

2023 Report *to the* Community



1993-2023
30 YEARS

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

alabamapossible 

www.alabamapossible.org

Greetings,

We, the team at Alabama Possible are filled with gratitude for the incredible support we receive from our loyal supporters like you! Your generosity and dedication truly have been making a difference in our mission as we celebrated 30 years of the organization's existence! During 2023, the team's commitment to **changing the narrative** and making a meaningful impact in Alabama resulted in further enhanced strategies to break down barriers to prosperity and create a more inclusive and thriving community.

A heartfelt thank you for the monumental level of support we received in 2023! Your assistance provided us with the opportunity to meet the increased demands of high school counselors, career coaches, and educators as they guided their students through postsecondary pathways. Together, we achieved a remarkable feat, positioning Alabama as the 11th state in the nation for overall Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion for the graduating class of 2023.

We encountered challenges with the 2024-2025 FAFSA not opening till December 31st, but your support allowed us the opportunity to offer continuous updates regarding opening of FAFSA, valuable resources, and trainings at no cost, ensuring that more and more students were made aware of their potential and understood that they can afford to pursue their postsecondary journeys. We're thrilled to be making a difference and moving the needle in the right direction for our students!

In addition to postsecondary access, Alabama Possible's scope of work has grown and expanded to encompass postsecondary success as well. We recognize that supporting students and ensuring their success extends beyond simply gaining access to higher education. Our team is dedicated to providing resources, guidance, and assistance to students throughout their postsecondary journey, helping them overcome challenges and achieve their goals. In 2023, we hosted the 2nd Annual Alabama 2-year and 4-year College Presidents' Luncheon. Representative Danny Garret and Director Bobby Singleton were in a fireside chat with Gregory Jones from The Jones Group.

In 2023, we continued to empower individuals to go beyond just deliberation and take action in order to address and close equity gaps within their communities. We did this by connecting them with neighbors across their community through our Break it Down Discussions. We also relaunched our poverty simulation experience. Alabama Possible utilizes the Community Action Poverty Simulation kit developed by Missouri Community Action Network (MCAN). This simulation is a hands-on exercise that allows participants to immerse themselves in the day-to-day life of a person living in poverty. It provides the participants with an in-depth preview of systemic barriers individuals living in poverty face and the impact it has on them emotionally and personally, leading them, the majority of times, to making disastrous decisions. It is a simulation that enables participants to look at poverty from a variety of angles and then to recognize and discuss the potential for change within their local communities.

The year 2023 was a momentous one for us as we celebrated Alabama Possible's 30th Anniversary! During the year, we reflected on our past achievements and shaped the future of our organization.

Thank you for taking the time to read through our end-of-year report, which provides a glimpse into the incredible accomplishments of 2023. We hope you enjoy this journey through the year and feel a sense of pride knowing that your support has made a positive impact on countless lives in Alabama.

Once again, on behalf of the Alabama Possible Board of Directors and our dedicated small but mighty team, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your incredible support throughout the year. We eagerly look forward to your continued partnership as we work together to change the narrative in Alabama and create a future of shared prosperity for all.

