

Bestwork's Breakout Year



OUR MISSION

Bestwork Industries for the Blind, Inc. is dedicated to improving the quality of life for people who are blind by providing training and employment opportunities in a supportive work environment.

OUR VISION

To transform from a small, self-sustaining manufacturing agency into a full-scale social enterprise with diversified lines of business, comprehensive training, and vocational rehabilitation services.



MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Fiscal Year 2023 accelerated Bestwork’s vision to grow and diversify and we are already witnessing our strategic goals coming to life. We created the blueprint when Jon Katz took the helm in July 2021, and since then, the changes to the organization have been extraordinary.

Jon and his team have created an environment of success at Bestwork. We have launched new knowledge-based lines of business that provide a two-fold benefit - to offer new employment opportunities to people who are blind or visually impaired and to offer quality, competitive, and necessary products and services to our customers. We have strengthened our textile and apparel lines and are diversifying our already impressive portfolio of products.

Additionally, Bestwork’s recognition within the community has shown strong and steady growth. We launched a new website (www.bestworkindustries.org), advertised steadily across print, digital, and radio platforms, and participated in numerous speaking opportunities. We welcomed many local influential legislative and industry leaders to the agency who in turn have assisted in amplifying our reach and supporting our mission.

With everything happening at Bestwork, Fiscal Year 2024 will be one to watch. We are very excited about what lies ahead.



John D. Shaw
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Fiscal Year 2023 was Bestwork's Breakout Year in terms of growth and diversification. But like most well-laid plans often do, we experienced some hiccups. As a textile manufacturer, we rely on our suppliers for production. Intermittent interruptions in the supply chain caused us to readjust production schedules and balance our labor to meet demand. It was challenging to say the least, but my seasoned Team rose to the occasion, and we successfully fulfilled all our contractual requirements, achieving an outstanding on-time-delivery rate that exceeds industry standards with a 100% customer satisfaction rating.

I am excited to share the good news that we secured two new military textile apparel programs (Navy Physical Fitness Uniform Pant and Navy Flight-Deck Jersey) and introduced new automated folding machine technology - completely run by people who are blind or visually impaired (BVI) - to help improve efficiency and allow for BVI individuals to be upskilled and repurposed to new, different lines of business.

Bestwork focused on diversifying its business service offerings that are replicable, scalable, and portable, which will facilitate expansion.

We launched a Document Scanning & Digital Imaging (DS/DI) line of business. The new line is operated by four employees who earned their qualifications through an official training program conducted by Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind in Maryland. As this business grows, so will employment opportunities.

Bestwork expanded its footprint in North Jersey, as a way to reach more BVI individuals. We opened a satellite facility in Montclair, NJ at Jewish Vocational Services of MetroWest (JVS) that resulted in hiring three new employees and an upward mobility opportunity through the promotion of a current employee to Team Lead. The Montclair team works on kitting and light assembly projects like dollies, fire rakes, and dustpans, while their Cherry Hill counterparts are assembling Military Decorative Medal sets.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO CONT'D

Our e-Commerce site, www.BestworkSupplyCenter.com, gained traction and expanded to offer a Contractor Operated Parts Store (COPARS) for the Navy. We also became an authorized AbilityOne Distributor, the only one in New Jersey, which allows us to sell a variety of products to federal government offices. These new avenues have the potential to be game changers for Bestwork, providing additional revenue streams to help ensure the line of business is self-sustaining, while enabling us to expand our product offerings and increase employment opportunities.

Bestwork gained notoriety and accolades in the community, including winning NJMEP's 2023 'Made in New Jersey' Manufacturer of the Year (Medium Business) and the Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce's Voice of Business award for Business Excellence (26-100 employees).

Of note, we have more than doubled our grants and donations raised from the prior year.

And we continue to pursue opening a Sight Center on our campus here in Cherry Hill to provide low vision, assistive technology, and vocational rehabilitation services to an underserved community in South Jersey. We established an advisory committee of subject matter experts to help lead this initiative and are in pursuit of raising the funds needed to get the Center operational.

These initiatives are an extreme undertaking, and I am so thankful to have a staff who whole-heartedly embraces the new vision for Bestwork's future. Through them, we will continue to do great things. I am excited for this next year and look forward to sharing our future successes.



