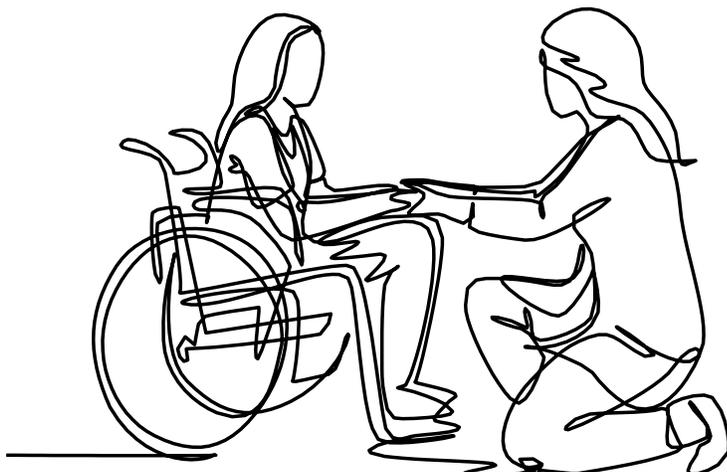
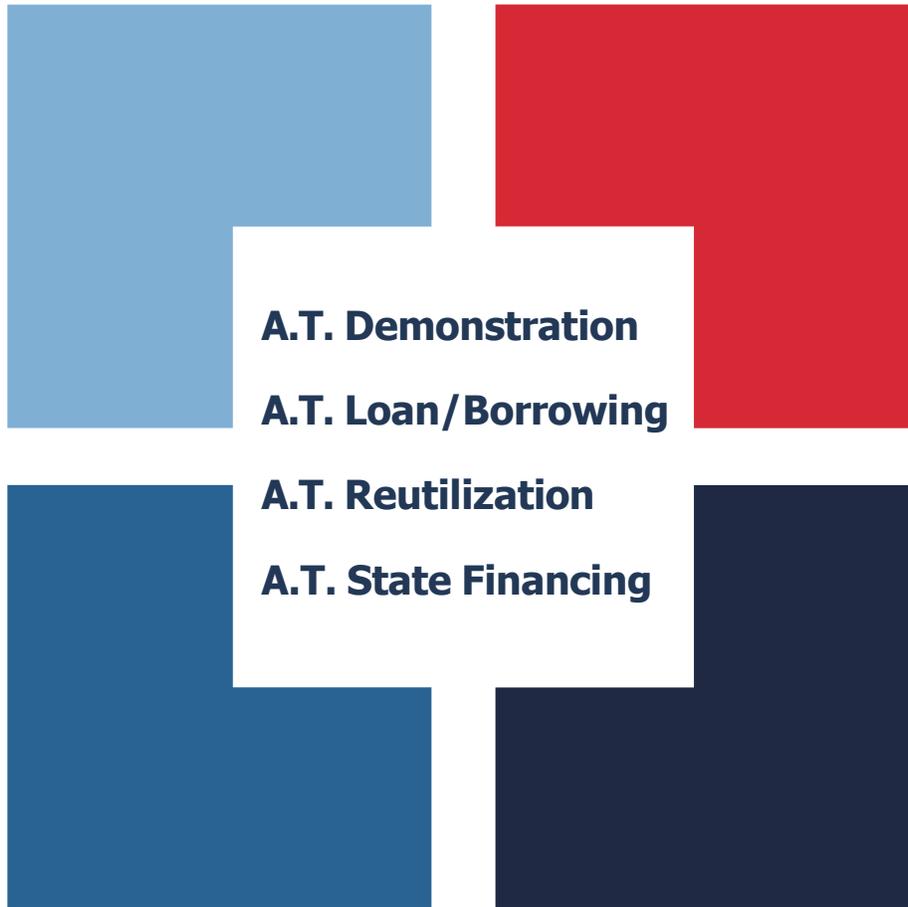




Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

FFY21: Small Federal Investment – Large Benefits in Return

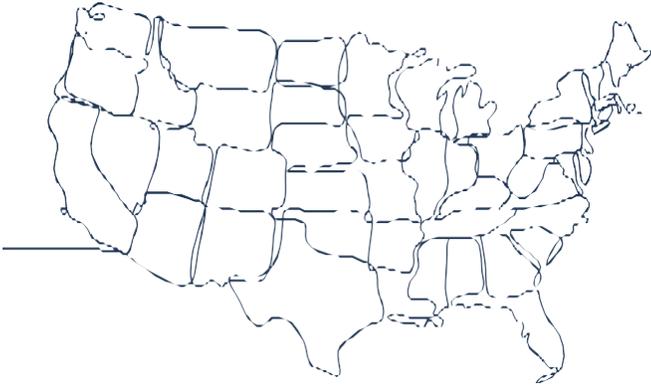


Mission

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 (A.T.) needed for education, employment, and community living.

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs

FFY21: Small Federal Investment – Large Benefits in Return



All 50 states, 4 US territories, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (known as grantees) receive formula grant funding under the Assistive Technology (AT) Act of 2004. The law requires these 56 grantees to carry out a continuum of specified state and territory leadership activities that ensure people with disabilities know about, have access to, and are able to obtain assistive technology (AT) so they can access their education, work, and live independently in their community. State and territory programs consistently deliver a large **return on investment** for the small federal appropriation provided annually by Congress.

Definition of Assistive Technology (AT)

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 to individuals or a disability-serving agency 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 or will not meet an individual's disability needs which prevents wasted expenditures on "mismatched" AT. For example, if an 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.)

In FFY21, **37,322** individuals participated in **21,640** device demonstrations conducted by State and Territory AT Act Programs. Projecting a modest \$100 savings realized by just half of the total demonstrations conducted, results in **national savings of \$1.1 million dollars.**

Maine

An older couple, searching for a device to conduct telemedicine appointments from their home, contacted the Maine Assistive Technology Act Program (CITE). Since they would only be using the device for telemedicine and possibly family contact once they were more comfortable with the device, they did not require a robust computer. The Maine Assistive Technology Act Program (CITE), through device demonstration, provided the couple with the opportunity to interact with a variety of tablet options at no cost. They were able to find a product that fit their needs which led to their selecting and acquiring the identified tablet.



Mississippi



A non-ambulatory and non-speaking young girl with Periventricular Leuokomalacia and chromosomal disorders was referred to the Mississippi Assistive Technology Act Program by her speech-language pathologist (SLP) as she was not using symbolic communication. Accessing any communication device was extremely difficult for her. During the initial evaluation, it was difficult to tell if she was intentionally activating the communication device and it was determined she may need more time to learn to use the device. A loaner device (Accent 800) was provided through Project START, and while she made

some progress on this device, her mother and speech-language pathologist were not sure it was the best option. When a different loaner device (Tobii Dynavox I-110) was provided, her mother and SLP reported she made significant progress and was more motivated to use this communication device. She was eventually able to receive funding for her own device, and her mother reports that she continues to do well and is making progress. This young client is an example of how assessment and acquisition of AT can, and often should, be done utilizing the continuum of services the Assistive Technology Act Programs provide.

Massachusetts



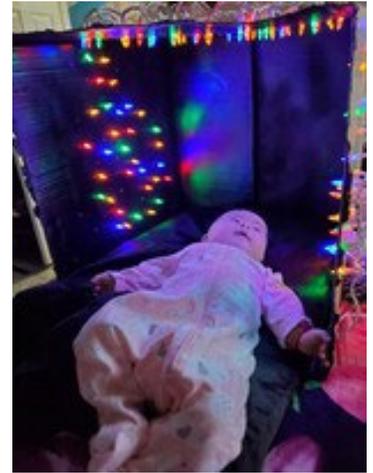
The Massachusetts Assistive Technology Act Program sent the program's assistive technology (AT) mobile van "AT Roadshow" to Greenfield, MA at the business park that houses the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission offices and a handful of other healthcare providers. Three staff members accompanied the roadshow to demonstrate various types of assistive technologies to professionals in the industry. One individual named Rachel was being shown a handful of items for vision impairment by

one of the AT specialists. She was excited to see some of the higher-tech technologies, such as the OrCam reader. After seeing these items, Rachel joked, "I wish you guys had something for Color-blind folks! My colleague is color-blind and it would be awesome if there were anything to assist him!" In that same moment, the AT staff pulled out the EnChroma Color-blind glasses. These glasses correct most types of color-blindness. Rachel was stunned and was extremely thrilled that she would be able to borrow the glasses for her colleague. The AT staff had her fill out the paperwork and they were hers to test.



