



WisTech Data and Narratives (Federal Fiscal Year 2023)

The following data and narratives are a summary from the Annual Progress Report submitted for the time period from October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023

WisTech Program Outcomes Federal Fiscal Year 2023	WisTech Service Description
20 Individuals served	Low interest loans to purchase assistive technology (AT) or make home modifications through WisLoan
3,559 Individuals served	Free equipment made available through reuse and telecommunication program funding programs.
\$1,411.106	Dollar value of reuse and telecommunications devices provided to Wisconsinites (cost-savings)
1,186 Individuals served	Device loans to assist with decision making or serve as a short-term accommodation while awaiting funding or a device repair.
1,677 AT devices	AT devices loaned out to people with disabilities, various service providers, and family members
749 Demonstrations 1887 Individuals served	Device demonstrations provided for individuals to decide what AT product will meet their individual needs.
3,297 Individuals served	Training on AT devices, services, funding resources, and accessibility.
49,589 Individuals served	Information and assistance provided to increase knowledge about AT devices, services, and funding.



WisTech Stories

WisLoan (Alternative Financing)

Direct consumer testimonial: "I would like to comment on the WisLoan program at Independence First. The program was really great. I am disabled and was in need of a lift chair. Because of the program, I was able to get a loan to buy my chair. My loan was set up with the payment taken automatically, which makes it really easy on me. The staff made the loan application process effortless and simple to understand. I am so thankful for this opportunity and I love my lift chair. It makes my life so much better! I would highly recommend this program."

Device Reuse

Options for Independent Living, a WisTech subcontractor, serves numerous counties and a staff member encountered an accessibility concern as they traveled in their service area. A staff member was driving past a home and happened to notice a family attempting to push someone up a homemade ramp that was created by 2x4 lumber. The staff member stopped and approached the family with an offer to provide a safer ramp option through their reuse program. They shared information about ramp safety both for the person who uses the wheelchair and for the family caregivers. The following day the family went to Options and picked up a portable ramp for use at their home. During that conversation, the family mentioned that rubber on the wheelchair wheels was disintegrating. Options was also able to provide a wheelchair for this individual to use through the reuse program.

Device Loan

A WisTech consumer who has ALS contacted their local Independent Living Center, Options for Independent Living, for assistive technology to assist with eating. WisTech added an Obi robotic feeding device to the loan and demonstration inventory this year. This device will be available to any of our subcontractors but is currently being shared by two primary programs. This consumer and her husband had the opportunity to borrow the device and decided that it would meet their needs. Direct consumer quote: "For me, it was great. I have ALS, and I have limited mobility remaining in my arms. For most meals my husband, who is my caregiver, must feed me. I pre-programmed the robotic feeding arm to always feed me at the right height. Since I control the robotic arms motion, I could eat as slowly or as fast as I chose. My legs still work well, so I can push the controllers with my feet. My ALS is slow moving, so I should be able to use the Obi in this manner for many years." This device gave my husband the opportunity to prepare my food and then get a plate for himself and sit down and enjoy his food without having to attend to me all the time. I know this will not work well for all people, but for me it is the next best thing to having my arms back! I have begun working with both Obi and my insurance company, to determine the best way to secure this device for my future."



Device Demonstration

One of the WisTech subcontractors, Independence First, worked with an individual who has a spinal cord injury. This individual recently immigrated to the United States and was planning to become employed as a language interpreter. This work will take place at his home and they had secured funding through a grant to support any accommodation needs. This individual and a representative from the granting program visited the WisTech program's loan and demonstration center to try out solutions in a variety of areas. This individual tried out devices in the hearing, daily living, and computer access categories. As this individual tried a device and made a decision that it would work for them, the funder went online and made the purchase. The devices purchased included a bone conduction headset, a computer stand, and a trackball mouse. They also tried out some solutions for carrying the computer but made the decision that these alternatives would not work as well as what they are currently doing.

Training

- Options for Independent Living, a WisTech subcontractor, serves several rural communities and has been conducting in-depth technology trainings to reduce social isolation through the use of smartphones and tablets. The training consists of a five-week curriculum covering how to operate a smart phone (charging, button navigation, etc.), setting up the accessibility features, selecting apps, and using distance communication tools such as Zoom and Facetime. A final component is an app sharing session where participants can share their favorite uses of the smartphone to reduce social isolation. The program has found that limiting the training to twelve participants allows for ample individualized assistance. Their most recent training class took place on Washington Island in Door County, Wisconsin. Washington Island is only accessible via ferry service which creates a demographic barrier to social connectivity. Bringing this training to the residents of Washington Island has had led to a significant reduction to social isolation among its residents which is demonstrated by their own creation of a Cookies, Coffee, and Conversation group. While this curriculum is modeled after a grant the program received during the pandemic the outcomes were so positive that it has been expanded beyond the original grant. In addition to gaining technology skills, the participants have noted a reduction in social isolation.
- WisTech hosted a webinar training on the use of native iOS smartphone applications to support transition. This training was made available statewide through Zoom and is also archived on the WisTech YouTube channel. More than 70 service providers were able to learn how native apps and functions on iOS devices can facilitate transition for high school students to post-secondary education, community living, and employment. Attendees consisted of vocational rehabilitation counselors, educators, therapists, and independent living center staff.



- WisTech staff from the Department of Health Services conducted a comprehensive training on document and information accessibility to statewide staff from the Aging and Disability Resources Centers (ADRCs), including the Tribal ADRCs. Approximately 110 staff members attended this training, and they will be incorporating the information learned to ensure that the information that is provided to Wisconsin residents is fully accessible.

Technical Assistance

WisTech staff from the Department of Health Services provided technical assistance internally on the development of new informational materials for enrollment in long term care programs. This TA included in-depth education on document accessibility, ongoing review of informational material content, and remediation of documents to ensure full access for individuals enrolling in long-term care programs in Wisconsin. Wisconsin residents seek out long-term care services to remain independent in their own homes or to transition from an institutional setting back to their own residence.

Information and Assistance

Sources for information and assistance data are collected from:

- Aging and Disability Resource Centers
- ALS Association
- Department of Health Services staff (WisTech)
- Independent Living Centers
- WisLoan program