

**FFY 2018**



Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs  
*Small Federal Investment – Large Benefits in Return*

**AT Demonstration**

**AT Loan/Borrowing**

**AT Reutilization**

**AT State Financing**

**Our Mission**

*To maintain and enhance a strong, effective, and efficient national network of Statewide Assistive Technology Programs, which enables individuals with disabilities, service providers and others to learn, access, and acquire assistive technology (AT) needed for education, employment, and community living.*

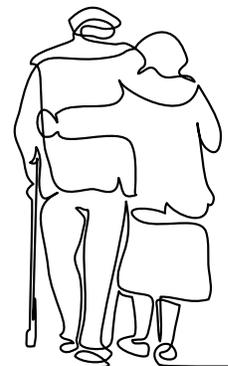


All 50 states, 4 US territories, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico receive formula grant funding under the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 2004. These 56 grantees are required to carry out a continuum of specified state level and state leadership activities that promote the ability of people 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.

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### Definition of Assistive Technology

*Assistive Technology (AT) is any item, device, or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functionality of people with disabilities, allowing them to be more independent in education, employment, and community living activities.*



# AT Demonstration

**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/individual explores two electronic magnification devices and decides that one costing \$2,000 is perfect – they have potentially saved another \$2,000 by knowing the other device they explored would not meet their needs (avoided purchasing to only find the device was not a good match.)*

**72,559 individuals** participated in **38,709 device demonstrations** conducted by State AT Programs in FY18. Projecting a modest \$100 savings realized by just half of the total demonstrations conducted results in **national savings of 1.9 million dollars.**



## Oklahoma

At 83 years young, this senior was able to keep an active lifestyle, including working, when she found the right equipment to enhance her vision! Her macular degeneration caused her to lose her central vision which prohibited her from managing a computer keyboard and looking at printed reports required for her job. The Oklahoma AT Program demonstrated several items including magnifiers, reading prismatic glasses, and large print, high contrast keyboards to help her keep her job. The equipment and the training she obtained gave her purpose and hope to continue her work at a local museum as well as many other tasks in her daily life.



## Wisconsin

A consumer with Parkinson's contacted a Wisconsin AT Program demonstration center to explore devices to assist with communication. Her disease left her with only whisper speech volume and to complicate matters her husband has a hearing loss. While portable voice amplifiers were a good solution, those marketed as AT products were not affordable costing as much as \$400. Three alternative portable amplifiers used by tour guides were obtained ranging in price from \$18 to \$40 and the consumer was able to try these out during a demonstration to evaluate the quality of the amplification to make sure it was good enough to meet her needs. The consumer identified a preferred device and borrowed it to try at home for two weeks. She decided that the device costing \$25 in her opinion worked better than the \$250 device and she confidently purchased the device.

## Oregon

A gentleman currently employed in the custodial industry came to the Oregon AT Program sharing his difficulty getting to work sites in a timely manner due to memory issues. Staff demonstrated a variety of devices that could assist with this need. Since he already had a smartphone, staff demonstrated how the built-in reminders and calendar apps can be used to provide reminders. He next explored a variety of smartwatches that would pair with his smartphone and alert him to the reminders set. After the demonstration he decided these devices would address his memory issues and reminder needs. He planned to acquire a smart watch and return to the AT program for further training if needed.

## Guam

Guam Assistive Technology Program staff participated in an awareness event and met a four-year-old with cerebral palsy who was able to try out a mobility harness under the watchful eye of his mother. The device allows a child to be safely strapped into a harness while connected to an adult which enables the child to stand and walk with support. Moving from the stroller the child's demeanor quickly changed when he realized that he was upright and able to take steps and move around with his mother. Big smiles from this child indicated the device was a winner! The parents came to the AT program shortly after the event to borrow the device for a longer trial period to make sure it was worth the investment and ultimately decided to purchase the harness. They love the sense of freedom it provides for their son.



# AT Loan/Borrowing

**Assistive Technology Device Loan/Borrowing Programs** allow individuals to borrow devices for a limited time period to 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 can also provide loaner AT while a device is being repaired, while a consumer is waiting for funding approval, 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.*

**32,353 device loans** were made to individuals or agencies with **49,721 devices borrowed** from short-term device loan programs operated through State AT Programs in FY18. 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 over \$17 million**. Projecting a minimum \$10 per day rental fee for the average loan period of 35 days, results in **national savings of \$3.7 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.

