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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STATE SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

January 4, 2018

Dear Ms Jess Hopeman:

The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B) is pleased to present its 2017 Annual Report. The SRC-B is a volunteer group appointed by the governor of Minnesota to provide advice to Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB), a part of the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

This report is produced pursuant to federal law, Section 105(c) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which calls for each state rehabilitation council to prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner of the Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration. This report highlights the efforts made and accomplishments realized by the SRC-B during Federal Fiscal Year 2017 as we continued to focus our efforts on carrying out the requirements for the SRC-B as set forth in the Rehabilitation Act.

The SRC-B enjoys a productive and positive relationship with SSB. We are continuing to strengthen our relationship with other entities in Minnesota, including the Governors Workforce Development Council. Helping Minnesotans, who are blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind find and maintain meaningful employment is a complex and demanding endeavor. The rewards, however, are great, both for individuals benefiting from SSB services and for all Minnesotans.

We take our responsibilities seriously and are dedicated to improving the lives of Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind through improvements in the delivery of employment, educational and independent living services. Our members work hard and receive support from the blind community. In the coming year, we look forward to an energized council which includes our newly appointed and our experienced members.

We appreciate your support of our efforts and look forward to continued service to you.

Sincerely,

Steve Jacobson, Chair



- MINNESOTA -State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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Letter from the Chair

Letter from the Chair Steve Jacobsen, Council Chair State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind 2200 University Avenue West, Suite 240 St. Paul, MN 55114 November, 2017

The Honorable Mark Dayton Office of the Governor 130 State Capitol, 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Dayton:

As can be easily seen from the rest of this report, the past year has been a busy one for the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and for Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB). It has been packed with both challenges and successes. Our council has actively worked to overcome the challenges and help with the successes.

We have seen 94 of SSB's customers officially employed during the past year, and there were others who had not been employed long enough by the end of the fiscal year to be included in that number. The bottom line is that over 100 blind people are employed now and paying taxes who were still looking for jobs a year ago. Even though finding employment is generally the goal,

it does not tell the full story. Many customers, especially those who lost vision recently, need to learn the various alternative techniques of blindness that enable one to cook and handle other household activities independently.

This investment in the future of these high school and other students will yield positive results.

Strong performance on the job also requires that one be able to travel independently as well as reading and writing effectively. These are all part of the services provided by SSB, through Adjustment to Blindness Training, to prepare its customers for successful employment.

Over 4,100 seniors who have recently lost their vision were served during the past year. This number continues to increase rapidly because of the rising number of seniors in our population, and it is anticipated that this number will continue to increase over the next decade. It was not many years ago when serving 3,000 seniors seemed like a distant goal. Handling this increasing number represents both a success and a challenge.

We have seen the continuing expansion of "transition programs" to bolster the skills of students who are just starting their journey toward taking an active place in society. This investment in the future of these high school and other students will yield positive results in a few years.

While these are certainly results for which SSB is responsible and deserves credit, I am proud to say that the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind played an active role in each of these areas. We have an active committee which works with the Senior Services Unit and another very active Transition Committee which addresses the

needs of students. All of our committees deal to some degree with issues relating to employment by being active in the goal setting process, looking at challenges faced by blind persons on the job, understanding the

Letter from the Chair

particular difficulties relating to the employment of blind persons who are members of minority groups. And the training and employment of persons who are DeafBlind.

There are always challenges as well, and we have tried to play a constructive role in overcoming them. Our Goals and Priorities Committee along with our Needs Assessment Task Force work closely with our other committees and SSB to set goals and spotlight areas where a little more effort can yield meaningful results. Fortunately, concerns that are raised by our council are generally shared by the agency which allows us to work together to develop solutions that will more likely succeed.

Our job is made easier by a good working relationship with the agency we are advising. This is not something that I take for granted. It is sometimes our job as an advisory council to take positions that might be seen as critical by the agency we advise. Just as important, it is our job to understand the parameters within which the agency must function so that we can advocate for realistic changes. During the past year, we have requested and received detailed presentations at our council meetings from each section of the agency to better understand how they work. A **Pre-employment Transition Services Blueprint** document, which outlines specific approaches to the provision of services to transition-aged blind students, has been reviewed by our council and we have provided input. That document is getting national recognition as a model for providing these services under the new federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This law mandates that 15% of the budget be allocated to these programs without providing a great deal of guidance, so Minnesota's blueprint is being seen as a model for other states to follow.



Back Row: Ken Rodgers, Rob Hobson, Kristina Petronko, Barb Ziemke, Steve Jacobson, Ron Woelfel, Jennifer Dunnam, Pat McGee, Carol Pankow, Steve Eggen, Jeff Thompson

Front Row: Gloria LaFriniere, Carolyn Cherry, Rose Ann Faber, Michelle Dornan-Vickery

In the following pages, I believe you will see that we have been successful in fulfilling the responsibilities you have assigned to us through your appointments. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve in this capacity and for your support of the services provided by State Services for the Blind.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Jacobson, Chair, State Rehabilitation Council — Blind

Letter from Director Pankow



Dear Governor Dayton:

Once again, in 2017 it has been both an honor and a pleasure to work with the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC-B). The council has worked diligently to ensure that Minnesotans who are blind, DeafBlind or experiencing vision loss have the tools and training they need to find work and live independently. As a whole and through its committees, the council has provided invaluable assistance and guidance in improving processes, evaluating outcomes, and advocating for standards and regulations that better serve our customers.

Investing in a Bright Future

One area of focus that deserves highlighting is the council's commitment to creating a better future for young blind, DeafBlind, and low vision Minnesotans who are preparing for work and life on their own. Many of our council members gave generously of their time to volunteer at SSB events connecting students with blind, DeafBlind and low vision adults. These council members talked about their work, the steps they took to get where they are, and the skills that proved most useful for success. Council members also contributed valuable feedback as we shaped our blueprint for services for students aged 14 to 21.

Employment

At each of its meetings the Council tracked our progress in the number of successful employment closures achieved by our customers. By the end of ffy17, there were 94 more blind, DeafBlind and low vision Minnesotans working, contributing to every sector of Minnesota's economy, and using their skills and experience in every region of our state. We continue to be proud of the quality and diversity of jobs obtained by our customers. Here are some of the numbers from last year that demonstrate the scope of our customers' employment success:

- \$21.62 average wage for full-time
- \$20.10 average wage for part-time
- \$23.60 average wage for metro area workers
- \$26.35 average wage for the five customers who found work in computing
- \$27.82 average wage for the 5 customers who found work in training and library sciences
- \$34.38 average wage of the five customers who found work in counseling and social service specialties
- \$34.18 average wage of the three customers who found work in postsecondary education

Serving Seniors

The Senior Committee of the SRC-B played an important role in strengthening the services we offer to seniors losing vision by taking on several key projects. You'll read more about these in their committee report. Specifically, I would like to highlight and thank them for their assistance in developing a survey that will go out to consumers who have received training and other services through SSB. The survey results will guide us in evaluating and adjusting our services to better meet the changing needs of this expanding demographic.