Yours in service and gratitude,

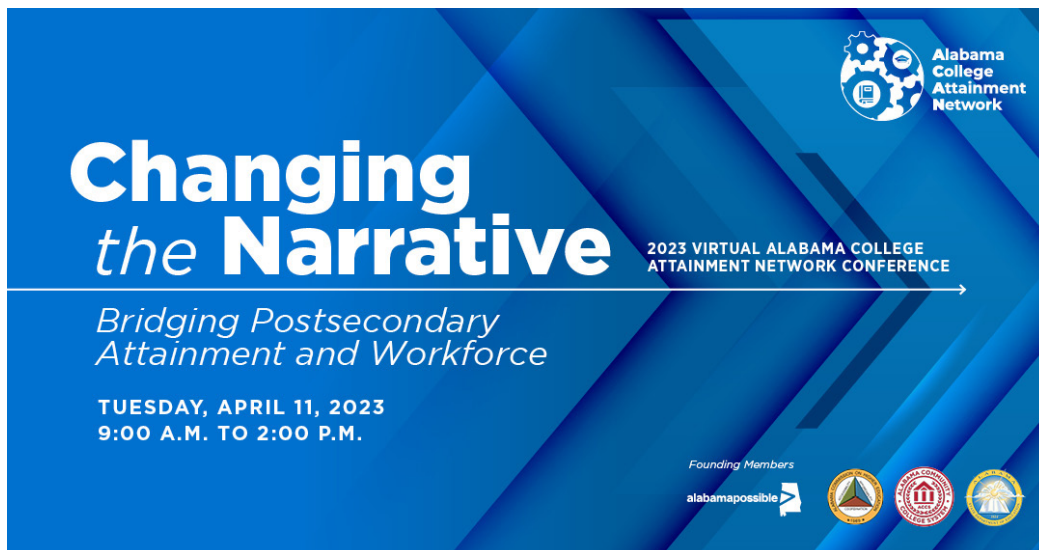


Chandra C. Scott
Executive Director



/// Alabama College Attainment Network (AlabamaCAN) Virtual Spring Conference 2023

- On Tuesday, April 11, 2023, the Alabama College Attainment Network hosted its third statewide virtual conference focused on *Changing the Narrative: Bridging Postsecondary Attainment and Workforce*.
- Our heartfelt gratitude to our keynote speaker, **Kathy Boswell**, who through her transparency, provided us with clarity on how to intentionally impact one's "narrative" positively.
- Two hundred and ninety-seven people registered for the conference, which included 16 sessions and 31 statewide as well as national presenters. The sessions were filled with shared-learning and innovative strategies demonstrating an urgency in creating formidable support system for every student navigating postsecondary pathways. We thank all our session presenters who, through their preparation and tireless efforts, provided us with strategies that apply to all areas of education.
- The virtual conference was sponsored by Lumina Foundation and lunch vouchers made possible by AT&T.
- All virtual participants received conference swag and other promotional and informational items.
- This conference continues our effort to break down silos and increase collaboration across various professions to meet the workforce demands of our state.



Alabama
College
Attainment
Network



/// Our Barriers to Prosperity Data Resources continue to inspire discussions and advocacy

Our 2023 Barriers to Prosperity Data Sheet uses the most recent data available from the U.S. Census Bureau to highlight metrics for Alabama's 67 counties. Alabama ranked as the nation's sixth poorest state, with 16.3 percent of Alabamians living below the federal poverty threshold. The federal poverty threshold ranges from \$13,788 for one person to \$27,740 for a family of four. Alabama continues to have a much higher poverty rate than the national rate of 12.8 percent.

Key findings include:

- Eight of Alabama's 67 counties have a poverty rate higher than 25 percent. Five counties have a poverty rate higher than 30 percent, which is three more counties than last year.
- Alabama's median household income is \$53,990, or \$13,382 less than the national median of \$69,717. For Alabama, this is only an increase of \$32 or 0.06% from the previous year.
- The median household income for Black or African American families is \$37,215, or \$26,685 less than white families and \$8,240 less than Hispanic and Latino families in Alabama.

A highly esteemed panel discussed how the Data Sheet is being used in their approaches to community education, workforce policy, investment strategies, and statewide advocacy. Panelists included:



Shannon Shelley-Tremblay

Director of Compliance
and Advocacy at Veterans
Recovery Resources



Brandon Glover

Workforce Development
Manager at Alabama Power



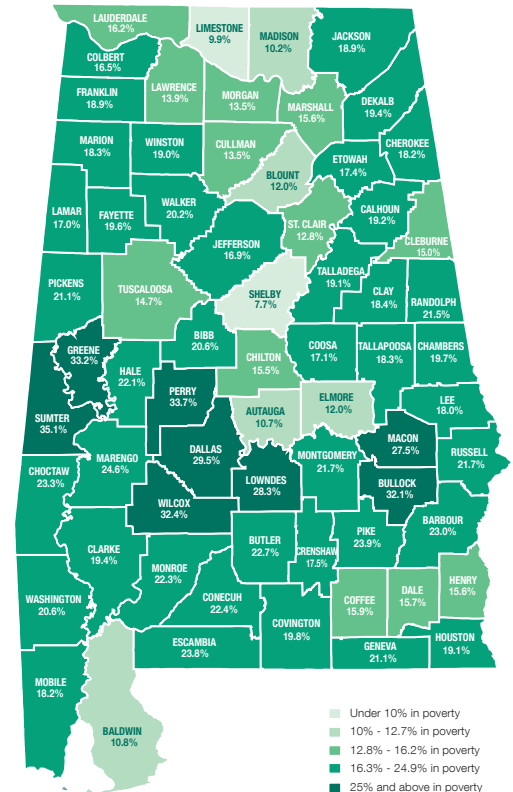
Emily Volkmar

Vice President of Community
Relationships and Operations
at Aqualateral



Chandra Scott

Executive Director at
Alabama Possible



/// Community Conversations

We held our Break it Down Discussion in Calhoun County in partnership with Alabama New South Coalition. The virtual engagement prioritized awareness and deliberation. When participants registered (13 people) for the discussion, they responded to close-ended and open-ended questions which directed the overall discussion when we met virtually. We encouraged participants to spend a few minutes with the 2023 Barriers to Prosperity Data Sheet prior to registering. During the discussion, Alabama Possible also encouraged members of the community to discuss the information from the Barriers to Prosperity Data Sheet, examine the many ways poverty impacts their community, and uncover opportunities for local action. We found commonality in the citizens' sentiments of working collectively towards removing barriers to prosperity as in our previous discussions.



/// Poverty Simulation

For years, Alabama Possible had been facilitating in-person poverty simulations. Alabama Possible utilizes the Community Action Poverty Simulation kit developed by Missouri Community Action Network (MCAN). This simulation is a hands-on exercise that allows participants to immerse themselves in the day-to-day life of a person living in poverty. It provides the participants with an in-depth preview of the systemic barriers individuals living in poverty face and the impact it has on them emotionally and personally leading them to majority of times making disastrous decisions. As per CAPS, “It is a simulation, not a game. The objective is to shift our paradigm about poverty away from being seen as a personal failure and toward the understanding of poverty as a structured, failure of society.”

We had to pause the simulations in 2020 due to Covid. We tried facilitating them virtually, but soon realized that it did not have the same impact as an in-person simulation. In July 2023, we facilitated our first in-person simulation since Covid and have hosted four simulations through December 2023.

One of our goals is to shift conversations around poverty. During the debrief sessions at the simulation, the following are some of the quotes from our participants:

“This simulation has taught me to have grace for people coming late to work given the constraints they face.”

“I have learnt the extent a person would go to take care of their family.”

“I have understood the shame that comes with homelessness no matter the circumstances that lead you to it.”



Alabama Possible Fellows

Micaela Oer, University of Alabama Intern

Micaela is a master's student from The University of Alabama School of Social Work. While interning with the Alabama Possible team this school year, she is supporting the Alabama Goes to College campaign and Help Desk and collecting stories from community members who have used Alabama Possible resources and tools. Micaela is also a Program Manager at jHICA! where she oversees the Empowering Community Program. When she isn't working, Micaela enjoys going for walks, working on puzzles, and spending time with her husband and son.



Jadyn Steave, Southern Education Leadership Initiative Fellow

Jadyn Steave is from Fairburn, GA, and is a J.D. Candidate at Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law with plans to practice education and family law. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in English from Alabama Agricultural & Mechanical University. She is a 2023 Southern Education Foundation Fellow, with a passion for educational justice on every level, and believes education is a human right.

