

**VISION LOSS
REHABILITATION**

ALBERTA

VLR
**Specialized Technical
Equipment Program**
Program Manual

A program to provide consumer products and assistive technology to Albertans with significant vision loss.
Equipment funding is supported by a grant from the Alberta Aids to Daily Living Program,
Ministry of Health.

Effective April 1, 2018

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

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VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

About VLR

VLR (legal entity name "Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada") is a registered charity, passionately providing community-based support, knowledge and a national voice to ensure Canadians who are blind or partially sighted have the confidence, skills and opportunities to fully participate in life.

To do that, our dedicated specialists work with people of all ages in their own homes, communities or local VLR offices - providing the personalized rehabilitation support they need to see beyond vision loss, build their independence and lead the lives they want.

In addition to our community-based services, we also work together with Canadians who are blind or partially sighted to advocate for a barrier-free society, and we strive to eliminate avoidable sight loss with world class research and by promoting the importance of vision health through public education.

Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

STEP provides consumer products and assistive technology to Albertans who are blind, partially sighted and deafblind. This equipment is necessary in maintaining one's independence within the community. Eligible equipment is identified in the STEP Approved Product List (STEP APL).

Consumer Products

Includes the low tech and low vision aids. Items under low tech include large print phones, talking calculators, talking blood pressure monitors, braille watches and many other items. Items under low vision include magnifiers, loupes, monoculars, binoculars and other items.

Assistive Technology

This category includes CCTV's, software, GPS and Optical Character Recognition equipment.

Deafblind Products

Deafblind items include vibrating watches, large print or braille clocks with vibrators, alerting systems, FM systems and communication devices.

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1.0 General Eligibility

Individuals must:

- have a valid Alberta Personal Health Number (PHN);
- be a permanent resident of the Province of Alberta; and
- meet residence and clinical eligibility as identified below.

1.1 Residence Eligibility

Benefits are provided to eligible Albertans residing in a variety of residence types:

a) **Home Living**

Albertans residing in their own home, apartment, condominium or other independent living option. Residences may be privately owned, rented or leased.

b) **Supportive Living**

Includes many different types of settings such as senior's lodges, retirement communities, personal care homes and group homes.

c) **Hospital**

If the individual is a patient in a hospital, benefits may only be authorized as part of the discharge plan as defined by commonly accepted hospital practice.

d) **Long Term Care Facility**

Includes nursing homes and auxiliary, sub-acute hospitals.

1.2 Persons not Eligible

Individuals may not be eligible to receive benefits under STEP if they are eligible to receive comparable benefits under:

- Department of Veterans Affairs (Canada);
- Workers' Compensation Board (WCB);
- Motor Vehicle Accident Claims Act/Criminal Injuries Compensation or a Private Insurer; or
- Non-Insured Health Benefits Program (NIHB) Health Canada.

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1.3 Clinical Eligibility for Equipment

Consumer Products

Albertans are eligible for approved low technical equipment and low vision aids under STEP if the visual acuity in both eyes with proper refractive lenses is 20/70 or less with the Snellen Chart or equivalent, or if the greatest diameter of the field of vision is severely restricted.

Assistive Technology

Albertans are eligible for approved assistive technology under STEP if the visual acuity in both eyes with proper refractive lenses is 20/200 or less with the Snellen Chart or equivalent, or if the greatest diameter of the field of vision is severely restricted.

1.4 Deafblind Eligibility for Equipment

Consumer Products

A VLR client is eligible for approved consumer products under STEP if the visual acuity in both eyes with proper refractive lenses is 20/70 or less with the Snellen Chart, or equivalent, or if the greatest diameter of the field of vision is severely restricted; and severe to profound hearing loss that is 71 decibels or greater in both ears. Persons who are deafblind must provide an updated audiology exam.

Assistive Technology

A VLR client is eligible for approved assistive technology under STEP if the visual acuity in both eyes with proper refractive lenses is 20/200 or less with the Snellen Chart, or equivalent, or if the greatest diameter of the field of vision is severely restricted; and severe to profound hearing loss that is 71 decibels or greater in both ears. Persons who are deafblind must provide an updated audiology exam.

Deafblind individuals wishing to access STEP are encouraged to go through the Program Lead in the North or South region so that appropriate assistance can be arranged to ensure they meet the criteria of STEP. If a deafblind applicant is successful, an intervenor will be requested as needed.

2.0 Cost-Sharing Policy

STEP is a cost-share program. Clients and STEP share the cost of approved benefits received through the program. Low income clients may be cost-share exempt. Cost-share clients must cost-share on all items and pay 25 percent of the cost of benefits to a maximum yearly (based on a benefit year July 1-June 30) contribution of \$500 per family/household. Clients are responsible for all additional costs resulting from an upgraded product choice. Additional charges resulting from

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an upgraded product choice do not count towards the \$500 STEP cost-share maximum.