Letter from Director Pankow

Now, 4,167 more seniors have tools and training to expand independence and enhance their safety. More than 700 of these seniors talked with one of our Community Partners who were trained in our Aging Eyes Initiative. This means that seniors in the early stages of vision loss received support and low vision tools from a member of the community trained by SSB, and our own staff could focus their time and expertise with consumers who needed more skilled attention. With two assistive technology trainers working exclusively with seniors, a daily living skills trainer also on staff, and expanded training options from vendors, in 2017 we also were able to provide more seniors with indepth instruction for doing more with less vision.

Access to Print

The council and the Communication Center Advisory Committee closely followed our work to ensure that the printed word is not a barrier to education, employment, or independence for any Minnesotan with a print related disability. One council member was key to helping us develop a plan, in partnership with graduate students from St. Thomas, for preserving thousands of tactile graphics – raised-line drawings created by hand that are used in textbooks and other materials.

The council also followed our progress as we developed and launched an online searchable catalog of the more than 8,000 books produced in braille and audio at the Communication Center. Council members joined us as we thanked longtime Radio Talking Book (RTB) Supervisor Stuart Holland, and in welcoming Scott McKinney who began working as the new RTB supervisor this last summer.

The council closely followed our day-to-day work in insuring that our customers got the materials they needed in the format that worked for them. Here are some of the numbers that added up to accessibility in 2017:

- 394,695 print pages, transcribed into audio through RTB and Audio services
- 433,906 braille pages sent out to students
- 24,906 hits on the RTB online stream
- 432,463 connections to NFB-NEWSLINE and Dial-in News

Other Notable Work

The council offered guidance and feedback in all areas of our work. In addition to those noted above, I extend my thanks to the council for the following:

- Supporting our efforts to insure that the Business Enterprise Program continues to provide opportunities for viable small business ownership for qualified Minnesotans;
- Supporting our cross-agency commitment to provide work experience for paid and unpaid interns and student workers;
- And offering important feedback that led to a full revamp of our website.

Looking Ahead

State Services for the Blind is fortunate to have the guidance and counsel of an engaged, informed and committed council. I look forward to another year of meeting together to make sure that we offer nothing short of excellent customer service, so that blind, DeafBlind, and low vision Minnesotans can contribute to our state's success, and fully participate in our thriving communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Pankow

Mission and Vision

Mission

The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, working on behalf of Minnesotans who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind is charged with ensuring that State Services for the Blind is in compliance with mandates under Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act. The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind strives to ensure that Minnesotans, who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind receive the best possible services under the law.

Vision

The SRC-B will be a catalyst for the emergence of State Services for the Blind (SSB) as a national leader in the development, implementation and continuous improvement of quality service programs and education for persons of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind throughout our state.

The SRC-B, in conjunction with SSB, will strive to ensure people who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind are made aware of the full array of services available to them, whether aimed at adjustment to blindness training, independent living, employment or education.

The SRC-B will work to make employers aware that people who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind have tremendous abilities for employment today and must be included in planning for the workforce of the future.

It is our vision that persons who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind will enjoy full equality of opportunity, education, complete integration in the life of our communities and appropriate employment that fulfills each individual's needs and aspirations. The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind strives to ensure that Minnesotans, who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind receive the best possible services under the law.



A Profile of Alycia Howard

When Alycia Howard addressed the council in June of 2017, it was clear to those present that she had both poise and enthusiasm. Alycia, who began at Metropolitan Community and Technical College this fall, has an interest in public speaking. "I look for opportunities to develop those skills," Alycia reflects, "I like having the challenge."

Alycia is one of the customers in SSB's transition program which serves students between the ages of 14 and 21. She was invited to the council meeting, in part, to share her experience in an intensive workshop for students called "Blind and Socially Savvy." The training, sponsored by SSB, teaches soft skills like networking, introducing yourself, dressing professionally, and handling a range of professional and social situations. Learning these skills can make the crucial difference when competing for jobs, meeting with a college recruiter, or navigating complex social situations.

"We learned a lot of skills that are going to be helpful in college, or in a job setting, or in a lot of situations," Alycia said of the Blind and Socially Savvy training, "For instance, we learned how to start a conversation with someone we don't know. We also learned techniques for keeping a conversation going, and ending a conversation gracefully."

Alycia noted that the training offered practical guidance on everything from shaking hands, to fine dining etiquette, to reining in nervous habits. "We learned about leakage cues, for instance," Alycia said with a laugh. "A leakage cue is one of those unconscious habits you do when you're nervous. They can affect how people see you, and if you are aware of them, you can manage them better," she explained.

Alycia also shared with the council that she began working with SSB when she was a high school Sophomore in Blaine. "SSB provided technology and training when I was in high school," Alycia noted, "And all along the way I've had the chance to participate in programs that SSB has offered. It's given me, and many others too, a head start on all the skills we'll need in the future, and that has been a tremendous opportunity." After high school, Alycia attended the Academy Plus program at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) and Adjustment to Blindness training at Vision Loss Resources (VLR). Both programs offered opportunities to gain skills for living independently and navigating college and work successfully.

The Transition Committee of the SRC-B works with SSB staff to set goals and develop programs for students. These programs provide students, like Alycia opportunities to gain confidence, build skills, and get real-world experience to make a successful transition from high school to life and work.

Alycia is interested in the fields of Communications and Music Therapy. Among her work opportunities, Alycia worked as a classroom assistant in the music therapy program at MSAB. "To be able to teach kids was amazing," Alycia told the council, "I gained a lot of skills, and because it is something I'm interested in pursuing as a career, it was a great chance to learn firsthand what it would be like." Council members were impressed by Alycia's energy and commitment, and appreciated hearing from a consumer in SSB's Transition Program.

Communication Center Committee Report

Committee Charge

The product of this committee consists of reports to the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind containing specific strategies for increasing and improving Communication Center services as well as a summary of the accomplishments of the past year. During FFY 2017 the Committee met three times to receive updates and offer input on the projects, staffing changes, and other ongoing work of the Communication Center.

The effectiveness of this committee is greatly enhanced by extremely active participation of Communication Center section supervisors and managers.

Listed below are highlights and accomplishments of the Communication Center and this committee in FFY 2017:

 Support the Needs of youth in Minnesota Schools. The Communication Center continues to provide braille and audio textbooks to blind students through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Education. This reduces the need

for school districts to provide this kind of support for their blind students directly and increases the efficiency of service by creating one-time materials common to multiple school districts. The Inter-agency Agreement with the Department of Education — two year document was renewed and revised. The Agreement

During this past year, 58 students were served and 433,906 pages were provided to students.

increased the funding by \$25,000 per year. So now the Communication Center will receive \$575,000 each year for a total of \$1,150,000 for two years.

Two additional items have been added to this document.

- 1) SSB will explore utilizing 3D image production to provide 3D materials from established computeraided drafting files.
- 2) Tactile illustrations will be produced in a timely manner by SSB staff according to the BANA (Braille Authority of North America) guidelines and standards for Tactile Graphics 2010. All new K-12, college and adult requests for braille will be transcribed into UEB. This is a major change that has taken place. On top of this UEB code change, new software was needed to reflect the changes within the UEB code. Duxbury 11.3 was purchased and volunteers and staff have had to learn this new braille software. Braille 2000 was also uploaded to the new version of Braille 2000 V2-UEB and is currently being used.

During this past year, 58 students were served and 433,906 pages were provided to students.

