

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

2013

Small Federal Investment - Large Benefits in Return



Assistive Technology refers to any equipment used to maintain or improve the functionality of people with disabilities, allowing them to be more independent in recreation, education, employment and daily living activities.

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All 50 states, 4 US territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico receive formula grant funding under the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 2004. These 56 grantees are required to carry out a continuum of specified state level and state leadership activities that promote the ability of people with disabilities to know about, have access to and ultimately be better able to obtain assistive technology (AT). These activities also deliver a large return on investment for the small federal appropriation for this program.

Assistive Technology Demonstration Programs provide opportunities for people to learn about and become familiar with specific types of AT by comparing and contrasting the functions and features of devices through hands on exploration. Instruction is provided by knowledgeable AT professionals in a product neutral environment that does not favor one company or manufacturer.

Device demonstrations result in informed decision-making about which AT will and will not meet an individual's disability needs and prevents wasted expenditures on "mismatched" AT. For example, if an agency or individual explores 2 speech generating devices and decides that a device costing \$1,000 is perfect – they have potentially saved up to \$8,000 on the other device they explored and rejected (could have purchased to only find the AT was not a good match). **60,480 individuals** participated in **40,934 device demonstrations** conducted by State AT Programs in FY13. Projecting a modest \$100 savings realized by just half of the total demonstrations conducted results in national **savings of well over \$2 million dollars.**

- **In Iowa, a gentleman with speech and motor disabilities as a result of a stroke participated in demonstrations of hand-held devices with speech and biofeedback applications provided by the State AT Program. The demonstration allowed him to identify the most efficient and appropriate device and applications saving vocational rehabilitation and him an estimated \$3,000 by avoiding errant purchases and allowed him to become employed resulting in another taxpaying Iowan.**
- **In Minnesota, a student with multiple disabilities received a device demonstration from the State AT Program. A variety of software programs were demonstrated with the student actively participating in the demonstration. The student and his family chose the iPad with supportive applications to help meet his learning and organizational needs. The parent reports that he is now using the iPad to stay organized and access online classes and most of his grades have improved from Fs to As. He now has his eyes set on the future and is excited that he will be able to continue to explore technology options for post-secondary education.**
- **In Arizona, an employee with vision impairment was using a desktop magnifier, a handheld magnifier and screen magnification software for his job as a power company supervisor, but he still needed to increase his work productivity. As part of a device demonstration, the Arizona State AT Program staff visited his workplace to get a better idea of his environment and recommended more light in his cubicle, using colored folders for organization, and a large monitor to make best use of the enlarging software. The employer provided these accommodations and his work productivity increased enabling him to remain a valued employee.**
- **In Pennsylvania, a secretary for the board of a local non-profit agency was having difficulty taking notes during meetings due to difficulties with her hands. Someone recommended a transcription machine so she could record the meetings and type the notes at home, but the cost of \$1,300 was unaffordable. She received a demonstration of an iPad and a free audio recording app that she**

was able to easily use. She now uses those devices to record the board meetings and types the notes later on a computer. This was less than half the cost and allowed her to do her job effectively.

- In Washington DC, the State AT Program was contacted by a family member requesting equipment for her father who was being released from a nursing home after suffering from a stroke. The State AT Program was able to provide an electric bed and air mattress, Hoyer lift and sling, high-back manual wheelchair, a transfer board and bedside commode at no cost. This family was able to obtain over \$4,000 in assistive technology that they otherwise could not have afforded and their father was able to leave the nursing home.

Assistive Technology Device Loan/Borrowing Programs allow individuals to borrow – for a limited time period – devices for use at home, school, work etc. Device loans allow borrowers to try out devices in their own environments to determine if a device will meet their needs before a purchase is made. Device loans also can provide loaner AT while a device is being repaired, while a consumer is waiting for funding approvals, or to use for training or professional development purposes.

