DEAL-Dual Enrollment for Adult Learners - A Toolkit to Support the Use of Ability to Benefit in America’s Colleges

[Anne Reeder] Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's webinar, Dual Enrollment for Adult Learners, A Toolkit to Support the Use of Ability to Benefit in America's Colleges. My name is Anne Reeder, and I serve as the Project Manager for the Dual Enrollment for Adult Learners, or DEAL, project.

Before we get started, just a quick housekeeping note: today's webinar is being recorded, and the recording, along with a copy of the PowerPoint, will be made available on the DEAL website following the webinar. We're really pleased to have you with us today. During the webinar, we'll introduce you to the new DEAL Ability to Benefit toolkit, provide some background on the Ability to Benefit, and hear directly from state and college representatives who have been involved in this work.

Before we get into our agenda and the rest of today's presentation, we're very pleased to have Dewayne Duncan with us today. It is my pleasure to introduce Dewayne Duncan, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, or OCTAE.

Dewayne brings nearly three decades of experience across public education, state-level leadership, policy, community development, and the private sector. Prior to joining OCTAE, he served as Executive Director of Middle School Education and Secondary Learning for the West Virginia Department of Education.

He began his career as a special education teacher and later served as a school principal. Throughout his career, Dewayne's work has focused on creating education and workforce pathways that expand opportunities for learners and strengthen connections among education, workforce, employers, and communities. We are very pleased to have him with us today. Dewayne, I'll turn it over to you.

[Dewayne Duncan] Good morning, Anne. Thank you so much for having me. I appreciate you guys. Welcome, everyone. My name is Dewayne Duncan. I am the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education here at the Department of Education. And today, like Anne said, we're pleased to introduce to you the Dual Enrollment for Adults Toolkit, which is a result of the Dual Enrollment for Adult Learners initiative.

The project was funded by our office here at the Department of Education, and it was led and implemented by the Manhattan Strategy Group, World Education, and RTI International under the guidance of our wonderful Program Specialist, Erin Berg. Dual Enrollment for Adult Learners supports states in the development and the implementation of Ability to Benefit.

It's a process that expands adult learners' access to post-secondary education and training using federal student aid. And over the past 18 months, the project has provided technical assistance currently to participating states and colleges.

Some of you are on the call today, and that we're going to hear from you. So we'll hear what they have to say about the program. The work aligns closely with America's talent strategy and its focus on preparing Americans for high-demand, high-wage careers. Ability to Benefit can help adult learners enter the career pathway programs that integrate post-secondary education, adult education, and occupational training, all of which we know connect learning directly to workforce needs.

Another thing that really helps our learners as adult learners and just learners overall is the Workforce Pell. It provides another important pathway for people. While Workforce Pell and Ability to Benefit are separate initiatives, they're complementary. Both of these can expand access to high-quality workforce alignment credentials and strengthen connections among education, training, and employers.

As states and institutions implement these opportunities, alignment with local and regional labor market needs to be critical. You've got to look at the needs in the communities to ensure that the learners are gaining the skills and the credentials that will lead to meaningful employment and economic mobility.

I, of course, want to thank you again for joining us today. I hope that after this webinar, you leave with practical ideas and achievable steps for strengthening ability to benefits in your state or in your institution. Thank you so much.

[Sandy Goodman] Good afternoon, and welcome, everybody. I'm Sandy Goodman, and I'm delighted to be here with you. Thank you to Anne Reeder and to Assistant Secretary Duncan. I'm going to start us off just telling you a little bit about our agenda for today. We have a lot of overviews for you, as you can see from the slide. We'll tell you about the DEAL project, then give you a brief primer on Ability to Benefit, or ATB, and a high-level introduction to the DEAL ATB toolkit before we dig into two key sections.

One section is about implementing ATB at an institutional level, and the other section we'll look at is implementing ATB at the state level. We have a packed agenda and probably won't have time to answer your questions today, but please do add them to the Q&A panel because we plan to send out written responses as a follow-up to this webinar.

And we'll remind you again to add your questions as we go to wrap up and at the end of the session. So, first, we'll be talking a lot today about the roles that different stakeholders from different organizations, agencies, and departments play in ATB. So, we'd like to get a sense of where you work.

