

# STRATEGIC PLAN 20-23

**Dacia Johnson, MS, CRC**  
Executive Director

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Government is faced with difficult decisions that will create lasting outcomes in our state. The increased demand for services is compounded by limited resources, which results in a widening gap between the need for the agency's services and the availability of those services.

As the only statewide organization that provides specialized services to adults who experience vision loss, the Commission for the Blind recognizes its critical role in ensuring that Oregonians who are blind have access to the services and resources necessary for them to lead fully integrated and productive lives. As Oregon's economic landscape evolves and improves, more individuals with vision loss will require training and supports to get and keep work and to live independently.

Governor Brown's leadership and commitment to equity and inclusion drives policy and resource decisions for Oregon. Our vision statement is *Blindness without Barriers: A state of Inclusion for Oregonians with vision loss*. I am proud to lead our efforts to ensure every citizen is afforded the same opportunities of building a better life for themselves and their families.

Oregonians who are blind believe and expect that their career opportunities should in no way be limited by their vision loss. With the right training and tools, blindness is not a barrier to working in a job of their choosing. While Oregon's economy rebuilds and opens doors for both workers and businesses, Oregonians who are blind will continue to strive for service equity and access to training opportunities that allow them to build on their skills and prepare for tomorrow's careers and high-wage jobs.

Among those Oregonians entering retirement, there are a growing number of seniors experiencing age-related vision loss that affects their ability to perform everyday tasks safely and independently. With the independent spirit of Oregon guiding them, our seniors want to live in their homes and remain active in their communities, and vision loss need not prevent them from doing that.

Rehabilitation is not only the right thing to do for Oregonians who are blind, it is cost effective. Investing in education and prevention services as a long-term

strategy that will produce improved outcomes and reduce costs to the State over time.

Vocational Rehabilitation has consistently demonstrated a substantial return on investment. Individuals who are blind who successfully gain or retain employment repay the cost of their rehabilitation through the taxes they pay and by investing their earnings into the economy as consumers.

Seniors who are able to acquire skills they need to remain independent in their homes after experiencing vision loss can delay or avoid higher levels of assisted living and nursing care (that would otherwise be paid for at the expense of taxpayers). Maximizing independence and self-reliance are two core values that are deeply meaningful to Oregonians. The Commission for the Blind assists those who are blind in personally applying those values and principles in their everyday lives.

The Commission for the Blind is facing critical challenges in the coming years that will only be able to be fully addressed through the effective use of all available resources. These challenges include:

- Economic and public health challenges facing Oregon's citizens disproportionately affect individuals who experience disability.
- Federal legislation transformed the public workforce system, targeting youth requiring pre-employment transition services and services to businesses and their hiring needs.
- Aging citizens with vision loss who desire to age in place require training and support that allow them to remain independent in their homes and engaged in their communities.
- Society increasingly relies on technology to perform daily activities. Available adaptive solutions for individuals who are blind require training and support to ensure that people are able to access and operate these technologies and remain independent.

- There is a national shortage of professionals in specialized disciplines in the field of blindness rehabilitation, particularly Orientation and Mobility instructors who are certified to teach cane travel to individuals who are blind.
- Public policy has shifted to expect that individuals with disabilities will be fully integrated and working in jobs in the community at, or above, minimum wage.

Under the guidance and leadership of our Commission, this strategic plan will guide the agency to utilize resources effectively and efficiently to generate outcomes that benefit the greatest number of Oregonians who are blind. This strategic plan provides the framework to address challenges and opportunities through targeted resource allocation and informed decision-making to ensure that the agency is investing now to achieve Governor Brown’s vision of “Moving Oregon Forward.”



Dacia Johnson  
Executive Director

## INTRODUCTION

Oregon's Commission for the Blind was established in 1937 as a state agency and has evolved over time to be a consumer-focused organization with a citizen governing body appointed by the Governor. The agency receives policy direction and oversight from a seven-member Commission representing consumer organizations, educational institutions, ophthalmology and optometry professionals, business leaders and individual citizens. It is required that the majority of the seven members of the Commission are persons who are blind.