Device loans result in informed and accurate AT purchasing decisions especially in unique contexts like a classroom or workplace. When a school or employer can borrow a device and make sure it will allow the individual with a disability to be successful, they save money by avoiding “incorrect” purchases. Device loans also allow individuals to remain functional while their device is being repaired, preventing costly loss of wages, lost school days, or the need for increased community living supports.

34,224 device loans were made to individuals or agencies with **49,038 devices borrowed** from short-term device loan programs operated through State AT Programs in FY13. Using an average savings of \$1,000 per loan with more than one device associated (at least one device was rejected as being a match and a second one was borrowed) results in national **savings of well over \$14 million**. Projecting a minimum \$10 per day rental fee for the average loan period of 35 days, results in national **savings of almost \$3 million** for devices borrowed for accommodation (while a device is repaired or while waiting for funding) or for training since the device did not have to be rented for these purposes.

- In North Dakota, an adult with vision loss participated in a demonstration of various low vision aids at the State AT Program. She thought a desk-top magnifier was a good fit and borrowed one. During the trial, she realized that this device was not what she needed, and brought it back to the AT Program. When returning the device, she tried an iPad with a built in camera and a magnification app and knew it to be the solution for her. This demonstration and device loan saved her the \$4,595 purchase price of the device she tried and determined was a misfit.
- In Montana, an employee was provided a demonstration of various AT solutions to help resolve the pain and discomfort she was experiencing due to repetitive stress injuries. As a result of the demonstration, she borrowed multiple different ergonomic options for computer mice and keyboards, and two different styles of forearm supports to try at work. As a result of the device trials she was able to identify the devices that best met her needs. Since she used the devices at work her employer saw the benefit and was willing to purchase the items she needed. This device loan allowed her to continue to be gainfully employed.
- In Wyoming, a special education teacher borrowed the Pen Again for a student and found that the device created a significant improvement in his handwriting. The school purchased a Pen Again for this student for \$5, and was able to save the cost of a human scribe (paraprofessional) which was previously required for the student’s writing to be legible.

- **In New York, a family wrote to the State AT Program expressing their gratitude for the AT devices borrowed that allowed their mother to remain at home until her passing. Without this AT, her doctors were not willing to let her come home from the hospital. The family wrote, “You and this program made it possible (to keep my mother home) with all the items you had to offer. We could not keep affording everything she needed and it was getting harder and harder to come up with the money to keep her with us.” These device loans yielded significant savings by allowing the mother to leave the hospital and the family was able to have their mother at home.**

Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Programs support the reuse of assistive technology that is no longer needed or used by its original owner. Recipients usually obtain equipment at significantly lower cost or no cost. There are several options for reutilization including reassignment/reuse, device exchange (typically online) and long-term device loans where the borrower keeps the device as long as needed.

Purchasing/obtaining reutilized devices saves agencies and individuals a significant amount of money when compared to buying new devices.

38,258 recipients acquired 49,325 reutilized devices through State AT Programs in FY13. A total of **\$21,633,638 was saved** by device recipients by purchasing/obtaining reutilized AT instead of new. In addition, well over half of the reuse device recipients indicated that they would not have been able to afford the AT if it were not for the reuse services of the State AT Program. The cost of those individuals being unable to work, learn or live in the community without the AT they need would be immeasurable.

- **In Kansas and Oklahoma, the State AT Program operates a program reutilizing devices purchased by Medicaid that has saved those agencies \$722,904 and \$388,569 respectively after program costs were recovered.**
- **In Arizona, an individual with a spinal cord injury was interested in getting into cycling. His family wanted to obtain a hand operated cycle and began exploring resources for used or pre-owned hand cycles on the internet. After some searching they found the Arizona exchange program website with a pre-owned hand cycle listed. They contacted the seller, via the website, and were able to directly negotiate a purchase price and had the hand cycle shipped to them. It worked perfectly for the consumer, and the family was able to save about \$2,200 off the original price of this hand cycle.**
- **In Illinois, an individual with spinal neuropathy and a third reoccurrence of cancer needed an accessible vehicle to transport her to frequent doctor appointments. The family savings was depleted by medical bills and their home was lost in foreclosure. The Illinois AT Program was able to provide them with an accessible van (original \$45,000 price) that had been donated to the reutilization program. The consumer is now able to receive consistent medical care, stay as healthy as possible, and avoid unnecessary medical costs.**
- **In Texas, the daughter of a Veteran was diagnosed with a rare terminal brain tumor and was in need of a specialized wheelchair that cost as much as some cars. The parents have eight other children and could not afford that expense. They were able to obtain the needed device through the reuse program of the Texas AT Program well within their budget. Every dollar the Texas AT Program spends on reuse has a five dollar return.**

