

State: Maryland

Part I: Attachments
OMB Control Number: 1820-0664
Expiration Date: 12/31/2008

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Attachment 1: Basic Information

Name of Lead Agency: Maryland Department of Disabilities

Name of Applicable Division and/or Subdivision of Lead Agency: Maryland Department of Disabilities

Address of Lead Agency: 217 East Redwood Street, 13th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202

Name and Title of Certifying Representative for Lead Agency: Kristen Cox, Secretary

Address for Certifying Representative: Maryland Department of Disabilities, 217 East Redwood Street, 13th Floor, Baltimore, MD 21202

Telephone for Certifying Representative: 410-767-3661

E-mail for Certifying Representative: kcox@mdod.state.md.us

Name and Title of Program Director: Michael Dalto, Executive Director

Address for Program Director: Maryland Technology Assistance Program, 2301 Argonne Drive, T-17, Baltimore, MD 21218

Telephone for Program Director: 410-554-9245

E-mail for Program Director: mdalto@mdtap.org

Name and Title of Program Contact (if different from Program Director): Not applicable

Address for Program Director: Not applicable

Telephone for Program Director: Not applicable

E-mail for Program Director: Not applicable

Name of Implementing Entity: Not applicable

Name of Applicable Division and/or Subdivision of Implementing Entity: Not applicable

Address of Implementing Entity: Not applicable

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Name and Title of Program Director: Not applicable

Address for Program Director: Not applicable

Telephone for Program Director: Not applicable

E-mail for Program Director: Not applicable

Name and Title of Program Contact (if different from Program Director): Not applicable

Address for Program Director: Not applicable

Telephone for Program Director: Not applicable

E-mail for Program Director: Not applicable

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Attachment 2: Lead Agency and Implementing Entity

2.1 Identification and Description of the Lead Agency - Identify and describe the Lead Agency referred to in section 4(c)(1)(A) of the AT Act.

2.1A Identification and Description of Lead Agency if an Implementing Entity is not Designated

Maryland's Governor and General Assembly created the Maryland Department of Disabilities in 2004 to oversee the reform of government delivery of supports to people with disabilities in Maryland through collaboration with all state government agencies. The Department focuses on achieving tangible improvements in the level and quality of supports provided in each of the following five major areas: education, employment, health care, housing, and transportation. Replacing the Governor's Office for Individuals with Disabilities, the formation of the cabinet-level Department underscored Maryland's commitment to making services to individuals with disabilities more coordinated, efficient and customer-responsive. The Department and its earlier incarnation have been the lead agency for Maryland's Statewide AT Program – the Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MD TAP) - since 1989. MD TAP, a division of the Maryland Department of Disabilities, has provided free information and referral, an accessible web site, publications in accessible formats on topics related to disability rights, laws, policies and funding opportunities for assistive technology (AT) along with other programs and services since its inception.

MD TAP's mission is to help Marylanders with disabilities live, work and learn more independently by making assistive technology more available, affordable and usable.. To fulfill its mission, MD TAP provides a variety of programs, some in partnership with two regional contractors and/or other public and private agencies, to deliver information about, access to, and funding for or provision of assistive technology and accessible electronic and information technology to Marylanders with all disabilities of all ages statewide. The Maryland Department of Disabilities will continue as the lead agency responsible for the Statewide AT Program for the next two years under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended (AT Act). MD TAP will continue to operate current programs and initiate others outlined in this State Plan to accomplish its mission.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities is uniquely well positioned to provide maximum exposure, support and coordination for MD TAP's programs. The Department is charged with creating a user-friendly system of disability services in Maryland through collaboration with all state agencies that provide significant services to individuals with disabilities. Barely two years old, the Department has already helped expand MD TAP's relationships with state agencies including the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (which administers Maryland's Medicaid, Developmental Disabilities and Mental Health programs, among other divisions); the Maryland State Department of Education; the Maryland Department of Budget and Management; the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation; and the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. These agencies will serve as key partners on MD TAP projects outlined in attachments 5 and 8 of this plan. The Department greatly assisted MD TAP to secure \$220,000 in matching funds

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needed to secure federal grants to expand the low-interest loan program for assistive technology and inaugurate a loan program for people with disabilities who need equipment to telecommute or operate home-based businesses. A signature initiative of Governor Ehrlich, the Department also enjoys strong support from Maryland's General Assembly, providing a powerful platform for disability issues in the state. The Department was created with a broad mandate to improve services for Marylanders regardless of disability type, age, financial status or area of residence in the state. Its efforts will benefit all state residents with disabilities.

As does the Department, MD TAP enjoys complete flexibility to assist individuals with disabilities without restrictions. It will help Marylanders with AT needs of all ages, for all purposes and in all environments. MD TAP's primary facility is based in Baltimore in the heart of central Maryland, but it will make its services available statewide through two regional contractors, presentations and other activities in all areas of the state, toll-free telephone numbers (for both MD TAP and the contractors) and accessible web sites (also for both MD TAP and the contractors).

MD TAP and its contractors employ knowledgeable staff with a range of AT expertise to carry out the activities described in this state plan. A total of fourteen staff with an average of over 16 years experience are currently dedicated to activities funded through the AT Act of 1998; these staff will continue working on activities funded through the AT Act of 1998 as amended. During the first year of this plan, MD TAP hired two additional part-time AT specialists to help operate the primary device loan, device demonstration, training and outreach programs. Current staff possess a range of education and expertise including background in a variety of AT product areas, speech-language pathology, accessible telecommunications, accessible information technology, special education, finance and management. MD TAP and its contractors have the capacity to address AT needs in all areas of life, with special focus on education, employment, information technology and telecommunication, and community living. MD TAP and its contractors will provide continuing training and professional development opportunities throughout the remaining two years of this state plan to ensure that staff maintain state-of-the-art knowledge and skills.

MD TAP has forged relationships with numerous public and private entities during its 16-year history. Its collaboration with the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) is so close that the two agencies are co-located, share a staff member and jointly host trainings. DORS provides extensive in-kind support to MD TAP, including office space, utilities, telecommunications, photocopying, postage and supplies, and contributed to the matching funds required to start the Telework and Self-Employment Loan Program. MD TAP's partnerships with other state agencies focus heavily on actual projects that will deliver AT devices and/or services or accessible information technology and telecommunications to Marylanders with disabilities. They include the Maryland Department of Budget and Management, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (which operates Maryland's Medicaid agency), the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications program, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and the Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (see attachments 5 and 8). MD TAP works with centers for independent living; local school systems; colleges and universities; private schools; educational consortia including the Maryland Assistive Technology Network; disability-

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specific agencies such as United Cerebral Palsy, Self-Help for the Hard of Hearing, the National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind, Blind Industries and Services of Maryland and the Epilepsy Foundation; nonprofit disability service providers; health care agencies; senior citizen organizations; employers; and others to deliver training, technical assistance, and initiatives providing access to and acquisition of AT. The agency will continue these efforts and begin new ones as outlined in attachments 5 and 8.

MD TAP will continue regional contracts with AT:LAST, Inc. and the Holly Community, Inc. to provide device loan and demonstration programs, training and technical assistance and outreach activities as described in this plan. AT:LAST, Inc. – created by MD TAP in 1998 - also operates the Maryland AT Co-op. The Freedom Center (a center for independent living) jointly operates Voice for Freedom (an equipment distribution program providing communication devices to nursing home residents) with MD TAP through an agreement. MD TAP also established an agreement with the Holly Community, Inc., and is seeking an agreement with the Living Classrooms Foundation, to operate modular wheelchair ramp construction projects. The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and MD TAP are collaborating to create a jointly-administered equipment re-use program to recycle durable medical equipment.

During the first year of this state plan, MD TAP began a partnership with the Easter Seal Society's Greater Baltimore Washington Region to establish an AT demonstration center in Montgomery County, Maryland (see 5.4 Device Demonstration Program).

MD TAP will ensure its programs and services are consumer responsive through its advisory council and by soliciting responses from the individuals and agencies it serves through personal interviews and follow-up surveys.

