

# The Unsung Student Aid Option: A College Leader's Guide to Implementing the Credit-Hour Ability to Benefit Provision in the Federal Student Aid Program

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 **CSW**  
CORPORATION FOR A  
SKILLED WORKFORCE



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## Introduction

Welcome to the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) how-to guide on implementing a credit hour Ability to Benefit (ATB) initiative for adult education students in community college. This guide is a resource for community college administrators, staff, and faculty interested in implementing a credit hour ATB initiative to provide access to federal student financial aid for adult education students dually enrolled in high school diploma/equivalency and

postsecondary education via an ATB-eligible career pathway program.

This how-to guide is based on learnings from the A2B4Equity Ability to Benefit pilot project implemented from Spring 2022 through June 2024 and focuses specifically on the option for students to earn six credit hours (*sans* federal student aid) to demonstrate their “ability to benefit from college” and gain eligibility to apply for federal student financial aid.

## About the A2B4Equity Pilot Project

The *A2B4Equity* pilot project was funded by ECMC Foundation, managed by CSW, and implemented by two colleges in Chicago (Daley College and Truman College) and two in Michigan (Mott Community College and Wayne County Community College District). World Education, a division of JSI, provided technical assistance, and the University of Pittsburgh School of Education conducted the evaluation.

The *A2B4Equity* pilot project was implemented from Spring 2022 through June 2024. It focused on the ATB option of students earning six credit hours *sans* federal financial aid, after which they would be eligible to apply for federal student financial aid by completing the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

The pilot aimed to enroll 100 ATB students without a high school diploma or equivalent and from predominantly underserved populations into ATB-eligible career pathway programs and connect them to federal student financial aid. By the end of the pilot, the colleges had enrolled 105 adult students in ATB-eligible programs and 83 (79%) successfully completed six college credit hours. Most of the students (87%) were from communities of color.

Unfortunately, some of the colleges were unable to engage their Office of Student Aid early enough in the pilot project and did not connect students to student financial aid until several weeks or months after they completed their six credit hours. This resulted in only 14 of the students who completed the six credit hours completing the FAFSA (17%). It is uncertain how many students in the pilot project accessed federal student aid.

The pilot results were mixed but produced a number of key insights on how to both successfully implement ATB programs and what pitfalls to avoid.



The impact and benefits of ATB initiatives, often dubbed “Adult Dual Enrollment” within community colleges and adult education programs, can be significant and multifaceted.

These initiatives not only help in diversifying the student population but also contribute to filling the growing skills gap in the workforce. By providing access to education and training, ATB initiatives can help uplift individuals and communities, leading to improved access to employment, higher earnings, and social mobility. Considering that adults without a high school diploma or equivalent earn on average \$553/week—less than half the average of those with a bachelor’s degree and far too little to adequately support themselves or a family—any policies that have the potential to open doors to student financial aid and postsecondary credentials should be explored.

ATB initiatives can help make education systems more inclusive by providing additional options for accessing student aid and postsecondary education for adult students who have been unable to earn a high school diploma. Further, this is an issue of equity: of the twenty-seven million people in the United States who lack a high school diploma or equivalent, 20% are people of color, which is double the rate of white people. ATB can help close that gap and the racial gap in postsecondary credentials, as well.

This guide explores how ATB initiatives can be tailored to meet the needs of diverse adult learners and shares highlights from the four community colleges that partnered with CSW to pilot the credit hour ATB provision.

## I: Overview of the Federal Ability to Benefit Policy Framework

Ability to Benefit (ATB) refers to a provision under the federal Higher Education Act that allows students who have not yet earned a high school diploma or equivalent to access federal student financial aid for postsecondary education. Students must meet certain criteria by which they demonstrate that they have the “ability to benefit” from postsecondary education. There are three distinct alternatives in the Ability to Benefit provision:

1. Pass an independently administered test approved by the U. S. Department of Education;
2. Complete a state process approved by the U.S. Secretary of Education; or
3. Complete at least six credit hours or 225 clock hours that are applicable toward a Title IV-eligible degree or certificate (*sans* federal student aid).



It is important to note that developmental education credits are not eligible as the ATB six credits. The credits must count toward a credential program offered at the institution, and students must make satisfactory academic progress.