Daryl, please open the poll, which is called Where Do You Work? And if participants can just take a second to answer the question, the choice, you'll see the choices ahead of you. I won't read them to you. And these are going to be really flash polls, so we don't spend too much time there. So, I know there are many of you.

We'll give you one more second. And Daryl, go ahead and close the poll and share the results, please. So, we have quite a broad mix, which is great, an even mix. We'll go on to the next poll then, which is to get a sense of your familiarity with Ability to Benefit. Daryl, go ahead, please, and open this poll.

Poll number two. How familiar are you with Ability to Benefit? And Daryl, go ahead and close the poll and share the results. So, great. If you're very familiar, as a minority of you are, you'll learn how you can share the information with others using the ATB toolkit. And those of you who are just somewhat familiar or not at all familiar, you'll have the most to gain and to learn by the end of this webinar.

So, welcome. So, I'm going to give you a little bit of an overview of DEAL now. DEAL stands for Dual Enrollment for Adult Learners, and the purpose of DEAL is to support states in the development and implementation of Ability to Benefit state processes, expanding adult learners' access to post-secondary education and training through the use of federal student aid.

DEAL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, or Office, sorry, or OCTAE. And DEAL is led by the Manhattan Strategy Group, MSG, World Education, an Initiative of JSI, and RTI International. These are the 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 activities, the state teams developed and drafted tailored ATB state processes while the college teams mapped out next steps for successful ATB implementation.

And you'll hear today from the Virginia state team lead and an Alabama college team lead later in the session. So many people contributed their time and expertise to make this project a success. First, we want to thank the team from the Department of Education, Erin Berg and Rene Argueta from the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, and Aaron Washington from the Office of Post-Secondary Education.

Their commitment and collaboration at the federal level is an excellent model for the type of cross-division, cross-departmental collaboration required at the state and local levels to make ATB work. Anne Reeder and Elizabeth Brandeberry from MSG manage the project, and you'll hear more from my World Education colleagues Shirley Doan and Alexis Cherewka throughout today's session.

We lead the DEAL technical assistance design and delivery with support from Jessie Stadd and Michelle Tolbert from RTI. The state and college teams received excellent individual technical assistance and support from our team of subject matter experts listed here. They include Nikitna Barnes, Nicole Daughtry, Laurie Kierstead-Joseph, and Michelle Lamons.

Finally, our work was fortified and validated with input from our advisory board listed here. We're grateful for such rich collaboration with this network of dedicated and knowledgeable educators. Last, this is the list of the states that participated.

Alabama, Connecticut, Idaho, Kansas, New Mexico, and Virginia are the six states that were selected by application to participate in the DEAL technical assistance. Each state invited two colleges from their state to participate on the state ATB team and to form local ATB implementation teams that participated in TA for colleges.

And these are the participating colleges from Alabama, Connecticut, Idaho, Kansas, New Mexico, and Virginia. Now, I'll pass the mic and the slide controls to my colleague Shirley Doan.

[Shirley Doan] Thank you, Sandy. So, looking at the poll results from earlier, we have quite a number of people with us today who are learning about ATB for the first time or simply exploring ATB a little bit more. So, let's dive right in. What is ATB? ATB, or Ability to Benefit, is a provision in the Higher Education Act that gives eligible adults without a high school diploma or equivalent access to federal student aid.

Sometimes ATB is referred to as a federal program or funding source, but this can be misleading. Rather, ATB is a means of activating access to federal student aid once certain requirements are met. To be eligible for ATB, an adult learner must meet the following requirements.

First, enroll in a program called an Eligible Career Pathway Program, or ECPP. Second, complete one of the three ATB options, including passing a Department of Education-approved ATB test, such as the Accuplacer. Completing six credits or 225 clock hours applicable to a degree or certificate offered by a post-secondary institution, or participate in a state process approved by the Secretary of Education, in which the state defines its own process for admitting ATB students. And third, the adult learner must be eligible for federal student aid. While we won't have time to explore each of the three ATB options in today's webinar, I'm going to take a couple minutes over the next several slides to talk about the ECPP requirements.

In an Eligible Career Pathway Program or ECPP, 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 post-secondary program, and workforce preparation activities and training for specific occupation or occupational cluster.

