

Washington Assistive Technology Act Program



FY2022 Annual Report



This report is available in alternative formats by request.

Thank you!

Three years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were finally able to get back out into the community and participated in many events and activities in person. Many thanks to WATAP's dedicated staff, whose expertise and professionalism brought assistive technology into the lives of many persons with disabilities, seniors, and their families across the state; to our partners, whose collaborative efforts continue to help us to extend our reach and services offered; and to our Advisory Council members for their on-going work, support, and dedication.

Partners 2022

- National Assistive Technology Act Technical Assistance and Training (AT3) Center
- Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)
- Bridge Disability Ministries
- Department of Services for the Blind
- Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Hearing, Speech, and Deaf Center
- King County Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy
- Northwest Access Fund
- Perkins School for the Blind
- Timberland Regional Library System
- Special Education Technology Center
- San Juan Island Library
- UW Center for Technology and Disability Studies
- UW Center on Human Development and Disability, University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disability
- Washington AgrAbility/Washington State University Extension- Skagit County

Advisory Council 2022

- Mario Eiland - Representative from the Department of Services for the Blind
- Reginald George - Consumer Representative
- Sandy Goodwick - Consumer Representative
- Tyson Kuntz - Representative from the Workforce System
- Heather Meares - Consumer Representative
- Kimberly Meck - Representative from the Centers for Independent Living
- Devin Myers- Consumer Representative
- Lee Olsen - Consumer Representative
- Tyler Schrenk - Consumer Representative
- Toni Wheeler - Representative from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Bill Youngman - Representative from the Division of Vocation Rehabilitation

About WATAP

The Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP) is located at the University of Washington Center for Technology and Disability Studies (UWCTDS), within the Center for Human Development and Disability. Our work is supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Community Living (ACL) (#2201WAATSG) and other funding sources. WATAP has served Washington State since 1994, providing assistive technology (AT) resources, services, and expertise to persons who face challenges related to disability and aging. We help in the selection and use of AT to help make tasks easier or possible in school, at work, at home, and in the community.

Building Capacity

WATAP staff delivered training to 549 professionals across the state, to support professional development by building competencies, promoting the consideration of and proper matching of AT, and exploring case studies and best practices. A large part of our partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is professional development training and in FY22, we provided 10 trainings via webinar to 198 DVR case managers, employment specialists, and community rehabilitation providers. The series topics were (1) An Introduction to AT; (2) AT to Support Farmers and Agriculture Workers; (3) AT for Cognition and Mental Health; and (4) Mobile Technologies in the Workplace. WATAP was also invited by the City of Seattle to take part of their day-long recognition of the Global Accessibility Awareness Day on May 19, 2022. We provided online training to 80 city employees responsible for developing and posting online content. The training included high level concepts and best practices for making websites, documents, forms, and social media accessible. Participants are using the information gleaned from this training to improve policies and implement best practices to ensure accessibility citywide of information available on and downloaded from websites and online resources.

Outreach to Rural Seniors

WATAP continued work on the 5-year project funded by the King County Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy providing AT services and resources to seniors and caregivers in rural and tribal communities in King County. We partnered with senior centers located within rural communities, participating in 9 community events, where we showcased AT to support gardening, medication management, cognition and mental health, hearing, and vision. We highlighted the potential impact of AT in the daily lives of seniors for maintaining and enhancing independence and community participation.

WATAP's new Assistive Technology Support Technician

WATAP received a "Expanding the Public Health Workforce within the Aging and Disability Networks" grant and is using these funds to support a new Assistive Technology Support Technician. This position supports program computing and WATAP's device demonstration and lending library. This position will also be working on some new endeavors for WATAP, to support independent living, address social isolation, and enhance the well-being of seniors and persons with disabilities using assistive technology. These endeavors include accessible gaming, virtual reality, smart home technology, and 3D printing.

2022 Program Activity Highlights

219 Device Demonstrations Provided

307 individuals participated in hands-on and virtual demonstrations that explored AT options and features with guidance from an experienced specialist.

