

**Part I: Attachments**

OMB Control Number: 1820-0664

Expiration Date: 10/31/2008

**Attachment 1: Basic Information**

Name of Lead Agency: Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Name of Applicable Division and/or Subdivision of Lead Agency: Project START  
(Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology)Address of Lead Agency: 1281 Highway 51 North  
Madison, MS 39110

Name and Title of Certifying Representative for Lead Agency: H. S. McMillan

Address for Certifying Representative: 1281 Highway 51 North  
Madison, MS 39110

Telephone for Certifying Representative: 601-853-5100

E-mail for Certifying Representative: Butch.McMillan@mdrs.state.ms.us

Name and Title of Program Director: Dorothy Young

Address for Program Director: 2550 Peachtree Street  
Jackson, MS 39216

Telephone for Program Director: 601-987-4872

E-mail for Program Director: dyoung@mdrs.state.ms.us

Name of Implementing Entity: Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services

Name of Applicable Division and/or Subdivision of Implementing Entity: Project START (Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology)

Address of Implementing Entity: 1281 Highway 51 North  
Madison, MS 39110

Name and Title of Program Director: Dorothy Young

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Jackson, MS 39216

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## **Attachment 2: Leading 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

In 1995, the Governor designated the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) as the lead agency for the statewide assistive technology project, Project START, (Success Through Assistive Rehabilitative Technology Program). The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services is directly responsible for conducting and overseeing the activities of the statewide AT Program.

Programs and services of MDRS assist individuals with disabilities in gaining employment, retaining employment, and living independently. The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services strongly supports the provision of assistive technology services to Mississippians with disabilities. Through its offices of Vocational Rehabilitation, Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, Special Disability Programs, and Disability Determination Services, the agency provides assistive technology services. In addition to providing coordinated services for its clients, MDRS is committed to providing services to individuals with disabilities of all ages not just in employment but in education, community living, and telecommunications and information technology through Project START. Project START has in the past and will continue to provide Mississippians free access to information and referral services, an accessible webs site, and publications in accessible formats on extensive topics related to disability rights, laws, policies, and funding opportunities for assistive technology (AT).

Project START is committed to statewide systems change to ensure that assistive technology devices and services are available to all persons regardless of age or disability or location in the state through its activities and services. Over the next three years,

Project START will continue to provide and begin new services to Mississippians with disabilities of all ages under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended. MDRS will continue to serve as the lead agency.

The staff of Project START collectively represent many years of education and training in the field of assistive technology including vocational rehabilitation, rehabilitation counseling and guidance skills and specific areas of assistive technology such as vision and mobility. Several members of the staff have received a credential in AT from the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America (RESNA). MDRS is committed to enhancing the skills of its employees through ongoing professional development opportunities.

Project START will continue to work closely with all service provider agencies in the state to expand and enhance AT services to individuals with disabilities. Project START will continue to serve as an entry point for information and referral services for consumers, their representatives, organizations, and service providers who wish to access assistive technology services. Project START has a fifteen year history of established relationships with public and private entities in the state. Project START will collaborate with agencies and organizations in order to carry out its statewide and comprehensive mission to provide AT services in education, employment, community living and telecommunications and information technology. In the past conferences have been held with other organizations such as Mississippi State University, T. K. Martin Center, Mississippi Methodist Rehabilitation Center, and the Workforce Investment Act. Over the next three years, we anticipate these collaborations to continue and expand with other service providers.

Project START staff members participate on the boards, advisory councils, committees, and commissions that address the needs of Mississippians with disabilities across their life span with agencies such as the State Department of Education, the T.K. Martin Center, Mississippi State University, University of Mississippi Medical Center, Central Mississippi Medical Center, LIFE, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, and the Division of Medicaid. Project START also works with school districts on AT-related issues throughout the state. Project START will continue these types of activities and others over the next three years. Project START will also work with these agencies and others on new and ongoing initiatives in the state to address the AT needs of individuals with disabilities.

To ensure that Project START continues to be consumer-responsive over the next three years, input will be provided by the program's advisory council which is made up of a consumer majority (see Attachment 3). The advisory council will provide input into the planning, implementation and evaluation of all Project START activities.

Project START will engage in a number of subcontracts and agreements over the next three years including the TK Martin Center which will provide training, public awareness, and collaboration activities. In addition, their comprehensive AT Center will serve to provide AT demonstrations. The Mississippi Methodist Rehabilitation Center

located in Jackson will conduct a statewide AT conference under an agreement with Project START. Other agreements over the next three years are anticipated.

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, provide an explanation of good cause for this redesignation.

Not Applicable.

### **Attachment 3: State Advisory Council**

During the next three years of this state plan, the Project START's Advisory Council will provide consumer-driven, consumer-responsive advice to the state for planning, implementation and evaluation of the activities of the program.

Project START's advisory council is comprised of thirteen (13) members. Sixty-one percent (8 members) of the council are individuals with disabilities who use AT or family members of individuals with disabilities who use AT. The remaining six members of the council represent agencies including the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Services, Department of Education, and the State Workforce Investment Board. The members represent the geographic, racial and ethnic diversity of the state. Members on the council who experience a disability use a variety of types of devices such as mobility devices, communication devices and computer adaptations.