Cost share example: If a cost-sharing individual chooses and is recommended by the Authorizer for a CCTV priced at \$6,000, they are responsible for 25 percent of the \$5,000 (up to a maximum of \$500 per family) plus the \$1,000 upgrade difference between the price maximum for STEP (\$5,000) and the actual cost of the equipment (\$6,000).

Cost-share exemption is available to clients whose taxable income (line 260 of the most recent income tax return) is:

- \$20,970 or less for a single person;
- \$33,240 or less for a family with no children; or
- \$39,250 or less for a family with children.

For the purpose of cost-share exemption, family status is determined based on Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan registration.

To be eligible for cost share exemption the client either has current Cost Share Exemption status under the Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) Program, or if they receive assistance from one of the following government assistance programs:

- Income Support Program;
- Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH);
- Alberta Adult Health Benefits (AAHB);
- Child and Youth Support Program; or
- Children Services (minors in foster care).

The VLR bases cost share exemption eligibility on the same parameters as the Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) Program. To assess cost share eligibility and permit the release of information between VLR and AADL for this purpose, clients must apply to AADL for AADL Cost-Share Exemption status and complete the Consent to Disclose AADL Cost-Share Exemption Status form (attached as Appendix H) and the STEP Consent to Release of Personal Information Form.

Clients are not eligible to apply for cost-share exemption if they are:

- A new or returning resident from outside Canada, who has not yet resided in Alberta for 12 consecutive months;
- Exempt from paying income tax for religious, charitable or communal reasons; or
- A foreign student temporarily residing in Canada.

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2.1 Temporary Cost Share Exemption

Temporary cost-share exemption is available for clients who do not qualify for cost-share exemption but due to recent change in circumstances will experience financial hardship if required to cost share.

Eligibility is based on the average gross monthly income before deductions for the three months prior to the date of application. Clients applying for temporary cost-share exemption must include proof of the last three months of gross income.

If approved, temporary cost-share exemption remains in effect from the time of approval until the end of the benefit year, June 30. If the need continues to exist, the client will need to apply for cost-share exemption for the new benefit year.

3.0 STEP Approved Product List (APL)

The STEP APL (as posted on the AADL website) includes all consumer products, assistive devices and deafblind equipment inclusive to the program. The STEP APL identifies generic categories, descriptions and price maximum, and quantity/frequency limits.

Price maximums reflect the maximum amount available under STEP. If an individual chooses and is recommended by the Authorizer to exceed the price maximum, they are responsible for paying the difference.

VLR shall only fund equipment up to the maximums as specified in the STEP APL that is approved by the Province, as may be amended by the Province from time to time.

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4.0 Quantity Limits

Benefits will be provided as outlined in the STEP APL. Quantity limits as identified on the STEP APL will be observed in dispensing of consumer products and assistive technology.

The maximum benefit per eligible Albertan within each benefit year (July 1-June 30) under STEP is \$8,000, except for individuals who are deafblind where the maximum benefit is \$12,000.

Applicants who have not received any equipment from STEP will be given priority over those with second requests.

Participants in the Assistive Technology portion of STEP will be permitted to apply for two (2) pieces of equipment in a five-benefit-year period if the requests are from different device categories. Applicants may only apply for one (1) piece of Assistive Technology within a benefit year.

4.1 Replacement

A piece of Assistive Technology and/or a Consumer Product is only replaced when there is a substantial change in the visual condition of the client with a result in change of need, or if STEP has assessed that the current piece(s) of equipment is no longer economically repairable. This is not for upgrading existing equipment.

4.2 Benefit Appeals

Individuals wishing to appeal visual acuities, quantity/frequency limits or the maximum benefit amount per benefit year allowed must write a letter to the Program Lead in their region regarding their request.

1. The Program Lead reviews the request and will respond within 5 business days of receipt.
2. If unresolved, the request will be sent to the Regional Manager for review, and again a response should be provided within 5 business days of receipt.

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5.0 Ownership and Responsibility

The VLR retains full ownership of all recyclable equipment (as identified on STEP APL by *Note*); therefore, the equipment is not for resale and must be returned to the nearest VLR office for recycling under the following conditions:

- When an individual no longer needs it;
- If the equipment has been replaced;
- If the individual moves out of Alberta; and
- If the individual becomes ineligible.

Individuals will be asked to complete and sign the Ownership Waiver Form for Recyclable Equipment at time of receipt of equipment (Appendix B).

5.1 Individual Responsibility

The client, or their trustee or guardian, is responsible for ensuring the reasonable care and maintenance of the equipment. VLR is not responsible for replacement of equipment that is lost, stolen or damaged due to misuse. VLR recommends that the equipment be added to home insurance or tenant's insurance policies.

