Technology and Disability Policy Highlights

Spring 2015



# Overview

This Spring 2015, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) addressed accessibility in a variety of ways. In March, service providers and equipment manufacturers were reminded by the FCC that they are required to maintain records of their efforts to provide accessible services and equipment to individuals with disabilities, in accordance with the Communications Act. Recordkeeping enables the FCC to evaluate the impact of their accessibility regulations. There was also advancement of text-to-911 capabilities with updates to the Text-to-911 Readiness and Certification Registry (Text-to-911 Registry) which lists 911 call centers that are prepared to receive text messages and the date by which emergency text message services should be available to their citizenry. Text-to-911 deployments allow for people with hearing and speech disabilities to independently contact emergency services from their mobile devices. In May, accessibility was central to the FCC’s Open Commission meeting where they considered a proposal to extend accessibility rules that apply to emergency information presented on video programming to emergency alerts presented on “second screen” like tablets and smartphones. They also deliberated the permanent extension of the ‘iCanConnect’ Program, which provides up to $10 million annually for the distribution of communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind.

In Wireless RERC news, the App Factory released its [2015-2016 Call for Proposals](http://WWW.WIRELESSRERC.GATECH.EDU/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/CONTENT/NEWROOM/APP%20FACTORY_RFP_2015_DEADLINE%20EXTENDED.PDF), inviting developers based in the U.S. to submit proposals for financial support to develop assistive and/or accessibility apps for mobile platforms (e.g., Android, Blackberry, iOS, Windows). In May, the Wireless RERC convened its State of Technology (SoT) Summit, *Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES* and included 45 subject matter experts in disability advocacy, wireless technology, communications policy, emergency management, hearing access, aging and disability, wearable computing and more. The Summit was grounded in research carried out in 2014 by the Wireless RERC, and focused on 1) key social, economic, political and technological forces at play in the migration from legacy, analog technologies to mobile, digital technologies, and 2) explored the consequential futures for people with disabilities. The results of the Summit will be presented as online conference proceedings and an online and print publication in a special issue of the FUTURES Journal.

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# Regulatory Activities

**FCC Grants Waivers to Accessible Emergency Information Requirements**

May 26, 2015 - The American Cable Association (ACA) filed a petition [**MB Docket Nos. 12-107, 11-43**] to the FCC’s Media Bureau requesting a waiver to rules which require cable systems to pass emergency information to a secondary audio system by the compliance deadline, which was May 26, 2015. The waiver asked for an exemption for certain analog-only and hybrid digital/analog systems; and requested that they be allowed to be considered compliant if they provide free set-top boxes to eligible viewers (i.e. individuals with vision disabilities).  The National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) also filed a petition to receive a waiver of the Commission’s rules. The NAB is requesting a partial exemption until November 26, 2015. They requested this extension because the hardware and software necessary to transcribe emergency information has not been released or delivered by the manufacturers. Interested parties were asked to submit comments in April. On May 26, 2015, in *Memorandum Opinion and Order* [**12-107**], the Media Bureau granted the waivers.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[FCC Seeks Comment on American Cable Association's Petition for Waiver of Accessible Emergency Information Requirements](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-357A1.pdf)

[<https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-357A1.pdf>]

[MEDIA BUREAU SEEKS COMMENT ON NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS’ PETITION FOR WAIVER OF ACCESSIBLE EMERGENCY INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-394A1.pdf)

[<https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-394A1.pdf>]

[Media Bureau Grants Two Petitions for Waiver of Emergency Info Rule](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-632A1.pdf%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) 

<http://apps.fcc.gov/ecfs/comment/view?id=60001059183>

**Accessibility Central to FCC’s May 2015 Commission Meeting**

May 21, 2015 - The FCC convened its May 2015 Open Meeting on May 21, 2015. The agenda included a proposal to extend accessibility rules that apply to emergency information presented on video programming to emergency alerts presented on “second screen” like tablets and smartphones. Also up for consideration was the permanent extension of the ‘iCanConnect’ Program, formally known as the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program. iCanConnect provides up to $10 million annually for the distribution of communications equipment to low-income individuals who are deaf-blind. View the meeting here: [<https://www.fcc.gov/events/open-commission-meeting-may-2015>]

