Dual Enrollment for Adult Learners








A Toolkit to Support the Use of Ability to Benefit in America's Colleges

October 6, 2026

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Disclaimer

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Welcome



Opening Remarks

Dewayne Duncan

Deputy Assistant Secretary
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

U.S. Department of Education

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Agenda

- Welcome
- Overview of DEAL
- Overview of Ability to Benefit (ATB)
- Overview of the DEAL ATB Toolkit
- DEAL Toolkit: Implementing ATB at the Institutional Level
- DEAL Toolkit: Implementing ATB at the State Level
- Wrapping Up

Poll:
Where Do You Work?

- State higher education agency
- State adult education agency
- Local adult education program
- College financial aid office
- College career and technical education or academic services department
- Other

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Poll: How familiar are you with Ability to Benefit (ATB)?

- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Not at all familiar
- Unsure

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Overview of DEAL

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About DEAL

- **Purpose:** Support states in the development and implementation of ATB state processes, expanding adult learners' access to postsecondary education and training through the use of federal student aid
- Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE)
- Led by the Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG); World Education, an initiative of JSI; and RTI International (RTI)

DEAL Project Activities

- Six states and 11 colleges participated in DEAL activities between June 2025 and April 2026.
- Through a series of cohort-based and individualized technical assistance (TA) activities, the state teams developed and drafted tailored ATB state processes, while the college teams mapped out next steps for successful ATB implementation.

DEAL Project Team

- **Erin Berg,** Program Specialist, OCTAE
- **Rene Argueta**, Program Specialist, OCTAE
- **Aaron Washington**, Management & Program Analyst, Office of Postsecondary Education
- **Anne Reeder**, Project Manager, MSG
- **Elizabeth Brandeberry**, Project Manager, MSG
- **Sandy Goodman**, Director, National College Transition Network, World Education
- **Alexis Cherewka**, Senior Technical Advisor, World Education
- **Shirley Doan**, Senior Project Coordinator, World Education
- **Jessie Stadd**, Education Technical Assistance & Research Specialist, RTI
- **Michelle Tolbert**, Senior Program Director, Education & Workforce Development, RTI

