

Dear Participants,

The Building Illinois Bioeconomy Consortium is undertaking a series of work with the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) to improve the PLA programs at the participating institutions. As part of this effort, we will be taking a close look at the *processes* involved with administering the institutional PLA programs. This effort is called Process Mapping.

PLA Process Mapping workshops will be conducted by CAEL which will work with a team from your institution to define and document PLA processes, reveal inconsistencies and inefficiencies, and increase coordination among institutional stakeholders. Ultimately, participating institutions in the workshops will create a detailed PLA Process Map that can serve as a communication and process improvement tool for internal stakeholders, and can serve as a basis for improvements in guiding students through the PLA process.

A series of three webinars will be offered during a six-week period beginning on March 22 with assignments in-between webinars. Participating in the webinars is important. However, each webinar will be recorded in the event someone misses a session. Here is our timeline and schedule of dates:

1. **Thursday, March 16** – CAEL provides workshop overview via email institutional teams, including brief pre-work assignments. Institutional teams complete pre-work assignments. Workshop participants interview colleagues not attending workshop for views on PLA process and discuss existing PLA process internally.
2. **Wednesday, March 22, 12:00-2pm** – CAEL conducts first 2-hour Process Mapping workshop via webinar. You will receive information on how to dial in to the webinar from CAEL.
3. **Week of March 27** – Participants consult with colleagues in order to complete and revise relationship maps and to gather questions. CAEL provides assistance and coaching as needed.
4. **Wednesday, April 5, 12:00-2pm** – CAEL conducts second 2-hour Process Mapping workshop.
5. **Week of April 10** – Participants consult with colleagues in order to complete and revise documents and to gather questions. CAEL provides assistance and coaching as needed. Participants submit revised Process Map, Process Improvement Action Plan
6. **Wednesday, April 19, 12:00-2pm** - CAEL hosts final 2-hour webinar to review revised process maps.

We are excited to be working with you on building your institution's PLA process map. As noted, this is a very interactive process, so your participation is appreciated. While the much of the first session will involve more passive participation as you learn what a process map is and

how it works, your involvement will be becoming increasingly more active as you work through your own.

In addition, there will be some work assignments before and between the sessions. These assignments and details are located in the attached documents, along with an overall timeline. **Please note that there is some pre-work which should be completed prior to the first webinar on March 22 (see the Word document “Prewrite – PLA Process Definition...”)**.

Ensuring the Right People are Participating

Furthermore, we wanted to reemphasize the importance of participation by a wide group of individuals from your institution (anyone involved in the PLA process from start to finish). The #1 most common complaint by institutions is that **they do not have the right people in the room to correctly fill out their maps**. While we entirely understand that some team members will be unable to participate due to unavoidable conflicts and can be adequately represented by close colleagues, as many as possible should participate in the live sessions. There will be extended periods during these sessions where teams will work on their maps and related documents, which may prove difficult or impossible if key team members are absent.

We want to emphasize that this is more about job *roles* than *titles*. Essentially the key to knowing if someone should attend is whether or not they play a central role in (or know key details about) the PLA process from the initial inquiry of the student through posting on transcripts. Some people will play multiple roles (for example, sometimes faculty members are also your advisors) and sometimes certain departments may have a role not mirrored in other institutions (such as the admissions office or testing center). You do not need every single advisor or every single member of the financial aid office to attend, but you do need representatives so they can talk about their role in the overall PLA process. ***We strongly suggest you look at the attached sample maps from other institutions to see what roles and process parts come into play.*** Will you have someone who can speak competently about each of the parts shown? You will know best as to who should attend, but here are some possible attendees (or at least representatives of each group):

- Central PLA Point Person
- Academic Affairs
- Registrar
- Veteran’s Coordinator
- Financial Aid Officer
- Advisors (including faculty advisors)
- Transcript Analysts
- Adult Program Leader

Also, if an individual cannot attend, please take some time to consult with them outside of the sessions on the work assignments and other details so that their input can be gathered and to avoid impeding your work. We want to make sure these sessions are as productive as possible.

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact me. Thanks again, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,
Courtney Breckenridge
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