



ABILITY TO BENEFIT – ILLINOIS' PROPOSED STATE-DEFINED PROCESS

November 17, 2022

Whitney Thompson,
Deputy Director for
Workforce Education

Angela Gerberding,
Director for
Work-Based Learning

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

How Students Qualify for Ability to Benefit (ATB)

Requirements (all options)	Option 1 - test	Option 2 - 6 credits	Option 3 - state-defined process
Must be beyond the age of compulsory education (Can not be dual credit student)	All requirements AND achieve a pre-determined score on an US Dept. of Education approved test.	All requirements AND successfully complete 6 credit hours of college level course work.	All requirements AND follow Illinois's State Plan
Must demonstrate financial need			
Have a valid SSN			
Must be a US Citizen or eligible non-citizen			
Must be enrolled in an eligible degree or certificate program			

Use with IETs/ICAPS

The State-Defined Process is intended to be used along with Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs. These are also call ICAPS in Illinois.

IETs have 3 basic components:

1. Adult Education
2. Workplace Preparation
3. Workforce Training

Utilization of ATB can help pay for the credit education/training in the chosen career pathway.

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

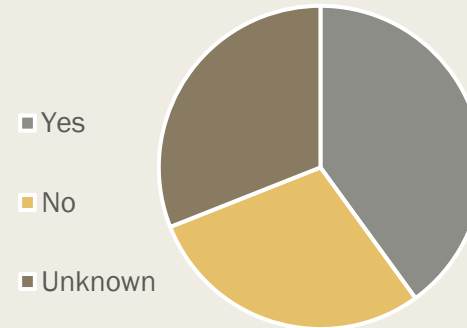
- Response Rate: 69%

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

- ✓ Eligibility criteria is more flexible for adult students
- ✓ Program design requires more structured support for students
- ✓ Creates additional awareness, support, and accountability for ATB implementation

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 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
- High School Equivalency coursework is recommended for students as improvement in these skills lead to more likely success in college and better employment opportunities.

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 (of all State-Defined Process approved by DOE)

Assessment

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.)

Success Rate Example

- Students with high school diplomas:
- NUMERATOR: 720 students with HSD/E enrolled in participating institution in education and training that academic year AND either (1) successfully completed their program, (2) remained enrolled at the end of the AY, or (3) successfully transferred and remained enrolled at the end of the AY.
- DENOMINATOR: 1000 students with HSD/E who enrolled in participating institution in education and training programs that AY, (excludes students who withdrew or were expelled during the AY and who received a 100 percent tuition refund)

Success Rate Example

- Students without high school diplomas:
- NUMERATOR: 13 students without HSD/E enrolled in participating institution in education and training that academic year AND either (1) successfully completed their program, (2) remained enrolled at the end of the AY, or (3) successfully transferred and remained enrolled at the end of the AY.
- DENOMINATOR: 19 students without HSD/E who enrolled in participating institution in education and training programs that AY, (excludes students who withdrew or were expelled during the AY and who received a 100 percent tuition refund).

SUCCESS!

- Success Rate for those with High School Diplomas: $720/1000 = 72\%$
- Success Rate for those without High School Diplomas: $13/19 = 68.4\%$
- Success rate for those without HSD must be 95% of success rate for those with HSD ($.684/.72 = 95\%$). Example Institution meets success rate for the AY!



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*

New Variable for Reporting

Ability To Benefit: Ability to Benefit (ATB) is a provision within the federal Higher Education Act that allows students without a high school diploma to benefit from Title IV financial aid. Currently, for students to qualify, they must score above a certain score on an approved test OR accumulate six credit hours to demonstrate college readiness. The U.S. Department of Education also allows for states to identify a third process for ATB usage. Use the following codes to identify the student's ATB status in the academic year.

Codes:

- 0 - Not Applicable
- 1 – Eligible due to qualifying score on an approved test
- 2 – Eligible due to the accumulation of six credit hours to demonstrate college readiness
- 3 - Eligible due to qualifying based on state approved process for ATB usage

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.

IMPLEMENTATION

Participating Institutions

- Black Hawk College
- Carl Sandburg College
- City Colleges of Chicago
- College of Lake County
- Danville Area Community College
- Elgin Community College
- Harper College
- Heartland Community College
- Highland Community College
- Illinois Central College
- Illinois Eastern Community Colleges
- Illinois Valley Community College
- John A. Logan College
- John Wood Community College
- Joliet Junior College
- Kankakee Community College
- Kaskaskia College
- Kishwaukee College
- Lewis & Clark Community College
- Lincoln Land Community College
- Moraine Valley Community College
- Morton College
- Oakton Community College
- Parkland College
- Prairie State College
- Rend Lake College
- Richland Community College
- Rock Valley College
- Sauk Valley Community College
- Shawnee Community College
- South Suburban College
- Southeastern Illinois College
- Southwestern Illinois College
- Triton College
- Waubonsee Community College

Participating Institutions

- Institutional Obligations:
 - *Request to be part of the State-Defined Process*
 - *Collaborate internally to enroll, support, and track eligible students per the requirements of Illinois' Ability to Benefit State-Defined Process (encouraged to have an Ability to Benefit Team)*
 - *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.*

Policy Considerations

- Automatic award of the adult high school diploma following completion of college coursework (GECC?, equivalent, degree).
- Working with ISAC to determine if utilize MAP for otherwise non-eligible students for FAFSA.

Resources

Important Links

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

http://www2.iccb.org/adult_ed/provider-resources/

- ✓ The approved IL State-Defined Process Plan
- ✓ The approval letter from US Department of Education
- ✓ An FAQ about IL's State-Defined Process that is updated regularly
- ✓ Other resources
- ATB Modules – coming soon

Questions?

- Whitney Thompson, Deputy Director for Workforce Education, whitney.Thompson@illinois.gov
- Angela Gerberding, Director for Work-Based Learning, angela.gerberding@illinois.gov

Resources Coming Soon

Modules

Phase 1 - short videos to watch for immediate information

- 1 - What is Ability to Benefit?
- 2 - Elements of the State-Defined Process Plan
- 3 - Data and Accountability
- 4 - Career Pathways

Phase 2 - more detailed videos on specific pieces of the plan

Student eligibility

Student services

Reporting/documentation

Effective practices