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[May 2015 Open Commission Meeting Video and Documents](https://www.fcc.gov/events/open-commission-meeting-may-2015)

[<https://www.fcc.gov/events/open-commission-meeting-may-2015>]

**FCC’s Consumer Advisory Committee Receives New Charter**

May 5, 2015 - The FCC announced the selection of 37 members to sit on its Consumer Advisory Committee. This Committee makes recommendations on consumer issues and facilitates consumer participation in the rulemaking process. Tom Wheeler, FCC Chairman, reappointed Debra R. Berlyn, National Consumer League, as the Chairperson. Members representing the consumer rights of people with disabilities and older adults include: Claude Stout, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumer Advocacy Network; Paul W. Schroeder, American Foundation for the Blind; and Christopher Baker, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[FCC Announces Appointment of Consumer Advisory Committee](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-535A1.pdf)

[<https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-535A1.pdf>]

**Based on GAO Finding, the FCC needs to evaluate the Lifeline Program**

April 23, 2015 - The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) evaluated the FCC’s Lifeline Program. Lifeline was created to ensure the availability of telephone service for eligible low-income Americans. According to the GAO, the FCC has been implementing reforms to the program but they have not evaluated the effectiveness of achieving the program’s goals and minimizing the program’s cost.

The GAO recommended that the FCC conduct a program evaluation. The report indicated the following evaluation guidelines for a successful programmatic evaluation:

* Develop criteria or standards for determining program performance.
* Define a methodology, including a valid and reliable sample frame.
* Identify project milestones.
* Describe roles, responsibilities, and completion timeframes.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[FCC Should Evaluate the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Lifeline Program](http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-335?source=ra)

[<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-335?source=ra>]

**DoJ and edX Enter Agreement to Make Moocs Accessible**

April 2, 2015 - The Department of Justice entered a settlement agreement with edX Inc. after they allegedly violated Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Title III of the ADA forbids disability discrimination and requires that public accommodations ensure individuals with disabilities are not excluded, deprived of services, isolated, or otherwise treated differently because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, such as accurate captioning of audio and labeling of visuals. edX Inc. is a non-profit platform, created by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, that provides massive open online courses (MOOC). The courses provided were not accessible to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, have low vision, or have physical disabilities affecting manual dexterity. The settlement has mandated multiple requirements for edX Inc. They must provide accurate captioning for people who are deaf, oral navigation signals for people who are blind, and programing changes to navigate content without a mouse for people with dexterity disabilities. The settlement also requires edX to conform to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 AA and make significant modifications to its website, platform, and mobile applications.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[United States Reaches Settlement with Provider of Massive Open Online Courses to Make its Content Accessible to the Disabled](http://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/united-states-reaches-settlement-provider-massive-open-online-courses-make-its-content)

[<http://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/united-states-reaches-settlement-provider-massive-open-online-courses-make-its-content>]

**New On-line ADA Act Complaint Form**

March 3, 2015 – The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) announced that ADA complaints can be filed electronically via an online form. As of March 15, 2015, the DoJ stopped accepting complaints sent via email. However, they continue to accept written complaints through the U.S. postal service. To request a paper complaint form by mail, contact the Department of Justice’s ADA Information Line at 1-800-514-0301 (v); 1-800-514-0383 (tty). To file out a complaint electronically, visit [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

#### Additional Information

[Americans with Disabilities Act Discrimination Complaint Form](http://www.ada.gov/complaint/)

[<http://www.ada.gov/complaint/>]