The agency operates under ORS 346.110 through 346.570 and through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, which designated the US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration as the principal federal agency to oversee the national vocational rehabilitation system throughout the nation, in collaboration with the US Department of Labor and other workforce entities.

The mission of the Commission for the Blind is to empower Oregonians who are blind to fully engage in life. We fulfill this mission by administering federally- and state-funded vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs that support Oregonians who are blind in going to work and living independently in their homes and communities.

The agency's core values include the following:

- Customer service – Dedication to meeting the needs of our clients and customers and to honoring our commitments;
- Leadership – Being open and authentic, and lifting others up while building consensus towards a common goal;
- Integrity – Meeting commitments, acting responsibly with public and personal trust and being accountable for words and actions;
- Professionalism – Embodying a commitment to quality and pride in our work;

- Operational Excellence – Striving for the highest quality and for continuous improvement;
- Innovation – Developing creative solutions and putting them into action; and
- Collaboration – Demonstrating an ability to facilitate, negotiate, build consensus, develop strong teams and empower others.

We are committed to ensuring that people have access to options and opportunities and are equipped with the tools and resources they need in order to make meaningful choices for their lives.

The Commission for the Blind has six major program objectives in support of our mission:

1. Helping Oregonians who are blind get and keep jobs that allow them to support themselves and their families;
2. Training Oregonians in skills related to dealing with blindness such as adaptive technology, white cane travel, braille, and activities of daily living;
3. Supporting in-school youth who are blind as they transition from high school to further education, training and employment through the provision of pre-employment transition services;
4. Helping those senior citizens and individuals who experience vision loss acquire essential adaptive skills so that they may remain independent in their homes and active in their communities;
5. Licensing and supporting business owners who are blind who operate food service and vending operations in public buildings throughout the state; and
6. Assisting Oregon businesses to attract and retain qualified job seekers who are blind as part of their overall hiring and diversity initiatives.

## KEY GOALS

The agency has a team of 66 full-time equivalent (FTE) specialized rehabilitation and administrative staff that work toward achieving the following key goals:

### **Engaged & Proficient Team**

Staff are open, accessible and accountable for the outcomes on behalf of the citizens of Oregon. We employ specialized professionals trained in blindness rehabilitation who understand their critical role and contribute toward our goals and mission. We seek to innovate whenever possible and utilize evidenced-based practices to deliver services. We believe offering professional training and continuing education for our staff is critical to our outcomes.

### **Effective Education and Outreach**

As a specialized agency, we are diligent in our efforts to ensure that Oregonians know who we are and what we do. Anyone who needs to access our services may reach us in a manner convenient for them. Any business or community partner understands that Oregonians who are blind are capable and competent members of the community who want the same things as their neighbors: a good job, a safe home and thriving community, access to healthcare and resources, and freedoms to pursue the life of their choosing.

The following core elements are integral to our success:

- Vision care and medical professionals appropriately refer qualifying patients to our services;
- Employers and hiring managers embrace recruitment of job candidates who are blind and contact us to provide adaptive technology to enable the individual to perform their role, reducing stigma and bias in the workplace and public; and
- Governmental and nonprofit social and service agencies are familiar with our services so they may engage with and rely on us when needed.

## **Operational Excellence**

We are intentional in our efforts to perform at the highest level to ensure the results on behalf of Oregonians who are blind. We map our workflow and processes and look for ways to measure and evaluate the work to ensure we are achieving the expected and desired outcomes. We identify collaborative opportunities and solutions to help us meet outcome-based performance measures, as well as meeting agency, legislative and funding requirements, and reporting.