Congress eliminated the Ability to Benefit (ATB) provision in 2012 during budget cuts resulting from the Great Recession of 2007-2009; however, the provision was reinstated in 2014 with new parameters. Updates were made in 2016, including aligning the definition of “career pathways” in the ATB provision with the definition used in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

In October 2023, the US Department of Education [updated regulations](#) to clarify ATB implementation processes. These updated regulations went into effect on July 1, 2024, and cover the following topics: “(1) codify the definition of an “eligible career pathway program,” which largely mirrors the statutory definition, (2) make technical updates to the student eligibility regulations, (3) amend the State ATB process (“State process”) to allow time for participating institutions to collect outcomes data while establishing

new safeguards, (4) establish documentation requirements for institutions that want to begin or maintain eligible career pathway programs for ATB use, and (5) establish that the Secretary will verify at least one career pathway program at each postsecondary institution intending to use ATB to increase regulatory compliance.”<sup>1</sup>

The updated regulations require every institution of higher education using any of the ATB alternatives listed above to have at least one eligible career pathway program approved by the US Department of Education (with institutions “affirming” that their other career pathway programs meet the same documentation standards). The Federal Student Aid Office in the US Department of Education issued additional clarifying guidance with a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) published on May 16 and updated on May 23, 2024, and another [Dear Colleague Letter](#) issued on June 12, 2024, explaining how colleges can get US Department of Education approval for their eligible career pathway programs and how to document these programs.<sup>2</sup>

To stay informed of updates to the regulations be sure to regularly check [World Education’s Ability to Benefit Resource Page](#).

1 “Financial Responsibility, Administrative Capability, Certification Procedures, Ability To Benefit (ATB),” *Federal Register*, Vol. 88, No. 209, Tuesday, October 31, 2023, <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2023-22785>

2 “Implementation of Regulations Related to Financial Responsibility, Administrative Capability, Certification Procedures, and Ability to Benefit (ATB) (Updated May 23, 2024).” Knowledge Center, Federal Student Aid Office, US Department of Education (Dear Colleague Letter GEN-24-07). “Ability to Benefit State Process and Eligible Career Pathway Programs.” June 12, 2024. Knowledge Center, Federal Student Aid Office, US Department of Education (Dear Colleague Letter GEN-24-08)



## II: Required Design Elements for ATB Initiatives

The credit hour ATB alternative includes specific guidance for the six credit hours, or 225 clock hours students can take. They must be within an “eligible career pathway program” that meets the following criteria:

- A. Aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the state or regional economy involved;
  - B. Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeship;
  - C. Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual’s education and career goals;
  - D. 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; and
  - E. 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.
  - F. Enables an individual to attain a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least one recognized postsecondary credential; and
  - G. Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
- as defined by Title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that assist adults in attaining a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and in the transition to postsecondary education and training.<sup>3</sup>
3. Workforce preparation **activities**, that include initiatives and services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in
    - a) Utilizing resources
    - b) Using information
    - c) Working with others
    - d) Understanding systems
    - e) Skills necessary for a successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment and
    - f) Other employability skills that increase an individual’s preparation for the workforce

The institution must also document how the initiative aligns with the skill needs of industries in the State or regional labor market in which the institution is located, based on research the institution has conducted, including government reports identifying in-demand occupations in the State or regional labor market; surveys, interviews, meetings, or other information obtained by the institution regarding the hiring needs of employers in the State or regional labor market; and documentation that demonstrates direct engagement with industry.

The credit hour ATB provision requires institutions to document their activities, including that enrolled students are receiving all three of the following elements simultaneously:

1. An **eligible** postsecondary program
2. Adult education and literacy activities

<sup>3</sup> The process for approval by the Secretary of an institution’s career pathway program is to ensure that ECPP’s are aligned with Integrated Education and Training programs



## III: Guidance for Launching ATB Initiatives and Key Partners

In addition to meeting the federal regulations, ATB initiatives require significant coordination and commitment from a variety of departments across an institution. They also require strong commitment and championing from college leadership. An ATB team should include representatives from adult education, academic affairs and/or workforce development, student services, and financial aid. Each department has a role to play, and strong program management and frequent communication are extremely important. Bureaucratic challenges and disconnects may surface, which is why engaged and committed leadership is key to ensuring that the effort does not stall or disintegrate. Here are the roles each department can play in an ATB initiative:

### 1. Adult Education:

The college department in charge of adult education or the adult education agency that oversees adult education in the area will be able to identify students who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, who are interested in pursuing postsecondary education, and who may be good candidates for an ATB career pathway initiative. Adult Education provides the required “adult education and literacy activities,” including adult secondary skills, English Language Learning, and preparation for the high school equivalency exam. Adult education faculty are instrumental in designing and implementing [Integrated Education and Training programs](#) that can be eligible career pathway programs. Oftentimes, Adult Education instructors also provide much needed support and encouragement for the dual enrolled ATB students.

