

**BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM
INTERESTED CANDIDATE**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the definition of 'legal blindness' for eligibility into the Business Enterprise Program?

Legal blindness, according to the Social Security Administration and Federal guidelines for the BEP, is defined as best corrected visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye; or a visual field limitation such that the widest diameter of the visual field, in the better eye, subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees.

2. How do I get started? Is there specific training to be part of the Business Enterprise Program?

Getting started is as easy as mentioning to your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor that you'd like to consider the Business Enterprise Program as your vocational goal. You should also review the material provided in the 'Guide to BEP' located on the www.bvis.in.gov webpage.

3. What paperwork and documentation do I need to be referred for the BEP Training Program?

Your referral should include a copy of your ID, most recent eye exam, and your high school diploma or equivalent. Your VR counselor may also request your resume, copies of any Certificates of Training or Certificates of Completion that are relevant. You may be asked to complete and submit a psychological evaluation and criminal background check as many BEP opportunities are in areas where only secure personnel may be permitted. Your VR Counselor can assist in determining the need for or obtaining these additional documents.

4. Tell me more about the training program timeline and classes.

The training program is to be conducted consecutively within an approximate twenty-week period. The program follows a prescribed curriculum in a combined format: online, in-person, and on-site. Topics covered include vending management, café operations, business structure and management, employee hiring and development, customer service, business processes and ServSafe.

5. What if I'm sick during the training program or need to arrange a doctor's appointment?

A trainee may have only two excused absences for the 6 week in-person and on-site training; the first twelve weeks of training are online and are to be completed as instructed. Trainees are expected to make every effort to attend and fully participate in all in-person classes and on-site training days.

6. When a Manager Trainee completes the training program, does one start right away to prepare for business or must they wait to see what site is acquired?

The time frame it takes from graduation of the program and beginning to operate a BEP location is not predetermined. BEP staff work diligently to publish new 'bids' and to successfully transition new trainees into opportunities. The Manager Trainee becomes eligible to 'bid' on BEP locations upon successfully graduating the training program.

7. Tell me more about the bidding process.

In accordance with promulgated rule 460 IAC 2-4-15, a bid is published through a BEP online Web-Portal which emails out any new programmatic information. Every effort is made to provide two to three weeks of time between the publication of a bid and its due date. During this time, it is possible for interested Managers/Manager Trainees to participate in a site tour. The entire bid process is covered in the promulgated rules that govern the BEP program and are available for review upon request.

8. Does the BEP program have sites throughout the state?

Currently the Indiana Business Enterprise Program is operating with approximately 30 Licensed Managers in 40 of the 92 counties, and 9 major cities in Indiana. There is always opportunity for growth, and the program is actively looking to expand.

9. When acquiring a site for the first time, is there help getting started?

After completing the BEP training program, all successful graduates are expected to be ready to get started. Once you've won a bid, you'll be assigned a Business Consultant, who will directly work with you and your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to assist in the transition process. This individual is your direct link within BEP, and it is their job to monitor, consult and provide guidance for better business practices. A mentor will also be available to you to guide you in the running of your business for approximately two months.

10. What does Vocational Rehabilitation provide to operators to start their first BEP site?

Funding for the first two-week ration of product is guaranteed. Depending upon your economic circumstances, other assistance with start-up expenses may be available to you; seek clarification from your VR counselor as they are the entity responsible for your case until final licensure in the BEP. Candidates may also consider start up business loans, obtaining credit for initial expenses, or utilizing the time between referral for the program and training graduation to build a saving account.

11. If accepting a site where relocation is required, is there help with moving expenses?

Depending upon your economic circumstances, assistance with relocation expenses may be available to you, though you should seek clarification and assistance in determining other resources and solutions from your VR counselor.

12. Do new or incoming Manager Trainees get assigned to a mentor already successful in BEP?

Yes. Additionally, trainees will have vast opportunities to get to know current BEP operators and develop relationships to enhance business knowledge and company growth during the training program. Trainees are also paired with a Business Consultant who can provide business and policy guidance.

13. Is the BEP operator self-employed, employed by the Business Enterprise Program (Randolph-Sheppard), or both?

BEP Licensed Managers are self-employed 'sole proprietors' owning the business name but working through a contracted bid under their state agreement.

14. Does the State Licensing Agency (BEP Office) offer any fringe benefits to the BEP operators?

Currently, Indiana does not offer fringe benefits to BEP operators.

15. What is an operator's obligation to the Business Enterprise Program once managing a location?

Once certified through the training course, a manager must successfully operate a location for 90 days in order to obtain your BEP manager's license. You must enter into a written agreement with the State Licensing Agency for the operation of a BEP facility. This agreement states specific program rules and policies in accordance with the BEP program. It will also contain requirements specific to your BEP location. Every BEP operator is assigned a Business Counselor/Consultant to work with concerning the BEP location.

16. Am I growing an equitable business to pass on to family?

No, as a BEP operator you will be operating your BEP location. However, when you retire or leave the program the location will remain a BEP location. The location will be assigned to another BEP operator at that time.

17. What is average income for an Indiana BEP operator?

The average income for Indiana BEP Licensed Managers is \$55,000.00; however, the median is about \$38,000.00 a year of net income.

18. How does Social Security work with this program?

Please speak directly to your Social Security case worker or Benefit Information Network Specialist directly regarding your specific case

19. What happens if a vendor needs time off for sickness or an accident?

In the day-to-day operations it is the Licensed Manager's responsibility to hire the appropriate staff to adequately perform the necessary duties and maintain the operational hours.

If it is foreseeable that a leave of absence is necessary and will be significant, the Licensed Manager should notify the State Licensing Agency immediately. Per the Promulgated rule, there are provisions for a leave of absence with prior written notice and approval for specific purposes. Please speak directly to your Business Consultant regarding this possibility and review the Promulgated rule directly for specific guidelines.

20. Can a BEP operator do this for as long as they want?

A BEP operator may remain in the BEP program if they are maintaining active participation in the daily management and operate of the location.