

# Developing a Funding Strategy for Assistive Technology

It is important to pull together all of the information you will need before seeking funding. Use the following list to write out information that you will need.

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## Step 1: Define the Need

Write out what areas in your life that you think AT could help you.

Here are some guiding questions to assist you in your quest to acquire assistive technology:

1. WHO? – Who will be using the AT? \_\_\_\_\_
2. WHY? – Why is the AT needed? \_\_\_\_\_
3. WHAT? – What types of AT are/were recommended? \_\_\_\_\_
4. WHERE? – Where will the AT be primarily utilized? (Home, work, school, recreation and/or all places) \_\_\_\_\_
5. WHEN? – When will the AT device be utilized? \_\_\_\_\_
6. HOW? – How can the AT device increase independence? \_\_\_\_\_

Most importantly, will the device or service enable you to enter or continue employment, live more independently, enter or continue schooling, or create or restore function on one or more life areas (examples: walking, seeing, hearing and/or communicating)

Depending on the funding source, you may have to prove one or more of these benefits. These questions may be difficult to answer on your own. It's a good idea to involve professionals when determining the answers to these important questions.

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## Step 2: Document the Need, Equipment/Service, Cost, and Alternatives

### NEED and EQUIPMENT:

The AT devices and services required for this need must be identified and described. This includes a specific written justification from appropriate professionals. Which professionals need to write support or justification letters?

- physician
- therapist specify:
- educator
- counselor
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### COST:

List vendors from whom the AT can be purchased, specific information about type of AT (including cost, fabrication needs, etc.) The funding source will need to know the cost, and the vendor may be able to help you in the funding process.



Technology for Independence

Phone: (800) 214-8731

TTY: (866) 866-0162

FAX: (206) 543-4779

Web: [watap.org](http://watap.org)

Email: [watap@uw.edu](mailto:watap@uw.edu)

## **ALTERNATIVES:**

You may need to determine if there are alternative devices that would also meet your needs. List the first and second choices for the devices, including vendors, and approximate costs.

Research these alternatives before you apply to a funding source. Consider some of the following questions:

- Is there a way to fabricate this device or equipment?
- Can it be borrowed from an "equipment loan closet"?
- Are the benefits of the AT device outweigh the expense?
- Is there a less expensive device that can meet your needs just as effectively?

If you find that there are no alternative devices to meet your particular needs, be sure to state that in all your documentation. Do not let the cost of the AT keep you from selecting the most appropriate device for your needs.

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## **Step 3: Determine Funding Sources**

Now you can begin the process of requesting funding assistance. Before you approach any one source, make a list of all possible sources and prioritize your list by the source that most closely matches your need. It's always a good idea to get help identifying and approaching funding sources. Some of the professionals assisting you with this process so far may be able to provide information.

Here are some questions to help guide you:

- Can you or your family pay for some or all of the device?
- Do you have private health insurance? If you do, does the policy cover the type of AT device or service that you need?
- Are there public and/or private funding sources available and appropriate for your circumstances?
- Does the funding source have specific eligibility criteria, including limits on how much they will pay?
- Is there more than one potential source of funding available?
- If your disability is related to an injury that occurred while at work, is the cost of the AT device or service the responsibility of worker's compensation insurance?
- What is the application process? How long is the wait? Are funds readily available?
- Is a personal loan a possibility?
- Do you qualify for any low-interest loan programs?
- Are there manufacturer or company rebates or discounts available for the AT device you need?
- Is there a local civic or charitable organization, foundation, or association in your area that can help raise the necessary funds?

Here are some helpful communication tips when dealing with the potential funding source(s):

- Remember the 3 P's! Politeness, Patience and Persistence
- Communicate in writing whenever possible and always keep a copy for yourself.
- Be in constant contact potential funding sources. Do not wait more than one month between communications.



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- Try to educate and inform the potential funding source in an assertive and knowledgeable manner.
- Always express your appreciation.

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#### **Step 4: Collect and Submit the Required Paperwork**

Collect the following paperwork :

- Information about your age, disability/medical diagnosis, prognosis, evaluation reports, etc.
- Information about your financial status, including private insurance coverage, employment status, level and source of income, etc.
- Information about public or governmental programs that you have previously used.
- Recommendations for specific assistive devices including the name and manufacturer of the equipment, the cost.
- Other information that documents the person's need for the assistive technology. List other information/paperwork that you may need below:

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List possible services or ongoing support the person may need to use the assistive technology successfully. (Examples: evaluations, training, maintenance, upgrades, etc.)

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#### **Step 5: Authorization is Received**

Written approval will be given for the amount of money that has been approved for the purchase of the assistive technology device requested. If the approval is for the full amount needed, the AT supplier or vendor will process the order and deliver the equipment.

However, if the approval is for less than the full amount, you will need to find other options to fund the remaining amount. Some options available:

- Personally pay the difference. You can apply for a low interest assistive technology loan, take out a bank loan, or home equity loan.
- Community and philanthropic organizations. Typically these organizations require written documentation of previous funding denials.
- Church groups or fund raisers.



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## Step 6: The Appeals Process

If your request for funding is denied, you can appeal the decision. The appeals process is an opportunity for you, your family, and/or the professionals working with you to approach the funding source and ask for a review of the initial decision. All public or governmental agencies have an internal appeals process. You have a right to request an appeal and to have your request or claim reviewed. Contact the funding source to determine why your initial request was denied.

- Is further supporting information needed?
- Was there a lack of funds?

If your funding was denied because of a lack of information, find out what additional information is needed. Submit this new information to the person who is handling your request. Don't leave it to chance that the right person will get it.

Here are some agencies and programs that you can contact to assist you with the appeal process:

- Disability Rights Washington (DRW)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Client Assistance Program (CAP)
- your local Legal Aid office

NEVER give up when it comes to funding! Be patient, persistent, exercise self-advocacy and have a plan. Knowledge is power! By educating yourself and the agencies or funding sources, you are paving the way for successful systems change. Many other individuals will benefit from these efforts as changes take place.

Adapted from:



DOLLARS & SENSE  
NAVIGATING THE AT FUNDING STREAM



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