Second Sense


This report represents Second Sense’s responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA Inc, and Independent Sector. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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Mission:
Second Sense inspires individuals to move beyond vision loss and believe in their abilities. Through client-centered support and training, they learn new skills, build confidence and realize their value in our community. Together, we are changing society’s perception of human potential.

The content of this Charting Impact Report is the sole product and responsibility of Second Sense. This report does not in any way represent an endorsement from Independent Sector, BBB Wise Giving Alliance, or GuideStar, nor does it represent fulfillment of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance’s Standards for Charity Accountability. For more information on Charting Impact, visit www.guidestar.org/chartingimpact
1. What are we aiming to accomplish?
Second Sense focuses on the individual. We work to help each person accept their vision loss, realize their true potential, set goals to achieve that potential, and gain the skills to reach those goals. Our clients range in age from 21 to 95. Some have been blind all their lives and some just lost their vision. Some have had long careers and others have never held a job. Some have a strong support system, with family and friends who are supportive of their independence and encourage them to learn and grow. Others have family and friends who are so afraid for their safety they encourage dependence. Each client needs to work at their own pace, determine their own path and set their own goals. Working within this framework, our goal for each client is to help they move beyond vision loss and learn the skills they need to live fulfilling lives -- however they define them. Over the next three years, we are continuing to expand our individual training in adaptive technology and daily living skills and our counseling services. Using a mix of interns, volunteers and independent contractors to assist our small staff, we are incorporating phone outreach and online options to expand our reach. We are also increasing our education and training options for professionals in an effort to improve the services offered to adults with vision loss. Most people are unaware of vision rehabilitation training and the huge difference it makes in the life of someone with vision loss. We are working to change this through our social media strategy, our website and community outreach.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?
Our programs are all delivered by professional specifically trained to provide services to adults with vision loss. This ensures our clients are receiving the best training and are performing the skills safely and efficiently. Not only does this serve them well, they become ambassadors of proper vision rehabilitation training. We will continue to concentrate on each client, tailoring our services to meet their needs. All services are provided either individually or in small groups. We believe this is the most effective and efficient way to offer training -- everything is hands-on with lots of repetition. Our clients need to feel comfortable doing the task and confident enough to tell others they do not need help. They need to be able to advocate for themselves on a daily basis, at home, at work and when out in the community.

3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?
Our staff are our core strength. They are all professionals, most with advanced degrees in their field. They are passionate about their work and their clients. We have strong, committed board that believes in our mission, our work and our service philosophy. Our staff have built strong partnerships with other community organizations, outside professionals, peers in their fields. We have a strong volunteer base, made up mostly of former clients. Because our services are all delivered directly by staff on an individual basis, our staff determine the impact and outcome of our services.

4. How will we know if we're making progress?
We assess our progress toward our goals through outcomes achieved by our clients. Each member of our program staff closely monitors the progress of each client, assessing their skills and progress through testing, demonstration, surveys and one-on-one conversations. Because our services are so dependent upon the individual clients, goals vary greatly. Milestones include crossing a street independently, using the Internet to search for employment, cooking dinner for their family or signing their name.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?
Second Sense is building partnerships to expand our services and awareness of vision rehabilitation. We have secured contracts with the State of Illinois to provide vision rehabilitation to clients of the Department of Human Services. We have added orientation and mobility training as an option for training. This is an important skill, but one that is often neglected, provided by unskilled staff or offered on a very limited basis. Our training has quickly gained a high reputation and is much sought after. We have learned that offering a variety of options is the best way to reach our audience. We have become known for our creative programs and our staff is requested to present at national conferences, provide webinars and offer training at other community organizations. We are still working on increasing the number of clients who can receive Orientation and Mobility training. This has been slower than we would have liked. We are seeking funding to cover the salary cost to hire a new staff person to provide this training.