In addition, ECPPs must also align with the skill needs of the state or regional economy, include academic and career counseling, and accelerate students' educational and career advancement. These requirements might sound familiar to many of you, and this is because ECPPs must align with the federal definition of career pathways as defined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which authorizes adult education, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, Perkins V, which authorizes career and technical education, and the Higher Education Act, which authorizes higher education. And therefore, kind of reiterating what Sandy was saying earlier, ECPP and ATB implementation as a whole requires coordination across all three of these stakeholder groups.

And again, you'll hear that theme being repeated multiple times today. Now, I'm going to talk a little bit about the ECPP approval process. Regardless of what ATB option an institution decides to implement, the institution must submit at least one ECPP to the Department of Education for approval via the Electronic Eligibility Application, or the eApp.

This is a portal that is usually accessed by the institution's financial aid office. 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.

While an institution only has to submit one ECPP for approval, institutions should maintain documentation for all ECPPs in case of audit or program review. The submission process requires collaboration and coordination across institutions.

Once again, highlighting that ATB implementation is not something that can be done by just one person or one department. First, the Adult Education, Career and Technical Education, or Academic Services departments must compile the required career pathways documentation for submission and then the financial aid office must submit that documentation via the eApp portal.

So, given the complex and collaborative nature of the work, we understand many of you may be asking, "Why is ATB implementation worth the investment?" For adult learners without a high school diploma, implementing ATB gives them access to federal student aid to participate in post-secondary training.

In addition, because ATB learners must enroll in an ECPP, they're working towards that high school credential and a post-secondary credential at the same time, accelerating their progress along their chosen career pathway. Implementing ATB can support colleges in doing the following.

Expanding adult learners' access to post-secondary 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 uncapped student population, and developing partnerships with adult education providers, whether they're within your institution or within your broader community.

There are many benefits for states as well in terms of ATB implementation. 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 post-secondary credential attainment, which prepares them quicker for in-demand, well-paying jobs, and maximizing the impact of existing career pathways, initiatives, and models that have already been in place for many years. And so, now that you've heard about the benefits of ATB implementation, I'm sure many of you are wondering how to get started. So, I'm going to pass it on to my colleague, Alexis Cherewka, who will be introducing the DEAL Toolkit.

[Alexis Cherewka] Thank you, Shirley. Okay, so now we'll start with an overview to the DEAL ATB Toolkit. So, this toolkit is really meant to serve as a resource for institutions and states that are interested in implementing and expanding their ATB usage to support dual enrollment for adult learners.

There's really three main objectives for this toolkit. The first is to increase the understanding of ATB among individual post-secondary institutions and state agencies that oversee higher education and adult education. Next, the goal is to help colleges develop those systems, cross-departmental collaboration, and processes that we've been discussing that are needed for ATB implementation and expansion.

And finally, 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. So this toolkit has really been designed for the wide range of partners who have a role in supporting ATB implementation, including but not limited to state and institutional leaders in the following areas: adult dual enrollment, adult education, financial aid, career and technical education, career pathways, and workforce development. As we've mentioned previously, we recognize that every state and institution may be configured differently. So, specific partners, agencies, and departments that may be relevant for ATB implementation may vary.

And as we've noted, the ATB implementation really requires that cross-functional and cross-departmental collaboration across adult education, post-secondary pathway programs, and financial aid. Okay, so without further ado, before we continue into a little bit more detail of the sections on the toolkit, I did want to go ahead and share the link.

So, on the left-hand side of your screen, you will see a QR code that should provide access to the link to the toolkit, and you will also receive a link in the chat. So, before diving into a few of the sections in more detail, I just wanted to highlight the eight sections that are included in the toolkit.

So, section one is about ATB and provides foundational ATB information, such as what you've heard my colleague Shirley discuss just a minute ago. Section two provides information on understanding the ATB eligibility requirements, including the three ATB options, the test option, credit hour option, and ATB state process option and eligible career pathway programs or ECPPs.

Section three talks about implementing ATB at the institutional level. Section four, ATB planning and implementation stages, so supporting colleges seeking advice on planning and implementing their ATB usage. Section five, specifically on developing an ATB state process.

Section six, also for state agencies to support statewide implementation of ATB beyond the state process. Section seven provides some promising practices on ATB implementation. And section eight includes a comprehensive listing of resources for states and institutions.

You'll note that and hear about more today. Each section includes advice, examples, and resources that can support ATB implementation across these areas. So, the first two sections are really, the audience is really widespread. I think anyone that is working at an institution or state and is interested in implementing ATB may find content from the first two sections helpful.