### 2. Academic Affairs and/or Workforce Development:

These departments are responsible for

ensuring the ATB initiative meets the definitions of an eligible postsecondary

program and of an eligible career pathway. They schedule the courses in which students enroll and the faculty who teach the courses and advise students. These roles are at the heart of planning and implementing a six-credit hour ATB initiative. Staff in these departments may also provide and/or coordinate the required “workforce preparation activities” with Adult Education and Student Services staff.

### 3. Student Services:

Counseling is a required component of an ATB career pathway initiative, which means that Student Services can play a critical role. Staff in this department often provide support to ATB students to help them persist in the program, including advice on navigating college processes and bureaucracy, tutoring, access to supportive services such as public benefits, access to resources to cover the cost of books and supplies, accommodations for students with disabilities, mental health services, and general encouragement and reassurance. Student Services can partner with faculty advisors to help students navigate entry into credit-bearing courses. This department can also help students with career exploration and planning.

### 4. Financial Aid:

The Financial Aid office should be included on the ATB team from the beginning. Their involvement is the linchpin for a successful ATB initiative. Financial Aid can partner with Student Services to help students apply for aid; understand the different types of aid (i.e., loans versus grants); understand their student budget and what’s covered by student financial aid; and access additional

aid if necessary to cover financial gaps remaining after all student aid has been applied. In addition, Financial Aid may be able to assist in identifying creative sources of funding to cover the student's initial six credit hours that are not allowed to be covered by federal student aid.

## 5. Leadership and Program Management:

Because most colleges have not often leveraged the ATB provision, staff may not be familiar with the requirements. Launching a new ATB initiative requires a bit of a learning curve to ensure that all components are in place and to meet ATB requirements. Strong program management is essential, as is supportive, committed, and attentive leadership. It can be helpful for leadership

to set clear objectives and goals for the initiative. For example, the A2B4Equity pilot project set the following objectives:

- a. Enroll approximately 25 students per college in an ATB-eligible career pathway;
- b. 75% of the enrolled students should be Black and/or Hispanic or from another underserved student racial and/or ethnic group;
- c. 80% of the enrolled ATB students will successfully complete six credit hours (or 225 clock hours), qualifying them to apply for federal student aid;
- d. 100% of the ATB students successfully completing six credit hours will receive federal SFA for which they are eligible for in the



semester following the completion of their participation in the ATB initiative.

Based on feedback from the A2B4Equity pilot project and recommendations sourced from ATB initiatives nationally, depending on the size of the ATB initiative, colleges should plan to have at least one full-time staff member to manage the initiative. The primary roles would be to manage the overall initiative, coordinate across the college departments and partners discussed in this guide, and oversee career navigators or transition specialists to ensure that ATB students successfully progress through their eligible career pathway programs, access necessary supportive services, and get connected to federal student financial aid.

### Funding the Initial Six Credit Hours

One hurdle to many students utilizing the credit hour option is the fact that federal financial aid is not allowed to fund the first six credit hours. Colleges will want to think creatively about how to access funding for these first six credits. Examples include:

**Local Workforce Boards:** Pima Community College in Arizona partnered with the local Arizona@Work Job Center to integrate ATB into its [Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training \(IBEST\) program](#). This allowed

students to utilize WIOA dollars and other funding from the local workforce board to complete their first six credit hours.

**Institutional Funding:** City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) relied on dedicated institutional funds to cover the first six credit hours and additional expenses for students in the Career Bridge program.

### Foundation and State Funding:

Mott Community College and WCCCD in Michigan used ECMC Foundation grant funding to fund their ATB students' first six credit hours.

SkillUp Mississippi, an initiative by the Office of Adult Education at the Mississippi Community College Board offers the [MIBEST program](#), an ATB program created through a state process approved by the US Department of Education. This program funds the first semester of ATB students' coursework at Mississippi's community colleges while providing resources for support services. It is funded by the Mississippi Community College Board and has leveraged the [support](#) of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Women's Foundation of Mississippi, and the Mississippi Department of Human Services.



## IV: Leveraging Financial Aid

Once ATB students have successfully completed their required six credit hours, they are eligible to apply for federal student financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This process can unlock a variety of federal financial aid options including Pell Grants and student loans, assuming the students meet all other federal eligibility guidelines (listed in the textbox below).

