

07

DISABILITY SERVICES



PROJECT #96

Adaptations Improve Job Satisfaction, Reducing Employee Turnover



Identify the need for the proposed project

Our service industry supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in the community has been in a staffing crisis for decades, primarily due to low Medicaid reimbursement rates resulting in low wages. The pandemic pushed the crisis into a staffing emergency with our organizations experiencing 20-30% position vacancy rates. For many years, Thresholds, Spectrum and MOKA and other providers of services to people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) have been working individually and collaboratively to address this severe, persistent direct care workforce shortage. The pandemic and economic turbulence have exacerbated the staffing crisis to an emergency, as people have exited the field or retired. Research indicates that this staffing crisis is not just a local, but a national challenge, for which one solution or approach will not be adequate. There is broad agreement that Medicaid rates must increase so providers receive the necessary funding to pay employees living wages and adequate benefits. However, no one believes that rate increases alone are enough to address this system-wide failure.

Many advocacy efforts are currently in action across the State to raise Medicaid reimbursement rates, improve training portability and flexibility, and develop direct care professional career ladders. We are not aware of larger initiatives to address potentially transformative technological and physical adaptations to the treatment milieu; however, our organizations have proven examples of adaptations making that very transformative difference for the people we serve and our workforce: Implementing SMART technology at one home reduced the staffing need by 1.5 full time equivalents. This relatively simple technology also increased the autonomy and self-esteem of the residents in the home. Adding an ARJO lift at another home reduced the need for personal care staff assistance by 50%, from two employees to one. Adaptations can be costly and funding is not readily available, which has made implementation slow and inconsistently applied. But even our limited experience shows that adapting structures, making the physical plant more universally accessible, and adding technology support transforms our workplaces and the lives of persons served. It has even reduced the need for staff, a game-changer in the current employment climate. These onetime, straightforward and cost-effective changes to our programs are a necessary element to protect and retain employees and better the lives of everyone. Though this approach alone will not solve the severe staffing crisis, it is a key part of a necessary multi-pronged approach to complement other statewide efforts, and is a one-time investment for remarkable transformation.

Brief Description

This project is a collaboration of three nonprofits that serve people with IDD, experiencing an aging, shrinking workforce, severe staff shortages and tasks requiring physical and emotional stamina. The goal is to transform workplaces so staff can focus on relational/behavioral support and have reduced physical burdens, and persons-served can achieve their highest levels of autonomy. Adding or enhancing technological, equipment and physical plant modifications to the homes where people receive care will ensure that current and future employees can continue the important role of treatment and care for our most vulnerable citizens. Additionally, technology and/or adaptive equipment allows the staff to spend more time with the persons served and give them a more independent quality of life. Specifically, this project would identify key elements of care that could be transformed via technology, equipment and physical plant enhancements. Examples include making treatment programs more universally accessible, use of SMART and other technology, and purchase of electronic equipment to use in place of manual labor. The partner agencies on this project have a combined 47 programs in Kent County where direct care staff work. Each agency's specific projects involve adding technology/equipment, and/or physical plant enhancements to replace or ease manual labor.

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$30,000,000

Maximum Cost: \$30,000,000

ARPA Request: \$2,999,999

Submitter Info

Name: Jacquelyn Johnson

Organization: Thresholds Inc

Project Overview

Funding Group: Economic Innovation and Workforce Development

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: New Project

Matching Funds: 0-25%

Eligibility: 

Sustainability: 

Feasibility: 

Impact: 

Source of Funding

(Listed in main description)

Partnership

MOKA, Spectrum Community Services, and Thresholds Inc with endorsement from Network180 (Kent County Community Mental Health)



Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$30,000,000

Maximum Cost: \$30,000,000

ARPA Request: \$2,999,999

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Name: Jacquelyn Johnson

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Eligibility: 

Sustainability: 

Feasibility: 

Impact: 

Source of Funding

(Listed in main description)

Partnership

MOKA, Spectrum Community Services, and Thresholds Inc with endorsement from Network180 (Kent County Community Mental Health)

Long-Term Benefit

By improving employee productivity and reducing the burden of some elements of the job, employee satisfaction and retention increases, and employee injuries and turnover decreases. Modifying the way work is performed will also improve the lives of persons served, giving employees time and energy to focus more intentionally on interpersonal connections with persons served. Importantly, this will reduce the negative impact that the staffing crisis has on our agencies and the community.

