**Business Enterprises Program Report**

**January 2024**

**Vision:** The California Business Enterprises Program (BEP) is the preferred food service of choice. This self-employment option expands the economic opportunities for the blind while providing an enjoyable experience for the customer. The program’s advances affirm that people with disabilities are integral to the social and economic success of our world.

Below are significant updates that have occurred since the last Blind Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting.

**BEP Staffing**

In December, Brandon Birchell has been appointed as the new Office Technician (OT) at the BEP Central Office, marking his initiation into State service. We anticipate his professional development in this role. In the same month, Frances Volk retired, Susanna Bishop, Central Operations Manager (SSMI), and Matt Buller, Location Development Officer (LDO), provided notice of their departure to different State agencies.

To address the vacancies in the Central Office, Luis Rodriguez, with extensive experience in the BEP’s Northern Field Office, has been transferred over to the role of Central Office Manager (SSMI). He will be overseeing both offices temporarily until a suitable replacement is found for the Northern Field Office. As of January, the BEP Central Office is going through the selection process to fulfill the Location Development Officer and the Budgets and Reporting Analyst roles.

The BEP Northern Region Business Enterprise Consultant (BEC), Melissa Solorio provided notice of her departure to a different State Agency. We are searching for qualified candidates to satisfy the BEC vacancy positions and the Northern Region Office Manager (SSMI) vacancy position.

The BEP Southern Field Office (SFO) has completed the selection process to fill one Staff Service Analyst (SSA) and selected Jose Mendez effective December 15, 2023. The SFO is still understaffed with one Office Technician vacancy since September 1, 2023. We are in the process of reviewing applications for the second time and planning to schedule interviews in next couple of weeks.

The Southern Field Office handled seven requests for public records this quarter.

The Northern Field Office handled nine requests for public records this quarter.

**Location Announcements, Awards, and Selections**

October 21, 2023 – January 19, 2024

**Awarded Locations:**

Satellite location 891: EPA Building, was awarded to Jessie Lopez.

Interim location 813: Westley and Enoch Christoffersen (Turlock) Roadside Rests, was awarded to Anthony Szi.

Interim location 1025: Valley Wells Roadside Rest, was awarded to Gloria Blanco.

Interim location 1035: California Health Care Facility and the Stockton Training Facility, was awarded to Barbara Moore.

**Pending Selections:**

Satellite location 697: CalPERS and CalVCB

Primary location: theUnited States West Coast Marine Corps (USMC) Regional Garrison Food Services, Department of the Navy, USMC.

**Procurement Section Overview**

October 21, 2023 – January 19, 2024

* 7 pieces of equipment totaling $26,383.27
* 18 Vending Machines $172,349.00

 Procurement total for all equipment is $198,732.27 for this period.

**BEP Training**

The new BEP Training Program is ready to roll out since the beginning of the year. The BEP Training Officer presented all training program pre-requisites at the Blind Field Services quarterly meeting in October 2023.

**Other Key Activities**

BEP hosted a Statewide Vendor Training Conference in Sacramento from November 3-5, 2023, for our current vendors. This is the first training conference the program has held since 2019. Twenty-nine vendors attended the event in total. The conference began with The California Restaurant Association providing an overview of the SERV Safe exam and proctor the exam for fifteen vendors. We had a packed agenda of guests from across the food service industry presenting on various topics. The National Association of Blind Merchants provided a presentation on national issues of interest that affect the future of the BEP program. It was a successful conference that offered a good variety of information for all our vendors.