## **Exemplary Service**

As the only specialized agency in Oregon, we set the bar high for service standards across programs. We care about understanding our performance in delivering the right services in a timely manner, while maintaining a focus on resource utilization to ensure services are being delivered in effective and efficient ways.

## **Successful Client Outcomes**

Our team of professionals develop customized plans for each individual to support their employment and independent living goals. Agency staff work to ensure clients are successful, which ensures that the agency is successful in meeting and exceeding the expectations placed upon us by the Governor, Legislative Leadership, our Federal Partners and Congress.

## **Governor's Vision**

Agency key goals align with the Governor's vision of "Moving Oregon Forward" to deliver services effectively and efficiently in the following areas:

### ***Healthy, Safe Oregonians***

Oregonians who are blind may be actively engaged in their community and enjoy participation in hobbies, recreation, civic engagement, or wherever their interests take them. Seniors who lose their vision and desire to continue living in their own homes can learn to be safe and independent in

their daily lives through specialized adaptive training designed for their own environment and life. This training is provided in the individual's home environment by the agency's specialized rehabilitation staff.

### ***Seamless System of Education***

As transition-aged youth who are blind prepare to exit high school, our Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who specialize in Transition work with the student, family members and the education planning team to develop a seamless transition into further post-secondary training and/or employment that will allow them to succeed in today's economy.

Oregonians who are blind work with the Commission for the Blind's specialized vocational rehabilitation counseling and teaching professionals to build and implement individualized plans for employment consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns and interests, as well as their informed choice.

### ***Thriving Statewide Economy***

Vocational rehabilitation at the Commission for the Blind is about helping individuals who are blind and want to gain or retain employment to acquire the necessary adaptive skills for full participation in the workforce. In order for Oregonians who are blind to thrive and have equitable access to opportunity, they also must be provided access to training, technology and other related vocational rehabilitation services. It is also critical that there be businesses who want to hire qualified individuals with disabilities in order to enhance and diversify their workforce. We are committed to being an agency that leads by example, having employees who are blind working at all levels of the organization.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

In order to be part of Oregon's vision to move Oregon forward and prepare for changes in the needs of our clients and demands on resources, the Commission for the Blind has developed five strategic priorities as a means to organize our work:

## **Strategic Priority 1: Service Equity**

Statewide Access: All Oregonians who experience vision loss, no matter where they live in Oregon, should have access to vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to reach their employment and independent living goals. Oregonians in rural and remote communities should know how to connect with our regional office locations to meet their needs.

Inclusive Service Delivery: All Oregonians should have equitable access to services regardless of race, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity. All communities should be represented in the clients that we serve and the individuals served should be a reflection of Oregon's population.

Increased Visibility: Anyone who needs access to services should know about our agency and the services we provide. As the only agency that provides rehabilitation and independent living services for individuals who are blind in Oregon, it is essential that all Oregonians who could benefit from our services know who we are and the services available.

Outcomes Measures Aligned with Priority:

Number of Clients Served  
Business Partnerships  
Timely Service Delivery  
Client Employment  
Client Independence

## **Strategic Priority 2: Aging Oregonians**

Aging Citizens: Oregon's citizens value independence. Oregonians want to live in a residence of their own choosing for as long as they are able. As Oregon's population increases, there are a growing number of seniors who will experience age-related vision loss. With access to specialized education, training and support, our seniors who experience vision loss may live safely and independently.

Aging workforce: As our workforce ages, we need to focus on ways to support older workers who experience vision loss so that they may maintain their employment and independence. Between advances in technology, non-visual strategies, magnification devices and safe travel skills, nearly every job task can be accomplished. In return, the state of Oregon will retain valuable talent for their workforce.

Outcomes Measures Aligned with Priority:

Number of Clients Served  
Business Partnerships  
Timely Service Delivery  
Client Employment  
Client Independence

### **Strategic Priority 3: Specialized Staff**

Recruitment and Collaboration: Due to the national shortage of Vision Rehabilitation professionals, we are steadily building partnerships with the accrediting bodies and university programs who provide training in these fields. To know firsthand who and where job seeking specialists are improves our recruitment efforts. This is particularly beneficial among the Orientation and Mobility specialists. Additionally, we offer internships and other experiential opportunities for many graduate students preparing to enter the field.