2.1B Identification and Description of the Lead Agency if an Implementing Entity is Designated

Not applicable

2.2 Identification and Description of the Implementing Entity – Identify and describe the Implementing Entity referred to in section 4(c)(1)(B) of the AT Act, if such an Implementing Entity is designated by the Governor.

Not applicable

2.3 Show of Good Cause for Change in Lead Agency or Implementing Entity – If the Governor has chosen to change the Lead Agency or, if applicable, Implementing Entity as allowed in section 4(c)(1)(C) of the AT Act, provide an explanation of good cause for this redesignation.

Not applicable

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Attachment 3: State Advisory Council

3.1 Membership of the Advisory Council - Identify the members of the Advisory Council and each member's designation as an individual with disabilities who uses AT, a family member or guardian of such individual, or a representative of a State agency or other entity.

The Maryland Technology Assistance Program's Advisory Council will advise the State on planning, implementation and evaluation of its activities under the AT Act as amended. The Council's majority of individuals with disabilities and family members will ensure a consumer focus.

The Council currently has ten (10) members. Five (5) members (50%) are individuals with disabilities who use AT or family members of AT users. The other five (5) members represent state agencies and an AT vendor.

The members are:

AT Users:

Lin Hendershott, Cumberland
Coit Custer, Oakland
Dr. Harold Williams, Salisbury
Floyd Hartley, Baltimore

Family Members of AT Users:

Leslie Margolis, Baltimore

Agency Representatives:

Lisa Wright, Maryland State Department of Education
James Corey, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services
Trudy Chara, Governor's Workforce Investment Board
John Wiley, Statewide Independent Living Council
Curt Mason, Ride-Away Corporation

Members live in counties throughout the state, representing rural, suburban and urban areas. They include African-Americans and Caucasians. AT users and family members of AT users employ a variety of types of AT including mobility devices, AT for non-visual access and AT for non-auditory access.

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3.2 Structure and Operation of the Advisory Council – Describe the structure and operations of the Advisory Council.

Six of the Council's members are community volunteers solicited through centers for independent living, education entities, vendors, legal advocacy organizations, service providers and other agencies; the other four members represent the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, the Governor's Workforce Investment Board, and the Statewide Independent Living Council and were appointed by their agency administrators. Members serve three-year terms coinciding with MD TAP's state plan period.

The Council meets quarterly in Baltimore, and members for whom travel is difficult may participate by teleconference. Decisions are rendered by a majority vote of members. The Council's primary functions are to approve state plan activities; develop goals, objectives and an evaluation plan; recommend changes in the plan; and ensure consumer direction and responsiveness for MD TAP activities. The Council does not currently elect officers, create by-laws or establish subcommittees, but a majority of members may vote to do so in the future. The Executive Director of MD TAP sets meeting agendas in consultation with Council members, and the Director and members may schedule guest speakers and presentations as needed. MD TAP staff arrange accessible meeting facilities and accommodations, prepare agendas and materials for review, deliver information on program activities and data collected on results, record minutes and communicate with members. The Council serves an advisory function; it does not exercise administrative authority over MD TAP programs.

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Attachment 4: Measurable Goals

MD TAP will establish baselines for all objectives in 4.1 through 4.7 during year two using a data collection instrument and procedures to be determined by RSA after the State plan process has been completed. Once baseline has been established, an amended plan will be submitted to RSA.

4.1 Goal for Improving Access to AT in Education

- **Long-term goal:** Increase percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service for educational purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 3:** Increase by 3% from baseline the appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program who made a decision about an AT device or service for educational purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 2:** Establish baseline percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program who made a decision about an AT device or service for educational purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 1:** N/A – data collection not established

4.2 Goal for Improving Access to AT in Employment

- **Long-term goal:** Increase percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device demonstration program and/or device loan program and made a decision about an AT device or service for employment purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 3:** Increase by 3% from baseline the appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service for employment purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 2:** Establish baseline percentage of the appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service for employment purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 1:** N/A – data collection not established

4.3 Goal for Improving Access to AT in Community Living

- **Long-term goal:** Increase the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program

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and made a decision about an AT device or service for community living as a result of the assistance they received

- **Short-term goal for Year 3:** Increase by 3% from baseline the appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service for community living purposes as a result of the assistance they received
- **Short-term goal for Year 2:** Establish baseline percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service for community living purposes as a result of the assistance they received
- **Short-term goal for Year 1:** N/A – data collection not established

4.4 Goal for Improving Access to IT and Telecommunications

- **Long-term goal:** Increase percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service that meets an IT/telecommunications need as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 3:** Increase by 3% from baseline the appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service for IT/telecommunications purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 2:** Establish baseline percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who used the device loan program and/or device demonstration program and made a decision about an AT device or service for IT/telecommunications purposes as a result of the assistance they received
 - **Short-term goal for Year 1:** N/A – data collection not established

4.5 Goal for Improving Acquisition of AT in Education

- **Long-term goal:** Increase the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for educational purposes through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have obtained the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 3:** Increase by 1% from baseline the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for educational purposes through state financing activities and/or recycling programs who would not have acquired the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 2:** Establish baseline percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for educational purposes

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through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have acquired the AT devices or services

- Short-term goal for Year 1: N/A – data collection not established

4.6 Goal for Improving Acquisition of AT in Employment

- **Long-term goal:** Establish baseline percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for educational purposes through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have acquired the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 3:** Increase by 1% from baseline the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for employment purposes through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have acquired the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 2:** Establish baseline percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for employment purposes through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have acquired the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 1:** N/A – data collection not established

4.7 Goal for Improving Acquisition of AT in Community Living

- **Long-term goal:** Increase the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for community living purposes through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have obtained the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 3:** Increase by 1% from baseline the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for community living purposes through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have acquired the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 2:** Establish baseline percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained AT for community living purposes through state financing activities and/or reutilization programs who would not have acquired the AT devices or services
 - **Short-term goal for Year 1:** N/A – data collection not established

Summary of Annual Objective Measures

Device Loan & Demo. Programs

Education – Year 2 Baseline; Year 3 +3%

Employment – Year 2 Baseline; Year 3 +3%

Community Living - Year 2 Baseline; Year 3 +3%

IT/Telecommunication - Year 2 Baseline; Year 3 +3%

Financing & Reutiliz. Programs

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Education – Year 2 Baseline; Year 3 +1%

Employment – Year 2 Baseline; Year 3 +1%

Community Living - Year 2 Baseline; Year 3 +1%

IT/Telecommunication - NA

4.8 Additional Measurable Goals -- If applicable, describe any measurable goals that the State has set in addition to the goals established in items 4.1 through 4.7 for addressing the assistive technology needs of individuals with disabilities in the State related to education, employment, community living, and telecommunications and information technology.

Not applicable

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Attachment 5: State-level Activities

5.1 State Financing Activities – Describe how the State will implement State financing activities as described in section 4(e)(2)(A) of the AT Act.

Maryland will operate six (6) projects that help people with disabilities and their families obtain new (or in some cases used) assistive technology (AT) products for permanent use. The projects will help people in three ways: (a) by providing low-interest loans to help people buy products they couldn't afford without loans, (b) by offering discounted prices on products to make them more affordable, and (c) by giving people devices for free or at reduced cost (though AT Act funds will not be used to buy products directly for individuals). People with disabilities and their families may use the projects individually or, in some cases, combine them (for example, get a discounted price on an item and receive a low-interest loan to buy it). All six (6) projects will be partially funded through AT Act dollars.

1) The **Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program** will provide low-interest loans to help Marylanders with disabilities, their families and friends buy AT devices. Many devices are expensive and not covered (or are only partially covered) by other funding sources such as insurance, public agencies and private grants, so individuals must find ways to pay for some or all of the cost themselves. People who don't have savings available to spend can get low interest loans so they can buy devices and pay off the loans through monthly payments. When necessary, loans may be backed (or "guaranteed") by the program; this helps people get loans who would usually be turned down for loans by banks because of limited incomes or credit issues. The interest rates on all loans are below the prime rate, and in some cases, the project may pay a fee (called an "interest buydown") to reduce the rate even lower. Three lenders in MD – a statewide credit union and two banks – issue the loans. Borrowers may use loans to pay the full cost of devices or the balance not covered by other sources (e.g., insurance co-payments). In some cases, loans may be used to pay for evaluations to choose devices, training to use them, and maintenance plans or insurance to protect them.

