

# Goals and Priorities for SSB Services PY 2026-2027

The goals and strategies for Program Year 2026-2027 reflect what customers and partners shared through the annual Customer Satisfaction Survey and the 2026-2027 Needs Assessment Listening Sessions. They build on progress made in recent years while addressing areas where customers still want improvement—especially communication, timeliness, and equitable access to services.

## Goal 1: Enhance Customer and Counselor Communication and Follow-Through

Customers emphasized the importance of consistent updates, clear communication, and reliable follow-through. Some described delays or confusion about who to contact when their counselor was unavailable. Strengthening communication will help customers stay engaged and confident in the process.

### Strategies:

- Increase supervisory attentiveness to consistent follow-up and case status communication from counselors without relying only on survey data.
- During prolonged staff absences, ensure regular touchpoints with customers from a consistent alternate contact.
- Simplify paperwork and service navigation tools, especially in the broad adoption of accessible e-signatures as a first mechanism for approval from customers and Community Partners.

## Goal 2: Improve Access to Services and Training

Many customers said it took too long to receive training, technology, or equipment. Reducing wait times and expanding flexible learning options will make services more responsive and accessible across the state, including in rural areas.

### Strategies:

- Streamline internal approval and purchasing processes to shorten delays.

- Incentivize and encourage utilization of Community Partners to increase both in-person and virtual training opportunities.
- Reduce confusion among staff about the quick referrals and ability to use Community Partners to provide services in addition to in-house staff. Expand outreach in rural areas.
- Ensure equitable service availability across regions, especially rural areas and explore mobile or hybrid training models.

## Goal 3: Broaden Service Options and Consumer Choice

Customers want more flexibility in choosing providers and a clearer understanding of what services are available. Greater transparency and choice help people tailor services to their goals.

### Strategies:

- Expand the list of approved training and service providers.
- Support models that combine community-based and online services.
- Provide clear information to customers about service options, service limits, and funding options. (Clarity of communication at in-take)
- Review existing policies to ensure they reflect a customer-centered approach.

## Goal 4: Strengthen Counselor Expertise and Responsiveness to Customer Needs

Customers continue to ask for counselors who are well-versed in current technology and who can effectively support individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Ongoing professional development will ensure staff can meet these expectations.

### Strategies:

- Provide regular training on new and emerging technologies, including AI tools prevalent in the workplace, accessibility software, and modern workplace collaboration tools.
- Offer professional development focused on working effectively with DeafBlind individuals and others with varied communication and support needs.
- Encourage counselors to support a wider range of career paths, including self-employment and creative work.

- Include training that promotes awareness of different life experiences and perspectives, delivered in collaboration with community organizations.

## Goal 5: Support Employment and Career Development

Customers placed high value on help finding and keeping meaningful work. They also expressed the need for more support when changing careers due to vision loss. Building stronger employment partnerships and career guidance will help more people reach their goals.

### Strategies:

- Simplify approval processes for self-employment and nontraditional career options.
- Strengthen partnerships with employers to promote inclusive hiring.
- Provide follow-up support to help customers succeed and stay employed.
- Develop services for people adjusting to vision loss later in life.
- Increase access to internships, apprenticeships, and other work experiences.

## Goal 6: Modernize Program Structure and Policies

Customers and staff both noted that some processes remain cumbersome. Updating administrative systems and allowing more flexibility in funding and reporting will make it easier to deliver services efficiently.

### Strategies:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of all surveys and mass communications to customers and simplify and streamline surveys and communications.
- Allow more flexibility in how funds are used for technology, tuition, and housing.
- Update employment models to reflect hybrid and remote work realities.
- Continue developing accessible electronic tools for application and referral.

## Goal 7: Ensure Physical and Digital Accessibility

Some customers, particularly those who are DeafBlind, described physical barriers and limited assistive technology in reception areas. Making both physical and digital spaces fully accessible ensures equitable participation for everyone.

### Strategies:

- Equip reception and service areas with braille displays and communication tools.
- Conduct regular accessibility reviews of facilities and digital systems.
- Provide accessible communication options for customers with complex needs.
- Work with community partners and membership organizations to test and improve accessibility solutions.

## Goal 8: Share Successes and Build Public Awareness

Telling the stories of people who have benefited from SSB services helps raise awareness, strengthens partnerships, and increases confidence in service delivery leading to meaningful outcomes.

### Strategies:

- Collect and share success stories through newsletters, DEED publications, and social media.
- Feature at least one new customer story each month.
- Highlight collaboration with employers and training partners.
- Incorporate storytelling into program evaluation and outreach.