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6.0 Recycling of STEP Equipment

Clients may be offered a recycled piece of equipment that is in excellent condition. All Assistive Technology provided through STEP remains the property of the VLR and is on extended loan to the client for as long as it is needed. When the equipment is no longer needed, it must be returned to the nearest VLR office. These items are refurbished and reused when returned by participants who no longer need them (i.e. CCTVs, Brailers).

Individuals will be offered suitable recycled equipment, as available, at a reduced cost. The reduced cost will be determined by several factors including:

- Cost of repairing the equipment;
- Overall condition of the equipment (scratches, dents, etc.); and
- The year and model of the equipment.

By using recycled equipment, a client's cost-share payment will be reduced compared to the purchase of new equipment. If a client chooses not to accept recycled equipment, the client's application will be withdrawn. Recycled equipment will be tracked by serial number as documented on the VLR database.

All recycled equipment remains the property of the VLR. Clients will be asked to sign a Confirmation of Receipt of Recyclable Equipment letter (Appendix B) documenting that the equipment was received in satisfactory condition and acknowledging that the equipment remains the property of the VLR.

All recyclable equipment may incur the following costs:

ITEM	COST
Repair Costs Labor	\$90.00/hour
Repair Costs Parts	if applicable
Extended Warranty	vendor invoice
Shipping & Handling	if applicable
VLR Administrative Cost	\$100.00\item

*Individuals who cost-share will pay 25% of the total recycle cost.

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7.0 Buy Out Option for Equipment

All recyclable equipment provided through STEP remains the property of the VLR. Persons who leave the province and wish to keep the equipment will be given the option to purchase it, at a price assessed by STEP to reflect the equipment's fair market value.

STEP uses the following formula to assess fair market value:

- If a cost share amount has been paid for the equipment, this amount will be deducted from the initial equipment cost before the fair market value is assessed;
- Equipment being purchased within the first twelve (12) months will be depreciated by 35 percent of the initial purchase price; and
- After the first year, the equipment will be reduced by an additional 10 percent for each subsequent year (i.e. Year 2 - 45 percent; Year 3 - 55 percent, etc.).

Buy out monies are deposited to the separate interest-bearing bank account used by the VLR for STEP funding pursuant to its grant agreement with AADL.

8.0 Staff and Volunteer Requests through STEP

VLR staff and volunteers who meet STEP eligibility must go through the same application and assessment process as all other eligible Albertans.

All other policies as indicated in the STEP manual will apply. Staff and volunteers are encouraged to schedule appointments with the Program Lead in North or South region to ensure that it will not conflict with their work commitments.

Staff and volunteer requests for limited quantities of Assistive Technology (i.e. CCTV, Computer Access Large Print Software, etc.) will go through the same application process as all other applicants.

For those staff who are Authorizers and who are making a request for Assistive Technology and/or Consumer Products, the assessment will be completed by the Program Lead.

Staff and volunteers are reminded about respecting the policy on confidentiality in processing applications for all individuals.

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

9.0 Assessment/Authorization Procedures

Individuals who meet the STEP eligibility will be recommended for benefits following an assessment/authorization process.

9.1 Consumer Products

a) Low Technical Equipment

Individuals wishing to access low technical equipment must clearly state their need to an Authorizer. The Authorizer ensures that the equipment appropriately meets the clients' needs. For a listing of approved Authorizers see Appendix A.

b) Low Vision Aids

Following a referral from an optometrist, ophthalmologist or general practitioner (GP), individuals are evaluated at one of the following:

- i) A low vision clinic by a Low Vision Specialist. Low vision aids are recommended, and follow-up is performed by a VLR Low Vision Specialist. Please call the nearest VLR office for further information on low vision clinics.
- ii) VLR's regional offices in Calgary and Edmonton or in the individual's home by the Low Vision Specialist with the appropriate low vision aid given and further follow-up provided if required. The Regional Offices can be reached at: Edmonton (780-488-4871) and Calgary (403-266-8831). Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.
- iii) VLR's satellite offices in Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie and Lethbridge or in the individual's home by the Low Vision Specialist with the appropriate low vision aid given and further follow up provided if required.

9.2 Assistive Technology

All individuals requesting Assistive Technology must complete an application form (Appendix D) following their assessment with an Assistive Technology Specialist. For Deafblind specialized equipment, such as Deafblind Communicators, the assessment will be completed by the Program Lead in the North or South region. For talking GPS, an Orientation and Mobility Assessment will be completed by the Specialist, Orientation & Mobility prior to an application being filled out. The

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purpose of the Orientation & Mobility Assessment is to determine whether the client has the necessary skills to travel safely using a talking GPS.

Individuals are evaluated at one of the following:

- VLR's regional offices in Calgary and Edmonton. The Regional offices can be reached at: Edmonton (780-488-4871) and Calgary (403-266-8831). Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday.
- VLR's satellite offices in Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Grande Prairie and Lethbridge when Assistive Technology Specialists are available.