MD TAP operates the program under the direction of a consumer-majority board of directors. In addition to processing loan applications, program staff refer applicants to other possible funding sources on request. The program will be available statewide to any applicant who (1) is at least 18 years old and (2) plans to use a loan to buy an assistive technology device (3) and is a Maryland resident with a disability. Although not every loan will be approved, anyone who meets the three conditions stated above may apply. The device user may live anywhere in Maryland and there are no restrictions on users' type of disability, age or income level.

Applicants may contact the project at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)

1-866-881-7488 (TTY)

trice@mdod.state.md.us

lmarkland@mdod.state.md.us

www.mdtpap.org

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The project plans to be able to accept applications on line within one (1) year.

In addition to using funds through the AT Act of 1998 as amended to support operating costs, the ATGLP has been funded by grants through Title III of the AT Act of 1998, state funds through a supplemental appropriation and the Maryland Department of Disabilities, and private contributions from the Weinberg Foundation, the Marriott Foundation, the Herbert Bearman Foundation, the Peroutka Foundation, the State Employees Credit Union of Maryland and the Ride-Away Corporation.

The program successfully negotiated with one participating lender to eliminate the required set aside of funds to guarantee loans. Previously, the ATGLP was obligated to maintain reserves in escrow equal to 50% of outstanding principal for all guaranteed loans. The new agreement still requires the ATGLP to pay the lender the full balance of all guaranteed loans that default; however, it leaves the program the discretion to determine how much to set aside in escrow. The board of directors has chosen to maintain reserves equal to 10% of outstanding principal for guaranteed loans (more than double the current default rate). The reduction of guarantee reserves from 50% to 10% enables the program to guarantee five times the volume of loans. The ATGLP is now negotiating with its other participating lender to adopt the same policy change, which should be completed during Year 2.

2) The **Telework and Self-Employment Loan Program** will provide low-interest loans to enable Marylanders with disabilities to purchase equipment, including AT, that they need to telecommute (i.e., work for an employer from their homes or telework centers) or operate small businesses that are largely home-based. This program seeks to boost employment options for people with disabilities, who suffer an unemployment rate of 70%.

Telecommuting and home-based businesses provide an alternative for citizens with disabilities, especially those whose disabilities make it difficult or expensive to travel to and from work. Small business is a proven employment strategy for people with disabilities whose enterprises succeed at rates higher than for nondisabled business owners. People seeking to telecommute or operate home-based businesses often need to pay for home modifications for accessible home offices, AT and accessible telecommunications devices, but are rarely able to pay for these items without loans. The program's fundamentals – including interest rate, loan guarantees, interest buydowns, program staff and operation, participating lenders, and coordination with MD TAP's other programs – will be identical to those of the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program.

Available statewide, the program will require that (1) applicants must be at least 18 years old, (2) loans must be intended to buy equipment for a Maryland resident with a disability to use to telecommute or operate a home-based business, (3) the worker with a disability must have a commitment from an employer to be permitted to telecommute or have a business plan found viable by a reputable small business assistance organization, and (4) the worker with a disability must have a good likelihood of increasing his/her income (or preventing an income loss) through the work opportunity assisted by the loan. The device user may live anywhere in Maryland and there are no restrictions on users' type of disability or income level, though s/he must be of working age. Because the program is limited to meeting employment needs, it is not comprehensive according to the AT Act; however, it is part of a comprehensive set of state financing activities in combination with the others in this plan.

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Applicants may contact the project through a toll-free telephone line (a separate toll-free line will serve TTY callers), by e-mail or regular mail, and the project plans to be able to accept applications on line within two (2) years.

Applicants may contact the project at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)

1-866-881-7488 (TTY)

trice@mdod.state.md.us

lmarkland@mdod.state.md.us

www.mdtpa.org

The project plans to be able to accept applications on line within one (1) year.

In addition to using funds through the AT Act of 1998 as amended to support operating costs, the program has been funded by a grant through RSA's Access to Telework competition, state funds through a supplemental appropriation and the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, and private contributions from the Weinberg Foundation, the Marriott Foundation, the Herbert Bearman Foundation, the Peroutka Foundation, the State Employees Credit Union of Maryland and the Ride-Away Corporation.

During the first year of this plan,

During Year 2, an intern will be recruited to assist with marketing the program and developing relationships with agencies and companies that may help to create new telework opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities. The program recognizes this dual-pronged approach is necessary to not only tap the limited, existing market for telework loans, but to help increase the market by expanding the number of teleworkers. Marketing efforts will include direct mail and e-mail. To develop new markets, the program will provide technical assistance to telework support agencies, microenterprise organizations, other self-employment assistance agencies and employers to increase telework opportunities in Maryland. The program will link organizations to support one another (e.g., connect employers with the Division of Rehabilitation Services) and provide training (e.g., instruct microenterprise organizations to use work incentives in the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program to help protect benefits and fund self-employment services).

3) The **Maryland AT Co-op**, a private, nonprofit organization created by MD TAP, will provide discounts on a wide variety of AT products. Like other buying cooperatives, the Co-op serves its members by using their buying power to persuade vendors and manufacturers to offer the lowest prices. These companies understand that, by providing the deepest discounts, they will capture the large share of the market comprised by the Co-op's member organizations and individuals. Starting with nearly all of Maryland's local school systems as its members, the Co-op has grown to include state agencies, colleges and universities, private schools and nonprofit agencies, and is now pursuing expansion into other states. The organization asks vendors for bids on hundreds of AT products twice a year. The Co-op offers discounts on AT products to individuals with disabilities and their families as well as member organizations. Members may also receive discounts on AT trainings hosted by the Co-op.

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By reducing purchase costs, the Co-op (a) helps individuals afford to buy AT products and (b) helps organizations to purchase more AT with limited budgets, thus serving more people.

The Co-op will provide discounts to any organization or individual in Maryland that becomes a member, as well as to organizations in other states that form partnerships with the Co-op. There is no fee to join, and no obligation to buy through the Co-op.

Anyone interested in joining may contact the Co-op at:

(866) 928-5278 (voice; TTY callers please dial “711” for Maryland Relay)

info@matcoop.org

www.matcoop.org

The Co-op covers its costs by retaining a small percentage of the discounts it negotiates, passing along the bulk of the savings to the organizations and individuals who buy through it. It will also receive funds through the AT Act of 1998 as amended. MD TAP staff (funded by AT Act funds) will actively help to market the Co-op to expand its membership, MD TAP and the Co-op will continue to make mutual referrals to jointly serve individuals (e.g., MD TAP refers individuals to funding sources and provides loans through the Assistive Technology Financial Loan Program to pay for AT, while the Co-op provides discounts to reduce purchase costs), MD TAP collaborates with the Co-op to host trainings and conferences, and MD TAP provides in-kind support (including photocopying, postage and clerical support) to the Co-op.

In the past eighteen months, the Co-op has added discounts on products from 51 vendors and manufacturers, 26 of which provide discounts on their entire product lines. 38 additional organizations have joined the Co-op, including higher education institutions, private schools, state agencies, libraries, vocational service agencies, disability specific agencies, and others. The organization has also established a partnership with an educational buying consortium in eastern Tennessee to offer discounts to the school systems it serves.

The Co-op will pursue additional expansion of member organizations and product lines during year 2.

4) The **Voice for Freedom** project will provide communication evaluations, devices and training for nursing home residents who have communication disorders and want to live in the community. MD TAP will operate the project jointly with the Freedom Center, one of Maryland’s centers for independent living. While nursing home residents can use Medicaid Waiver funding to receive services in the community and move into their own homes, these programs will not pay for communication devices and services until the individuals are within two weeks of moving. Residents with speech disorders need effective communication well in advance of moving so they can express their desires, plan their futures and advocate for their needs. Voice for Freedom will deliver services long before residents leave nursing homes. This will help ensure that people move to the community more quickly and that community services better fit individuals’ preferences. MD TAP hopes to use data showing Voice for Freedom’s success to persuade Maryland Medicaid to change its policy to cover communication devices for nursing home residents months before

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they move to their own homes. If this effort succeeds, the resulting policy change will eliminate the need to continue the project, as individuals will be able to receive timely services through Medicaid. This state plan will then be amended.