Section one, as I've noted, is about ATB, providing that foundational information, the benefits of implementing ATB, and noting some recent changes to the ATB provision.

And the second section focuses on understanding those ATB eligibility requirements, which we will discuss in more detail on the next slide.

So, this second section provides foundational information and detailed advice both on those three options for ATB implementation. So, the test option, the credit hour option, and the state process, and the eligible career pathways program process.

So, this section really highlights what you may consider when selecting an ATB option or selecting an ECPP for implementation. There's also implementation examples from colleges that represent the variation of ATB implementation across the country.

And these are included in call-out boxes throughout this section and others as well. And then finally, there are links to federal guidance and other relevant resources. As you can see from the screenshot on the left-hand side of the screen, the toolkit directs the reader to this Dear Colleague Letter on ATB state process and eligible career pathway programs.

Links to this and other federal guidance are included throughout the toolkit. Now, I will turn it back over to my colleague Shirley to talk about the next section of the toolkit.

[Shirley Doan] Thank you, Alexis. All right, so the next two sections of the toolkit are geared specifically towards institutions. Section 3, Implementing ATB at the Institutional Level, includes information, including federal guidance, as well as advice for colleges seeking to implement Ability to Benefit.

Section 4, ATB Planning and Implementation Stages, breaks that down into 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 in general, convene an ATB implementation team to start thinking and planning for the work, or guide in expanding the work of an existing ATB implementation team.

These two sections of the toolkit include, as I said, detailed advice on convening an ATB implementation team, as well as planning for ATB implementation. And as with the previous two sections, this section is also very rich with implementation examples from community colleges across the country who have been doing ATB work.

These two sections also include a planning tool to help ATB implementation teams and institutions track their progress. On the left side of the slide, you can see an octagonal graphic detailing the eight major benchmarks in the process of preparing to implement ATB, such as establishing a shared understanding of Ability to Benefit.

The planning tool that is included in this section further details and is aligned with these eight benchmarks. And lastly, the advice for institutions also includes a conversation with two financial aid directors and why they promote ATB within their own institutions.

I'm very excited to now introduce our first guest speaker, Kate Dust, Director of Adult Education at Lurleen B. Wallace Community College. Kate served as the team lead for LBW's ATB implementation team in the DEAL technical assistance for colleges and was also a member of Alabama's state team during the DEAL technical assistance for states.

So we're very fortunate to have her join us today to share her initial experience and thoughts about implementing ATB. Kate, would you come on up?

[Kate Dust] Hey, good afternoon, everybody.

[Shirley Doan] So we have three questions today. So I'll just start off with the first. How did LBW convene an ATB implementation team and build buy-in from the various partners involved?

[Kate Dust] So at LBW, we recognize that Ability to Benefit is not just adult education. It is collaboration across the board. Like already has been mentioned, we have partners from adult education, financial aid, student services, workforce development, the CTE programs, and a registrar because how the students are registered into the system is pretty important.

Getting the buy-in is understanding that it's not just an adult education initiative for adult education students. It is something that affects the college as a whole, credit hours, but most importantly for the student, it's giving them that career pathway and the ability to start on that pathway to find employment while they are working towards the high school diploma option or the GED.

So we have already had a strong relationship, especially between adult education and workforce development through IETs and some other local program things. So we expanded on what we already had. And at the state level, bringing the appropriate team members to the table from student services, financial aid at the state level, because if you have not already been engaged in dual enrollment for adult education students, there may be some policy things and processes that might need to change prior to its kickoff.

[Shirley Doan] Thank you. So we're going to zoom in a little bit from the policy side of things into actually the practice side of things. How did LBW choose its first ECPP? What program did you choose and why did you choose it?

[Kate Dust] We wanted to be very intentional. And when you do your ECPP process, you submit one to the Department of Ed for approval, and then you can add. We took a look at the employment needs in our service area, providing and to be able to provide a clear career pathway for industry-recognized credentials and employment, right?

To tie all of that together, because DEAL is just a piece of getting to that employment. So we chose welding as our first ECPP. It aligns well with our workforce needs in the service area and it provides that clearer pathway.

And with adult education, the CTE department, and workforce, we had already kind of established a welding pathway. And it also— we have to have a program that our students are interested in. If you don't have the student interest, then the enrollment is not going to follow.

