



Ability to Benefit

ACCESS, EQUITY, AND ENROLLMENT

Ability to Benefit could be the answer to all of these questions!

Ability to Benefit (ATB) is a federal financial aid provision that allows a student without a high school diploma or high school equivalency to receive Title IV student federal financial aid to pay for postsecondary education and training if they are enrolled in a Title IV eligible career pathway program. Colleges are already the main provider of career pathway programs. ATB just requires partnering with Adult Education Providers to ensure a contextualized adult education component and navigation support.

Ability to Benefit (ATB) is a federal financial aid process that provides funding for students without a high school diploma or GED. ATB allows eligible students to pay for tuition, fees, and books.

Receiving a Pell Grant is a game-changer for students. The 2021-2022 allotment of \$6,495 can make a dramatic difference for a low-income adult student. Adding in state and/or internal college scholarships or grants could allow students to attend college full time and perhaps only have to work part time. A Pell Grant buys freedom for adult students to attend classes, study more, participate in supplemental academic activities, and take care of themselves.

COABE
COALITION ON ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

www.coabe.org



Attention College Leaders: Chancellors, Presidents, Provosts, Financial Aid leaders, and Registrars.

Is your college leveraging Ability to Benefit (ATB) to recruit and retain students through adult dual enrollment?

Are you one of the 70% of community colleges that are concerned about hitting enrollment targets?

Does your college mission include increasing diversity and equity?

Has your state set a postsecondary attainment goal for state residents?

Why should you care as a College Leader?

- The need to engage our most vulnerable populations has never been greater given the pandemic and talent needed to fill critical positions in certain priority sector.
- The latest trends demonstrate issues colleges face in achieving their vision for diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- There has been a drop in Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications by lower income students.

Why now?

- Increase enrollment
- Meet the needs of adult learners
- Pell has increased and is available
- Strengthen partnerships. ATB programs work!
- Mission driven - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Improve your community

Colleges can make it simple for students:

- Advertise and market ATB programs.
- Work with your Adult Education Provider (many times right down the hall).
- Provide an easy-to-complete process at your institution. Students can prove Ability To Benefit in three ways:
 1. Completing six college-level credits (or equivalent) applicable toward a postsecondary certificate or degree; or
 2. Achieving a cut score on a Department of Education approved exam <https://ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/062415ATBTests.html>; or
 3. Completing a state process approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education. This option of the law permits students to demonstrate ability to benefit for federal student aid “in accordance with such process as the state shall prescribe.”





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US Department of Education Frequently Asked Questions:

<https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/electronic-announcements/2021-01-15/ability-benefit-frequently-asked-questions-ea-id-ope-announcements-21-02>

Resources:

Federal Student Aid Dear Colleague Letter GEN-16-09:

<https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2016-05-09/gen-16-09-subject-changes-title-iv-eligibility-student-s-without-valid-high-school-diploma-who-are-enrolled-eligible-career-pathway-programs>

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), Resources on Ability to Benefit:

<https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2019/10/2019%20Ability%20to%20Benefit%20Overview.pdf>

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, December Spending Agreement Affects ATB Determinations:

https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/8523/ED_Issues_Guidance_on_Revised_Ability-to-Benefit_Provisions

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges:

<https://www.sbctc.edu/colleges-staff/programs-services/student-services/ability-to-benefit.aspx>

Career Pathway Definition, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Section 3 (definition 7):

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-113publ128/pdf/PLAW-113publ128.pdf>

National College Transition/CLASP webinar June 2020:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/fZ2FPXXEi_Zq2fAUulunp0V3zcj667rBk7yDGhuiB767YTm-9B81uV4jUrEti3KjNtGidgPujKoHymGq.UQRDdm42XFWglJdgi?continueMode=true&_x_zm_rtaid=N2Zv0uegQ3Oc2LMCSdkMZg.1641315471624.9b28f8aafe22bc608107960d6f04526f&_x_zm_rhtaid=571

Dear Colleague Letter GEN-16-09 and Eligible Career Pathway Programs-Questions and Answers attached, published May 9, 2016:

<https://ifap.ed.gov/dear-colleague-letters/05-09-2016-gen-16-09-subject-changes-title-iv-eligibility-students-without>

Federal Register – Lists the approved Ability-to-Benefit tests, published November 9, 2020:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2020/11/09/2020-24795/list-of-approved-ability-to-benefit-atb-tests-and-passing-scores>

Federal Student Aid Handbook – Select the current Award Year, then Volume I (Student Eligibility):

<https://ifap.ed.gov/ilibrary/document-types/federal-student-aid-handbook>

Career Pathways Toolkit from U.S. Department of Labor: https://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/PDF/career_pathways_toolkit.pdf

OCTAE Career Pathway Checklist: <https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/topic/wioa/careerpathways-checklist.pdf>

Approved State Process Webinar Slides: <https://ifap.ed.gov/dear-colleague-letters/ann2002>

COABE ATB Symposium: <https://coabe.org/ability-to-benefit/>