



## Alternative Financing Programs

**Having trouble buying the devices you need? Alternative Financing Programs can help!**

*“Without the loan program, we’d never have been able to afford our modified van. Now we can travel together as a family again.”*

Michelle T., Massachusetts

Affording the assistive technology (AT) that can increase participation in home, work, school and community settings often proves difficult for individuals with disabilities and their families. The high price of AT often puts these devices out of reach. Many other possible funding sources, such as health insurance and vocational rehabilitation programs, may not pay for many needed devices.

To respond to the pressing need for AT funding options, Congress supported the establishment and operation of state-based Alternative Financing Programs (AFPs). Authorized under Title III of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, AFPs have provided an essential financial service to people with disabilities by offering a variety of affordable AT loans during the past thirteen years.

The availability of AFP loans for people with disabilities has expanded access to AT. When these programs first started in 2001, 548 AFP loans worth \$6 million were provided for individuals with disabilities across the nation. In 2013, that number has skyrocketed to 14,743 loans worth almost \$160 million.

Currently, 36 states operate AFPs for individuals with disabilities. These states are: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, U.S. Virgin Islands, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

**To find out how to contact your state loan program, please visit  
<http://resnaprojects.org/allcontacts/allafpcontacts.html>**

### ✓ **Designed for People with Disabilities**

The AFPS all take into account the unique circumstances held by most people with disabilities, and have designed programs to accommodate all of them. Most often there is no requirement to participate in an AFP other than being a person with a disability (or a family member) and a need to purchase assistive devices or services.

### ✓ **Multiple products to meet your needs**

These programs offer at least one, and up to four difference loan types designed to maximize the affordability of purchasing assistive devices:

- Guaranteed loans helps individuals qualify for loans because they are backed by a promise, or guarantee, that even if the loan goes into default, the loan will be repaid by the AFP.

- Interest rate buy-down loans make financing more affordable for you by having the program “buy-down” the interest rate, lowering monthly payments.
- Direct or revolving loans are loan provided by the program itself, instead of a lending institution, and gives the option of financing loans for small amounts.
- Non-guaranteed low interest loans assist people with disabilities who have sufficient incomes and high enough credit scores qualify for a traditional loan. However, the program can help buy providing lower interest rates, which makes monthly payments more affordable.

✓ **Flexible repayment terms to maximize loan potential**

Repayment terms range from one year to up to twenty years, allowing you more options for lowering monthly loan payments. This is usually determined by the program and the type of device being purchased.

✓ **Locating resources within the community**

AFPs help you locate community resources. This can include figuring out what device is best for you, additional funding sources to help offset the price of an assistive device, or support and training opportunities once you purchase your equipment.

✓ **Planning for the future**

In addition to helping you purchase AT, many programs offer support for planning for the future. This includes looking at developing and strengthening your credit score and savings abilities to make you a stronger financial person. The options of this vary from program to program, so please contact your state loan program to find out what is available.

**About the RESNA Catalyst Project:**

The RESNA Catalyst Project is a sponsored project of RESNA, the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America. RESNA operates the Catalyst Project under a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, U.S. Department of Education.

The RESNA Catalyst Project is funded to provide technical assistance to the Assistive Technology Act Grantees to assist them in increasing awareness, access, acquisition, and advocacy to AT devices and services for consumers with disabilities of all ages. The Project works with the 56 Statewide Assistive Technology Programs, the 57 Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology Programs, and 36 Alternative Financing Programs. The Project also works with 19 Access to Telework Financial Loan Programs.

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**For more information, please contact the RESNA Catalyst Project at:**

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