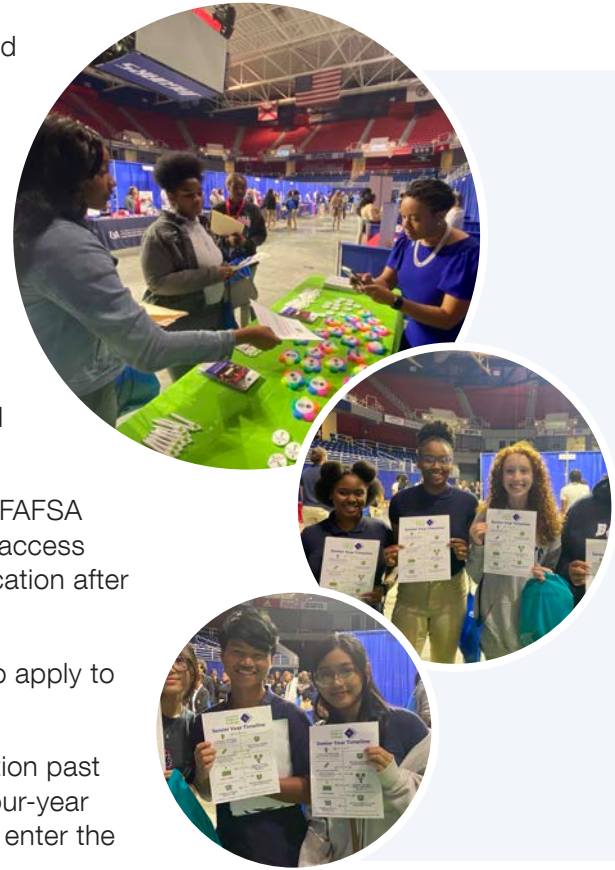


/// Alabama Goes to College

Alabama Goes to College equips Alabamians with tools and connects them with relationships so that every student can plan for, pursue, and complete valuable postsecondary credentials. Most career pathways require these credentials including technical certificates and academic degrees. Alabama Goes to College provides resources for students and families to explore college options, find financial aid opportunities, and successfully transition from high school to college.

The Alabama Goes to College Campaign combines Alabama College Application Week, Cash for College, and College and Career Decision Day. Through these three initiatives we:

- ✓ **encourage** every graduating senior to complete their FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) so they can access federal, state, and institutional aid to pay for their education after high school.
- ✓ **offer** high school seniors in Alabama an opportunity to apply to participating colleges for free.
- ✓ **celebrate** students committing to pursue their education past high school, whether to obtain a two-year degree, a four-year degree, a certificate or industry-recognized credential; enter the military; or pursue a skilled trade.



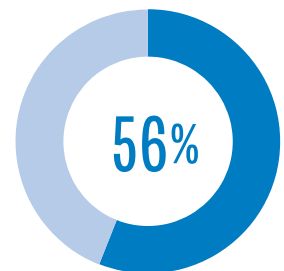
Did You Know?

MAXIMUM PELL GRANT

\$7,395
per year

AVERAGE PELL GRANT

\$4,605 for all Alabama students
\$4,916 for Alabama high school seniors



Pell Grants do not need to be paid back



Pell Grants can be used for technical and academic education

Around 56% percent of Alabama students qualify for Pell Grant aid



THE CAMPAIGN REACHED

377

high schools

67

counties

THROUGH ALABAMA COLLEGE
APPLICATION WEEK,

72

colleges and universities
across the country waived
their application fees for
Alabama students

27,238

high school seniors
applied to college

BY THE SUMMER AFTER THEIR
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION,

31,000+

seniors completed
their FAFSA and
leveraged over











\$80M

in Pell Grant aid

2022-23 Cash for College Winners

In the 2022-23 school year, we expanded our end-of-year awards to include more size categories: extra small, small, medium, large, and extra large.

The ten schools which had the highest and most improved FAFSA completion rates earned cash incentives to support a college- and career-ready culture.

