



ABILITY TO BENEFIT - ILLINOIS' PROPOSED STATE-DEFINED PROCESS

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Whitney Thompson,
Deputy Director for
Workforce Education

Angela Gerberding,
Associate Director for
Integrated Career Programs

Purpose

1. To share information on Illinois' Ability to Benefit Alternative Process and Plan
2. To raise awareness of Ability to Benefit provisions
3. To inform community colleges on how to opt-in to the Alternative Plan

Documents Available to You:

- The Plan
- Institutional Participation Form
- One-Pager



WHAT IS ABILITY TO BENEFIT?

Ability to Benefit

Ability to Benefit (ATB) is a provision of the Higher Education Act (HEA) that allows adults without a high school diploma or equivalency who are participating in a career pathway program at a Title IV eligible institution to have access to federal financial aid.

In order to be eligible for ATB, a student must demonstrate that they are college-ready by:

1. Passing an ATB- Approved Standardized Test;
2. Successfully attaining 6 college credit hours; OR
3. Completing a State Process as approved by the Secretary of Education

Career Pathway Programs

“Career pathway” means a combination of rigorous and high quality education, training, and other services that –

1. **Aligns with the skill needs of industries** in the economy of the state or regional economy involved;
2. Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeship;
3. **Includes counseling** to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;
4. Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupation cluster;
5. Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable;
6. **Enables an individual to attain a secondary school diploma** or its recognized equivalent, and at least 1 recognized postsecondary credential; and
7. Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

ATB IMPLEMENTATION IN THE IL COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

2019 Survey on ATB Usage

In February 2019, the ICCB administered a survey to community colleges to understand if and how Ability to Benefit provisions were being implemented and what challenges each college was facing.

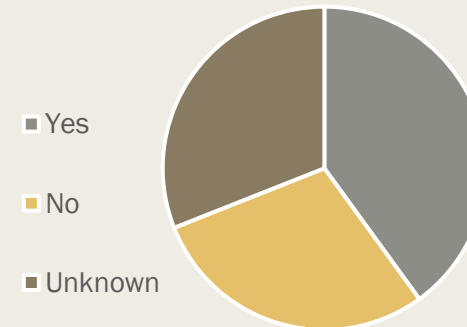
- 33 respondents out of 48 (Response Rate: 69%)
- Results were prepared and reported at the U.S. Department of Education Convening on Ability to Benefit.

Q1. Is the college utilizing the ATB provisions?

Yes = 40 % - 19 colleges

No = 29% - 14 colleges

Unknown = 31% - 15 colleges



Q2. Specifically, is the college utilizing ATB for adult students enrolled in Adult Education / Integrated Education and Training programs?

Utilizing with IETs – 36.36%

Not utilizing with IETs – 63.64%

Because → No IETs available, college not using ATB, or ATB is underutilized

Institutional Challenges to Current ATB Provisions

Lack of awareness and
knowledge

Current provisions too limiting

Uncertainty around “eligible
career pathway program”

Internal coordination too
challenging to implement

Student Challenges to Current ATB Provisions



Standardized tests create anxiety and are not always a valid measure of readiness



Standardized tests can be costly and time-intensive



Pursuing 6 credit hours without financial aid poses a financial burden for students

STATE-DEFINED PROCESS

ATB Alternative Method



Benefits of the State-Defined Process

- ✓ Streamlines the processes and procedures
- ✓ Eligibility criteria is more flexible for adult students
- ✓ Creates additional awareness, support, and accountability for ATB implementation

Ability to Benefit Working Group

Members of Working Group:

- Angela Gerberding, ICCB
- Whitney Thompson, ICCB
- Kathy Olesen-Tracey, ICCB
- Lisa Jones, DCEO
- Andrea Puckett, IECC
- Richard Hayes, CCC
- Maureen Fitzpatrick, CCC
- Lauren Hooberman, CCC
- Carmela Ochoa, MVCC
- Kerry Urquizo, HCC
- Jamil Steel, LLCC
- Alison Mills, LLCC
- Christina Manchen, RLC
- Cheri Rushing, RLC
- Ginger Harner, SCC
- Chris Warden, Women Employed
- Sarah Goldammer, SIPDC
- Peggy Heinrich, ECC
- Vicky Garcia, PSC
- Bianca Perkins, BHC

Objectives:

Create a State Plan by accomplishing the following:

- Establish a well-documented process for the creation of the IL State plan
- Engage stakeholders and subject matter experts from across the state to advise on the development of the plan
- Review DOE requirements and how other states have met those requirements
- Identify recommendations based on effective practices to integrate into IL's State Plan
- Identify current barriers for colleges using AtB
- Work with institutional partners to implement AtB locally

Plan Elements

- Background
- Participating Institutions
- Program Design
- Student Eligibility
- Required Student Services
- Success Rate- Accountability
- Data Collection and Reporting
- Monitoring
- Corrective Action
- Termination Clause
- Appendix A: Institutional Participation Form
- Appendix B: Eligible Career Pathways

Alignment with Current Initiatives and Priorities

- **A Tool for Postsecondary Attainment:** Expanding access and use of ATB will further contribute to Illinois' Postsecondary Attainment Goal adopted by the P-20 Council which “strives to increase the proportion of adults in Illinois with high-quality postsecondary degrees and credentials to 60% by the year 2025”.
- **A Tool for Advancing Educational Equity:**
 - *Black and Latinx students have higher dropout rates and lower undergraduate enrollment rates than white students.*
 - *Nearly 30 percent of adults living in poverty lack high school credentials**

*Duy Pham, *Advancing Racial Equity Through Career Pathways*, CLASP, 2018,
<https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/10/2018.10.30%20Career%20Pathways%20Racial%20Equity%20.pdf>.