Voice for Freedom will be available statewide to nursing home residents with communication disorders who are seeking to move to the community. There are no restrictions on age or income level, and the limit on type of disability (communication disorder) is only designed to ensure that individuals need communication devices. Maryland's six (6) centers for independent living and other nonprofit agencies will refer people to the project, or they may refer themselves by contacting MD TAP at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)
 1-866-881-7488 (TTY)
markland@mdod.state.md.us
www.mdtpap.org

Freedom Center and MD TAP staff will receive referrals, ensure all individuals are connected with centers for independent living for assistance, schedule evaluation and training and purchase communication devices. Devices will be purchased solely using private grant funds from the Verizon Foundation. United Cerebral Palsy's No Boundaries program will provide the evaluations and training.

In addition to its funding through the AT Act of 1998 as amended (which will pay for MD TAP staffing to co-administer the project with the Freedom Center), Voice for Freedom is funded by private grants from the Verizon Foundation (which will pay for communication devices and training) and United Cerebral Palsy (which will pay for evaluations) and Independent Living funds through RSA (which will pay for Freedom Center staffing for the project).

During Year 1, Voice for Freedom provided its full range of services to three individuals and is currently serving a fourth. It will serve additional individuals during Year 2.

5) MD TAP will partner with **wheelchair ramp construction projects** to boost their capacity to provide ramps at very low prices to Marylanders with disabilities. State agencies and centers for independent living report that ramps are one of the greatest needs to enable people with physical disabilities to remain in their own homes or return to homes in the community from institutions, but the high cost of many ramps (thousands of dollars) make them unaffordable for many. MD TAP will work with Holly Community, Inc. and the Living Classrooms Foundation (LCF) to expand low-cost wheelchair ramp construction on the Eastern Shore and in the Baltimore area during the first two (2) project years, and will seek a third partner in the third year. Another project operates independently in one Western Maryland county.

MD TAP will jointly administer the ramping projects with local nonprofit organizations. MD TAP's role will include securing participation by various agencies to provide volunteer labor, enlisting licensed building contractors to oversee ramp construction, locating free storage for lumber and supplies, recruiting engineers to develop master schematic drawings of modular ramps to keep on file with local building permit offices, arranging fee-for-service

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payments for ramps through the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Medicaid Waiver programs, and providing loans to finance ramps through the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program and the Telework and Self-Employment Loan Program.

On the Eastern Shore, the project has enlisted the Wicomico County Department of Corrections, the Wicomico County Public Schools, MAC, Inc. (the area agency on aging) and licensed home improvement contractors to provide volunteer labor and licensing to support the project. The projects will use modular ramp construction, a method that reduces the labor required to build ramps and makes it easier to disassemble them when they are no longer needed and move them to new locations.

In Baltimore, the Living Classrooms Foundation (which is already a licensed contractor) is developing a business plan to resurrect its ramp project. The original project employed Americorps members as its labor force, but was discontinued several years ago.

Individuals can receive information about ramp projects by contacting MD TAP at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)
 1-866-881-7488 (TTY)
mdalto@mdod.state.md.us
www.mdmap.org

These programs will serve only a limited number of Maryland counties, but MD TAP will continue to create new partnerships in future years in hope of eventually serving more jurisdictions. Ramp recipients must have disabilities that make ramps necessary, but there are no other restrictions on type of disability, and projects will serve people of all ages.

These programs will be funded by the AT Act of 1998 as amended (to pay for MD TAP staffing to provide the coordination outlined in the second paragraph above), private contributions and donated materials, Independent Living funds through RSA, and possibly Americorps funds through the Corporation for National Service. The programs will also apply to become vendors for the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Maryland's Medicaid Waiver programs so they can charge fees from those agencies for some ramps. The programs will refer recipients who need loans to help fund ramps to the Assistive Technology Financial Loan Program and the Telework and Self-Employment Loan Program.

The Wicomico County ramp project is scheduled to construct its first ramp on July 29, 2006. It plans to construct 9 – 10 ramps per year. The Baltimore City ramp project plans to begin operation during Year 2; MD TAP has assigned an intern to support the effort.

6) In collaboration with the Maryland Department of Disabilities/ Emergency Preparedness Division, Telecommunications Access of Maryland and the Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, MD TAP plans to create an **emergency notification system for citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing**. Based on a citizen request, MD TAP contacted the above-listed agencies to develop a system similar to one operated in Maine. That system – funded largely by a grant from the U. S. Department of Homeland Security – provides special pagers to citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing at no cost. In the event of an

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emergency (weather, civil disorder, terrorism, etc.), the system sends text messages to the pagers that provide the same information that hearing citizens receive via other media. MD TAP and the above-listed partners are now researching the best system to use, and may choose a service that can send text messages to other devices (e.g., cell phones, TTY's, personal computers) so the project would not need to purchase special pagers for everyone it serves.

In addition to researching the best system to use, MD TAP will secure grants to support the project (including purchase of pagers or other hardware and the text messaging system), establish the system jointly with its partners, and market the effort to Marylanders who are deaf or hard of hearing. MD TAP will amend the state plan once the program has been established.

Individuals can receive more information by contacting MD TAP at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)
 1-866-881-7488 (TTY)
mdalto@mdod.state.md.us
www.mdmap.org

The system will serve people statewide of any age and income level. Its restriction on type of disability (deaf or hard of hearing) only ensures that individuals served need the type of technology provided. In addition to funds through the AT Act of 1998 as amended, the collaborating partners will seek funding from the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, an additional state appropriation, and private contributions.

MD TAP collaborated with the Emergency Preparedness Division of the Maryland Department of Disabilities to research the initiative during year 1. The Maryland Department of Homeland Security and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency are supporting local homeland security/emergency management agencies to use accessible emergency notification systems, most notably one developed by Roam Secure, a vendor that is now operating a text-based system in the greater Washington, DC area, including several Maryland jurisdictions.

Research and development will continue during year 2.

5.2 Device Reutilization Program – Describe how the State will implement a device reutilization program as described in section 4(e)(2)(B) of the Act.

MD TAP plans to initiate three (3) device reutilization programs within two years and continue their operation during the remainder of the three-year term of this state plan. The three (3) programs will be at least partially funded through AT Act dollars. Each reutilization program increases acquisition of AT by enabling individuals to obtain used AT at no cost or at a reduced cost compared to the cost of new AT. The durable medical equipment recycling program targets individuals with low incomes who could not afford to buy needed equipment and who will receive it free through the program. The equipment

State: Maryland

exchange program and the AT auction are available to anyone and provide a lower cost alternative to people who have been denied funding from other sources.

1) MD TAP has formed a partnership with Maryland's Medicaid agency to create a statewide **durable medical equipment (DME) recycling program**. "Durable medical equipment" includes wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, lifts, home care beds, commodes, communication devices and other items. The program will deliver recycled equipment at no cost to people with disabilities who are either Medicaid beneficiaries or have limited incomes. It will combine features of programs operating in New Jersey and Kansas. New Jersey's Medicaid agency awarded a contract to a private equipment vendor to recycle DME purchased by Medicaid and provide it to Medicaid beneficiaries. By providing recycled rather than new DME, the program saved Medicaid \$2.5 million in its first year. The Kansas program, also funded by Medicaid, recycles equipment purchased by Medicaid and donated DME purchased by other sources (private insurance, private pay, etc.). In addition to providing recycled DME to Medicaid beneficiaries, the program can serve individuals with limited means and no DME insurance coverage, offering them recycled devices that no Medicaid beneficiary needs within 120 days of recycling. Contingent on approval by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Maryland's program will be designed to (a) collect, sanitize and recycle/refurbish DME that was purchased by Medicaid or a Medicaid managed care organization, or donated by individuals or agencies who received it through other funding sources; (b) deliver recycled DME to Medicaid beneficiaries approved for specific DME, to Medicaid beneficiaries who have not been approved for specific DME (e.g., a person who lives in a nursing facility or who lives in the community and needs a backup wheelchair when Medicaid purchased the first chair), and to individuals with low incomes who are not Medicaid eligible and who lack sufficient insurance for DME – at no cost to recipients; and (c) ensure that people with disabilities constitute at least a set percentage of its workforce for the program.