All applications, except for the Deafblind Communicator, are then submitted for evaluation to the North and South Program Leads; applications are reviewed by the North and South Program Leads and assessed based on the quality of the application and details provided by the client regarding use of the equipment. For 3 points, the client must provide detailed and unique examples of how they are going to integrate the technology into their day to day lives. 1 point is given if the client lives in a rural location and another point is given if the client lives alone. 2 points are awarded if the client exemplifies how this piece of equipment will enhance their independence.

Applications are reviewed three times per year with deadlines on May 31, September 30, and January 15. Applicants will be notified 2 to 4 weeks after the review process is completed. Applications submitted in May or September that are not successful remain active until the January deadline. This means applicants are not required to re-apply unless their circumstances change or they wish to alter their application forms.

Applications for the Deafblind Communicator can be submitted to the Program Lead in the appropriate region throughout the year.

Once the equipment is received, the Assistive Technology Specialist will make an appointment with the successful applicants to have the equipment delivered and installed. These commitments must be met within 30 days.

10.0 VLR Sales and Service Requirements

STEP Release of Information Form

Clients will be asked if they wish to participate in quality monitoring and program improvement feedback. If so, a STEP Release of Information form is to be signed by the client upon receipt of their equipment purchase. This applies to all purchases from Low Vision, Low Tech, Deafblind and Assistive Technology. This form provides the client's consent to participate in quality monitoring and program improvement operated by Alberta Health, which may include telephone, mail, or web-based surveys. This form only needs to be signed by the client once within a benefit year.

Registration of Equipment

As a requirement for warranty & service, the VLR will maintain a register of the serial number and date of equipment provided to clients. This register will be maintained as part of the STEP file.

On receiving the equipment, the client may be required to complete a mail-in card to be eligible for warranty.

Shipping Charges

The client is responsible for all mailing charges during warranty and out of warranty service.

Out of Warranty Equipment

The client is responsible to arrange for servicing and to cover the costs of the repairs for the equipment.

It is the responsibility of VLR Assistive Technology Specialists to help the individual in obtaining service for the equipment and provide contact info for vendors.

10.1 Statement of Account

VLR STEP must provide every client with a statement of account for equipment purchased. The statement of account must clearly identify the STEP contribution, the cost-share portion (if applicable), and any upgrade charges.

10.2 Returns

All merchandise must be returned within thirty (30) days from date of purchase with original packaging, in re-sellable condition and with sales receipt. All refunds must be approved by the appropriate VLR staff.

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APPENDIX A – AUTHORIZERS

The following individuals have been approved as Authorizers for STEP.

NORTH

M. Enica (HT, LT, *LV)	Program Lead, Assistive Technology
C. Heard (HT, LT, LV)	Specialist, Low Vision
J. Belyea (LT, LV)	Specialist, Low Vision and Orientation & Mobility
F. Doll (HT, LT)	Assistant, Assistive Technology
D. Winchester (HT, LT)	Specialist, Assistive Technology
J. Archibald (LT)	Assistant, Assistive Technology
D. Coneghan (LT)	Assistant, Assistive Technology
V. Prasad (LT)	Assistant, Assistive Technology
A. Sims-Magyar (LT)	Specialist, Service Coordinator

SOUTH

M. Enica (HT, LT, *LV)	Program Lead, Assistive Technology
D. Duchak (LT)	Assistant, Assistive Technology
M. Harras (LT)	Assistant, Assistive Technology
C. Harris (HT, LT)	Assistant, Assistive Technology
T. Freimark (LT)	Administrative Assistant
T. Howk (LT, HT)	Specialist, Assistive Technology
L. Liu (LV, LT)	Specialist, Low Vision
A. George (LV, LT)	Specialist, Low Vision/Client Services
J. Gust (LV, LT)	Specialist, Low Vision/Client Services

Appeals

M. Kay	Regional Manager, North & South
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* Can sign off on behalf of optometrist and low vision specialist if a previous recommendation has been made or if a high-tech assessment has been provided for an item also available under low vision funding.

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APPENDIX B – RECYCLE EQUIPMENT FORMS

OWNERSHIP WAIVER FORM FOR RECYCLABLE EQUIPMENT

As _____ (client’s full name), (referred hereto as “the client”) is eligible for the following benefit under the VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP):

(referred here to as “the equipment”)

It is acknowledged and agreed by the client, or on behalf of the client, THAT:

- The equipment will be on loan to the client and that it will be the property of the VLR.
- Any individual leaving the Province of Alberta must return the equipment to the VLR.
- The equipment will be returned in a reasonable state of repair to the VLR or its authorized agent when requested, or when it is no longer required. You are responsible for returning the equipment to the nearest VLR office.
- For those clients who pay a cost-share or upgrade charge in respect to receipt of this equipment, these monies are **not** refundable.

