



# Funding Strategies

"The true measure of success of our technological advances will be in what they contribute to the dignity and ability of individual persons with disabilities... In turn, our state and our communities will be enriched by their greater participation."

-An Iowa Parent

Have you ever tried to find funding for a piece of adaptive equipment or an assistive technology device?

If you are like most people you probably found it to be a frustrating experience.

We have found that people who are successful in getting funding know:

- There are people with key roles,
- There are "rules," and
- There are strategies.

People often overlook certain funding sources for lack of information, or, they give up the idea of purchasing a service or item due to its high cost. There are quite a few public agencies that offer funding.

You could be eligible for funds from one or more of them, even if you have been denied funding by other agencies. Until now, little information on what works to get funding for assistive technology has been available.

We have designed this brochure to give you and your family steps to take to get funding from any source. Now, let's examine the basics of funding.

## DEFINITION

Assistive technology is a device or service that makes certain tasks easier for people with disabilities. THE GOAL To obtain financial assistance for your AT needs.

## THE ROLES

You, the Consumer: You may be eligible for public or private funding. You must be persistent in seeking funding.

Funding Coordinator: you or any person you choose to collect information and prepare applications for funding. This should be a person close to you, dedicated to finding funding for you, and someone who understands your needs. It could be a parent, sibling, friend, provider, or vendor. Many professionals and vendors are experienced in assisting in the funding process. Selection of a funding coordinator should be done before going after funding.

Professionals and Advocates: other people who know your physical, social and safety needs, such as doctors, teachers, therapists, advocacy group or support group members.

Agencies or Programs (funding sources): organizations that have funds, process applications for funding, and award funds to qualified applicants. Public programs are divided into three main categories: medical, educational, and vocational/employment. There are private programs that also offer funds, and these can be tried if you are ineligible for public programs.

Agency Contact: a representative of the funding agency. The funding coordinator should make an effort to talk with the same agency contact each time they call or visit.

## THE "RULES"

These "rules" are not carved in stone and should be used as a guide to obtain funding.

Rule 1: You may or may not be eligible for funding—the funding coordinator must obtain information on eligibility requirements. Some examples of requirements include: You must fit the definition of the population served by the agency. Rejection by other

programs (e.g., to qualify for some waiver programs under Medicaid, you must be ineligible for Supplemental Security Income.)

Rule 2: Each funding agency has its own service goals and therefore its own definition of the need that must be demonstrated. The language or terminology that the agency requires reflects that definition of need. You must present your need in a way that fits with the agency's definitions and terminology. For example, medical sources may require terms such as medical necessity or basic medical need. Educational sources will look to integrate and perform, and vocational programs will prefer productivity and self-sufficiency.

Rule 3: Part of the funding process is learning how to negotiate with the funding agency. There should be an ongoing dialogue established between the funding coordinator and the agency contact. The funding coordinator and the agency contact must come to the same definition of need and be using the same words.

Rule 4: The funding coordinator should keep track of all correspondence and phone conversations. The funding coordinator should take notes—there will be important information or contact names to remember. The date and time of all phone calls should be recorded. The funding coordinator should keep a file or notebook with all of this information.

Rule 5: Do not be discouraged by rejection. The reasons for rejection should be explored. Sometimes the problem can be fixed easily. In some cases, you may have to be ineligible for one program to be accepted by another.

## **THE STRATEGIES**

Now that you know the roles and rules and have selected a funding coordinator, it's time to figure out your strategies.

The strategies are a general guide to the process of obtaining agency funding for assistive technology. The examples given do not describe everyone's situation, and the lists of sources do not cover every program. However, the strategies are presented as steps to help you and the funding coordinator to plan the search for information and to know what to expect when applying for funds.

Step 1: If you are an IOWA RESIDENT, contact Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Program at 1-866-866-8782 or 1-515-289-4069 (TTY). Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Program (ESI ATP) is a great source of free information about assistive

technology devices and resources as well as funding programs. For now, ask ESI ATP to determine the programs that may give you funding.

There are four main categories of funding sources: medical/health programs, educational programs, vocational/employment-related agencies and private organizations. This step will weed out the agencies and programs that will not work for your situation. ESI ATP can also provide you with information about advocacy groups and peer support groups.

Step 2: Obtain information about eligibility requirements. All agencies and programs have different eligibility requirements. It is the funding coordinator's task to obtain the eligibility requirements by contacting the funding source and the advocacy group provided by Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Program (see Step 1).

Step 3: Request and collect the documentation consistent with eligibility requirements. Gather the papers and records necessary to prove your eligibility. If the information you received from the funding agency does not make clear what records you need, call them back and ask for a list. The majority of these papers will be letters from professionals explaining how long they have known you and why you need the assistive technology you are requesting. Some professionals may need to be alerted to the requirements and terminology of the agency.

Step 4: Review the documents with the funding coordinator, advocacy group member or professional; make photocopies of all documents; and submit your request for assistance to the agency. Be sure to ask the agency how long it might be until you get a reply. If you do not hear from them at that time, you or the funding coordinator should make a follow-up call to your contact at the agency.

Step 5: If your application is denied, be sure to review the application process with your funding coordinator and agency contact to determine why your application was denied. Some applications are denied when the information supplied is incomplete or inconsistent.

Contact Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Program for the names of advocacy groups that may be able to assist you. If your application is in the correct order and you are still rejected, your next step is to appeal the decision.

An appeal is a written protest of rejection that attempts to prove why your application for assistance should be accepted. Each public funding source (except private sources)

has its own legal and administrative procedures for appealing a decision. Be sure to find out what the process is from the agency contact or advocacy group. Seek their help in the appeal process. You may have to appeal more than once.

Step 6: Approach other funding sources and begin again with Step 2. Exhaust all options for public funding from medical, educational, and vocational programs. Then approach private organizations.

These steps do not guarantee that you will be eligible for funding, but greater persistence does increase the chances of obtaining funding. Here is a review of the process:

1. Call Easter Seals Iowa Assistive Technology Program to discover your possibilities
2. Contact the agency and ask about eligibility requirements
3. Request and collect the documentation required
4. Review the documents, make photocopies and submit application
5. Resubmit corrected application; if rejected, appeal
6. Approach other funding sources

**And remember, you will not get funding unless you apply for it. Good luck!!**

Easterseals Iowa Assistive Technology Program  
866-866-8782, [atinfo@eastersealsia.org](mailto:atinfo@eastersealsia.org) or 515- 289-4069 (TTY)

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