

Strategic Plan Report
Delaware Business Enterprises

Prepared by
Terry C Smith

October 4, 2017

Introduction

Representatives of the Blind Vendors Committee, Delaware Business Enterprise staff, and the Director and Deputy Director of Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired met with the Consultant in New Castle on September 28 and 29 2017, to develop a strategic plan for the Business Enterprises Program. The group went through a number of exercises. Consensus was reached on everything contained in this report.

During the first day, the group developed a vision statement; identified strengths and weaknesses, created program priorities, identified barriers to addressing the priorities, and began the process of developing goals and strategies. On Day 2, the group continued to work on goals and strategies.

Rules of Engagement

Prior to beginning the exercises, the group adopted the Rules of Engagement listed below as a guide for their interaction with each other. The participants agreed to these Rules of Engagement. The Rules of Engagement are as follows:.

- 1) **Honesty**--participants are to be honest in their comments and feedback during this process.
- 2) **Respect**--all participants will show mutual respect for each other and employ the "Golden Rule" of treating each other in the way they would like to be treated.
- 3) **Non-personal**--comments are not to be personal in nature and should instead be issue oriented.
- 4) **Constructive**--all comments should be constructive in nature in a way that enhances the process.
- 5) **Focused**--all participants will remain focused on the issue being discussed and not bring into discussion unrelated topics.
- 6) **Confidential**--any discussions of confidential matters are not to be discussed beyond the Committee and Agency staff

Our Vision

To be a consumer driven, progressive, and nationally renowned entrepreneurial program for the blind focused on the needs and desires of the customers.

Strengths

Following are the identified strengths of the Delaware BEP:

- Relationship between BVC/SLA
- Commitment to true Active Participation by both the BVC and SLA
- Size of the program (Advantages to being small)
- Family atmosphere
- Upward Mobility training
- Commitment to quality training for new operators
- Willingness to evolve
- Relationship with private vending/food service purveyors
- Commitment to quality customer service
- Randolph-Sheppard Act
- NFBEI
- SLA responsiveness
- Involvement and commitment by BVI Director and Deputy Director
- NCSAB
- Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Access to National Resources (Terry Smith, etc.)
- Recognize our weaknesses
- BEP Director's personal commitment to program excellence
- Lack of turnover and experience amongst operators
- Age of operators (Younger than most BEP's)

Weaknesses

Following are the identified weaknesses of the Delaware BEP:

- Cumbersome Reporting Process
- Total reliance on third parties
- Outside influences
- Little Randolph-Sheppard Act
- Reluctance by VR staff to refer potential operators due to lack of education
- Lack of opportunities/no sites available for the new operators
- Lack of outreach to and interest from younger blind people
- Resources (People and money)
- No availability of federal VR dollars
- Lack of RSA support
- No clear job description for staff
- Loss of administrative support position
- No plan for growth
- No marketing plan
- Lack of knowledge and understanding by legislators
- Lack of advocacy initiatives
- Lack of political involvement by operators
- Income level of operators (less than 50% of national average)
- Lack of use of technology in vending
- Age of equipment
- No interstate rest areas
- Lack of diversity (no females)
- Reliance on government locations
- Open meeting requirements
- Vendor information is public
- No micromarkets
- Requirement to pay commissions at some sites
- Ongoing issues with SSDI
- Low expectations for Operators
- SLA requirement for state procurement on third party contracts
- Conflict with SECC
- Lack of support from Legal

Program Priorities

The group identifies six priorities for the BEP. They are ranked in order of importance. The program priorities are as follows:

- 1) Growth - Expand number of locations
- 2) Increase number of operators
- 3) Increase income of current operators
- 4) Upgrade vending (technology, micromarkets, and replacement)
- 5) Improve advocacy and political involvement
- 6) Change reporting

Barriers

The group identified the following as potential barriers to being able to address the priorities and achieve strategic goals:

- Resources – Need money to expand
- Political push back
- Resistance from state entities
- Lack of legal support
- No dispute resolutions mechanism with state entities

Goals

Goal #1 - Increase number of vending facilities

- A. The BVC will work with the NFBEI to draft a new Little Randolph-Sheppard Act and work with consumer groups to get it introduced and passed
- B. Explore private sector opportunities in non-Federal services
- C. Establish as a vending facility a commissary for food trucks
- D. Reach out to the Department of Corrections to explore opportunities for vending and inmate commissaries
- E. Contact the VA Hospital, do a survey, and exert priority to establish a vending facility
- F. Contact Dover Air Force Base and do a survey, and exert priority to establish at least one vending facility on that base and determine whether or not the BEP is entitled to unassigned vending
- G. File for arbitration to enforce the law when federal entities do not comply with the Randolph-Sheppard. Act

Goal #2 - Increase the number of operators to 10 within next 5 years

- A. Develop marketing and education plan(s) aimed at both potential sites and potential new operators
- B. Educate VR staff about the BEP in an effort to generate more referrals

Goal #3 - Maintain all current operators and increase income to the extent practicable

- A. Add annex locations to existing operators to increase income when feasible
- B. Increase the percentage of commissions from 3rd part
- C. Develop policy that requires operators of future new vending facilities to self operate the majority of the business

Goal #4 - Change the Little Randolph-Sheppard Act during the next legislative cycle (Jan – June 2019)

- A. Connect with legislators to find sponsors
- B. Educate the public, blind community, legislators, and other groups (Governors Advisory Council, VRAC, NFB, Blind Sight, Lions Clubs, Employment First)
- C. The BVC will identify a lobbyist to assist in the effort to amend the law

- D. Draft the new law to expand entities covered

Goal #5 - Outreach and Educate the Public in general

- A. Create new brochures
- B. Create new promotional products
- C. Speak to various groups and organizations
- D. Get on a local radio program
- E. Develop public service announcements
- F. Create a website
- G. Use Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

Goal #6 - Modernize Operations

- A. Utilize emerging technology on vending and other equipment
- B. Diversify products to include non-food items
- C. Develop a long-term budget to replace older equipment
- D. SLA and individual operator will access the businesses to determine poor performing sites and relocate equipment as appropriate
- E. Put signage on all machines that include contact information for the operator rather than SLA
- F. Work with 3rd party vendor to identify potential sites for micromarkets
- G. As new opportunities become available, evaluate to determine appropriateness of a micromarket

Goal #7 - Create a system whereby operators are treated as independent entrepreneurs

- A. Develop policy whereby operators file monthly reports and submit only set aside payments and pay their own expenses
- B. Explore how operators can remain on state retirement without current cumbersome process
- C. Create policy whereby operators can negotiate their own 3rd party contracts and teaming arrangements
- D. Review and revise all operating agreements
- E. Streamline paperwork for BEP staff