

How to develop a national assistive product list: a brief guide

What is a national assistive product list?

A national assistive product list (APL) compiles essential assistive products designed to meet the highest priority needs within a given country. It can be used to optimize the allocation of resources for financing, procuring, and providing assistive products that cater to those needs. It can also guide and strengthen product development, production, service delivery, market shaping, procurement, and reimbursement policies. A national APL should not limit access solely to the listed assistive products, nor should it remain static; instead, it should adapt to the changing needs of the population.

Developing a national APL is a foundational step for governments to strengthen the assistive technology sector and improve access. By ensuring a commitment to providing, at minimum, all products listed in an APL, those most in need of assistive technology can receive the appropriate consideration to lead inclusive, independent, dignified lives.

What is the WHO Priority Assistive Products List?

The WHO Priority Assistive Products List¹ contains assistive products that have been prioritized globally. It was first published in 2016, and WHO will continue to update it to better respond to global needs and emerging technology. It is intended to be a catalyst in promoting access to assistive technology. It is not a restrictive list but aims to provide each Member State with a model list from which to develop a national APL. It can provide guidance for procurement and reimbursement policies, including insurance coverage.

How do you develop a national assistive product list?

To develop a national APL, it is suggested to adopt an evidence-informed and consultative approach over three phases, engaging all relevant stakeholders.



Phase 1. Synthesize

In the first phase, relevant evidence is gathered and synthesized. Depending on available data and resources, one or more of the following methods can be used:

- Conduct a review of or collect and analyze existing data on the prevalence of use of assistive products, functional limitations, health conditions, disabilities, age distribution in your country to estimate the need for assistive products across functional domains, i.e., mobility, vision, hearing, cognition, communication, and self-care.
- Conduct a review of scientific and grey literature to gather evidence on the effectiveness of various assistive products in maintaining or improving an individual's functioning, independence, quality of life, or wellbeing relevant to your country.

¹ World Health Organization. (2016). Priority assistive products list: improving access to assistive technology for everyone, everywhere. World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/207694>

- c) Conduct a nationally representative survey on the prevalence of functional limitations and the need and use of assistive products in your country, for example, by using the WHO Rapid Assistive Technology Assessment (rATA)² tool.

Phase 2. Prioritize

In the second phase, a preliminary list of assistive products is developed in a stepwise process.

1. Using synthesized information from Phase 1 and the model WHO Priority Assistive Products List, and considering an ultimate total number of assistive products in the national APL (e.g., 50) and a fair distribution of assistive products between functional domains, determine an initial APL.
2. Identify and invite relevant participants in a Delphi process, ensuring representation of all relevant stakeholders across regions, age groups, genders, functional limitations, sectors and professions in your country³.
3. Engage identified and consenting participants in three rounds of Delphi exercises.
 - a. *Round 1:* Share the initial APL determined in Step 1 with the participants for review. Ask them to propose any additional assistive products. Analyze the results and add proposed assistive products to the list.
 - b. *Round 2:* Share the expanded APL with the participants. Ask them to select up to a certain number of assistive products that should be given priority within each functional domain (e.g., totaling 100). Analyze the results and determine the highest ranked assistive products within each functional domain (e.g., totaling 100).
 - c. *Round 3:* Share the list of highest ranked assistive products from Round 2 with the participants. Ask them to select a subset of assistive products that should be given priority within each functional domain, which matches the ultimate total number in Step 1. Analyze the results and determine the highest ranked assistive products, generating a preliminary APL.

Phase 3. Harmonize

In the third phase, the preliminary APL is discussed and finalized in a consensus workshop.

1. Determine a criterion for consensus around individual assistive products and the national APL (e.g., simple majority).
2. Organize a national APL consensus workshop.
 - a. Identify and invite relevant participants in a consensus workshop, ensuring representation of all relevant stakeholders across regions, age groups, genders, functional limitations, sectors and professions in your country.
 - b. Present the purpose of the workshop, activities undertaken to develop the preliminary APL, and the criterion for consensus.
 - c. Discuss the preliminary APL and reach a consensus on each assistive product and, finally, on the national APL. It may be effective to discuss assistive products belonging to the same functional domain in the same session.

² World Health Organization. (2021). Rapid assistive technology assessment tool (rATA). World Health Organization. <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/341939>

³ A Delphi process is a method of progressively reaching consensus among a group of stakeholders via multiple rounds of questionnaires sent to relevant participants. Several rounds of questionnaires are sent out to the group, and the anonymous responses are aggregated and shared with them after each round.