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 members of the advisory council are:

**Individuals with Disabilities:** Individual with a disability, Individual with a disability, Individual with a disability, Individual with a disability, Individual with a disability

**Family Members:** Parent of a child with a disability, Parent/Guardian and Public Agency

**State Agency Representatives:** Independent Living; Department of Education; Office of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Blind; Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; Workforce Investment

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

Project START's advisory council was reconstituted to meet the requirements of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, as amended. Individuals with disabilities and/or family representatives make up a majority of the membership. The council has provided input and advice into the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of all program activities. The council has also ensured that Project START's activities and services are consumer responsive. Members were appointed for three years which is the term of the grant. In the event of a resignation or other vacancy on the Advisory Council,

the Advisory Council shall appoint a new member to complete the term of office for the vacant person.

The council meets quarterly and operates through formal bylaws. The chairperson of the Advisory Council was selected at the first advisory meeting that was held in February 2006. The chair person is a consumer representative that was elected by the members of the Advisory Council. The term of the chairperson shall be one (1) year. The duties of the Chairperson are to:

- a. Chair all meetings of the Advisory Council.
- b. Act as liaison between the Advisory Council and Project START.

The vice-chairperson is also a consumer representative that was elected by the members of the Advisory Council in February 2006. The term of the vice-chairperson shall be one year. The duties of the vice-chairperson are to assume the role and duties of the chairperson in the event that the chairperson is unable to function in that role.

The Project shall be aided in its operation by committees. There will be standing committees and Ad Hoc committees created as needed. Members of these committees shall consist of between three and five Advisory members. The Advisory Council shall make its recommendations to Project START through the Project Director.

The Advisory Council has scheduled the date, time and location for each quarterly meeting for 2006. All meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Mississippi Public Meetings Act and business will be transacted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, Revised Edition. The Proposed agenda items will be transmitted to the Advisory Council members ten (10) days prior to a scheduled meeting by Project START's staff. All materials and information will be made available in alternate formats for those individuals who require this accommodation. All meetings will be held in ADA accessible facilities. Project START's staff have served as resource persons before and during the meetings. Project START's Advisory Board will continue to meet quarterly.

#### **Attachment 4: Measurable Goals**

Project START will establish a baseline for each of the goals for 4.1 through 4.7 during year two, and will submit after year two an amendment identifying the long term goal and short term goals set to improve upon this baseline during years two and three of the State Plan. This baseline will be established by using a data collection instrument and procedures to be determined by RSA after the State Plan process has been completed.

##### 4.1 Goal for Improving Access to AT in Education

- Long-term goal:
  - Short term goal for Year 3:
  - Short term goal for Year 2: Establish baseline of the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who accessed device demonstration programs and/or device loan programs 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 1: N/A data collection instrument has not been established by RSA.

##### 4.2 Goal for Improving Access to AT in Employment

- Long-term goal:
  - Short term goal for Year 3:
  - Short term goal for Year 2: Establish baseline of the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who accessed device demonstration programs and/or device loan programs 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 instrument has not been established by RSA.

##### 4.3 Goal for Improving Access in Community Living

- Long term goal:
  - Short term goal for Year 3:
  - Short term goal for Year 2: Establish baseline of the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who accessed device demonstration programs and/or device loan programs 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 1: N/A data collection instrument has not been established by RSA.

#### 4.4 Goal for Improving Access to IT and Telecommunications

- Long term goal:
  - Short term goal for Year 3:
  - Short term goal for Year 2: Establish baseline of the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who accessed device demonstration programs and/or device loan programs and made a decision about an AT device or service that meets and IT/telecommunications need as a result of the assistance they received.
  - Short term goal for Year 1: N/A data collection instrument has not been established by RSA.

#### 4.5 Goal for Improving Acquisition of AT in Education

- Long term goal:
  - Short term goal for Year 3:
  - Short term goal for Year 2: Establish a baseline of the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained devices or services from State financing activities or reutilization programs for educational purposes who would not have obtained the AT device or service otherwise.
  - Short term goal for Year 1: N/A data collection instrument has not been established by RSA.

#### 4.6 Goal for Improving Acquisition of AT in Employment

- Long term goal:
  - Short term goal for Year 3:
  - Short term goal for Year 2: Establish a baseline of the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained devices or services from State financing activities or reutilization programs for employment purposes who would not have obtained the AT device or service otherwise.
  - Short term goal for Year 1: N/A data collection instrument has not been established by RSA.

#### 4.7 Goal for Improving Acquisition of AT in Community Living

- Long term goal:
  - Short term goal for Year 3:
  - Short term goal for Year 2: Establish a baseline of the percentage of appropriate targeted individuals and entities who obtained devices or services from State financing activities or reutilization programs for community living purposes who would not have obtained the AT device or service otherwise.
  - Short term goal for Year 1: N/A data collection instrument has not been established by RSA.

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.