**The FCC Updated the Text-to-911 Readiness Registry**

March 2, 2015 – The Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau of the FCC updated the Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) Text-to-911 Readiness and Certification Registry (Text-to-911 Registry) which lists PSAPs that are prepared to receive text messages and the date by which emergency text message services should be available to their citizenry. This Public Notice [**PS Docket Nos. 10-255 and 11-153**] served as official notice to Commercial Mobile Radio Service providers and other providers of text messaging services that they must be able to route text messages to the certified text-ready PSAPs within six months - by September 3, 2015. States included in the March update were Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and Texas. To see specific cities/counties visit: <https://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/psap-text-911-readiness-and-certification>.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Announces Update to PSAP Text-to-911 Readiness and Certification Registry](https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-276A1.pdf)

[<https://apps.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DA-15-276A1.pdf>]

**Recordkeeping efforts to implement accessibility requirements**

March 2, 2015 - Service providers and equipment manufacturers were reminded by the FCC that they are required to maintain records of their efforts to provide accessibility for individuals with disabilities, in accordance with the Communications Act. These service providers and equipment manufacturers are subject to Section 255 (ensuring services and equipment will be accessible), Section 716 (ensuring advanced communications services and equipment are accessible and usable), and Section 718 (ensuring that the functions of the Internet browser on a telephone are accessible and usable for individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment).

Since January 30, 2013, service providers and equipment manufacturers have been obligated to maintain documentation of their accessibility efforts. They must include information about the entity’s efforts to hold consultations with people with disabilities, descriptions of the products and services’ accessibility features, and information about the service or products compatibility with equipment used by people with disabilities.

Each entity must send an officer to submit a certification verifying that records are in accordance with the Communications Act, supported by an affidavit or declaration. These records must be submitted to the Commission by April 1st of every year.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[ACCESSIBILITY RECORDKEEPING COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION AND CONTACT INFORMATION REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTITIES SUBJECT TO SECTIONS 255, 716, AND 718 OF THE COMMUNICATIONS ACT](http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2015/db0302/DA-15-274A1.pdf)

[<http://transition.fcc.gov/Daily_Releases/Daily_Business/2015/db0302/DA-15-274A1.pdf> ]

# Publications & Reports

**The NCD’s Update on the State of Public Transportation**

May 4, 2015 - In 2005, the National Council of Disability (NCD) report: “The Current State of Transportation For People With Disabilities in the United States” was a major review of the accessibility of transportation and its impact on people with disabilities. The 2005 report facilitated improvements in public transportation. Ten years later, NCD has released a new report, entitled “Transportation Update: Where We’ve Gone and What We’ve Learned.” In this new report, the NCD analyzes the advances in transportation since their last report. This report focuses primarily on surface transportation and addresses the accessibility-related progress in transportation systems. It also discusses ensuring that communication systems (e.g., public address systems and telecommunications systems) are implemented that are accessible and appropriate for people with different types of disabilities. Even though progress has been made, the NCD is continuing to address persistent problems with compliance and gaps in access. Following are their overarching recommendations (verbatim):

1. All transportation providers must comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). They should establish policy and conduct training to ensure their proper implementation.
2. All federal agencies that enforce any aspect of the ADA transportation requirements should enforce them thoroughly and robustly, and take the initiative to undertake robust compliance oversight activities, such as compliance reviews, to ensure that the ADA is implemented properly.
3. Congress should undertake oversight activities to ensure compliance with the ADA transportation requirements, as well as proper implementation.
4. Transit agencies and other stakeholders should follow all the best practices identified in this report.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Transportation Update: Where We've Gone and What We've Learned](http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2015/05042015/)

[<http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2015/05042015/>]

**Caregiver Creates Emergency Preparedness Workbook**

March 12, 2015 - Laura George created her book, *Emergency Preparedness Plan: A Workbook for Caregivers, Persons with Disabilities, the Elderly, and Others,* after an incident her and her husband had a few years ago. The George’s received separate diagnoses of pregnancy and a spinal cord injury at the beginning of hurricane season. When she realized the scarcity of information on emergency preparedness for those working with or caring for people with disabilities, she and her husband began to create resources on emergency preparedness for not only themselves but for other members in the community. Now, Laura George continues to present, teach, write and advocate on emergency management and disabilities.

