

Legislative Oversight Committee

Staff Study of the Commission for the Blind

March 7, 2016



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CONTENTS

Table of Contents

Legislative Oversight - Overview.....	7
Foundation.....	7
Purpose and Schedule.....	7
Information Considered.....	7
Agency Study - Actions.....	8
House Legislative Oversight Committee’s Actions	8
Subcommittee’s Actions	8
Committee Staff’s Actions	8
Next Steps.....	9
Agency Study - Information Highlights	10
Part I. Agency History, Legal Responsibilities and Strategic Plan.....	10
History.....	10
Mission, Vision and Goals	11
Strategies, Objectives & Potential Negative Impacts.....	15
Part II. Agency Relationships and Public Input.....	28
Relationships.....	28
Public Comments about the Agency	35
Part III. Resources: Availability and Allocation.....	36
Financial Capital	36
Employees.....	41
Appendix A - State Budget	42
Appendix B - State Employees	42

Illustrations

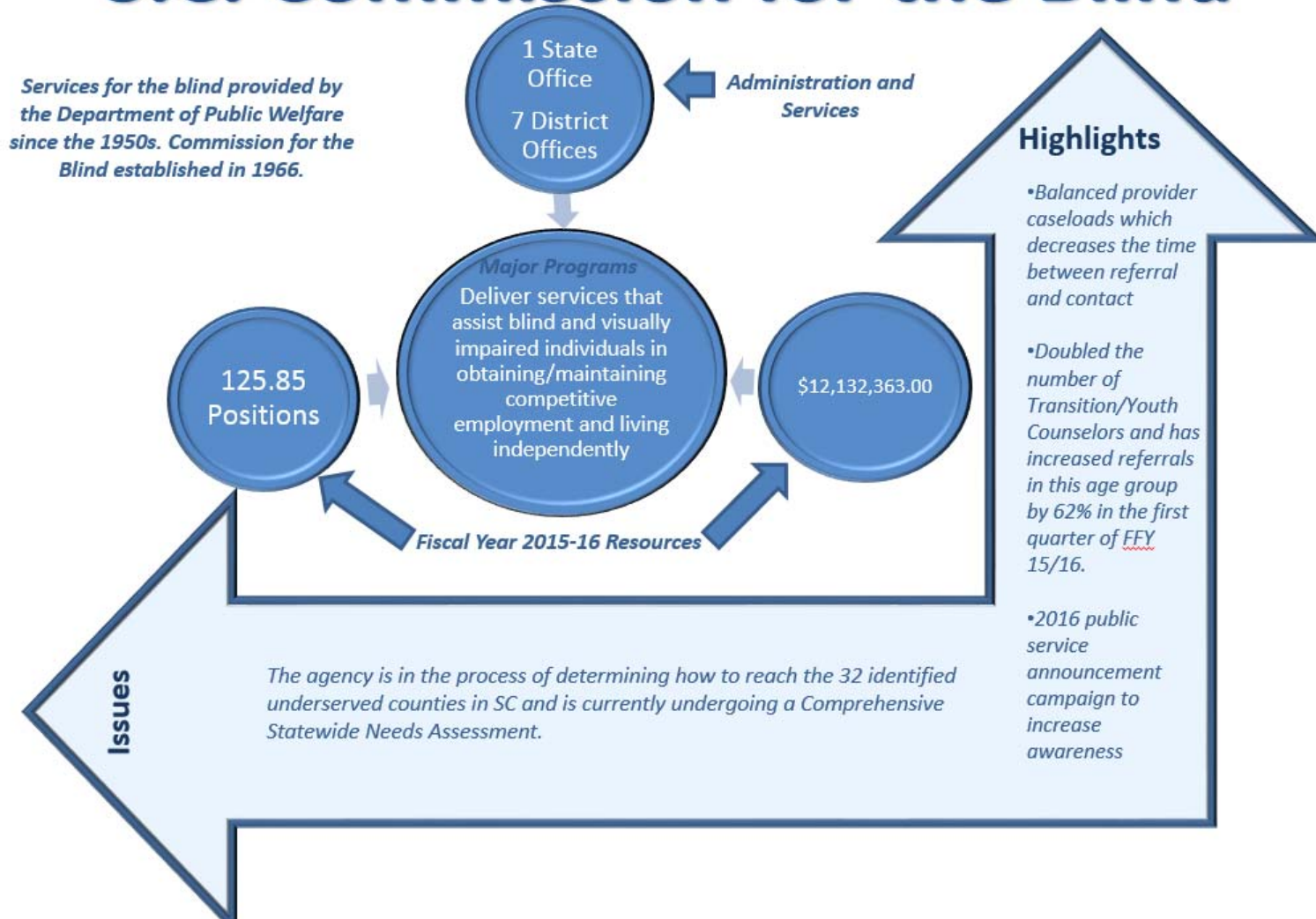
Figures

Visual Summary Figure 1. Snapshot of the agency’s history, services, highlights, and issues	4
2. Agency organizational structure.....	6
3. Partners, customers, and stakeholders defined.....	28
4. Total recurring funding for the agency by funding type during the past five years	37
5. Authorized and filled positions at the agency during the past five years	42
6. Agency organizational structure.....	44
7. Phases of the budget process	46