Intended Beneficiary

Current Direct Support Professionals working in Adult Foster Care homes in Kent County and the people with intellectual and developmental disabilities living in specialized licensed residential homes in Kent County. Supporting the frontline workforce by improving their jobs through technology and physical enhancements will provide the support at the front end of delivery, which may also lower emergency room visits and police interventions. Staffing shortages lead to failure to support people effectively in adult foster care homes, causing short term hospital stays that turn into long stays due to those same staffing shortages. Currently, nearly 50 Kent County residents are waiting for openings in our homes. As we are able to lower our employee turnover rates, there is the potential to serve more people who are waiting for these vital services.

Estimated Cost

30000000

*Source of Funding

0%-25% Each organization is committed to seeking alternative supplemental funding and in-kind donations to support technology or physical plant adaptations. We also agree to meet quarterly to share best practices and strategies for implementation outcomes as well as alternative funding options. This learning and sharing of best practices will allow us to leverage the benefit of the ARPA funds across the entire network of providers.

Project Management Experience

MOKA, Spectrum and Thresholds are three of the four largest providers of Medicaid services for people with IDD in Kent County. We have been publicly funded for over 40 years, contracting and collaborating with Community Mental Health (Network180) to meet the needs of people with IDD in a way that makes best and most efficient use of taxpayer dollars. We have been partners with the County for a decades-long, County-wide project dating back to the beginning of deinstitutionalization, managing tens of millions of county dollars and successfully caring for tens of thousands of Kent County residents.

Federal Funds Experience

All three nonprofits are contracted service providers for Network180, serving a Medicaid population. We also receive Social Security and Medicare funding. We are familiar with billing codes for all services we provide and are able to provide the services according to the guidelines set by the federal government. We have experience billing electronically to the payor and have a compliance system in place to monitor billings for accuracy. Each of our organizations has over 40 years of experience managing federal funds.



Studies on Impact

Yes. A number of national and local research articles support the need for increased reimbursement rates to increase wages, enhance the image of this profession, create career ladders, and improve work conditions and efficiencies through use of technology or adaptations. See "Community Supports in Crisis: No Staff No Service" article in following link:

https://ici.umn.edu/products/PERjPdfZQgGW_TqyOH_Utg See "Forging a Path Forward to Strengthen Michigan's Direct Care Workforce" that addresses the need to make work easier to support employee retention. <https://www.chcs.org/media/Forging-a-Path-Forward-to-Strengthen-Michigans-Direct-Care-Workforce.pdf>

Supporting Documentation

- [1. Community Supports in Crisis](#)
- [2. Forging a Path Forward to Strengthen Michigan's Direct Care Workforce](#)

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$30,000,000

Maximum Cost: \$30,000,000

ARPA Request: \$2,999,999

Submitter Info

Name: Jacquelyn Johnson

Organization: Thresholds Inc

Project Overview

Funding Group: Economic Innovation and Workforce Development

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: New Project

Matching Funds: 0-25%

Eligibility: 

Sustainability: 

Feasibility: 

Impact: 

Source of Funding

(Listed in main description)

Partnership

MOKA, Spectrum Community Services, and Thresholds Inc with endorsement from Network180 (Kent County Community Mental Health)

Guidehouse Ranking Notes

 **Eligibility**

Eligible under non-profit support - need more information.

 **Sustainability**

One time expense

 **Feasibility**



PROJECT #114

Beyond26 Program Office Construction

Identify the need for the proposed project

Beyond26 began in 2018 by a group of community members who noticed a lack of opportunity for adults who are over the age of 26 and have disabilities. This group, comprised of parents of adult children with disabilities and individuals deeply connected to these families, understood that 26 is a critical age for an adult with disabilities; this is the year that they age out of Michigan’s education system. While the next step should likely be employment, these opportunities are, unfortunately, few and far between for adults with disabilities. Beyond26 bridges this gap between local businesses and a community of excited and available jobseekers through networking and advocacy. After consulting a variety of local agencies who also work with individuals with disabilities, it was undeniable that this service was much needed in our West Michigan community. Upon opening our doors, Beyond26 had an immediate outpouring of individuals coming forth and seeking job placement services. Today, Beyond26 is constantly striving to successfully support individuals with disabilities and connect them to meaningful employment so they may thrive as individuals, and thrive within our community. Our work has made us increasingly aware of how important housing and social programs are in the lives of individuals with disabilities as well. As we continue to build relationships with other disability support organizations, we are also made aware of the benefits that would come from working side-by-side and making our services centrally located; benefits which include increasing the efficiency of our organizations, and more importantly removing barriers to access for those that we serve.

