



## Illinois' Proposed Alternative to Ability to Benefit Plan

### 1. What is Ability to Benefit (ATB)?

Ability to Benefit 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. However, the U.S. Department of Education allows for states to identify a third process for ATB usage.

### 2. What is the purpose of this plan?

This plan offers individuals lacking a high school diploma a third process for taking advantage of Ability to Benefit. The currently approved methods (e.g. approved test or accumulation of 6 credit hours) often come with barriers for students (e.g. costs, time, anxiety of standardized testing, etc.). This third process allows institutions to utilize a multiple measures approach to assessment of college readiness beyond a standardized test, accelerating the student's postsecondary pathway.

### 3. What are the proposed assessment methods under this alternative plan?

To be eligible for the alternative process, an assessment must be conducted utilizing multiple measures of assessment. Institutions need to utilize **two or more** assessment methods as provided below. This list is not exclusive, and institutions may identify another method for approval by ICCB.

- GED Ready practice tests
- Instructor or employer referrals
- High school transcript review
- High School Equivalency and English Language Acquisition assessments
- Writing samples
- Student interviews

### 4. How does my institution participate in the plan?

In order to participate in the plan for the period of July 1, 2022- June 30, 2026, institutions must opt in by completing the Institutional Participation Form (Appendix A of the Plan). Institutions must opt in prior to **November 15, 2021**. By opting in, institutions are not required to utilize the process, but have the opportunity to. Obligations and other stipulations are identified in the Participation Form.

### 5. Questions?

Contact Whitney Thompson, Deputy Director for Workforce Education, [whitney.thompson@illinois.gov](mailto:whitney.thompson@illinois.gov), or Angela Gerberding, Associate Director for Integrated Career Programs, [angela.gerberding@illinois.gov](mailto:angela.gerberding@illinois.gov).