Oklahoma

A four-month-old, with the assistance of her family, began working with the Oklahoma Assistive Technology Act Program – Oklahoma ABLE Tech – to discover clever ways to spark the baby’s interest in bright and colorful toys. With the help of Oklahoma ABLE Tech, the baby’s mother produced an inventive lightbox using a cardboard box, black paint, and a string of lights. Now the baby can either lay on her back or sit assisted to look and reach for the lights. The Oklahoma Early Intervention provider (SoonerStart Early Intervention Program) encouraged the baby to use this lightbox in different ways as she reached each milestone resulting in smiles and vocalization as she participated in the activities. This low-tech lightbox provided a fun and bright piece of assistive technology for the baby to use as she grows and learns! The SoonerStart Early Intervention Program partners with Oklahoma ABLE Tech to provide assistive technology (AT) to infants and toddlers, birth to three-years-old, with disabilities.



ATAP

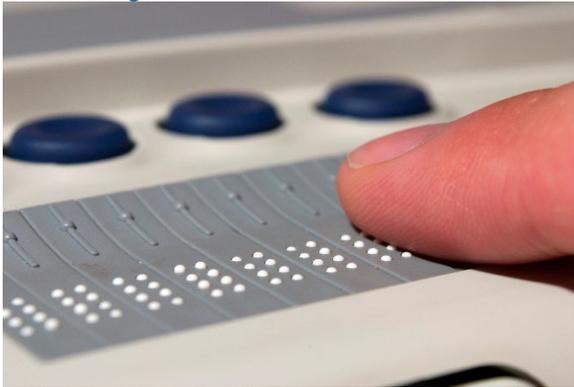
AT Loan/Borrowing

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, it allows the individual with a disability to be successful and to 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.

In FFY21, **38,507** devices were borrowed from short-term device loan programs operated through State and Territory AT Programs. Assuming an average savings of **\$1,000 per device loan**, and keeping in mind multiple items are often borrowed to find a solution, we calculate a **national savings of over \$ 13.56 million**. In addition, assuming a minimal \$10-per-day rental fee for the average device loan period, we project a **national savings of \$2.8 million** for devices borrowed to meet a short-term need (since these devices did not have to be rented).

Washington



The Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP) understands that helping consumers make informed decisions is a primary purpose of the device lending program. During these last few years, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability for deaf-blind consumers to maintain connectivity with friends, family, and the community has also become of paramount importance. Consumer access to a program like WATAP, where they can have a critical piece of assistive technology when their own is broken is critical.

A client of WATAP utilized a Focus 14 Braille display which stopped working unexpectedly. Although the consumer also had a larger Focus 40, it was not a portable option especially for use with his iPhone when he was away from home.

Given the consumer's heavy reliance on both of the braille displays, being without one significantly impacted his ability to communicate. Several months later, this same consumer borrowed a Focus 40 from WATAP when his device needed a repair, and it was well over a month before it was returned to him. He was able to turn to WATAP to borrow, a Focus 14 to maintain his ability to communicate using his iPhone and a Focus 40 while his unit was being repaired. He was grateful to have access to WATAP's device lending program because without it he would have been more isolated and disconnected from his circles of support.