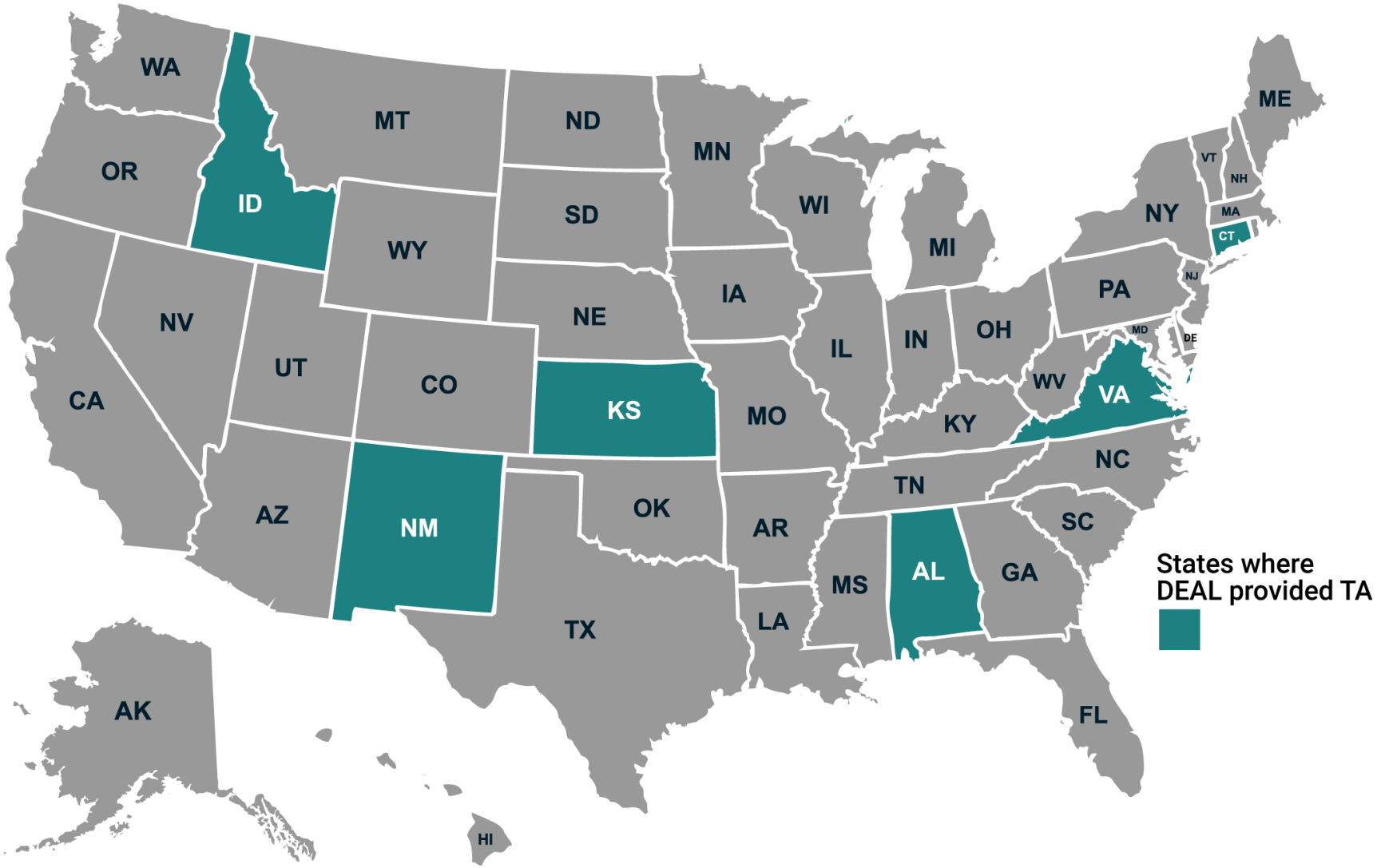
DEAL TA Providers

- **Nikitna Barnes**, Mississippi Community College Board
- **Alexis Cherewka**, World Education
- **Nicole Daughtry**, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
- **Shirley Doan**, World Education
- **Sandy Goodman**, World Education
- **Laurie Kierstead-Joseph**, Pima Community College
- **Michelle Lamons**, ThriveForce

DEAL Advisory Board

- **Eric Atchison**, Arkansas State University System
- **Vincent Castano**, Fayetteville Technical Community College
- **Vickie Choitz**, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce
- **Will Durden**, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (formerly)
- **Kate Kinder**, National Council for Workforce Education
- **Ben Konruff**, Wisconsin Technical College System (formerly)
- **Regina Suitt**, Pima Community College (formerly)
- **Donna Zuniga**, Lee College

Participating States



Participating Colleges

State	Colleges
Alabama	Gadsden State Community College Lurleen B. Wallace Community College
Connecticut	Connecticut State Community College
Idaho	College of Eastern Idaho College of Western Idaho
Kansas	Manhattan Area Technical College Seward County Community College
New Mexico	Mesalands Community College University of New Mexico – Valencia
Virginia	Eastern Shore Community College Virginia Western Community College

Overview of ATB

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What is ATB?

The ATB provision in the Higher Education Act gives eligible adults without a high school diploma or equivalent access to federal student aid.

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ATB Student Eligibility

To be eligible for ATB, an adult learner must meet the following requirements:

- Enroll in an eligible career pathway program (ECPP)
- Complete one of the three ATB options:
  - Pass an ED-approved ATB test
  - Complete six credits or 225 clock hours applicable to a degree or certificate offered by a postsecondary institution
  - Participate in a state process approved by the Secretary of Education
- Be eligible for federal student aid

Note: Paraphrased from (GEN-24-08) Ability to Benefit State Process and Eligible Career Pathway Programs, Dear Colleague Letter, June 12, 2024

Eligible Career Pathway Programs

Students must be **concurrently enrolled in all three** of the following:

- Adult education and literacy programming that assists adults in attaining a high school diploma or equivalent
- A Title IV-eligible postsecondary program
- Workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster

Note: Paraphrased from (GEN-24-08) Ability to Benefit State Process and Eligible Career Pathway Programs, Dear Colleague Letter, June 12, 2024

ECPPs (cont.)

ECPPs must also:

- Align with the skill needs of the state or regional economy
- Include academic and career counseling
- Accelerate students' educational and career advancement

In other words, ECPPs must align with the federal definition of ***career pathways***.

Note: Paraphrased from (GEN-24-08) Ability to Benefit State Process and Eligible Career Pathway Programs, Dear Colleague Letter, June 12, 2024

ECPP Approval Process

- Regardless of what ATB option an institution uses, **the institution must submit at least one ECPP to ED for approval** via the Electronic Eligibility Application (E-App).
- Once this first ECPP is approved, an institution may enroll ATB students in the ECPP as well as any other career pathway programs that meet the ECPP requirements.
- Institutions should maintain documentation for all ECPPs in case o audit or program review.