		MVP			MOST IMPROVED
X-LARGE		CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL (PHENIX CITY) 68.19% COMPLETION RATE	X-LARGE		CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL (PHENIX CITY) 24.65% IMPROVEMENT RATE
LARGE		HEWITT-TRUSSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL 63.66% COMPLETION RATE	LARGE		ALMA BRYANT HIGH SCHOOL 92.81% IMPROVEMENT RATE
MEDIUM		LEE HIGH SCHOOL 83.33% COMPLETION RATE	MEDIUM		CITRONELLE HIGH SCHOOL 93.52% IMPROVEMENT RATE
SMALL		LOVELESS ACADEMIC MAGNET PROGRAM 86.09% COMPLETION RATE	SMALL		MADISON COUNTY VIRTUAL ACADEMY 68.48% IMPROVEMENT RATE
X-SMALL		SWEET WATER HIGH SCHOOL 100% COMPLETION RATE	X-SMALL		CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL (HAYNEVILLE) 142.86% IMPROVEMENT RATE

Awards are based on data collected as of April 28, 2023.

Alabama Goes to
College partners
include



30th Anniversary Celebration: Dinner & Conversation

Alabama Possible celebrated its 30th anniversary of addressing poverty and fostering education statewide at its Changing the Narrative Dinner and Conversation in November 2023. During the extraordinary occasion we honored the organization's visionary co-founder, Dr. Wayne Flynt, who was recognized for his pioneering vision and relentless dedication to improving the lives of Alabamians.

Kathy Boswell, an accomplished leader in education and advocacy, moderated a panel discussion featuring distinguished speakers from various sectors: Nick Preston, a dedicated high school counselor at Shades Valley High School, who shared insights on the challenges and triumphs of guiding students toward higher education; Jessica Wiggins, representing Jacksonville State University, discussed the role of universities in creating pathways to success for Alabama's future workforce; Dr. Neil Scott, representing the Alabama Community College System, shared with the participants the critical role community colleges play in expanding educational access; Rev. Melissa Self Patrick, from Independent Presbyterian Church, explored the intersection of faith and social justice in addressing poverty; Kaila Pouncy, a University of Alabama student, offered a fresh perspective on the student experience in Alabama.

As we celebrated three decades of impactful work, this event provided an opportunity to reflect on the remarkable journey of Alabama Possible and the individuals who have made it possible. and it was a night of inspiration, dialogue, and reflection.

(Re)Engage Alabama Grant Scholarship

Alabama Possible in partnership with Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), Governor's Office, and Third Sector (a national organization) convened 9 of Alabama's public 4-year institutions through a year-long continuous improvement process centered around re-engaging adults with a focus on successful attainment. In response to the data collected through the process, (Re)Engage Alabama Grant Program was established to provide scholarships to adults with some credit no degrees who desired to complete their degrees in high-wage, high-demand majors. The State funded \$1.5 million towards this initiative. This intentional focus is going to be a game-changer for adult students across the state. Our mission is to break down barriers to prosperity and the work of this group gives us confidence that Alabama is creating an eco-system designed to end generational poverty.





HBCC/PBCC

In April 2023, Alabama Possible partnered with ECMC Foundation to support the **Historically Black Community College (HBCC) and Predominately Black Community College (PBCC) Network**. ECMCF provided a 3-year grant that afforded us the opportunity to conduct research that would result in the nation's first case studies on Alabama's eight HBCCs/PBCCs named The Great Eight. These case studies would highlight the success stories, the innovations, and the issues and challenges in these institutions. Institutions had the opportunity to present at the UNCF annual conference. Alabama Possible began the planning process to host the nation's first HBCC/PBCC conference in 2024.