The client, their family, trustee or guardian are responsible to ensure the reasonable care and maintenance of the equipment and will be responsible for replacement of equipment that is lost, stolen or damaged due to misuse. The VLR STEP advises that the equipment be added to client’s home insurance or tenants’ insurance policies.

Dated _____, 20_____

Witness

Client or Designate on behalf of Client

NOTE: The client fee consists of 25 percent of the cost of the benefit, up to a maximum contribution per family per benefit year of \$500.00. For a client leaving the Province of Alberta, the equipment will be appraised and the client will be given the choice to purchase.

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CONFIRMATION OF RECEIPT OF RECYCLABLE EQUIPMENT

Day, Month, Year

Mr. John Q. Public
12345 - 67 Avenue
Edmonton, AB, T6K 4Z4

Dear Mr. Public:

Re: Confirmation of Receipt of Recyclable Equipment

The VLR STEP recently made arrangements to provide you with the following item:

<u>Equipment</u>	<u>Serial Number</u>
CCTV	XFG6758943

Once you have received the equipment and are satisfied that it is in good condition, please **date, sign, and return the duplicate copy of this letter** to our office in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

The equipment provided remains the property of the VLR and is on extended loan to you for as long as you need it. When you no longer need this item, it is your responsibility to return the equipment to the nearest VLR office. If you require information on servicing, please contact the nearest VLR office.

Sincerely,

Equipment Received

Date: _____

Program Lead, Assistive Technology
VLR

Signature

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APPENDIX C – AUTHORIZATION FORM

**VISION LOSS
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VLR STEP Authorization Form

Updated February 2019 ME

Client Name: _____

VLR Client Number: _____

Address:

Assessment Date: _____

Deafblind Client: Yes No Replacement Magnifier: Yes No

List any other family members living at home accessing the program:

Item number and Description	Total Cost	STEP Cost	Client Cost	Over
Total Costs				
Comments:				

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Cost Sharing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No (identify reason for exemption below)
	<input type="checkbox"/> AADL Ref. Number
	<input type="checkbox"/> Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
	<input type="checkbox"/> Income Support
	<input type="checkbox"/> Alberta Adult Health Benefits
	<input type="checkbox"/> Child and Youth Support Program
	<input type="checkbox"/> Children Services

The client meets the criteria of STEP and has been asked if he/she is eligible for funding from any other source (DVA, WCB, Educational, insurance companies, NIHB). Funding from other sources makes the client ineligible for STEP funding.

Authorization Signature:

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APPENDIX D – ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY – HIGH TECH APPLICATION

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VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

Assistive Technology-High Tech Application

This document explains the Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP) equipment request process. This document has six parts:

- 1) eligibility requirements
- 2) rules and regulations
- 3) instructions on how to fill out the application
- 4) official VLR STEP application form
- 5) STEP Release of Information Form
- 6) STEP Checklist

Begin by checking if you are eligible for STEP. If you have ticked every box, then proceed to part 2. If you are willing and able to follow the rules and regulations, initial and proceed to part 3. Finish up by filling out your application (part 4) and the signing of the Release of Information form (part 5). Complete the checklist (part 6) and send the entire package to the VLR.

VLR Calgary - STEP

Attention: Specialist, Assistive Technology
10-11A Street NE
Calgary, AB T2E 4Z3
Phone: 403-266-8831
Fax: 403-265-5029

VLR Edmonton - STEP

Attention: Specialist, Assistive Technology
#600, 11150 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 0C7
Phone: 780-488-4871
Fax: 780-482-0017

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Applicant Name: _____

Part 1: Are you eligible?

- Do you have a valid Alberta Personal Health Number?
- Are you a permanent resident of Alberta?
- Do you have visual acuity of 20/200 or less or a field of vision of less than 20 degrees?
- Are you UNABLE to obtain funding from another source such as:
 - Insurance company
 - Motor Vehicle Accident Claims
 - Workers Compensation
 - Department of Veterans Affairs
 - NIHB
- Are you registered with VLR?

If you were unable to check off any one of the above, you are not eligible to apply.

Yes, I am eligible (initials) _____

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Part 2: STEP Rules and Regulations

- A.** STEP is a cost-sharing program meaning that you are responsible for paying 25% of the item cost, up to a maximum of \$500 per year. This amount is payable before you receive your equipment.
- B.** You are eligible for a cost-share exemption if you receive support from Income Support (IS), Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), Adult Health Benefit (AHB), or if your household combined taxable income on line 260 of your Notice of Assessment(s) from the Canada Revenue Agency is below
 - a. \$20,970 for a single person;
 - b. \$33,240 for a family with no children; or
 - c. \$39,250 for a family with children.

