**Business Enterprises Program Report**

**February 2025**

**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 Overview**

**Central Office:**

The BEP Central Office still needs to fill the Training Officer vacancy to achieve full staffing. The program is currently reviewing applications for this critical role for the third time and expects to schedule interviews in the upcoming weeks.

**Northern Field Office:**

In November 2024, Carlene Guzman returned to BEP as the Northern Field Manager, after completing a two-year limited term role at another Department.

As of November 2024, Daniel Bertsch transferred to another State agency, vacating one of two BEC positions within the Northern Field Office. The Program is actively recruiting to fill this vacancy and expects to complete interviews in the upcoming weeks.

The Program is actively recruiting to fill the open Office Technician position and expects to fill the position in the upcoming weeks.

The Northern Field Office has a SSA procurement/audit vacancy, and we anticipate recruitment to begin in February.

**Southern Field Office:**

The Southern Field Office (SFO) has completed the selection process for the

Staff Services Analyst (SSA) vacancy, and selected Maritza Jimenez effective November 18, 2024. Maritza is a recent UCLA graduate and is quickly learning her roles and responsibilities. On November 20, 2024, Office Technician Maisha Garner returned from an extended medical leave and is quickly resuming her OT duties.

To date, the BEP Southern Region is fully staffed, and previously pending tasks are now being completed.

**Public Records Requests Overview**

The Northern Field Office processed one request for public records this quarter.

The Southern Field Office did not receive any requests for public records this quarter.

**Location Announcements, Awards, and Selections Overview**

November 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025

**Location Announcements:**

* None

**Awarded Locations:**

* Interim Location, 760: West Sacramento Mail Processing Center, United States Postal Service – Awarded to Mark Lindsey

**Pending Selections:**

* None

**Procurement Section Overview**

November 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025

* 2 pieces of equipment totaling $9,231
* 34 Vending Machines totaling $303,938

 Procurement total for all equipment is $313,170 for this period.

**BEP Training Overview**

The Training Committee met with BEP staff on January 16, 2025, and discussed the future of the BEP training program, along with the planning of the next annual training conference for current BEP vendors. BEP has reviewed applications and soon will be scheduling the top candidates for interviews as we look for a qualified individual to fill the Training Officer position. The program appreciates the patience of all the stakeholders involved while it works diligently to fill this critical position. BEP training will resume once a Training Officer is onboarded.

**Other Key Activities**

BEP hosted a Statewide Vendor Training Conference in Sacramento from December 13-15, 2024, for our current vendors. This was the second training conference the program has held since the conferences were temporarily paused from 2019-2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We had a packed agenda of guests from across the food service industry presenting on various topics. Additionally, there were a multitude of educational presenters for our vendors such as Empower, the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, and the National Association of Blind Merchants. It was a successful conference that offered a good variety of information for all our vendors.

The RSA 15 Report was submitted before the December 30, 2024, deadline. There was an overall increase in gross sales and vendor earnings from the prior year. This can be attributed to many locations seeing an increase in business when compared to prior years impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The RSA 15 Report reflects 52 vendors operating locations as of September 30, 2024. This decrease from 55 in the prior year is due to the resignation, retirement, or loss of 3 vendors.

**Federal Employees Ordered Back to the Office—What It Means for BEP Businesses**

An executive issued memo has directed federal agencies to return their employees to the office “full-time.” The Office of Personnel Management instructed federal agencies to revise their policies, emphasizing that employees are expected to “work full time at their respective duty station.” These changes are set to take effect within the next 30 days.

Why It Matters**:** The return of federal employees to the office could significantly impact convenience services operators in federal buildings and surrounding areas. Increased foot traffic and a more consistent presence of employees may drive higher demand for vending machines, micro-markets, and other convenience services, creating opportunities for growth and revenue recovery for our BEP vendors.