



State of Connecticut  
Department of Developmental Services

DDS

Ned Lamont  
Governor

Jordan A. Scheff  
Commissioner

Elisa F. Velardo  
Deputy Commissioner

March 14, 2023

**TO:** DDS Qualified Providers, Stakeholders, Individuals and Families, Personal Support Team (PST)

**FROM:** Patricia Cymbala Transition Advisor/ Assistive Technology Specialist/ ARPA AT Lead

**CC:** Jordan Scheff, Commissioner; Elisa Velardo, Deputy Commissioner; Katie Rock-Burns, Chief of Staff; Scott McWilliams, Chief of Fiscal/ Administrative Services; Regional Directors; Private Assistant Regional Directors; Resource Administrators; Self Determination Directors; IFS Assistant Regional Directors

**SUBJECT: Notice of Opportunity – Assistive Technology/ Enabling Technology for Self-Employment and/or to Acquire or Maintain Employment- Qualified Providers – Individuals/ Families**

The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is currently accepting proposals for Qualified Providers, individuals, and families interested in receiving grants to fund **Assistive Technology (AT)** to benefit individuals currently supported by DDS. Grants will assist with procuring and utilizing Assistive Technology (AT) hardware, software, software subscription, equipment, and internet connectivity to enhance access to virtual supports and service supports in entrepreneurial and employment-based settings.

**EMPLOYMENT:**

This grant is designed to support and advance the creative use of Assistive Technology (AT) to improve employment access and create job opportunities for people with intellectual disability. AT can play a critical role in developing skills, increasing independence and safety, improving communication, and encouraging participation in traditional employment and customized self-employment. This grant focuses on person-centered planning strategies to create an individualized, revenue producing, and sustainable career or business built around the talents, interests, and assets of the individual with an intellectual disability. This grant is intended to support meaningful employment to enrich lives.

**Innovative Self-Starter Businesses with the Use of Technology:**

This grant also intends to assist individuals and families independently or with the assistance of a Qualified Provider in finding the right person-centered technology-based business opportunity that matches their interests and talents. Several innovative self-starter businesses are using technology to launch and grow their business. Dog-walking self-starter businesses are becoming increasingly popular as technology can be used to manage and coordinate bookings, payments, and customer communication. 3D printers are becoming more affordable, allowing self-starters to create and manufacture their products. Etsy is a great platform for self-starters to create and sell handmade products, and Amazon has also opened a huge opportunity for self-starters to become 3rd party distributors and sell products on the platform. Grants applications may include AT work assessment/evaluation, employee AT training, and environmental modifications/ adaptations designed to increase accessibility, safety, and independence.

**Self-Employment Allows for the following:**

- Choice and control
- The use of natural skills and talents
- Expanded work opportunities
- Accumulation of wealth
- Independence and creative freedom

Grants are intended to support entrepreneurs to meet standards for self-employment including competitive wages. This grant is not intended to support or establish a hobby.

These opportunities are available for individuals who live independently or with families, and providers that have been qualified by DDS to support individuals with intellectual disabilities. Interested parties in this Notice of Opportunity should include the following information in their proposals:

**I. Descriptions of Specific Utility/ Statement of Need:**

- A. Employment opportunity or type of business. Please include specific considerations for the use of AT. Please include a plan to describe how the business will increase revenue and become sustainable.
- B. Potential technology needs and hardship due to lack of AT. Please include specific person-centered considerations for enhancing the health, safety, and/or autonomy of the proposed user(s) in developing a business or acquiring or maintaining employment.
- C. Proposed AT equipment and/or service including name of the vendor(s). This may include, but is not limited to, the following items: Hardware; software; environmental modifications/ adaptations; specialized durable AT products; or auxiliary items. Services such as AT work evaluation/assessment, business equipment, accountant consultation, and business entity establishment fee.
- D. If internet connectivity is a needed service this may include Broadband/ Internet provided at fair market value for the purpose of access to activities related to achieving documented person-centered goals & objectives. **Internet business** services shall be capped at \$100.00 per month per business setting for a period of up to one year, based on fair market value in CT.
- E. List itemized cost of proposed AT equipment and/or services and include the total amount for all equipment and/or services listed.