If you meet the above criteria, you may apply to AADL for AADL Cost-Share Exemption status and complete a Consent to Disclose AADL Cost-Share Exemption Status form. This form will be provided by VLR to AADL in order to permit AADL to determine eligibility for cost-share exemption status and to release related information to VLR for this purpose. This form is available through the VLR office.

- C.** Applicants applying for equipment will be required to be assessed prior to their application being submitted for review. If you are applying for a talking GPS device, you will need to be assessed by an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. If you are applying for a Deafblind Communicator, you will need to be assessed by the Program Lead in your region. Applications for the Deafblind Communicator are to be submitted to the Program Lead for review. All other assessments will be completed by Assistive Technology Specialists.
- D.** You must be committed to setting up an appointment with the Assistive Technology Specialist to have the equipment delivered and installed. These commitments must be met within 30 days of approval or your application will be withdrawn from the current review period. A family member or friend should be present for delivery and training.
- E.** You may only apply for one piece of equipment per year. You are eligible for two pieces of equipment in a five-year period if the requests are from different categories. Applicants who have not received any equipment from STEP will be given priority over those with second requests.

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- F.** STEP aids you in acquiring equipment but does NOT pay for repairs once you receive it. This means that you become responsible for your equipment including adhering to all warranties and guarantees. It is your responsibility to understand the manufacturer's terms and conditions.
- G.** If you request computer software, you must have a computer that meets the minimum requirements for the software. You must be willing to purchase or upgrade your computer as required before software is ordered.
- H.** STEP is an environmentally conscious program, which means that you will be offered recycled equipment that is in excellent condition (if available). In this case, cost-sharing is significantly less. If you choose not to accept used equipment, your application will be withdrawn.
- I.** Applications are reviewed three times per year with deadlines on **May 31**, **September 30**, and **January 15**. Please note that specific questions are weighted and scored by the review committee. Scoring is noted on the application. You will be notified 6 to 8 weeks after the review process is completed. Please do NOT contact VLR for results, we will contact you. STEP benefit year runs from April 1 to March 31. Applications submitted in May or September that are not successful remain active until January. This means you do not need to re-apply unless your circumstances change or you feel you can improve upon your earlier application.

Applications for the Deafblind Communicator can be submitted throughout the year. They will be reviewed by the Program Lead as they are received.

- J.** Your STEP application is evaluated on the detail and quality of the information you provide, your specific needs, and the number of applicants during each cycle. We encourage you to consult with a VLR representative if you have any questions.
- K.** Applications are reviewed 3 times a year; during the review process, your application is kept anonymous.

Yes, I understand the STEP rules and regulations (initials) _____

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

Part 3: VLR STEP Application Instructions

When filling out the application please:

- Print clearly in black ink or type out responses.
- Check over your application to ensure you have filled out every part in detail. Missing information may cause your application to be unsuccessful.
- Check over your application to ensure you have initialed and signed all the necessary sections.
- You may complete this application with the assistance of a family member, friend or caregiver as required.
- VLR may have volunteers available to assist you in completing this form.

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

Part 4: VLR STEP Application

Applicant Information:

Name: _____ VLR Client #: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Province: _____

Postal Code: _____

Telephone/Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Do you have a valid Alberta Personal Health Number? Yes No

Are you Deafblind? Yes No

Do you live alone? Yes No **(possible 1 pt.)**

Urban or rural? Urban Rural **(possible 1 pt.)**

Date of last eye examination: _____

Eye Diagnosis: _____

Visual Acuity: _____

Alternate Contact Person:

Name & Relationship: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

Are you eligible for any of the following alternate funding sources?

	Eligible	
	Yes	No
ASVI (Alberta Society for the Visually Impaired) Edmonton School Board	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cost Share Exemption Criteria:

AADL Cost Share Exempt	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
AISH Recipient	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Income Support Recipient	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Alberta Adult Health Benefits (AAHB)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Child and Youth Support Program	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Children Services (minors in foster care)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Did you have a successful High-Tech STEP application in the past?

Yes No

If yes, indicate date received and type of equipment: **(possible 2 pts.)**

DATE: _____ EQUIPMENT: _____

Select the device category for this application:

- Closed Circuit TV Reader (CCTV)
- Large Print computer software (ZoomText)
- Note Taking Device (Apex, Braille Sense)
- Braille Display
- Perkins Braille
- Optical Character Recognition Software (OpenBook)
- Computer Screen Reading Software (JAWS)
- Talking GPS
- Stand-alone OCR (Eye Pal Vision, Clear Reader)

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP)

Deafblind High Tech Equipment:

Deafblind Communicator

Name the specific assistive device you are requesting:

SKU Number: (to be filled out by Assistive Technology Specialist)

Where will you use the equipment? _____

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

Declaration of Verification & Responsibility

My signature is verification that I have completed this form to the best of my abilities. The contents of this application are an accurate representation of myself and my situation.