Alaska

A client of the Alaska Assistive Technology Act Program – Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA), provided services to an older individual living in an assistive living facility. The older individual had difficulty completing daily tasks, including putting her hearing aids in every day. Her son, who works full-time, found it challenging to go to the assisted living facility each day to assist with this task. In addition, if he could not visit in person, they could not talk using the telephone without her hearing aids. Following COVID guidelines, an ATLA assistive technology (AT) specialist met in the hearing demonstration room where the older individual and her son could look at specific AT equipment to assist her. After the demonstration, they decided to borrow an amplified telephone to ensure they could talk each day. After trying the loaned AT, they discovered it worked exceptionally well and made the decision to acquire their own, and the son immediately assisted his mother with completing the Alaska Relay application. As the amplified telephone was the key to daily communication daily, the older individual kept the loan item until her new amplified phone was available. As a result, she and her son can now talk daily and check in with each other.



Connecticut



A 9-year-old student on the Autism Spectrum needed a way to engage with school from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning from home was the new reality for many students when the pandemic began, and as schools discovered not all students have equal access to remote learning. Many students, like this 9-year-old, needed access in more than one way and required access to technologies not available at home as well as access to the curriculum due to their unique learning differences based on an array of disabilities. Special education services that readily took place in school buildings now needed to be delivered remotely at the student's home. This student benefited from the Connecticut Assistive Technology Act Program's partner agency "The Assistive Technology Training Center of CT" (ATECH) Device Lending Library. ATECH provided the student with a Samsung Tablet with ClassLink for remote classroom access, apps that were being used at his school, and a range of educationally appropriate apps selected to address the student's specific learning needs, including math, science, and literacy apps and supports.

The tablet and apps worked out so well for the student, that at the end of the device loan period his guardian was able to purchase a tablet and downloaded all of the apps that were used on the loaned device.

Michigan

The Michigan Assistive Technology Act Program (MATP) was contacted by a daughter of an older individual. The daughter reported her mother was having trouble remembering to take her pills, and sometimes took the wrong pills, and often ran out of pills unexpectedly. An Assistive Technology Specialist at MATP showed the daughter several medication reminder systems and their different features. The mother and daughter particularly liked the MedCenter 31-Day Medication Reminder system because it allowed her to see all of her medication for the month and included an alarm system and that kept track of the pills for a month. Her daughter was elated that she could assist her mother once monthly to fill the medication boxes. The mother decided to take the MedCenter out on short term loan and after several weeks with the device decided it worked well and purchased the device. Both the mother and daughter report that the pills are taken consistently and without complication.



AT Reutilization

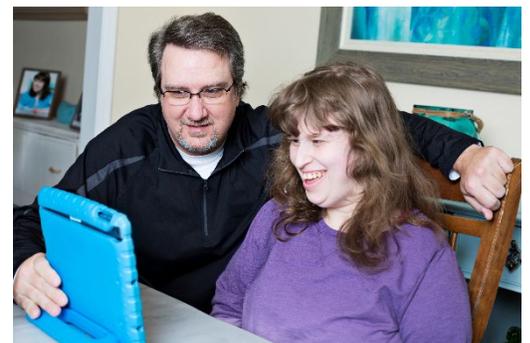
Assistive Technology Device Reutilization Programs support the reuse of assistive technology that is no longer needed or used by its original owner. Recipients usually obtain equipment at significantly lower cost or no cost. Reutilization efforts include refurbishment (previously owned devices are cleaned, 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.

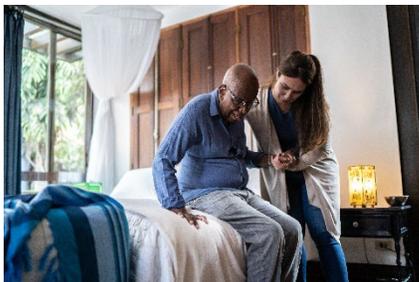
In FFY21, **49,502 recipients acquired 68,061 reutilized devices** through State and Territory AT Programs. A total of **\$28.43 million was saved** by device recipients by purchasing/obtaining reutilized AT instead of new. In addition, 90.64% of the reutilized device recipients indicated that they would 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 and Territory AT Program. The cost of those individuals being unable to work, learn or live in the community without the AT is immeasurable.