*Emergency Preparedness Plan: A Workbook for Caregivers, Persons with Disabilities, the Elderly, and Others,* was created to start dialogue on emergency planning and preparation for people with disabilities. In an effort to increase readability, George made 80% of the book’s font size 14. The book also includes topics, such as: How to Call 911; Medical Equipment; Caregiver’s Needs; Disaster Preparedness and Resources and more.

You can contact the author through these means of communication:

* Phone: 770-330-5653
* Email: LauraGeorgeEMDL@gmail.com
* Facebook (moderated group): LauraGeorgeEMDL

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[*Emergency Preparedness Plan: A Workbook for Caregivers, Persons with Disabilities, the Elderly, and Others*](http://www.amazon.com/emergency-prepardness-plan-caregivers-disabilities/dp/150774708X)

[<http://www.amazon.com/emergency-prepardness-plan-caregivers-disabilities/dp/150774708X>]

# Other Items of Interest

**AT&T NYU Connect Ability Challenge**

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is a three-month global software development competition called the AT&T NYU Connect Ability Challenge. This competition encourages the leveraging of current mobile and wireless technologies to improve the lives of people living with disabilities. The initiative intends to help users with disabilities by matching development talent and client users to facilitate user-friendly design.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Connect Ability Challenge](http://connectability.challengepost.com/)

[<http://connectability.challengepost.com/>]

**NCD Applauds Maria Town’s Appointment to the White House**

May 4, 2015 - Maria Town was appointed as the Associate Director to the Office of Public Engagement at the White House. She will manage the office’s disability and Federal Agency portfolios. She is a graduate of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Before she transitioned to the White House, she held a position at the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). Due to her work in the area of disability policy, with a focus on improving employment outcomes for people with disabilities, the National Council of Disability (NCD) publicly commended her appointment. Rebecca Cokley, NCD’s Executive Director stated, “Maria’s track record on bolstering youth with disabilities as they transition into the workforce and her demonstrated skill crafting career development opportunities in classrooms, fostering leadership for young people with disabilities, and building opportunities for inclusive volunteerism will serve the existing efforts of the White House on behalf of Americans with disabilities well.  We look forward to working closely with her.”

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Nat’l Council on Disability Applauds Maria Town’s Appointment as Associate Director to the Office of Public Engagement at the White House](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/05042015b)

[<http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/05042015b>]

**TV Programing Is Now Accessible To Students With Disabilities**

April 2015 - The National Association of the Deaf via the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) has enabled access to free, on-demand children’s television programming to students with vision and hearing disabilities. Many children’s and family friendly TV shows, featuring closed captioning and audio descriptions, can now be accessed online through the Accessible Television Portal project (<http://www.dcmp.org/accessible-television>).

This Accessible Television Portal is an element of the DCMP (<http://www.dcmp.org> ). The portal includes free video-on-demand TV content provided by major networks, producers and distributors, including Sprout, Cartoon Network and Sesame Workshop. With their services, DCMP benefits thousands of students from Pre-K-12, who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind. These services also include, inter alia, a collection of free educational media that is described and captioned.

Parents, teachers, school personnel, and other professionals can visit [www.dcmp.org](http://www.dcmp.org) to apply for access to the portal. The content can be used with, and by, students at home or in the classroom via the Internet, mobile tablets and phones, mobile apps, and set-top boxes. The portal is also designed to be accessible to those with sensory disabilities.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Students with Disabilities Can Now Access On-Demand Children’s TV Programming

[<http://www.ed.gov/blog/2015/03/students-with-disabilities-can-now-access-on-demand-childrens-tv-programming/> ]

