

BEP GUIDE FOR NEW VR CLIENTS



DEPARTMENT OF
ECONOMIC SECURITY
Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona



Arizona Business Enterprise Program



Welcome to the Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

The BEP was created following the enactment of the Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936, 20 USC 107 et. seq., as amended in 1954 and 1974. The act authorizes a person who is blind to receive training and then be licensed by the state licensing agency (SLA) to conduct specified activities in vending facilities through permits or contracts.

To become a licensed BEP operator, follow the 8-step process outlined in this guide. These 8 steps are a combination of BEP Policy and State regulations and contain details and an explanation of the process required to become a trainee. Each of the steps includes detailed tasks which are required to be completed.

If you are participating in a blind comp program, you should review your progress and the checklist regularly with your VR counselor.

Steps 1 through 4 are to be completed prior to acceptance into the training program.

Step 5 is the screening for acceptance into the training program.

Steps 6 through 8 are to be completed after acceptance into the training program.

Your VR counselor will be your point of contact throughout each of the 8 steps, and the BEP manager will be involved as a resource for information throughout all steps.

These steps require a candidate to show initiative, be organization, and engagement, skills crucial for a successful BEP operator. As a BEP operator you will be an independent business person who is responsible and accountable for your success, with the support of the VR Program. Your VR counselor will outline their expectations and the assistance they can provide, but you will be responsible for the completion of the process.

After Step 1 is completed, the next 3 steps can be completed in any order. Many require planning, or involve scheduling and preparation to complete.

Your VR counselor or the BEP Manager may provide guidance or updated information as needed. These steps may be updated from time to time, so please speak with your counselor or BEP about any changes.



Step 1: Introduction

STEP 1: Introduction (BEP Policy D., 2.)

a. Attend the Intro to Blindness Services and Resources (IBSR) workshop and visit two BEP facilities –OR– visit three BEP facilities (using the contact list provided)

If you attend the 5 day Intro to Blindness Services and Resources (IBSR) workshop offered through VR, you will need to visit 2 other BEP locations for a brief meeting with the manager of those locations. These visits can be scheduled with 3 different blind vendors on the contact list provided, and should be approximately 1 hour each. If you did NOT attend the IBSR workshop, you will need to schedule and complete visits to 3 different facilities.

b. Attend 1 APOC meeting

You are required to attend one meeting, but can attend additional meetings after that for information, to make contacts, or to better understand the committee and its function.

Most APOC meetings are held from 12 PM to 3 PM usually on the fourth Tuesday of each month. In January and July, all operators are required to attend these meetings, and they typically last from 8:30 AM to 4 PM on the fourth Tuesday of those months.

The schedule does vary around state holidays or other events, so please ask for the most up-to-date list of all calendar dates for upcoming APOC meetings.

c. Meet the BEP Program Manager

Schedule a meeting with the BEP Program Manager by calling (602) 774-9100. This meeting will be held at the BEP office located at 3425 E. Van Buren, Suite 102 Phoenix, AZ 85008.

The dress code for the meeting is business casual attire, and plan for the meeting to last approximately 60-90 minutes.

Please contact BEP at least 14 days in advance of when you wish to meet, and bring any questions related to the program with you.

d. Background Check completed to highest screening level possible (BEP Policy D., 3., c., i.)

i.) This step requires additional time and should be started as soon as possible in the process.

The criminal background check (CBC) can be sourced from any provider you choose, but must include the following screens:

- A full criminal history of all the states and counties in which you lived, including all of your previous addresses
This is a full lifetime screen, not for a specific limited period of time.
- The CBC should include a national criminal search (to a minimum of county level), sex offender search, terrorist watch list, and social security validation as a minimum.

Please note that there may be additional options available for verification of education, social media, military service, personal references, and more. However, please be aware that we are not requesting these options to be included, and your counselor will not be able to reimburse you for any additional options you may select.

Vendors that can be used to order your CBC include the companies listed below. If asked, please specify this is a consumer requested report for yourself as opposed to company ordering one for an employee.

BeenVerified.com
www.beenverified.com/

BackGroundReport.com
www.backgroundreport.com/

HireRight.com
(Free for basic, additional costs for what is needed for BEP)
www.hireright.com/applicants/

USSearch.com
(Free for basic, additional costs for what is needed for BEP)
www.ussearch.com/background-check?refer=5186

Intellius.com
(one of highest rated among employers)
www.intellius.com/background-check.html

BEP operators work in a variety of facilities, many in secure locations that which require a high level of clearance. While a spotless record is not a requirement, offenses like violent felonies, crimes against children, and others may prohibit you from working in some locations, and would limit your ability to advance within the program.

There is no drug screen requirement to become a trainee; however many BEP facilities are located in buildings that require a drug screen prior to being allowed to work in the location. Failure to comply or pass drug or background screens can result in your inability to operate a facility or site and may violate your operator agreement.

e. Credit Check completed (BEP Policy D., 3., c., iv.)

You can order a credit report from any of the major credit bureaus or through a 3rd party provider and the most popular source for this requirement is listed below. As with the background check, this step should be started prior to an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) being written.

The most popular source for a credit check is:

AnnualCreditReport.com
(FTC recommended – 1 free report per year)
www.annualcreditreport.com/index.action

Every US citizen is entitled to one free credit report per year as part of Federal Trade Commission standards. If you have ordered a credit report from this service or any of the major credit bureaus in the last 12 months, there may be a charge. You also can order a credit report from any of the 3 major credit bureaus (Equifax, TransUnion, or Experian) for a cost.