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$4,500,000
Maximum Cost: \$5,000,000

Submitter Info

Name: Dirk Bakhuyzen
Organization: Beyond26

Project Overview

Funding Group: Community Health
Project Theme: Disability Services
Project Status: New Project
Matching Funds: 51-75%

Eligibility:

Sustainability:

Feasibility:

Impact:

Brief Description

Beyond26 plans to partner with David's House Ministries and Compassionate Hearts to build a collective that allows our organizations to operate side-by-side as we offer support to individuals with disabilities in three major areas of need: employment, housing, and social integration. The funding from this proposal would be used to support building costs for Beyond26 alone, which would be used to construct one building (around 15,000 sq ft) and would include administrative offices and program offices for our microbusinesses, which provide direct employment for individuals with disabilities. 15+ acres of land has already been pledged by a donor toward this project, and the project has recently been approved by the City of Kentwood. All that remains is the construction of the buildings

Long-Term Benefit

Beyond26 has been in operation for 5 years. In that time we have served over 115 individuals, largely through volunteer labor and inkind donations of office space. Owning a facility, especially one so close to our referral partners, will ensure longterm organizational stability and accessibility of our services to those who need them. Likewise, recipients of our services will be able to access housing services and social/recreational services more easily as well.

Source of Funding

Capital campaign (Individual donors, corporate sponsors, grants, etc.)

Intended Beneficiary

Adults with disabilities, especially Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Estimated Cost

\$4,500,000- \$5,000,000

Partnership

David's House Ministries,
Compassionate Heart Ministries

Project Management Experience

None

Federal Funds Experience

None

Studies on Impact

Employment, housing, and social integration are major social determinants (SDH) of health for all individuals, and each area needs to be addressed for a true impact on quality of life. An article published in the 2018 issue of Disability and Rehabilitation stated that, "Disparity between people living with and without a disability is unambiguous when comparing SDH such as employment and income, housing, transport, and social support... This negative consequence of disability is commonly addressed relative to individual SDH components, for example there are separate support mechanisms for income, housing and transport... When considering changes to the social determinants of health resulting from disability acquisition, it is impractical to view these changes and those affected in isolation. Consideration of this multidimensional effect on life associated with the acquisition of disability will be useful in disability research, advocacy and support services." A. Frier, F. Barnett, S. Devine & R. Barker (2018) Understanding disability and the 'social determinants of health': how does disability affect peoples' social determinants of health?, Disability and Rehabilitation, 40:5, 538-547

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$4,500,000

Maximum Cost: \$5,000,000

Submitter Info

Name: Dirk Bakhuyzen

Organization: Beyond26

Project Overview

Funding Group: Community Health

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: New Project

Matching Funds: 51-75%

Eligibility:



Sustainability:



Feasibility:



Impact:



Source of Funding

Capital campaign (Individual donors, corporate sponsors, grants, etc.)

Partnership

David's House Ministries,
Compassionate Heart Ministries

Guidehouse Ranking Notes



Eligibility

Housing support is eligible



Sustainability

Need funds for construction only



Feasibility

Unclear on if project can be completed by 2026. Further, Questions about whether they have the capacity to expand their services to support 5-7K people, need a sustainable business plan to evaluate.

PROJECT #267

Grand Rapids ADA Curb Cuts



Identify the need for the proposed project

Grand Rapids' Vital Streets program identified sidewalk connectivity and multimodal transportation as a priority. The City recognized that lack of curb cuts was a barrier to persons with limited mobility in some areas of the sidewalk network. The City intends to eliminate these barriers by installing ADA compliant ramps at intersections with curb barriers.