• Audio Services — The Communication Center continues to provide audio and electronic

transcription for Minnesota youth and adults. Provision of these services helps ensure blind students and workers have equal opportunities to succeed in education and employment. This past year, 73,990 unique audio pages were transcribed, 34, 917 audio pages were redistributed, and 17,057 E-text pages were produced.

- Radio Talking Book Through the Radio Talking Book, NFB-NEWSLINE, and Dial-In News, the Communication Center offers access to local and national newspapers, along with a variety of other literature. This past year, there were 24,898 hits on the RTB audio stream, 422,831 accesses to NFB-NEWSLINE, and 9,632 accesses to Dial-In News. Stuart Holland, long-time supervisor for the Radio Talking Book, retired this past September. The committee joins blind Minnesotans from across the state in thanking him for his faithful and excellent service.
- Professional Development To help ensure their skills remain up-to-date, Communication Center staff attended a number of conferences including Midwest Regional Braille Conference, National Braille Association, and the National Library Service conference.
- **Community Outreach** The Communication Center completed a new brochure to let individuals and agencies know of its services. Additionally, they continued to work on ways to provide print access to underserved populations. They have compiled a group of volunteers to record in Spanish, Somali, Hmong, and Russian. This effort was in part a result of an earlier special project of this committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy McGillivray, Chair

Members:

Kathy McGillivray, Chair, Amy Baron, Elizabeth Bruber, Mark Dahlberg, Catherine Durivage, Kristin Oien, & Ryan Strunk

SSB Staff:

David Andrews, Gwen Bighley, Brianna Holeman

Customer Satisfaction and Goals and Priorities Committee Report

Part I Committee Charge and Overview

This committee exists to carry out specific duties contained in federal regulations for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. These include:

- 1. Conduct a review and an analysis of the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with the functions of the Department of Employment and Economic Development Vocational Rehabilitation services provided within the state (except adjustment to blindness and technology services), and the employment outcomes of persons served.
- 2. In collaboration with SSB, evaluate the extent to which SSB achieved its goals and priorities, strategies used, and factors that impeded success and performance on the federal Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) Primary Indicators of Performance.
- 3. Jointly with other committees of the Council, and in partnership with SSB, develop and, as necessary, revise an annual statement of goals and priorities.

Committee Reports

Part II — Customer Satisfaction Survey Review

The Committee reviewed the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) results through March 31, 2016. Five survey items were analyzed to compare the results for years ending 3/31/14 3/31/15, 3/31/16, and 3/31/2017. While there has been some fluctuation in results, no significant changes have taken place from year to year.

SSB Customer Satisfaction Survey YE2014-YE2017 Summary Results

Summary	YE 3/31/2014	YE 3/31/2015	YE 3/31/2016	YE 3/31/2017
Q1 (was Q5): How satisfied are you with the time it usually took to get your answer	79%	88%	85%	89%
Q2 (was Q4): Satisfied that counselor (staff) understood customer's needs	85%	88%	88%	87%
Q3 (was QVR1): Satisfied that customer given enough info to make good choices on employment plan	83%	89%	85%	85%
Q4 (was QVR2): Satisfied that customer had an active role in decisions about services	89%	94%	92%	94%
Q5 Satisfied that services helped plan for/maintain employment	*	80%	81%	83%
Q11 (was Q1): Overall satisfaction with services provided	82%	88%	84%	86%
Q12 (was Q2): Extent to which services have met expectations	73%	83%	81%	80%
Q13 (was Q3): Comparison with "ideal" set of services	77%	85%	81%	84%

* = Question began to be asked in surveys beginning April 2014.

SSB's results on the Customer Satisfaction Survey are also computed by the Minnesota Department of Economic Development utilizing the Minnesota Customer Satisfaction Index (MnCSI). Simply put, this index summarizes overall satisfaction with services by applying a formula to the responses for Questions 11, 12, and 13 on the survey. Using the MnCSI makes it possible to compare the customer satisfaction ratings of SSB with those of other agencies in Minnesota and with industry in general.

Customers Served	Apr 15 – Mar 16	Jul 15 – Jun 16	Oct 15 – Sept 16		
Average MnCSI Scores	76.5	75.7	75.7	76.1	76.4
N size	210	213	218	222	233

The committee continued to track the questions about assistive technology that began to be asked on the survey in the year ending 2015. The data for the years ending March 2015, March 2016, and March 2017 are as follows:

Responses	2015 4 Quarters	2016 4 Quarters	2017 4 Quarters
Yes	72%	66%	65%
No	25%	31%	31%
Unsure	3%	3%	4%
DK/Refused	<1%	0%	0%
N Size	223	216	238

Q6 Have you received any Assistive Technology from State Services for the Blind? This could be hardware or software.

Q7 Think about when you most needed to use your Assistive Technology. How prepared did you feel to use the Assistive Technology when you needed it? Were you very well prepared, somewhat prepared, not very well prepared, or not prepared at all? (NEW VERSION STARTED APRIL 2016)

Responses	2015 4 Quarters	2016 4 Quarters	2017 4 Quarters
Very prepared	46%	37%	60%
Somewhat prepared	37%	42%	32%
Not very well prepared	12%	8%	5%
Not at all prepared	4%	11%	3%
DK/Refused	1%	2%	1%
N Size	161	142	154

Q8 How useful do you think the Assistive Technology equipment that you received will be/was in helping you meet your vocational plan goals? Do you think it will be very useful, somewhat useful, not very useful, or not at all useful? (NEW)

Responses	2015 4 Quarters	2016 4 Quarters	2017 4 Quarters
Very useful	75%	76%	75%
Somewhat useful	22%	16%	20%
Not very useful	1%	2%	1%
Not at all useful	2%	4%	1%
DK/Refused	1%	1%	2%
N Size	161	142	154

The members of the committee read the verbatim comments elicited by the following two survey questions to determine if trends or issues specific to SSB were apparent. No significant trends were identified from this data.

- Q9 In your opinion, what is/was the most important part of the services you received from SSB?
- Q10 If you could change one thing about the services you received, what would you change?

Committee Reports

Part III — Progress on FFY17 Goals and Priorities

FFY17 Goals and Priorities Review

Goal #1: Jobs, More Jobs, Better Jobs

PRIORITY 1.1:

Increase competitive integrated employment outcomes by 3% from the previous year.

STRATEGIES:

- Annual review of customer base with counselors and develop targeted plans for those in "ready for employment" status.
- Complete revision of intake process including materials, training for staff, and incorporation of an intake overview training for customers.
- Ensuring applicants fully understand the benefits of competitive integrated employment.
- Work with Department of Human Services (DHS) in the Olmstead interagency workgroup focused on blending and braiding funding that allow access to extended services for the long term supports needed for customers desiring employment.
- Active participation in the State interagency workgroup promoting the Governor's executive order to improve hiring persons with disabilities in state government to 7%. SSB provides technical assistance to HR Directors, Accessibility Coordinators, IT staff in accommodations, reviews software and hardware issues, and makes recommendations to the Governor and his staff of steps that can be taken to improve hiring.

