# Goals and Priorities Program Year July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019

## **State Services for the Blind (SSB)**

## FOCUS AREA: JOBS, MORE JOBS, BETTER JOBS

### Priority:

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

#### Strategies:

* Annual review of customer base with counselors leading to targeted plans for those in “ready for employment” status.
* Active participation in the Assistive Technology interagency workgroup as part of the Olmstead planning. Serve as the Olmstead lead for employment and assistive technology strategies that will make the State of Minnesota a model employer for persons with disabilities.
* Actively promote the Connect 700 and Supported Worker programs to SSB customers to help increase employment of people with disabilities in state government.
* The SSB Employment Team will meet regularly to review those individuals in ready for employment, in employment and in employment status for over 90 days and will work with counselor to ensure steady case progression.

### Priority:

Potential SSB applicants have an increased awareness of the vocational rehabilitation process including their responsibilities and intent to achieve an employment outcome.

Strategies:

* Continue using the new intake process, collect data and review in six months.
* Complete a full analysis of closures by October 31, 2018 to determine the impact on unsuccessful closures using the analysis from 2017 which was too preliminary to draw any substantive conclusions.
* Determine the viability of hiring a part time staff who is an East African language speaker to liaison and lead further community engagements with New Americans.
* After reviewing the analysis, implement strategies as needed.

Priority:

Improve the opportunity for individuals who are Non-English Language speakers to make an informed choice about whether there are SSB services that meet their blind, low vision, or DeafBlind rehabilitation needs.

Strategies:

* Determine the extent that language is a barrier during the SSB orientation and intake process for Non-English Language speakers in their fully understanding the concepts, requirements, and expectations of participating in the Vocational Rehabilitation or Independent Living programs and how to address that barrier.
  + Engage with the DEED New American’s Project for technical assistance
  + Review other states VR programs for best practices
  + Survey language interpreter vendors and ethnic community resources for ways to ensure that communication with shared meaning is achieved
  + Engage with community leaders from New American-focused organizations for input and guidance
  + Determine the viability of hiring a part time staff who is an East African language speaker to liaison and lead further community engagements with New Americans.
  + Based on the findings, develop and implement strategies to ensure Non-English Language speakers are provided with information that is complete, accurate, and understandable.

Priority:

Ensure that Non-English Language participants can effectively engage in and achieve their goals in either VR or IL program services.

Strategies:

* Research existing resources, entities, and programs, locally and nationally, for ideas on effective engagement with non-English Language participants
* Research methods for effective teaching and training to Non-English Language participants
* Develop a model for effective engagement, teaching, and training Non-English Language participants
* Implement a pilot of the model and assess its effectiveness

## FOCUS AREA-SSB-Your Resource Within Reach

### Priority:

Increase the number of transition students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) from SSB to 80% of students identified by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) as blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind. (Currently serving 120 of 183 students listed on the MDE Unduplicated Child Count Report 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.
* Regular communication with teachers for Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) students through the BVI listserv and targeted mailings about SSB opportunities for students so they can share this with families and encourage them to apply for services.
* Utilize the data sharing agreement with MDE to obtain names and addresses of blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind students and target mailings specific to Pre-ETS and services SSB can provide.

### Priority:

All Pre-ETS students will have required Pre-ETS activities identified.

#### Strategies:

* All potentially eligible students will have required activities identified on the Workforce One activity page.
* All eligible students will have required activities identified on the IPE.
* Promote and continually improve the year-round transition programs provided by Community Rehabilitation Providers.
* Promote the pre-employment transition services and activities to students and families by increasing the distribution of promotional materials.
* Annually review, update, and implement the SSB Pre-ETS Blueprint.

### Priority:

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.
* Travel instructors complete a comprehensive assessment of student travel skills and recommend training.
* Counselors and Assistive Technology Specialists will work with the students Individualized Education Plan team to discuss these strategies and the assessment results so a coordinated plan can be implemented.
* Training is provided to students to build necessary skills for entering college.

### Priority:

#### Provide services and training to customers and vendors to improve the employment outcomes for DeafBlind (DB) individuals.

#### Strategies:

* Focus on improving skills of vendors (state contractors) who are able to “directly” serve DB individuals.
* Work with HKNC and/or other professionals to train current and potential ATB trainers on specific techniques for DB individuals. ATB training areas of specific interest include technology and tasks of daily living, especially to include ProTactile techniques.
* Provide training to interpreters who frequently work with ATB vendors in Minnesota to improve on specific communication techniques, ex. ProTactile techniques and boundaries for DB individuals.
* Identify strategies to improve current transition services to address the specific needs of DeafBlind youth.
* Develop DB Foundational Skills document.
* Improve communication between DB Committee and SSB Transition Coordinator
* Include DB youth in the content of messages about Transition services such as video, brochure, etc.
* Increase awareness of the DeafBlind community by collaborating with the DeafBlind consortium of agencies and participating in community events such as conferences/awareness day, panels, policy projects, presentations, etc.

### Priority:

### Participate in 10 touchpoint activities throughout the year in order to increase existing ongoing outreach efforts within the five top minority communities in Minnesota so they are aware of and have access to information about SSB.

#### Strategies:

* Strengthen the connection with the Red Lake and White Earth VR Services Projects for American Indians with Disabilities.
* Each member of the SRCB’s minority outreach committee will make contact with at least two organizations in a minority community and report back to the committee to be shared with the SRC-B.
* Focus outreach efforts to locate more resources in the Somali community and the minority communities outside of the metropolitan area.

## FOCUS AREA: SSB-A Great Place to Work

### Priority:

SSB will actively promote a culture that celebrates inclusion and diversity.

Strategies:

* All SSB job postings have a preferred qualification of fluency in a second language.
* SSB will participate in the Connect 700 Hour program for the State of Minnesota.
* Work with the Minority Outreach Committee to develop an email distribution list of minority communities and communicate job openings to them.
* All postings are sent to consumer and professional groups for broad dissemination.
* Expand the Pre-ETS student worker program and develop opportunities in greater Minnesota.

### Priority:

Determine if the number of SSB employees of diversity leaving SSB is disproportionate to the number of employees of non-diversity leaving the agency.

Strategies:

* Establish a baseline from data starting in 2016.
* Collect and analyze data annually to calculate the numbers and review the reasons for SSB staff exiting the agency.