MD TAP has researched best practices in other states, written a request for proposals to solicit a contractor to perform most program functions, will participate in negotiations with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services for approval to use Medicaid funds to operate the program, will solicit and coordinate volunteers to deliver equipment to non-Medicaid beneficiaries and train them to use it, and will market the program.

Additional information is available from MD TAP at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)
 1-866-881-7488 (TTY)
mdalto@mdod.state.md.us
www.mdmap.org

The program – projected to begin operation during the second year of this state plan- will serve individuals with disabilities of all ages throughout the state. People served must have disabilities requiring the use of DME and must either be Medicaid beneficiaries or meet income limits. Individuals with higher incomes may, as alternatives to the recycling program, ask MD TAP about funding for DME through insurance, private grants and/or public agencies, and may apply for loans from the Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program. The program will be funded by Medicaid, the AT Act of 1998 as amended (to provide MD

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TAP staffing for the functions listed in the previous paragraph), and by the Corporation for National Service (for MD TAP's Americorps volunteer coordinator). Once the program is operational, an amended plan will be submitted to RSA.

During the first year of this plan, MD TAP co-wrote a request for proposals to solicit a vendor to fulfill many program functions (collecting, sanitizing, refurbishing and storing DME; distributing, training and repairing DME for Medicaid recipients who have been preauthorized to receive it), and secured a volunteer coordinator to recruit volunteers for the project and nurture relationships with agencies to serve as distribution sites for "surplus" DME for individuals who do not receive Medicaid or who are not preauthorized by Medicaid to receive the DME they request. The Medicaid agency initiated a state regulatory change needed to begin operation and consulted with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to ensure the request for proposals would conform with federal requirements. MD TAP and the Medicaid agency have solicited an opinion from the Maryland Office of the Attorney General as to liability issues affecting the vendor and the state regarding the distribution of DME recycled by the vendor but distributed by other agencies (including equipment loans closets, centers for independent living, disability service providers, area agencies on aging and other nonprofits).

During Year 2, the request for proposals should be released, a vendor contracted, partnerships established with agencies to distribute "surplus" devices (i.e, those not needed by preauthorized Medicaid recipients within 120 days), and the project should begin operation. Maryland plans to apply for a three-year AT Device Reuse grant from RSA to serve individuals who lack Medicaid or Medicaid preauthorization for needed DME (i.e., matching individuals with "surplus" DME, distributing DME through agencies, providing training in proper use and maintenance, and linking users with the vendor in the event repairs are needed).

2) MD TAP will establish a statewide **equipment exchange program** during the coming year. The program – an on-line classified ad system for used AT - will enable individuals, families, agencies, etc. to acquire used AT from others who want to either sell, donate or lend it. Individuals and agencies can place ads on the system for equipment they want to donate, sell, lend or acquire. The program will especially help people and agencies that can't afford to buy new equipment and/or have been denied funding from other sources. The Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) has graciously offered to donate the source code for its equipment exchange database program to replicate the effort in Maryland. MD TAP will be hiring the developer to customize the database for Maryland, and the Maryland AT Co-op has agreed to host the database on its web site. After having the database customized, MD TAP will begin marketing the Exchange, offering customer service and maintaining the database. The exchange will link individuals who wish to sell or donate used AT with others who want to acquire it; the parties will negotiate sale prices (if any) themselves. Listings will be free for anyone wishing to give or receive equipment. The program will be available on line with links to neighboring states' exchange programs. Hard copies and alterne formats will be available on request.

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Additional information is available from MD TAP at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)
1-866-881-7488 (TTY)
mdalto@mdod.state.md.us
www.mdmap.org

The program will be available statewide to meet the needs of individuals with all types of disabilities of all ages and income levels. It will be funded entirely through AT Act funds.

During Year 1, MD TAP hired DATP's contractor, AgoraNet, to customize the exchange system for Maryland, marketed the program, recruited an intern and a volunteer coordinator to maintain the database and update it daily, and launched the site on July 17, 2006 with over 50 listed items. MD TAP also collaborated with 18 other states to hire AgoraNet to develop an upgraded version of the database.

In Year 2, MD TAP will continue operation of the site and secure an upgrade through AgoraNet.

3) MD TAP will participate in **ATMATCH.com**, a fully accessible internet auction site for used AT, which is generously sponsored by Assistive Technology for Kansans at no cost to statewide AT programs. The site will enable users to locate specific AT devices at reasonable prices (or, in some cases, for donation), post equipment for sale, and locate state AT resources. DME providers may advertise equipment at the AT Store link.

MD TAP will register on the site and market it to potential users and assist them as necessary to use it (using funds from the AT Act of 1998 as amended). AT for Kansans will maintain the site and generate quarterly data reports on the number of Marylanders using the site, the number of items they registered for sale and the number of items they acquired.

Additional information is available from MD TAP at:

1-800-832-4827 (voice)
1-866-881-7488 (TTY)
mdalto@mdod.state.md.us
www.mdmap.org

The program will be available statewide to meet the needs of individuals with all types of disabilities of all ages and income levels. It will be funded entirely through AT Act funds.

MD TAP focused on its equipment exchange program (see 2. above) during the first plan year, but will initiate Maryland's participation in ATMATCH.com during Year 2.

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5.3 Device Loan Program – Describe how the State will implement a device loan program as described in section 4(e)(2)(C) of the Act.

MD TAP will provide access to AT devices and software by lending them to individuals, family members, professionals and agencies throughout the state. The program will increase access to AT in several ways. Individual borrowers may use devices to try out before deciding to buy (or otherwise acquire) them or as “loaners” when devices are being repaired or replaced. Professionals and agencies may use products to evaluate the AT needs of individuals they serve, provide trials with devices to ensure they are appropriate for individuals, and to provide training to use devices effectively. Products may be borrowed for up to four (4) weeks (or longer if an item is not in demand by other borrowers).

AT for loan will be housed at six (6) locations throughout the state: a central loan center in Baltimore and regional sites in Salisbury, Cambridge, Hagerstown, Cumberland and Columbia. MD TAP operates the Baltimore site directly. The Salisbury and Cambridge sites on Maryland’s Eastern Shore are operated by the Holly Community, Inc. under contract with MD TAP; the Cambridge site is located at the Eastern Shore Center for Independent Living. MD TAP contracts with AT:LAST, Inc. to operate the Hagerstown, Cumberland and Columbia sites.

Items for loan include augmentative communication devices, electronic enlarging systems (portable and free standing), computer access devices, electronic note-takers, assistive listening systems, environmental controls, adaptive telecommunications devices, adaptive toys, switches and aids for daily living. MD TAP will also lend laptop computers loaded with adaptive software (including screen readers, screen enhancers, text readers and special education software) to professionals.

MD TAP and its contractors will staff the program, maintaining an equipment inventory; arranging for product shipment and delivery; tracking loaner products and arranging for their return; maintaining, repairing and replacing devices; and serving customers.

For more information, please contact:

Eastern Shore

Holly Community, Inc.
 (877) 511-0744 (voice; TTY callers please dial “711” for Maryland Relay)
ptingle@hollycommunity.org
www.hollycommunity.org

Western Maryland

AT:LAST, Inc.
 (866) 928-5278 (voice; TTY callers please dial “711” for Maryland Relay)
info@matcoop.org
www.matcoop.org

State: Maryland

All Other Maryland Jurisdictions

MD TAP

1-800-832-4827 (voice)

1-866-881-7488 (TTY)

jvollmer@mdod.state.md.us

The device loan program is available to individuals and agencies statewide. They may visit the loan centers and/or have products shipped to them by the program. MD TAP is exploring the option of creating a network of state employees to deliver the most expensive and fragile devices to locations near borrowers' homes as an alternative to shipping. The program will provide products for loan to meet the needs of people with all types of disabilities of all ages.