Results Summary

This first priority was not realized in FFY17. Four of the five strategies were met as outlined below; however, the interagency agreement with DHS is still in the process of being completed. The significant reason for not meeting this goal has to do with the on-going effort to secure clear, consistent, and accurate direction from our federal partners about how to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. As we started FFY17, our placement goal was 130. Not long into the year, we were informed we were unable to purchase services for an individual during the 90 day employment period prior to closing a successful case. This resulted in adjusting the goal to 80. We finished the year with 93 successful closures, a 14% increase from the adjusted goal.

- 1. Annual review of customer base with counselors and develop targeted plans for those in "ready for employment" status.
 - ✓ Through the team model, counselors, their supervisor, and their support team meet on a monthly or bimonthly schedule to review all customers on the caseload. Special attention is given when discussing those individuals in the ready for employment status.
 - ✓ The WDU employment team was assigned a special project where they evaluated all customers who were ready for employment, in employment less than 90 days, and in employment over 90 days. They assisted counselors with getting those customers moving through the process and into a successful employment outcome.
- 2. Complete revision of intake process including materials, training for staff, and incorporation of an intake overview training for customers.
 - ✓ All individuals entering into the vocational rehabilitation program at SSB are required to participate in an orientation to the program. This can be done individually or by group. In the metro, this activity is completed by SSB's intake counselor. In Greater Minnesota, each counselor completes their own orientation. The orientation is a scripted presentation, and all staff have been trained on the materials.

In FFY17, 100 individuals went through the orientation process resulting in 48 applications.

- ✓ Intake materials have been updated and all staff are using those new updated materials when conducting intakes.
- ✓ Training on the new intake process occurred in June 2016.
- 3. Ensuring applicants fully understand the benefits of competitive integrated employment.
 - ✓ As part of the intake process, emphasis is placed on competitive integrated employment. Individuals who are not pursuing competitive integrated employment are referred to other resources, including the Senior Services Unit, that can assist them in meeting their independent living needs.
 - ✓ Career counseling and information and referral services on competitive integrated employment is provided to individuals in subminimum wage and extended employment, as well as to youth seeking subminimum wage employment. WDU's intake counselor is responsible for providing this service to these individuals, consistent with the new 511 requirements.
- 4. Work with Department of Human Services (DHS) in the Olmstead interagency workgroup focused on blending and braiding funding that allow access to extended services for the long term supports needed for customers desiring employment.
 - ✓ Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is currently working with DHS on developing an interagency agreement between DHS, VRS, and SSB for providing services to those customers who require long term supports. SSB does not see the high volume of customers who require extended services that VRS sees, although the interagency agreement will apply to SSB.

- 5. Active participation in the State interagency workgroup promoting the Governor's executive order to improve hiring persons with disabilities in state government to 7%. SSB provides technical assistance to HR Directors, Accessibility Coordinators, IT staff in accommodations, reviews software and hardware issues, and makes recommendations to the Governor and his staff of steps that can be taken to improve hiring.
 - ✓ SSB continues to have an active presence on the State interagency workgroup.
 - ✓ An SSB employment specialist was instrumental in the development of the Connect 700 and Supported Worker programs, which encourage the hiring of people with disabilities in state government.
 - ✓ The SSB employment and assistive technology teams provide ongoing consultation and technical assistance to state government.

PRIORITY 1.2:

Increase the percentage of eligible individuals achieving employment outcomes from 55% to 70%.

STRATEGIES:

- Regularly analyze data of unsuccessful closures to determine trends, issues and opportunities.
 From that develop plans to mitigate those problems.
- Implement the new intake process so individuals have a clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all parties when entering the public vocational rehabilitation program.

Results Summary

This priority was not met for the reasons described above; however, both strategies were achieved as outlined below.

Strategies In Review

- Regularly analyze data of unsuccessful closures to determine trends, issues and opportunities. From that develop plans to mitigate those problems.
 - ✓ SSB hired a full time data analyst to begin looking at a variety of areas, including unsuccessful closures. We have found, for example, that individuals who are actively engaged during the first six months of eligibility are more likely to remain engaged and reach their vocational goal. As a result of that information, in addition to strengthened language in WIOA, SSB had developed strict policies around the completion of eligibility determinations and individualized plans for employment (IPEs) within the required timeframes.
- 2. Implement the new intake process so individuals have a clear understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all parties when entering the public vocational rehabilitation program.
 - ✓ By implementing our new intake and orientation process, we have been able to consistently provide complete and accurate information to interested individuals about all SSB services and vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in particular. The data of intake participants for the past year show that nearly fifty percent choose not to apply for services once they attended. We expect this to eventually reflect that those who do apply do so with the full understanding of their responsibilities in the VR program and as such will see less individuals who drop out and more who achieve their vocational goal.

PRIORITY 1.3:

Implement the primary indicators of performance under section 116.

STRATEGIES:

- Currently, SSB is unable to capture the data required under the section as some is not collected in our current system and other data is not available to us. After an audit of the Unemployment Insurance Program, the IRS made several recommendations about others accessing their data. SSB did not have an acceptable agreement unlike VRS general. SSB has been working with the central office Data Practices Administrator to secure the appropriate agreement to access this data.
- SSB is working with Title I, II, and III programs under WIOA in Minnesota to collaborate around securing other data for the performance accountability measures.
- Work with the development team and build tracking mechanisms into the new case management system set to launch June 2017.

Results Summary

This priority has been met. As of July 1, 2017, SSB has begun the data collection requirements for implementation of the six performance accountability measures outlined in section 116.

- 1. SSB has been working with the central office Data Practices Administrator to secure the appropriate agreement to access data required for the performance accountability measures.
 - ✓ SSB now has an approved data sharing agreement in place with UI and is able to receive State wage data. Currently, the federal partners are developing a national data sharing agreement so States can receive wage

data regardless of what state their customers work in. There are limitations with the available UI data, as individuals who work in nonprofits, are self-employed, or work for religious organizations or certain government entities may not appear in that database. In the summer of 2017, the federal partners released information on supplemental wage, which is a process for obtaining wage information directly from the individual if not available through UI. SSB is currently developing an internal procedure for obtaining supplemental wage from closed customers who do not show up in UI. This procedure will be completed by December 31, 2017.

- 2. SSB is working with Title I, II, and III programs under WIOA in Minnesota to collaborate around securing other data for the performance accountability measures.
 - ✓ SSB is working with the other Minnesota Title programs under WIOA to implement the sixth performance accountability measure, (Services to Employers) which requires States to choose two of the three options (penetration, repeat business, and retention with same employer). Minnesota chose to focus on penetration and repeat business. SSB's employment team is primarily responsible for tracking our activities in this area, and we are in the process of developing a tracking template by December 31, 2017.
- 3. Work with the development team and build tracking mechanisms into the new case management system set to launch June 2017.
 - ✓ The updated WF1 case management system launched on June 26, 2017, and ensures we can collect the information needed to report on these measures. States were not required to begin collecting data for the new measures until July 1, 2017; SSB has met that deadline.

Goal #2: SSB — Your Resource Within Reach

PRIORITY 2.1:

Increase the number of transition students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) from SSB to 100% of students identified by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) as blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind.

STRATEGIES:

- Identify and communicate with all transition aged students who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind who are not currently engaged with SSB so they are informed of services.
- Meet with Special Education Directors outlining SSB's Pre-ETS services and disseminating materials for distribution in their districts.
- Regular communication with teachers for Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) students through the BVI listserv about SSB opportunities for students so they can share this with families and encourage them to apply for services.
- Work with MDE to develop a data sharing agreement so student names can be shared with SSB.