Note: Paraphrased from (GEN-24-08) Ability to Benefit State Process and Eligible Career Pathway Programs, Dear Colleague Letter, June 12, 2024

ECPP Approval Process (cont.)

The submission process requires collaboration and coordination:

1) The **adult education, career and technical education (CTE), and/or academic services departments** must compile the required career pathways documentation for submission.

2) The **financial aid office** must submit the documentation via the E-App portal.

Benefits of ATB for Learners

For adult learners, implementing ATB gives them access to federal student aid to participate in postsecondary training.

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Benefits of ATB for Colleges

Implementing ATB can support colleges in doing the following:

- Expanding adult learners' access to postsecondary education and financial aid
- Supporting enrollment, retention, and completion rates for adult learners
- Developing and implementing an intentional adult dual enrollment strategy
- Increasing student enrollment by reaching a potentially untapped student population
- Developing partnerships with adult education providers

Benefits of ATB for States

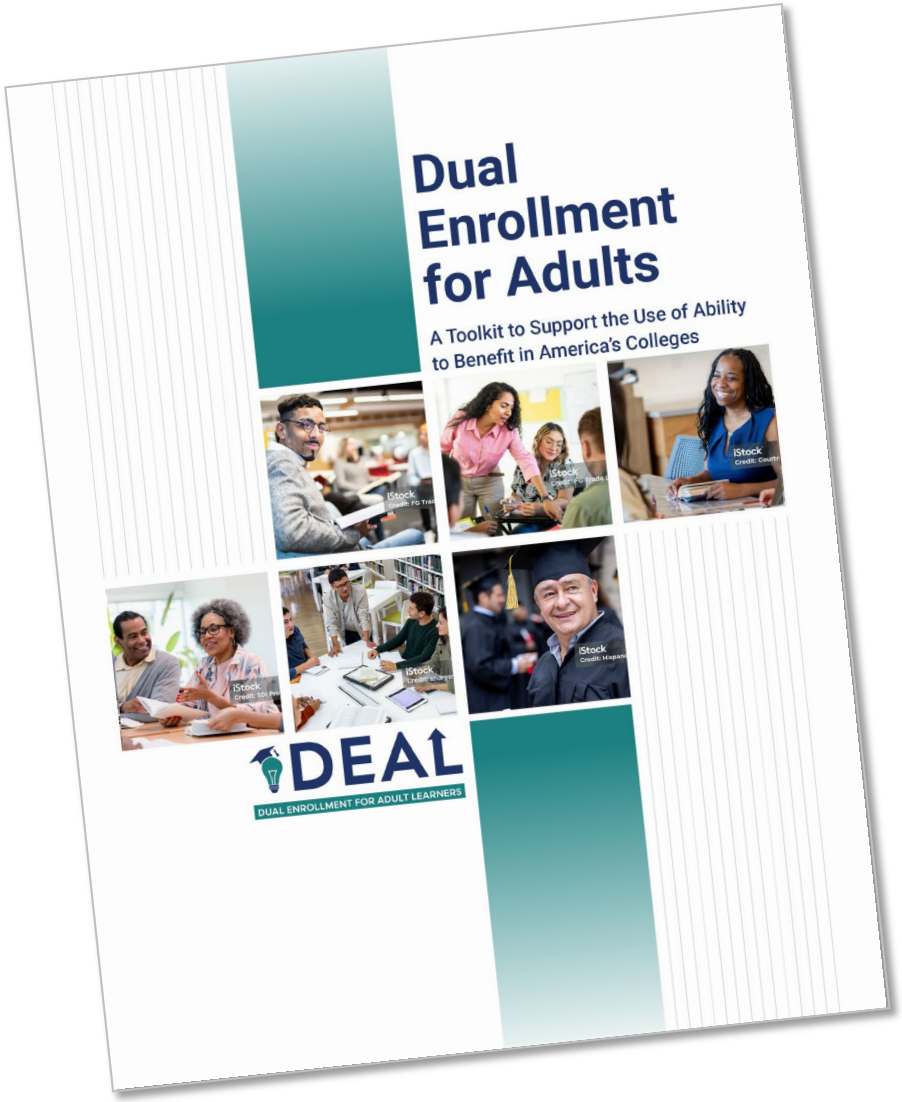
Scaling ATB implementation statewide can support states in:

- Meeting the demand for trained workers in high-interest, high-growth industries and occupations
- Developing, implementing, and expanding an intentional adult dual enrollment initiative
- Accelerating adult learners' high school and postsecondary credential attainment, which prepares them quicker for in-demand, well-paying jobs
- Maximizing the impact of existing career pathways initiatives and models

Overview of the DEAL ATB Toolkit



Purpose



- **To increase the understanding of ATB** among individual postsecondary institutions and state agencies overseeing higher education and adult education
- **To help colleges** develop systems, cross-departmental collaboration, and processes for ATB implementation and expansion
- **To help state agencies** understand how they can support ATB implementation and expansion in their states, including through the development of an ATB state process

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Target Audience

This toolkit is designed for the wide range of stakeholders who have a role in supporting ATB implementation, including state and institutional leaders in the following:

- Adult dual enrollment
- Adult education
- Financial aid
- Career and technical education
- Career pathways and workforce development

Access the Toolkit

Scan to access the toolkit:

Access the toolkit online:

Dual Enrollment for Adults: A Toolkit to Support the Use of Ability to Benefit in America's Colleges

Content

The toolkit is organized into eight sections:

1) About ATB
2) Understanding the ATB Eligibility Requirements
3) Implementing ATB at the Institutional Level
4) ATB Planning and Implementation Stages
5) Developing an ATB State Process
6) State Support for Institutions Implementing ATB
7) Promising Practices in ATB Implementation
8) Resources

Each section includes advice, examples, and resources to support ATB implementation.

Sections: Understanding ATB

Sections:

1) **About ATB:** Foundational ATB information
2) **Understanding the ATB Eligibility Requirements:** Detailed information and advice on the different ATB eligibility requirements, including the three ATB options and ECPPs

Audience: institutions and states interested in implementing ATB

Sections: Understanding ATB (cont.)

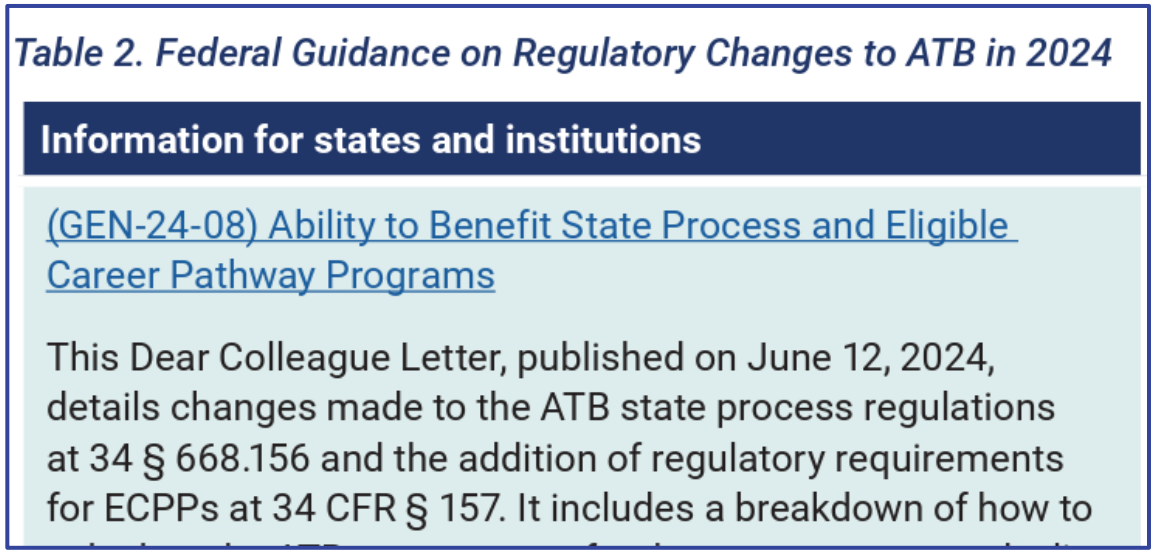


Table 2. Federal Guidance on Regulatory Changes to ATB in 2024

Information for states and institutions
(GEN-24-08) Ability to Benefit State Process and Eligible Career Pathway Programs This Dear Colleague Letter, published on June 12, 2024, details changes made to the ATB state process regulations at 34 § 668.156 and the addition of regulatory requirements for ECPPs at 34 CFR § 157. It includes a breakdown of how to

Includes the following:

- Foundational information and detailed advice
- Implementation examples from colleges
- Links to federal guidance and other resources

Implementing ATB at the Institutional Level

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Sections: For Institutions

Sections (continued):

3) **Implementing ATB at the Institutional Level:** Information and advice for colleges seeking to implement ATB

4) **ATB Planning and Implementation Stages:** Detailed advice for colleges on the major benchmarks in the process of preparing to implement ATB

Colleges may utilize these sections to build awareness of ATB, convene an ATB implementation team, or guide and expand the work of an existing ATB implementation team.