Tables

Visual Summary Table 1. Summary of agency’s mission, vision, goals, and spending	5
2. Strategic partners and associated objectives.....	30
3. Some topics addressed by survey participants in written comments about the agency	35
4. Agency budget levels for the past five years	36
5. Agency funds available to spend in 2015-16 and where the agency budgeted to spend those funds... ..	38
6. Agency employee levels for the past five years	41
7. Number of employees at the agency, by department, from 2010-11 through 2014-15	43
8. Background on the budget process	45
9. Main parts of the Annual Appropriations Act.....	45

S.C. Commission for the Blind



Visual Summary Figure 1. Snapshot of the agency's history, services, highlights, and issues.¹

How Agency Uses Taxpayer Money

The data in this table **highlight how the agency is investing the money it receives from the people of the state and nation**. The goals are in order from largest to smallest, based on the percentage of total money the agency budgeted toward accomplishment of each. Further details about the amounts budgeted on the individual objectives within each goal as well as the **performance measures, which should show the return the state is receiving on its investment**, are provided on later pages.

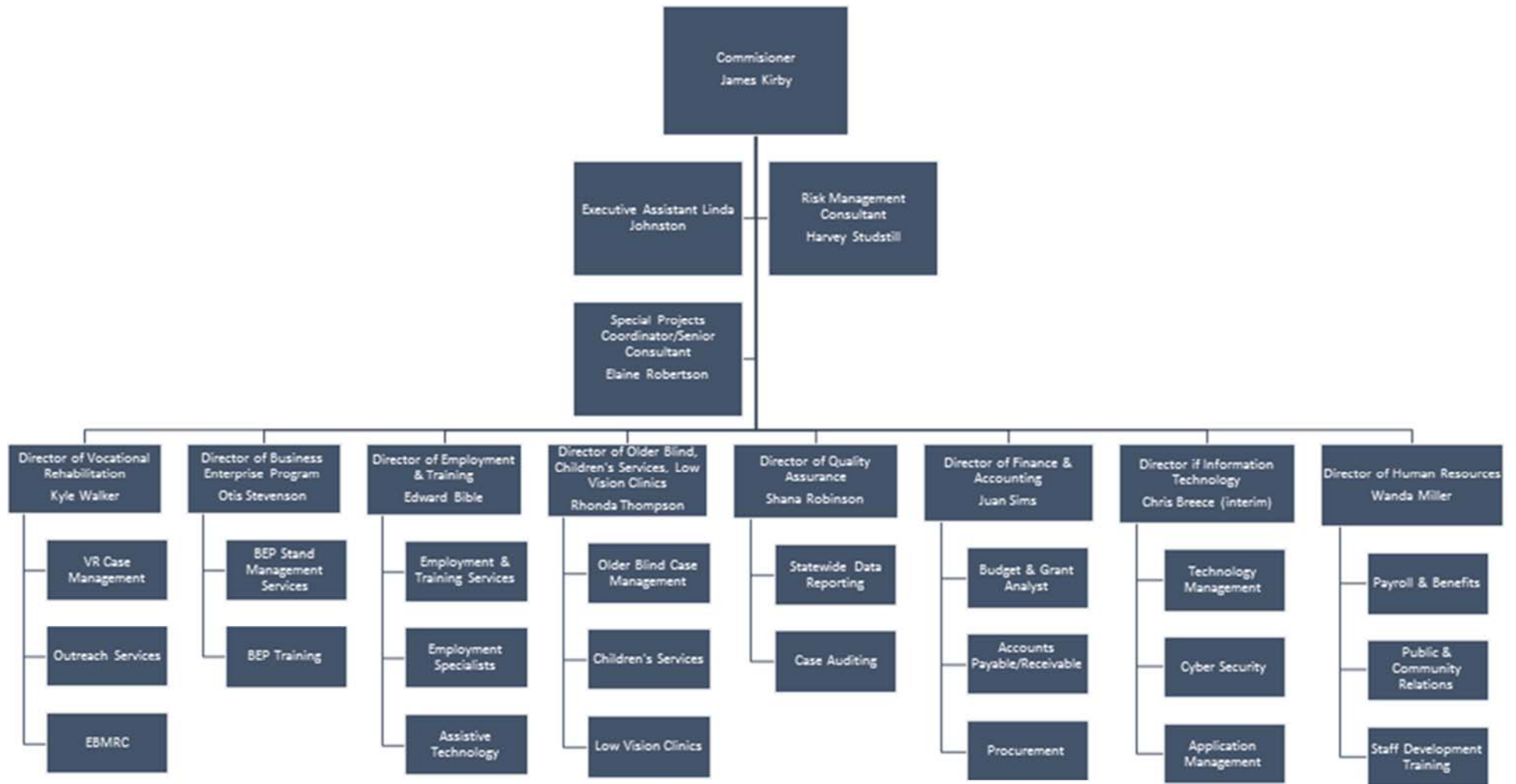
Mission: The Commission’s mission is to “provide vocational rehabilitation services, independent living services and prevention of blindness services to blind and visually impaired individuals leading to competitive employment and social and economic independence”²