2nd Higher Education Alliance Presidents' Luncheon

On Tuesday, October 3, 2023, Alabama Possible hosted its second annual Higher Education Alliance Alabama College & University Presidents' Luncheon. The luncheon was held at Central in Montgomery, AL from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM where over 65 two- and four-year college/university presidents and their guests were engaged in a fireside chat with Senator Bobby Singleton and Rep. Danny Garret moderated by Gregory Jones of The Jones Group. The theme of the luncheon was *Bridging policy and practice in postsecondary education*. Sen. Bobby Singleton and Rep. Danny Garrett shared various ways the legislation is supporting and seeking to support a seamless education-to-workforce path. At the luncheon, Mr. Nick Moore from the Governor's Office of Education and Workforce Transformation shared Alabama's progress in leveraging work and military experience to count towards credential and degree completion. The Higher Education Alliance College Presidents' Luncheon was made possible by support from EBSCO Ed.



State and Federal Advocacy

Alabama Possible's executive director participated in a discussion moderated by CCA's Charles Ansell, featured experts Kayla C. Elliott from Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Brandon Nichols from City Colleges of Chicago-Olive-Harvey College, Kevin Randle of the Office of U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly (IL-02), and Chandra Scott from Alabama Possible who examined support for predominantly Black and historically Black community colleges and the pivotal role of these institutions in the higher education landscape.



Alabama Possible's deputy director and strategy director for postsecondary access attended National College Attainment Network's Hill and Advocacy Day held at Washington D.C. in April 2023. Both attended a virtual advocacy training session as well as an in-person training session before visiting the Capitol to meet with Alabama's federal representatives. They also had the opportunity to hear from key administrative staff from the Department of Education. They met with the representatives and advocated for policies that would improve students' ability to attend and complete postsecondary education. This is an annual event that brings together top college access and success professionals who are passionate about influencing federal policy. This event was last held in 2020.

About Alabama Possible

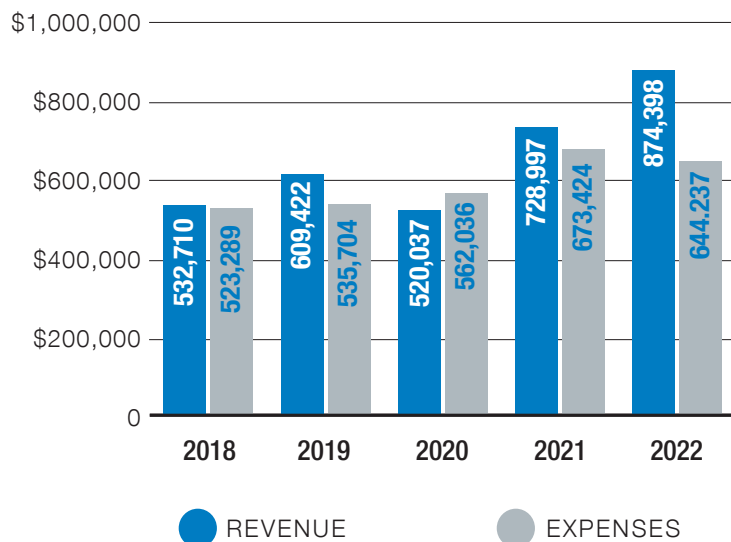
VISION

To ensure that all Alabamians have the opportunity to lead prosperous lives.

MISSION

To break down barriers to prosperity in Alabama through education, collaboration, and advocacy.

Stewarding investments to remove barriers to prosperity



Source: Alabama Possible Form 990
Alabama Possible stewards community and organizational sustainability by maintaining an operating reserve fund.
Alabama Possible's 990 is available at alabamapossible.org/990

Staff

Chandra Scott, *Executive Director*
Manisha Mishra, *Deputy Director*
Mae Whiting, *Data and Research Director*
Yoruba Butler, *Strategy Director for Postsecondary Access*

Fellows and Interns

Jadyn Steave, *Southern Education Leadership Institute Fellow*
Micaela Oer, *Intern*



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Wayne Flynt, PhD, *Auburn University (retired)*

Leon Frazier, EdD, *Alabama State University (retired)*

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“Trust is earned in the smallest of moments.

It is earned not through heroic deeds, or even highly visible actions, but through paying attention, listening, and gestures of genuine care and connection.”

– BRENÉ BROWN

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