## **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.

During Year One, Project START has collaborated with other organizations such as the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services, vendors, insurance companies, and other organizations in helping consumers find alternative funding for devices. Mississippi is a state with one of the highest rates of poverty that increased in 2000-2004 from 18.2% to 21.6%. Given the high poverty rate and the devastation brought on by Hurricane Katrina, Project START is amending its State Plan to invoke State Flexibility and therefore, will not be providing state financing activities at this time. Options for state financing activities will continue to be explored. If during Years Two and Three it is feasible to include state financing activities as part of Project START's Plan, an amendment will be made and submitted to RSA.

**During Year One, Project START, in conjunction with its advisory council discussed options for conducting an alternative financing program. Project START, along with the Advisory Board has taken into consideration the poverty rate and other circumstances beyond a consumer's control such as Hurricane Katrina in making sure if a financial loan program is the best option for individuals with disabilities in Mississippi at this time. Alternative financing, cooperative buying, and the administration and coordination of AT funding among agencies and organizations were discussed. All members agreed that Project START would continue to provide consumers with information and referrals and individual assistance for funding while exploring other state financing activities.**

See attachment 7 for more specific information.

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.

Project START plans to operate three device reutilization programs: (1) an AT Equipment Connection Program, (2) Computer Recycling Program and (3) Mississippi Use IT Again Program. These three reutilization programs will meet the measurable goals of the state plan by allowing individuals to acquire needed assistive technology including computers, durable medical equipment, communication devices, adaptive toys for children etc. that can be used for education, employment, and community living as well as accessing information technology. The reutilization programs provide affordable or free equipment to Mississippians with disabilities or those who have a dependent with a disability, regardless of their disability, age, income, or location of residence within the state or the type of AT device required. The goal for the reutilization programs are to provide Assistive Technology for Mississippians in a timely manner. Project START

along with the advisory board agreed that timely access to appropriate assistive technology is the key to facilitating independence and maximize functioning for individuals with disabilities.

**1. AT EQUIPMENT CONNECTION.** Project START operates an equipment exchange program which allows individuals to buy and sell used AT through “want ads.” Sellers from across the state will be able to contact Project START staff either via email or a toll free line to post an ad for a used AT device. The AT Equipment Connection will assist individuals obtain devices by providing used devices at a lesser price than buying new and meeting the needs of individuals who are not eligible for funding from other sources.

Used AT devices will be listed by category on the program’s fully accessible web site. A hard copy of the listings will be included in the Project quarterly newsletter, which will be mailed to disability-related agencies/organizations and consumers.

During the first year, Project START collaborated with the ATMATCH.com program on the AT Equipment Connection Program. The Equipment Connection Program is an online marketplace for sellers, donors and buyers of assistive technology and durable medical products. The primary purpose for the Equipment Connection Program is to provide for Mississippians a single site for connecting with assistive technology equipment. The Equipment listings cover fifteen major categories, with over three hundred fifty defined subcategories. New and recycled devices may be listed. Registration is free. During Year One, the ATMATCH website has been linked to Project START’s Website for consumers to locate equipment at a cheaper price. The Equipment Connection Program can be used for sellers as well as donors. For a fee, a seller may list an item online either in an auction format or available for direct purchase. If a buyer agrees to an acceptable price, the seller is then charged an additional fee on the amount of the transaction. For the potential buyers who register on the site, ATMATCH.com offers a customizable page that provides a personal list of the major state and national resources. There are links to online resources, as well as a directory of physical addresses, telephone numbers and other contact information. Users can also track auctions of individual items that they may have an interest in purchasing on their personal pages.

Since the Equipment Connection Program is a new program for Project START, during Year Two, Project START’s staff will establish basic terms and conditions for listing equipment. Other criteria perhaps will be added at a later date. The following are initial terms and conditions that Project START has used during Year One for operation of the Equipment Connection:

- Project START will not warrant the condition of the device
- Project START accepts no liability that may result between the transaction of the buyer and the seller
- The seller agrees to provide Project START staff with the original price and the sold price of the item and the contact information of the buyer.

- The seller provides Project START staff with a description of the device along with any special features.
- No personal information will be listed on the AT Equipment Connection except for the first name, city and county.
- The seller must renew the listing every 90 days or the item will automatically be removed from the list.

Over the next two years, Project START will expand and improve the AT Equipment Connection by coordinating with other entities in the state that have established equipment reutilization programs. Specifically Project START will coordinate the listing of equipment from each participating entity on Project START's web site and to make it available to anyone anywhere in the state. This will expand the number of items available to consumers at no or low cost.

During Year One, Project START has been in discussions with school districts and other organizations for becoming the single point of entry for locating used or donated devices and equipment. Since these discussions, Project START has been able to loan devices to school districts and provide individual assistance with AT information. This process will expand and continue over the next two years.

Project START has publicized the AT Equipment Connection Program in monthly newsletters and via emails and referrals.

- 2. Mississippi Use It Again Program.** During Year One Project START partnered with the T.K.Martin Center housed at Mississippi State University to refurbish wheelchairs and other assistive technology devices for consumers. As noted earlier in the State Plan, Mississippi is a state with a high poverty rate. Due to this consideration Project START along with the Advisory Board recommended the refurbishing of AT devices. The Refurbishing Program operates through the T.K.Martin Center that maintains the physical possession of the equipment and serves as both a warehouse and repair service. The types of devices housed at the T.K. Martin Center include such items as wheelchairs, adapted toys, augmentative communication devices, etc. which are repaired and redistributed at no charge. This program offers an alternative for consumers and professionals who cannot afford to purchase a new device or have the device repaired.