Jon Katz
PRESIDENT & CEO

BESTWORK LEADERSHIP

Board of Directors »

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Claire Allamby
MaryAnn Ragone DeLambily
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Leadership Team »

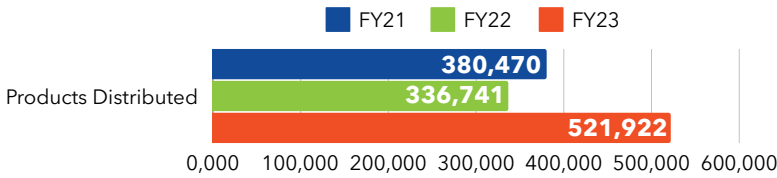
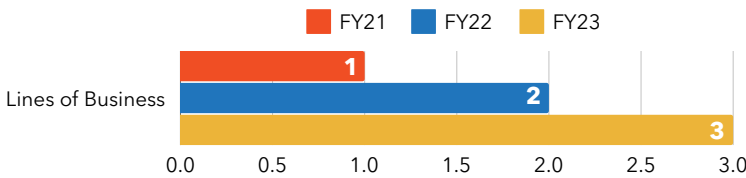
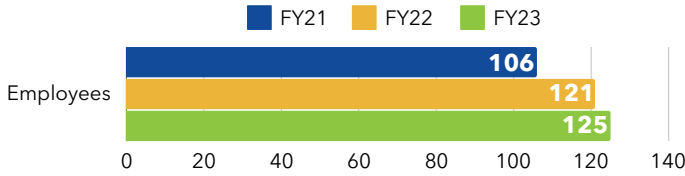
Jon Katz	President & CEO
Tom Black	VP of Products & Business Services
Johnette Lee	VP of Sales
Greg Pereira	Sr. Director of Finance, Accounting, & Operations
Lauren Scarpa	Director of Communication & Marketing
Maurice Tyndell	Director of Workforce Development & Government Affairs
Bridgette Matison	Executive Coordinator



BESTWORK AT A GLANCE

Growth & Development

Bestwork continues to grow every year...



- Bestwork's workforce grew from 106 employees in FY21 to 125 in FY23.

- Bestwork started with 1 Line of Business in FY21 and has grown to 3 Lines of Business in FY23.

- In FY21, Bestwork produced and distributed 380,470 products. This number grew to 521,922 products in FY23.



Authorized Distributor



Affiliated Agency



Associated Agency

8 New contracts awarded in 2023

521,922 Total products distributed in 2023

On-time shipping and delivery



Customer Satisfaction Rating

386,101 Military Garments

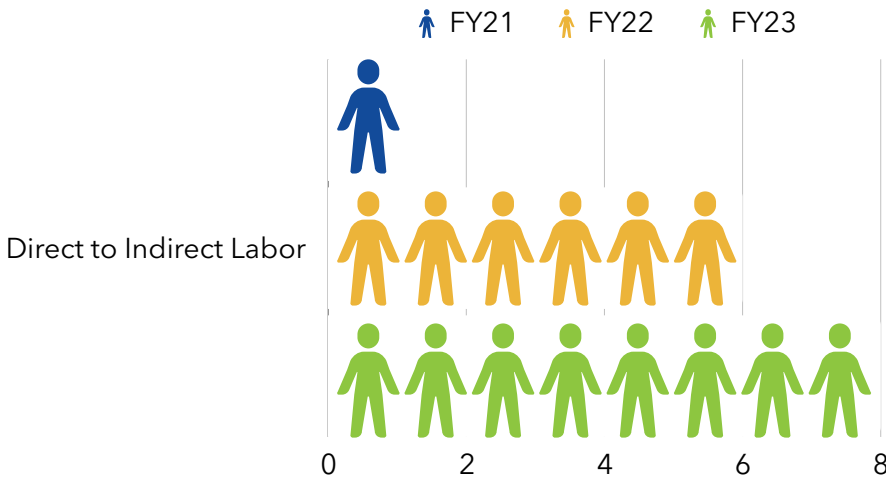
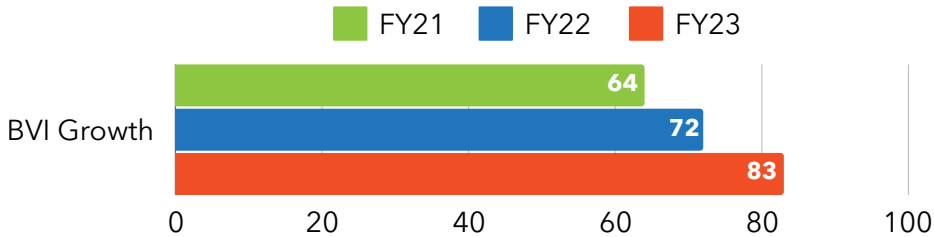
91,735 General Service Administration Products

