

F. M. KIRBY FOUNDATION SOLICITATION EVALUATION FORM

DATE: March 28, 2024
Program Area: Human Services
Grant Type: Board Grant

REQUEST DATE: February 27, 2024

APPLICANT:
The Seeing Eye, Inc.
1 Seeing Eye Way
Morristown, NJ 07960

CONTACT: Ms. Margaret Howard, President and CEO

AMOUNT REQUESTED: \$85,000
BUDGETED AMOUNT: \$85,000

NATURE OF REQUEST: General Operating Support

GRANT HISTORY

SUPPORT: 1977-2023

OF APPROVED GRANTS: 52

TOTAL DOLLARS: \$3,907,750

LAST GRANT DATE: 05/01/2023

LAST GRANT AMOUNT: \$85,000

FYE DATE: 09/30

AFS DATE: 12/15/2023

Year Approved	Approved Amount	Approval Date	Grant Purpose
2023	\$85,000	05/01/2023	General Operating Support
2022	\$75,000	05/31/2022	General Operating Support
2021	\$75,000	05/28/2021	General Operating Support
2020	\$75,000	04/30/2020	General Operating Support
2019	\$75,000	04/30/2019	General Operating Support

LAST SITE VISIT DATE: June 2021

ENDORSEE: Leigh Kirby Klein

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS COMMENTS: The FY23 audit is for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2023. The auditor's comments for this period were unqualified. The audit reveals a 5.76% (\$22.2M) increase in net assets, despite a 36% (-\$1.84M) decrease in cash and cash equivalents, due to increased gains on investments. Revenue decreased by 5% (\$1.89M) while

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expenses increased by 5.8% (\$1.69M) over the previous fiscal year. Contributions were down 10.4% (\$1.07M) and legacies were down 17.4% (\$1.87M) over FY22. Program services comprised 80% of the total operating budget and the ED's compensation comprised approximately 1% of the total operating budget. As of September 30, 2023, the Organization held investments of \$326.6M all of which were endowment related. During the 2023 and 2022 fiscal years, senior executives of Morgan Stanley were trustees of the Organization. Fees paid to Morgan Stanley, in respect to investment funds managed by Morgan Stanley, for the year ended September 30, 2023, and 2022, were approximately \$93,000 and \$98,000, respectively. The FY24 revenue and expenses are projected to increase by 12% (\$3.6M) over the FY23 actuals. The F. M. Kirby Foundation's grant of \$85,000 in 2023 comprised 0.95% of total donor contributions and 0.28% of total revenue/expenses.

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION: The Seeing Eye serves people who are blind or have low vision from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Canada and provides services regardless of a student's race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and national or ethnic origin. Seeing Eye students range in age from 16 years to 90+. The Seeing Eye has five overarching organizational objectives. In pursuit of our mission, The Seeing Eye: (1) breeds and raises puppies to become Seeing Eye dogs; (2) trains Seeing Eye dogs to guide people who are blind; (3) instructs people who are blind in the proper use, handling and care of the dogs; (4) advocates for public access for our graduates by educating the public and public officials on the role of guide dogs and by defending the rights of access for people using guide dogs; and (5) conducts and supports research on canine health and development. To date, over 18,000 Seeing Eye dog partnerships have been created with students from across the U.S. and Canada. The founding of the Seeing Eye also spawned the worldwide guide dog movement.

LIZ CROWLEY COMMENTS: There is not much I can say about The Seeing Eye that would be new to the Kirby family, as the partnership between the Foundation and TSE enters its 47th year and TSE enters its 95th year of existence. With this in mind, I will use this space to provide organizational updates from the past year.

Since TSE's receipt of the FMKF 2023 grant, 9 class sessions were held from 5/22/23 through 2/29/24 for a total of 160 students (45 new students and 115 returning). Students ranged in age from 18 to 82 and came from 38 states, 1 U.S. territory (Puerto Rico), and 6 Canadian provinces. These numbers are consistent with those from the previous year. Additionally, in FY23, 415 puppies were whelped at the Chester Breeding Station and 223 dogs completed the four-month training program.