Brief Description

Currently, the City upgrades existing ramps and curb cuts when completing street projects, but this method makes slow progress. The City proposes a focused project to address an estimated 1,450 curb barriers throughout the city by installing ADA compliant curb cuts at identified locations. The City would issue unit cost contracts for the work including curb cuts, ramps, and acceptable detectable warning surfaces. Concurrent and future additional work would continue through the City's Vital Streets program to address curb cuts that were installed under previous ADA design criteria, but do not meet current standards.

Long-Term Benefit

This project will improve opportunities for people with disabilities or limited mobility to use the sidewalk network to reach destinations such as work, school, healthcare, shopping, parks, and transit. The project demonstrates a commitment by Grand Rapids and Kent County to address usability issues for people of all ability levels and takes a significant step forward toward ADA compliance and Universal Design.

Intended Beneficiary

All residents and visitors with mobility issues including disabled persons, elderly, children and adults with strollers. The universal design of curb cuts is for the safety of all mentally, physically, and visually impaired pedestrians.

Estimated Cost

\$4,000,000.00

Project Management Experience

Incorporated in 1850, the City of Grand Rapids is the second largest city in Michigan with a population of 198,917 within about 45 square miles. Grand Rapids is a full-service city providing a wide range of public services including development services, planning, engineering, drinking water, sewer, wastewater treatment, street maintenance, traffic safety and parking, trash and recycling, parks, recreation, forestry and cemeteries, fire, police, and so forth. These functions are fully supported by administrative/central service departments. The Engineering Department employs 37 staff and performs project services for road maintenance and reconstruction, sidewalks, utilities, city facilities, and vital streets (complete streets + green infrastructure). The department also provides support for permitting, surveying, city GIS data, and asset management. Over the past three fiscal years, the department has initiated 286 new Capital Projects and awarded 148 projects with a total value exceeding \$260.4 million. The Engineering Department's internal structure supports the award and management of projects of any size. It utilizes a webbased bidding system, Accela for permitting, and Microsoft Project to manage engineering projects. The Department is experienced in managing projects with multiple funding sources. The City maintains a financial system that includes fund accounting and assigns codes to track grants. This allows proper tracking of project details and prevents commingling of funds. Staff tracks time worked by project. Engineering's own accounting staff audit each disbursement by funding source in compliance with the OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements (2CFR 200).

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$4,000,000

Maximum Cost: \$4,000,000

Submitter Info

Name: Tim Burkman, P.E.

Organization: City of Grand Rapids

Project Overview

Funding Group: Infrastructure

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: Expanded Project

Matching Funds: 0-25%

Eligibility:



Sustainability:



Feasibility:



Impact:



Source of Funding

The sidewalk/vital streets program would match up to \$200,000 per year.

Partnership

n/a



Federal Funds Experience

The City has extensive experience managing federal funds including EPA, FEMA, EDA, DOE, HUD, and FHA. The engineering department has a full-time staff person to support grants.

Studies on Impact

Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations, Subpart D – Program Accessibility, 35.151 (2016) https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleII_2010/titleII_2010_regulations.htm#a35151 ADA Chapter 4 Accessible Routes <https://www.access-board.gov/ada/chapter/ch04/#a406> ADA.gov https://www.ada.gov/2010ADASTandards_index.htm • 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design <https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADASTandards/2010ADASTandards.htm> • Guidance on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design <https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADASTandards/2010ADASTandards.htm> Effects of ramp slope on physiological characteristic and performance time of healthy adults propelling and pushing wheelchairs <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4305601/>

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$4,000,000

Maximum Cost: \$4,000,000

Submitter Info

Name: Tim Burkman, P.E.

Organization: City of Grand Rapids

Project Overview

Funding Group: Infrastructure

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: Expanded Project

Matching Funds: 0-25%

Eligibility:



Sustainability:



Feasibility:



Impact:



Guidehouse Ranking Notes



Eligibility



Sustainability



Feasibility

Potentially eligible under Public Health.

Source of Funding

The sidewalk/vital streets program would match up to \$200,000 per year.