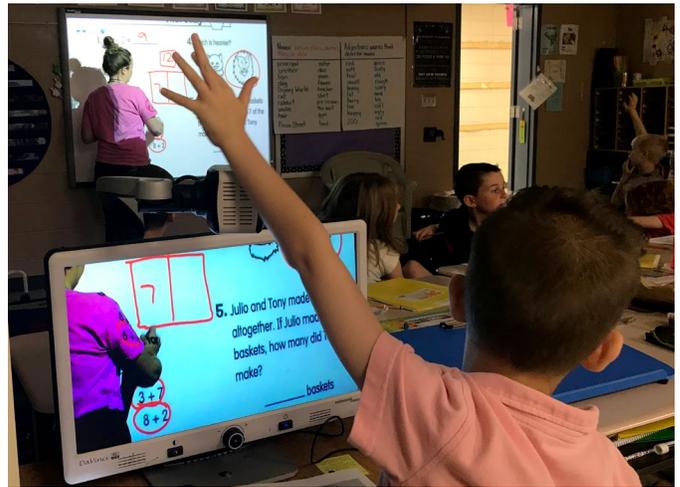


Being fed by his parents at home wasn't a big deal for a fourth grader with cerebral palsy, but being fed at school in front of his peers was so not cool. Enter a robotic feeding companion loaned by the Montana Assistive Technology Program. The student was able to test drive the device multiple times at schools with data collected that documented his success in using the device to eat independently. Mom researched the health benefits of self-feeding and along with the successful device trial data, the family was able to get funding to purchase the device. He is now able to eat independently at school, at home, and in restaurants.



## Missouri

A second-grade student is one of many in Missouri schools, who has been able to overcome barriers to print text and actively participate in classroom activities by borrowing AT through the Missouri AT Program. The school borrowed a desktop magnifier with optical character recognition with near and distance magnification, along with instant text-to-speech that the student was able to try out in the classroom with textbooks, teacher-produced materials, and the whiteboard to make sure it provided exactly what he needed before the school made an expensive purchase.



## Florida

A four-year-old with autism and his mom came to the Florida AT Program to try out communication devices. The demonstration included exploring tablet-based devices with communication apps. One that seemed to work well was loaned to the family to use at home and at school allowing Mom and teachers to assess the device and make sure it would work for him. Mom is actively pursuing financial assistance to obtain the device and app permanently.



## Illinois

A young man who wears hearing aids was facing communication barriers in a commercial drivers' license (CDL) program. His hearing aids were sufficient in the classroom work needed to get his permit, but the driving portion was so noisy he could not hear the instructor while the truck was running. The Illinois AT Program was able to provide an FM assistive listening device to use, which allowed him to understand his instructor even while the truck was running. He passed his driving test on the first try and got his Class A CDL. He has now started a new truck driving career.



# AT Reutilization

**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. Reutilization efforts include refurbishment (previously owned devices are cleaned, repaired, and/or reconditioned and then provided to new owners) and device exchange (e.g. online classifieds). In some reutilization programs, a device is provided on an open-ended loan basis, until the recipient no longer needs it.

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

**59,149 recipients** acquired **70,673 reutilized devices** through State AT Programs in FY18. A total of **\$28,075,773 was saved** by device recipients by purchasing/obtaining reutilized AT instead of new. In addition, 87% of the reuse device recipients indicated that they would not have been able to afford the AT or obtain it from other sources 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.



The Nebraska AT Program hosted the Lose it and Reuse it: Medical Equipment Exchange event giving away 305.43 pounds of donated AT with a cost savings of approximately \$5,766.53 for recipient individuals and families. There were many success stories to share: a young lady whose insurance would not cover the cost of a manual wheelchair was able to find a chair that fit and was adjusted/modified by a licensed Occupational Therapist partner; a parent was able to find a reclining, belted shower chair for her adult child to bathe safely and comfortably; a family found a manual wheelchair, wheelchair cushion, and toilet riser for their father preparing to exit a rehabilitation facility; a woman who donated



a commode that didn't quite fit, was able to swap hers for one that was just right; and numerous CPAP machines were donated that a licensed Respiratory Therapist partner will be able to refurbish and donate back out to those in need.

## Tennessee

A daughter needed help caring for her mother who sustained a severe stroke. She struggled to transfer her mother from one area of the home to another causing fatigue and aggravating an existing neck injury. Ms. B's doctor warned that continuing this caregiving without assistance would lead to a permanent injury of her own. The Tennessee Reuse Program provided a hospital bed and mattress, a manual wheelchair, a Hoyer lift and a sliding board for her mother. The reuse program relieved the stress of lifting her mom while no longer risking her own health as caregiver. The reuse program was able to provide these items that Ms. B could not have otherwise obtained.