395 Devices Borrowed

236 individuals tried AT at home, work, or school to make an informed decision before purchasing. An additional 2 individuals were able to borrow devices for accommodation, professional purposes, or as a loaner during repair.

128 Devices Obtained Through State Financing

37 individuals obtained 99 devices for telecommunication and internet purposes through the iCanConnect WA program totaling \$91,942. 10 individuals benefited from the Northwest (NW) Access Fund's matched savings program, obtaining 29 devices valued at \$25,298.

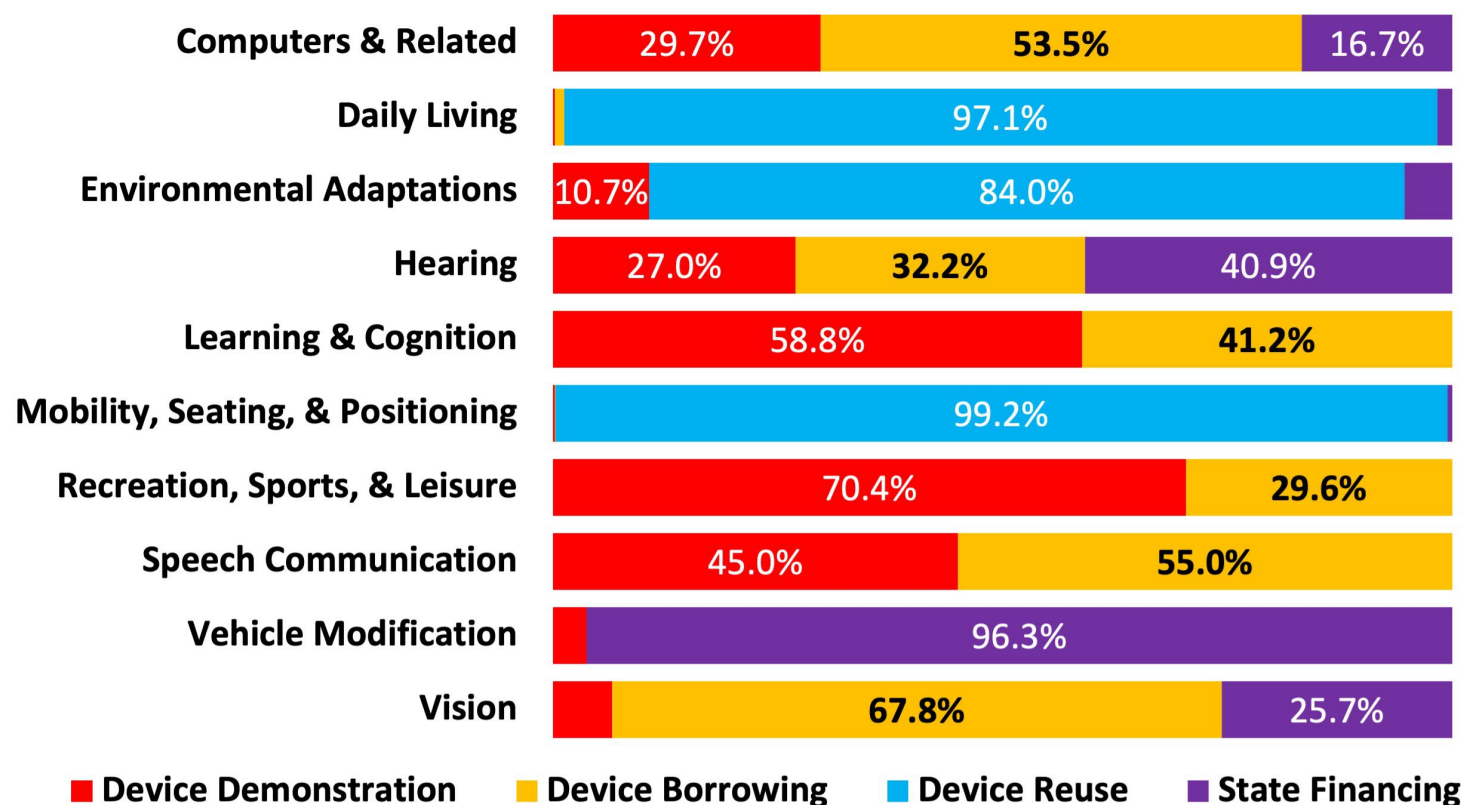
111 Devices Financed Through AT Financing

105 individuals obtained affordable financing through the NW Access Fund totaling \$933,984.

