



The South Carolina Commission for the Blind

FY 2020-21 Budget Request



“Our mission is to provide quality individualized vocational rehabilitation services, independent living services, and prevention-of-blindness services to blind and visually impaired consumers, leading to competitive employment and social and economic independence.”

AGENCY INFORMATION – THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

- New common performance measures for all core programs were implemented under WIOA which created a major shift for the VR program. VR programs are no longer solely measured on how many consumers are placed into employment (quantity), but are now measured on quality employment outcomes. Wages are now reported for 6 and 12 months after case closure to ensure a career path, not just a short-term job. We are also required to report measurable skill gains and credential attainment such as diplomas, degrees, or specific vocational certifications. Quality careers are being achieved, but it does require cases to remain open longer and increased costs to achieve these training milestones. As a result, counselors at SCCB are experiencing larger caseloads. SCCB currently has 1,068 open cases.
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers is another performance indicator under WIOA. In SC we are measured on how many businesses we provide services to and how many repeat business customers we serve. The services provided to employers include information and support, workforce recruitment assistance, strategic planning, access to untapped labor pools, and training services. Currently there are only 3 Employment Consultants to serve the entire state.
- 15% of federal funds received must now be used ONLY for Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with a disability, ages 13 – 21, in an educational setting. SCCB has just 3 Transition counselors to cover the entire state to ensure that services in 5 categories are provided. Federal reporting mandates that only the delivery of Job Exploration Counseling, Work-based Learning Experiences, Post-secondary Exploration, Workplace Readiness, and Self-Advocacy Instruction can be charged to this 15%. This leaves 85% of our grant to serve all other youth and all adults.

AGENCY INFORMATION

- ▶ South Carolina Commission for the Blind is the primary agency serving Blind and visually impaired individuals, of every age, throughout the State of South Carolina.
- ▶ Providing specialized services to the Blind and visually impaired requires highly trained and credentialed staff.
- ▶ The 2018 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium completed by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research reported that out of 728,764 SC citizens living with disabilities, 145,928 have severe visual impairments, and many live in rural areas that SCCB does not have the necessary resources to reach.

AGENCY INFORMATION

Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services

Employment is the primary focus of all services provided to eligible consumers through the VR program. This includes counseling and guidance, educational programs, vocational training, and assistive technology.

Older Blind Services

This program provides services to SC citizens age 55 and older with severe visual impairments. Services include home management, technology, low vision devices, orientation and mobility instruction, and low vision clinics. All services are designed to assist these individuals in remaining as independent as possible in their own homes.

Children's Services

This program is 100% state funded and provides services to visually impaired children, ages 3 to 13. This program ensures that children have assistive technology available at home, not just in the school. Counselors work closely with families to provide resource information and to encourage self-sufficiency, confidence, and independence from a very early age.

AGENCY INFORMATION

Prevention

This program is 100% state funded and provides financial assistance for surgeries or eyeglasses to restore visual acuity, maintain independence, and gain employment. It also provides education on blindness prevention and eye safety across the state .

Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center for Employment

This residential center on the SCCB Columbia campus provides adjustment training in home management, braille training, assistive technology training, financial literacy, benefits counseling, vocational assessments, and psychological counseling. Depending on individual need, the program may last 16 weeks.

Training & Employment

Provides individual guidance on resume preparation, interviewing skills, on the job training, paid internships, assistive technology, and training. One result of SCCB providing educational assistance and assistive technology led to a consumer receiving a master's degree in Cyber Security and employment as an IT specialist with the US Army Cyber Command in GA, earning \$74,596 a year.

Services to businesses include sensitivity training, workforce recruitment, assistance with accommodations, and training services.

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ SCCB has seen significant increases in the number of referrals for Older Blind and Children's Services. Just 2 counselors are serving 130 children across the state. Older Blind has 5 counselors with caseloads of 70 or more, and a waiting list for the program.
- ▶ The 2017 Legislative Oversight Study recommended that SCCB request \$650,000 for the Prevention Program to reinstate the pre-2008 level of funding. Instead, we have requested an additional \$150,000 each year as we rebuild this program (It was eliminated during the 2008 recession). These services have assisted 133 individuals in restoring and maintaining visual acuity and independence.
- ▶ The Building Readiness for Individualized Development of Gainful Employment (BRIDGE) had its pilot program in October 2018. The 8-week program offers a combination of structured learning and on-the-job training, for consumers entering or re-entering the workforce. Three consumers from the first cohort achieved full time employment as a Care Taker (with Care For Life), a Family Support Specialist (with Homeless No More), and Machine Operator (with IFB Solutions). The success of this program led to a second group that recently graduated on November 14th. One is scheduled to take their state certification in Medical Billing and Coding, one is scheduled to complete the Customer Service and Sales Certification through the National Retail Federation, and the other is receiving advanced training in assistive technology.