I agree to abide by the STEP rules and regulations that are described in this document and the VLR STEP Manual. This includes returning recyclable equipment to VLR if it is replaced, I no longer require it, or if I move out of the province of Alberta.

Applicant Signature

Date

Witness

Date

Did someone help you with the application? Yes No

Name, Contact Information & Relationship:

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

Part 5:

**VISION LOSS
REHABILITATION**
ALBERTA

STEP Consent to Release of Personal Information Form

Keeping personal information in strict confidence is a Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLR) policy approved by the Board of Directors. VLR's privacy policy is in compliance with relevant privacy laws. Personal information is only released with your consent or in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

By signing this form, you are giving VLR permission to release your personal information (your name, contact information and type of benefit received) to Alberta Health, Alberta Aids to Daily Living Program (AADL), which is the funding source for the Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP) for the purposes set out below.

Personal information is collected and used by AADL pursuant to sections 20, 21, 22, and 27 of the *Health Information Act* and sections 33, 34 and 39 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP). Alberta Health may collect personal health numbers as a custodian under the *Health Information Act*. VLR may collect personal health numbers, for the limited purpose of determining eligibility for the STEP Cost-Share Exemption, as an affiliate of Alberta Health. All personal information that is disclosed to AADL will be protected in accordance with the provisions of the *Health Information Act* and FOIP.

If you have any questions about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by AADL, you can contact AADL at 10th Floor Milner Building, 10040 - 104 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0Z2; Telephone: 780-427-0731; Fax 780-422-0968.

If you have any questions about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by VLR, you can contact the Program Lead, Assistive Technology, VLR Alberta and NWT, in your region as listed below.

North: #600, 11150 Jasper Ave, Edmonton, AB, T5K 0C7; Telephone: 780-488-4871; Fax:780-482-0017.

South: VLR Alberta and NWT, 10-11A Street NE, Calgary, AB, T2E 4Z3; Telephone: 403-266-8831; Fax: 403-265-5029.

I consent to the disclosure of my personal information by VLR to AADL for the purpose of AADL: (a) determining cost-share exemption status; and (b) conducting quality monitoring and program improvement, which may include telephone, mail, or web-based surveys.

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

This form has been read to me by: _____

Name of Client (please print): _____

Signature of Client or Guardian

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Name of Witness (please print)

Part 6: Checklist for completed application

Did you?

- make sure you are eligible to apply?
- read, understand and agree to all the STEP rules and regulations?
- provide up-to-date information about your vision?
- fill out the application to the best of your ability independently or with the help of a friend, family member or caregiver?
- initial and sign all required sections?
- have an assessment with a VLR Assistive Technology Specialist or Orientation and Mobility Specialist?
- attach your VLR STEP Release of Information Form? Please check the paragraph indicating whether you are willing to participate in surveys regarding the STEP program for AADL.
- submit the completed STEP package in its entirety to VLR?

Deadline for Application Reviews:

- May 31
- September 30
- January 15

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

APPENDIX E - RELEASE OF INFORMATION FORM

Keeping personal information in strict confidence is a Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLR) policy approved by the Board of Directors. VLR's privacy policy is in compliance with relevant privacy laws. Personal information is only released with your consent or in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

By signing this form, you are giving VLR permission to release your personal information (your name, contact information and type of benefit received) to Alberta Health, Alberta Aids to Daily Living Program (AADL), which is the funding source for the Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP) for the purposes set out below.

Personal information is collected and used by AADL pursuant to sections 20, 21, 22 and 27 of the *Health Information Act*; and sections 33, 34 and 39 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP). Alberta Health may collect personal health numbers as a custodian under the *Health Information Act*. VLR may collect personal health numbers, for the limited purpose of determining eligibility for the STEP Cost-Share Exemption, as an affiliate of Alberta Health. All personal information that is disclosed to AADL will be protected in accordance with the provisions of the *Health Information Act* and FOIP.

If you have any questions about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by AADL, you can contact AADL at 10th Floor Milner Building, 10040 - 104 Street NW, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 0Z2; Telephone: 780-427-0731; Fax: 780-422-0968.

If you have any questions about the collection, use and disclosure of personal information by VLR, you can contact the Program Lead, Assistive Technology, VLR Alberta and NWT, in your region as listed below.

North: #600, 11150 Jasper Ave, Edmonton, AB, T5K 0C7; Telephone: 780-488-4871; Fax: 780-482-0017. South: VLR Alberta and NWT, 10-11A Street NE, Calgary, AB, T2E 4Z3; Telephone: 403-266-8831; Fax: 403-265-5029.

I consent to the disclosure of my personal information by VLR to AADL for: (a) determining cost-share exemption status; and (b) conducting quality monitoring and program improvement, which may include telephone, mail, or web-based surveys.

