

Knowbility Grant Proposal  
This proposal seeks to help  
the neurodivergent, adults and  
K-12, in Texas.

# **Knowbility Technology Accessibility for the Neurodivergent Grant Proposal**

Hawkins, Brentt

From: Knowbility  
5930 Middle Fiskville Road  
Austin, Texas 78752

June 26, 2024

To: Moody Foundation  
2302 P.O. Box 704  
Galveston, TX 77550

Dear Moody Foundation,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to provide an overview of the program design for the grant application in question. This is a grant proposal from Knowbility. It is entitled Knowbility Technology Accessibility for the Neurodivergent Grant Proposal

## **Moody Foundation:**

### **Abstract**

The program proposed in the grant application aims to address Technology Accessibility for the Neurodivergent within our community by providing useful tools for accessing technology. Our approach is rooted in rehabilitating the neurodivergent, collaborating with government entities, building networks among grantees, and focusing on the educator workforce and mental health.

## **Knowbility Technology Accessibility for the Neurodivergent Grant Proposal**

### **Organizational Information**

#### **Organizational Background and History**

Knowbility is a non-profit that aims to help the neurodivergent, or disabled people, succeed in education and potential job placements by improving their digital user experience and stopping digital discrimination.

We have successfully assisted in the training and development of neurodiverse individuals in the technology space through Community Programs, including the award-winning Accessibility Internet Rally (AIR) initiative which is a unique kind of design competition that brings together nonprofits and teams of volunteer web developers, designers, and other technology experts to create accessible websites for the disabled. AIR was founded in 1998 to educate web developers about the tools and practices for creating accessible websites.

#### **Mission Statement**

Knowbility exists to facilitate assisting the neurodivergent and rehabilitating them into the mainstream of life with technology.

#### **Project Title**

Technology Accessibility for the Neurodivergent

#### **Project Summary**

Technology is an integral part of our daily lives, and being able to communicate digitally allows individuals to engage more fully in society. With the support of Knowbility the neurodivergent can look for work and contribute to the economy, attend cultural events, volunteer for causes they care about, receive health care, counseling, and more. Our initiatives benefit the neurodivergent population, which includes over 1 billion people globally.

Participants put what they learned at AIR to practice professionally with software accessibility. AIR is now in its 25th year. It is an annual global competition that links volunteer developer teams looking to improve their accessibility design skills with nonprofits and community organizations in need of assistance in making their websites more accessible. At the end of the program, NGOs will have updated or created websites from scratch, increasing their ability to provide services to their target community and even growing their audience. An organization can now amplify its strategic objectives. Web designers will have learned skills that will aid them throughout their design careers, as well as how to work with other nonprofit organizations. People with disabilities will then have access to vital information and the opportunity to engage in cultural events. Participants apply what they learned at AIR to work professionally on software accessibility with companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Meta, IBM, Dell, and Visa.

Our annual AccessU Digital Accessibility Skills Training conference teaches professionals in the technology industry how to incorporate accessible design into their products. This three-day web training covers accessibility, usability, and inclusive design skills. These are part of an interactive and communal setting. People can learn about accessibility and apply it to their company. Topics covered include development, testing, user experience, emerging technologies, inclusive hiring practices, and HR structures, the formation of Employee Resource Groups for employees with disabilities and neurodiversity, as well as the investigation of public policy changes that benefit neurodiverse people. Our program will include activities such as computer training and design classes to achieve the desired outcomes.

Our K-12 and Neurodivergent Adult Access Toolkit enhances educational results for people with disabilities by teaching teachers and support staff how to use Assistive Technology (AT) in the classroom.

These teachers may learn about tools to assist a neurodivergent individual, such as communication devices and scheduling apps that incorporate video modeling to teach the individual how to accomplish assignments. Additionally, we provide commercial services, including usability testing, website audits, training, consulting, and accessibility help desks to corporations, government agencies, educational institutions, and small businesses.

**Project Start Date:** September 1, 2024

**Project End Date:** August 31, 2025

**Grant Duration Constraints:** None

**Annual Request Amount:** \$1.9 Million

**Year Project Budget:** Request for \$1.9 Million

**Total funding received or pledged for a project** Moody is the first funder we have contacted. We felt it was important to contact Moody first.

