**Request for Information**

# **INTRODUCTION**

The California Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) is releasing this Request for Information (RFI) to provide information and solicit input from Interested Parties.

The RFI includes the following Sections:

1. Purpose/Background
2. Key Action Dates
3. Contact Information
4. Scope of Work
5. Opportunity to Provide Input
6. Input Submission
7. Disclaimer

# **SECTION 1: PURPOSE/BACKGROUND**

## **Purpose**

The goal of the California Assistive Technology (AT) Program is to increase awareness of and access to AT devices and services that may help with education, employment, daily activities, and inclusion of people with all types of disabilities in their communities. The DOR operates the AT Program through funding from the United States Administration for Community Living (ACL) in the Department of Health and Human Services authorized by the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act, hereafter referred to as the AT Act. The AT Program supports state efforts to improve the provision of AT to individuals with disabilities of all ages through comprehensive, statewide programs that are consumer responsive. The AT Program makes AT devices and services more available and accessible to individuals with disabilities and their families. Activities performed through the AT Act are categorized as State Leadership and State Level Activities, each serving to increase the availability and acquisition of AT for individuals with disabilities in California. To perform all activities required under the AT Act the DOR, as the Governor appointed Lead Entity authorized in Section 4(c)(1)(A)(i) of the AT Act, may contract with an organization, referred to as the Implementing Entity, authorized in Section 4(c)(1)(B).

As part of the AT Program, DOR operates AT Network Activities through Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC) Sec. 19801-19806 as a foundation for offering assistance to individuals with disabilities, including AT services, in coordination with the state network of Independent Living Centers (ILCs).

DOR invites entities to review and respond to this non-binding RFI, which will provide information to DOR to inform its contract management strategy. DOR is seeking information from entities who may be able to assist DOR implementing the AT Program contract strategy and provide feedback on the services described in the preliminary draft Scope of Work (RFI Attachment I). DOR may use the RFI responses to refine the Scope of Work that may be incorporated into the final solicitation for AT services.

DOR expects to award a contract for an Implementing Entity to administer AT Act Section 4 State AT Program activities across the state of California and AT Network Activities as outlined in WIC Sec. 19801-19806. This RFI will help DOR:

1. Identify and seek feedback from entities with expertise using evidence-based approaches to implementing, or working with organizations to implement, the activities specified in Section for of the AT Act.
2. Identify and seek feedback from entities with capacity to provide, internally or through a subcontract with capable entities, AT Act State Leadership, State Level Activities and AT Network Activities:
	1. A minimum of one (1) and maximum of three (3) comprehensive Device Lending and Demonstration Centers (DLDCs) across the state of California, including: developing and executing subcontracts/grants; producing and disseminating subcontract/grant materials; serving as Fiscal Intermediary (FI) and distributing funds to awardees; providing training and technical assistance to subcontractors in a collaborative learning environment (e.g., learning collaborative model); monitoring subcontractor performance over time; and defining metrics, collecting data, and reporting outcomes and performance trends in the approved Assistive Technology data reporting systems.
	2. State financing activities, to increase access to and funding for AT devices and services, while not directly paying for such devices or services for the individual with a disability. This could include supporting the development of systems for the acquisition of AT devices and services and supporting the development of a State or privately financed alternative financing program engaged in the provision of AT devices, such as a low interest fund, a low buy-down program, a revolving loan fund, or a loan guarantee or insurance program.
	3. Coordinating AT Network activities in collaboration with ILCs throughout the state to provide a wide variety of AT services and supports in California.

**Background**

The AT Act was originally established in 1988 with the *Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988* and continues to be modernized through the 21st Century Assistive Technology Act, authorized by Congress in December 2022. The AT Act provides federal formula grants, administered by the ACL in the Department of Health and Human Services, to support an AT Program in each state, with funds dependent upon annual federal appropriations. California’s Assistive Technology Program, authorized under Section 4 of the AT Act, is developed to align with and abide by AT Act requirements and recommendations, typically soliciting and awarding an agreement to an Implementing Entity. This program focuses on improving the provision of AT through comprehensive, consumer responsive statewide activities.

AT is defined as any piece of equipment, device, or system used to improve or maintain the ability level of the individual with a disability in an educational setting, in employment, in transportation, and in all aspects of daily living. AT can be acquired commercially, be handmade, store bought, a customized or modified item, or a specially designed device, and is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

AT Programs are required to serve people with all types of disabilities, functional limitations, or chronic health conditions, of all ages, in all environments, and provide a wide array of activities to meet AT needs. Programs must also serve family members, service providers, educators, therapists, employers, health and rehabilitation professionals, AT vendors, procurement officials, and other interested parties. The AT Act requires specific data reporting, financial reporting, and performance measures on services provided via the required state level and state leadership activities.