## Virginia

A woman contacted the Virginia Reuse Program for help with ambulation. She was using a cane funded by Medicare but now needed a three-wheeled walker that the reuse program was able to provide. A few months later, another health issue created additional disabilities, and she was unable to move off the toilet one morning. She and her family began considering nursing home placement, but decided to contact the reuse program first. They provided a bedside commode to use over the toilet so that she could use her arms and be elevated for easier standing. As a result, she regained her independence and avoided premature placement into a nursing home.



## North Carolina

In the aftermath of hurricane Matthew, the North Carolina AT Program received a call from NC Emergency Management regarding two survivors who needed a manual reclining wheelchair, a standing lift, electric hospital bed, and a lift chair. The NC Reuse Program reached out across the state to locate these items, and within hours had identified someone who donated these pieces. The AT program arranged for pickup and delivery, and was able to get the reused devices to those in need within two days of the request.

# AT State Financing

**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.*

**908 borrowers obtained** financial loans totaling **\$7,867,423** to buy **933 devices** in FY18. **3,359 recipients** acquired **4,859 devices valued at \$3,722,993** from other state financing programs that directly provide AT using external funding sources. **2,190 recipients** acquired **2,333 AT devices with a savings of \$712,610** from other state financing activities, such as cooperative buying programs. The vast majority (96%) 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 due to cost or availability potentially resulting in individuals who are unable to successfully work, learn or live in the community.



## Washington

A senior with severe hearing and vision loss came to the Washington AT Program no longer able to make phone calls, watch TV, and read printed material which made her feel very isolated. Through the AT program she explored several types of devices through demonstrations, and after a full evaluation, it was determined that a Google Home smart speaker would best suit her needs. The AT program was not only able to provide the device through iCanConnect funding, but also provide training on how to use the device. She now uses Google Home to make phone calls to family and friends, listen to music, the radio, and the news, keep up with her favorite sports teams, and set alarms and reminders to remain independent.



## Puerto Rico

A professional photographer needed to use bigger cameras with large format lenses in his work, but due to his severe physical disabilities and small body size, the bulk and weight of the equipment was too much for him to handle. He needed something that could hold the camera and allow him to rotate, tilt, and angle it. Existing commercial devices did not provide the features needed or were far too expensive at \$850. The Puerto Rico AT Program fabricated a prototype with the help of mechanical engineering students, then tested and optimized to a final version that is fully adjustable, lightweight and can hold over 20lbs. of equipment. The total cost of materials was \$53 and the device supports use of the largest and heaviest lens available. This photographer now has access to the full range of camera and lens for his business.



## Connecticut

A young woman diagnosed with Friedreich's Ataxia was completing college and needed assistance to hear better in the classroom, meeting rooms and for future employment. Her audiologist recommended a \$2,330 microphone/receiver system coupled with her hearing aids. The Connecticut AT Program was able to approve a cash loan and she received two grants from disability organizations for \$1,300 leaving her with manageable loan payments. Her ability to understand speech in noisy settings is greatly improved with the AT, and she has not only done well in college, but she also spoke at a conference and has participated in presentations at the university. She recently interned at her town's court house and they are currently working with her to secure permanent employment.



## North Dakota

A veteran and member of the Lakota Nation lost part of her hearing due to the war and health issues. She struggled to hear and comprehend in most situations. The North Dakota AT Program was able to provide her with a personal assistive listening device through generous donations from their last resort fund. She reported that the device lets her use the TV at a "normal" loudness level preventing angry calls from her neighbors, the ability to understand her doctor during medical appointments, and the opportunity to meet with friends now that she can grasp what they are saying. She says she can even hear her cat meow now!





**Leveraged Funding** is frequently secured by State AT Programs and used to expand and maximize services. In FY18, State AT Programs **leveraged \$21,106,708** in funding from federal, state, local and private sources. These funds were used to support all of the State AT Program authorized activities.

*Collectively State AT Programs are an integral partner in federal, state and local AT activities. State AT Programs leverage a variety of funding including direct federal dollars for National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program from the Federal Communications Commission along with funding from special education, vocational rehabilitation, health, senior services, and other state agencies to provide AT services.*

## Small Federal Investment – Large Benefits in Return

**\$28 million** federal investment in State AT Programs  
close to **500,000** direct service recipients

Over **\$63 million** in savings and benefits  
that's **\$2.25** for every federal dollar invested



Over **\$21 million** in leveraged funding  
**75¢** leveraged for every federal dollar invested



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