5691 Devices Received Through Device Reuse

2,462 individuals received durable medical and other equipment through device exchange and from our reuse partner, Bridge Disability Ministries, with a savings of \$5,184,010.

Devices by Category Provided Through Each Activity

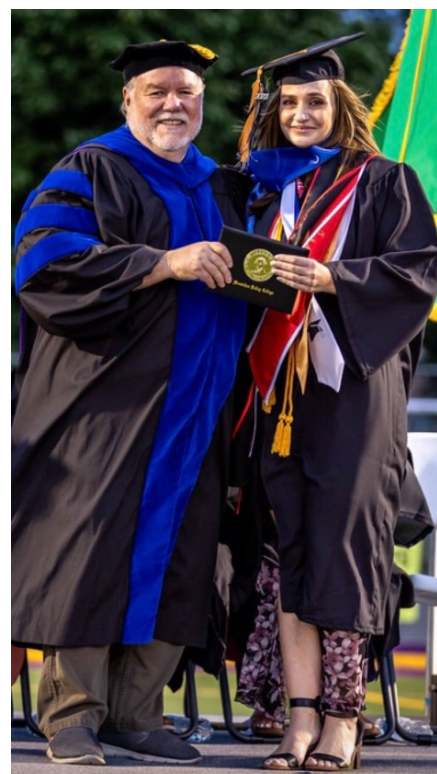


Stories of Our Clients

WATAP's statewide services start with information and assistance, move through device demonstration and short-term device loans to assist in better decision-making, and lastly provide the opportunity to obtain AT from our device reuse partners or with help from our state financing programs. Wrap around services to professionals and the community include training, workshops, and technical assistance. Here are just a few stories from individuals who took part in our programs this past year.

Device Lending

Stacey was a full-time student at Wenatchee Valley College. Stacey also has limited hand mobility and dexterity as a result of past treatments for chronic illnesses and injuries. During the COVID pandemic, all her courses moved to be fully online, happening so suddenly that it required Stacey to set up a makeshift office at home. She needed to use her new computer setup several hours each day and it became apparent that the use of a standard mouse was debilitating and by the end of each day her wrists locked up and made it difficult to continue her work. So she reached out to the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to seek any resources that may be available to help. She was able to enroll in a career plan/contract with DVR while she pursued work in the Information Technology field. Through DVR's partnership with WATAP and with the help of her rehab counselor and regional assistive technology assessment practitioner, she was able to try an adjustable desk and chair, Dragon Naturally Speaking, an Anker Mouse, and a Sculpt keyboard. In particular, she was able to borrow the Anker Mouse over the summer, to ensure that this was the correct mousing product for her and that it would not further damage her hands and wrists and would be comfortable to use for long periods of time. DVR provided all of the ergonomic equipment she tried so that she could thrive in her home setting. Stacey received her Associates of Applied Science Degree over the summer of 2022. Her next chapter began in the fall of 2022 as she started her Information Technology and Administration Management bachelor's degree program at Central Washington University. Stacey says that she is flourishing because of organizations such as WATAP and DVR and is grateful for the help and support they provided.



