

Data and Technology: Information and Resources

Empowering Persons with disabilities and Caregivers with Information and Resources on Technology

Background Information:

Enabling Masterplan 2012-2016

The Enabling Masterplan 2012-2016¹ stated that “the use of assistive technology (AT) and information and communications technology (ICT) enhances the quality of life of persons with disabilities and their potential to lead productive lives”. The Masterplan also highlighted that Assistive Technologies /Information Technology was “underutilised at a systemic level” and adoption of AT ought to be scaled up. It was reported that there was a lack of coordination and inefficient utilisation of limited resources (such as care-givers, trainers of AT/ICT and specialised AT/ICT equipment) in the promotion of AT and ICT adoption amongst persons with disabilities and caregivers.

Tote Board – Enabling Lives Initiative Grant Call

This grant call seeks innovative solutions to increase the awareness of the diverse options of AT/ ICT for persons with disabilities and their caregivers so as to increase AT and ICT adoption.

This grant call focuses on information and resources for AT/ ICT, including how to leverage mainstream technologies as assistive technologies. In addition, the grant call aims to equip users (i.e. persons with disabilities and their caregivers) with timely and relevant information on AT/ICT so that they are better able to make informed decisions and plans regarding the use of AT and ICT.

Successful projects will greatly increase the opportunity for persons with disabilities to benefit from AT/ICT to enhance their quality of life, lead productive lives and harness AT/ICT for job customization to create more job opportunities.

SG Enable has conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews to delve deeper into the deployment and use of AT/ICT in the disability space. These sessions involved representatives from government agencies, hospitals, volunteer welfare organisations, research institutes and commercial companies. From the FGDs, we gathered that information and knowledge about AT and ICT were largely fragmented across the sector, and the expertise typically resided with individual professionals or institutions.

Hence, the following are some possible approaches that the grant would like to support to increase the awareness and knowledge of diverse options AT/ICT:

¹ “Enabling Masterplan 2012-2016” is a 5 year national roadmap to build a more inclusive society, in which persons with disabilities can be integral and contributing members, empowered to reach their potential. <http://app.msf.gov.sg/Policies/DisabilitiesSpecialNeeds.aspx>

1a) Providing persons with disabilities (and their caregivers) access to an aggregated information source on AT/ IT. The information should not be static (i.e not merely a directory) and should be easily updated. The information must be presented in a way that is accessible to the lay-person and persons with disabilities. Users must be able to obtain information that they need to make an informed decision regarding the use of AT/ICT. The information can also be tiered at different levels of reliability:

- i. Curated and verified information by AT/ ICT, allied health or medical professionals. The information is likely to be on AT/ICT devices or solutions that require users to be guided or trained in their use to prevent any mishaps.
- ii. Information shared by peers (or public) and reviewed by peers based on personal experience and use. For example, mainstream technologies that can be used as assistive technologies, or off-the-shelf products and solutions.
Auxiliary and other information related to AT/ ICT that will help in the adoption and use of AT/ ICT. For example, information on distributors, sources of funding, contacts for customisation, trends of new technologies relevant for AT/ ICT etc and how to adopt and use the devices in various contexts to enhance the users' ability.

1b) Continuous AT/ ICT Support for Persons with Disabilities throughout Different Phases of Life Cycle so that persons with disabilities can leverage AT/ ICT throughout their life. The key variables that need to be kept in mind are (a) the needs of a person would change and evolve as they age, proceed to a different stage of life or experience a change in their environment; (b) development of technologies and mainstreaming of technologies would occur over time; and (c) existing AT/ IT product would need repairs and maintenance to maintain optimal performance. Possible project areas to consider include:

- iii. A platform where information (tiered at differing level of reliability) can be data-mined with predictive analytics for contextualised information push to individuals throughout their life.
- iv. The information that is contextualised may go beyond mere provision to actionable information so that individuals will know where to seek the necessary service. This may also include instructional content on how to use a specific AT/ ICT, trends and tips on how others are overcoming impairment and limitations with their AT/ICT use.

2) Enhancing AT/ICT information and assessment for persons with disabilities for better matching of assistive technology with needs. Currently, to obtain an AT device, persons with disabilities or their carers will need to navigate their way around various stages – from needs assessment to product identification, from obtaining financial assistance (such as tapping Assistive Technology Fund) to procurement. At times, they may also have to interact and engage with different organisations for each stage.

The objective is to allow assessment and recommendation of AT/ICT to be made as pervasive as possible so that persons with disabilities can get advice in a timely and

convenient manner without having to navigate various stages on their own. The recommendation made should also be a holistic one that takes affordability into consideration. Possible project areas to consider include:

- a. Nurture team(s) of AT/ ICT assessors with capabilities to serve pan-disabilities profile
- b. Develop capabilities to bring AT/ ICT assessment services to persons with disabilities in their natural environment (eg: school, workplace, home etc).
- c. Equipping “key contact points” who support persons with disabilities with the knowledge to provide initial advice for AT/ ICT assessment, including the diverse options of AT/ICT that are available. This is so that each key contact point can encourage persons with disabilities to get help from professional AT/ ICT assessors. Examples of key contact points include educators from mainstream or special education schools, human resource managers, and others.

The overarching principle is to develop solutions that enable content (i.e. information and resources) to be aggregated for search and dissemination on a relevance and reliable basis to people who need the information when they need the information. This is critical for persons with disabilities so that they can “self-help” to make informed decisions in addition to professional recommendations.

The solutions are not limited to the approaches described above and we welcome any proposals that shall meet the outcomes of empowering persons with disabilities and their caregivers with information and resources on AT/ICT.

Interested applicants may visit SG Enable website (www.sgenable.sg/enablinglivesgrant) for more details on the Tote Board - Enabling Lives Initiative Grant.