**We shall not consider requests for the following:**

- Fundraising events
- Reserve funds or debt elimination
- Businesses that discriminate based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran or disability statuses in the delivery of services and in their employment practices.
- Awardees will be expected to participate in follow up analysis and reporting and share the use and impact of the products or services awarded (AT Survey Form). In addition, select awardees may be expected to act as ambassadors for the use of AT.

Questions regarding this opportunity may be directed to Patricia Cymbala at [patricia.cymbala@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.cymbala@ct.gov).

Awardees must purchase equipment or subscribe to approved service no later than June 2, 2023. Proposals for this opportunity will be submitted to Patricia Cymbala at [patricia.cymbala@ct.gov](mailto:patricia.cymbala@ct.gov) upon completing the electronic form and clicking on the submit button. The electronic form can also be found at the following URL:

<https://forms.office.com/g/sj5iGByaGU>

### Starting a New Business in Connecticut:

- [Registering your Business](#) (Applying for a Tax Registration Number)
- [Obtaining a Tax Clearance](#) - (Buying an existing business)
- [Welcome New Business](#) (Recently registered with DRS)

### Resources:

- [Getting Started in Business](#) - (A comprehensive guide)
  - [Other Registration Applications](#) (Cigarette tax, motor carrier, motor fuel, etc.)
  - [Publications to Assist you](#)
  - [Sales and Corporate Tax Guides](#)
  - [CT-CLIC.com State of Connecticut Licensing and Registration Needs](#)
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### Self-Employment and Entrepreneurship Resources:

- [Entrepreneurship Resources](#) — Information about self-employment and starting a business from the Job Accommodation Network (JAN), a free service of ODEP.
- [Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#) — Federal agency that provides assistance to current and prospective small business owners.
- [Road to Self-Sufficiency: A Guide to Entrepreneurship for Youth with Disabilities](#) — Guide that shows how entrepreneurship education can be implemented and offers suggestions on how to introduce self-employment as an option for all youth, including youth with disabilities.
- [SCORE Small Business Mentors](#) — Seasoned business professionals help entrepreneurs start businesses, grow companies, and create jobs in local communities. Find a [SCORE location](#) near you.
- [Self-Employment: What to Know to Be Your Own Boss](#) — Information from the Bureau of Labor Statistics on self-employment.
- [START-UP](#) — ODEP initiated START-UP, a three-year grant project, in 2007 to identify policies and practices then in place that either made it difficult for individuals with disabilities to become self-employed or supported them in becoming self-employed. As part of the initiative, three states (Alaska, Florida, and New York) were awarded grants to pilot new innovative models for assisting individuals with disabilities to start businesses. A fourth grant established a national technical assistance center, Self-Employment Technical Assistance, Resources, & Training (START-UP/USA), to provide information and guidance about promoting self-employment for disabilities to the state grantees, as well as serving as a national resource for individuals and agencies wanting to pursue self-employment goals for people with disabilities.

- [Self-Employment for People with Disabilities](#) (PDF) is the final report of the START-UP initiative. It describes the barriers experienced by the four grantees, the self-employment models tested, the achievements of the grant programs, and case studies of several individuals with disabilities who successfully became self-employed. The report also makes recommendations for adoption by agencies and individuals for realizing self-employment goals.
- [Small Business Development Centers \(SBDCs\)](#) — SBDC advisors provide aspiring and current small business owners a variety of free business consulting and low-cost training services.
- [How to Write a Business Plan](#) — Online training course from the Small Business Administration explains the importance of business planning, defines and describes the components of a business plan, and provides access to sample plans and resources that can help you develop a plan for your business.
- [USA.gov Start Your Own Business](#) — Resources to help you start your own business, including information on programs to help military veterans and minorities become entrepreneurs.