Vision: The Commission’s vision is “to become a national model vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind demonstrating quality consumer services, accountability, innovation, effectiveness and efficiency.”³

Goal	Description	2015-16	
		% of total	Amount Budgeted
Goal 1	Deliver quality, individualized vocational rehabilitation services that will assist Blind and visually impaired individuals in obtaining or maintaining competitive employment.	64%	\$7,784,986.00
Goal 3	Provide the administrative leadership necessary to accomplish the agency mission.	20%	\$2,459,310.00
Goal 2	Provide adjustment to blindness and independent living skills training to Blind and visually impaired consumers.	16%	\$1,888,067.00
TOTAL		100%	\$12,132,363.00

Visual Summary Table 1. Summary of agency’s mission, vision, goals, and spending⁴

Figure 2. Agency organizational structure as provided by the agency



LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT - OVERVIEW

Foundation

The **South Carolina State Constitution** requires the General Assembly to provide for appropriate agencies in the areas of health, welfare, and safety and to determine their activities, powers, and duties.⁵ Stated **public policy** provides that this “continuing and ongoing obligation of the General Assembly that is best addressed by periodic review of the programs of the agencies and their responsiveness to the needs of the state's citizens. . . .”⁶ The periodic reviews are accomplished through the legislative oversight process.⁷ Specific statutes relating to legislative oversight are included in South Carolina Code of Laws Section 2-2-5 *et seq.*

Purpose and Schedule

The stated **purpose of legislative oversight** is to determine if agency laws and programs are being implemented and carried out in accordance with the intent of the South Carolina General Assembly and whether or not they should be continued, curtailed, or even eliminated.⁸ The South Carolina House of Representatives’ Legislative Oversight Committee (“House Oversight Committee,” “Committee,” or “LOC”) recognizes that a legislative oversight study informs the public about an agency.⁹ To accomplish legislative oversight, the specific task of the Committee is to conduct a study on each agency at least once every seven years.¹⁰ To guide the work of the Committee in completing its task, a **seven-year study schedule** is published in the House Journal the first day of each legislative session.¹¹

Information Considered

Oversight **studies must consider**: (1) the application, administration, execution, and effectiveness of **laws and programs**; (2) the **organization and operation of agencies**; and (3) any conditions or circumstances that may indicate the **necessity or desirability of enacting new or additional legislation**.¹² **Evidence or information relating to a study may be acquired by any lawful means**, including: serving a request for information on an agency; deposing witnesses; issuing subpoenas that require the production of documents; and, with certain exceptions, requiring the agency to prepare and submit a program evaluation report by a specified date.¹³ Testimony given to the investigating committee must be under oath.¹⁴ All witnesses are entitled to counsel, and they shall be given the benefit of any privilege which they may claim in court as a party to a civil action.¹⁵ Certain criminal provisions are applicable during the legislative oversight process, including contempt of the General Assembly.¹⁶ Joint investigations with the South Carolina Senate (“Senate”) or with other committees in the South Carolina House of Representatives (“House”) are authorized.¹⁷

AGENCY STUDY - ACTIONS

House Legislative Oversight Committee's Actions

On April 14, 2015, the Committee **approved additional agencies for study in 2015 and 2016**. The Committee approved the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (“agency” or “Commission”) as one of the state agencies to be studied.

The **Committee notified the agency** about the study in April 2015. As the Committee encourages **collaboration in its legislative oversight process**, the Speaker, standing committee chairs in the House, members of the House, Clerk of the Senate, and the Governor were also notified about the agency study.

