

Washington Assistive Technology Act Program



FY2021 Annual Report



This report is available in alternative formats by request.

Thank you!

Through the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we faced continued challenges requiring us to quickly pivot so that we were able to continuously offer many of our services despite ever changing health guidance. WATAP's dedicated staff put in a lot of hard work these past months and stepped up to the plate despite the challenges faced in keeping their families healthy and safe. Many thanks to our partners who continued to keep their doors open and whose collaborative efforts enabled us to extend our reach across the state, and to our Advisory Council members for their on-going work, support, and dedication.

Partners 2021

- ATAP/AT3 Center
- 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 2021

- Mario Eiland - Representative from the Department of Services for the Blind
- Reginald George - Consumer Representative
- Sandy Goodwick - Consumer Representative
- Petra Heppner-Nelson - Representative from Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- 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
- 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) (#2101WAATSG) 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 568 professionals across the state, provided virtually via webinar as in-person events were not possible due to the pandemic. Our trainings 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 FY21, we provided 11 trainings via webinar to 365 DVR case managers, employment specialists, and community rehabilitation providers.

Aging Well, Collaborative Project with Georgia Institute of Technology

WATAP is a key partner in a new collaborative project with the Georgia Institute of Technology called “Accommodation Expert Support System for Aging Well (ACCESS for Aging Well)” a newly funded Disability and Rehabilitation Research Project by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. This project, called Aging Well for short, will develop an online tool to assist in the process of accommodating older individuals aging into or with a disability. WATAP project staff will provide professional services and technical assistance, and leverage resources, to support the development and testing of the expert system.

WATAP’s brand new demonstration lab and office space!

In November 2020, WATAP moved from an off-campus location to offices located on-campus within our department at the Center on Human Development and Disability Studies. For the first time in the history of WATAP, we have a dedicated AT demonstration lab! The lab is designed



to have as much flexibility as possible, with several computer stations, shelving for frequently used devices, and a repair and modification station. Our office spaces are large enough to allow our AT specialists to have additional flexibility for demonstrations and assessments, and we now have dedicated areas for a maker desk and for our adaptive gardening and agricultural collection. Plans for the future include adding a 3D printer and installing home automation devices to provide more opportunities for our customers to explore in the future.

2021 Activity Highlights

Device Demonstrations: 248 demos provided

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

Device Lending: 254 devices borrowed

153 individuals tried AT at home, work, or school to make an informed decision before purchasing. An additional 7 individuals were able to borrow for accommodation, professional purposes, or as a loaner during repair.

State Financing: 180 devices obtained

52 individuals obtained 139 devices for telecommunication and internet purposes through the iCanConnect WA program totaling \$122,067. 16 individuals benefited from the Northwest (NW) Access Fund's, matched savings program obtaining 41 devices valued at \$41,158.

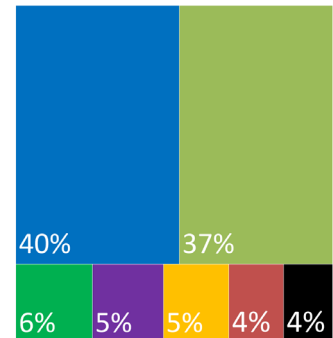
AT Financing: 86 devices financed

84 individuals obtained affordable financing through the NW Access Fund totaling \$967,573.

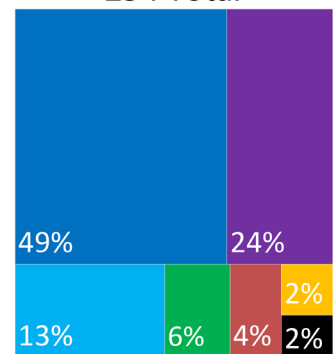
Device Reuse: 3024 devices received

1758 individuals received durable medical and other equipment from our reuse partner, Bridge Disability Ministries with a savings of \$2,470,719.

Demonstrations by Category
248 Total

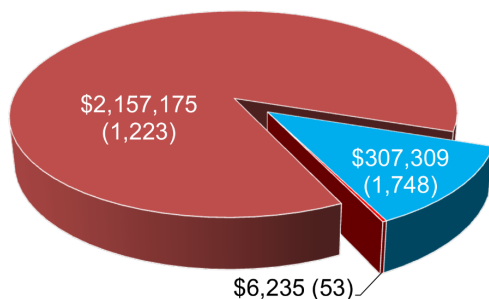


Devices Loaned by Category
254 Total



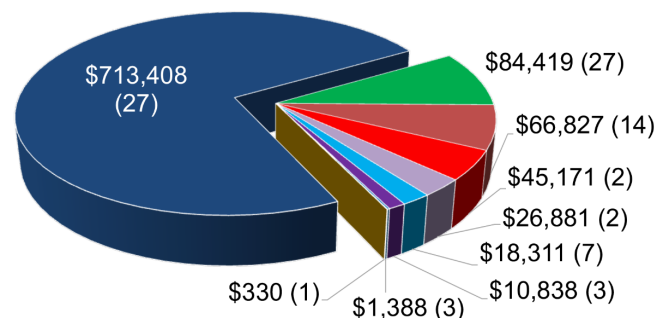
Cost Savings & Number of Devices
Reused by Category

