



ABILITY TO BENEFIT - ILLINOIS' PROPOSED STATE-DEFINED PROCESS

Transitions Academy - November 2, 2021

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Work-Based Learning

Purpose

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

Documents Available to You:

- The Plan
- Institutional Participation Form
- One-Pager



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

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

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

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

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 Interest 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?

- Angela Gerberding, Director for Work-based Learning,
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