Subcommittee's Actions

The **Healthcare Subcommittee** (“Subcommittee”) of the House Oversight Committee is studying the agency. The Chairman of the Subcommittee is the Honorable Nathan Ballentine.¹⁸ Other members are: the Honorable Mia S. McLeod, the Honorable Walton J. McLeod, and the Honorable Bill Taylor.¹⁹

Information from the Public

From September 1, 2015 until September 30, 2015, the Committee posted an **online survey to solicit comments from the public about the Commission** and other agencies. These comments are not considered testimony.²⁰ As noted in the survey, “input and observations from those citizens who [chose] to provide responses are very important . . . because they may help direct the Committee to potential areas for improvement with these agencies.”²¹ The **public may continue to submit written comments about agencies online**.²²

Information from the Agency

The **Committee asked the agency to conduct a self-analysis** by requiring it to complete and submit a restructuring report and program evaluation report. The agency submitted its 2015 Annual Restructuring Report on March 31, 2015. The agency submitted its Program Evaluation Report on July 27, 2015. The agency submitted its 2016 Annual Restructuring Report on January 8, 2016. These reports are available on the Committee’s website.²³

Committee Staff's Actions

In the staff study, committee staff **obtain, review, and provide highlights of relevant information based upon what the committee and subcommittee inform staff they are looking for when conducting the study**.²⁴ Relevant information may include: an agency restructuring report; an agency seven-year plan for cost savings and increased efficiencies; an agency program evaluation

report; another submission to a legislative or executive entity, such as an agency accountability report; comments from the public concerning the agency; any information submitted by a legislative standing committee in the House of Representatives; and any information submitted by individual Members of the House.

The **staff study is intended for the internal use and benefit of Members of the House, and it does not reflect the views of the House, House Oversight Committee, or any subcommittees.**²⁵ The staff study **is shared with the agency.**²⁶ The agency has the option to provide a written response within ten business days for inclusion in the study.²⁷

Next Steps

This **staff study, and any agency response, will be shared with the Subcommittee** and legislative standing committees in the House of Representatives that share subject matter jurisdiction.²⁸

The **Subcommittee may review the staff study and, if one has been submitted, the agency's written response, in order to determine what other tools of legislative oversight should be used** to evaluate (1) the application, administration, execution, and effectiveness of the agency's laws and programs, (2) the organization and operation of the agency, and (3) any conditions or circumstances that may indicate the necessity or desirability of enacting new or additional legislation pertaining to the agency.²⁹

AGENCY STUDY - INFORMATION HIGHLIGHTS

Part I. Agency History, Legal Responsibilities and Strategic Plan

History³⁰

In the 1950s, the state Department of Public Welfare provided services for South Carolinians who were blind or severely visually impaired. The Department's Division of the Blind taught home crafts, supervised vending operations and placed clients in the Broom Shop.

At its 1964 convention, the South Carolina Aurora Club of the Blind, now known as the National Federation of the Blind of South Carolina, passed a resolution calling for the creation of a separate agency to serve individuals who are blind. In early 1965, state Senators Walter J. Bristow and Earle E. Morris Jr., along with Reps. Owen Cobb and F. Hall Yarborough introduced a bill in the General Assembly addressing that resolution. A public hearing on the matter resulted in the formation of a nine-member legislative committee charged with exploring the feasibility of creating a state Commission for the Blind. Senator Morris served as the chair of the committee.

After careful study, the legislative committee recommended establishing a new agency. The committee based its decision on data showing that only Mississippi and Hawaii exceeded South Carolina in the incidence of blindness per 1,000 people. Nationally, the state ranked among the top 10 states in the number of new blind cases reported.

On May 6, 1966, Governor Robert E. McNair signed a bill creating the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. The agency's first governing board included Dr. Sam M. Lawton, Spartanburg; R.F. Neidhardt, Columbia; Dr. Michael Holmes, Kingstree; Katherine Morrison, Columbia; and Doris McKinney, Greenwood.

Dr. Fred L. Crawford was appointed the first commissioner. He was succeeded by Henry Watts (1973-77), Maxine Bowles (1977-84), William K. James (1984-89), Donald Gist (1990-99), Dr. Nell Carney (2000-05) and James Kirby (2005-present).

Part I. Agency History, Legal Responsibilities and Strategic Plan

Mission, Vision and Goals

Overseeing Body (i.e. director, commissioners, trustees, etc.)

The Commission for the Blind consists of seven members, one from each of the seven Congressional Districts, of whom three shall not have a visual acuity that exceeds 20/200. The Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoints the members of the Commission for terms of four years and until their successors are appointed and qualify.³¹

Current individual members of the board include:

- Peter Smith, First Congressional District
- Dr. Judy Johnson, Second Congressional District
- Mary Sue Sonksen, Fourth Congressional District
- Rosemary Parks, Sixth Congressional District

As of the date of publication of this staff study, there are three vacancies on the board (Third, Fifth, Seventh Congressional Districts).³²

Mission

The Commission for the Blind's mission is "[t]o 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."³³

The Commission cites several legal standards as a basis for its mission.³⁴ These legal standards include³⁵:

- Code the Federal Regulations - 34 CFR 361.13 (a) and 34 CFR Part 367; and
- S.C. Code of Laws § 43-25-20 *et seq.*

Vision

The vision of the Commission for the Blind is “to become a national model vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind demonstrating quality consumer services, accountability, innovation, effectiveness and efficiency.”³⁶

As for the legal standards which serve as the basis for the vision, the Commission for the Blind provided the same legal standards it did as the basis for its mission.³⁷

Part I. Agency History, Legal Responsibilities and Strategic Plan

Goals³⁸

The information below is current as of January 12, 2016, when the agency submitted its 2016 Annual Restructuring Report. S.M.A.R.T. criteria are utilized in the Accountability Report the agency submits annually and is an acronym for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound.