The program will be funded entirely through the AT Act.

MD TAP hired two new part-time AT Specialists during Year 1 to operate the Baltimore site, while operations continued at the other five (5) locations.

5.4 Device Demonstration Program – Describe how the State will implement a device demonstration program as described in section 4(e)(2)(D) of the Act.

MD TAP will demonstrate AT devices and software to individuals, family members, professionals and agencies throughout the state. The program will increase access to AT by providing information about and exposure to a variety of AT that may meet individuals' needs, highlighting a variety of devices and explaining their benefits and differences. Knowledgeable staff will provide personal assistance to individuals and groups, presenting and demonstrating devices to meet individual needs so that individuals may make informed choices. The program will coordinate fully with the device loan program so that customers may use the demonstration program to help identify appropriate devices (coupled, when necessary, with professional evaluations) and the loan program to borrow them to try out.

AT for demonstration will be housed at six (6) locations throughout the state: a central demonstration center in Baltimore and regional sites in Salisbury, Cambridge, Hagerstown, Cumberland and Columbia. MD TAP operates the Baltimore site directly. The Salisbury and Cambridge sites on Maryland's Eastern Shore are operated by the Holly Community, Inc. under contract with MD TAP; the Cambridge site is located at the Eastern Shore Center for Independent Living. MD TAP contracts with AT:LAST, Inc. to operate the Hagerstown, Cumberland and Columbia sites. Although most device demonstrations will occur at these designated sites, program staff may provide off-site demonstrations when individuals are unable to travel to a demonstration center, and for group presentations.

Items for demonstration include augmentative communication devices, electronic enlarging systems (portable and free standing), computer access devices, electronic note-takers, assistive listening systems, environmental controls, adaptive telecommunications devices, adaptive toys, switches and aids for daily living. MD TAP will also use laptop computers to demonstrate adaptive software (including screen readers, screen enhancers, text readers and

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special education software). Adaptive telecommunications devices are provided at the demonstration centers through a partnership with the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications program (see description in 5.1 State Financing Activities above).

MD TAP and its contractors will staff the program, maintaining an equipment inventory; scheduling on-site and off-site demonstrations; conducting demonstrations; maintaining, repairing and replacing devices; and serving customers.

For more information, please contact:

Eastern Shore

Holly Community, Inc.
(877) 511-0744 (voice; TTY callers please dial “711” for Maryland Relay)
ptingle@hollycommunity.org
www.hollycommunity.org

Western Maryland

AT:LAST, Inc.
(866) 928-5278 (voice; TTY callers please dial “711” for Maryland Relay)
info@matcoop.org
www.matcoop.org

All Other Maryland Jurisdictions

MD TAP
1-800-832-4827 (voice)
1-866-881-7488 (TTY)
jvollmer@mdod.state.md.us
www.mdtap.org

The device demonstration program is available to individuals and agencies statewide. They may visit the demonstration centers and/or receive off-site demonstrations when necessary. The program will demonstrate devices to meet the needs of people with all types of disabilities of all ages.

The program will be funded entirely through the AT Act.

During Year 1, MD TAP hired two new part-time AT Specialists to operate the Baltimore site, while operations continued at the other five (5) locations. MD TAP also assisted the Easter Seal Society’s Greater Baltimore Washington Region to establish an AT demonstration center in Montgomery County, Maryland. MD TAP has introduced Easter Seals administrators to the Verizon Foundation and is co-writing a grant proposal to fund AT to stock the center, which is scheduled for completion in 2007. MD TAP has helped Easter Seals select products to feature in the center, which will provide device

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demonstrations to individuals with all disabilities of all ages, family members and professionals. The center will be the first ever located in Maryland's southern region.

MD TAP also initiated a partnership with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), which has agreed to conduct joint device demonstrations with MD TAP using the NFB's technology center in Baltimore, which houses \$2.5 million in state-of-the-art nonvisual access technology.

MD TAP will continue assisting the Easter Seal Society and will begin joint device demonstrations with the NFB during year 2.

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Attachment 6: Comparable Support

6.1 Source and Amount of Support – Identify the State-level activity for which there is comparable support, the source of this support, the amount of the support, and the project year for which this support is being provided.

Not applicable

6.2 Comparability -- Demonstrate that this support is comparable in terms of funding and that the activities are comparable in terms of scope.

Not applicable

6.3 Coordination and Collaboration – Describe how the State will coordinate activities and collaborate with the appropriate entity, if the comparable funds are provided to, or the activities are conducted by, an entity other than the Lead Agency or Implementing Entity.

Not applicable

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Attachment 7: State Flexibility

7.1 Activity – Identify each State-level activity the State is choosing not to carry out.

Not applicable

7.2 Maintenance of Statewideness and Comprehensiveness – Demonstrate that the Statewide AT Program will continue to be comprehensive without conducting this activity.

Not applicable

7.3 Achievement of Measurable Goals - Demonstrate that the State can reach its measurable education goals, employment goals, telecommunications and information technology goals, and community living goals without conducting such activities.

Not applicable

7.4 Coordination and Collaboration – Describe how the Lead Agency or Implementing Entity will coordinate activities and collaborate with entities in the State that do conduct this activity, if the State chooses not to conduct this activity because another entity already conducts it.

Not applicable

Attachment 8: State Leadership Activities

8.1 Training and Technical Assistance Activities – Describe how the State will provide training and technical assistance to enhance the knowledge, skills, and competencies of individuals from local settings statewide, including representatives of State and local educational agencies, other State and local agencies, early intervention programs, adult service programs, hospitals and other health care facilities, institutions of higher education and businesses as described in section 4(e)(3)(B)(i) of the AT Act.

Training

MD TAP and its contractors will provide a series of workshops on a variety of topics relevant to AT, accessible electronic and information technology, and accessible telecommunications. MD TAP will host over 40 training sessions per year jointly with the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services. These events will be marketed to state and local education agencies, other state and local agencies, private nonprofit service providers, adult service providers, early intervention programs, colleges and universities, health care facilities and private vendors. Training will be provided by MD TAP staff, Division of Rehabilitation Services staff, vendor representatives and other guest speakers. Topics will include:

- Overview of AT
- Nuts and Bolts of Accessible IT
- AT Funding
- Accessible Software for Education
- Vendor demonstrations of emerging technologies

Other workshops will include a selection from the following topics:

- AT Assessment
- Accessible Telecommunications
- Office Ergonomics
- Home Modifications
- Alerting and Signaling Devices
- AT for People with Blindness and Low Vision
- AT for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- AT for People with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities
- Computer Access for People with Physical Disabilities
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- Workplace Accommodations
- Text Readers
- Mobility Aids
- Low-Tech Aids for Daily Living
- Electronic Aids for Daily Living (Environmental Control Devices)
- Alternatives to Handwritten Notes

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The Holly Community will provide 12 trainings per year on the Eastern Shore through its contract with MD TAP on subjects chosen from the above list.

AT:LAST will host a vast number of training events, both statewide and regional. The agency will feature nationally-renowned presenters at 24 workshops per year on topics related to AT implementation. They will focus on AT use in education, for senior citizens, and in employment (with employers as the target group). AT:LAST will deliver an average of 36 hands-on regional trainings and followup sessions for education professionals; the current focus is on using AT to help middle school students with disabilities to reach the adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirement of the No Child Left Behind law. Finally, AT:LAST will conduct 24 “user group” sessions per year on very specific topics of interest to educators. The two current user groups are addressing the use of Intellitools for switch users and to develop curriculum materials using Don Johnston’s Solo software suite.

MD TAP and the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services jointly provide training for recipients of adapted telephones and telecommunications devices for the deaf distributed through the **Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program**. This state-run program provides, at no cost to recipients, accessible telecommunications devices to Maryland residents who have disabilities that make standard telephone use difficult, and who meet age and income criteria ((a) must be at least five years old and either (b) receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) or Temporary Emergency Medical and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) benefits or (c) document financial hardship.

