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The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way some supports can be delivered, with technology enabling support continuity through telehealth, video conferencing and other technologies.

Some participants have found this flexibility enables them to use their capacity building funding better to achieve their goals.

In recognition of this, the flexible approach to purchasing low cost AT will continue and be monitored as participants and providers continue to adapt to COVID normal.

The flexible approach introduced during the pandemic allowed participants to spend up to \$1,500 on low cost AT items, such as smart devices and fitness equipment, in consultation with their existing support providers.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues, think how this flexible approach may help you to continue services safely if physical distancing is required. We recommend participants, their families and carers work with their existing providers to discuss the best way to receive services and supports or do everyday activities.

This may include:

- using available technology
- developing exercise programs participants can do at home
- borrowing equipment
- keeping in touch online or over the phone.

Remember that supports must continue to be effective, beneficial and provide value for money.

Providers should be sure that how they deliver their services continues to meet these requirements.

Professional associations and practice regulators may publish guidelines on what is currently considered good or evidence-based practice to assist.

## How can participants use their low cost AT funding for support continuity?

Participants are able to spend up to \$1500 on low cost AT items from their existing budgets.

Participants should not spend more than \$750 on electronic devices needed to maintain existing services.

Participants can use their existing NDIS funding to purchase an item if it meets the NDIS funding criteria and is [reasonable and necessary](#) .

In particular, to use low cost AT funding flexibly the item:

- needs to maintain or improve delivery of funded NDIS supports like a program, therapy or requirement (for example physiotherapy or Auslan interpreting provided via video conferencing);
- must be confirmed by your support provider (in writing) as needed to continue receiving supports and services while maintaining physical distancing/other health requirements;
- is the simplest solution/device required to maintain funded supports
- is not the same or similar to a device you already have, or could easily get access to;
- is not something another organisation could and would provide you; and
- is not specifically excluded by NDIS Rules (such as being illegal to supply or use).

Participants are advised that if a standard tablet, computer or iPad is required to participate in online video classes, these should generally cost no more than \$600. A suitable protective case or bag (usually costing less than \$100) should also be purchased to protect your investment from accidental damage.

## What is excluded from this policy?

Some things should never be paid for with NDIS funds including items:

- that do not relate to the participant's disability, or
- that are illegal to supply or use.

The following items and circumstances are excluded from the flexible low cost AT policy:

- smart phones, tablets or iPads with mobile-only 3G, 4G or 5G connections (though you can upgrade from a wifi only device to one of these devices using your own money)
- purchase of multiple devices (that do similar things) for the same participant
- internet connection and data, these are considered ordinary living costs (utilities)

- applications (apps) or software (most apps/software for continuity of support needs is free, very low cost or is provided by the support provider)
- additional hardware or accessories, other than standard protective cases.

## Smart devices needed as an AT support

[Our Guideline on Assistive Technology](#) recognises some participants need smart devices to meet their specific disability needs all the time and not just for support continuity (for example communication disabilities).

In these cases, the smart device will be specific to meet the needs of the individual.

This may include specifications and additions in excess of those permissible when a participant is purchasing a smart device for use under this flexible arrangement.

To see examples of how smart devices are funded for these needs, refer to the [Would we fund it \(WWFI\) guide](#) .

## Can I use my low cost assistive technology (AT) budget to purchase a portable air purifier?

You can temporarily use your existing core - consumables budget to purchase a portable air purifier (or other ventilation device such as a portable extraction fan or pedestal fan) to ensure safe access to NDIS funded supports in your home, where you:

- have a disability that compromises your breathing (lung function) and/or puts you at increased risk of acquiring, or becoming very unwell if you acquire, COVID-19
- are at increased risk of acquiring COVID-19 due to the nature and volume of close personal supports you receive each day from support workers in your home
- are unable to (due to disability) effectively minimise your risk of acquiring COVID-19 by following public health advice (e.g. to wear a mask), or otherwise ensure adequate ventilation within your home or residence by other means (e.g. opening windows).

You do not need to provide any evidence or otherwise seek approval for any low cost AT device purchased below \$1,500 in value, but you must keep the [evidence](#).

The expected price range of a portable air purifier varies between \$300-\$700 per unit.

If you need additional funding or believe you need to purchase a device valued at more than \$1,500, you will need to seek a plan reassessment and provide relevant [evidence](#).

You can refer to the following for more information:

- [Participant factsheet – Understanding assistive technology evidence, advice, assessments and quotes](#)
- [Mid cost AT](#)

For more information on low cost AT, read [Our Guideline – Assistive Technology](#) .

Portable air purifiers are unlikely on their own to prevent transmission of COVID-19. You should consider current health advice on how to effectively minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission within their home. Improving ventilation and air quality (whether through natural or mechanical means) is just one of a hierarchy of controls that should be considered.

You should also seek professional advice before selecting and installing a portable air purifier or other ventilation improvement equipment within their home, if you choose this as a control.

## Low cost AT in your plan budget

Participants can use their funding flexibly to purchase low cost AT using funding in their Core - Consumables budget.

Plan-managed or self-managed participants can purchase these items from any provider.

NDIA-managed participants can purchase these from any NDIS provider registered to deliver the relevant AT supports.

We know not all participants have funding allocated in their Core budget for consumables.

Following a change made in 2020, participants can use their Core budget more flexibly, including to purchase low cost AT under the consumables category.

Some participants only have funding in their Capacity Building budget, for example those who are part of the Early Childhood Early Intervention program.

Participants are able to use the “Low Cost AT – to support Capacity Building support delivery” line item to purchase appropriate low cost AT under this policy.

Participants should use their plan wisely for all of their support needs.

The NDIA will not increase plan values to accommodate the purchase of a device under this policy.

For more information on the above items, refer to the [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - Using your budget](#) FAQs for participants.

## Replacement of equipment when required

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Replacements for loss or damage will generally follow the existing [AT replacement policy](#).

Replacement of items would generally only apply where the existing device is no longer suitable to meet the participant's needs at that time.

It does not include upgrade because a new model or version is released.

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