Goal 1 – Deliver quality, individualized vocational rehabilitation services that will assist Blind and visually impaired individuals in obtaining or maintaining competitive employment.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR. 361.13 (a); S.C. Code § 43-25-50; 43-25-80
- How the Goal is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Delivering quality, individualized services are the specific functions of the agency. Service provision is measured through case documentation and successful case closures. Each consumer creates a plan with a goal of employment that is attainable based on individual strengths and skills. All of the actions within the plans are relevant to reaching successful closures. Exact time frames for eligibility determination and plan development to ensure service provision in a timely manner.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Increased employment leads to increased economic self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance. Expanded tax-base, increase tax payers. Decreased demand on other public service and benefit programs such as welfare programs, subsidized housing, etc.
- Responsible Person: Kyle Walker (Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services)
 - Office Address: 1430 Confederate Avenue, Columbia, SC 29201
 - Department or Division Summary: Vocational Rehabilitation. Supervises all activities of vocational rehabilitation counselors, EMBRC, O & M instructors, home management instructors, manual arts instructors, and A. T. instructors.

Goal 2 – Provide adjustment to blindness and independent living skills training to Blind and visually impaired consumers.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); 34 CFR Part 367; S.C. Code § 43-25-50; 43-25-60; 43-25-80
- How the Goal is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): The Older Blind Program, Children's Services, and Prevention of Blindness all provide eligible consumers with services to assist in maintaining self-sufficiency. These services are measured through case documentation and closures. Plans are developed for each individual to identify the highest level of self-sufficiency possible based on each consumer's specific needs and condition.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Increased independent living skills and improved adjustment to blindness results in expanded individual freedom, independence, self-reliance, and leads to employment and economic self-sufficiency. Decreases demand on other public services.

- Responsible Person: Rhonda Thompson (Director of Older Blind, Children’s Services, Low Vision Clinics)
 - Office Address: 1430 Confederate Avenue, Columbia, SC 29201
 - Department or Division Summary: Older Blind, Children’s Services, Low Vision Clinic. Supervises OB and CS counselors, low vision clinics in five locations across the state, and conducts presentations to potential service providers. Oversees all services to consumers who are eligible for services but not able/interested in employment.

Goal 3 – Provide the administrative leadership necessary to accomplish the agency mission.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); SC Code § 43-25-10; 43-25-30
- How the Goal is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): The Senior Leadership Team meets monthly to assess progress on the measurable goals in the Strategic Plan. Team discussions address the attainability of each goal and modify the Strategic Plan objectives when necessary to ensure that each goal remains attainable and relevant to the agency mission and values. Each objective has a specified completion date.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Mission focused leadership and sound fiscal stewardship ensure that the agency meets its legal purpose.
- Responsible Person: James Kirby (Commissioner)
 - Office Address: 1430 Confederate Avenue, Columbia, SC 29201
 - Department or Division Summary: Commission for the Blind. Oversees and supervises all aspects of the Commission for the Blind. Presents and advocates at the legislative level.

Part I. Agency History, Legal Responsibilities and Strategic Plan

Strategies, Objectives & Potential Negative Impacts

*Strategies and Objectives*³⁹

Goal 1 - Deliver quality, individualized vocational rehabilitation services that will assist Blind and visually impaired individuals in obtaining or maintaining competitive integrated employment.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); SC Code § 43-25-50; 43-25-80
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Increased employment leads to increased economic self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance. Expanded tax-base, increase tax payers. Decreased demand on other public service and benefit programs such as welfare programs, subsidized housing, etc.
- Responsible Person: Kyle Walker, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services

Strategy 1.1 - Increase the number of consumers served by the vocational rehabilitation program

Objective 1.1.1 - Increase public awareness of SCCB services to the unserved and underserved minorities and rural counties.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: N/A
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Radio advertisements and printed materials are currently being distributed to unserved, underserved, rural counties, and minority populated areas to increase awareness. Increased referrals from these areas will be the measurement.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Increasing public awareness of SCCB programs in currently unserved and underserved areas.
- Responsible Person: Wanda Miller, Director of Human Resources

Objective 1.1.2 - Expand outreach services to unserved and underserved rural counties.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); SC Code § 43-25-80
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): An outreach work group is under development to begin serving the rural areas as public awareness increases and with it, referrals to SCCB programs increase in these areas.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Will provide services to visually impaired citizens who are unable to travel to a larger district office or the Columbia campus.