Staff Development: We support our specialized staff in obtaining continuing education. They keep current with the latest research and advancements in their field, optimizing the agency's ability to train and prepare clients for work and full independence. Investing in the opportunity to engage with other professionals in their field while maintaining their professional credentials is crucial of this effort.

Retention: As the nation's workforce has evolved, we can no longer expect to have employees who choose to work in the same job for their entire career. In order to retain our specialized skilled workforce, we have to be creative in offering compelling reasons for employees to consider long-term employment with our agency. Opportunities for professional development and growth and an engaging mission are compelling reasons that today's staff members remain,

fueling their passion for the work. We recognize that by retaining valuable staff and engaging them in their jobs we are able to complete the critical work of the agency.

Outcomes Measures Aligned with Priority:

Engaged Staff  
Team Member Proficiency  
Team Utilization

#### **Strategic Priority 4: Diverse Workforce**

Public Education: We seek out opportunities and venues in which to communicate the wide variety of jobs and roles that Oregonians who are blind perform each day in their lives, breaking through social stereotypes and misconceptions about vision loss.

Leading in State Government: We believe that building a more equitable Oregon begins with government leading the way with inclusive hiring practices that promote an inclusive and diverse workforce.

Businesses Partnerships: Our experience is that businesses that understand the capabilities of individuals who are blind are best positioned to hire the most qualified candidate for the job, irrespective of whether that candidate is blind. Hiring individuals who are blind is, quite simply, good for business.

Expanding Opportunities: The Business Enterprise Program is the most visible aspect of the work by the agency. Each day, vending facility managers demonstrate the capabilities of individuals who are blind in their food service and vending operations. Partnering with public agencies, vending facility managers in the Business Enterprise Program operate food service and vending businesses in public buildings around the state.

Outcomes Measures Aligned with Priority:

Business Partnerships  
Accessibility Compliance

BE Client Performance  
Client Employment

## **Strategic Priority 5: Open and Accountable Government**

Effective and Efficient Operations: We are committed to ensuring that all aspects of the organization are operating as effectively and efficiently as possible. As the responsibilities and duties of state agencies evolve, our capabilities and staff need to reflect the needs of the agency.

Information Technology: As we engage in updating our automated case management system that collects and reports all of the work of the agency, we are committed to creating technology solutions that optimize secure and effective reporting and tracking capabilities, while protecting and securing the private information of Oregonians who are blind.

Collaboration: Stakeholders inform the work of the agency in order to optimize the use of agency resources to meet the needs of Oregonians who are blind, resulting in improved employment and independent living outcomes.

Transparency: The work of the agency is conducted in an open and transparent way. Policy decisions are made in public meetings where stakeholders have an opportunity to provide their input and stay informed.

Outcomes Measures Aligned with Priority:

Team Utilization  
Spending to Budget  
Strong Internal Controls  
Client Satisfaction