**The status of other sources of funding (listing and status, is there other money coming in?)** Other grant proposals are being prepared for other funding sources.

**Post Secondary Success applicants—is this money going to early learning applicants?)** Knowbility will be working with neurodivergent adults and K-12 students.

**Specific goals and objectives** To meet our purpose of training, rehabilitating, and integrating the neurodivergent into our technological society.

**Proposed Method for Evaluating the Impact of the Success of the Project**

Surveys of neurodivergent students after completing their training with Knowbility will conduct surveys of all parties involved in the process, including web designers, software developers, teachers, and neurodivergent students. Knowbility will evaluate what was effective and what needs to be improved.

**Expected Outcomes** We will employ a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress of this program and measure its impact.

Key performance indicators will include classes like AIR and AccessU Digital Accessibility Skills Training conference.

**Annual Request Amount: \$1.9 Million**

**Subject:** Distribution of \$1.9 Million Across Various Business Expenses

Here is the suggested/proposed allocation:

1. Salary:	\$800,000
2. Utilities and facilities:	\$200,000
3. Rental equipment:	\$300,000
4. Office supplies:	\$150,000
5. Marketing:	\$450,000

This allocation is designed to support our operational needs while ensuring that each aspect of our grant proposal receives the necessary funding for growth and success. We believe that this distribution will enable us to maximize our resources and achieve our strategic goals, helping the Neurodivergent.

**Year 2 Project Budget:** \$2.09 Million Due to inflationary costs request and 10% increase

**Year 3 Project Budget:** \$2.3 Million

#### Other Organizational and Program Information:

In what state was your Organization incorporated?*	Texas
Does your Organization conduct operations outside the State of Incorporation?*	Yes
Please provide your Organization's Articles of Incorporation*	<a href="#">Knowbility Articles of Incorporation.pdf</a>
Please provide your Organization's Bylaws as amended to date.*	<a href="#">BYLAWS amended Dec 2012.docx</a>
Please provide the Organization's Conflict of Interest policy, if any.	<a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1upLzJVbuhE3lDgo5nYmoOH4jI1npFh8/edit?usp=sharing&amp;ouid=106351380573776312649&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1upLzJVbuhE3lDgo5nYmoOH4jI1npFh8/edit?usp=sharing&amp;ouid=106351380573776312649&amp;rtpof=true&amp;sd=true</a>
Do you have the latest statistics on adults with disabilities?	From Cornell University <a href="https://disabilitystatistics.org/">https://disabilitystatistics.org/</a>  <a href="https://askearn.org/page/statistics-on-disability#:~:text=7.9%25%20of%20people%20who%20are,60%2D64%20have%20a%20disability.">https://askearn.org/page/statistics-on-disability#:~:text=7.9%25%20of%20people%20who%20are,60%2D64%20have%20a%20disability.</a>  <a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ASqqm_Ga30KOZ3Md-5XyR_yI0WcxPnpF/view">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ASqqm_Ga30KOZ3Md-5XyR_yI0WcxPnpF/view</a>

<p>Please provide the name of the individual serving as a Reference for your Organization.*</p> <p><b>Please note this Individual cannot be an officer or member of your Organization.</b></p>	<p>Larry Goldberg, <a href="mailto:larry@lrgoldberg.com">larry@lrgoldberg.com</a></p>
<p>Please provide your Reference's email address*</p> <p><b>Enter the email address of the person you'd like to serve as a reference.</b></p>	<p>Personal reference and email.</p> <p>Larry Goldberg, <a href="mailto:larry@lrgoldberg.com">larry@lrgoldberg.com</a></p>
<p>Needs statement: Why do you think it is necessary to have the money go to Knowbility?</p> <p>Add Personal Message (optional)</p> <p><b>Sending a reference request will not submit this form.</b> You may send your reference request at anytime, otherwise it will be sent automatically when you submit this form.</p> <p>Be sure to include <b>your Organization's name</b> in the '<u>Add Personal Message (optional)</u>' field above to identify your Organization to the Reference.</p>	<p>Based on our history we have successfully used grant funds to achieve our mission of helping the neurodivergent.</p> <p>Personal reference and email</p>
<p>Please provide the name of the individual serving as a Reference for your Organization.*</p> <p><b>Please note this Individual cannot be an officer or member of your Organization.</b></p>	<p>Reference 2</p> <p>Personal reference and email.</p> <p>Larry Goldberg, <a href="mailto:larry@lrgoldberg.com">larry@lrgoldberg.com</a></p>
<p>Please provide your Reference's email address*</p> <p><b>Enter the email address of the person you'd like to serve as a reference.</b></p>	<p>Personal reference and email.</p> <p>Larry Goldberg, <a href="mailto:larry@lrgoldberg.com">larry@lrgoldberg.com</a></p>