Results Summary

We have not met this priority but have accomplished all four strategies. In FFY17, SSB served 136 of 183 students identified by MDE. This is 74% of the potential students. An additional 34 postsecondary students were provided Pre-ETS, resulting in a total of 170 students. While we did not meet the priority of providing Pre-ETS to 100% of students identified by MDE, we increased our outreach efforts and have served 13 more students in secondary school than the previous year.

Committee Reports

The following factors prohibit us from reaching our goal of 100%:

- While we are now able to receive the names of students from local education agencies through a data sharing agreement with MDE, there is no centralized source for all student directory information.
- We believe some students may be aware of our program but are not interested in receiving services at this time.
- SSB does not have the capacity to assign a counselor available to each school district. There are 553 school districts that potentially have students who could receive Pre-ETS, while SSB only has 15 counselors throughout the state.
- We believe some students have significant disabilities and their goals after graduation may be for independent living versus employment.

A large part of our continued outreach efforts is due in part to the monthly newsletter "The Spectacle," which is created by SSB's transition coordinator. Approximately 75 families receive the newsletter, in addition to over a dozen agencies and organizations.

Strategies In Review

1. Identify and communicate with all transition aged students who are blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind who are not currently engaged with SSB so they are informed of services.

✓ The biggest vehicle for this communication is the teachers of blind and visually impaired students. We post to their listserv, and the teachers then pass on the information to their students. We send information to the Regional Low Incidence Facilitators, who share with teachers. Finally, we keep an updated web site with current happenings and have shared resources with SSB's sister agency VRS, who has one counselor assigned to each school.

- 2. Meet with Special Education Directors outlining SSB's Pre-ETS services and disseminating materials for distribution in their districts.
 - The director of district 287 sits on the BVI advisory committee through MDE. Information is shared with her directly, and she passes it on to other special education directors.
- 3. Regular communication with teachers for Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) students through the BVI listserv about SSB opportunities for students so they can share this with families and encourage them to apply for services.
 - ✓ Weekly emails are sent to the BVI listserv. Each email corresponds to an element of BRIDGE, which is part of our framework for providing Pre-ETS. For example, an article about assistive technology would fit in the B (basic skills) section. After six weeks, an entire BRIDGE is built. Additional information is sent out about SSB programming and services. For example, information about "Career Connections" and "Blind and Socially Savvy" is sent directly to the list. SSB's newsletter "The Spectacle" is also sent to this list.
- 4. Work with MDE to develop a data sharing agreement so student names can be shared with SSB.
 - ✓ A data sharing agreement was included as part of the interagency agreement with MDE, which was activated in December 2016. The agreement allows student names to be shared with SSB.

PRIORITY 2.2:

Annually, 95% of Pre-ETS students served will participate in at least one skill building opportunity outside of the school setting each year.

STRATEGIES:

- Promote and continually revamp the newly developed year-round transition program with involved Community Rehabilitation Providers.
- Promote summer opportunities to students and families.
- Co-sponsor a two-week Summer Transition Program with the MDE for 12-16 students annually on a college campus with a focus on independent living skills, skills of blindness, technology training, employment, and socialization.
- Co-sponsor a Career Expo with the Minneapolis Community and Technical College where students meet professionals who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind so they learn about careers.
- Work with the DeafBlind committee to pair DeafBlind students with DeafBlind mentors.

Results Summary

96% of Pre-ETS students participated in at least one skill building, and all five strategies were successfully completed.

- 1. Promote and continually revamp the newly developed year-round transition program with involved Community Rehabilitation Providers.
 - ✓ The two vendors (Blind Incorporated and Duluth Center for Vision Loss) who have developed year-round pre-employment transition programs continue to reevaluate their programs and adjust to the changing environment and needs of the students and their families. For example, the Duluth Center for Vision Loss has more of a focus this coming year on assistive technology.

- 2. Promote summer opportunities to students and families.
 - ✓ Opportunities are promoted through our website, the parent list, counselors, BVI listserv, and "The Spectacle" newsletter, which reaches 75 families and over a dozen agencies and organizations.
- 3. Co-sponsor a two-week Summer Transition Program with the MDE for 12-16 students annually on a college campus with a focus on independent living skills, skills of blindness, technology training, employment, and socialization.
 - ✓ Planning begins in November 2017 for the June 2018 STP. This is a yearly summer activity that continues to evolve depending on the needs of the students. There is now a required work experience as part of STP to help students gain valuable work skills.
- 4. Co-sponsor a Career Expo with the Minneapolis Community and Technical College where students meet professionals who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind so they learn about careers.
 - ✓ This career centered event changes yearly. For FFY17, our monthly Career Connections workshop offered students the opportunity to meet professionals who are blind, low vision, and DeafBlind and employers in specified areas. Each month is a different focus of Minnesota Career Fields. A different professional is featured in each issue of "The Spectacle" and through the Blind Abilities podcasts.
- 5. Work with the DeafBlind committee to pair DeafBlind students with DeafBlind mentors.
 - ✓ The committee has established an activitybased mentorship program. The first mentorship activity was held in October at a Metro-based bowling alley. DeafBlind students were paired with a DeafBlind mentor for that activity. Additional activities are being planned for the future.

PRIORITY 2.3:

During their senior year, 100% of transition aged students planning to attend college will complete technology and travel assessments and receive requisite equipment and training prior to graduation.

STRATEGIES:

- Each fall counselors identify students that are graduating.
- Technology specialists complete a comprehensive assessment and procure required equipment.
- Training is provided to students to build necessary skills for entering college.

Results Summary

100% of transition aged students planning to attend college completed their assessments and received their equipment and training, if needed. There is currently no tracking mechanism in place. There is a calendar for counselors that outlines the activities that are related to students; this calendar is reviewed quarterly.

Strategies In Review

- 1. Each fall counselors identify students that are graduating.
 - ✓ Counselors identify these students at the beginning of each school year, so the student has time to complete assessments in technology and travel. This process is outlined in the transition calendar.
- 2. Technology specialists complete a comprehensive assessment and procure required equipment.
 - ✓ Students are referred to the Pre-ETS technology specialist, who performs a comprehensive technology assessment and recommends specific technology the student requires.

- 3. Training is provided to students to build necessary skills for entering college.
 - ✓ Students are provided training in technology, travel, and other adjustment to blindness skills when there is an identified need for that training.

PRIORITY 2.4:

Increase the vendor base able to serve DeafBlind individuals so they have better access to training for travel skills and placement (Target-5 vendors).

STRATEGIES:

- Work with Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to provide training to O & M instructors in Minnesota on training techniques for DeafBlind.
- Work with HKNC and current placement vendors/potential vendors regarding training techniques for DeafBlind.

Results Summary

SSB exceeded the priority of increasing the vendor base able to serve DeafBlind individuals. The goal was five vendors, and six vendors were provided specialized DeafBlind training. One of the two strategies was completed.