Program Design

- To be administered in a career pathway system
 - *Eligible career pathway sectors identified in Appendix B of Plan*
- Utilize ATB during IET implementation
- IET is adult education and literacy, workforce preparation, and workforce training “each of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available, especially with respect to improving reading, writing, mathematics, and English proficiency of eligible individuals” that “occur simultaneously,” “use occupationally relevant instructional materials,” and are “organized to function cooperatively” with “a single set of learning outcomes” (34 CFR §463.37).
- Strong wraparound supports

Student Eligibility

- Adult learner (must be beyond age of compulsory education)
 - *Does not include dual credit students or students who otherwise should be enrolled in K-12 education*
- Learner meets all other [eligibility criteria for federal financial aid](#) (demonstrate financial need, valid SSN, citizen or eligible non-citizen, etc.)
- Learner *does not* meet original ATB criteria
- **Ideal candidates:**
 - *are enrolled in an Early School Leaver Transition or an ICCB approved Alternative Methods of Credentialing for High School Equivalency programming*
OR
 - *have successfully completed a Bridge Program within Adult Education.*

Student Eligibility

Assessment of each student's existing capabilities through means other than a single standardized test. Institutions need to utilize two or more assessment methods as provided below. Potential assessment methods include:

- GED Ready practice tests
- Instructor or employer referrals
- High school transcript review
- HSE and ESL assessments
- Writing samples
- Student interviews

Evidence must be documented in the student file. This information may be requested as part of the monitoring conducted by the ICCB.

Required Student Services

Assessment
(previous
slide)

Orientation

Tutoring

Career Goal
Development

Counseling

Follow Up

Success Rate- Accountability

State-Level Requirement: ATB enrolled students must have a success rate that is within 95 percent of the success rate of students with high school diplomas (non-ATB students).

The number of students during the applicable award year enrolled who-

- (i) Successfully completed education or training programs;
- (ii) Remained enrolled in education or training programs at the end of that award year; or
- (iii) Successfully transferred to and remained enrolled in another institution at the end of that award year.

DIVIDED BY

- The number of students who enrolled in education or training programs in participating institutions during that award year who remained enrolled (minus the number of students who subsequently withdrew or were expelled from participating institutions and received a 100 percent refund of their tuition under the institutions' refund policies.)

Data Collection and Reporting

- Ability to Benefit designation added to MIS Manual for FY beginning July 1, 2022
- Data collection will occur through student-level data submissions that reside in the ICCB Centralized Data System
- Annual Implementation Reports due August 30 each year
 - *career clusters and program of study ATB students are participating in,*
 - *types of industry credentials earned, college credentials earned,*
 - *dates of ATB orientation offered,*
 - *how many of each assessment option was utilized,*
 - *tutoring and other academic and career planning services offered*

Accountability and Oversight

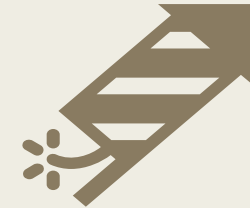


Monitoring

ICCB staff review reports annually

Cyclical review to ensure compliance with requirements

- Eligible career pathway program elements
- Required student services
- Methods of assessment
- Review of institutional success rate



Corrective Action Plans

Corrective Action Not Required:

- 95% Success Rate or higher each year
- 91%-94% Success Rate for one year (added to Watch List)

Corrective Action Required:

- Less than a 95% Success Rate for two consecutive years
- 90% or lower Success Rate in one year

Termination Clause

- A. **Due to non-compliance** – Institution fails to meet 95% Success Rate for three consecutive years
- B. **Termination by Institution** – Institution is not allowed to enroll more students utilizing Alternative Process but must continue supporting students that are mid-program.
- C. **Termination by ICCB** – ICCB terminates Alternative Process or plan expires and ICCB opts not to renew it – Institution must continue supporting students that are mid-program. Notice of 90 days will be given by ICCB.

Participating Institutions

- Institutional Obligations:

- *Request to be part of the State-Defined Process via this form*
- *Collaborate internally to enroll, support, and track eligible students per the requirements of Illinois' Ability to Benefit State-Defined Process*
- *Submit Program Implementation Reports on an annual basis (August 30)*
- *Maintain a success rate of 95% as defined in Section VI or be in compliance with Section IX.*

- Institutions are not obligated to:

- *Enroll a minimum number of students in ATB via this State-Defined Process, even if they have opted into the plan.*

Next Steps

1

Participating Institutions: Complete Institutional Participation Form and submit to Angela Gerberding, angela.Gerberding@illinois.gov by November 12, 2021

2

ICCB: Submit Plan to U.S. Department of Education for Review and Approval (November 15, 2021)

Resources

Important Links

- [USDOE ATB FAQ](#)
- [CLASP ATB Resources](#)
- [ICCB ATB Resources](#)

Questions?

- Contact: Whitney Thompson, Deputy Director for Workforce Education, whitney.Thompson@illinois.gov
- Angela Gerberding, Associate Director for Integrated Career Programs, angela.gerberding@illinois.gov