State Financing Activities help individuals purchase/obtain AT through a variety of initiatives. Financial loan programs provide consumers with affordable, flexible borrowing options. Other programs provide AT directly to consumers at no cost using dollars from non-AT Act sources or save consumers money when purchasing AT.

Purchasing/obtaining devices through state financing activities saves agencies and individuals a significant amount of money and may be the only option available to them. Without the program they would go without the AT they need for work, school or community living.

757 recipients obtained financial loans totaling **\$5,650,391** to buy **786 devices** in FY13. These loans were made at an average interest rate of 3.98%. Assuming most standard loans would be at a 7% or higher interest rate, consumers have saved an estimated **\$500,000** through access to these flexible loans. **2,262 recipients** acquired **2848 devices** valued at **\$2,838,058** from other state financing programs that directly provide AT using external funding sources. **3,282 recipients** acquired **3,764 AT devices** with a **savings of \$962,912** from other state financing activities, such as cooperative buying programs and device lease programs. The vast majority of recipients indicated that if the state financing activity they used was not available they would not have been able to purchase/obtain the AT potentially resulting in individuals who are unable to successfully work, learn or live in the community.

- **In Utah, \$8,993,823 has been loaned for purchase of AT over the last decade which is over 4 times the original federal investment in that financial loan program.**
- **In South Dakota, renting equipment to address vision loss saved 189 individuals with vision disabilities \$421,920 in one year, and allowed them to acquire AT devices they would have otherwise been unable to afford.**
- **In Puerto Rico, the State AT Program is making technology accessible by actually fabricating AT devices. Through the Low Cost Design and Development Program consumers invested \$810 during FY13 in order to obtain over \$23,000 worth of AT devices. For consumers, this translates into savings of over 96% in the acquisition of needed technologies in the areas of education, employment and community living.**

Leveraged Funding is frequently secured by State AT Programs and used to expand and maximize services. In FY13, State AT Programs leveraged \$14,719,262 in funding from federal, state, local and private sources. These funds were used to support all of the State AT Program authorized activities.

- **In Idaho, the State AT Program leveraged almost twice their AT Act federal grant award in state agency agreements and federal funding in one year to increase the scope and depth of services provided in many multiple state level and state leadership activities.**
- **In Illinois, the State AT Program leveraged close to 3 times their federal grant award in one year including funding to provide quality assessments and technical assistance to IEP teams in schools. These services reduced conflict over which AT is “best” and helped avert a due process hearing (which can easily cost as much as \$100,000 to hold not including the emotional toll on the family and school.)**
- **In Colorado, the State AT Program leveraged more than their annual federal grant award to support training and technical assistance to IEP teams in the schools. This leveraged funding supported a statewide loan bank which resulted in over \$979,142 in AT loaned to students in public schools.**

Federal Investment of \$24.2 million to State AT Programs in FY13

**\$35 million in savings
and benefits for FY13**

**Close to \$15 million in
leveraged funding in FY13**

**Almost 700,000 direct service
recipients in FY13**

● A GREAT RETURN ON INVESTMENT ●

ATAP's Mission Statement

To collaborate with persons with disabilities and others at the national level to increase the availability and utilization of assistive technology devices and services for all individuals with disabilities in the United States and territories.



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