- 1. Work with Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to provide training to O & M instructors in Minnesota on training techniques for DeafBlind.
 - Six vendors participated in and completed the specialized training on August 27th and 28th, 2016
- 2. Work with HKNC and current placement vendors/potential vendors regarding training techniques for DeafBlind.
 - ✓ The training with placement vendors on placement strategies for DeafBlind individuals did not occur. The priority was on coordinating the orientation and mobility training, which took the majority of the year to complete.

PRIORITY 2.5:

Identify set DeafBlind counselors and provide them with specialized training.

STRATEGIES:

- Identify DeafBlind counselors and assign a DeafBlind caseload.
- Provide DeafBlind counselors with training at DeafBlind camp in collaboration with HKNC.
- Participate in the DeafBlind consortium of agencies, including presenting at conferences, panels, and policy projects.

Results Summary

SSB has met this priority and has completed two of the three strategies.

Strategies In Review

- 1. Identify DeafBlind counselors and assign a DeafBlind caseload.
 - ✓ There are two DeafBlind counselors who are trained in working with DeafBlind individuals and who are assigned a DeafBlind caseload.
- 2. Provide DeafBlind counselors with training at DeafBlind camp in collaboration with HKNC.
 - ✓ One DeafBlind counselor attended a threeweek training program with HKNC and obtained a certification in DeafBlindness.
- 3. Participate in the DeafBlind consortium of agencies, including presenting at conferences, panels, and policy projects.
 - ✓ One DeafBlind counselor participates in the DeafBlind consortium. She is actively involved in sitting on panels, attending and presenting at conferences, and working on specialized projects.

PRIORITY 2.6:

Increase outreach efforts within the five top minority communities in Minnesota so they are aware of SSB and have access to information about SSB by participating in 10 touchpoint activities throughout the year.

STRATEGIES:

- Work with Minority Outreach Committee to develop a list of networks that have not yet been targeted by SSB.
- Develop plan of contacts and participation in meetings, seminars, and conferences each year.

Results Summary

SSB has exceeded the priority of participating in 10 touchpoint activities. We had 21 touchpoint activities in the form of outreach events and presentations. These included the Hmong Resource Fair, the Somali Health Fair, The American Indian Health Fair, and the World Refugee Day.

- 1. Work with Minority Outreach Committee to develop a list of networks that have not yet been targeted by SSB.
 - ✓ We created a comprehensive list of organizations that serve minority communities; it includes about 350 listings, including faith communities (African American, Hispanic, Hmong churches, for instance, East African Mosques, and Buddhist temples etc.). We spoke to organizations such as the Center for Africans Now in America and the African Community Council. We established relationships with the Immigrant and Refugee Health Task Force, and the Cultural and Ethnic Communities Leadership Council. Finally, we presented to Latino, Russian, and Hmong seniors.

Committee Reports

- 2. Develop plan of contacts and participation in meetings, seminars, and conferences each year.
 - A plan is developed each year that outlines contacts and participation in activities. This year's plan included all the activities completed by the Minority Outreach Committee.

Goal #3: SSB-A Great Place to Work

PRIORITY 3.1:

Increase the numbers of individuals hired by SSB that are reflective of the customer base served by 3.

STRATEGIES:

- All SSB job postings have a preferred qualification of fluency in a second language.
- All individuals meeting the required qualifications and are flagged as "special population" defined by Human Resources are granted an interview.
- SSB will participate in the Connect 700 Hour program for the State of Minnesota.
- All postings are sent to consumer groups for broad dissemination.
- SSB will hire at least 3 student workers who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind.

Results Summary

SSB has met this goal. SSB has hired three student workers who have a vision loss.

- 1. All SSB job postings have a preferred qualification of fluency in a second language.
 - ✓ All job postings list a preferred qualification of fluency in a second language, including proficiency in American Sign Language.
- 2. All individuals meeting the required qualifications and are flagged as "special population" defined by Human Resources are granted an interview.
 - ✓ HR identifies individuals who are recently separated veterans (RSVs) and Connect 700 applicants. SSB interviews all qualified RSVs and Connect 700 applicants. HR cannot disclose when an individual has a disability.
- 3. SSB will participate in the Connect 700 Hour program for the State of Minnesota.
 - ✓ SSB participates in and promotes the Connect 700 program. One Connect 700 applicant was given a non-competitive interview.
- 4. All postings are sent to consumer groups for broad dissemination.
 - ✓ All job postings are sent to the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, the United Blind, and the Minnesota DeafBlind Association. We also send postings to the State Rehabilitation Council-Blind and the three Minnesota adjustment to blindness training centers.
- 5. SSB will hire at least 3 student workers who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind.
 - ✓ We hired three student workers in Audio Services, Radio Talking Book, and Senior Services. The Audio Services worker did data entry into the National Library Service database. The Radio Talking Book worker assisted with podcasting. The Senior Services worker supported the Aging Eyes Initiative.

PRIORITY 3.2:

Implement the accepted Assistive Technology workgroup recommendation by piloting CETT (Customer Evaluation of Technology and Training) by December 31, 2016.

STRATEGIES:

 No strategies have been developed for this priority

Results Summary

The assistive technology team is actively incorporating the CETT process with students in secondary education during their technology evaluations, and it is no longer considered a pilot program.

PRIORITY 3.3:

Implement strengths based meeting framework within the team model process by December 31, 2016.

STRATEGIES:

 No strategies have been developed for this priority

Results Summary

Training on the strengths-based meeting framework did not occur due to competing priorities, including an increased focus on Person Centered Planning. However, the team model continues to be used and fine-tuned.

Part IV — Primary Indicators of Performance

Insufficient data is available at this time to track SSB's performance under the newly enacted Primary Indicators of Performance.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Dunnam, Chair

Members:

Steve Jacobson, Margaret Klein, Pat McGee, Bob Raisbeck

SSB Staff:

Pam Gowan, Natasha Jerde, Andy Olson

We have been able to consistently provide complete and accurate information to interested individuals about all SSB services.

DeafBlind Committee Report

Committee Charge

This committee exists to support and advise SSB regarding its services to individuals who are deaf/ hard of hearing and blind/visually impaired. This committee will provide input to the Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee and the full Council for consideration in the development of annual goals and priorities in conjunction with SSB, and will monitor those goals and priorities throughout the year.

During the past year, our committee met most every month. Our main focus has been on employment and how to reach more DeafBlind students. For example, in December of 2016, we met with State Services' Transition Coordinator, Sheila Koenig, to discuss how the various programs aimed at transition aged customers can be adjusted to more effectively include those who are DeafBlind. The discussions were fruitful. At that same meeting Tou Yang, the newly hired Work **Opportunities Navigator for Transition Students** was introduced. Tou had limited experience with persons who are DeafBlind, and he welcomed the opportunity to learn about the related challenges. While some of the services needed by DeafBlind persons are specialized, it is important to include DeafBlind customers in all of SSB's programs, and having discussions both with Sheila and Tou moved toward that end.

The DeafBlind Committee also developed a "DB Mentor program" which attempts to pair DeafBlind students with DeafBlind adults who are successfully employed. This will be an on-going project. As a part of the "DB Mentor Program," it was decided to hold an event to engage DeafBlind students and their parents at Pinz in Oakdale. This event took a great deal of planning and was held on Saturday, October 7. It was a success, and it should be noted that several committee members served past the ends of their terms on our committee to help with this event.