How many people are on your Organization's Board of Directors?*	10
Who is currently serving as the Organization's CEO/Executive Director?*	Sharron Rush
How long has your CEO/Executive Director served in their current position?*	24 years
Please attach your organization's CEO/Executive Director bio*	<p>Sharron Rush is the award-winning co-founder and Executive Director of Knowbility, a nonprofit advocacy, consulting, and training company based in Austin, Texas. Since 1998, Sharron has been a leader in raising awareness and skills around the issue of access to technology for people with disabilities. Her work at Knowbility includes policy review, performance analysis, technical consultation, and training development for private and public companies, government agencies, and schools. Her technical expertise, understanding of the barriers faced by people with disabilities, and strong communication and training skills have contributed to her leadership position in the field.</p> <p>Since 2007, she has served as an Invited Expert at the W3C, developing and applying global accessibility standards for their Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI). In 2014, she became co-chair of the Education and Outreach Working Group at WAI. In 2023, Sharron was an AARP Purpose Prize Honoree, a distinguished award given to five individuals age 50 and older who are using their knowledge and life</p>

	experience to solve challenging social problems.
Would your CEO/Executive Director consent to a background check to include examinations of their financial, criminal, and credit histories?*	<p><b>Yes</b></p> <p>No</p>
In the last 10 years, has any of the Organization's officers or directors been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor in any court of competent jurisdiction in or outside the United States?*	<p>Yes</p> <p><b>No</b></p>
Is there any outstanding litigation or threats thereof involving any officer, director, or key employee in their organizational capacity?*	<p>Yes</p> <p><b>No</b></p>
<p>Provide a Summary of what the Organization does to aid in the training and development of talented neurodivergent individuals to position them for careers in cybersecurity and information technology (IT).*</p> <p><b>500 words</b></p>	<p>Founded in 1999, Knowbility is an Austin-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to create an inclusive digital world for people with disabilities. We help make the internet and other technologies accessible to people who are blind, have low vision, have limited mobility, are neurodivergent, or have cognitive or learning disabilities. Our goal is to create a barrier-free world of information technology so that people with disabilities and neurodivergent individuals can fully participate in the business, educational, and cultural marketplace.</p> <p>Knowbility seeks to help</p>

neurodivergent individuals by improving their user experience in the digital landscape. Technology is ingrained in our daily lives, and individuals can more fully participate in society by being able to communicate digitally. They can look for jobs and participate in the economy. They can attend cultural events and volunteer with missions that they care about, access health care services and counseling, and so much more.

The Knowbility network has grown to include more than 10,000 teachers and educators, developers, designers, project managers, and community program leads, many of them with disabilities. Our programs serve the general community of people with disabilities - a stakeholder group of more than 1 billion people worldwide.

Now in its 25th year, AIR is an annual global competition that pairs volunteer teams of developers wanting to increase their accessible design skills with nonprofits and community organizations who need help making their websites accessible.

At the end of the program, nonprofits have redesigned or built-from-scratch websites that increase their capacity to bring services to their target population and even expand their audience. An organization now has a stronger tool to achieve its strategic objectives. Web designers have learned skills that they can use for the rest of their design

careers (benefiting other organizations - nonprofit and private), and people with disabilities have access to critical information and participate in cultural activities.

Topics include development, testing, user experience, emerging technologies, inclusive hiring practices and HR structures, the development of Employee Resource Groups for employees with disabilities and neurodiversity, and the exploration of changes in public policy that benefits neurodiverse individuals.

