

ABLE Summary Report

Information about the Applicant

Since 1965 ABLE (Audio & Braille Literacy Enhancement) has had a simple, yet profound, mission: to provide alternative ways for people with print disabilities to read. ABLE's vision is that everyone will have access to the printed word. ABLE staff and volunteers transcribe printed materials into braille, tactile and audio formats for thousands of children and adults who are blind, visually impaired, or have other print disabilities. A major focus is to ensure that students have a fair and equal chance at education, which means receiving their braille, tactile, or audio materials at the same time as their sighted peers. We are requesting funding for our audiobooks program, which serves 5,274 patrons of the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library.

Statement of Need

Despite the growing popularity of audiobooks among sighted readers, they represent a small fraction of the books published each year that are narrated in audio formats. Only 7% of published materials are available in formats that are accessible to people who are blind or print disabled. In addition, many audiobook devices or applications (including Kindle and the Libby App) are difficult, if not impossible, for blind people to use.

The National Library Service and the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library are the equivalent of the public library for people who are blind or print disabled. (Print disabilities include visual impairments, learning disabilities, or physical disabilities that impede the ability to manipulate a book.) The audiobooks ABLE produces for the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library are available free of charge to blind and print disabled patrons, and patrons receive a digital player especially designed for blind people from the National Library Service.

ABLE is seeking funding to produce a minimum of 50 high-quality audio books for both adults and children with an emphasis on Wisconsin authors.

Project Goals and Expected Benefits

Each new book will then be added to the "library" of books we have produced and will be accessible on an ongoing basis. Early this year ABLE was excited to learn that books recorded in our studio circulated 33,501 times from 2016 through 2021, including over 11,000 in 2021 alone. ABLE will also continue to record audio schedules and general information for Summerfest, Irish Fest, and the Wisconsin State Fair. We hope to add other events to that list.

The materials ABLE produces help to ensure inclusive opportunities for education and recreation for those we serve, contributing to the Wispact Foundation's mission of improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities.

Project Implementation Plan

Volunteer narrators, who undergo significant training, read aloud in the ABLE Sound Center while staff members edit the books they are reading on the spot. Books are selected in cooperation with the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library with a focus on Wisconsin authors. ABLE staff also reaches out on an ongoing basis to find new community partners that want to increase their accessibility for people who are blind or print disabled through audio enhancements.

Evaluation Plan

ABLE’s Executive Director and Audio Manager evaluate our success based on 1) meeting our goal of producing 50 books each year that meet the exacting digital recording standards of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled; and 2) monitoring circulation numbers with the Director of the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library to ensure that the books we produce are reaching a wide audience.

Budget

Project Expenses	Amount	Wispect Request
Personnel	\$92,656	\$5,000
Facilities/Occupancy	\$20,443	
Equipment/Supplies	\$14,565	\$3,000
Printing/Promotions	\$3,730	
Meeting/Travel	\$784	
Administrative Expenses	\$10,176	
Donated Services (value of volunteer time)	\$57,000	
Depreciation Expense	\$5,085	
TOTAL	\$204,439	\$8,000

Staff Recommendation

The grant application can be approved but with an amendment to the allocation of the funding. It is possible that the \$5,000.00 included in personal is for the talent that reads the audio books in which case it could be approved; however, since it is not sectioned out as separate line item we can apply to entire \$8,000.00 requested to the cost of supplies. We can provide a grant in the amount of \$3,000.00