CURRENT YEAR “NEW” FUNDING

- ▶ The agency received \$150,000 in “new funding” for SFY 2019/2020 for our Prevention program.
- ▶ The additional funding allowed the agency to provide 133 citizens services to restore vision or prevent vision loss. This included 60 surgeries for cataracts or retinal detachment.
- ▶ The agency received \$210,000 for salary alignment in the VR Consumer Services program for counselors, supervisors, and assistants only.
- ▶ SCCB’s HR staff has been working with the Department of Administration’s HR team to distribute the increases for counselors, supervisors, and assistants so that their salaries are comparable to similar positions at other agencies. These increases were distributed in December and this group of individuals are extremely grateful. However, other staff performing equally important duties are becoming discouraged since they feel unappreciated, and we are concerned this could lead to an increase in turnover and decreased morale in the agency.

RECURRING BUDGET REQUESTS

- ▶ Salary Adjustment — Recurring state dollars to better align SCCB salaries with state averages in positions that were not addressed last year. Increases to base salaries of 5% to 15% will be applied to all permanent FTE positions that did not receive parity increases in SFY 2019/20 -- \$350,000
- ▶ Additional Program Support Staff — Recurring state dollars to increase FTE's by 9 in order to reduce workloads, increase efficiency, and provide better quality services to consumers. \$353,600 (Average salary \$28,889 plus 36% for fringe. \$260,000 salary + \$93,600 fringe = \$353,600)
- ▶ Children's Services Program- Recurring state dollars to increase program service funds available to serve consumers. \$150,000
- ▶ Prevention of Blindness program — Recurring state dollars to increase operating funds for the program. \$150,000

NON-RECURRING BUDGET REQUESTS

- ▶ AWARE modifications — A one time request to upgrade the case management system to reduce data entry, ensure compliance with all federal documentation measures, improve reporting features, and increase accuracy. \$300,000

CAPITAL BUDGET REQUEST

- SCCB is requesting \$4,635,582 for replacement of the current HVAC system at the main campus in Columbia.
- The current system is over 20 years old and has become very unreliable and is not energy efficient.
- Repair technicians are called frequently, often more than once in a week, as temperatures in our offices and consumer dormitories fall or rise unexpectedly. Because of the age of the system it is difficult to repair.
- Temporary hotel accommodations have been made for residential program consumers during periods of HVAC repairs, creating disruption in services, extra challenges, and added expenses.
- Staff and consumers are often adversely affected by the inability of this system to heat or cool the 4 campus buildings.

EXAMPLES OF SCCB SUCCESS!



Successful Business
Enterprise Entrepreneur!



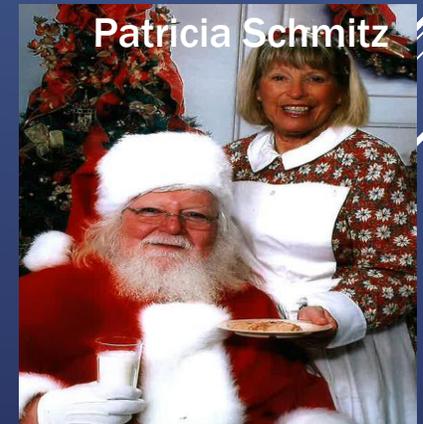
Attained Eagle
Scout Rank!



From homeless to
employed and self-
sufficient!



2019 Employment
Achievement
Award Winner!



Isolation to Mrs.
Santa Claus!

* Full stories included in your presentation binder.

WRAP-UP

- ▶ We would like to thank each of you for your time and attention in considering our funding requests.
- ▶ SCCB provides services to SC citizens who may otherwise be reliant on greater public support.
- ▶ Federal mandates require us to obtain just over a 20% match from the state of SC in order to receive all of our federal funding.
- ▶ Each of our programs offer specialized and personalized services that lead to independence, provide hope for the individual's future, and make them proud and honored to be a citizen of this great state.