**aViewer IS NOW AVAILABLE ON GITHUB**

April 22, 2015 - With the support of Google, the Paciello Group announced the Accessibility Viewer (aViewer) is available on Github under an open source license. The aViewer is an accessibility object inspection tool source code. It presents the accessibility API information that is disclosed by web browsers to the operating systems and to assistive technology used to access information on the website, like screen readers. According to the Paciello Group, aViewer’s status as an open source project will allow for it to be collaboratively developed and used by web developers and accessibility specialists.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[aViewer – accessibility inspection tool on Github](http://www.paciellogroup.com/blog/2015/04/aviewer-accessibility-inspection-tool-on-github/)

[<http://www.paciellogroup.com/blog/2015/04/aviewer-accessibility-inspection-tool-on-github/> ]

**Facebook’s “Accessibility Toolkit”**

March 31, 2015 - Facebook, as well as many other companies, face the same issue: “How do you incorporate accessibility within the company’s existing engineering environment?” To tackle this question, Facebook’s Accessibility Engineering Team was formed in 2011. They have created an “Accessibility Toolkit,” described as a behind-the-scenes review of how Facebook thinks about and implements product usability for people with vision loss and varied abilities.

To increase accessibility for people with disabilities, Facebook began to integrate assistive technology compatibility into the platforms components. Reportedly, Facebook initially had a challenge with accessibility because they weren’t aware of the need for it. User feedback, however, made it apparent that they needed to increase accessibility. According to Facebook, the Toolkit helps in their mission to help the world share and connect by building products that everyone can use.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Introducing the Accessibility Toolkit](https://code.facebook.com/posts/844124808988739/introducing-the-accessibility-toolkit/)

[<https://code.facebook.com/posts/844124808988739/introducing-the-accessibility-toolkit/>]

**UN World Conference Received Accolades for their Accessibility Measures**

March 18, 2015 – The United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (#WCDRR) held their conference this year in Sendai, Japan. It may have been their 3rd conference but this was the first international meeting of its kind to provide a wide range of accessibility features for people with disabilities.

Over 200 people with disabilities were active participants at the conference, serving as delegates, speakers, panelists and contributors. There were 34 events that addressed the issues of disability. At the main venues, there were accessibility features provided such as: closed captioning in English and Japanese, wheelchair accommodations in accessible transportation, and machines that displayed documents in Braille. “I have been to many international meetings, but this is the most accessible meeting not specifically for people with disabilities,” Sonia Margarita Villacres of the World Federation of the Deafblind stated.

Mr. Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman of the Nippon Foundation, a supporter of the initiative to make the Conference accessible, noted that following a UNISDR global survey in 2013 which found that people with disabilities were often excluded from disaster planning, the *Post-2015 Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction*, a revised version of the current *Hyogo Framework for Action*, includes the recommendation to consult people with disabilities on plans and strategies for managing disaster risk. Sasakwa stated, “It will be an important milestone and help advance the cause of disability-inclusion on other global agendas.”

The Post-2015 Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction can be accessed at: <http://www.wcdrr.org/uploads/Sendai_Framework_for_Disaster_Risk_Reduction_2015-2030.pdf>

The United States was the only country that did not sign the framework, citing issues with the language on technology transfer and international cooperation, but have committed to implement all other areas of the framework.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Sendai UN World Conference hailed for accessibility](http://www.unisdr.org/archive/43260)

[<http://www.unisdr.org/archive/43260>]

**Donald Cullen vs. Nexflix - Case Dismissed**

March 13, 2015 - California resident, Donald Cullen’s initial attempt to sue Netflix Inc. on a California Disabled Persons Act claim was dismissed from district court. Cullen decided to fight back and appealed the court’s decision. Cullen based his Disabled Persons Act and Unruh Civil Rights Act claims on Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Title III in the ADA states that “no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation.” His claim was denied based on a previous interpretation of the legal term “place of public accommodation” in the *Weyer v. Twentieth Century Fox.* A “place of public accommodations requires “some connection between the good or service complained of and an actual physical place.” Since Cullen lacked evidence to his claim, the Court of Appeals affirmed the district court’s dismissal.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[DONALD CULLEN, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, Plaintiff - Appellant, v. NETFLIX, INC., Defendant - Appellee](https://d3bsvxk93brmko.cloudfront.net/datastore/memoranda/2015/04/01/13-15092.pdf)