36,104 Commercial Garments

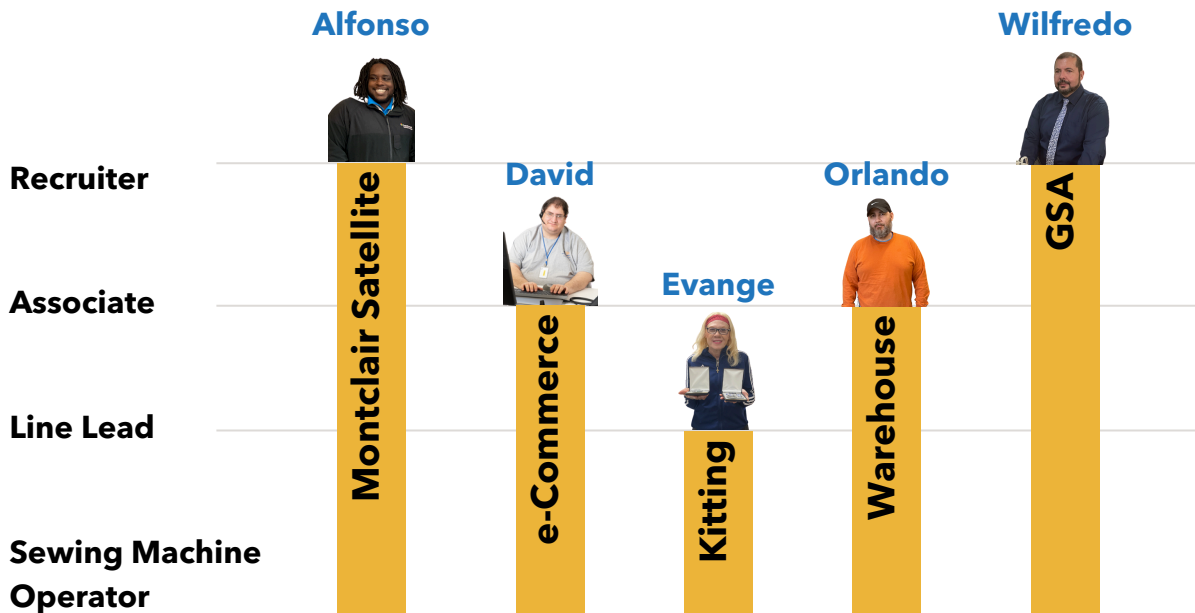
7,982 ACCSES NJ Products

UPWARD MOBILITY & BLIND LABOR

Bestwork's main priority is to offer training and employment to the BVI community, with opportunities for upward mobility.



- Bestwork's workforce grew from 64 blind and visually impaired (BVI) employees in FY21 to 83 BVI employees in FY23.
- Bestwork's goal is to create more upward mobility opportunities for its employees. In FY21, 1 upward mobility position was created. We grew that to 8 positions in FY23.



BESTWORK OPENS SATELLITE LOCATION

People who are blind or visually impaired in North Jersey now have access to meaningful employment opportunities thanks to a new partnership between Bestwork and Jewish Vocational Services of MetroWest (JVS) who provides vital services that help to improve employability, increase self-sufficiency, and enhance quality-of-life for thousands of individuals and families throughout Northeastern New Jersey.

As part of the agreement, Bestwork is operating a satellite location in JVS's Montclair facility, where people who are blind or visually impaired will work on kitting and light assembly projects.

The organizations celebrated the Grand Opening of the satellite location in December 2023 at JVS with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony performed by Bestwork President & CEO, Jon Katz and JVS CEO, Michael Andreas. They were joined by three new employees, Eddie Duran, Carla Branche, and Anthony Aikens, who were hired because of the partnership, and Alfonso Harrell, a Bestwork employee since 2021, who was promoted to lead the team. This team of four has already exceeded production goals.