So, all of those things considered with our high-wage, high-demand jobs in Alabama, that was our first choice. And because we have had our women in welding program prior to this, it was easily manageable because we had a lot of the cross-department communications and instruction and that kind of thing already in place.

So I would encourage everyone, you don't want to take the easy way out, but you want to start manageable. That ECPP process can be overwhelming because of the documentation and all the things that need to be provided, you know, for the— and for the state application. So starting with something manageable is, in my opinion, highly encouraged.

[Shirley Doan] All right. And I think that sets us up nicely for the last question. We know that there's still a lot of work ahead, but you have such a strong foundation to build off of. So are there any other critical lessons learned from these early stages of ATB implementation that you would like to share with the other colleges and states here today?

[Kate Dust] I think the biggest lesson is understanding that communication is absolutely critical. It's not a one department. It is not one silo. It crosses all of the department lines. And there is ownership, but it's team ownership.

It is not a single person owns this process. And you have to have a champion kind of in each of those as your go-to. So, and have that basic understanding of how everything kind of connects together. Like I said, start with something small, start with something manageable and build that process because there will be kinks and there will be things that, you know, me in adult education, I may believe this is how it would be the easiest, but maybe that's not the easiest way for registration, right? Or, um, you know, we do a lot of form sharing, and so the workflow is kind of automated and goes to the appropriate people, and that's also where your champion for each department is pretty important because you know who to send it to.

Um, and even though I'm in adult education, in order to sell the program to the student who maybe is not confident in their ability, right, to be in adult education and in a college credit class, I have to have a clear understanding of the other side of the fence as well.

Um, and the support that you can get from your college for the adult ed student that's co-enrolled is very important, right? Because we have to focus everything on the student perspective, and how is this going to be for the student?

We already have a lot of barriers, a variety of barriers for different— for every student. And so we want to be sure that we're not creating more. And as a parent and as a student myself, I've done the FAFSA multiple times.

And it's horrendous. Like, it can be a hard process for someone who's familiar with it, right? So being able to have support on filling out that paperwork from start to finish and then having the co-enrollment piece after they've started so they continue to feel that support, so it's not just about that financial aid piece.

Obviously, that's a big part of it. But we just really need to come together to support the student really from the time before they even realize they want to take college credit classes while co-enrolled, all the way to well beyond the enrollment and actually working in the class.

[Shirley Doan] Thank you, Kate. That's really insightful. And thank you for recentering the perspective on adult learners at the heart of ATB work. We do firmly believe that in

order to implement ATB, you have to have the belief that adult learners with the right supports can succeed in post-secondary education, even without a high school diploma or equivalent.

And so, that perspective and that reiteration is really helpful to hear. I want to just again thank you for sharing your perspective and congratulations on getting that welding ECPP approved. And at this point, I will turn it over to Sandy to talk about the next two sections of the toolkit.

[Sandy Goodman] Thank you, Shirley, and thank you, Kate. So, as we've discussed, the primary objective of DEAL was to support states to develop an ATB state process, submit it for federal approval, excuse me, and move forward with implementation at the college level. States participating in DEAL technical assistance were asked to convene a team with members representing state leaders in adult education, career and technical education, or the community college system, and financial aid, as well as representatives from two local colleges. And as you heard from Kate, she, in addition to representing her college, she represented— in addition to leading her college team, represented her college on the Alabama state team. And you'll hear more about the state team process from our next guest speaker in just a moment.

But first, let me tell you a little bit about the toolkit sections that are dedicated to states. So the toolkit includes two sections specifically for state leadership on how to put together an ATB state team to develop an ATB state process, including information about the required elements of a state process application and links to examples of other approved state applications as exemplars.

The toolkit also includes advice for state leadership on how to support colleges in implementing any of the ATB options. This information is drawn from states that have provided professional development, toolkits, and learning communities to expand statewide ATB implementation.

The toolkit sections for states include detailed advice on developing and drafting an ATB state process and supporting ATB implementation statewide. As I said, it includes implementation examples and tips from states, and it includes a state readiness or state self-assessment tool, an action plan template for state teams to use to get to look at what work they need to do to put together a state process using best practices and then organize themselves based on the tasks and roles of each member.

So the inset to the left of the slide shows how implementation examples and tips are featured in the toolkit, and they're in shaded boxes, as you can see. Below the shaded boxes is an image of the layout of the state self-assessment or state readiness tool, which is a fillable form within the toolkit.