## Delivering Outcomes

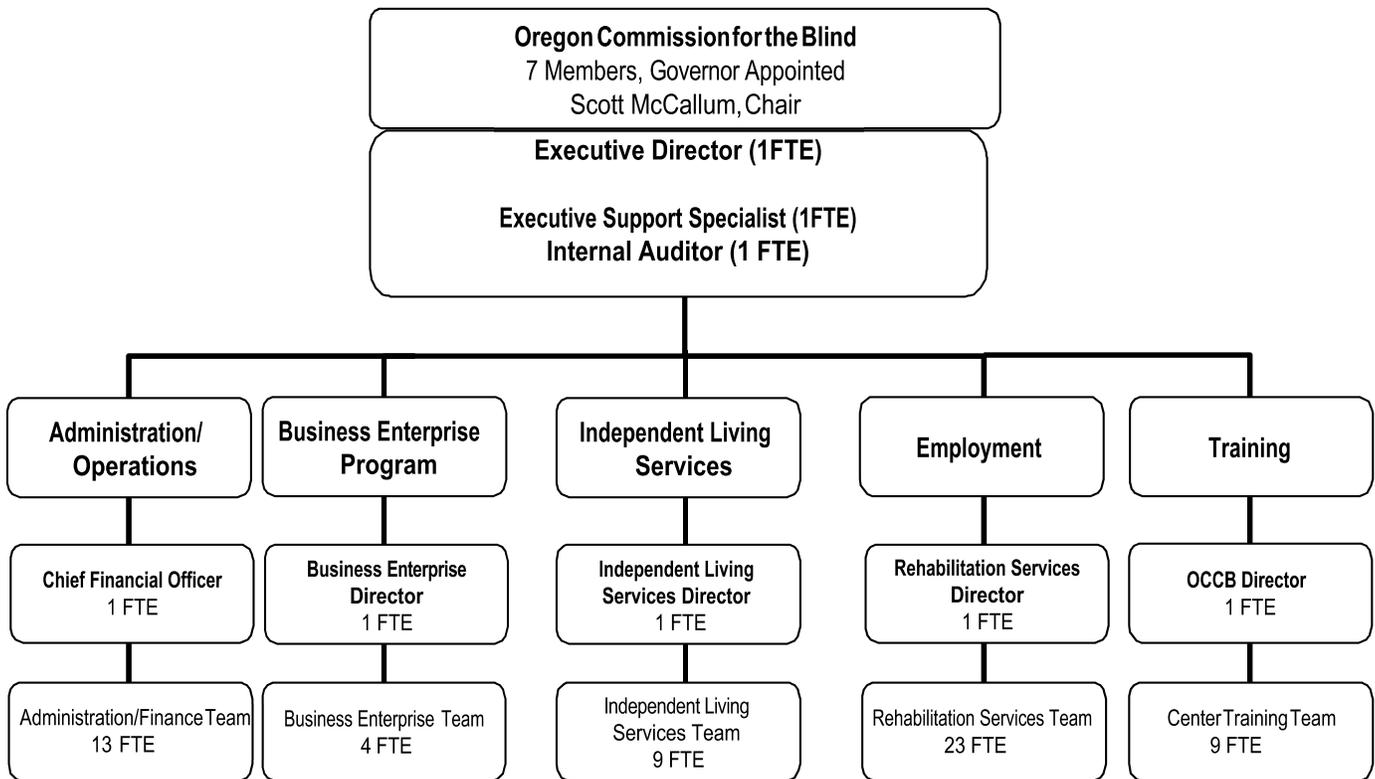
The Commission for the Blind's ability to deliver results on these strategic priorities will require the following:

- The ability to recruit and retain specialized staff trained in the field of blindness rehabilitation who have a strong commitment and passion for serving Oregonians who are blind.
- Staffing capacity necessary to be responsive to individuals at the time they receive the diagnosis of blindness so that they may understand their options to learning skills and resuming full independence.
- Leveraging the full amount of federal dollars available to Oregon. Strategic enhancements of agency services over time to build capacity and agency responsiveness to emerging needs.
- The ability to have specialized staff available as a resource to health care providers who are working with individuals experiencing vision loss.
- The opportunity to partner and collaborate with the education system to provide for a seamless transition from school services to post-secondary training and employment for transition-aged youth.
- The capacity to actively engage in the workforce system to assist businesses in recruiting and retaining qualified workers who are blind.