Partnership

n/a

PROJECT #207

GRAAA's James C. Veen Observatory Assembly Room



Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$550,000

Maximum Cost: \$600,000

Submitter Info

Name: Marc H Daneman & Chris Miller

Organization: Grand Rapids Amateur Astronomical Association

Project Overview

Funding Group: Quality of Life

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: New Project

Matching Funds: 26-50%

Eligibility:



Sustainability:



Feasibility:



Impact:



Source of Funding

(Listed in main description)

Partnership

(Listed in main description)

Identify the need for the proposed project

The Grand Rapids Amateur Astronomical Association (GRAAA) Board of Directors and its Sustainability Committee began a strategic planning process five years ago to identify programming, operational and capital improvements for our organization and 52-year-old James C. Veen Observatory. This effort prioritized physical improvements to the Observatory to provide year-round usability, ADA access, modern restrooms, and expanded classroom and meeting room space. Dan Voss Construction of Ada was engaged to deliver a preliminary design for a building addition to meet these objectives

Brief Description

GRAAA would use the ARPA funds to construct an ADA accessible climate-controlled 50 ft by 30 ft annex to the existing building. It will include meeting /classroom space for 50, in-door & out-door ADA accessible restrooms, storage space, and AV technology. The lowprofile design and unobtrusive location will retain the observatory's unique front profile. Preliminary drawings and cost estimates for the annex were prepared by Dan Voss Construction. Renderings along with a Rough Order of Magnitude cost estimate are available for your review

Long-Term Benefit

This addition extends the 52-year-old Observatory for another 50 years for the Kent County community by enabling a wider range of services. The new facility would supplement GRAAA's ongoing outreach efforts to promote community interest in astronomy. By becoming a year-round and ADA facility, we would not need to rent or find locations for large events or for the winter months. Allowing us to add program like Telescope Lending in Libraries, Telescopes in the Parks and expand GRPM's programming

Intended Beneficiary

The entire Kent County community will be served with our monthly presentations, Observatory events, and outreach activities. Most benefitted will be the professional and novice astronomers, high school and college students, scout troops, families, social and church groups who seek a unique experience enjoying the night sky and learning about astronomy. This project will directly benefit our members and observatory visitors and accomplish our commitment to offer value to a diversity of social groups and levels of interest. Offering these services in a new and larger space will allow GRAAA to expand its ongoing outreach efforts (with the programming noted above), especially to the western and northern portions of the county, which are far less accessible to the Lowell area Veen Observatory. All of this will have a transforming impact on the quality of life for all Kent County residents and support the infrastructure of the Observatory's unique architecture

*Partnership

Grand Rapids Public Museum. We have had an on-going relationship with the Museum since our inception in 1955. The Museum has long supported GRAAA by providing meeting facilities, and through financial and administrative support in operation of Veen Observatory. Some of our outreach events are co-sponsored by the Museum and its Roger G. Chaffee Planetarium. We also work regularly with local school groups (such as the Grand Rapids Public School's Zoo School), area scouting programs, and local colleges. We have worked closely with and received grants from the Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Lowell Area Community Fund, Lowell Cable Television (LCTV) Endowment, and numerous private groups and foundations.



Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$550,000

Maximum Cost: \$600,000

Submitter Info

Name: Marc H Daneman & Chris Miller

Organization: Grand Rapids Amateur Astronomical Association

Project Overview

Funding Group: Quality of Life

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: New Project

Matching Funds: 26-50%

Eligibility:



Sustainability:



Feasibility:



Impact:



Source of Funding

(Listed in main description)

Partnership

(Listed in main description)

Estimated Cost

\$600,000 is needed to meet the overall construction of the new assembly building as recommended by our consultant. The projected 2021 construction cost for the addition was \$550,000. Above this cost will be the inflationary impact, audio-visual technology suitable for classroom and public events and road improvements for winter access. Should it be impractical to raise the entire amount needed for a new structure, we have explored the feasibility of a scaled back effort involving integration of expanded floor space and the ADA compliant restroom into the current building. This would meet a portion of our facility goals with a budget cost in the \$300,000 range. GRAAA would certainly consider these changes if necessary.

*Source of Funding

GRAAA's General Operations Funds; a Second Phase Capital Improvements Campaign; local community funds (GRCF, Lowell Community Fund, LCTV, and others); and member contributions and donations. GRAAA will be conducting its own Capital Improvements Campaign for equipment and other support. If needed, GRAAA will commit to providing about a one-third match of ARPA funding in support of the project.

