

The Ability Center (Ramp Up) Summary Report

Information about the Applicant

Founded in 2008, the mission of The Ability Center (TAC) is to provide people impacted by disabilities with a daily opportunity to be fit, active, healthy, and to play. Our vision is to build communities where all abilities are provided a universal opportunity for health, wellness and recreation. Our main goal is to provide a higher quality of life for people of all abilities by transforming greater Milwaukee into the most universally inclusive recreation destination in the world. In 2021, The Ability Center programs impacted more than 5,000 students through its Adaptive Scholastic Athletic Program (ASAP) and 500 program participants through Open Gym and other adaptive opportunities. In fact, The Ability Center has experienced a 50% increase in events when comparing the last two quarters in 2021 to the first two quarters of 2022.

Statement of Need

The Ability Center is seeking a grant in the amount of \$5,000.00 to support their Ramp Up program. The RampUp Program of The Ability Center designs, builds and/or implements universally inclusive recreational opportunities and continues to empower those with disabilities through accessibility. To date, RampUp has made three Milwaukee County parks more accessible, benefitting more than 10,000 area residents and tourists annually. The first project, in 2016, was the addition of ice-skating sleds at Red Arrow Park, enabling children and families of all ages the opportunity to enjoy a favorite winter past-time together. Following that success, The Ability Center was instrumental in making adaptive hand cycles available at Veterans Park which makes biking available to anyone regardless of their unique physical needs or challenges. In July 2020, The Ability Center transformed Bradford Beach into the country's most accessible beach that allows anyone in a wheelchair to get from the Oak Leaf Trail right up to Lake Michigan. Accessible beach wheelchairs also are available at no charge to help visitors explore the entire beach or take the chair right into the water.

Project Goals and Expected Benefits

Milwaukee County is committed to achieving racial equity and driving change to become the healthiest County in Wisconsin. This vision will be accomplished by investing in equity to address root causes of health disparities and living conditions. One of the County's goals is to dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities and improve access to safe, quality recreational opportunities. The overall RampUp program addresses this goal by delivering inclusive fitness and athletic opportunities to those in the community impacted by disabilities. Therefore, the RampUp Program is instrumental in transforming Greater Milwaukee into an universally inclusive recreation destination that is accessible to all regardless of income, race/ethnicity or zip code.

RampUp goals:

1. Assists communities and/or organizations in becoming more universally accessible.
2. Deliver inclusive recreation opportunities to those in their community impacted by disabilities.

RampUp outcomes:

1. Increased level of happiness for people with mobility disabilities who can finally use the Beach and other Parks more fully.
2. Increased level of happiness for friends/family members who can now include their family members/friends with mobility disabilities on outings to the beach/parks.
3. Continue to help transform greater Milwaukee into the most universally inclusive recreation destination in the world.

Project Implementation Plan

In addition to the ongoing RampUp opportunities at Bradford Beach, Veterans Park and Red Arrow Park; and identification of a new RampUp site in 2023, The Ability Center has a new initiative through a partnership with the Milwaukee County Parks Department to develop the country's first "Universal Park." Located on 17 partially wooded acres at 10300 W. Wisconsin Avenue, this fully accessible park will set the inclusion standard for future parks and provide equity for an entire region. For the first time in America, an entire community park - not just a playground, ballfield, fitness area or trail - will be accessible to every visitor. Plans feature a 'clubhouse' complete with inclusive amenities, such as: accessible restrooms, adult changing tables, caretaker restrooms, charging stations for mobility and communications devices and a room available to the community to use for events. There will be a first-of-its-kind universal field, complete with a moveable wall so kids and adults can play wheelchair baseball/softball. Users of all ages will be able to recreate on a specially designed playground, fitness stations, activity areas, sensory destinations and enjoy the hardwood forest on a meandering half-mile path. The YMCA has also joined this initiative. Targeted opening of Universal Park is Summer 2023.

The RampUp pillar of TAC is managed by the Community Program Manager, in partnership with Executive Director, Damian Buchman. Additionally, a Park Committee comprised of community leaders and volunteers supports the initiative.

Evaluation Plan

The Ability Center will measure RampUp success by monitoring the number of users checking out accessible beach wheelchairs at Bradford Beach, handcycles at Veterans Park and Ice Sleds at Red Arrow Park. In addition, the organization will monitor the number of first-time vs. repeat users of accessible equipment with the intent to increase the number of repeat users. The Community Program Manager is responsible for processes designed to track this information, as well as the relationships with Park staff at each location.

RampUp outputs:

1. # of users checking out accessible beach wheelchairs, hand cycles or ice sleds.
2. # of first-time users checking out accessible equipment.
3. Increase the number of repeat users checking out accessible equipment.

Budget

While Universal Park is an initiative of RampUp, the actual Park build costs are not listed below. The ongoing maintenance of current RampUp locations, as well as focus on a new RampUp location in 2023 (outside of Universal Park) are the revenue and expenses included below. ANON Foundation supports RampUp exclusively, while Bader, Soref, Bradley and Dick's Sporting Goods provide general support to TAC's 3 main programs.

RampUp Project Budget	
REVENUE	
Bader Philanthropies	\$20,000
Soref Charitable Trust	\$20,000
ANON Foundation	\$16,500
WisPact	\$5,000
Bradley Foundation	\$10,000
Dick's Sporting Goods Foundation	\$7500
TOTAL	\$79,000
EXPENSES	
Community Program Manager (80% of salary)	\$40,000
Bradford Beach	\$7,280
Veteran's Park	\$1,000
Red Arrow Park	\$1,000
2023 Future Site	\$15,000
Replacement Equipment	\$10,000
Awareness Event Costs	\$5,000
TOTAL	\$79,280

Staff Recommendation

The grant application can be approved. The \$5,000.00 can be applied toward the \$10,000.00 cost of the new chairs that will directly benefit the disabled participants in the ASAP program. The cost is allowable under the initiatives of the foundation.