## Appendix

Organization Chart

Organization Chart  
2019-2021  
FTE 66



# Appendix

## [Measures] Operating Processes

CORE PROCESSES	Conducting Public Education and Outreach	Determining Client Eligibility	Assessing Needs and Developing Plans	Delivering Independent Living Services	Delivering Employment Services		
	OP1	OP2	OP3	OP4	OP5		
SUB PROCESSES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Representing the Governor's policies</li> <li>2. Taking strategic direction from the Commission</li> <li>3. Educating the legislature</li> <li>4. Engaging stakeholders and staff</li> <li>5. Facilitating and participating in community events</li> <li>6. Soliciting program referrals</li> <li>7. Collaborating with consumer groups</li> <li>8. Partnering with businesses, agencies, organizations</li> <li>9. Advocating for accessibility and inclusion</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying client interests and needs</li> <li>2. Explaining agency services &amp; processes</li> <li>3. Matching client to correct program</li> <li>4. Obtaining required eye/diagnostics &amp; application signature</li> <li>5. Confirming referral meets program requirements</li> <li>6. Identifying client functional limitations &amp; appropriate agency services</li> <li>7. Determining eligibility</li> <li>8. Notifying client of eligibility status &amp; resources</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assessing client needs, abilities, &amp; strengths</li> <li>2. Identifying appropriate equipment and services</li> <li>3. Developing services plan</li> <li>4. Obtaining client agreement</li> <li>5. Initiating service delivery</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Authorizing equipment purchase</li> <li>2. Teaching in-home techniques of Daily Living</li> <li>3. Teaching community access skills</li> <li>4. Connecting to appropriate resources</li> <li>5. Monitoring progress</li> <li>6. Adjusting plan as needed</li> <li>7. Verifying goals are met</li> <li>8. Closing cases</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying services and equipment providers</li> <li>2. Authorizing services and equipment purchases</li> <li>3. Initiating training referrals</li> <li>4. Delivering training and equipment</li> <li>5. Monitoring progress</li> <li>6. Amending plan as needed</li> <li>7. Obtaining client approval</li> <li>8. Verifying goals are met</li> <li>9. Closing vocational rehabilitation cases</li> <li>10. Supporting BE client success</li> </ol>		
PROCESS OWNERS	Ken	Jason	Eric	Malinda	Angel		
PROCESS MEASURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OP1a. Urban community outreach and key stakeholder events/meetings</li> <li>2. OP1b. Rural community outreach and key stakeholder events/meetings</li> <li>3. OP1c. Client referrals</li> <li>4. OP1d. Successful client referrals (00s to 02)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OP2a. Referral to Application All Programs: Average number of days from referral to application for all programs within the month</li> <li>2. OP2b. Average Number of days from VR application to eligibility within the month</li> <li>3. OP2c. Number of applicants determined eligible for VR and Part B</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OP3a. Timely assessments</li> <li>2. OP3b. Eligibility to plan, VR</li> <li>3. OP3c. Signed VR Plans</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OP4a. Internal referral to service IL/OB</li> <li>2. OP4b. Increase in client independent living skills</li> <li>3. OP4c. Number of successful ILOB closures</li> <li>4. OP4d. Number of successful Part B closures</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OP5a. VR internal referral to service: Average # of days between referral request and date services have begun</li> <li>2. OP5b. Signed amended plans: Percentage of signatures on amended VR plans.</li> <li>3. OP5c. Number of successful VR closures</li> </ol>		
OUTCOME MEASURES AND OWNER	OM 1 Staff Engagement Dacia	OM 2 Team Member Proficiency Eric	OM 3 Number of Clients Served Malinda	OM 4 Business Partnerships Ken	OM 5 Team Utilization Jason	OM 6 Accessibility Compliance Jason	OM 7 Spending to Budget Gail