 **Indiana**

A woman with a traumatic brain injury was taking virtual computer classes through her local library to improve her employment skills. To participate in these classes, she had become dependent on a computer loan program on the other side of town that required long bus rides to and from to arrange. The Indiana Assistive Technology Act Program (INDATA) was able to provide her with a gently used computer so she to continue her classes and eliminate the need for the long trips every few weeks. She was extremely grateful for the help and is looking forward to continuing her classes.



Louisiana

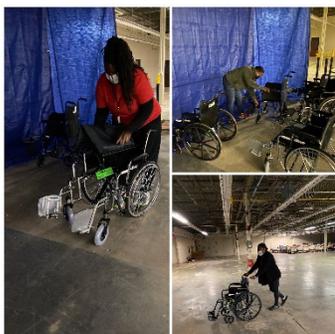


The children of a 96-Year-old man, living with wet macular degeneration, as well as acute hearing loss, discovered the Louisiana Assistive Technology Act Program - Louisiana Assistive Technology Access Network (LATAN) - from a television advertisement and called to inquire about devices and services that could help their father. The phone call to LATAN led to a device demonstration with the aging father to explore vision and hearing devices. Following the device demonstration, the father stated that he wanted to proceed with a hearing device first and

would need to take advantage of the AT Marketplace, LATAN's reuse program to acquire it. Fortunately, the AT Marketplace had two hearing amplifiers (Williams Sound Pocket talker 2 & Williams Sound broadcast device) available. During a follow up call, the father's daughter was extremely satisfied with how well the devices made life easier. She explained that her father can now hear what his doctors are saying and can also hear people on the phone when they call. She also said they no longer have to yell in his ear to get his attention. She continued that her father regularly has family over and they can freely communicate with him again.



North Carolina



A year into the COVID-19 pandemic, local communities were setting up mass vaccination sites across North Carolina. Several communities reached out to the North Carolina AT Program (NCATP) to provide durable medical equipment to ensure individuals with disabilities could participate. Items needed included manual wheelchairs, walkers, and other devices to assist individuals with mobility limitations. Through the AT Reuse program NCATP delivered devices to local vaccine sites and provided instruction on assisting individuals with mobility limitations during the vaccination process.

Puerto Rico

A 58-year-old man with limited mobility contacted the Puerto Rico Assistive Technology Act Program (PRATP) to find alternatives for the acquisition of a power wheelchair that would allow him to move around independently. Due to the nature and severity of his condition, he needed a wheelchair designed to address his particular characteristics and needs. The family, however, could not afford such a device, so they requested PRATP's help. An assistive technology assessment on positioning and mobility was carried out to identify the necessary size and postural requirements for the wheelchair. Then, through PRATP's Reuse Program, a suitable power wheelchair was identified, but it required some changes to match Jose's needs. Size adjustments and postural modifications were made to meet the characteristics identified during the assessment. Now, Jose has regained his mobility with a customized-reused power wheelchair that he and his family could not otherwise afford.





The Virginia Assistive Technology Act Program (Virginia Assistive Technology System, VATS), partners with an adult durable medical equipment (DME) reuse program titled, the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (F.R.E.E.). Together the programs assisted patients at a hospital in the western part of the state in acquiring needed rehabilitation equipment prior to discharge. Discharge planners contacted F.R.E.E. and explained that there were no rolling walkers available through DME vendors in

southwest Virginia due to the aluminum shortage, staffing shortages, and shipping delays. DME vendors reported that DME equipment was, “Stuck on freight boats in the Atlantic.” This impacted adults in hospitals, who have insurance, but due to the shortage, do not have access to the equipment they need to be discharged home. This also caused an admissions bottleneck because the hospital was at full capacity and unable to safely discharge some patients home due to lack of needed rehab equipment. In response, F.R.E.E. immediately stepped in and delivered a load of gently used and sanitized rolling walkers and crutches within 24 hours of the request. Upon receipt of the walkers, patients were discharged. VATS adult DME reuse partner was able to assist the hospital because of the valuable community donations the reuse program receives, sanitizes, refurbishes, and makes available to gift to older adults and Virginians with disabilities based on medical and financial need. F.R.E.E. of Richmond and Roanoke are maintaining stockpiles of DME (specifically crutches and walkers) in anticipation of meeting demand of other Virginia-based healthcare organizations in the current time of crisis.