- Responsible Person: Kyle Walker, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services

Objective 1.1.3 - Develop a commensurate ratio of consumer to provider on all caseloads to ensure expediency of service in all areas.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: N/A
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): All counselor vacancies have now been filled and as training is completed, caseloads are being evaluated based on needs in each district/county to ensure expediency of service. Measurements are conducted by length of time from referral to service contact.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Optimal VR Counselor to Consumer ratios lead to increased successful outcomes. Increased employment leads to increased economic self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance. Expanded tax-base, increase tax payers. Decreased demand on other public service and benefit programs such as welfare programs, subsidized housing, etc.
- Responsible Person: Kyle Walker, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services

Strategy 1.2 - Increase successful placements and closures in competitive, integrated employment for all consumers.

Objective 1.2.1 - Provide adjustment to blindness, assistive technology and job readiness training consistently at EMBRC and in outreach locations.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); SC Code § 43-25-80
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Specific services are offered to assist in consumer adjustment to blindness including Orientation & Mobility, Home Management, and Braille instruction. All trainings are provided based on individual assessments of need related to the individual consumer's visual condition and acuity, as well as skills and abilities. All service provisions are tracked in our electronic case management system to ensure timely progress to successful closure.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Adjustment to blindness, assistive technology, and job readiness training is essential to successfully rehabilitation person with blindness. These services result in successful employment outcomes. Increased employment results in increased economic self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance. Decreases demand on other public service and benefit programs such as welfare programs, subsidized housing, etc.
- Responsible Person: Kyle Walker, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services

Objective 1.2.2 - Expand job search, development and placement opportunities.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); SC Code § 43-25-80
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Training & Employment has 3 staff members who spend a large portion of their working time in the field meeting with employers. Each is required to make a minimum of 10 contacts per month and this is tracked by T & E. The information is shared at the monthly Senior Leadership meeting to show progress on this Strategic Objective. The specific goal in the Strategic plan is 1 new employment opportunity per month, per consultant.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Expanding employment opportunities will allow a greater number of SCCB consumers to obtain employment and become taxpayers, as well as reduce the burden on social service programs.
- Responsible Person: Edward Bible, Director of Training and Employment

Objective 1.2.3 - Increase successful placement rate for youth consumers aged 14 to 21 and consumers requiring supported employment services

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); SC Code § 43-25-80
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has 4 counselors dedicated to Transition age youth. They are implementing a program in the schools to teach Pre-employment skills. Counselors are also participating in school events to spread awareness in the educational system and communities about SCCB youth age programs. The goal is to increase youth employment by 30% by September 2016.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Increasing placement for youth consumers will provide them the opportunity to build employment skills and careers. This will reduce dependence on public benefits as this population leaves school and reaches adulthood.
- Responsible Person: Kyle Walker, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services

Objective 1.2.4 - Increase the number of successful case closures

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a); SC Code § 43-25-80
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): The Strategic Plan goal is to increase successful closures in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program by 10% for FY15/16. Closures are tracked in the automated case management system and reported monthly at the Senior Leadership Team meeting. Successful closures relate directly to service provision which relates to funding. .

- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Increased employment leads to increased economic self-sufficiency, independence, and self-reliance. Expanded tax-base, increase tax payers. Decreased demand on other public service and benefit programs such as welfare programs, subsidized housing, etc
- Responsible Person: Kyle Walker, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Services

Goal 2 - Provide services to assist eligible consumers who are not seeking employment to maintain the highest level of self-sufficiency possible.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 367; SC Code § 43-25-80
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Increased independent living skills and improved adjustment to blindness results in expanded individual freedom, independence, self-reliance, and leads to employment and economic self-sufficiency. Decreases demand on other public services.
- Responsible Person: Rhonda Thompson, Director of Older Blind, Children's Services, Low Vision Clinics

Strategy 2.1 - Develop and maintain consistent and quality individualized service plans.