This form has been read to me by: _____

Name of Client (please print): _____

Signature of Client or Guardian

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

Name of Witness (please print)

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

APPENDIX F – STEP BUDGET
April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020

Breakdown	Amount in Dollars	% of Total Funding
Equipment (STEP portion only)	\$585,000.00	90%
Administration	\$65,000.00	10%
GRAND TOTAL	\$650,000.00	100%

APPENDIX G – GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST

A VLR employee who has the specific duty to evaluate, promote, provide, and/or develop the delivery of assistive technology services to persons with vision loss. This position reports to the Program Lead, Assistive Technology in their region.

AUDIOLOGY EXAM

A hearing test performed by an audiologist.

EYE CARE PRACTITIONER

A physician who specializes in diagnosing and prescribing treatments for defects, injuries and diseases of the eye and is skilled at delicate eye surgery, such as that required to remove cataracts; called also oculist or eye specialist. An Optometrist who specializes in the correction of refractive and low vision conditions will also be included in this definition.

FAMILY

For the purpose of the VLR STEP, a family is defined by Alberta Health Care Registration.

INTERVENOR

An Intervenor acts as the eyes and ears for deafblind individuals. They are sensitive and skilled at interpreting both visual and auditory information. They assist people with this dual disability to communicate, become more independent, and in some situations, assist with activities of daily living. Intervenors provide services via the method of communication preferred by the individual who is deafblind (that may include tactile signing methods, Braille, large print, communication boards, or any other required method). Intervenors are not Interpreters. When Intervenors communicate with the individual who is deafblind, they must convey not only words spoken around them, but also the visual information.

LOW VISION CLINIC

Assesses a person's functional vision and suggests aids that maximize the use of residual or remaining vision. This is provided by a team of practitioners specializing in low vision, this may include ophthalmologists and/or optometrists.

LOW VISION SPECIALIST

A VLR employee who has the specific duty to evaluate, promote, provide, and/or develop the delivery of low vision services to persons with vision loss.

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

ORIENTATION & MOBILITY SPECIALIST

A VLR employee who has the specific duty to evaluate, promote, provide, and/or develop the delivery of orientation and mobility services to persons with vision loss. This position reports to the Regional Manager.

PROGRAM LEAD, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

A VLR employee who has the specific duty to evaluate, promote, provide, and/or develop the delivery of assistive technology services to persons with vision loss. This position reports to the Regional Manager. Also referred to as the "Program Lead".

PROPER REFRACTIVE LENS

Eyeglasses and contact lenses correct refractive errors by bending (refracting) light as it passes through the lens. The prescription needed to provide the best possible vision is provided by an eye care professional.

SNELLEN CHART

A chart printed in block letters in gradually decreasing sizes, used in testing visual acuity.

APPENDIX H - CONSENT TO DISCLOSE AADL COST SHARE EXEMPTION STATUS

Consent to Disclose AADL Cost-Share Exemption Status

Section A – Client’s personal information

Title	Last Name	First Name

Mailing Address

.....

City	Province	Postal Code

Date of Birth (yyyy-mm-dd)	Personal Health Number

Section B - Consent

I authorize Alberta Health, Alberta Aids to Daily Living (AADL) Program, to release the following information to the Specialized Technical Equipment Program (STEP), which is operated by Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada (VLR):

1. Current AADL Cost-Share Exemption status;
2. Whether an application for AADL Cost-Share Exemption has been received by AADL;
3. Status of any pending application for AADL Cost-Share Exemption, if applicable; and
4. Expiry date of AADL Cost-Share Exemption, if applicable.

My personal information, including my personal health number, is used solely for the purpose of determining and verifying my eligibility or that of my child or adult dependent for whom I am the parent, legal guardian, trustee or attorney, for STEP Cost-Share Exemption.

This authorization is valid for the benefit year (July 1 to June 30) prior to the date of signature of this consent, the current benefit year and for each subsequent benefit year for which STEP Cost-Share Exemption is requested.

Personal information is collected by Alberta Health (AADL) pursuant to sections 20, 21, 22 and 27 of the *Health Information Act*; and sections 33, 34 and 39 of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP). Alberta Health may collect personal health numbers as a custodian under the *Health Information Act*.

VLR Specialized Technical Equipment Program

VLR may collect personal health numbers, for the limited purpose of the STEP Cost-Share Exemption, as an affiliate of Alberta Health.

All personal information that is released by me to Alberta Health will be protected in accordance with the provisions of Alberta's *Health Information Act* and Alberta's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

I understand why I have been asked to disclose my personal information and am aware of the risks or benefits of consenting or refusing to consent to the disclosure. I understand that if I wish to withdraw this consent, I may do so at any time by writing to Alberta Aids to Daily Living Program, 10th Floor, Milner Building, 10040-104 Street NW, Edmonton Alberta T5J 0Z2.

Name of Client or Guardian (please print)

Relationship to client if applicable

Signature of Client or Guardian

Date

X
