

DEVELOPING A FUNDING STRATEGY

The first thing to remember when seeking funding for assistive technology (AT) is that funding is usually available. Though the journey may take a while and may try your patience; do not give up! Persistence is the key, coupled with information.

Determining age, disability and other basic eligibility criteria will shorten the process and allow an individual to move through the subsequent funding steps. Knowing what device or equipment is needed and for what purpose(s) is an important factor, because ALL funding sources have a particular focus or purpose, such as vocational/ employment, education, medical, etc. Thus, knowing the purpose(s) or use of the assistive technology can assist narrowing down the list of possible funding sources.

Ask questions: seek out information, suggestions and guidance from peers, service providers and professionals in the field of assistive technology. Learn ALL you can! Gathering the right information and documenting your need(s) is fundamental in the approach to obtain funding and will become a core part of the request to the funding source(s).

STEPS AND STRATEGIES TO ACQUIRE FUNDING FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

In developing a funding strategy, it is important to follow some basic steps to increase the chances of success. The development and use of funding worksheets can be beneficial and help in working with accuracy and efficiency. We also recommend keeping a list of names, phone numbers, and notes.

Step 1: Define and document the need.

Why is Assistive Technology Needed?

This involves identifying the areas AT may be of assistance. You may already have some idea about how AT could provide you with fuller access, inclusion in society and improve your quality of life. However, funding success depends upon clearly describing the need and exactly how AT may assist in the home, school, work and/or in daily community activities.

To be successful in obtaining funding for AT devices and services, it is necessary to justify and document the need(s). At this point, it may be wise to involve a professional and/or an advocate to assist in documenting these need(s). This person should have a great deal of experience or information to help thoroughly and precisely document those needs. Describe the specific benefits of the AT and what the device will enable you to accomplish at home, school, work and/or in daily life in the community. If seeking funding from health insurance providers, Medicaid, etc., determine the health-related and preventative benefits of the AT device (i.e., prevention of accidents/falls, further injury; prevention of physical or health deterioration; additional loss of function; employment; etc).

This professional might be a teacher or early interventionist, a speech therapist, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a vocational counselor, an independent living coordinator, an assistive technology professional, or a rehabilitation engineer. The necessary documentation may include input from a combination of these professionals, depending on specific need(s). Involve one or more of these professionals throughout the request, but begin with the documentation of need. This is also the time to involve an advocate and other support persons. Detailed guidelines on documentation of need are included in the next section.

Step 2: Identify the equipment and/or services needed.

What assistive device, equipment, or service is needed?

Once the need has been defined and documented, the AT devices and services required to fill this need must be identified and described. **THIS IS THE CRITICAL STEP IN THE FUNDING PROCESS AND MUST BE DONE IN DETAIL.** This includes a specific written justification from the appropriate professionals. This justification can take several forms: a) an evaluation or assessment report, b) a medical prescription, or c) other written justification that may be needed including letters of support.

This information is used to develop a written "documentation of need" or justification and must be written in such a way that it convinces or proves to the funding source of the AT needed for specified purposes or outcomes. The extent, detail and scope of this written justification will also depend on which funding sources are pursued. Later you may