ATB can also unlock state and institutional supplemental grants and scholarships. These financial supports are critical in reducing the barrier of tuition costs, enabling more students to pursue higher education despite not having a traditional high school diploma or equivalent.

The process of applying for student financial aid takes time and can be complicated, which is why this guide recommends Financial Aid staff be included in the initiative from the beginning to help ATB students navigate the application process. As ATB students are completing the initial six credit hours, Financial Aid staff and Student Services should assist them with understanding their eligibility to apply for student financial aid once they successfully complete the hours. This will serve as an incentive for students to persist in career pathway programs that are longer than six credit hours and help them plan the remainder of their postsecondary program.

### Federal Financial Aid Student Eligibility Requirements

- Demonstrate financial need (for most programs)
- Be a U.S. citizen or an eligible noncitizen
- Have a valid Social Security number
- Be registered with Selective Service (males)
- Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a regular student in an eligible degree or certificate program
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress
- Provide consent and approval to have your federal tax information transferred directly into your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form
- Sign the certification statement on the FAFSA form stating that you're not in default on a federal student loan, you do not owe money on a federal student grant, and you'll only use federal student aid for educational purposes
- Show you're qualified to obtain a college or career school education by:
  - Having a high school diploma or a state-recognized equivalent such as a General Educational Development (GED) certificate
  - Completing a high school education in a homeschool setting approved under state law
  - Enrolling in an eligible career pathway program and **meeting one of the "ability-to-benefit" alternatives.**

## V: Marketing and Recruitment Strategies for ATB

Just as the ATB provision is a new concept for college staff, it is new and unique for students, so it must be explained clearly and carefully. Effective marketing approaches to engage potential ATB students are crucial for the success of these initiatives. Colleges should leverage both digital and traditional marketing channels to communicate the availability and benefits of ATB initiatives. City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) for example identified and then reached out to eligible students via email, text, and phone to remind students of their eligibility for financial aid and connect them to student aid workshops and other services such as peer mentors and academic advisors.

Colleges need to leverage the marketing tools they already have such as social media and targeted online ads that stress the value add of ATB - in particular stress that ATB allows students to access the aid they need for their education and offers a much faster timeline to

earn their degrees. [Central Texas College](#), for example, used its YouTube channel to create quick videos highlighting the potential benefits of its ATB initiative.

Partnerships with local community-based organizations can be especially effective in reaching diverse demographics within the community. Local nonprofit organizations serving underrepresented groups, libraries, and community centers can significantly enhance outreach efforts. Workforce development boards can also be valuable partners.

Effective marketing materials often include ATB student success stories. Testimonials and first-hand accounts of the benefits of ATB can boost recruitment efforts. Washington State's Community and Technical Colleges system has made ATB a priority and leveraged [testimonial videos](#) that directly highlight the benefits for and experience of ATB students.



## VI: A2B4Equity Pilot Project Case Study

In Spring 2022, with funding provided by ECMC Foundation, CSW launched the A2B4Equity pilot project in partnership with the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh, who evaluated the pilot. World Education, a division of JSI, provided technical assistance to the participating colleges. This two-year pilot initiative provided funding to the colleges to cover the first six credit hours in ATB-eligible career pathway programs for at least 100 ATB students, as well as additional staffing costs to support the students and the pilot initiative.

The pilot included four institutions: in Chicago, Truman College and Daley College. In Michigan, the pilot included Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) and Mott Community College. The pilot specifically focused on leveraging ATB as a tool to boost racial equity in access to postsecondary education by enrolling Black, Hispanic, and other underserved students who have traditionally been left behind by both secondary and postsecondary education systems.

In Chicago, Truman College and Daley College activated their existing [Career Bridge](#) programs to enroll adult education students into Advanced Manufacturing and Early Childhood Education ATB-eligible career pathway programs.

Mott Community College enrolled students in general studies coursework that allowed students to enter a variety of different career pathway programs that met ATB eligibility. General studies coursework such as Math and English are often required courses for career pathway programs and are therefore eligible in the credit hour ATB alternative. In addition, Mott formed partnerships with community-based organizations and adult education providers in the region to recruit eligible students. Mott attributed their success to their collaborative culture and longstanding efforts by their

workforce development division of working with leadership to find new ways to support students. In addition, Mott leveraged dedicated career navigators for students in the ATB pilot that ensured they were connected to the financial aid office and support services.

