

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND BLIND SERVICES

2020 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

WHO WE ARE

Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) serves people with disabilities seeking employment and businesses employing people with disabilities. VRBS is part of the Disability Employment and Transitions Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

VISION, MISSION, AND CORE VALUES

VRBS' work is driven by our vision, mission, and core values.

VISION: Montana values people with disabilities in our workforce and our communities.

MISSION: Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services promotes opportunities for Montanans with disabilities to have rewarding careers and achieve maximum personal potential.

CORE VALUES:

1. We value informed choice; our staff guide, and the people we serve decide.
2. We presume all people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, can work in competitive integrated settings with advancement opportunities.
3. We believe work provides a sense of purpose.
4. Our services promote the civil rights of each participant.
5. We respect and value diversity.
6. We value our ethical foundations of autonomy, beneficence, fidelity, justice, nonmaleficence, and veracity.
7. We promote healthy interdependence, independent living, and community integration.
8. Collaborating with partners makes us stronger and more effective.
9. We continually innovate and provide state of the art services.

VRBS GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Montana VRBS’s work is organized into five goals with supporting objectives.

Access and Quality Montanans with disabilities can access high-quality competitive, integrated employment.	Youth Engagement Montana youth with disabilities are effectively engaged in vocational exploration and work readiness training.	Equity All people with disabilities are engaged and valued for their abilities and contributions to our workforce, with extra emphasis on reaching underserved and unserved populations.	Coordination Montana’s workforce system is coordinated to effectively support people with disabilities and their employers.	Organizational Sustainability VRBS is a stable, sustainable organization.
Increase the number of clients served by VRBS. Increase the percentage of VRBS clients employed, retained, and promoted in competitive, integrated jobs. Improve the quality of VRBS services. Increase the percentage of clients meeting and exceeding WIOA performance indicators.	Increase participation of students (14-21) with disabilities engaged in high quality pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS).	Increase resources for people who are deaf or hearing impaired. Increase blind and low vision supports. Increase resources and access to rural and migrant communities as well as language minorities. Increase collaboration with 121 programs and resources to American Indians on reservations and in urban settings. Increase support for people with disabilities in institutional settings. Increase support for youth in foster placements.	Increase community awareness and understanding of VRBS. Increase coordination with partner organizations. Enhance coordination with businesses/ employers. Enhance eligibility and navigation processes for clients.	Increase fiscal stability. Increase staff professional development. Increase staff engagement and satisfaction.

GOAL 1: ACCESS AND QUALITY. MONTANANS WITH DISABILITIES CAN ACCESS HIGH-QUALITY COMPETITIVE, INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT.

VRBS is dedicated to supporting people with disabilities to achieve and maintain quality employment outcomes.

Objectives	Strategies
1.1 Increase the number of clients served by VRBS.	1.1.1 Reduce the waiting list and order of selection. 1.1.2 Improve community outreach and encourage more people to apply for VRBS services.
1.2 Increase the percentage of VRBS clients employed, retained, and promoted in competitive, integrated jobs.	1.2.1 Continue to move people out of shelter and group placements into competitive, integrated employment. 1.2.2 Eliminate sub-minimum wage jobs. 1.2.3 Increase access to customized employment opportunities. 1.2.4 Increase access to self-employment opportunities. 1.2.5 Provide higher education, trade school, apprenticeship, and certificate program opportunities to assist with sustaining and/or advancing people with disabilities. 1.2.6 Implement mechanisms for VRBS Counselors and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to be more aware of the economy and labor market projections. 1.2.7 Provide Benefits Counseling to clarify the impact of working on state and federal benefits.
1.3 Improve the quality of VRBS services.	1.3.1 Provide high quality, holistic, long-term, relationship-based counseling services. 1.3.2 Integrate counselors with the internal team structure of subject matter experts.
1.4 Increase the percentage of clients meeting and exceeding WIOA performance indicators.	1.4.1 Use measurable skill gains to increase quality of placements and outcomes. 1.4.2 Train counselors on measurable skill gains and regularly monitor their accuracy.

GOAL 2: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT. MONTANA YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES ARE EFFECTIVELY ENGAGED IN VOCATIONAL EXPLORATION AND WORK READINESS TRAINING.

VRBS is working to enhance its Pre-Employment and Transition Services (Pre-ETS) programming to shift the culture around disability and work at a younger age – changing individual and family expectations and helping young people to begin work earlier.

Objectives	Strategies
2.1 Increase participation of students (14-21) with disabilities engaged in high quality Pre-ETS.	2.1.1 Build capacity in Pre-ETS programs to reach eligible students with disabilities statewide. 2.1.2 Expand outreach efforts to qualified students, their families, and schools. 2.1.3 Improve application process to enroll students in Pre-ETS services. 2.1.4 Enhance collaboration and relationships between VR Counselors, Pre-ETS specialists, and students with disabilities. 2.1.5 Improve outcomes for students with disabilities as they transition out of Pre-ETS.

