

Beyond Vision Summary Report

Information about the Applicant

Beyond Vision has a long and innovative history. In 1903, the “Wisconsin Workshop for the Blind” was established by the State of Wisconsin to promulgate work for blind individuals. In the early stages, work was limited to woven baskets and mats. As technology progressed, accessible work capacities of low to no vision individuals increased exponentially. By the 1930s, value-added work for Briggs & Stratton and Harley-Davidson included light assembly, sorting parts and packaging. A machine shop was opened in 1958 to expand employment opportunities for people who are blind into manufacturing careers. In 1985, the organization separated from the State of Wisconsin, becoming a privatized 501c3, and changed the name to Wiscraft Inc. As part of the separation agreement, our employees were able to maintain state health care and retirement program benefits. In 2013 we took the name Beyond Vision to better reflect our mission.

The mission of Beyond Vision is to provide meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for people who are blind. We believe that people who are blind are no different than our sighted counterparts. We want to live successful, meaningful, and productive lives. Work is important. Work enables us to care for ourselves and our families. With a 70% non-employment rate among people who are blind, the mission of Beyond Vision is an important one. This grant request, which will be explained more thoroughly in the project description, is about creating jobs for the blind.

Beyond Vision is one of just two organizations in the entire State of Wisconsin with the sole objective of providing employment for people who are blind.

Beyond Vision has roughly 110 employees across our business units and managerial staff, each of these employees and other new hires throughout the year will directly benefit from our job training programs. By supporting Beyond Vision you directly support job skills training for blind and visually impaired members of our community.

Statement of Need

We are asking the Wispact Foundation for \$10,000 to support our VisAbility Center Capital Campaign. Beyond Vision has purchased the former Sam’s Club located at 1540 South 108 Street, West Allis, WI. This 130,000 square foot facility will be renovated to include space for Beyond Vision’s four business units and will enable Beyond Vision to provide employment to three times number of blind workers it currently employs.

Renovation began in late 2021 and is currently scheduled to be completed by year end. The new space is being designed with accessibility and community in mind.

Project Goals and Expected Benefits

The overall goal of this project is to create an environment where every blind employee at Beyond Vision has an opportunity to be successful. This includes providing each person with an adaptive workplace to meet their needs and giving them the skills needed to be successful. Every single job at Beyond Vision accessible to an individual regardless of their level of sight.

Each year, Beyond Vision provides well over 2,500 hours of job training to more than 70 employees who are blind.

Project Implementation Plan

Our job training projects are ongoing year-round. It is led by our HR Director, Rob Buettner, who is legally blind. Every employee is provided with training at some level. Israel Zuritas, Lead Accessibility Coordinator, also plays a role in all our training programs. Israel's primary focus is to ensure every employee is provided with customized adaptive workspaces. This ensures each employee has the tools needed to be successful.

Evaluation Plan

Since Beyond Vision operates similarly to a business, we track nearly every metric of our business closely. Mission metrics and training metrics are tracked and reviewed at monthly meetings. We track total number of visually impaired employees hired, number of paid working hours, number of hours of training provided, which job each employee has been trained on and much more. Each business unit leader, as well as our HR team closely monitor and are responsible to measurement of these goals. They can be provided upon request.

Budget

Training Activity	Workforce Development and Job Training Budget 2021-22	
	Wispect Foundation	
	Budgeted Cost	Wispect Foundation
Communications center employee training	\$ 12,000	
Adaptive tech training (JAWS, ZoomText etc.)		
New employee training		
New call program training		
Training on use of zoom and work from home tools		
New hire training and Onboard process enhancement	\$ 13,000	\$ 5,000
Workplace basics and etiquette		
VisAbility Center mobility training		
Computer Literacy Skills	\$ 7,000	\$ 5,000
Computing class for blind employees (Beginner and Advanced)		
Class designed for low vision first time computer users		
Advanced computing skills (Excel, MBS Dev, TCN)		
Low Vision accessibility device/software use training		
Windows eyes and JAWS scripting training (screen readers)		
Machine Shop/ Manufacturing skills -Including	\$ 13,500	
Ongoing job training (New hires or new jobs)		
CNC set up and operation		
Manual machine operation		
Adaptive machine shop technology		
CMM training for quality engineer in training		
Safety and mobility		
ISO Certification training		
Shop math and blueprint reading		
Leadership Development	\$ 15,000	
NIB leadership & advocacy training		
Sales & networking training		
National Industries for the Blind (NIB) Training	\$ 4,000	
3 Blind employees to attend and receive training		
City of Milwaukee CDBG training - Designated for specific training activity for low income residents of specific targeted areas of Milwaukee	\$ 30,000	
TOTALS	\$ 94,500	\$ 10,000

Staff Recommendation

The grant application can be approved. The grant funds sought from Wispect for \$10,000.00 will be applied to the training offered to disabled individuals for development of workforce skills and computer literacy. These proceeds will directly benefit the individuals with disabilities.