

# Chapter 4: Placement

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Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Policy and Procedures Manual

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## Section I. Definitions

- A. **“Business consultant”** means an individual who can provide expertise in writing a business plan, planning, financing, and starting a business.
- B. **“Competitive integrated employment”** means work that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis (including self-employment). The work is performed in an integrated setting. The individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled. The individual is at a location where the employee with a disability interacts with other employees, other persons, customers and vendors to the same extent as other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.

In the case of an individual who is self-employed, the person is earning income comparable to others without disabilities performing similar tasks and in similar occupations with similar training, experience, and skills.

- C. **“Employment outcome”** means, with respect to an individual, entering, advancing in, or retaining full-time or, if appropriate, part-time competitive integrated employment including customized employment, self-employment, telecommuting, or business ownership, or supported employment that is consistent with an individual’s unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.
- D. **“Initial stock”** means the initial inventory of merchandise or goods necessary for direct resale or for further preparation for direct resale by an individual entering self-employment.
- E. **“Integrated setting”** means, with respect to the provision of services or an employment outcome, a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals are at a location where the employee with a disability interacts with other employees, other persons, customers and vendors to the same extent as other employees who are not individuals with disabilities and who have similar positions.
- F. **“Start-up costs”** means expenses for equipment for the business, initial stock and supplies, deposits for such things as rent and utilities, payment of rent and utilities for a maximum of four months, insurance, improving a site to suit the business, and licenses needed to open a business.
- G. **“Supplies”** mean those expendable items necessary for an individual in the day-to-day operations of a self-employment venture or other occupation. Examples are stationery and paper clips for a business office or wrapping paper for a gift shop.

## Section II. General Policy

- A. Placement services provided for persons who are blind or visually impaired shall be consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, and capabilities so that such persons may prepare for and engage in gainful employment. A program of services shall be designed with an eligible person to enable his/her placement in or retention of an employment outcome.
- B. Placement services may be provided directly by DBVI. Comparable services, such as those provided by the Vermont Department of Labor, will be used as appropriate and available.

## Section III. Types of Placement Services

- A. Placement usually includes one or more of the following activities:
  - 1. An evaluation of the person's job readiness is performed;
  - 2. The person is guided in development and execution of a plan for job-seeking activities by individual or group instruction. This may include notification of potential job openings, instruction in making job applications and proper conduct/appearance during interviews, and counseling regarding job retention skills;
  - 3. DBVI or contracted staff person accompanies the person to and assists with the interview;
  - 4. Employers are contacted, and jobs developed by a DBVI or contracted staff person;
  - 5. The counselor and person collaborate with other organizations involved in employment services;
  - 6. The counselor interprets employment trends and economic forecasts;
  - 7. Jobs are analyzed, and modifications recommended by the counselor or Rehabilitation Technology Specialist, employers or supervisors are consulted, advised, and trained as needed;
  - 8. A DBVI-designated person assists with or consults on removal of barriers to employment, including transportation; and
  - 9. Other activities similar to the above.

## Section IV. Criteria for Determining Achievement of an Employment Outcome

- A. A consumer may be determined to have achieved an employment outcome only if the following conditions have been met:
  - 1. The provision of services under the person's IPE has contributed to the achievement of the employment outcome;
  - 2. The employment outcome is consistent with the person's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice;
  - 3. The individual has maintained the employment outcome for a period of at least 90 days; and
  - 4. At the end of the appropriate period under 3 of this Section, the person and the rehabilitation counselor consider the employment outcome to be satisfactory and agree that the person is performing well on the job; and

5. The person is informed through appropriate modes of communication of the availability of post-employment services.

**Guidance – Achievement of employment outcome.**

*A letter outlining the criteria in Section IV (1-3) of this Policy (including the availability of post-employment services) shall be provided to the person for review. To fulfill Section V (4) the form letter must include a:*

- *Place for signature to indicate agreement, and/or*
- *Statement such as “If I don’t hear from you by \_\_\_\_\_, I will assume you are in agreement and will place your file in an “inactive status”.*

**End Guidance.**

## **Section V. Self-Employment**

- A. **Purpose:** Self-employment is a vocational option that may be considered in the wide array of employment options available to an individual. Such an option recognizes that self-employment is more prevalent in rural areas and that people with a disability tend to be self-employed at higher rates than people without a disability.

The decision to use DBVI funds to support start-up costs of a business will be based on a variety of factors including, but not limited to:

- viability of the business plan,
- potential for other financial sources, and
- counselor judgement.

If the business plan calls for additional funds beyond DBVI spending guidelines, the individual may use the potential of DBVI funds to leverage other funding and as collateral for establishing bank credit.