The committee also reached out to representatives of the University of Minnesota's "Deaf Day" to develop opportunities for DeafBlind persons. In the future, this could allow perspective DeafBlind students to "shadow" other DeafBlind students who were attending classes at the University to experience life as a college student.

The DeafBlind Committee continues to monitor issues related to communication between DeafBlind customers and SSB to ensure that customers understand documents that are distributed by SSB and also that they receive documents in the most useful format.

It is certain that we have no shortage of projects for the coming year. Much of what was initiated last year will require on-going efforts, but we are up to the challenge.

Respectfully Submitted,

Molly Wezel-Peterson, Chair

Committee Members:

Sarah Carlson, Wendy DeVore, Rachel Eggert, Cathy Lyle, Chris Marble, Jamie Taylor

SSB Staff:

Lindsey Hanson, Katy Kelley

Employment Committee Report

Committee Charge

This committee exists to provide advice and propose strategies to increase the quantity and quality of employment outcomes for individuals served through the state vocational rehabilitation services for the blind system.

FY 2017 Meeting Dates

Due to various circumstances, the committee only met on May 16, 2017.

Review of Past Projects

At the May 2017 meeting, new members to the committee were updated on items the committee has been working on over the past couple years. Items included; strengthening client education on employment-related issues specific to persons with disabilities, developing a mentoring program for transition age youth, examining the reasons that might impact SSB's non-closure rate, reviewing the reorganization within the Workforce Development Unit (WDU) and the ramifications of the enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA).

We discussed the new performance measures SSB is evaluated against that were enacted as part of WIOA legislation. Performance indicators include:

- 1 and 2) employment rate at different stages after clients exit the program,
- 3) earnings rate,
- 4) attainment of education or vocational degree or certification,
- 5) skill attainment and
- 6) services provided to employers such as training, job placement or accommodation assistance.

Special emphasis is placed on services to youth and young adults with specific measures related to employment and education of transition age youth. In response to these new indicators, the WDU hired a Youth Coordinator to work with Junior and Senior High School youth on vocational issues such as exploring various career options, job shadowing, etc. In June as part of the youth summer work experience program, employed members of the blind community met with high school youth to discuss their experience as employed blind individuals.

SSB staff also provided committee members with an update on the Connect 700 hour program, which is a program to help individuals with disabilities obtain employment with the State of Minnesota. Under the Connect 700 hour program, if the individual is qualified, they receive priority in the hiring process. It is not a guarantee that they will be hired, but there must be a conversation to see if the person is qualified to do the job. The person then does the job for up to 700 hours as a training period. If the person works out, he or she can then be hired permanently. As of May 2017, one or two SSB clients have already been placed through this program.

In past meetings we had discussed the State of Minnesota supported worker program as an employment option for clients with multiple disabilities. The goal of the program is to help those that need more substantial support to stay on the job. In many cases persons in this program need a job coach with them in order to do the job. According to SSB staff members, it appears that this program needs additional organization at the State level before clients can be placed in the program. Based on this feedback, the committee put this initiative on hold for the time being.

Also, during the May meeting, the Youth coordinator provided an update on the transition program at SSB. He works one-on-one with students to determine what career area they are interested in pursuing and tries to match the student's interest with someone in the field to do job shadowing. He also works to find students internship opportunities. Much of the emphasis of WIOA is directed toward helping young people with disabilities gain employment related experiences at an early age, which is likely to translate into employment as an adult.

We anticipate returning to a more regular meeting schedule in 2018.

Respectfully Submitted, Michael O'Day, Interim Chair

Committee Members:

Scott Eggen, Rob Hobson, Ken Rogers, Dennis Siemer, Ron Woelfel

SSB Staff:

Natasha Jerde, Pam Gowan

The "DB Mentor program" attempts to pair DeafBlind students with DeafBlind adults who are successfully employed.

Senior Services Committee Report

Committee Charge

The Senior Services Committee exists to assist State Services for the Blind to improve and expand services to blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind Minnesotans who are not interested in employment. The majority of this group is seniors. These customers face significant barriers to independence, but they can benefit from services which help maintain or increase their independence. Activities include identifying unmet needs, recommending services necessary to meet these needs and identifying strategies to remove or reduce barriers to their independence.

The Senior Services Committee is thoroughly engaged with the Senior Services Unit. It provides fresh perspectives, advice and new project ideas at each meeting.

For the 2017 Fiscal year, the meetings focused on three projects:

Identifying barriers to white cane usage by seniors, providing feedback on the Senior Services Unit Training Effectiveness Survey and on creating an overview document which offers guidelines for selecting phones for seniors with low vision.

Identify barriers to white cane usage by seniors.

The Senior Services Committee formed a subcommittee composed of Ed Letcher, Judy Sanders, Pat Barrett and Jean Johnson to explore research methodologies which would facilitate identification of barriers to white cane usage. After evaluating multiple methodologies, the subcommittee chose, as a first step, to obtain funding for a focus group consisting of Orientation & Mobility instructors. Unfortunately, this funding did not materialize.

Committee Reports

As an alternative, the committee piggy-backed on to an existing Senior Services Unit survey that could accommodate questions concerning mobility. Once the survey is tabulated, the committee anticipates results will inform next steps concerning white cane usage by seniors.

SSB Senior Services Unit program training effectiveness survey

The Senior Services Unit was mandated to provide customer training at a higher level. The Senior Services Unit, in partnership with Mississippi State University, created a consumer participation survey which could give SSB feedback on the effectiveness of the Senior Services program. The feedback from the survey will be used to measure program effectiveness

The Senior Services committee invested much time and energy (2 committee meetings plus personal time) reviewing all 12 multiple choice survey questions. Over 95% of the committee recommendations were adopted and included in the survey. Committee members vetted each question for clarity, accuracy, ease of understanding and relevance. At member suggestions, an additional question was recommended and added to the survey. The question specifically targeted the digital talking book, Radio Talking book, NFB-NEWSLINE and Dial-In News usage by clients.

Phone Document

Great and relevant research on accessible phones for seniors with low vision was done as part of the 2016-17 Senior Services Committee projects. As a follow up to that project, a document gathering this research is now in draft form. The document describes guidelines for choosing a phone, types of phones available and examples of phones for each type. Once vetted, the document will be made available for general use. In addition, each meeting consisted of a report from Ed Letcher, director, Senior Services Unit, follow-up on previous agenda items and discussion and planning for current and future activities.

The committee is in the process of evaluating several project ideas for the 2018 Fiscal year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jean Johnson, Chair

Members:

Pat Barrett, Jean Christy, Rose Ann Faber, Pat McGee, Judy Sanders

SSB Staff:

Ed Letcher

Transition Committee Report

Committee Charge

This committee provides specific advice and counsel regarding services to transition-age youth (ages 14-21). This committee will provide input to the Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee and the full Council for consideration in the development of annual goals and priorities in conjunction with SSB, and will monitor those goals and priorities throughout the year.

Dates the Committee Met

The Transition Committee met on the following dates during FY 2016-2017: 10-07-16 / 12-02-16 / 1-26-17 / 3-23-17 (rescheduled for 4-06-17) 7-20-17 / 9-21-17

The following is a report on the 2 Priorities and Strategies that Transition Committee identified as relevant to their committee and the actions taken to support these goals.