During Year Two, Mississippi Use It Again Program will expand with an increase in consumer awareness of the program. Project START has advertised this program through Project START's newsletters, emails, conferences and etc. The collaboration with the ATMATCH existing program and the refurbishing of AT equipment through the T.K.Martin Center will increase availability of AT devices at a cheaper price or no charge for consumers in Mississippi. Project START's Advisory Board has been engaged in all decisions regarding these activities.

- 3. COMPUTER RECYCLING:** Over the next three years Project START's staff will repair, refurbish and make available used computers. During Year One, Project START collaborated with Jackson State University Refurbishing Program to refurbish computers. This program is designed to help Mississippians with disabilities gain independence by acquiring computers that they would not otherwise have been able to obtain. Project START acquires the computers from donations from consumers, disability organizations, state agencies etc for the program. Jackson State University Refurbishing Program will be responsible for evaluating, repairing, loading licensed software, distributing the computers to people with disabilities, and training the person on the equipment.

During Year Two, Project START anticipates receiving more donated computers which then will be refurbished and loaded with operating and basic software. The computers then will be given away to adults and children with disabilities at no charge. For many individuals with disabilities, adapted computers can provide opportunities for independence, access to information and a way to communicate. For example, a person who is blind will use a computer with a screen reader to read information that is sent electronically.

The Computer Recycling program operates in the following manner: consumers with disabilities apply for a computer. Project START staff notify approved applicants of the availability of a computer that matches the needs of the applicant and makes necessary arrangements for the applicant to pickup the computer. When a computer is not available, Project START has maintained a waiting list and notifies approved applicants on a first come first serve basis. It may take up to three-six months to receive an available computer. In the future computers will be made available to anyone in the state and may be picked up at various partner locations across the state. The partner listing will be available on the Project START web site and in all of the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services Offices. Project START will maintain a web site that will have a downloadable application for a free computer system. Additionally, Project START staff will market its computer recycling program to disability-related organizations, private businesses, and through Project START'S web site link. Over the next three years, Project START on the advice and input from its advisory council plans to enhance the computer recycling program by

- Exploring options for shipping computers to individuals who are not able to pick them up from various locations.
- Develop relationships with software companies so that more adaptive software can be loaded onto the recycled computers.
- Market the program to various organizations including schools and Independent Living Centers.
- Explore the feasibility of charging a nominal fee for a basic system based on a person's ability to pay.
- Develop a training program in which basic computer skills are taught for a person taking possession of a computer system.

This program will be available to anyone in the state regardless of age, type of disability, income.

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.

Project START operates and will continue to operate an assistive technology short term equipment loan program to provide increased access to equipment to targeted individuals and entities. During the first year of the device loan program Project START has loaned out over fifty devices statewide from the central location in Jackson, MS. Before any devices are loaned, individuals are trained on each device by Project START before the devices are taken home for trial use. Project START 's loan program offers Mississippians an opportunity to try out a device before they buy, allows clinicians a chance to use a device to assess clients, and meets interim needs when devices are being repaired.

The short term equipment loan program will meet the measurable goals of the state plan by enabling individuals to access needed assistive technology that can be utilized for the purposes of education, employment, community living, or IT/telecommunications. During Year One, Project START has coordinated five resource centers located throughout the State which are the (1) T.K. Martin Center housed at Mississippi State University, (2) North Mississippi Regional Medical Center, (3) Hudspeth Mental Health Center, and (4) Toy Library housed at the University of Southern Mississippi, where each partner organization train, demonstrate and loan equipment to consumers in Mississippi where-by Project START staff provide the specialized assistive technology expertise in exchange for the partner managing the day to day operation of the program, as well as collecting program data.

Project START staff and its MOA partners have provided specialized equipment to Mississippians with disabilities or those who have a dependent with a disability, regardless of their type of disability, age, income level or location of residence within the state and/or appropriate targeted individuals and entities statewide. Project START's short term loan program accepts applications for equipment loans from a person with a disability, family members, advocates or service providers (e.g. therapist, teacher, rehabilitation counselor). Some devices that are available for loan may require specialized support for their use, therefore, the person requesting the loan will be asked to identify someone who will provide support during the loan period. Support persons may include Centers for Independent Living staff, vocational rehabilitation counselors, teachers, OTs, PTs, Home Health staff, etc. The borrower may request a maximum of three devices at any one time. The length of the device loan is 90 days with a possible extension.

Project START recognizes that this short term equipment loan program will not have the capacity to conduct the program in a comprehensive manner with regard to types of devices, but expects to expand the types of devices offered over the three year period of

the state plan. Also the types of devices offered in the program have been restricted based on prohibitive costs and manpower needs associated with purchasing, storing, shipping, maintaining, and retrieving of durable medical equipment. Rather, the short term loan program will focus on providing equipment in the areas of vision, hearing and speech, computer access, environmental and educational technology. Project START has marketed the short term equipment loan program on its fully accessible web site, through ads in its monthly newsletter, and through flyers distributed to disability related agencies and organizations.