Wayne County Community College District also enrolled ATB students in its existing bridge programs in Physical Therapy, Accounting, and Cybersecurity. The existing career pathway bridge programs met the requirements in the ATB provision outlined above, and no changes were necessary. WCCCD took a cohort model approach to the A2B4Equity pilot. Even though students took courses on different campuses, the institution provided advising, support, and services to them as a group. The importance of the cohort was shared by a WCCCD student: “The persons that I am in this space with, are all kind of like me...we get it, we can encourage each other, and we are on the same baseline.”

WCCCD leadership noted that making students aware of the ATB provision early was critical, as it helped them identify as college students and envision themselves on a path towards lifelong learning. It opened their eyes to new possibilities, seeing that gaining their GED or high school equivalency was not only a way to access a job now, but also opened doors to broader career pathways. This approach enabled ATB students to feel a stronger connection to the institution and acclimate to higher education coursework.

A fifth institution in Michigan, Schoolcraft College, was not officially part of the pilot, but became interested in leveraging ATB. Schoolcraft College is nurturing a partnership with its local adult education provider, Livonia Public Schools, as well as a private local provider to enroll students in its career pathway programs. Once these partnerships

are established, Schoolcraft aims to onboard a cohort of ATB students in the Fall 2024 semester. To support the ATB initiative, Schoolcraft hired an outreach specialist in their financial aid office who will prioritize ATB

students. The college is also dedicating staff time to engage in on-site admissions events to make students aware of the ATB opportunity.

**Results of the A2B4Equity Pilot Project:**

The School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh evaluated this pilot project. Their final evaluation report can be found here . The evaluation found that the pilot project met or exceeded the pilot’s success measures focused on enrolling students from underrepresented communities in ATB-eligible career pathway programs and supporting them to completion.

Pilot Success Measure	Evaluation Data
Enroll 100 students in the ATB College Promise Pilot (approximately 25 students per college)	105 students across the four colleges enrolled in ATB-eligible career pathway programs
75% of the 100 students enrolled in the ATB College Promise Pilot will be Black and/or Hispanic or from another underserved student racial and/or ethnic group	87% of the enrollees were from communities of color (91 of 105)
80% of the 100 enrolled ATB students will successfully complete six credit hours, qualifying them to apply for federal SFA.	79% of the enrolled students successfully completed six credit hours (83 out of 105)

Unfortunately, some of the colleges were unable to engage Student Aid early in the initiative and did not connect students to student financial aid until several weeks or months after they completed their six credit hours. This resulted in only 17% of the students who completed six credit hours filling out the FAFSA.

Pilot Success Measure	Evaluation Data
100% of the ATB students successfully completing six credit hours will receive federal SFA for which they are eligible for the semester following the completion of their participation in the ATB college promise pilot program.	17% of the students who completed six credit hours filled out the FAFSA (14 out of 83)  As of the publication of the evaluation report and this guide, it is unknown how many students received federal SFA.

Overall, the A2B4Equity pilot project has shown that students without a high school diploma or equivalent can complete college credits, proving their ability to benefit from college. The pilot also has underscored how essential it is to include Financial Aid staff from the beginning and secure their buy-in and support for ATB students.

## VII: Key Lessons Learned from the A2B4Equity Pilot

### Ensure that your ATB Initiative has All the Required Components and Partners Onboard:

Prior to launching an ATB initiative, be sure to have detailed project plans that include roles and responsibilities for each partner, clear communication channels, and a mutual understanding of the initiative's objectives. It is crucially important to have your Financial Aid staff brought into the project from day one. Early and sustained commitment from these stakeholders not only streamlines the

implementation process but also ensures the initiative's longevity and effectiveness in serving ATB students. In addition, be sure to document your program as laid out in this guide, as well as following the new US Department of Education regulations as of July 1, 2024.

### Identify and Address ATB Students' Unique Needs:

The cohort of ATB-eligible students will vary from each institution. Colleges should specifically identify their ATB students and

## Additional Ideas for Engaging Student Financial Aid in ATB

Separate from the A2B4Equity pilot project, in April 2024, World Education, a division of JSI, in partnership with **Minnesota State** (the Minnesota state college and university system) hosted a community of practice meeting focused on implementing ATB. The learning session highlighted a number of best practices for engaging Financial Aid staff in an ATB initiative, including:

*Find Your Financial Aid Champion:* Even one financial aid staff member on the campus or system level can be the catalyst for marshaling support and disseminating the information needed to connect ATB students to financial aid.