MD TAP will also provide customized training for organizations ensuring audiences of at least 20 participants, tailoring sessions to meet audience needs.

In addition to the activities described above, MD TAP established a partnership with the National Federation of the Blind to provide joint technology training, which will be initiated during Year 2.

Technical Assistance

MD TAP is planning to provide specific types of technical assistance during the next three years, and will also deliver assistance to agencies and organizations upon request.

MD TAP completed a Memorandum of Understanding (the document that enables state agencies to provide services to one another) with the Maryland Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to technically assist the agency to implement Maryland’s Information Technology Non-Visual Access Policy. The new policy requires state agencies and state and community colleges to procure information technology products and provide web sites that are non-visually accessible and compatible with AT used by individuals who are blind or have low vision. MD TAP will evaluate DBM’s web site for accessibility and support DBM staff to correct any areas of noncompliance, to establish the DBM site as a model of accessible design for other state agencies. MD TAP staff will also train and technically assist

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procurement officers and evaluation teams from state agencies to procure accessible information technology products.

MD TAP initiated services through the Memorandum of Understanding during Year 1, and will complete them during Year 2.

MD TAP also advised the web developer for the Maryland Department of Disabilities to design the Department's new web site accessibly. The web site was completed with MD TAP's consultation during Year 1.

MD TAP seeks to support improved reading and writing skills for students with disabilities and other students struggling with literacy by promoting broader use of text readers in K – 12 public schools. The agency organized a multi-agency task force to evaluate nine (9) of the most popular text reading software products and complete a comprehensive comparison matrix to highlight the features and strengths of each. Equipped with the matrix and research demonstrating the efficacy of text readers for a broad range of students, MD TAP will, in partnership with education agencies, encourage local school systems to purchase more of these products, ideally for use in every classroom. MD TAP and its partners will also negotiate with vendors for discounted pricing for broad-scale deployment of text readers to make the effort more affordable for school systems.

MD TAP assembled and began convening the task force during Year 1. The matrix will be completed and distributed within Maryland. MD TAP will also seek to disseminate the report nationally through a journal article and a national conference.

MD TAP will technically assist other agencies upon request.

Transition

MD TAP will provide statewide training and technical assistance to people transitioning from institutions to homes in the community through two programs: Voice for Freedom (see 5.1 State Financing Activities) and the durable medical equipment recycling program (see 5.2 Device Reutilization Program). Voice for Freedom will train people in nursing homes who are seeking to re-enter the community to use communication devices that the project will provide. The recycling program will deliver training to people in nursing homes to whom the project provides durable medical equipment. Medicaid does not fund equipment for beneficiaries in nursing facilities, so these programs are essential for individuals who need communication devices and durable medical equipment to return to the community. The recycling program will also serve nursing home residents with limited incomes who are not Medicaid eligible. Although it will not provide training or technical assistance, the wheelchair ramp construction effort (see 5.1 State Financing Activities) will help to overcome one of the greatest obstacles to community reintegration for nursing home residents: the dearth of accessible homes. Communication devices enable nursing home residents to voice their preferences for community services, participate in planning meetings and advocate for their departure from institutions; durable medical equipment provides greater mobility and independence to facilitate community living; ramps make homes in the

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community more accessible. By providing both equipment and the training to use it properly, the projects will directly aid individuals to move to their own homes.

MD TAP, AT:LAST, Inc. and the Division of Rehabilitation Services jointly convened a statewide conference on transitioning from K – 12 settings to employment or post-secondary education during the first year of this state plan. The conference featured an extensive session on the role of AT in the transition process by Joy Zabala, a nationally-renowned expert; breakout sessions on topics including collaboration between local school systems and the Division of Rehabilitation Services, how students and families can advocate for their interests, the role of higher education institutions, AT for nonvisual access, AT in employment and the roles of employers and service providers, and AT funding sources and strategies. The conference targeted an audience of individuals with disabilities of transition age and their families, K – 12 educators and administrators, adult service providers, college and university staff and administrators, state agency administrators and policy makers. Based on conference results, participant survey responses and advisory council recommendations, MD TAP will plan training and technical assistance activities to support AT in transition during the second and third years of this plan. MD TAP will amend this plan to reflect those activities.

MD TAP brokered memoranda of understanding between the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and each of four (4) local school systems to facilitate a seamless system of AT provision and training for students transitioning from secondary school to postsecondary education and/or employment. Apparently unprecedented in the nation, these agreements establish partnerships in which DORS and local school systems jointly ensure AT assessments during the second-to-last year of high school, DORS purchases devices needed for higher education or employment early during the final high school year, and the local school system delivers training to students throughout the final year of high school to use devices. The effort creates a system in which students will complete high school equipped with AT to which they may retain permanent access, and adequate training and experience to use it effectively for college and/or work.

MD TAP will broker at least one additional agreement during Year 2.

8.2 Public Awareness Activities – Describe how the State will provide information to targeted individuals and entities relating to the availability, benefits, appropriateness, and costs of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services as described in section 4(e)(3)(B)(ii) of the AT Act.

During the next three years, MD TAP will use information and referral, mailings, internet, exhibits, presentations and trainings to increase awareness about the benefits of assistive technology devices and services, the types of AT devices and services available, funding for AT devices and services, and policies related to AT. Activities will include:

Information and Referral – MD TAP and its regional affiliates provide free information and referral via toll-free telephone for people of all ages with all disabilities and their families, service providers, educators, other professionals and businesses. Staff provide information about availability, benefits, appropriateness, and cost of AT devices and

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services, as well as potential funding sources. Staff also mail resource guides and device information to callers to help them make informed decisions about AT. Staff and volunteers also offer more intensive, followup support to callers who request it or who appear to need it.

Newsletter – MD TAP publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Tapping Technology*, that is available on its web site and is mailed in alternative formats upon request. The publication features news about MD TAP programs, state and federal disability-related legislation, emerging technologies and new products, developments in accessible information technology, upcoming trainings and special events. The Holly Community publishes its newsletter bimonthly

Web site – The web site (www.mdmap.org) displays detailed information about MD TAP's programs (including the financial loan programs, the buying co-op, device demonstration and loan programs, information and referral service and accessible information technology in education project). New initiatives will be added as they begin. The site also features resource guides, training schedules, the newsletter, AT and accessible information technology resources and links. The Maryland Department of Disabilities (of which MD TAP is a division) developed a new web site during Year 1 into which MD TAP's site was subsumed. It will add on-line applications for the financial loan programs during Year 2.

MD TAP's regional contractors also detail their AT initiatives on their web sites: the Holly Community, Inc. at www.hollycommunity.org and AT:LAST, Inc. at www.matcoop.org.

AT:LAST, Inc. houses the equipment exchange on its web site (www.matcoop.org).

Resource Fairs and Conferences – MD TAP and its contractors will host display booths and provide demonstrations at local, regional, statewide and national conferences and meetings, including Closing the Gap, the Governor's Conference on Vital Aging, the World of Possibilities Expo., several statewide annual employment conferences, Maryland Assistive Technology Network conferences, Maryland Instructional Computing Coordinators Association conferences, Chamber of Commerce and small business events, health fairs, community college conferences, senior and education fairs and numerous others.

Publications – An array of training materials and publications addressing numerous AT and accessible information technology issues for people with various disabilities of all ages are available, and are provided in alternative formats on request.

8.3 Coordination and Collaboration – Describe how the State will coordinate activities among public and private entities that are responsible for policies, procedures, or funding for the provision of assistive technology devices and assistive technology services to individuals with disabilities, service providers, and others to improve access to assistive technology devices and assistive technology services as described in section 4(e)(3)(B)(iii) of the AT Act.

State: Maryland

MD TAP will coordinate and collaborate with public and private entities to improve access to AT, accessible information technology and telecommunications. Initiatives begun during Year 1 include:

- Providing web accessibility services to Maryland state government agencies to ensure their web sites conform with Maryland's IT Nonvisual Access standards (which for web sites are identical to the standards of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act), and to encourage them to meet the higher standards of accessibility and usability of Priority AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. MD TAP has hired one consultant and is interviewing for another to execute the project, which will evaluate nearly half of state agency web sites, document areas of nonconformance, recommend remediation strategies, and provide training and technical assistance to implement corrective actions.