Project START'S Advisory Council quarterly evaluates the comprehensiveness of the program with regard to type of equipment and audiences to determine whether the program should be modified. Project START plans to expand the program by adding additional equipment and/or short term loan partners in years two and three. Additionally, Project START will enhance collaboration with disability related agencies/organizations that currently operate a durable medical equipment loan program.

Consumers and service providers are encouraged to borrow equipment before making a decision to purchase an identical or similar device in order to gauge its appropriateness. The opportunity to try out equipment for an extended period of time allows individuals with disabilities, their families, and professionals to learn more about what devices will meet their needs or the needs of those they are serving within the environment where it will be used. The trial use of equipment has provided valuable experience and information for individuals as they make choices about what will best meet their needs. The equipment loan program also serves consumers who are current technology users, but whose device is unavailable because it has been sent back to the vendor for upgrade or repair.

During Year Two, Project START plans the following activities for expansion of the Loan Program for school districts in Mississippi.

#### A. Activities

##### **1. Survey of potential participants**

To judge the feasibility of expanding the loan program for school districts Project START will send introductory letters and a survey to the special education program developers in the 152 school districts in the state. The survey is an attempt to gauge the interest in developing an inter-district equipment loan program.

##### **2. Research State laws and policies to determine the legality of forming a collaborative agreement to loan assistive technology equipment between districts.**

Project START staff will research state laws and policies as they apply to the movement of equipment from one school district to another. If State laws and policies do not favor our proposal and enough school districts are in favor of the program, then we will change our direction and try to effect change to the laws and policies.

##### **3. Workshop to develop a collaborative agreement**

If the results of the survey are adequate, interested school districts will be asked to attend a meeting to develop an interagency collaborative agreement that allows individual districts to loan assistive technology equipment to other districts on a short term basis. The purpose of the loan is to offer financially strapped districts an opportunity to try equipment before purchase in order to determine suitability or to use during the repair of equipment.

#### **4. Inventory of equipment available**

When the collaborative agreement has been developed and signed each district will submit to Project START an inventory of equipment available for use in the inter-district loan program.

#### **5. Create an inventory tracking database**

Project START will develop a database that will include all equipment available for use in the inter-district loan program. This database will also allow for tracking equipment as it is loaned.

#### **6. Activate an ongoing program of interagency equipment loan**

Activation of the loan program is dependent upon completion of the above activities. Data concerning the number of loans, type of equipment, length of loans, and purpose of loans will be collected through the database tracking system. The established loan program will then be on-going.

5.4 Device Demonstration Program- Describe how the State will implement a device demonstration program as described in section 4(e) (3) (D) of the Act.

Project START operates an AT device demonstration program in five locations throughout the state: (1) T.K.Martin Center housed at Mississippi State University, (2) North Mississippi Regional Medical Center, (3) Hudspeth Mental Health Center, (4) Toy Library housed at University of Southern Mississippi, (5) and the Central Location, Project START'S Office. Each Demonstration center has demonstrated over fifty devices to individuals throughout the state. The Demonstration Centers have increased access, to and awareness of assistive technology. The Demonstration Centers have also provided Mississippians with disabilities assistive technology for the purpose of allowing consumers and agencies to have individual and small group exploration, individual implementation of one or more device explorations designed to support informed decision-making, and guided experiences for individuals and small groups with a particular device to support effective usage. The device demonstration program will meet the measurable goals of the state plan by allowing individuals to access needed assistive technology that can be utilized for the purposes of education, employment, community living or IT/telecommunications.

During Year One, Project START participated in discussions with other organizations about partnering to further expand the program. The entities included: the Department of Education, Mississippi State University, Central Mississippi Medical Center, Deaf

Service Center, Central MS Autism Group, The Arc of Mississippi, and Healthy Futures. Project START will operate this demonstration program by partnering with the following entities: the Department of Education, Mississippi State University, and Central Mississippi Medical Center. Project START will outline an arrangement whereby Project staff will provide the specialized assistive technology expertise in exchange for the partner managing the day to day operation of the program, as well as collect program data. During Year Two an amendment will be presented to RSA detailing the agreements with different organizations. .

The Device Demonstration programs have also provided specialized equipment to Mississippians with disabilities or those that have a dependent with a disability, regardless of their type of disability, age, income level or location of residence within the state and/or appropriate targeted individuals and entities at the demonstration centers. The device demonstration programs have enhanced informed choice to both individuals and professionals resulting in cost savings to purchasers of the equipment who previously may have experienced abandonment, as well as lack of effective utilization, product awareness, knowledge of the product features, and access to a device.

During Year Two, Project START will continue to expand its demonstration program in a comprehensive manner with regard to the types of devices. The types of devices located in the various device demonstration centers have been unique to the needs of the population served. The device demonstration program shall continue to focus on providing equipment in the areas of vision, hearing and speech, computer access, environmental and educational technology, as well as AT assessment kits for early intervention. Individuals and service providers interested in a demonstration have been able to visit one of the centers or make a reservation to ensure that the equipment and staff are available to demonstrate the equipment of interest. Staff from Project START along with staff from the contracting resource centers will travel throughout the State providing resources, training and demonstration on Assistive Technology.