Our K-12 and neurodivergent Access Toolkit, which improves educational outcomes for students with disabilities by helping teachers and support staff learn to implement assistive technology (AT) in the classroom. Tools these teachers may learn about to help a neurodivergent student include devices to help with communication, and apps for scheduling that include video modeling to prompt the child on how to complete tasks.

Additionally, we provide commercial services, including usability testing, website audits, training, consulting, and accessibility helpdesk to corporations, government agencies, education institutions, and small businesses.

<p>What Activities, Experiences, and Training has your Organization provided or planned that have helped talented neurodivergent individuals pursuing careers in cybersecurity and information technology (IT)?*</p> <p><b>500 characters</b></p>	<p>Our AccessU and AIR programs jumpstart the digital accessibility careers of countless software engineers, designers. Both programs may have neurodivergent participants and/or beneficiaries who are neurodivergent.</p> <p>Participants learn that accessible websites seek to eliminate visual noise, add the ability to pause or stop content, like rotating carousels, and encourage intentional design choices that reduce sensory overload for neurodivergent individuals to improve their user experience.</p>
<p>Organization Activities, Experiences or Training examples</p> <p>Please provide links to your website, social media, videos, and any significant activity that demonstrates your offerings that will help the judges understand the impact of the activities, including but not limited to testimonials from those who have interacted with your offerings.</p>	<p><a href="#">AccessHippos AIR Experience Video 2021</a></p> <p><a href="#">Team Airway Submission Video 2022</a></p> <p><a href="#">AccessU 2022</a></p> <p><a href="#">ATSTAR Curriculum Modules</a></p>
<p>What communities do you seek to reach? *</p>	<p>The Neurodivergent, K-12 and adults.</p>
<p>If your Organization provides practical, hands-on or immersive cyber experiences and/or employment support, please explain.</p>	<p>They have training and job placement and build on this with the prospectus.</p>
<p>Please provide links to your website, social media, and any significant press</p>	<p><a href="https://www.aarp.org/about-aarp/info-2022/purpose-prize-winners.html">https://www.aarp.org/about-aarp/info-2022/purpose-prize-winners.html</a></p>

<p>that your Organization has received.*</p>	<p><a href="https://blog.diamond.la/conversations-with-accessibility-experts-sharron-rush">https://blog.diamond.la/conversations-with-accessibility-experts-sharron-rush</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.barrierbreak.com/barrierbreaks-shilpi-kapoor-named-as-openair-advisory-chair-knowbility/">https://www.barrierbreak.com/barrierbreaks-shilpi-kapoor-named-as-openair-advisory-chair-knowbility/</a></p>
<p>Approximately, how many individuals have you reached in the past 5 years?*</p>	<p>10,000</p>
<p>Approximately, how many individuals do you expect to currently reach in total in 2023?*</p>	<p>2,000</p>
<p>If you are awarded the first prize, how many more individuals do you anticipate being able to engage and support?*</p>	<p>Top prize allows us to build capacity and easily reach 10x the number of individuals through expanding our programmatic offerings, modernizing programming, improving marketing, and increasing the size of the team.</p>
<p>Provide numbers and examples of successful placement or advancements of neurodivergent individuals.*</p> <p><b>300 characters</b></p>	<p>Knowbility has worked directly with 107 neurodivergent individuals, but our work as an intermediary to accessible design means that millions benefit from our training, consulting, and advocacy. Currently, Knowbility has four employees (of 12) who are neurodivergent.</p>
<p>Which cybersecurity organizations, if any, do you partner with or have a relationship with (for content, advisory, guest teaching)?</p>	<p>Accenture, Cloudflare, McAfee. When we work with government agencies, schools, and banking and financial institutions, all of which have cybersecurity on the top of their minds, we are helping them to ensure that user accessibility runs parallel to their cybersecurity improvements.</p>