Now, I'm really pleased to introduce Heidi Silver-Pacuilla. Heidi is the director of the Office of Adult Education with the Virginia Department of Education and was the lead convener of the Virginia DEAL state team. And Heidi will talk with us today about their process for developing the Virginia state ATB process.

Welcome, Heidi. So glad you could join us. First, Heidi, tell us what motivated Virginia to participate in DEAL and to develop a state ATB process.

[Heidi Silver-Pacuilla] Sure. Well, we had a long-standing agreement way back from 2016 that said ability to benefit was allowable in Virginia, but no college had ever taken advantage of it. So clearly, there was capacity to do more, to do better, and to restart the understanding among colleges about how students might be able to benefit from ability to benefit.

The opportunity to apply to DEAL cohort came along from OCTAE, which means that it came to the Virginia Department of Education as the administrating entity for WIOA Title II and Perkins. It didn't go to the community college system.

So I saw it pass by and I said, hey, maybe this is an opportunity to restart that conversation and get some of our processes articulated.

[Sandy Goodman] We've talked a lot today, and as you know firsthand, ability to benefit requires cross-agency partnerships and true collaboration. So, tell us a little bit about the existing programs and partnerships that served as a foundation for you to pull people together and begin this work or continue this work.

[Heidi Silver-Pacuilla] Virginia has had a sustained focus on adult credentialing over four governors. That's kind of amazing. Not a lot of policies sustain in that way, but adult credentialing has really been a focus and the sustained messaging around it has been powerful.

Having a long history of messaging and a statewide push with some money behind it has helped all of the adult workforce development institutions consider: okay, what else can feed into this larger goal? Making sure that adult ed students are benefiting from these efforts and that adult education is recognized as part of the solution was my motivating factor for getting my partners across agencies to join me in our efforts to restart Ability to Benefit.

[Sandy Goodman] So, then who did you bring together to develop the ATB state process? What agencies were represented on your state team and what roles did team members play in drafting your state process and why was their input important?

[Heidi Silver-Pacuilla] Well, my writing partner was at the community college system, Dr. Angela Lawhorn. She's in the Workforce Development division overseeing many related efforts. And so she jumped in early and took responsibility with me on the writing and coordinating. We had colleagues from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, known as SCHEV.

They lead adult career counselors and support services, wraparound services on higher education institutions in Virginia. They also keep a lot of the data, so they were helpful to talk about how is this going to work on campuses. Clearly, the financial aid directors at each campus were integral.

We had our state-level partner from the Virginia Community College System on our writing team, and she communicates regularly with the financial aid directors at all of the 23 campuses. And we had our professional development partners at the Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center who had led the PluggedIn Virginia model, a precursor to WIOA's IET integrated education and training model.

They helped surface some of the issues that faculty raise with this model of supporting adult learners in college classes and the success that students can have when they have the right supports, as Kate was just saying. We also had two campuses involved, they were working on submitting their eligible career pathway, so they were involved through the whole process, and it was extremely helpful that they were the voice of reason and reality to say, "Well, maybe if you said it this way, it would land better." They really helped with our wording and our timing.

[Sandy Goodman] So, your team wrote and submitted your state process, and it's been approved by the Department of Education. Congratulations. What are your next steps for engaging colleges and participating in ATB or in implementing the state process and in implementing the state process?

[Heidi Silver-Pacuilla] So, our two colleges must demonstrate two full years of success. That's where we are in the pilot. But we're engaged now in spreading the word that Ability to Benefit is coming to a campus and adult education program near you using our state conferences, newsletters, communities of practice to spread that word.

We've got two colleges that you highlighted: Virginia Western, sort of suburban outside of Roanoke City, and Eastern Shore, which just as it sounds is very rural out on the Atlantic Eastern Shore. They both have great success with including adult learners in their classes.

So, we look forward to them sharing their success. But in the meantime, we're spreading the word that the plan is approved, we're implementing, and using our state conferences. We've also leveraged all the work that happened over the summer leading up to the summer on workforce Pell.

The task force that was brought together to write the regulations on Workforce Pell, many of the same agencies, some of the same people. So developing champions and colleagues, just as Kate said, it's so important. The more people understand this process and the difference and the different ways that different streams of Pell can be used, it's very important.