The demonstration centers are housed in accessible facilities and are open during regular hours on weekdays, as well as by appointment. Based on available space and request from consumers, equipment has rotated on a quarterly basis, and has been available for group training classes. Project START's staff currently market the device demonstration program on its fully accessible web site, through its quarterly newsletter, and through distribution of flyers to disability-related agencies and organizations. In addition, the program has been marketed to college students studying disability related issues, professional associations, Student Disability Services, Centers for Independent living staff, and professionals, such as Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, teachers, OTs, PTs, and Home Health staff.

Project START's Advisory Council has evaluated the comprehensiveness of the program with regard to type of equipment and audiences reached to determine whether the program should be modified. The advisory board gave input and recommendations on the target audiences and devices for the demonstration centers. In the second and third

year, Project START staff will expand the program by adding additional equipment and/or device demonstration partners.

**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.

## **Attachment 7: State Flexibility**

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

The Mississippi Assistive Technology Program is choosing not to carry out any state financing activities at this time. Instead, Project START will concentrate on expanding, maintaining and sustaining its three AT Reuse programs thus assisting individuals with disabilities acquire AT devices that they would not have been able to obtain otherwise. Options for state financing activities will continue to be explored. If Project START decides to implement state financing activities during Years Two and Three, an amendment will be submitted to RSA.

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

Project START will operate three device reuse programs as described in Attachment 5.2, thus offering an array of AT devices to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities of all ages throughout the state in a timely manner. Project START will continue to support and expand these programs and provide outreach to consumers and others who might benefit. In addition, Project START will provide individual assistance through information and referral to persons with disabilities to help them obtain funding for AT devices and services

These programs alone have proven to be irreplaceable assets to many individuals with disabilities who find themselves in a position where they believe they have nowhere else to turn to obtain assistive technology devices. Project START along with the advisory board recognizes this need for individuals with disabilities therefore we are addressing the need of the State in increasing access and acquisition of Assistive Technology through device loan, device demonstration, and reutilization.

### 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.

Despite not conducting the State Financing Activity, Mississippi will reach its measurable goals by enhancing and expanding the three Reutilization Programs throughout the State. These programs will offer individuals in Mississippi a chance to purchase used equipment at a lower cost or no cost for others. Project START's staff along with the Resource Centers will provide funding information to individuals with disabilities. In Year Two Project START will focus on creating a database of funding resources available to individuals and their families, provide technical assistance about local resources to the contracted Resource Centers, inform consumers on eligibility and

application requirements for various funding resources and serve as the state's resource and knowledge base for funding options for assistive technology.

Additionally, Project START will develop relationships with various funding providers for assistive technology devices in the areas of employment, education, telecommunications and community living. As a partner, Project START will provide the technical assistance and guidance to those resources as they review, change and develop policies that affect individuals who are applying for their services. Thus, this partnership will lead to better coordinated and more efficient funding systems with the ultimate goal of increasing acquisition of assistive technology.

Finally, as a resource to consumers, the Project START has been available to answer funding related questions by telephone, email, conferences, and etc. As part of their resource material development, Project START will also compile and provide printed and electronic material to consumers. This material will be specifically designed to educate and inform individuals with disabilities about various funding resources, eligibility criteria, application processes and appeal procedures. This specialized emphasis on funding will help to ensure that individuals with disabilities are more educated about and have better access to a complex and sometimes difficult to navigate funding in Mississippi.

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.

There are no other organizations in Mississippi conducting State Financing activities similar to those required under the AT Act.

## **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

Over the next three years, Project START staff will engage in a number of training activities. Project START will develop a number of training modules targeted for specific audiences and on specific topics, and anticipate continuing to deliver such trainings upon request. These include:

- Training for education professionals. (special education teachers, speech therapists, occupational and physical therapists, early intervention professionals, Head Start personnel, daycare workers, career technology teachers, adult learning professionals, higher education disability specialists and instructors). A number of training sessions have been developed for education professionals, ranging from providing a basic understanding of AT, to including AT in the classroom, to training on the use of specific devices. The training is developed to include information for a broad array of disabilities and devices. At the request of any school district in the state, Project START staff will train educators on site at school. Similar training will be provided for free to parent groups through a collaboration with Community Parent Resource Centers in the state.
- Training for human service professionals. Project START collaborates with Mississippi State University to provide pre service training on AT to students in special education, occupational therapy, physical therapy, rehabilitation Counseling, and social work. The training will be developed to include information for a broad array of disabilities and devices. Training will be conducted at regional DRS offices and one-stop centers throughout the state.
- Training for employment professionals. Project START staff will provide training about AT to all new vocational rehabilitation counselors in the state, and to train one stop centers. This training will include providing a basic understanding of AT and using AT in the workplace. The training is developed to include information for a broad array of disabilities and devices. Training is conducted at regional DRS offices and one stop centers throughout the state.
- Training for Centers for Independent Living. Staff of Project START will train professionals and consumers who are involved with centers for independent living throughout the state. Training include basic understanding of AT, using AT in the community and home, and sources of funding for AT. The training is developed to include information for a broad array of disabilities and devices. Project START staff will offer this training for free in exchange for referrals to Project START other programs and services.