I'm so thankful for this opportunity, otherwise, I wouldn't have a job or be able to work.
- Eddie Duran, new employee



JVS and Bestwork share a common goal of increasing employment opportunities for people who face challenges finding a job. We are excited to partner with Bestwork because working together, our impact can be even greater.

- Michael Andreas, CEO of JVS of MetroWest



Satellite Location
in partnership with



DIVERSIFYING LINES OF BUSINESS



The PSEG Foundation and OceanFirst Foundation each provided Bestwork with a grant to purchase equipment to jumpstart our first knowledge-based line of business, Document Scanning & Digital Imaging (DS/DI).

Great story... In addition to helping us fund the initiative, OceanFirst Foundation also agreed to become our first customer! Chris Maher, Chairman & CEO of the Bank, and Kathy Durante, Executive Director of the Foundation brought the first wave of documents for our employees to begin working on.



The DS/DI line will upskill four employees, to start, and begin operating in January 2024! Eight more employees are lined up to receive training to join this team.



This initiative is crucial for our sustainability as an organization. By implementing this knowledge-based service line of business, Bestwork is able to recruit more employees who are blind or visually impaired, further promoting the mission to employ with meaningful impact. This also allows for the opportunity to promote employees internally from the manufacturing production floor to a management position in a knowledge-based job.

Equipment Funded by our Partners:



BESTWORK EMBRACES AUTOMATION



The Story

Bestwork received grants from Truist Foundation and the NJEDA, through the NJ Manufacturing Voucher Program (NJMVP), to invest in and install a new automated textile folding machine to help streamline processes and increase productivity. Representatives from Truist Foundation presented Bestwork with a check in early December. Line leader Adrian Ramos (pictured above) is seen folding the Navy Flight Deck Jersey.

With this purchase, Bestwork can train and upskill employees on this machine and in other areas of production, streamlining processes and increasing productivity, all while saving manual labor hours.

The Stats

- All-in-one folding, bagging and heat-sealing system
- Folds about 1,000 garments per hour (nearly 4x the amount that can be accomplished manually)
- Adaptable for people who are blind or visually impaired
- Adaptability features make the machine compatible with Bestwork's textiles and apparel, including t-shirts and fleece, allowing for consistent, efficient work

We are excited to share that the Truist Foundation provided a grant to Bestwork to purchase a new Textile Folding System, helping to streamline processes, increase productivity, and allow for upward mobility. This is expanding work opportunities available to people who are blind or visually impaired, within a supportive, caring environment.

- Jaime Whalen, SVP, Commercial Banker at Truist

Equipment Funded by our Partners:

 Truist Foundation

 NJEDA
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Michael (Mike) Bubb has a big personality... like light up a room, big, which makes sense since he came to Bestwork after working in the entertainment industry for over 20 years.

Raised by his parents, Mike grew up in Oklahoma City, then after his mom was transferred for work moved to New Jersey, and then Ohio where he graduated high school. Ohio was a hub for athletes at the time. It was there he befriended a few professional athletes from the Cleveland Browns (NFL) and the Cleveland Cavaliers (NBA) and got a taste of what fame was like. He liked it and wanted to experience it for himself, however sports weren't his passion - music was. So, Mike packed up and moved to Long Island, New York in 1997 to pursue his passion, behind the scenes.

He befriended some well-known artists at the time... He credits Bryan Abrams, the lead singer of the group Color Me Badd, as one of his best friends, as well as the members of the group Soul For Real, who he lived with for three years.

As a singer/songwriter, Mike worked with and represented R&B artists, helping them with artist development and perfecting songs. He traveled to recording sessions, worked with A-list producers, and made sure those he worked with were in good hands. Songs he contributed to (artists like: Omarion, Mya) hit the airwaves and were on a tv show (Empire). Life was good.

It was in 2004 when Mike first noticed he couldn't really see out of his left eye. Up until this point, he had 20/20 vision, and had just gotten his driver's license renewed. The loss came on quite suddenly. He waited a bit to see if it would come back. When it didn't, his girlfriend at the time talked him into getting it checked out.

The diagnosis... glaucoma. Mike was only 28.

And it appears to be genetic, as his mom completely lost her vision in her 60's. The loss slowed him down a little, but didn't stop him - he can see enough to be fully independent, so he continued working, traveling back and forth between New York and California.