Project Management Experience

Since 2017 GRAAA has raised more than \$200,000 which was used to fully acquire ownership of 16 acres of land surrounding Veen Observatory. GRAAA has since used a combination of donated and general operational funds to make extensive improvements to the property. The three principal telescopes have had upgrades or refurbishment over the past five years. The GRAAA has developed a capital improvements plan and is underway to complete its goals. By the end of 2022, through a donation from a current member, the goal to install a park pavilion for outdoor classes and social events will be done. In 2023, through another donation, a new stand-alone rotating dome will house a solar telescope. Other grounds and building improvements are in the planning stages. GRAAA is an all-volunteer organization. It has received help from supporting institutions such as the Grand Rapids Public Museum, but most consistently it is the result of the hard work from a dedicated team of members. Several of our volunteers and board members have expertise and professional backgrounds to lead and ensure that all funding from ARPA is closely monitored and properly managed.

Federal Funds Experience

The GRAAA itself has not received federal funds for any of its work to date. However, several GRAAA members, and staff in the development office of the Grand Rapids Public Museum have professional experience in managing projects which included large donor contributions (as described above), and with federal and state programs in their professional and vocational positions. Individual member vitas and program examples can be provided as needed.



Studies on Impact

GRAAA's Sustainability Committee completed in 2021 a two-year Strategic Plan that identified physical and operational requirements for the Veen Observatory and grounds – if the Veen is seen another 50 years. This is described in the GRAAA's Capital Idea Board Priorities, which looked at possible projects over the next ten years. The number one priority identified was the addition to the Veen Observatory. GRAAA retained Dan Vos Construction Company in 2021 to provide a schematic design and estimated costs for the building addition. The ARPA Funds would be used to construct this Assembly Room. The strategic planning efforts also addressed the need to expand membership, organizational marketing, social and media efforts, and new and expanded programming, much of which is now continuing as part of a second phase of this strategic planning process

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$550,000

Maximum Cost: \$600,000

Submitter Info

Name: Marc H Daneman & Chris Miller

Organization: Grand Rapids Amateur Astronomical Association

Project Overview

Funding Group: Quality of Life

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: New Project

Matching Funds: 26-50%

Eligibility:



Sustainability:



Feasibility:



Impact:



Guidehouse Ranking Notes



Eligibility



Sustainability



Feasibility

Eligible under non-profit support. Additional information will be needed if the proposal moves forward in the process.

Source of Funding

(Listed in main description)

Partnership

(Listed in main description)



PROJECT #323

Kent County Autism Mental Health Initiative

Identify the need for the proposed project

The Compassionate Awareness Autism Center (CA2C) is a non-profit organization created to build healthier, happier communities for individuals dealing with Autism and their families. We do this by increasing cultural tolerance and inclusion around Autism within social systems. Our aim is to work with the community at-large to create empathy and understanding concerning autism, while deconstructing bias.

The CDC reports that 1 in 44 children are diagnosed with Autism (CDC.com) and the numbers are only increasing. The need for Autism mental and behavioral health services in Kent County is also increasing. Characteristics of Autism spectrum disorder include impaired social interactions, decreased social skills and a lack of social boundaries. According to the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, these deficits cause children with Autism to experience increased levels of Anxiety, loneliness, and depression (White and Roberson- Nay).

Compassionate Awareness Autism Center (CA2C) currently services 211 clients who are affected by Autism. Our organization has experienced an increase in the number of our clients who are experiencing mental and behavioral health problems triggered by the Covid 19 pandemic. 90% of our families report chronic anxiety and isolation for both parent and child, feelings of hopelessness and a lack of support.

To address these needs CA2C is currently providing behavioral health services to children and families effected by Autism. We are currently providing Autism parent support groups, social skills groups for individuals on the Autism Spectrum, as well as Autism parent self-care accountability groups. Our services work to decrease anxiety and feelings of isolation, while increasing the availability of support for Autistic children and their families.

CA2C also provides services through our Compassionate Awareness initiative which works to destigmatize mental health and provide Autism Awareness in the Kent County Community. This initiative started as a partnership with Kent County Community Mental Health Agency Network 180 Community Family Partnership UP2U Mental Health Campaign. CA2C created a book, "I Am" Coloring Book: Shining the Light on Autism, in collaboration with Network 180 Community Family Partnership program to destigmatize mental health and raise Autism Awareness in the minority community of Kent County. We currently partner with local area schools to provide training for students and staff with the use of this Mental health Acceptance tool.