Project START staff will customize training for organizations that request training on specific topics or for specific audiences.

During the first Year, Project START collaborated with Methodist Rehabilitation Services for a statewide AT conference.. This conference was open to the public and was attended by a variety of professionals, parents, and consumers with disabilities. This conference served a dual role for providing both public awareness and training, and was geared to serve the needs of experts and novice alike. At this conference the following events were held:

- AT vendors displayed and provided information about a wide range of devices to serve the needs of many types of disabilities
- Experts in areas such as education, recreation, vocational rehabilitation, an community living provided training sessions on AT issues in their fields; and
- Keynote speakers provided updates on important AT policies and legislation.

#### Technical assistance

Because Project START provides technical assistance to agencies and organizations by request, it is difficult to predict the type of technical assistance that will be provided over the next three years.

In the past, Project START has provided technical assistance such as the following:

- Through a contract, Project START collaborates with the T.K. Martin Center who provides technical assistance to educators, VR clients, employers on improving their services, management, policies and /or outcomes. The types of Technical Assistance provided are needs assessment for different school districts, input on curriculum for school districts, site reviews for employers that may be needed for a particular individual in a specific setting such as school, work, and/or the home.
- Provided technical assistance to state agencies on creating accessible websites.

Project START anticipates providing technical assistance in a similar manner over the next three years.

#### Transition

The AT Act requires that Project START specifically focus on training and TA around transition. This includes transition for students with disabilities who are leaving high school for employment or post-secondary education and transition for those entering or maintaining community living. During Year One, Project START has been in discussion with the Department of Education and the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services for partnering for a statewide Transition Conference. This conference will be held in September of Year One, in a central location so that more consumers can attend.

The conference will train school districts, employers, transition counselors, families, and other interested consumers on techniques to use to enable students to transition from school to employment better. During Year Two of this State Plan, Project START will develop training modules to address the areas listed below for transition:

- One module will be aimed at providing special educators, vocational rehabilitation counselors, parents, and students involved in transition with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully include AT in all transition planning. Elements of this training also will be infused in the general AT training provided to education professionals and vocational rehabilitation counselors as explained above.
- A second module will be aimed at employees of nursing homes and other supported living environments, family members, and consumers with disabilities to provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to successfully include AT in all transition planning. Elements of this training will also be infused in the general AT training provided to centers for independent living as explained above.

Elements of both training modules will be infused in the pre-service training for human service professionals describe above.

Following the development of these modules in year two, Project START will identify appropriate ways to provide such training free of charge in a statewide manne, and begin to deliver such training once venues have been identified. The same will be done in year three. Because development of these training modules and the plan for implementing them is not complete, Project START is unable to provide more details about the training. Project START will submit an amendment to RSA following year two to specify the results of development and its plans for implementation.

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.

Over the next three years, Project START will use multifaceted approach (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 are available, funding for AT devices and services, and policies related to AT. Project START will provide the following public awareness activities:

**Information and Referral.** The toll free INFO-Line provides free information and referral services on AT for people of all ages with all disabilities. Family members, services providers and others who work in fields related to disabilities or AT may also use this service. Project START staff provides information to those who call on availability, benefits, appropriateness and cost of AT devices and services. For many callers, Project START staff will mail AT resource information and a survey

approximately six months following the call to determine if they are satisfied with the information provided by Project START staff or if they need additional information.

**Newsletter.** The Project START newsletter is developed and disseminated both in hard copy and on the web site by Project START staff on a quarterly basis. Regular sections of the newsletter include AT information on: Current events at Project START, Highlight of AT (which discusses features of a specific AT devices) an insert that provides the latest Equipment Exchange inventory, web site resources on AT, an update on disability related legislation.

**Web Site.** The Project START web site features in depth information on the four state level activities of the ATA of 1998, as amended, as well as information on other programs Project START is involved with outside of the AT Act of 1998, as amended, publications, IT Access resources, Legislation, AT resources and links. The web site also provides an opportunity for individuals to directly contact Project START for purposes of feedback, information and referral, listing for sale items on the Equipment Connection want ad.

**Publications.** Training materials and publications that cover AT information have been developed and disseminated for all types of audiences across the life span on a broad array of AT related issues. All publication materials will be provided free of charge on the web site and is made available in any requested alternative format.

**Statewide AT conference.** As mention in item 8.1, Project START will sponsor an annual conference that provides both training and public awareness.

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.

Because coordination and collaboration with public and private entities often is based on emerging, new, or changing policies and procedures, it is difficult to anticipate all of the coordination and collaboration activities that Project START will undertake over the next three years. In the past, coordination and collaboration involved the proposal of new or changes to current AT policies, providing input on proposed AT policies, and analysis of the impact of current AT policies. Project START does this by participating on task forces sponsored by state agencies, by being a member of consumer groups, advocacy groups, and disability networks throughout the state, and through independent efforts.

