

**Business Enterprise Program  
Frequently Asked Questions  
Interested Candidate**

**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. Ensure that you meet all of the federal minimum qualifications by reviewing <http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/4901.htm>

**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' and this FAQ document located on the [www.bvis.in.gov](http://www.bvis.in.gov) webpage. Pre-requisite 'Business Basics' computer classes are also highly recommended for any potential candidate, a 5 course free package is offered by Hadley School for the Blind in collaboration with the National Industries for the Blind and can be found here: [http://www.hadley.edu/NIB\\_BB.asp](http://www.hadley.edu/NIB_BB.asp).

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

Your referral should include a copy of your most recent eye exam, your resume, and a copy of any Certificates of Training or Certificates of Completion that are relevant; including the Business Basics courses. It may also be applicable to complete and submit a psychological evaluation and criminal background check as many BEP opportunities are located in areas where only secure personnel may be permitted, your VR Counselor can assist in determine 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 a thirty week period. The program follows a prescribed curriculum where all trainees are expected to participate together during the week. There is a business casual uniform required for the training program. Trainees must wear khaki work pants and solid colored polo shirts. Training is from 8am until 3pm Monday through Friday with a one week vacation built in if the class is scheduled during the Holidays. Classes include Business Administration, Business Math using Excel, Customer Service Training, ServSafe and Business Writing. Interwoven into the classroom training are on-site training (OST) opportunities working with current Licensed Managers.

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

There is an attendance requirement for the training program, only three (3) total absences for the 30 week period are allowed. Trainees are expected to make every effort to attend and fully participate in all classes throughout the training program

**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. These BEP locations become available when a current BEP operator leaves a location or BVIS develops a new location. Many Manager Trainees find that they are employed within 6-9 months from the point of graduating the training class.

**7. Tell me more about the bidding process.**

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 available for review upon request. Multiple example bid packets and how to appropriately respond is covered during the training program.

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

Currently the Indiana Business Enterprise Program is operating with approximately 50 Licensed Managers in 40 of the 92 counties, and nine of the 10 major cities of 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 to get started?**

After completing the seven (7) month 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.

**10. What does Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provide to operators in order to start their first BEP site?**

Depending upon your economic circumstances, assistance with start-up expenses may be available to you, though you should seek clarification from your VR counselor as they are the entity responsible for your case until final licensure in 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?**

Indiana does not currently operate a formal mentorship program. 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 (BC) 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?**

An operator 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 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 \$44,000; however, the median is about \$34,000 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 for a period up to twenty-four (24) months, 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 as long as they are maintaining active participation in the daily management and operate of the location.