**Michael (Mike)
Bubb**

It feels good. It feels good to be recognized and appreciated for the work that I do. Bottom line, I truly love my coworkers... When they said my name, the love I received was crazy. That's what meant the most to me. Anyone can sit behind a sewing machine, it's the fact that I get to help others. I work hard and I'm proud to be a part of this team.

- Mike Bubb

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR CONT'D

As time went on, the music business work slowed down. It was then he made the decision to move back to New Jersey and pursue other opportunities. He heard about Bestwork from someone working at the agency at the time. Mike applied and was hired as a sewing machine operator in 2020. Admittedly, he was scared to try something new, but the Bestwork training staff eased his fears. Mike's confidence grew and so did his sewing capabilities. In fact, he was good at it and better yet, he enjoyed it! He thrived in this new environment, and was thrilled to make new friends.

Mike mainly worked on Bestwork's Navy Fleece line, but was also cross-trained on packing so that he could pitch in wherever needed. Mike's dependability was apparent. His quality was good, as was his performance and attendance. In early 2023, Mike was one of eight employees selected to go to Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind in Maryland to be certified in document scanning and digital imaging, something that will soon benefit him.

Mike's upbeat personality, work ethic, and willingness to be a team player contributed to him unanimously winning the agency's ultimate honor in December 2023. During Bestwork's holiday party, Mike accepted the award for Employee of the Year. The recipient this year received a special nod because the award was renamed the James and Rita Varsaci Employee of the Year Award, in honor of our founders, and presented by the Varsaci family who were in attendance.

Good things just keep happening for Mike. In January 2024, he was promoted from a sewing machine operator to the Team Lead for Bestwork's newest line of business - Document Scanning and Digital Imaging. He's excited for the new role, and approaches it with the same go-getter attitude he's known for. He has a goal to grow into upper management for this line of business, even considering going back to school for Business Management to support his new endeavors.

Despite losing his vision, Mike has a zest for life, the arts, and entertainment. While he still dabbles in song writing, he's found a new interest: voice over work. He worked with a coach for more than a year and recently completed his demo. Now he's looking for a few external opportunities to have fun with - game show announcer or podcast host, anyone? He's also an avid comedy show fan, going to as many shows as he can. Additional hobbies include bowling and traveling. He even has a dream to go visit Montana!

Bestwork employee Mike Bubba is definitely one to watch!



AWARDS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our people are our priority. Bestwork aligns its overall goals with our employees' passions, supporting them every step of the way. Here at Bestwork, we know that people who are blind can do more things than most people realize. We take the utmost responsibility for designing our workplace and operations to position people who are blind or visually impaired to excel.

Exposure is crucial for Bestwork's sustainability and overall success. These accomplishments help better position Bestwork as a not-so-much 'best-kept secret' in South Jersey. Exposure, and as a result support from others, can ensure that we can take whatever steps necessary - use technology, make modifications and updates - to correct a system where 70% of working-age adults who are blind are unemployed.

We are proud to have received the following awards in FY23.



Gold
Transparency
2023

Candid.

OUR SUPPORTERS



Bestwork has a dedicated community of partners. Thank you for your continued support.

Individuals »

Claire Allamby*
Linda Carney
Audrey Croley Little
MaryAnn* & Robert DeLambily
Francis Du Vernois
Ann Marie Fantini
Julie Natale Fenton*
Daniel Galasso
Kevin Graham
Rich Hoffman
John Hughes**
Louis Jablonski*

Jon Katz
Jim Kehoe*
Elaine Porch
Warren Pross*
Atlee Robinson
Richard Ross, Jr.*
Kenneth Saunders*
Ardyth Shaw
John Shaw*
Jennifer Shropshire

* *Board of Directors*

** *Advisory Board*

Organizations »

1st Colonial Community Bank
Amazon-Smile
BNY Mellon Mid-Atlantic Charitable Trust
Fund for the NJ Blind, Inc.
Glen Raven Logistics
Grande Staffing Solutions LLC
Hyland Levin Shapiro LLP
Milliken & Company
National Industries for the Blind (NIB)
Ocean State Innovations

OTEX Specialty Narrow Fabrics
Park Avenue Limousine
Sam's Club (Williamstown)
Sir Speedy Printing 70610
Walmart (Cherry Hill)
Walmart (Mt. Laurel)
Walmart (Vineland)