The project will operate during Year 2, and state funds are being sought to continue the project in Year 3 to complete all state agency sites.

- Preparing an action plan to ensure access to instructional materials for students with print disabilities in public institutions of higher education. Mandated by Maryland legislation passed in 2006 (Senate Bill 282 and House Bill 710), the report will most likely recommend a central coordinating entity to receive requests from students and academic institutions, contact publishers to request electronic files of instructional materials, maintain an inventory of these files, deliver them to students and/or academic institutions, coordinate production of alternate formats when necessary, and work with publishers to ensure that electronic files are as accessible as possible.

MD TAP hired a consultant to prepare the report, is assembling a focus group to ensure stakeholders provide recommendations, and is contacting state agencies that should be involved in implementation. The report will be completed during Year 2 (if not before), and MD TAP is requesting state funding to implement the action plan.

MD TAP anticipates these and other collaborations in the next two years.

Attachment 9: Involvement of Public and Private Entities

9.1 Nature and Extent of Resources – Describe the nature and extent of resources that will be committed by public and private collaborators to assist in accomplishing identified goals.

Public and private collaborators will contribute extensively to the activities outlined in attachments 5 and 8.

AT:LAST, Inc. will operate the Maryland AT Co-op, providing staff, facilities, supplies, telecommunications, printing, postage, etc. funded mostly by retaining a small share of the purchase discounts offered by vendors on AT purchases by Co-op members.

The Freedom Center will jointly administer Voice for Freedom with MD TAP, providing staff, office space, supplies, telecommunications, printing and postage as in-kind contributions. The other five centers for independent living will provide some in-kind staff support to make referrals to the project, assist individuals to secure small grants for evaluations and training, and complete surveys. The Verizon Foundation has provided a \$20,000 grant to fund communication devices and training, and United Cerebral Palsy will provide small grants to individuals to fund evaluations.

The modular wheelchair ramp construction projects will receive in-kind staff, facilities, transportation, supplies, telecommunications, printing, postage, etc. from the primary partners, the Holly Community, Inc. and the Living Classrooms Foundation. The Wicomico County Department of Corrections will provide in-kind labor and transportation; the Wicomico County Public Schools, Habitat for Humanity and other nonprofits will contribute additional in-kind labor and Blind Industries and Services of Maryland has committed donated storage space for lumber and supplies.

AT:LAST, Inc. will host the equipment exchange on its web site. The Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative is providing the source code for its database pro bono.

Assistive Technology for Kansans has offered free hosting of the ATMATCH.com auction site and will provide free quarterly data reports on site use by Marylanders.

The Eastern Shore Center for Independent Living and the Western Maryland Hospital Center donate space for the device loan and device demonstration program sites in Cambridge and Hagerstown. The Easter Seal Society and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) will participate in device demonstration through the partnerships described above. The Easter Seal Society will house a device demonstration center in the southern region, and the NFB will share its technology demonstration center with MD TAP for joint demonstrations.

MD TAP also has a volunteer coordinator through the Americorps program who will solicit additional volunteers for the durable medical equipment recycling program and the wheelchair ramp construction projects; the Corporation for National Service heavily

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subsidizes the volunteer coordinator's compensation, and community agencies and individuals will contribute volunteer labor.

AT:LAST, Inc., the Holly Community, Inc. and the NFB will provide facilities for training during.

The Center for Technology in Education provides a computer lab for the Text Reader Task Force.

The public school systems in Howard, Frederick, Charles and Allegany Counties will provide staff for training to transitioning students on the AT devices purchased through the Memoranda of Understanding with the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services.

9.2 Mechanisms to Ensure Coordination - Describe the mechanisms established to ensure coordination of activities and collaboration between the implementing entity, if any, and the State.

Not applicable

9.3 Involvement of State Advisory Council - Describe the nature and extent of the involvement of the State Advisory Council in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the activities carried out through the grant, including setting the measurable goals required in section 4(d)(3).

The Advisory Council met once before this plan was submitted to review potential goals and projects for the statewide AT project and to ensure that MD TAP's activities would meet the needs of individuals with all disabilities of all ages statewide. The Council has met quarterly to evaluate progress in meeting goals, to recommend changes in or alternatives to state plan goals and initiatives, and suggest additional partnerships. The Council will guide and review any future state plan amendments.

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Attachment 10: State Support

10.1 State Support for State-level Activities – If applicable, describe how the State will support with State funds any State-level activities described in section 4(e)(2).

The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services provides in-kind space for MD TAP's office and Baltimore device loan and device demonstration programs, as well as in-kind contributions covering utilities, telecommunications, photocopying, supplies, postage, meeting and surplus AT storage facilities and building security. The Division also designates a portion of the effort of one full-time AT specialist on its staff to help coordinate the Baltimore device loan and device demonstration programs. MD TAP and the Division of Rehabilitation Services regularly borrow AT for demonstration and loan from each other.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities, Telecommunications Access of Maryland and the Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will provide in-kind staffing, facilities and related amenities to initiate and operate the emergency notification system for Marylanders who are deaf and hard of hearing. The Maryland Accessible Telecommunications Program is expected to secure and distribute devices needed by program participants to receive emergency text messages.

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, which administers Maryland's Medicaid program, will provide in-kind staffing and related support to initiate the durable medical equipment recycling program, and will fund a contractor to conduct most program activities.

10.2 State Support for State Leadership Activities - If applicable, describe how the State will support with State funds any State Leadership activities described in section 4(e)(3), if applicable.

The Maryland Department of Budget and Management (DBM) provided funding of \$25,000 through a Memorandum of Understanding to pay MD TAP to deliver training and technical assistance to implement Maryland's Non-Visual Access policy.

The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services provides AT specialists to conduct AT training and conduct device-specific training for the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications program.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services provides space and amenities for training and the AT and Transition Conference, and will purchase the AT devices required by the Memoranda of Understanding for transitioning students.

The Maryland Department of Disabilities has provided funding for the state agency web accessibility project, for the preparation of the action plan to ensure access to instructional materials for higher education students, and provides the services of its web developer for MD TAP's web site.

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Attachment 11: Allocation and Utilization of Funds

11.1 Tracking Expenditures – Describe planned procedures for tracking expenditures for activities described in sections 4(e)(2) and (3).

All units of Maryland State government track income and expenditures using the Statewide Accounting and Reimbursement System (STARS). MD TAP also employs spread sheets of its own financial transactions to capture finer details that escape the STARS system. MD TAP will separately code State Level, State Leadership, and Transition Activities, as well as Indirect Costs. This mechanism will enable MD TAP to verify (as required by the AT Act as amended) that (a) at least 60% of AT Act funds have been used for State Level activities, (b) at least 5% of the funds used for State Leadership activities have been used for Transition activities and (c) no more than 10% of AT Act funds have been used for indirect costs.

11.2 Proposed Budget Allocations – Attach a budget containing proposed allocations for activities described in sections 4(e)(2) and (3).

Proposed expenditures for FY 2006 are as follows:

Proposed Allocation	Distribution	Total Award Amount
		\$381,847
State Level	65%	\$248,200
State Leadership	25%	\$ 95,462
<i>Leadership Activities</i>	<i>95% (of 25%)</i>	<i>\$ 90,689</i>
<i>Transition</i>	<i>5% (of 25%)</i>	<i>\$ 4,773</i>
Indirect Costs	10%	\$ 38,185
TOTAL		\$381,847

The following proposed apportionments for specific activities are estimates.

State Level Activities	Proposed Allocation
State Financing Activities	\$78,200
Device Reutilization Programs	\$30,000
Device Loan Program	\$75,000
Device Demonstration Program	\$65,000

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State Leadership Activities	Proposed Allocation
Training and Technical Assistance Activities	\$43,889
Transition	\$ 4,773
Public Awareness Activities	\$39,000
Coordination and Collaboration	\$ 7,800