State Leadership activities:

* Coordination and Collaboration
* Public Awareness (including Information and Referral)
* Educational Activities and Technical Assistance
* Transition Assistance to Individuals with Disabilities

Required State Level activities:

* Device Demonstrations
* Device Loan Programs
* Device Reutilization Programs
* State Financing

Anticipated funding for the contractor selected to administer the AT Program as the Implementing Entity is approximately $1,300,000 annually which includes approximately $1,090,000 in AT Act funding for State Leadership and State Level activities and $210,000 for AT Network activities starting in Fiscal Year 2024–2025.

AT Program Funding Allocations are as Follows:

1. The AT Act requires the State AT Program to use no more than 40%, or $436,000, of the AT Act annual award to carry out State Leadership activities and requires all State AT Programs to use at least 5%, or $21,800, of the State Leadership funds for transition training or technical assistance activities.
2. In addition, State Leadership activities shall include $210,000 in funds allocated to coordinate with Independent Living Centers delivery of State Leadership related AT services, per WIC Sec. 19806(g).
3. The minimum amount allocated for State Level activities is 60% of the annual contract, or $654,000.

The potential contract recipient will be a non-profit, community-based organization with a demonstrated commitment to the philosophy of independent living, a history of consumer involvement, experience in the delivery of AT state leadership and state level activities, and expertise in AT devices and services as well as how people with disabilities can acquire them. Potential contractors must serve individuals regardless of age or type of disability, be able to achieve statewide reach in delivery of all required services, and be able to coordinate services with the network of ILCs in California.

# **SECTION 2: KEY ACTION DATES**

Below is a tentative schedule of dates related to this RFI:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Date** |
| RFI Released  | March 28, 2024 |
| Questions Due  | April 11, 2024 at 4:00 pm (PT) |
| Release State response to questions | April 25, 2024 |
| RFI Due | May 9, 2024 at 4:00 pm (PT) |

# **SECTION 3: CONTACT INFORMATION**

Direct all questions related to this RFI to the contact identified below:

Division: Contracts Division

E-mail Address: Contractsinfo@dor.ca.gov

# **SECTION 4: SCOPE OF WORK**

See preliminary draft Scope of Work (RFI Attachment I). DOR may use the RFI responses to refine the Scope of Work.

# **SECTION 5: OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE INPUT**

1. The Department is providing this opportunity to interested parties to provide input on:

**Contract Administration**

1. Has your company administered a federal, state, or locally contracted program before? If so, please detail any work in disability rights advocacy, independent living, community living, assistive technology, systems change, or transition and diversion.
2. Has your company developed Request for Applications/Proposals (e.g., determining eligibility guidelines, finalizing contract/grant scope) on behalf of the contract making organization? If so, please detail prior experience and specifically mention work involving consumer-centric Assistive Technology and/or independent living.
3. How would your company approach a marketing campaign to generate proposals for the grant program detailed in this RFI? If your company has experience in soliciting grant proposals, please detail the experience as well.
4. Has your company screened or scored grant proposals on behalf of a grant making organization (based on a pre-approved rubric/evaluation criteria)? If yes, please detail experience.
5. Does your organization have experience administering statewide programs? If so, please provide at least one example that includes how services were administered statewide, if the services were provided directly or in coordination with other organizations, years of experience, and any program outcomes.
6. State AT Programs must have a mechanism in place to accurately track all AT Act expenditures by contract award fiscal year and by the State Level and State Leadership categories. Most direct expenditures like salaries and benefits, contractual expenses, etc. will be clearly attributable to a State Level or State Leadership activities. Please describe how you would track all State Level and State Leadership activities.

**Technology used to complete deliverables**

1. Currently, the AT Program utilizes the National Assistive Technology Act Data System (NATADS) to report State Level and State Leadership Activities. Please provide a summary of your organizations experience collecting and reporting data, including using NATADS. Please include any partnerships with technology companies that might be relevant to this RFI and experience with data tracking systems, including implementing a new system.

**Suggested language or concepts**

1. Does your organization have any suggested language or concepts related to providing AT services as described in the preliminary draft Scope of Work (RFI Attachment I)? If so, please provide the suggestions.

**Service delivery**

1. What is your organization’s process(es) for delivering services as specified in the preliminary draft Scope of Work (RFI Attachment I)? Specifically, does your company have the ability to provide the requested services? Please provide as much detail as possible.
2. In addition, for prospective contractors, DOR would like to know:

**Independent Living**

1. What experience does your organization have working in the field of disability and Independent Living? If applicable, please include experience specifically demonstrating efforts to improve and expand independent and community living disability resources and services.
2. Describe how you would engage California’s 28 ILCs in the provision of AT services. If appropriate, include any experience working with ILCs and how you would leverage that experience for the AT Program.
3. How would your organization define, abide by, and advance the philosophy of independent living?

