SFI Public Service Fellowship 2023

1. **Name of Governmental Department or Agency**	
National Disability Authority	
2. **Title of the Project**	
NDA2 Streamlining access to assistive technology and other relevant supports for people with disabilities in Ireland	
3. **Description of the Project**	

- The National Disability Authority (NDA), as the independent statutory body, provides information and advice to the Government on policy and practice relevant to the lives of persons with disabilities. We have a role to assist the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in the co-ordination of disability policy. We work through our Centre for Excellence in Universal Design to promote the universal design of the built environment, products, services and information and communication technologies so that they can be easily accessed, understood and used by everyone, including persons with disabilities.

- Research has shown that disabled people in Ireland have an unmet need for assistive technology. Some of that need is being met through the use of mainstream consumer products that have mainstreamed accessibility features. Recent developments in the areas of Generative AI, and their application to Assistive Technology now mean that advances in automated image description, text and product recognition, as well as other pertinent areas need now to be explored. These advances, however, also pose ethical and moral questions primarily focussed around the role of persons with disabilities in the design of these new features, as well as the models underpinning them.

- Research conducted in 2012 by the NDA found that 'There is a requirement to systematically document the nature and extent of unmet needs …, examine the implications for the clients concerned and for overall costs across the entire health and social care system…"[1]

- This project will build on the work undertaken in 2012. It will conduct and analysis of the current landscape in areas relating to assistive technology, aids and appliances etc. The focus will be on the technological developments, and the role of Generative AI in the development of feature-sets and use-cases for the technology. Deriving from this the project will examine costs involved and efficiencies in processes. Recommendations and guidance will be strategic but also practical in that they will be implementable. The outputs will further inform national policy in the areas of Assistive Technology Provision, AI and

---

- [1] Research on the Provision of Assistive Technology in Ireland and Other Countries to Support Independent Living across the Life Cycle: Report - National Disability Authority

	disability, and the ethical considerations which must apply when technological solutions are designed and implemented with this cohort primarily in mind.
4.	**Project Scope**
	• The focus of the study will be both bespoke and mainstream Assistive Technology. This includes aids and appliances and related products that are used in everyday life including health, education and employment. The project will involve collaboration with a number of stakeholders, including Disabled Persons Organisations, to understand the state of play in different sectors. This collaboration will yield use-cases for the technologies, and will highlight barriers and enablers to their adoption.
5.	**Skills/Expertise Required**
	• Knowledge of the field of assistive or consumer technology relevant to people with disabilities.
	• Knowledge of AI and specifically Generative AI, with specific emphasis on the models used, the applications of training data, and the ethical implications associated with applying this technology to use-cases involving persons with disabilities
	• Some knowledge of the systems and funding available in the Irish public system to assist people with disabilities in every day live including education, health and employment would be considered desirable though not essential.
	• Ability to work with stakeholders to co-design, and produce, solutions to challenges that are identified.
	• An ability to think strategically.
	• Excellent oral and written communication skills, and the ability to effectively communicate with a wide range of stakeholders including persons with disabilities and/or older people.
6.	**Expected Outputs of Project**
	• A detailed report or series of reports on the project.
	• A series of workshops and workshop reports that are used to co-produce recommendations.
7.	**Working Arrangements**
	• The working arrangements will be in compliance with those in operation at the National Disability Authority/Centre for Excellence in Universal Design. At time of writing, a hybrid model is in operation which requires attendance at the place of business at 25 Clyde Road Ballsbridge for a minimum of two days per week, or as required for operational reasons.
8.	**Expected Timeline**
12 months full-time	
9.	**Contact Details**
Rosalyn Tamming, Head of Policy Research and Public Affairs, National Disability Authority	