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 A.T. they need for work, school or community living.

In FFY21, **796 borrowers obtained financial loans totaling \$8.42 million** to buy 1,085 devices. **8,068 recipients acquired 15,162 devices valued at \$6.7 million** from other state financing programs that directly provide AT using external funding sources. **1,800 recipients acquired 9,659 AT devices with a savings of \$3.89 million** from other state financing activities, such as cooperative buying programs. The vast majority (92.22%) 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.

Pennsylvania



The mother of a child with a disability contacted the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Act Programs – TechOWL (Technology Our Whole Lives) – to order a few devices that could possibly help her son with Cerebral Palsy. The mother specifically requested a child-sized version of certain pieces of assistive technology. The TechOWL team worked with some of the undergraduate engineering students at Temple University, where TechOWL is housed, to make these child-sized devices using a 3D printer.

It is very challenging to find open-source files for 3D printers that specifically make child-sized assistive technology, so the TechOWL team, along with the undergraduate Temple University students, created their own files to create and make these child-sized devices. Additionally, the TechOWL team was able to share these files with the Makers Making Change so other children with disabilities could benefit.



Nebraska

The Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) partners closely with multiple agencies in the community to run the iCanConnect program, which is a state financing activity that some AT Act programs administer. Another name for this program is the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP), which is a federal program designed to help the thousands of Americans with combined vision and hearing loss to connect with family, friends and community.



It was established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to comply with the 21st Century Video and Communications Accessibility Act, a federal law that requires people with disabilities to have access to modern communication technology that enables distance communication.

A client of the ATP applied for the iCC program and was eligible for services. He received an iPhone SE with case and AppleCare through the iCC Program. He then received training on how to use the device to communicate effectively with his friends and family members. A thank you note was received from him after his iCC case was completed where he said: "I would like to thank you for the iPhone. I really like the many things that I can do with the phone. I can listen to the football games on it. I like the fact that I can text my friends and they can text me. It really opened the door for me. I'm able to save my contacts in my phone. The voice is better quality and understanding. There is a lot to learn. Once again thank you very much. I really enjoy my phone."

North Dakota

A young man with Cerebral Palsy who uses an iPad for his phone and for video communications needed a mount that he could swing away when not in use and also to make the iPad more accessible. He contacted North Dakota Assistive Technology Act Program (ND Assistive) to assist with this search. After a successful demonstration and loan, he tried to obtain the mount through other



funding sources and was turned down. He applied for the ND Assistive Possibilities Grant, a last resort funding program, and was approved. Following this success, he said this about his experience: "I think you do great stuff. I can't thank you enough. The iPad and mount system you helped me get is awesome. When I have meetings it's so valuable because I can't hold my iPad. If I didn't have the mount, I wouldn't be able to use it at all the meetings I attend. I want to help you guys any way I can because you do such great things."

North Carolina



A woman, as a result of a fall and subsequent surgeries, had mobility limitations that made it impossible for her to get up and down the stairs at her home. She was unable to access the second level of her home due to not being able to maneuver the stairs for several years. The unique design of the staircase made it difficult to find a good and affordable solution. Through work with the North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) program and the Alternative Financing Program (AFP) provided by the Self-Help Credit Union, a solution was identified, and the consumer was able to purchase the perfect stairlift which allowed access to the upstairs of her home.

Leveraged Funding is frequently secured by State and Territory AT Act Programs and used to expand and maximize services. **In FFY21, State and Territory AT Act Programs leveraged \$34.22 million** in funding from federal, state, local and private sources. These funds were used to support all the State and Territory AT Act Programs authorized activities.

Collectively, State and Territory AT Act Programs are an integral partner in federal, state and local AT activities. State and Territory AT Act Programs leverage a variety of funding including direct federal dollars for the 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/ territory agencies to provide AT services.

FFY21: Small Federal Investment – Large Benefits in Return

