



BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

What is the Business Enterprise Program?

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) was created through federal legislation called the Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936. Federal and state statutes that govern this program provide a "priority" for blind vendors to operate retail food service businesses located in federal and state government buildings.

How Does BEP Work in New York State?

The program teaches you how to successfully manage a deli, vending operation, vending route, newsstand, snack bar or cafeteria. Program participants receive an interest-free, three-year loan to buy their initial product inventory. Once the business is up and running, a Business Enterprise Program specialist visits monthly to assist in business development and growth. Participants learn business math, labor and merchandise management, purchasing, legal requirements and customer service. Participants will also earn (through study and passing a test) the ServSafe® nationally accredited food safety certification from the National Restaurant Association.



Who is Eligible to Participate in the Program?

Any New York State resident who is legally blind or deaf/blind and is a United States citizen 18 years old or older may be eligible.

How Can Someone Become a BEP Participant?

For current New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) participants, contact your vocational rehabilitation counselor. If you are not yet an NYSCB participant, contact the New York State Commission for the Blind by phone, toll free, at 866-871-3000. You will be connected to NYSCB's district office. Tell them you are interested in the Business Enterprise Program when you call or include that information in the "Remarks" section when you fill out an *NYSCB Application for Services*.

VR and ILOB programming is funded, in part, with federal funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Education under VR Supported Employment Services, and the Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) programs. For purposes of the VR program, the federal VR grant paid 78.7% of the total costs of the program. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2021, the VR agency received \$24M in federal VR funds. These funds were matched at 21.3% from non-federal sources.

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