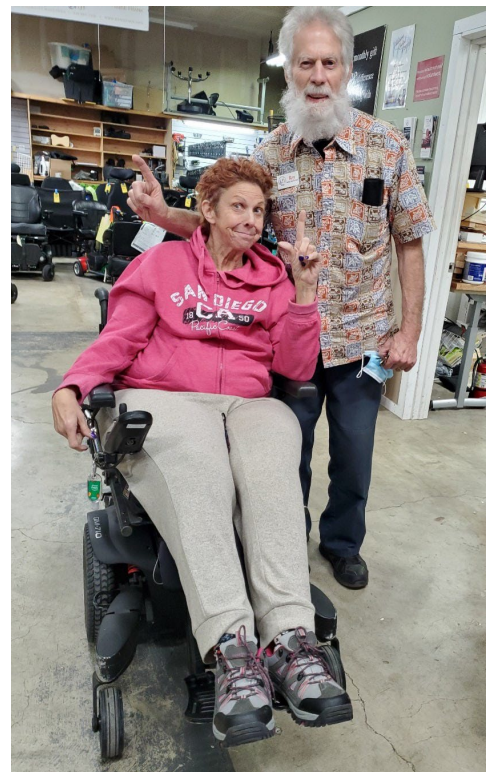
Device Demonstration

"Ron" was diagnosed with MS as an older adult and the progression of the disease in his later life has resulted in significant upper and lower extremity paralysis. He was looking to increase his independence with computer use, as he desired to write a book and to communicate via email with friends, family, and colleagues. But he had other limitations, as he needed to access the computer in bed or while in his wheelchair. Ron has been a (continued next page)

long-time user of MacOS, but he wanted to try Dragon Naturally Speaking on a PC. So “Beth,” Ron’s wife, contacted WATAP on his behalf so he could try out various options for computer access. During the demonstration, he was given the chance to not only try Dragon, but also the voice control built into the MacOS operating system, which he was unaware of before visiting with WATAP’s AT Specialist. This ended up being the solution Ron was looking for, as he gained independence with controlling and creating content using his Mac and he didn’t need purchase a new computer and learn a whole new operating system. Additionally, during the demonstration, it was noted that his voice volume output suffered with use and generally declined as the day wore on. So he tried a voice amplifier. The addition of this simple device provided increased voice volume and helped with voice control accuracy. Ron now feels he is on his way to having the computer access he needs to remain productive and connected.

Device Reuse

Michelle was involved in a head on collision which resulted in several severe leg injuries and arthritis which contributed to significant mobility challenges over the years. She came to the Meyer Medical Equipment Center, operated by WATAP’s device reuse partner, Bridge Disability Ministries, and received a re-furbished power wheelchair, which became the key to her increased independence and mobility. But Michelle isn’t just using her newly found mobility to meet her own needs. She goes out of her way to do what she can for her friends, getting around on her power wheelchair to shop for them, pick up their groceries, and just spread good cheer. Although her injuries and arthritis substantially limited her mobility over the years and even though she needs a power wheelchair to get around, it doesn’t mean Michelle has lost her sense of adventure and ability to make new friends wherever she goes. These days, she frequently drops by the Equipment Center with her new friends, acting as an ambassador for the Center and for device reuse and as an advocate for her friends, helping even more individuals with mobility challenges get the technology they need to be independent and contributing members of the community.



State Financing – Affordable Loan Program

Amanda and Tim, a mother and son, learnt about Northwest Access Fund through a local adaptive vehicle vendor. They were in the market for a new vehicle as their existing vehicle was old and unreliable, and they were often having to rent vehicles that would accommodate Tim's wheelchair at significant cost. With a collection and thin credit file, Northwest Access Fund was able to approve the applicants for a loan even though they were not able to be approved for financing by a mainstream financial institution. Amanda and Tim found (continued next page)

a 10-year-old vehicle with low miles that was well within their budget. But besides the obvious benefits to having their own accessible vehicle, they have found an unexpected one. Tim is used to riding in the back facing sideways with his head more titled towards the back of the van, so he couldn't really see out and at times, communication was difficult if not impossible. In this van Tim is sitting right next to Amanda and the van rides quietly, so they can have great conversations. Tim is so much more comfortable because he is facing the right way and has a shoulder seat belt which helps him sit better. Sitting better means he has easier breath control, and he isn't so exhausted after a conversation, and he is easier to understand. They love their new vehicle and how even some simple things we all take for granted are now possible.



Center for Technology and Disability Studies

WATAP Key Staff

Alan Knue, Director

Maria Kelley, Senior Assistive Technology Specialist

Curt Johnson, Assistive Technology Specialist

Naomi Namekata, Assistive Technology Specialist

Scott Canaan, Program Support Supervisor

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Jacob Rourke, Lending Library Assistant

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