Review of the Federal Fiscal Year 2016 (*FFY16*) *Goals & Priorities*

SECTION #1: Jobs, More Jobs, Better Jobs

PRIORITY #1.3:

Implement the workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS). (This new priority is a result of WIOA becoming law this past July and the emphasis on youth with disabilities who are transition students to better prepare for the world of work through a variety of activities.)

STRATEGIES:

1. Proposed: Identify and communicate with all transition aged students who are blind, visually impaired, and DeafBlind who are not currently engaged with SSB so they are informed of services available.

Transition Committee actions and activities that took place for FFY16-17:

- Transition Newsletter Continuation of newsletter called, "The Spectacle" which is produced five times per year. The newsletter is made available online via the SSB Website as well as the teacher list-serve. Efforts will be made to continue to send out hard copies and alternative formats to students and parents.
- STP Program (June 2017) & Summer Paid Work Experience
 - STP was held for 12 days in June, 2017. The students spent a full day at SSB and met with SSB staff and placement team members. The students participated in mock interviews with SSB staff.
 - Several students had work experience during the STP Program and job shadows.
 - Students were supported by SSB for paid work experiences after the program. (July – August, 2017)

- Transition Services State Grant Funding (2016-2017) - Blind, Inc located in St. Paul, and the Duluth Lighthouse for the Blind, located in Duluth, continued their state grant to fund the following:
 - Year-round Transition Services for Blind, Low Vision and DeafBlind students.
 - Statewide outreach efforts in providing informational seminars to professionals, teachers, parents and students.
 - Summer Transition & Employment Program Services.
 - Peer Mentoring Program.
- SSB Transition Coordinator. Sheila Koenig, who was hired for this position in 2015 continues to focus on the areas listed below:
 - Keeping in contact with current and new SSB Transition students.
 - Attending IEP meetings, building relationships with all the team players, meeting with all SSB Counselors.
 - Attending various conferences throughout the State (BVI, Council Meetings, etc.)
 - Coordinating and attending outreach activities that also include a variety of media formats and outlets.

SECTION #2: SSB — Your Resource Within Reach

PRIORITY #2:

All Blind, Visually Impaired, and DeafBlind Minnesotans are aware of and have access to information about SSB.

STRATEGIES:

1. Develop and implement marketing and outreach plan targeting Regional Low Incidence Facilitators and Special Education directions. Transition events that occurred FFY 2016-2017 and upcoming events

- Blind and Socially Savvy Three introductory sessions in 2016-2017 were provided and were well received and attended. More sessions will be provided this year with a Step Two focus. Students who completed Step One last year will be eligible to attend Step Two this year. Sessions will begin this April 2018. Date location and time are still to be determined. Step One will be offered again this year but the details are yet to be determined.
- Self-Advocacy and ProTactile (PT) Training SSB is sponsoring several workshops with John Lee Clark who is a DeafBlind consultant in providing self-advocacy and ProTactile training for DeafBlind students at MSAD. These workshops will begin in the fall.
- > Career Connections SSB is offering a new program called Career Connections. This is aligned with the Minnesota Career Paths which are divided into 6 sections. Every other month SSB will provide a workshop for transition students highlighting one section at a time. At these workshops employers and adults with a vision loss who are in the highlighted field will be invited to present. The first workshop was held on Monday, September 25th, 2017 and addressed Arts, Communication and Information Systems. Presenters representing employers included Walker Art Museum, MNIT (computer programming), and Hubbard Broadcasting. Blind persons employed in technical fields included Sam Jasmine, a local radio host, Ryan Strunk and Corbb O'Connor who work to make systems accessible at Target and US Bank Respectively, and Steve Jacobson who is a Data Quality Analyst at 3M Company.

- DeafBlind Youth Day October 7th, 2017. SSB DeafBlind Committee and members from the SSB Transition Committee partnered with the Minnesota DeafBlind project and DeafBlind Services of Minnesota in hosting a DeafBlind transition youth mentor bowling activity. This activity was for DeafBlind students between the ages of 14 to 21 and was held at Pinz Bowling Alley in Woodbury from 12 to 2pm. Pizza, ice breaker activities, and bowling were provided free of charge for attendees.
- PACER Workshops SSB has developed a contract with PACER to create outreach and training opportunities for parents and families. A workshop was held on October 10th, 2017 from 6 to 8:15 pm at the Bloomington PACER Center. This workshop covered the IEP process and SSB services. Barb Ziemke spoke about the IEP process and Sheila Koenig spoke about SSB services.
- Opportunities Fair February 25, 2017: State Services for the Blind hosted an Opportunities Fair on Saturday, February 25 at Fairview Community Center, 1910 County Road B West, Roseville, MN 55113 from noon until 4. This event provided an opportunity for Transition students to learn about internships, assistive technology, summer programs, and more!

Respectfully Submitted

Wendy DeVore, Chair

Members:

Betty Jean Kaufmann, Julie Kochevar, Rebecca Kragness, Kristin Oien, Dan Wenzel

Staff:

Sheila Koenig, Michael Newman

Vendor Outcomes Committee Rport

Committee Charge

This committee exists to support and advise SSB regarding measuring the outcomes realized by the recipients of training in adjustment to blindness and technology. This committee will provide input to the Customer Satisfaction & Goals and Priorities Committee and the full Council for consideration in the development of annual goals and priorities in conjunction with SSB, and will monitor those goals and priorities throughout the year.

During FFY2017, the Vender outcome and Measures committee continued to evaluate Survey results from SSB customers on their experiences with vendors. The committee accumulated the data for a full year, thus adding together all of the results at one time. This was done to ensure all vendors had the most accurate results. This ensured that more vendors met the reporting threshold so that survey data could be made available to the general public.

The survey is designed to reflect the very different training programs provided for Senior Services and Workforce Development customers.

The survey results were collected in quarterly reports covering 12 months of activity. These four separate reports better reflect the needs of each unit and provide information that is more accurate to the users of the reports. The reports contain extensive tables for each vendor meeting the minimum statistical requirements for meaningful results. Both of these reports are available in print, braille, audio, and on the SSB website so all customers, SSB staff, vendors, and the public have access to the results.

The data collected shows overall good customer satisfaction. There are still improvements to be made with the survey including working out some data collection bugs and posting the results of the survey. At the end of FFY2017, The committee made some significant changes to the survey structure. State Services for the Blind decided to only collect the survey data once a year. This would be in and near the month of April. Additionally; the Committee observed some areas where the customers were not being reached and thus not allowing them to have a voice of their vendor experience. The areas that were left out was the DeafBlind, and ESL. These groups had barriers whether they were not understanding either what the call was about, or were not being reached for their input. The DeafBlind population are not able to take phone calls, thus eliminating them from the survey results. The committee sat down and decided on some changes that needed to be made. State Services for the Blind will continue to send out braille notices of the surveys, and will set up interpreters for the DeafBlind population for those who need one to fill out the survey.

Additionally, there was a budget crunch which caused SSB to eliminate the Senior survey entirely. This was done for two reasons. SSB Senior Services Unit already has their own survey for their customers and we had a budget crunch. It was felt at this time the inhouse survey will best assist senior customers.

This year was the first time we had a vendor monitoring report. The vendors had a few areas for improvement, but over all the results were good.

Respectfully submitted, Robert P. Hobson, Chair

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