- B. **Development of a Business Idea:** An individual who wants to begin a business should take the responsibility for determining if he/she has the attributes necessary to operate a successful business. Individuals may participate in a variety of self-assessments activities which may include standardized business assessments, interviewing business owners, and other creative means of assessing their own business potential.

The counselor will have a variety of materials for the consumer to use to explore their own suitability for being self-employed. The individual should examine his/her own expertise and skill level for the particular business, ability to work independently, commitment and persistence, and other factors relevant to self-employment. Counselor judgement and data gathered should play important roles in this process since no single factor can determine whether an individual would succeed at a business.

- C. **Business Research and additional Services/Education:** An individual who wants to start a business needs to look at all the factors that can affect success. Research about the business potential helps the individual to learn about the market demand and the financial potential for the business. To assist with this process, the individual should, in all but the simplest endeavors, choose a business consultant. Business advice is available at no charge from community resources such as the Senior Corps of Retired Executives and the Small Business Development centers.

The DBVI counselor will be familiar with the relevant business services available through the Vermont Department of Labor, the Small Business Administration, and other community organizations. During this process the consumer and the counselor will determine the need for additional services, education, and resources that may help the individual in preparing to operate a business. The analysis may provide the individual with information that either helps to affirm the business idea or to begin exploration of other vocational options.

- D. **Writing the Business Plan:** Through the development of the business plan, the individual will research many areas including the type of product or service offered; the market potential; the competition; how the business will be organized and managed; expected personnel; and detailed financials including cash flow projections, balance sheet, and profit and loss statements. Capital financing needs and sources will also be outlined. A business consultant may provide assistance in developing the plan. When research is complete, the individual with the assistance of the business consultant, and DBVI counselor if necessary, will write the business plan.
- E. **Approvals:** The decision to proceed with the business will be made by the counselor, the individual, and the business consultant. Approval of DBVI's financial contribution to the plan will be based on the counselor's judgement that the individual is making an informed choice. If approval is not given, the counselor will give the individual a written notice of the appeal process and the availability of the Client Assistance Program.
- F. **Registration of the Business Name:** The name of the business must, if applicable, be registered with Vermont's Secretary of State's Office for the following reasons: the individual does not have ownership of the business if the business name is not registered; has no right to claim bad debts; is not able to establish a "track" record for future lending needs; and is not able to purchase business insurance.
- G. **Establishing DBVI Funding Levels:** DBVI may provide up to \$5,000 toward start-up costs for a business venture. In some cases, a business may be developed for less. Costs should be outlined before dollar amounts to be provided by DBVI are committed. DBVI's contribution should not be viewed as an "automatic" grant.

These guidelines can be adjusted to fit the needs of the individual entrepreneur. Standards for exception to the guidelines are: 1. The individual's resources and loans have been used to the maximum, and 2. There is consensus among the

business consultant, the consumer, and the counselor that additional funds are needed to ensure success.

Evaluation costs, consultant costs, and disability related accommodations shall not be included in determining start-up costs related to the spending guidelines for self-employment.

The level of DBVI's financial support will be determined using information provided in the business plan and the availability of support from other resources. The IPE shall be written to reflect this level of support. (See Funding Options at the end of the chapter.)

If the level of funding needed is greater than the available individual and DBVI resources for the business start-up, the plan may be submitted to other funding sources. Release of additional DBVI funds is contingent upon the receipt of these other funds. The potential of DBVI participation may be used to gain other support such as a business loan.

As the plan is implemented and the business develops, unanticipated expenses may arise beyond what is outlined in the IPE and the business plan. Consumer/peer loan groups will be encouraged as a way for the consumer to establish credit with local lending institutions and to receive on-going business support and training.

- H. **Follow up and Closure:** Since small businesses rarely yield large profits for many months, an individual entering self-employment will continue to receive follow up services for a minimum of 6 months after the new business has begun. There should be a clear understanding at the time the IPE is written of the criterion to be used for determining success. The criterion will be set on an individual basis and may be as simple as "income equals outgo".

DBVI funds, in addition to those committed for start-up costs, may be used for continued education and training if needed; of course, post-employment services may also be applicable. (See Chapter 17, Post-Employment Services.)

## **VI. Placement as a Post-Employment Service**

- A. Placement as a post-employment service may be provided to help a person maintain or regain a suitable employment outcome having achieved a rehabilitated status as the result of the Individualized Plan for Employment. (See Chapter 17, "Post-Employment Services", for more information.)

**(WORKSHEETS and other FORMS for self-employment will be included in this section as well)**