[<https://d3bsvxk93brmko.cloudfront.net/datastore/memoranda/2015/04/01/13-15092.pdf>]

**Window-Eyes 9.1 Screen Reader Is Released By Ai Squared**

March 7, 2015 – Ai Squared has released the new Window-Eyes 9.1 Screen Reader as a continued effort to improve digital accessibility for people who are blind or have low vision. Windows- Eyes 9.1 is a free upgrade from Window-Eyes and has the following features:

* Continued Improvements for Web Support.
* Support for Google Chrome.
* Enhanced performance in Firefox.
* Placemarkers have returned to the new Browse Mode, increasing ease of access to favorite parts of websites.
* Element Properties have returned to the new Browse Mode.
* More ARIA functionality added to provide an improved web browsing experience.
* Bug Fixes for iTunes, Outlook, Windows Live Mail.
* Stability fixes.

The Director of Product Management for Ai Squared, Jeremy Curry said, “We are extremely proud to continue to provide the best possible web experience to our customers… We listen to our customers and have fixed many issues while also adding all-new support for Google Chrome and additional functionality to make it easier for users to browse the web.”

Customers who have Window-Eyes 9 can upgrade to Window-Eyes 9.1 by checking for the update.

For more information, call (802)362-3612, email sales@aisquared.com, or visit <http://www.aisquared.com>.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Ai Squared Releases Window-Eyes 9.1 Screen Reader](http://www.aisquared.com)

[<http://www.aisquared.com>]

**New Disability Training Module for I&R Specialists by NASUAD**

March 4, 2015 - A new training module, focused on disability has been launched by the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD), in partnership with the Alliance of Information and Referral Services (AIRS) and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a). *Disability for Information and Resource (I&R) Specialists* has been released on the NASUAD iQ online learning center. The training module provides an outline of key issues pertaining to providing information, referral, or assistance to people with disabilities and covers subjects such as disability awareness, disability rights and advocacy, effective communication and more. *Disability for I&R Specialists* may benefit any I&R specialist who wants to become more experienced at serving individual with disabilities.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[NASUAD Launches Disability Training for I&R Specialists](http://www.nasuad.org/newsroom/nasuad-news/nasuad-launches-disability-training-ir-specialists#sthash.djnpa6mR.QO74k2o8.dpuf)

[[http://www.nasuad.org/newsroom/nasuad-news/nasuad-launches-disability-training-ir-specialists#sthash.djnpa6mR.QO74k2o8.dpuf](http://www.nasuad.org/newsroom/nasuad-news/nasuad-launches-disability-training-ir-specialists#sthash.djnpa6mR.QO74k2o8.dpuf)]

# Wireless RERC Updates

**App Factory Releases 2015-2016 Call for Proposals**

Each year, the Wireless RERC’s App Factory invites experienced organizations or individual developers based in the U.S. to submit proposals for financial support to develop assistive and/or accessibility apps for mobile platforms (e.g., Android, Blackberry, iOS, Windows).

Apps developed through this program include AccessNote by the American Foundation for the Blind, BrailleTouch by BrailleTech, LLC, Smart Steps Mobile by Smart Steps, LLC, ZyroSky by Zyrobotics, LLC, and Sprint ID Accessibility Packs, Currency Identifier, and IDEAL Group Reader by Apps4Android.