SUPPORTERS CONT'D



Lions Clubs >>

Berlin Lions Club
 Brigantine Lions Club
 Gloucester City Lions Club
 Greater Wildwood Lions Club
 Haddonfield Lions Club

Hammonton Lions Club
 Lions Club of Stafford
 Neptune Township Lions Club
 Williamstown Lions Club
 Winslow Township Lions Club

Foundations >>

American Online Giving Foundation
 Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation
 Foundation@ Cross River
 Harriet G. Fredericks Foundation
 OceanFirst Foundation

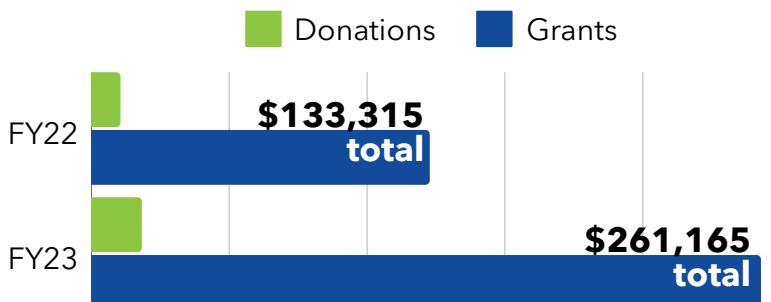
Readers Digest Partners for Sight Foundation
 The Scholler Foundation
 Truist Foundation
 William G. Rohrer Foundation

In-Kind >>

Anonymous
 DoubleTree Suites by Hilton Hotel
 Mt. Laurel
 New York Football Giants
 New York Jets

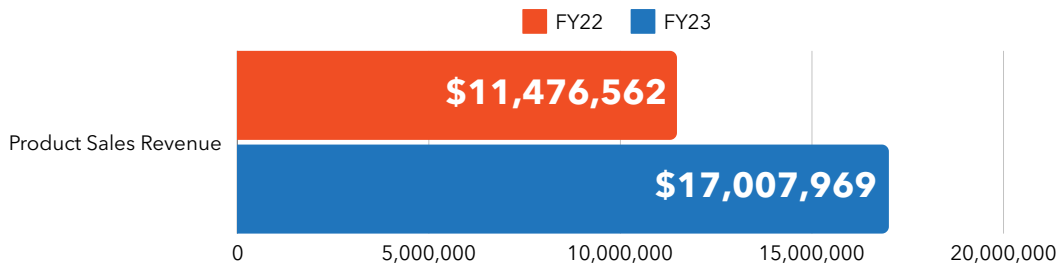
Philadelphia Flyers
 Pittsburgh Steelers
 Jed & Krysti Plester
 Wawa Foundation

Please note we endeavor to maintain complete and accurate records. If you notice an error or omission, please contact the Fund Development & Grant Specialist at 856-424-2510 x214



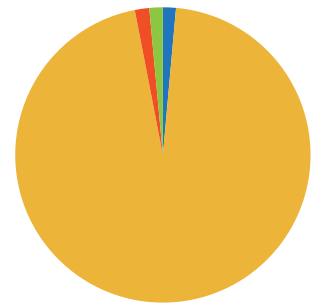
Since Bestwork began its transformation from a small, self-sustaining textile manufacturing agency to a full-scale social enterprise, fundraising efforts have nearly doubled, and will continue to grow.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW FY2022/2023



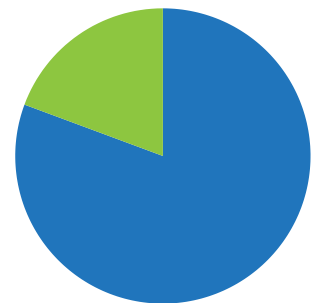
Support and Revenues >>

Grants and Donations	\$253,195	1.4%
Product Sales	\$17,007,969	95.5%
Investment Income	\$280,609	1.6%
Other Income	\$262,347	1.5%
Total	\$17,804,120	



Expenses >>

Program Services	\$14,809,971	80.7%
Administrative/ General Operations	\$3,552,227	19.3%
Total	\$18,362,198	



Change in net assets* (\$558,078)

**Net assets reflect significant investment in infrastructure to support growth and diversification.*



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