

# AUTONOMYWORKS

## THE ORGANIZATION

AutonomyWorks is a for-profit social enterprise that provides meaningful employment for adults with autism. The organization contracts with national and international marketing organizations that need detail- and task-oriented employees to effectively support their digital and online marketing efforts. These employment opportunities are well suited for individuals with autism who frequently possess the unique talents critical for this work.

## THE CHALLENGE

According to the Centers for Disease Control, autism is the fastest growing developmental disorder, affecting more than one million people, including one out of every sixty-eight children, and diagnoses are expected to continually rise. In addition, more than 500,000 young people on the autism spectrum are expected to graduate from high school over the next decade.

Over the last decade, recognition of the special needs children with autism face has grown with both public and private school systems creating programs to serve them. Yet, little attention has been paid to the needs of autistic individuals once they leave the education system. Unless there is a change, experts estimate that 80 percent will be unemployed or employed in low-skill, low-wage jobs, at an estimated annual cost of \$125 billion per year in the United States.

## THE SOLUTION

Many individuals with autism excel at detailed, repetitive, and structured tasks. AutonomyWorks matches people with autism who possess these core competencies to companies who recognize the value in the unique characteristics these individuals bring to the workplace.

AutonomyWorks contracts with a variety of firms with a need for digital marketing and analytics and draws its employees from a wide range of social service agencies and the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services. Employees work onsite at AutonomyWorks, under the direction of skilled supervisors, are paid competitive wages, and receive occupational support, job-coaching, and social and life skills training in the workplace.

## LOAN AMOUNT AND EXPECTED IMPACT

With a \$600,000 loan, AutonomyWorks will expand marketing and hiring. Over 10 years, more than 330 people will be employed, 140 of them a direct result of growth made possible by the loan.



*“The Benefit Chicago investment allows AutonomyWorks to hire more people with autism, while building a stronger and more enduring company. By accelerating key hires and establishing foundational processes and tools, we are able to build a company that can be prosperous into the future.”*

*- David Friedman,  
Founder and CEO*

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