**Fiscal Capabilities**

1. What experience does your organization have serving as a fiscal intermediary on behalf of a federal, state, or local government? Please specifically mention any experience in Independent Living or AT services and include the total value of the program.
2. What experience does your organization have as a financial lending institution or working with an existing lending institution to support individuals acquiring AT?

**Training and technical assistance to grantees, monitoring performance, and developing a reporting system**

1. Has your organization provided training or technical assistance to organizations who may have received federal, state, or local grants on best practices for implementation? If yes, please elaborate and specifically mention any experience related to AT and independent living.
2. Has your organization created and implemented a model that would allow organizations or individuals to share learnings with each other (e.g., learning collaborative, quarterly forums)? If yes, please elaborate and specifically mention any experience with providers or networks that provide delivery of services directly to consumers in different settings (community living, institutional, health care, etc.)
3. What experience does your organization have in developing and implementing an AT specific training or technical assistance program?
4. What is the organization’s experience in designing, implementing, and monitoring programs to ensure compliance with grant requirements (e.g., conducting site visits, reviewing grantee expenditures, compiling a monitoring report)? Please mention any experience in AT or independent living.
5. Does your company have experience in designing a standardized set of metrics to measure success across multiple organizations or grantees? If yes, please elaborate and mention any experience in AT or independent living.
6. What experience does your company have in creating reports that highlight a program’s success (e.g., virtual dashboards to measure incremental progress, comprehensive final reports)? Please mention any experience in AT reporting systems and outcomes, or other relevant experience.
7. DOR would also like to gauge the marketplace capability and interest in being an Implementing Entity for the AT Program. If you are an organization that provides AT services, we would appreciate your answers to the following questions (in addition to the questions above):
8. Are you interested in being the Implementing Entity for the AT Program for DOR?
9. If not interested, why?
10. Do you have any suggestions that would encourage more interest, participation, and/or competition in a contract, should DOR proceed with a future procurement?
11. Please provide a detailed cost estimate for your organization’s services as referenced in the preliminary draft Scope of Work (RFI Attachment I). Wherever possible, please provide a breakdown of different types of costs as it will help DOR better understand needed funding from the State perspective. This cost estimate is non-binding, will not be considered as an offer, and will be used only for planning purposes.

# **SECTION 6: INPUT SUBMISSION**

For interested parties who are responding to this RFI, please submit your responses to the questions outlined in Section 5 (as applicable) to DOR Contracts Division e-mail inbox at Contractsinfo@dor.ca.gov

**no later than the RFI due date as indicated in Section 2, Key Action Dates.**

If you have supplementary information to provide, it can be sent to the email address in Section, 3, Contact Information, no later than the RFI due date as indicated in Section 2, Key Action Dates. Include **RFI 23-02-01** in the subject line. Please also include your name, the entity or organization you represent, and your contact information.

# **SECTION 7: DISCLAIMER**

1. **This RFI is issued for information gathering and planning purposes only and does not constitute a solicitation.** A response to this RFI is not an offer and cannot be accepted by the State to form a binding contract. Furthermore, any award made related to the subject matter of this RFI is not contingent upon a contractor responding to this RFI.
2. Respondents are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI.
3. Respondents are advised that responses to this RFI are subject to the California Public Records Act (Government Code Section 6250 et seq.) and responses may be subject to disclosure. As such, do not include any proprietary, trade secret or confidential information in your response to this RFI.
4. Responding to this RFI creates no obligation on the part of any Respondent to DOR. Conversely, issuing this RFI and considering the responses creates no obligation on the part of DOR to any Respondent.
5. DOR may use the information received as the result of this RFI to initiate future discussions with vendors/contractors/grantees.
6. In accordance with California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 19806(g), DOR has the authority to award $210,000 to the nonprofit contractor selected by DOR to coordinate delivery of AT Act services.
7. Not submitting a response to this RFI will not prohibit a response to any future solicitation, nor disadvantage the evaluation of a response to any future solicitation, if DOR chooses to procure. By submitting a response to this RFI, a Respondent is implicitly agreeing with these conditions.
8. DOR asks willing Respondents to share nonbinding budgetary pricing information for each identified solution where requested. Pricing is only for planning purposes. Any pricing provided in a response to this RFI will not be considered an offer on the part of a Respondent.

If you have any questions regarding this RFI, please submit them in writing to the contact information in Section 3 of this RFI.

Sincerely,

*Signed Electronically*

Christine Templeman, Chief

Contracts Division