*Call on Allies:* If approaching the financial aid office or staff directly is not a viable option, find allies who may have a stronger relationship with the financial aid staff to bridge the connection. For example, staff who manage Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs will often have relationships with both adult education and financial aid, making them good potential connectors. In addition, admissions directors can be natural ATB champions and allies since they often recognize the need to include a broader swathe of students in postsecondary education. Another set of allies can be those inside and outside the college focused on student and educational equity. ATB enables access for adults who have been left behind in the secondary and postsecondary education systems, which includes significant numbers of potential students from communities of color.

*Spotlight Strong Examples:* When it comes to student financial aid innovations, few aid officers like to be first. If they see how others are implementing ATB successfully within the federal student aid strict guidelines, they may be more likely to consider collaborating in an ATB effort. For example, one ATB initiative identified a college with many ATB students and asked the student aid staff to co-present with them to other student aid offices to reassure them ATB initiatives are okay.





ensure that they are not only enrolled in an ATB-eligible career pathway initiative but that they are also receiving the services and support required in the credit hour ATB provision. This may mean that colleges need to bolster student services staff to provide the necessary support for ATB students. In Chicago, the CCC team became aware that their students were facing a number of daily challenges including food insecurities, lack of childcare, access to adequate internet, and language barriers. To remedy this, CCC identified their Federal TRIO department to provide additional student supports and expanded language support for English Language Learners.

### **Build a Culture of Collaboration:**

It is common for any institution with multiple departments to lack connection and collaboration across those departments, and community colleges are no exception. Often

these institutions have a cultural divide across departments, and this divide is often particularly wide between adult education, academic affairs, and financial aid offices. These cultural divides create distinct challenges for transitioning students from adult education initiatives to credit initiatives long term, as well as from adult education to financial aid.

Successfully implementing an ATB initiative will require bridging these traditional cultural divides and facilitating working partnerships across departments that traditionally have not worked together. Leadership and institutional ATB champions should intentionally focus on bringing together these departments and supporting their work together.

## Conclusion

Integrating Ability to Benefit (ATB) can be a core strategy in recruiting and enrolling more students in your community college and advancing more equitable access to postsecondary education and credentials. Enterprising institutions looking to boost enrollment and give deeper support to traditionally underserved adult students should explore ATB initiatives. By building on the policy

framework outlined by the federal government, colleges now have a great opportunity to form key partnerships across their departments and in their regions, to leverage ATB to support adult students. By leaning into ATB, colleges can effectively transform their recruitment and enrollment processes, making higher education accessible to a broader array of learners.



## Additional Resources

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### [NCTN Resource Page](#)

World Education's National Center for College Transition Network has compiled a comprehensive list of ATB resources for states and practitioners including policy guidance, promising practices, and the latest research.

### [Transitioning Adult Learners to College: Career Ladders Project](#)

The Career Ladders Project in California produced a report in February 2023 outlining how California institutions can implement ATB initiatives. The report includes a planning tool and checklists for two ATB implementation options.

### ["A2B4Equity: Leveraging Ability to Benefit to Improve Equity in Higher Education"](#)

In July 2022, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (CSW) penned a blog announcing the launch of the A2B4Equity pilot and the benefits of ATB initiatives for adult education providers.

### ["Reopening the Door: Toward Broadening Participation Through ATB at Community Colleges"](#)

The University of Pittsburgh School of Education published this blog in July 2022 to announce its role in the A2B4Equity pilot and illustrate how ATB initiatives can benefit community colleges looking to boost their equity focus.

### [The Case for Ability to Benefit \(11/1/23\)](#)

The first of World Education's blog series on scaling ATB initiatives across the country.

### [Case Study: Ability to Benefit in California \(11/8/23\)](#)

World Education's blog highlighting ATB efforts in California.

### [Case Study: Ability to Benefit in North Carolina \(11/15/23\)](#)

World Education's blog highlighting ATB efforts in North Carolina.

### [Case Study: Ability to Benefit in Texas \(11/22/23\)](#)

World Education's blog highlighting ATB efforts in Texas.

### [Opportunities for Further Investment in Ability to Benefit \(11/29/23\)](#)

World Education's final blog in the series highlighting the A2B4Equity pilot project.

### [Austin Community College: How to Implement ATB \(Video\)](#)

In 2019, Austin Community College in Texas created a video describing their efforts and best practices to establish an ATB initiative.

### [Wisconsin Technical College System Ability to Benefit User Guide](#)

WTCS created a manual for implementing ATB initiatives within the state system.

### [Wisconsin Technical College System ATB Testimonial \(Video\)](#)

In 2021, WCTS published a testimonial video highlighting ATB success stories.



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