What is the Organization's total operating <b>budget</b> for this fiscal year?*	\$1,935,084
If awarded the first prize, how will the Organization use the funds?* <b>Divide it</b>	<p>Capacity Building: 60%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Curriculum consultants and content developers to add courses to our training portfolio</li> <li>-Marketing and advertising staff to market and expand attendees to AccessU and AIR.</li> <li>-Modernize current training tools (updated videos, technology platforms, and evaluation tools)</li> <li>-Modernize database of stakeholders for better tracking and engagement</li> </ul> <p>Public Awareness: 20%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Advocacy campaign that promotes importance of inclusive design and a better experience for neurodivergent people</li> <li>-Paid advertising to market and increase attendees to all programs.</li> </ul> <p>New project research: 20%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Explore the development of digital accessibility credentialing to people with disabilities, with an emphasis on the neurodivergent community.</li> </ul> <p>Present backing research stating how I plan to spend the money and why and use the statistics here, for example based on the national science award the Giving a certain amount of money will bring/support new project research which will benefit adults with</p>

	disabilities.
In addition to monetary resources, what else are the needs for your Organization?*	Volunteers
The latest statistics on adults with disabilities.	<p>From Cornell University  <a href="https://disabilitystatistics.org/">https://disabilitystatistics.org/</a></p> <p><a href="https://askearn.org/page/statistics-on-disability#:~:text=7.9%25%20of%20people%20who%20are,60%2D64%20have%20a%20disability.">https://askearn.org/page/statistics-on-disability#:~:text=7.9%25%20of%20people%20who%20are,60%2D64%20have%20a%20disability.</a></p> <p><a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ASqqm_Ga30KOZ3Md-5XyR_yI0WcxPnpF/view">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ASqqm_Ga30KOZ3Md-5XyR_yI0WcxPnpF/view</a></p>
Do you know the causes of mental illness or learning disorders in adults?	<p>The causes of mental illness are widely varied and quite complex. There are genetic, environmental, physiological, and psychological factors that can contribute to the development of mental illness. While the issue is widely studied, the causes of the conditions are not fully understood or agreed upon. Stress, trauma, and social instability are known contributors, but genetic predisposition is also a strong contributing factor.</p> <p>Individual neurodivergent people need to have a program to participate in that is tailored to their needs and makes them feel included and fulfilled so that they can grow in a way that suits them.</p>

Is there anything else you would like to say in consideration of this grant?

So in conjunction with these great individual programs, Knowbility seeks to help neurodivergent individuals by improving their user experience in the digital landscape. Technology is ingrained in our daily lives, by being able to communicate via digital means, individuals can more greatly participate in society. They can look for jobs and participate in the economy, they can attend cultural events and volunteer with missions that they care about, they can access health care services and counseling, and so much more.

Society in general is better when neurodivergent people are participating in it.

Particularly those who see the world in creative ways and find creative solutions to problems, big and small. Having these people at the table is critically important, and having more accessible websites, assistive technology in the classrooms, and digital creators trained and extremely aware of incorporating accessibility into their platforms is how Knowbility can help make that happen.

Having disabled people in the design process ensures that it's an authentic experience for the end user.

Digital accessibility standards have been codified & updated since 1998. The purpose is to ensure that websites

& apps can interact with assistive technology (AT). And yet, the most recent WebAIM study of the top one million websites in the world found that more than 98% of websites do not meet even minimum standards. People with disabilities are therefore, locked out of many opportunities on the web. Just as automatic doors, ramps, & curbs make the physical world accessible to people with disabilities, design choices can make the digital world accessible to screen readers & other AT used by people with disabilities.

The Internet had already proven to be a "great equalizer" in terms of providing knowledge, economic power, and job possibilities to people with disabilities. However, since many websites were not (and still aren't) built with these millions of users in mind, people with disabilities do not have equal opportunities to succeed or participate. People with disabilities use special tools, called assistive technologies, to browse the Web, which can be confused by some website designs and functions.

For a number of reasons, nonprofit websites are often built without accessibility in mind, limiting the number of people they can reach with their mission. As a result, people with disabilities face social isolation, missed employment and volunteer opportunities, and less access to critical

	social services like housing, mental health support, and food security.
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## Conclusion

I look forward to working with your company for grant funding for this Knowbility project. I know personally how helpful this project can be for the neurodivergent. This program can help them integrate into the mainstream of society and become digitally proficient.

In closing, our team is committed to ensuring that this program design aligns with the goals and objectives of the grant and that it has the potential to create meaningful change in our community. Should you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to reach out. Thank you for considering our application.

Warm regards,  
Brentt Hawkins