\$2,470,719 Total Cost Savings; 3,024 Devices



Loan Amounts & Number of Devices
Financed by Category

\$967,573 Total Loan Amount; 86 Devices



Stories of Our Clients

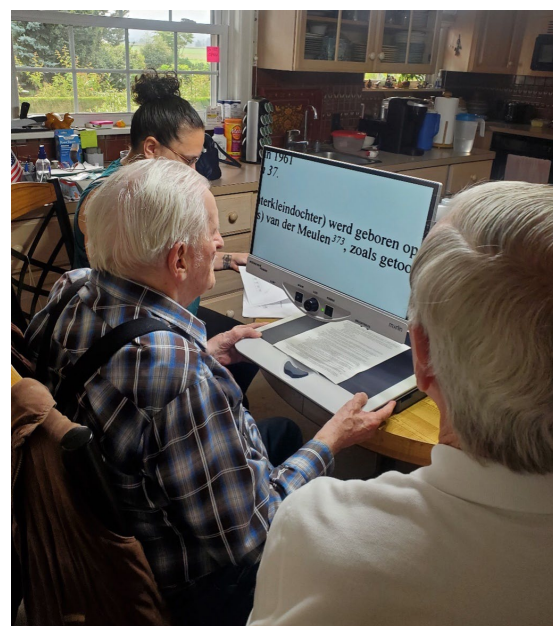
WATAP's statewide services start with information and assistance, move through device demonstration and short-term device loans to assist in better decision-making, and lastly provide the opportunity to obtain AT from our device reuse partners or with help from our state financing programs. Wrap around 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

Although helping make informed decisions is a primary purpose of our device lending program, the ability for our deaf-blind clients to maintain connectivity with friends, family, and the community is of paramount importance during these last few years due to the COVID pandemic. Having access to a program where they can borrow a critical piece of assistive technology when their own is broken is critical. Charlie's Focus 14 Braille display stopped working unexpectedly. Although he also had a larger Focus 40, it is not a portable option especially for use with his iPhone when he was away from home. He relies heavily on both of his braille displays so being without one would have significantly impacted his ability to communicate. Several months ago, Charlie had borrowed a Focus 40 from WATAP when that device needed a repair, and it was well over a month before it was returned to him. So he turned to us again to borrow a Focus 14 to maintain his ability to communicate using his iPhone. He was grateful to have access to our device lending program as without it, he would have been more isolated and disconnected from his circles of support.

Device Demonstration

Sid is a 91-year-old retired dairy farmer with macular degeneration whose vision has been progressively worsening. He was an avid reader of both English and Dutch/Friesian, and had mostly lost that ability. Sid was referred to WATAP through our Washington AgrAbility partnership. He worked with our vision and other assistive technology specialists to find a solution. At first, several handheld and portable devices were demoed that didn't work as they were too cumbersome or too hard for Sid to operate. We contacted several providers who specialized in vision products directly for additional in-home demonstrations. He was able to try desktop video magnifiers and additional devices to find an option that was easy for him to use. He was able to try the devices while performing a variety of tasks and he decided a Merlin Ultra HD video magnifier was the best choice based on his desires and device functionality. Sid purchased the device and it was set up in his kitchen where he uses it regularly to read things he couldn't have read without the device.



Device Reuse



Linda has limited mobility due to pain from chronic back issues and arthritis. She had been using a walker inside her apartment but going beyond her mailbox less than 80 feet away from her front door just using the walker was pretty much impossible. She did not have the stamina to manage even the slight uphill grade to get to the top of the hill to her local grocery store. However, even if she could it would be impossible for her to travel all the way across the busy street before the traffic light changed. Linda came to the Meyer Medical Equipment Center, operated by WATAP's device reuse partner, Bridge Disability Ministries, hoping to find a free or low-cost solution as she was living on a fixed budget and had limited means. After speaking with the Center staff, it was determined that a small electric scooter small enough to fit in

her apartment but with enough power to get her up the hill to the grocery store might be a good solution. The scooter was delivered to her home and adjusted it to fit her body so she could give it a try. On the first attempt she was able to use the scooter to get up the hill, cross the street at the traffic light with time to spare, and enter the grocery store! She had not been unable to do this for months. She looks forward using the scooter to regain her mobility and independence.

State Financing – Affordable Loan Program

Beth first learned about Northwest Access Fund, one of WATAP's state financing partners, when she was researching funding options for an all-terrain wheelchair. The coronavirus lockdowns were preventing her from getting out and exercising, and as a result, her muscles were weakening. Beth missed being able to go on trails with her dogs and she was struggling to engage with her community. Getting the wheelchair as soon as possible was a priority. Beth's parents considered using their savings to finance the wheelchair, but they were renovating their home and property, purchasing medical equipment, and paying for medical care for both Beth and her father, who had suffered a traumatic brain injury in a fall. "We were really pushed to the limits financially," Beth's mother, Elaine, recounts. Beth applied for financing through the Access Fund herself, was approved, and now she's making payments and building her credit. Beth loves her new all-terrain wheelchair, the GRIT Freedom Chair, and using it regularly has helped her become stronger. Every night, she and her mother take the chair to their local park and Beth walks her dogs for a while before making a few more additional laps in her new wheelchair on her own.





Center for Technology and Disability Studies

WATAP Key Staff

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