On a community level, the need for Autism mental and behavioral health interventions, has increased as well. "Mental health conditions are alarmingly high among children with autism (sciencedaily.com)". "Nearly 78 percent of children with autism have at least one mental health condition and nearly half have two mental health conditions or more, according to a new U.S. study from the University of British Columbia's department of psychology and the AJ Drexel Autism Institute at Drexel University – Pennsylvania" (sciencedaily.com).

Our requests for Autism Awareness and trainings to destigmatize mental health in youth have increased by 75%. To address the need and increasing demand for Autism behavioral health and mental wellbeing interventions CA2C would like to increase the capacity of our behavioral health programing with ARPA dollars to implement the Kent County Autism Mental Health Initiative.

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$150,000

Maximum Cost: \$150,000

Submitter Info

Name: Zenia Bates

Organization:
Compassionate Awareness Autism Center

Project Overview

Funding Group: Community Health

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: Expanded Project

Matching Funds: No

Eligibility: 

Sustainability: 

Feasibility: 

Impact: 

Source of Funding

n/a

Partnership

Local area schools



Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$150,000

Maximum Cost: \$150,000

Submitter Info

Name: Zenia Bates

Organization:
Compassionate Awareness Autism
Center

Project Overview

Funding Group: Community Health

Project Theme: Disability Services

Project Status: Expanded Project

Matching Funds: No

Eligibility:



Sustainability:



Feasibility:



Impact:



Source of Funding

n/a

Partnership

Local area schools

Brief Description

We will continue our Autism behavioral and mental health programs as well as increase the number of individuals served. We will also increase our mental health awareness and destigmatization programs to reach more individuals.

Long-Term Benefit

The long-term benefits are decreased numbers of mental and behavioral health among autistic children and families and a decrease in mental health stigma among youth in Kent County.

Intended Beneficiary

1 in 44 Autistic individuals of Kent County and their families, as well as the local kent county community.

Estimated Cost

\$150,000

Project Management Experience

We have managed various community-wide projects including Autism therapy equipment distribution programs, PPE distribution for Autism families, and virtual parent support groups all of which are county wide.

Federal Funds Experience

We have received federal CARES ACT funding.

Studies on Impact

Yes the research supporting the effectiveness of our programming is:

University of British Columbia. "Mental health conditions alarmingly high among children with autism, study finds." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 19 January 2021.
<www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/01/210119114358.htm>

Center for Disease Control, Center for Disease Control, 2022,
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html.

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, White, S.W., Roberson-Nay, R. Anxiety, Social Deficits, and Loneliness in Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders. J Autism Dev Disord 39, 1006–1013 (2009).



Guidehouse Ranking Notes

Eligibility

Potentially eligible as non-profit support or behavioral health programming. More information on overall project needed

Sustainability

Existing organization, but expansion may face funding cliff.

Feasibility

Existing organization. Need more information about actual use of funds.

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$150,000
Maximum Cost: \$150,000

Submitter Info

Name: Zenia Bates
Organization:
Compassionate Awareness Autism Center

Project Overview

Funding Group: Community Health
Project Theme: Disability Services
Project Status: Expanded
Matching Funds: No

Eligibility:

Sustainability:

Feasibility:

Impact:

Source of Funding

n/a

Partnership

Local area schools

PROJECT #62

Social Connection Opportunities for People with Autism



Identify the need for the proposed project

We, Autism Support of Kent County (ASK), are the ONLY organization in the state of Michigan offering social and connection programs for individuals with autism. People with autism struggle with the social, recreational and emotional facets of life and may have difficulty communicating.. They have higher than normal rates of anxiety and depression due, in large part, to the fact that they find it difficult to "fit in" to regular society and have a hard time making friends. Our social opportunities end up being the only way for these autistic individuals to connect with others, and these groups profoundly affect their quality of life, as they have connection to others and finally belong somewhere. Our constituents are telling us that they need more connection to others, more opportunities for things to do, and more life skill and independence development. The need we see is huge, but we do not have the funds to enhance our capacity to serve everyone who wants to be served. We are being told that the areas of need are greatest for children, teens and young adults. However, expanding our program for older adults is important too. Many people with autism are not employed for various reasons. They tend to end up spending the vast majority of their time in their home alone. This leads to a high rate of depression and loneliness. Because autistics struggle socially as a result of being autistic, being isolated makes it much worse. The more time they spend alone, the less confident they are, the less likely they are to seek employment, and the greater number of communication and independent skills they tend to lose. Being around others and practicing the social skills that don't come naturally to them leads to less loneliness, more confidence, greater desire to attempt to get a job or volunteer, and a happier life overall.

Project Cost

Minimum Cost: \$20,400
Maximum Cost: \$20,400
ARPA Request: \$20,398

Submitter Info

Name: Pamela Liggett
Organization:
Autism Support of Kent County

Project Overview

Funding Group: Quality of Life
Project Theme: Disability Services
Project Status: Expanded Project
Matching Funds: No

Eligibility: 

Sustainability: 

Feasibility: 

Impact: 

Brief Description

We are requesting funding for expansion of these programs: - CLUBHOUSE GROUP FOR YOUNG ADULTS- a drop off social skills and life skills program that meets weekly (ages 15 and up). We would like to expand this program to TWICE each week. -THEATER GROUP- a performing group that meets weekly and performs two plays annually (ages 12 and up) We would like to expand to include more than 20 actors. -SOCIAL GROUP- a group that meets twice each month for fun and friendship for teens and young adults (ages 12 and up) We would like to expand this group to meet weekly. - OLDER ADULT SOCIAL GROUP- meets monthly for anyone over age 35 with autism We would like to expand to meet twice each month and have funds provided for those who cannot pay. We are requesting funding for the creation of these new programs: ELEMENTARY-AGED SOCIAL GROUP- we are also requesting funds to create a social group for kids in elementary school. We currently have a list of 16 families that want to participate in this group as we believe that practicing social skills earlier leads to better outcomes later in life. MENTORSHIP FOR PARENTS: We would like to have funding for staff to create a mentorship program and materials for families who have children who are aging out of the school system. Securing guardianship, SSI, Medicaid, housing and planning for the future of a disabled child is extremely complicated, and families need help and support that currently isn't offered anywhere else.

Source of Funding

No

Partnership

No

Long-Term Benefit

Because people with autism struggle socially and with communication, they tend to be isolated. Being isolated can lead to skill decline, loneliness, lethargy and a lack of motivation, and even mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Meeting the social needs of the autistic community can encourage employment, lead to greater life satisfaction, reduce mental distress, and help support families with children with autism. This makes life better for everyone in a community



Intended Beneficiary

The largest beneficiaries of our expanded programs would be teens. In the creation of new programs, the beneficiaries are children with autism. Overall, we serve families affected by autism and autistic people of all ages.

Estimated Cost

We are requesting funding for expansion of these programs: - Clubhouse Program- add a second section for 12 teens/young adults- \$6,000 + Theater Group Expansion- \$2,400 + Social Group/ Older Adult Group- \$3,600 + Elementary Group Creation- \$3,600 + Mentorship Program and Materials- \$4,800

Project Management Experience

We have been the only autism organization in West Michigan for over 25 years. We have received some grants curing COVID 19. We understand the responsibility of being in this position.

Federal Funds Experience

We have received a grant during COVID 19, so we understand how to report outcomes, monitor progress and assess the program.

Studies on Impact

Not at this time, however, a study in England was conducted that found that people with autism had a much greater risk of feeling suicidal than the general population. The study attributed these suicidal thoughts to the loneliness and isolation that comes with the social challenges and awkwardness of autism. Our goal is to create safe places for individuals with autism to connect and belong, and therefore, be happier. We believe that our priority should be on making life better for those with autism in West Michigan, and we believe that we are well-suited to doing so.

Supporting Documentation

- 1. [Letters of Support](#)
- 2. [ASK Sustainability](#)

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Guidehouse Ranking Notes

Eligibility **Sustainability** **Feasibility**

Eligible under non-profit support. Additional information will be needed if the proposal moves forward in the process.

Does not include a funding plan or fund availability after expending all the ARPA dollars.