And we are coalescing around our commitment at the state level to help our career coaches at all of the places help students understand not to run out of Pell before they have achieved that rigorous degree or credential.

So, to really be careful, think carefully, get good coaching, know what path you're on, and use your Pell wisely is a message we're trying to really spread among the career counselors and advisors.

[Sandy Goodman] Thank you so much for emphasizing that need for the career coaching as part of this work as well. So, Heidi, in closing, what advice do you have for other state administrators interested in convening a team to develop an ATB state process?

[Heidi Silver-Pacuilla] Well, you know, as an adult educator, I really had no power in this process. Ability to benefit Pell, it's got to run through higher ed. But what I could do was

be a champion and a writer. So, if that's advice, you can take that too. I wanted to really share that our students can be successful.

We had good data to share that our students can be successful in college courses. We want to be part of the solution, as I said, to getting more adults credentialed. So, I served as a convener and a writer and organized my colleagues so that they could respond and bring their strengths.

It was not submitted by adult education because that's not really appropriate. It doesn't belong to adult education, it belongs to the community college. So, it was submitted by the community college and they are taking implementation. So, from being a champion early and a convener, now I'm a champion on the other side saying this is coming.

Stay in touch with your community college in your region and get thinking about which pathway is going to be the right one, the manageable one. Thank you. It's a great word, Kate. A manageable one to start with for this process because we know we have adult learners going into community college. So, how do we make sure they are successful?

[Sandy Goodman] Thank you so much for sharing your expertise with us, Heidi. And we look forward to seeing your state's progress as you roll out the state, the ATB state process. And I just want to say to everyone else attending, we talk a lot about partnerships and collaboration. And you've heard both from Kate and Heidi at the state and local level that this is truly something that just can't be done without everybody from their different agencies and perspectives coming to the table.

So, thank you so much for illustrating that for us so beautifully. So, with that, I'm going to pass back to my colleague Alexis, who will close us out.

[Alexis Cherewka] Thank you, Sandy. Before we wrap up, I just wanted to remind you all that today we touched on several of the sections in the toolkit, but there are two other sections that we did not talk in length about today. Section 7 highlights promising practices for ATB implementation related to building intentional and sustained systems, creating those clear and collaborative partnerships that we've discussed throughout our session today, and taking a learner-centered approach to doing this work. Finally, Section 8 concludes with a comprehensive list of resources for colleges, institutions, and state as they continue or begin to implement ATB. So, at this time, I invite you to please submit any additional questions you have through the Q&A feature in the webinar.

We've had a couple come through throughout this presentation, but please feel free to submit them now. Alternatively, if you think of something after the webinar ends, please feel free to email the DEAL@manhattanstrategy.com email. We will compile and send you those questions and responses to all attendees by October 15th.

After October 29th, we invite you to send your questions to atbstateprocess@ed.gov. Before you head out, we do want to ask one more quick poll question. It's coming up on your screen now. We'd really love to hear about one way that you might use this toolkit in your work.

So, I'll give you all a few seconds to take a look in this one. Okay, you can go ahead and close the poll. As you can see, a lot of you are interested in building your own knowledge of ATB, really interested in sharing this with a colleague, which is great. And some of you are also thinking about working with your current ATB implementation team or proposing of convening for a new ATB implementation team.

So, thank you all for sharing that. We really hope that this toolkit will be useful to you in one or more of these ways. With that, I would like to turn it over back to Anne to close us out.

[Anne Reeder] Thank you. So, before we wrap up, I want to thank everyone for joining us today. We really appreciate you taking the time to be here. As a reminder, you can scan the QR code on the screen or click the link to access the toolkit. Today's webinar was also recorded, and the recording, along with a copy of the PowerPoint, will be made available on the DEAL website following the webinar, most likely sometime next week.

So, please check the website next week. If you have any questions, please feel free to submit them through the Q&A before we close today's webinar. You can also send questions to us at DEAL@manhattanstrategy.com. We'll compile the questions we receive and send a Q&A document to all attendees by the end of next week.

Finally, when you exit the webinar, a short four-question survey will automatically open. We would really appreciate you taking a few minutes to complete it. Your feedback is very valuable to us as we plan future events and resources. Again, thank you to our speakers and to all of you for joining us today. We hope you found the webinar and the toolkit helpful, and we appreciate your participation.