**Proposals for 2015-16 are due on July 31, 2015**. Selection of proposals for funding will be on October 15. More information can be found in the PDF of the Call for Proposals below.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Assistive and Accessible Mobile Applications Call for Proposals](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/App%20Factory_RFP_2015_Deadline%20Extended.pdf)

[<http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/content/newroom/App%20Factory_RFP_2015_Deadline%20Extended.pdf>]

**Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES**

The Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies (Wireless RERC) convened its State of Technology (SoT) Summit on May 14-15, 2015 in Atlanta, Georgia. The *Envisioning Inclusive FUTURES Summit* was held at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center and included 45 subject matter experts in disability advocacy, wireless technology, communications policy, emergency management, hearing access, aging and disability, wearable computing and more. The Summit was grounded in research carried out in 2014 by the Wireless RERC, and focused on 1) key social, economic, political and technological forces at play in the migration from legacy, analog technologies to mobile, digital technologies, and 2) explored the consequential futures for people with disabilities. Two rounds of Delphi polling collected expert opinions on complex or ambiguous forecasting problems that often exceeded the capabilities of any one-area expert. This Summit, a dialogic meeting, served as the final phase of the assessment and forecasting process.

The philosophical basis of the futures studies approach is that many ideas about potential futures exist. The purpose of the futures process is to explore, analyze, compare, and critique competing concepts of “the future.” The Summit attendees engaged in dialog on the alternative possible inclusive future(s) of people with disabilities. In the context of technological migration they explored innovative paths to a transformative future for people with disabilities.

Highlights of each paper were presented and discussed. The papers and their associated responses were presented in three thematic clusters: technological, social, and change process factors. The focus was on overturning ‘business as usual’ thinking. During the first day, current assumptions or frames that are most challenged by emerging changes in technology and society were identified. As a group the attendees pinpointed several “vulnerable assumptions” to be further explored. Small working groups each tackled one of the “vulnerable assumptions” and collaboratively envisioned transformative, inclusive futures using their ‘challenging changes’ as opportunities. Each group shared their discussions and collaboratively developed a range of innovative inclusive futures. The attendees determined the most novel and transformative ideas from each group and what common visionary themes emerged across the groups. Three of the Future visions were prioritized and attendees began mapping the pathways to those inclusive futures; identifying needed knowledge, resources and allies. The results of the Summit will be presented as online conference proceedings and an online and print publication in a special issue of the FUTURES Journal.

#### Additional Information

[State of Technology Summit](http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/state-technology-conference-t2)

<http://www.wirelessrerc.gatech.edu/content/state-technology-conference-t2>

**Healthy Environments and Active Lifestyles (HEAL) Open House**

The 7th Annual Healthy Environments and Active Lifestyles (HEAL) Open House was held on April 14, 2015. The event featured student design projects from the Wireless RERC’s universal design course, BCS - the Chartered Institute for IT, Southeast Regional Group Youth Code Club and ongoing research from many organizations within Georgia Tech, including the Wireless RERC’s App Factory, the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA), the Aware Home Research Initiative and the Institute for People and Technology (IPaT), among others.

#### Additional Information

[HEAL Event](http://www.healatgt.gatech.edu/?q=Welcome)

[<http://www.healatgt.gatech.edu/?q=Welcome>]

# Upcoming Events

**National Federation of the Blind National Convention 2015**

The National Federation of the Blind announced that their 2015 National Convention will take place July 5-10, 2015 at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida. The primary function of the national convention is to address policy issues in the upcoming years and officer/board member elections. The NFB convention also provides practical benefits for attendees including seminars for those new to blindness and reviews of the latest adaptive technology for the blind.

The Rosen Centre Hotel is located at: 9840 International Drive, Orlando, Florida 32819. Hotel reservations can be made at (800) 204-7234. Additional information as to meetings, schedule, hotel, etc., may be obtained as it becomes available by visiting the link below.

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[National Federation of the Blind National Convention 2015](https://nfb.org/convention)

[<https://nfb.org/convention>]

**Technology and Disability Policy Highlights,** Spring 2015



The Technology and Disability Policy Highlights (TDPH) reports on national and local public policy events and recent wireless technological advances and political activities; and tracks emerging issues of interest to individuals with disabilities. *Technology and Disability Policy Highlights* is published monthly by the Wireless RERC. The Wireless RERC is a research center that promotes universal access to wireless technologies and explores their innovative applications in addressing the needs of people with disabilities. For more information on the Wireless RERC, please visit our web site at [<http://www.wirelessrerc.org>].

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