While there is no minimum credit score required, several factors or items on your credit report may be considered by the screening for training committee. If you plan on running a business with millions in sales and assets, you must be prepared to answer questions about any credit issues you may have had.

f. Assessments and Evaluations (BEP Policy D., 2., b.)

- i. Reading, writing, math comprehension**
- ii. Blindness related skills assessments (A/T, O&M, IL, other)**
- iii. Able to use Excel, MS Word and Email**

Your counselor will schedule your assessments, or they may be included as part of your comprehensive service plan. Once your assessments are completed, there may be instruction or services scheduled to prepare you for training. You will not need to provide a high school diploma, college degree, or any other certifications as a part of the BEP information; however, your counselor may request that information as part of other documentation in your plan. For the reading, writing, and math comprehension evaluation, you will be expected to test at a 10th-grade level or higher.

Step 2:

Application Process

Step 3:

Job Shadowing

STEP 2: Application Process

a. Complete application to the program

b. Other BEP involvement considered (BEP Policy D., 3., c., iii.)

If you have experience with BEP in other states, please provide the name of your counselor the state(s) that you were a vendor in, the dates of your involvement with BEP, the facility or facilities you operated, any contact information you have (consultant, program manager, other), and if you left that state(s) program in good standing.

Step 3: Job Shadowing (BEP Policy D., 5.)

a. Visits to 3 types of facilities totaling 40 hours of Job Shadowing

This is a step that requires considerable time and planning on your part and should be initiated shortly after Step 1 is completed. Use the contact list provided and make calls to various blind vendors to schedule job shadowing. You will be expected to spend a minimum of 40 hours of cumulative time in at least 1 cafeteria, 1 vending route, and 1 other type of facility. Please prepare a list of questions prior to each job shadowing visit to ask the vendors. You should plan on being in each facility for up to 8 hours on each visit, but the actual time will be determined by each vendor you meet with. At the end of job shadowing you will need to be able to document that you spent no less than 40 hours in the BEP facilities. To accomplish this, you may be required to visit multiple locations over 2 weeks as noted in the next section.

b. All shadowing visits completed in 2 weeks using the approved contact list

You will be expected to arrive on time and in work attire (business casual dress code, comfortable closed-toe shoes – no sandals or flip-flops) and be prepared to be active for the time there. Specific attire standards can be confirmed with the blind vendor when you schedule each visit. Job Shadowing visits should be completed in no more than a 2-week span. You will be expected to arrange transportation through your counselor, on your own, or with the help of others. There may be instances where you are job shadowing in a single location, but job shadowing on a vending route may require you to travel to multiple stops or locations throughout the day.

You will mirror the schedule and activities of the blind vendor on the job shadowing and should plan to be mobile and active for the duration of the visit. Most job shadowing visits are 4-8 hours in length and will include a variety of settings or locations. You will NOT be in a working role, your purpose on these visits is to gain an understanding and experience of the vendor's role, interact with and observe their staff, and/or participate as an observer in duties included in that location. You can discuss the details with each vendor when you schedule the visits. At the end of job shadowing you should have an understanding of what the facility manager does daily, what their role in the operation is, and the number of hours and commitment required to be successful.

Step 4: Qualifications (A.A.C. R6-4-303, D.)

- VR Client
- Legally Blind
- US Citizen
- 18 years of age

To be eligible for the BEP, the following qualifications must be met:

VR Client – it will need to be documented by your counselor that you are an active VR client.

Legally Blind - “Legally blind person” means a person who, after examination by an ophthalmologist, has been determined to have no vision or acuity or has a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye, with the best correction by a single magnification, or who has a field defect in which the peripheral field has been contracted to such extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees. The required documentation can be submitted by several methods.

US Citizen – Proof of citizenship and eligibility to work in the US will need to be provided prior to screening for acceptance into the BEP training program.

18 years of age – Your age will be verified using a government-issued ID, passport, original government-issued birth certificate, or similar.

If you have questions about any of these requirements, please discuss them with your VR counselor or the BEP Program Manager.



After Step 4: Steps 5 to 8

After Step 4:

Step 5: Screening Committee for acceptance into training (BEP Policy D., 6.) – is a screening group of 2 blind staff members, the APOC Chairperson, and the BEP Program Manager. You and your counselor will attend this meeting. Included will be a discussion of your completion of all parts of the 4 steps above, why you are interested in becoming a BEP operator, your work history, and more.

Step 6: Formal Training – is the actual training to become a BEP licensee/manager.

Step 7: Licensing – after training is completed, you and your counselor will attend a meeting similar to the screening committee and be licensed by the program.

Step 8: Licensing – after completion of training, a committee meeting is scheduled with the APOC, BEP staff, your VR counselor, and you. A review of your training, your attendance, and all information contained in Steps 1-6 will be reviewed. At that time you may be licensed or returned for more training. Once licensed, you are referred to as a “BEP Licensee” but your VR case remains open.

Step 9: Placement – when you successfully bid on an available facility you will move from being a “Licensee” to a “Licensed Operator.” After a designated period of time, your VR case is closed.

Contact information for Arizona BEP:



www.azdes.gov/rsa/sbvid/bep



(602) 774-9100



joycelineelliot@azdes.gov



For general information on Randolph-Sheppard programs and nationwide:

Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America

www.randolph-sheppard.org

National Association of Blind Merchants

www.blindmerchants.org

Department of Education

www.ed.gov

National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

www.nfb.org

National Council of State Agencies for the Blind

www.ncsab.org

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