GOAL 3: EQUITY. ALL PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ARE ENGAGED AND VALUED FOR THEIR ABILITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR WORKFORCE, WITH EXTRA EMPHASIS ON REACHING UNDERSERVED AND UNSERVED POPULATIONS.

VRBS works to better meet the needs of unserved, underserved, and hard to serve people with disabilities throughout Montana.

Objectives	Strategies
3.1 Increase resources for people who are deaf or hearing impaired.	3.1.1 Contract with additional qualified interpreters. 3.1.2 Work to collaboratively start training programs for sign language interpreters. 3.1.3 Enhance access to assistive technology.
3.2 Increase blind and low vision supports.	3.2.1 Partner with doctors across the state to share resources and improve information access for the newly blind. 3.2.2 Enhance access to assistive technology.
3.3 Increase resources and access to rural and migrant communities as well as language minorities.	3.3.1 Analyze and modify staffing to ensure highly trained, specialized staff are effectively supporting rural, migrant, and language minorities. 3.3.2 Conduct outreach to organizations working with people in language minorities in Montana. 3.3.3 Improve outreach to rural communities. 3.3.4 Enhance strategic partnerships to increase awareness of VRBS as an option for migrant and refugee workers.
3.4 Increase collaboration with 121 programs and resources to American Indians on reservations and in urban settings.	3.4.1 Increase outreach and communication with tribal partners, including 121 programs, health and human services providers, and high schools. 3.4.2 Partner with tribal colleges.

Objectives	Strategies
	3.4.3 Build relationships with tribal businesses.
3.5 Increase support for people with disabilities in institutional settings.	3.5.1 Enhance outreach and communication with institutions to increase awareness of and engagement with VRBS services.
3.6 Increase support for youth in foster placements.	3.6.1 Actively work with Child and Family Services to identify and engage with youth who could benefit from VRBS.
	3.6.2 Enhance partnerships with schools, programs, and professionals serving homeless and at-risk youth.

GOAL 4: COORDINATION. MONTANA’S WORKFORCE SYSTEM IS COORDINATED TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR EMPLOYERS.

VRBS works to support a cohesive approach to service delivery, inclusive of all partners. Having stronger connections with other agencies in our communities makes a difference in client employment outcomes and improved community integration.

Objectives	Strategies
4.1 Increase coordination with partner organizations.	4.1.1 Increase community awareness and understanding of VRBS.
	4.1.2 Develop and implement a partner engagement plan, inclusive of Job Services, SRC, tribal vocational rehabilitation programs, CRPs, Developmental Disabilities Program, Adult Education, community block grant programs, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and others.
	4.1.3 Increase coordination with Local Transportation Advisory Committees, Montana Transit Association, and other transportation stakeholders.
	4.1.4 Develop a community performance appraisal tool and baseline measures for co-enrolled participants.
4.2 Enhance coordination with businesses/employers.	4.2.1 Increase awareness of VRBS with businesses and analyze options for improved information sharing.
	4.2.2 Coordinate business relationship management with partner organizations.
	4.2.3 Provide increased Windmills training to employers.
	4.2.4 Increase business representation on the SRC.
4.3 Enhance eligibility and navigation processes for clients.	4.3.1 Analyze options for a common intake process.
	4.3.2 Analyze options for tools and methods to share client information.

GOAL 5: ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY. VRBS IS A STABLE, SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION.

VRBS needs to sustain a fiscally stable organization to do our work well, to best support Montanans. Our staff is the foundation for our organization; we are committed to supporting an effective and engaged staff to fulfill our mission.

Objectives	Strategies
5.1 Increase fiscal stability.	5.1.1 Improve Ticket to Work milestone payments collection process. 5.1.2 Put internal controls in place for financial monitoring.
5.2 Increase staff professional development.	5.2.1 Provide earlier Foundations training. 5.2.2 Develop and implement approaches to keep up to date on changes. 5.2.3 Provide ongoing, continuing education for staff. 5.2.4 Develop system to track staff professional development. 5.2.5 Conduct performance-based evaluations to support high quality work. 5.2.6 Enhance CRP training.
5.3 Increase staff engagement and satisfaction.	5.3.1 Celebrate staff and team successes. 5.3.2 Monitor workloads and determine need for work redistribution. 5.3.3 Ensure staff have updated, adequate tools. 5.3.4 Continually evaluate staff training needs and desires and develop training and career paths to support staff. 5.3.5 Continually evaluate employee engagement and make management decisions based on evaluations.