Currently, Project START is collaborating and coordinating with:

- The Mississippi State University, T. K. Martin Center in order to empower individuals with disabilities through leading edge technologies. The T.K.Martin

Center for Technology & Disability maintains a state-of-art clinical, research and training program focusing on modern technologies, in a comprehensive and integrated manner, to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. The services are made available to persons with disabilities regardless of age or disability. The T.K. Martin Center provides comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluations to remove limitations in dexterity, communication, sensory function, learning and understanding through the application of assistive technology, allowing individuals to participate in educational, vocational and leisure activities to the fullest degree they choose. The comprehensive nature of the services offered ensures that the correct solutions are achieved efficiently and effectively, with needs being met in a one-stop shop.

- Project START will organize different conferences that include providing comprehensive education to occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists, rehabilitation counselors, case managers, special educators, and assistive technology providers in Mississippi.
- The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 mandates Vocational Rehabilitation as a mandatory partner of the One-Stop system as established by this act. Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) has worked very closely with the state's One Stop System, known as the Workforce Investment Network (WIN) in Mississippi, to ensure accessibility in the WIN Job Centers for people with disabilities. One accomplishment in this area was to provide oversight of the provision of WIA funds to reimburse fiscal agents/One-Stop operators for software and equipment they purchased to enhance programmatic and communication accessibility to WIN Job Centers around the State.

Project START anticipates coordinating and collaborating on policies in a similar manner over the next three 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.

Project START will continue to work with the T.K.Martin Center housed at Mississippi State University, North Mississippi Regional Medical Center, Hudspeth Mental Health Center, and Toy Library housed at University of Southern Mississippi to expand its Resource Centers. This partnership will provide storage space for AT devices free of charge as an in-kind contribution. They also will provide general administrative support for the program such as office supplies, telephone, printing, postage, as in kind contributions. Over the next three years Project START will be in discussions with other organizations as well to partner with for expansion of access and awareness of the program as well.

9.2 Mechanisms to Ensure Coordination- Describe the mechanism 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 before the submittal of this plan in order to set general goals and objectives and to provide advice on how activities are to be carried out. The development of the two new training modules and the plan for providing device demonstration, and the loan program are all directly based on the suggestions of the Council and other stakeholder involved in planning.

The Council will meet on a quarterly basis to evaluate progress toward established goals and provide suggestions for improvement and change. Measurable goals contained in this plan will be reviewed and evaluated on a quarterly basis and any adjustments necessary will be made in response to and under the guidance of the Advisory Council.

**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).

Not applicable.

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).

Not applicable.

**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).

The State of Mississippi records financial transactions on the State’s accounting system, known as the Statewide Automated Accounting System (SAAS). To ensure financial transactions are recorded to the correct grant and grant year, the MS Department of Rehabilitation Services utilizes individual fund numbers, Program numbers, and Organizational codes. Every financial transaction recorded in our accounting system is coded utilizing each of these three individual codes. Program personnel are required to approve each invoice by signing their names on the invoices and recording their respective codes (fund #, project code, and org code) prior to an invoice being submitted to Finance for payment. Additionally, accounting personnel review invoices for coding and approval prior to any invoice being entered for payment. In addition to the SAAS system, the state also maintains a software system known as MERLIN, which allows financial personnel to generate specific reports from the accounting system. Reports are individualized; in that, accounting personnel can generate reports at any given time based on such items as: funding source/grant, grant year, time period, etc. As a further control, each month, the VR Finance Director generates itemized reports by funding source and submits them to the respective program directors. This provides a further program review in that program directors can review all expenditures being charged to their programs/grants. This system will allow for tracking of State Level and State Leadership activities to ensure the required distribution of 60/40% plus the 5% for transition is met at the end of the fiscal year.

**11.1 Proposed Budget Allocations-** Attach a budget containing proposed allocations for activities described in section 4(e) (2) and (3).

The following are proposed budget allocations for State Level and State Leadership Activities for Year Two of the State Plan.

	<b>Proposed Allocation</b>	
	<b>Year One</b>	<b>Year Two</b>
<b>Total Grant Award</b>	<b><u>\$305,700.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$320,162.00</u></b>
<b>State Level Activities</b>		
State Financing Activities	20,000	
Device Reutilization Program	29,014.00	100,000.00
Device Loan Program	87,050.00	42,500.00
Device Demonstration Program	29,014.00	59,202.00
<b>Total State Level</b>	<b>\$165,078.00</b>	<b>201,702.00</b>

**State Leadership Activities**

Training and Technical Assistance	20,899.00	26,894.00
Transition	5,503.00	5,762.00
Public Awareness	20,920.00	26,894.00
Coordination/Collaboration	62,730.00	26,894.00
<b>Total State Leadership</b>	<b>\$110,052.00</b>	<b>\$86,444.00</b>
<b>Indirect Cost</b>	<b>30,570.00</b>	<b>32,162.00</b>
<b>Total Available for Program</b>	<b><u>\$305,700.00</u></b>	<b><u>\$320,162.00</u></b>