# Appendix

## [Measures] Supporting Processes

CORE PROCESSES	Developing and Supporting Staff	Managing Finances and Physical Assets	Managing Information Technology	Managing Compliance and Risk	Managing Agency Performance		
	SP1	SP2	SP3	SP4	SP5		
SUB PROCESSES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluating and identifying staffing needs</li> <li>Recruiting for vacant positions</li> <li>Hiring qualified applicants</li> <li>Orienting new employees</li> <li>Training and developing staff</li> <li>Managing employee performance</li> <li>Recognizing performance</li> <li>Retaining quality staff</li> <li>Maintaining a positive and professional work place</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing agency budget</li> <li>Managing revenue</li> <li>Managing payroll</li> <li>Paying invoices</li> <li>Managing receivables</li> <li>Purchasing goods and services</li> <li>Compiling and submitting reports</li> <li>Managing office facilities</li> <li>Managing assets</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring Systems</li> <li>Enhancing Performance</li> <li>Responding to Help Desk Tickets</li> <li>Ensuring System Uptime</li> <li>Managing Resources &amp; Licenses</li> <li>Ensuring System Security</li> <li>Planning for Future Needs</li> <li>Coordinating IT Disaster Recovery</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring employee safety</li> <li>Developing policies and procedures</li> <li>Monitoring policy and procedure compliance</li> <li>Assessing risk</li> <li>Conducting audits</li> <li>Evaluating audit findings</li> <li>Taking corrective action</li> <li>Monitoring effectiveness</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing strategic plan</li> <li>Implementing strategic initiatives</li> <li>Creating measures</li> <li>Measuring agency progress</li> <li>Evaluating agency performance</li> <li>Prioritizing improvement opportunities</li> <li>Identifying constraints</li> <li>Making program improvements</li> </ol>		
PROCESS OWNERS	Dacia	Gail	Gail	Tamara	Dacia		
PROCESS MEASURES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SP1a. Days to hire</li> <li>SP1b. Staff orientation</li> <li>SP1c. Timely performance evaluations</li> <li>SP1d. Performance recognition</li> <li>SP1e. Days to hire</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SP2a. Revenue plan to actual</li> <li>SP2b. Timely federal reports</li> <li>SP2c. Tier 2 process measure performance</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SP3a. System Uptime</li> <li>SP3b. Customer Satisfaction</li> <li>SP3c. Critical IT security vulnerabilities per host</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SP4a. Business practice reviews</li> <li>SP4b. Client safety incidents</li> <li>SP4c. Number of noncompliance findings</li> <li>SP4d. Timely business practice reviews</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SP5a. Measures improvement</li> <li>SP5b. Outcome performance</li> <li>SP5c. Active problem solving teams</li> <li>SP5d. Process performance</li> <li>SP5e. QTR Timeliness</li> </ol>		
OUTCOME MEASURES AND OWNER	OM 7 Spending to Budget Gail	OM 8 Strong Internal Controls Tamara	OM 9 Timely Service Delivery Cassie	OM 10 Client Satisfaction Angel	OM 11 BE Client Performance Eric	OM 12 Client Employment Angel	OM 13 Client Independence Malinda

## Appendix

### **Mission Statement**

Empower Oregonians who are blind to fully engage in life.

### **Vision Statement**

Blindness without Barriers: A state of inclusion for Oregonians with vision loss.

### **Key Goals**

- Engaged and proficient team
- Effective education and outreach
- Operational excellence
- Exemplary service
- Successful client outcomes

### **Core Values**

- Customer service
- Leadership
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Operational Excellence
- Innovation
- Collaboration

### **Outcome Measures**

- Conducting Public Education and Outreach
- Determining Client Eligibility
- Assessing Needs and Developing Plans
- Delivering Independent Living Services
- Delivering Employment Services
- Developing and Supporting Staff
- Managing Finances and Physical Assets
- Managing Information Technology
- Managing Compliance and Risk
- Managing Agency Performance

## Appendix

Strategic Priority 1: Service Equity

Strategic Priority 2: Aging Oregonians

Strategic Priority 3: Specialized staff

Strategic Priority 4: Diverse Workforce

Strategic Priority 5: Good Government