



A Growing Demand in Cybersecurity

The US is experiencing unprecedented growth in the cybersecurity industry and demand for entry level staff has never been higher. Today, there are approximately 350,000 unfilled positions in the cybersecurity¹ industry and as demand continues to exceed the supply of available workers, the United States is on pace to hit a half million or more unfilled cybersecurity positions by 2021.

A Growing and Available Workforce Solution

People of differing abilities represent one of the most promising and readily available entry-level cybersecurity workforces in the nation. Many people on the autism spectrum who are unemployed or underemployed have heightened abilities that make them a perfect match for these high tech jobs. These strengths include:

- Hyper Focus
- Affinity for Repetitious Tasks
- Meticulous Attention to Detail
- Visual and Systematic Thinking

People of differing abilities are available and ready to work, but have often been overlooked as a workforce solution. Two-thirds of young people with autism are unemployed and more than 500,000 young people on the autism spectrum will enter the job market within the next 10 years².

Enter the abilIT Pilot Program

To harness the potential of people of differing abilities and to meet the labor shortage, Melwood is undertaking a six-month comprehensive pilot program to help participants pursue career opportunities through professional development and technical training. We have also partnered with one of the largest and most respected cybersecurity training firms, Cybrary.

Career exploration and professional development training have been the cornerstone of Melwood's success for 55 years. We see this as a natural evolution of our work and recognize the impact this could have on one of the most in-demand fields in America.

¹According to the U.S. Department of Commerce's CyberSeek project

²According to a report by A.J. Drexel Autism Institute

abilIT Admission Eligibility

Person of differing abilities with either:

- High school diploma, GED, or equivalent
- TABE cut scores (minimum):
 - R: 576
 - M: 596
 - Language: 584
 - Alternatively, may qualify by taking a Melwood administered VALSPAR test
- Veterans living with post-traumatic stress or service-related injury

Upon completion, participants will have gained:

- The skills to compete for entry-level Network Operations Center (NOC) or Security Operations Center (SOC) Analyst positions.

The ability to sit for A+, Network+, and Security+ certifications. This drives abilIT's six-month timeline.

- The soft skills necessary to land a job and work effectively as part of a project team.

abilIT Evolution

Phase 1:

- Pilot Program with a small cohort of participants

Phase 2:

- Employees receive one-on-one full-time "sponsored" training from a skilled professional as well as related classroom instruction.

Phase 3:

- Melwood looks to provide basic outsourced cybersecurity services for organizations that have a need for a cybersecurity program, but that do not have the means to manage their own cybersecurity team and infrastructure.

Encouraging Employers to Embrace Neurodiversity

As part of this program, we will be continuing to engage employers in order to educate them on neurodiversity. Our "Melwood Challenge" campaign challenges businesses to think outside the box and see our workers as a potential workforce solution.

Our goal is to scale the abilIT program with the help of philanthropic and corporate support so we can provide a reliable pipeline of workers in this high-demand industry.

Proposed Partners

- Cybrary: The largest massive open online course (MOOC) in the cybersecurity space. Cybrary's size, proximity to Melwood, and its list of established employer-clients gives it an advantage over other MOOCs in the cybersecurity space.
- The International Critical Infrastructure Institute (ICISI): ICISI is a 501 (c)(6) research and workforce development organization that specializes in cybersecurity and the protection of critical infrastructure from cyber-based threats. ICISI grants membership to individuals and corporations and provides access to state of the art labs, systems, and technologies that would otherwise only be accessible to larger laboratories. ICISI provides professional certifications, curriculum development, workforce programs, and work-based learning/research opportunities.

For more information on the program or to apply, visit abilIT.melwood.org or email abilIT@melwood.org