



إكسبو 2020
دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة
DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Press Release

A Danish mobile app that helps the blind to 'see' wins Expo Live grant

- App helping 37,000 blind people overcome everyday challenges
- Be My Eyes may get opportunity to showcase solutions at Expo 2020
- Third cycle of the grant open for submission until 2 November 2017

DUBAI, 2 October 2017 – A Danish start-up that uses mobile technology to make the world more accessible for the blind and visually impaired has won an Expo Live grant from the organisers of the next World Expo, being held in Dubai in 2020.

Be My Eyes is an app that connects a blind person with a sighted volunteer, who describes what they see through live streamed video. The app creates a 'virtual pair of eyes', enabling the visually impaired to overcome everyday challenges and lead a more independent life.

Inspired by the personal experiences of its inventor, Hans Jørgen Wiberg, Be My Eyes makes 'visual assistance' more accessible, regardless of time and location. It has already connected more than 37,000 blind users and 545,000 volunteers, who come from more than 150 countries and speak over 90 languages.

Through the Expo Live grant, Be My Eyes plans to increase the number of users and volunteers, and expand the complexity and diversity of features by working with public institutions and businesses to make their services more accessible for the blind.

Expo 2020 Dubai's Expo Live programme has an allocation of USD 100 million to back projects that offer creative solutions to pressing challenges that impact people's lives, or help preserve the world – or both. Organisers are looking for projects that would not reach their full potential without its support.

Expo Live is granting up to USD 100,000 per initiative for its Innovation Impact Grant Programme – to be made available incrementally depending on progress and results.

Christian Erfurt, CEO of Be My Eyes, said: "Be My Eyes is having a positive impact in making daily life easier for the blind and visually impaired by connecting them with sighted strangers.

"The volunteers are doing it out of compassion and empathy to help someone in need. We were pleasantly surprised when we first started to see such a large number of people who are willing to spare their time to help blind strangers with everyday tasks. Sometimes this leads to some really heartwarming stories, like when a volunteer helped a user read a positive pregnancy test result.

"It's been incredible to see the power of collaboration first hand, when people connect minds under a worthy cause of minimising the gap – not only between the blind and the sighted, but also across culture, borders and religion.

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“We are excited to be part of the next World Expo, where we hope to explore the possibilities when millions come together.”

World Expos, which trace their origins back to the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, have always celebrated the latest in innovation and technology.

The Expo Live programme was launched in January 2017, following a pilot phase last year. It aims to stimulate innovation that has a social benefit, by supporting winning projects with funding, business guidance and promotion. Successful applicants will also have the chance to showcase their work to many millions of visitors to Expo 2020 Dubai.

To date, the programme has attracted more than 1,100 applicants from 107 countries around the world. Following a rigorous evaluation process, which included live presentations in Dubai in August, 16 grantees from 14 countries have joined Expo Live’s community of Global Innovators. With these new members from the second cycle, the community now comprises 45 Expo Live Global Innovators from 30 countries.

Yousuf Caires, Vice President of Expo Live, said: “According to the World Health Organization, there are more than 285 million visually impaired people in the world, for whom everyday tasks can feel like insurmountable challenges. Be My Eyes offers a simple solution requiring only a smartphone and an internet connection, but the impact it makes to the lives of users far outweighs its simplicity.

“We are proud to support Be My Eyes to acquire necessary resources and capacity for them to support even more users and volunteers, making the world more accessible for the blind.

“We see innovation not as the process of generating ideas, but as the relentless commitment to solving a problem worth solving. It is the global innovators’ character, their drive and their reasons for choosing this path – the path of a change-maker – that earns them a place in our Expo Live family and the opportunity to inspire millions at Expo 2020 Dubai.”

The third cycle of the Innovation Impact Grant Programme is now open and will receive creative and innovative solutions to real life challenges by 2 December. Interested applicants with projects that generate social and environmental value and are in line with Expo 2020 Dubai’s subthemes of Opportunity, Mobility and Sustainability can find out more and apply at www.expo2020dubai.ae/expo-live.

Caires added: “We want to prove that innovation can come from anywhere, to everyone. If you have a solution that improves lives, we are here to listen and we are here to welcome you to our community of innovators.”

To find out more about the winning project visit: <http://bemyeyes.com/>

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About Expo 2020

Expo 2020 Dubai is guided by the belief that innovation and progress are the result of people and ideas combining in new ways. Over the course of six months from October 2020, Expo aims to bring together hundreds of countries and millions of people to celebrate human ingenuity: ‘Connecting Minds; Creating the Future’.

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- Between its opening day on 20 October 2020, and its close on 10 April 2021, we expect Expo to be visited by many millions of people.
- 70% of all visitors are expected to come from outside the UAE - the largest proportion of international visitors in Expo history.
- We aim to create and deliver an inclusive and global Expo with over 200 participants, including nations, multilateral organisations, businesses and educational institutions.
- Expo 2020 also has an ambitious volunteer programme, which aims to include more than 30,000 volunteers from a wide range of ages, nationalities and cultures and backgrounds.
- The Expo site covers a total of 4.38 sq. km, including a 2 sq. km gated area. It is located within the Dubai South District, adjacent to Al Maktoum International Airport.

Visit: www.expo2020dubai.ae

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About World Expos

In 1851 the Crystal Palace was the centrepiece of London's Great Exhibition - the first World Expo. It celebrated the man-made industrial wonders of a rapidly changing world. Architecture, contents and a theme, 'Industry of All Nations', coalesced to create a big idea of nations meeting nations in shared technological and commercial progress. In more recent years, participants in World Expos, including governments, international organisations and companies, have gathered to promote their achievements, products, ideas, innovations, their national brand, and their nations as destinations for tourism, trade and investment.

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