Sections: For Institutions (cont.)



Includes the following:

- Detailed advice on convening an ATB implementation team and planning for ATB implementation
- Implementation examples from colleges
- A planning tool to help ATB implementation teams track their progress
- A conversation with two financial aid directors

Guest Speaker 1

Kate Dust

Director of Adult Education

Lurleen B. Wallace Community College (LBW)

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1) How did LBW convene an ATB implementation team and build buy-in from the various partners involved?
2) How did LBW choose its first ECPP? What program did you choose, and why did you choose it?
3) Are there any critical lessons learned from these early stages of implementation that you would like to share with other colleges and states?

Implementing ATB at the State Level

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Sections: For States

Sections (continued):

5) **Developing an ATB State Process:** Information and advice for states seeking to develop and draft an ATB state process

6) **State Support for Institutions Implementing ATB:** Advice for states seeking to support statewide implementation of ATB beyond the state process

States may utilize these sections to build awareness of ATB, convene an ATB implementation team, provide ATB implementation support to colleges, and explore the possibility of developing an ATB state process.

Sections: For States (continued)

Virginia: As the Virginia Community College System began to develop its state process, one of the goals that emerged was to leverage its success in implementing CPL across the state, such as its Credits2Careers portal. CPL enables Virginia's community college students to earn academic credit for their work, military, and life experience, accelerating their postsecondary educational attainment. Through Virginia's approved state process, an adult learner may demonstrate readiness for ATB by either accruing six credits through CPL as determined by VCCS or attaining a CPL-eligible industry-recognized credential at a Virginia community college.[19] *(Note that while CPL cannot be used under the credit-hour option, states may propose alternative means for assessing ATB readiness under the state process.)*

"We developed a common messaging document for folks on our ATB task force. This is what we used when we went out into the field to talk about ATB at all. If we were at instructional councils or vice president councils, we all had language that was in common. We made sure that we were speaking about ATB on one accord." *(Nicole Daughtry, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges)*[20]

Dual Enrollment for Adults Toolkit

DEAL State Team Self-Assessment Worksheet

I. Intentional and Sustained Systems

Use this section to consider how current systems that support ATB can be strengthened, incorporated into your state-defined process application, and leveraged to promote and scale ATB at the institutional level.

Practices	**Describe your current practices and next steps for developing and/or strengthening them.** *(Cells will expand to accommodate content.)*
1. We have sufficient staffing and systems in place to address the additional administrative workload required to develop and administer a state-defined ATB process. This includes collecting data, monitoring compliance, calculating the success rate, and/or reporting responsibilities necessary for administering a state-defined process.	Current practices: Next steps:

Includes the following:

- Detailed advice on developing and drafting an ATB state process and supporting ATB implementation statewide
- Implementation examples and tips from states
- A self-assessment tool and an action plan template for state teams

Guest Speaker 2

Heidi Silver-Pacuilla

Director, Office of Adult Education

Virginia Department of Education

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1) What motivated Virginia to participate in DEAL and develop an ATB state process?
2) Who was on your state ATB team, and what roles did they play in developing and drafting your state process?
3) What are your next steps for engaging colleges in implementing the state process?
4) What advice do you have for other state administrators interested in convening a team to develop an ATB state process?

Wrapping Up

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Questions?

Please ask your questions using the Q&A feature during the webinar.

Questions may also be sent to DEAL@manhattanstrategy.com after the webinar.

We will compile and send questions and responses to all attendees by October 15, 2026.

After October 29, 2026, questions may be sent to atbstateprocess@ed.gov.

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Poll: What is one way you might use this toolkit?

- Share with a colleague
- Discuss with current ATB implementation team
- Propose convening an ATB implementation team
- Share publicly via email, newsletter, or social media
- Build your own knowledge of ATB
- Other

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Review: Access the Toolkit

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