In September 2022 we saw Margaret "Peggi" Howard take over as Executive Director after serving in an interim capacity for nearly a year. This year the report relays the establishment of a new department that focuses on awareness and advocacy for guide dog handlers who continue to face exclusions and access denials to businesses, restaurants, and rideshare apps. The newly formed Director of Accessibility, Advocacy, and Government Relations is David Johnson who has been with TSE since 1984 and previously served as the Director of Instruction and Training for over a decade. To address this work, Johnson will partner with Mellissa Allman, TSE's Senior Specialist of Advocacy and Government Relations, who is an attorney and a graduate of the Seeing Eye (she works with a yellow lab mix named Luna). The Board of Trustees currently stands at 25 non-

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employed members from diverse backgrounds including psychology, veterinary science, finance, and higher education. Six current Trustees are graduates of TSE.

The report on “Tales from the Seeing Eye” that is included in the application is incredible; both the dogs and the humans of TSE are sources of inspiration (I dare you not to shed a tear while leafing through these stories). On the human side, we see folks from all walks of life who have learned to successfully exist without the benefit of sight, the main tool we use (and often take for granted), to comprehend and navigate our physical world and interactions with our peers. On the canine side, the dogs are bred for high intelligence, health, and impeccable temperament; they are obedient, good-natured, eager to please, patient, loyal, and joyful. I was touched to read the account of one “twosome” from Canada, Marlin Nagtegaal and his German Shepherd, Champ. Marlin has worked with Champ for several years and describes his initial meeting with Champ as “love at first sight” and says that “he is an unbelievable dog. He’s changed my life completely.”

TSE is a staple in Morristown and their guide dogs in training are so ingrained in our local culture that, as a native Morristown resident, I was surprised to go off to college and realize that most towns are not inundated every spring with a bevy of beautiful canines on “training runs,” learning how to assist humans live a full life. Though I took the concept of a guide dog for granted as a child, I have now glimpsed the “inner workings” of the TSE program (and am also a dog owner who fully comprehends the challenges of training), and I am beyond amazed by this cross-species partnership that we see in the Seeing Eye, along with BluePath Service Dogs. Additionally, we recently received an updated photo of one of our Kirby-namesake SEDs, Dillard, who has grown from a floppy puppy into a very dignified and handsome pooch.

I am truly honored to continue stewarding this relationship for the F. M. Kirby Foundation and very pleased to recommend \$85,000 in general operating support for 2024.

RECOMMENDATION: I recommend \$85,000 in general operating support.

JUSTIN J. KICZEK COMMENTS: A bit disappointing to see student numbers this year (160) remain stagnant from last year (161), as we had noted in our 2023 EF all of Seeing Eye’s efforts to attract and retain staff (by revising the hiring process and preferred qualifications) while also recruiting more younger students through social media and marketing. Let’s find out more about this next time we talk with them (I do think a site visit is due soon, as we were last there in June 2021). That said, considering the impact of the pairing of each student with a Seeing Eye dog, this is still 160 lives either utterly changed or continuing to be enhanced.

This is an organization that is not only transforming lives but it is also integral to Morristown’s identity as an inclusive place for people of all abilities. Moreover, Seeing Eye enhances the philanthropic landscape of the entire region by getting families involved in fundraising, puppy-raising, and other ways of volunteering. Safe to say, Morristown would not be the same without it.

We are looking forward to having our December 13, 2024 Board meeting at the Seeing Eye location!

RECOMMENDATION: I recommend \$85,000 in general operating support.

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DISPOSITION:

- Declination
- Hold for review on/about:
- Approval for: **\$85,000**
- Recommended Grant Payment(s):
2024:
2025:
2026:
- Hold for Board Review: **April 26, 2024**
- Payee Other Than Addressee:
- Insert Information: **General Operating Support**
- Other:

Initials: JK

Date: 04/12/2024

Check # _____

Date: _____