Objective 2.1.1 - Increase community interaction through home visits and developing new referral sources in unserved and underserved rural counties.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: Federal Regulation: 34 CFR 367; SC Code § 43-25-80
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Counselors for the Older Blind Program primarily visit consumers homes to assess and provide services. The Strategic Plan goal is to develop a minimum of 5 new resources for referrals from unserved and underserved counties within FY15/16. Contact information is tracked and reported on monthly at the Senior Leadership Team meeting.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Consistent efforts to increase awareness of Agency services through community meetings and coordinate comprehensive adjustment skills training results in an increase in independent living and self-reliance. Subsequently, the Agency's intervention minimizes the need for other programs such as skilled nursing care, Home Health assistance, other public services, etc.
- Responsible Person: Rhonda Thompson, Director of Older Blind, Children's Services, Low Vision Clinics

Objective 2.1.2 - Collaborate with nonprofit, social and human service organizations to provide early intervention services.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: State Statutes: SC Code § 43-25-80

- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Staff in the Children's Services program attend numerous community events in all areas of the state to present information on SCCB early intervention programs. Staff also partners with community organizations to provide full, wrap around services to children with visual impairments. The goal is to increase referrals by 10% during FY15/16. This is measured through the electronic case management program and reported monthly at the team meeting.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Collaborative efforts further increase and enhance service opportunities and results in providing timely and necessary adjustment to blindness assistance and improved independent living skills. Reduces the need for institutional care and other public service programs.
- Responsible Person: Rhonda Thompson, Director of Older Blind, Children's Services, Low Vision Clinics

Goal 3 - Provide the administrative leadership to build a strong team that will strive to fulfill the agency mission.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a)
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Mission focused leadership and sound fiscal stewardship ensure that the agency meets its legal purpose.
- Responsible Person: James Kirby, Commissioner of the SC Commission for the Blind

Strategy 3.1.1 - Create a diversified, highly qualified workforce with the administrative leadership necessary to ensure accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Objective 3.1.1 - Develop a process to attract highly qualified candidates and heighten employee satisfaction to increase retention.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: N/A
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Salaries have been moved closer to the same hiring range as competing agencies in the same area for positions requiring specific education and skills. Recruitment is done through SCJobs, networking, job fairs, and utilizing online resume searches. The strategic goal is to reduce time positions remain vacant by 50% in FY15/16. Vacancies are reported at monthly team meeting.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Maintaining high standards and competitive salaries will attract highly qualified staff who will provide quality services to foster employment and reduce the demand on tax payer assisted programs in the community.
- Responsible Person: Wanda Miller, Director of Human Resources

Objective 3.1.2 - Provide staff development training to improve employee's skills and provide up-to-date information to consumers.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: 34 CFR 361.13 (a)
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): Staff has the opportunity to register for optional trainings on the SC HR website. HR, Senior Management, and supervisors review upcoming trainings and conferences for suitability to the needs of SCCB. Training is tracked and recorded by HR staff to ensure all staff receives updated information. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is currently offering trainings to all counselors to bring consistency and up to date information across the state.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Ensuring that staff is trained in the most current best practices will result in highly qualified staff who will provide quality services to foster employment and reduce the demand on tax payer assisted programs in the community
- Responsible Person: Wanda Miller, Director of Human Resources

Objective 3.1.3 - Strengthen the communication among the leadership team to create a consistent flow of information to staff.

- Legal Responsibilities Satisfied: N/A
- How it is S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound): The leadership team meets on a monthly basis. Each program director reports on the progress of his/her team on meeting the objectives in the strategic plan. Information is also shared at this time that can be distributed to program staff. This process is strengthening the leadership team and creating more cohesiveness between programs.
- Public Benefit/Intended Outcome: Mission focused leadership and sound fiscal stewardship ensure that the agency meets its legal purpose.
- Responsible Person: Elaine Robertson, Special Project Coordinator/Senior Consultant

Part I. Agency History, Legal Responsibilities and Strategic Plan

Strategies, Objectives & Potential Negative Impacts

*Potential Negative Impacts*⁴⁰

In its 2016 Annual Restructuring Report, the agency listed what it considers the most potential negative impact to the public that may occur as a result of the agency not accomplishing each objective. In addition, it was asked to provide information on the level at which it believes it needs outside help, the entities to whom the agency would reach out if the potential negative impact rises to that level, when the agency thinks the General Assembly should be put on notice, and options for what the General Assembly could do to help resolve the issue before it became a crisis.

Goal 1 - Deliver quality, individualized vocational rehabilitation services that will assist Blind and visually impaired individuals in obtaining or maintaining competitive integrated employment.

Strategy 1.1 - Increase the number of consumers served by the vocational rehabilitation program

Objective 1.1.1 - Increase public awareness of SCCB services to the unserved and underserved minorities and rural counties.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Blind and visually impaired citizens of SC will be unable to obtain the disability adjustment and employment services needed to live independently and/or rejoin the workforce. This will result in undue burdens on families, local communities, charities, and will result in additional dependence of government programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, housing, etc.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When SCCB is unable to respond to citizens with visual impairments in rural counties due to lack of resources.
- Outside Help to Request: SCCB partners with other state Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies in the region and across the nation, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and seeks out technical assistance and training support.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When no outside assistance can be found and funding does not exist for SCCB to expand services to help all citizens with visual impairments in the state of SC.

- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider additional funding to increase services in rural counties. 2. Consider legislation that encourages and incentivizes South Carolina businesses to hire persons who are blind or visually impaired in rural counties. 3. Consider providing state funds to rural communities to improve accessibility to blind and visually impaired individuals in the form of audible traffic islands, safe sidewalks, and Braille markers in public areas.

Objective 1.1.2 - Expand outreach services to unserved and underserved rural counties.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Blind and visually impaired citizens of SC will be unable to obtain the disability adjustment and employment services needed to live independently and/or rejoin the workforce. This will result in undue burdens on families, local communities, charities, and will result in additional dependence on government programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, housing, etc.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When SCCB is unable to respond to citizens with visual impairments in rural counties due to lack of resources.
- Outside Help to Request: SCCB partners with other state Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies in the region and across the nation, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and seeks out technical assistance and training support.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When no outside assistance can be found and funding does not exist for SCCB to expand services to help all citizens with visual impairments in the state of SC.
- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider additional funding to increase services in rural counties. 2. Consider legislation that encourages and incentivizes South Carolina businesses to hire persons who are blind or visually impaired in rural counties. 3. Consider providing state funds to rural communities to improve accessibility to blind and visually impaired individuals in the form of audible traffic islands, safe sidewalks, and Braille markers in public areas.

Objective 1.1.3 - Develop a commensurate ratio of consumer to provider on all caseloads to ensure expediency of service in all areas.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Vocational Rehabilitation effectiveness, quality, compliance, and outcomes decrease as Client to VR Counselor ratios exceed normal ranges. This limits the number of consumers who achieve quality employment outcomes and reach independence and self-sufficiency. Citizens who are blind are forced to become dependent on other government programs, community charities, or their families.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When Client to VR Counselor ratios exceed research based industry standards and turnover increases due to burnout.
- Outside Help to Request: There are no outside resources to assist with this situation.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When the agency can no longer hire or retain staff.

- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider funds to place more VR Counselors in the field and reduce caseload sizes in high need areas. 2. Consider funding for SCCB to offer a competitive salary consistent with the professional educational requirements for VR Counselors to improve recruitment and retention. 3. Consider legislation that would require state funded public technical and community colleges to partner with SCCB in the development of short term demand driven training programs that result in jobs for blind individuals.

Strategy 1.2 - Increase successful placements and closures in competitive, integrated employment for all consumers.

Objective 1.2.1 - Provide adjustment to blindness, assistive technology and job readiness training consistently at EMBRC and in outreach locations.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Without this training, a person with visual impairments is unable to obtain employment that matches their skill level and is often unable to live at home alone, thus creating the burden on families, communities, and government programs to support the individual.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When SCCB can no longer provide all of the necessary services to a person experiencing a visual impairment.
- Outside Help to Request: SCCB would need to reach out to community agencies for training assistance
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When there is no assistance forthcoming from community agencies and consumer needs cannot be met by SCCB.
- General Assembly Options 1. Consider additional funds for creation of job readiness training sites. 2. Consider additional funds for upgrading and obtaining the most up to date A.T. devices. 3. Consider legislation that encourages and incentivizes South Carolina businesses to hire persons who are blind or visually impaired.

Objective 1.2.2--Expand job search, development and placement opportunities.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Without job search, job development, and job placement resources available, SCCB is unable to effectively connect job ready blind consumers with job vacancies. This limits the number of consumers who achieve quality employment outcomes and reach independence and self-sufficiency. Citizens who are blind are forced to become dependent on other government programs, community charities, or their families.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When employers refuse to hire blind consumers no matter how many services SCCB provides or how much training is offered.
- Outside Help to Request: SCCB would reach out to local employment agencies and businesses to develop opportunities for consumers.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When SCCB has exhausted all efforts to create opportunities with businesses.

- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider additional funds for creation of job readiness training sites. 2. Consider additional funds for SCCB to hire and expand Job Placement and Job Coaching staff. 3. Consider legislation that encourages and incentivizes South Carolina businesses to hire persons who are blind or visually impaired.

Objective 1.2.3--Increase successful placement rate for youth consumers aged 14 to 21 and consumers requiring supported employment services

- Most Potential Negative Impact: The most potential negative impact to the public would be not offering employment and career opportunities to youth ages 14 to 21 and having them leave school with no preparation for being self-supporting taxpayers. This will increase the burden on public programs such as Medicaid, Food Stamps, and SSI.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When employers refuse to hire blind consumers no matter how many services SCCB provides or how much training is offered.
- Outside Help to Request: SCCB would reach out to local employment agencies and businesses to develop opportunities for consumers.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When SCCB has exhausted all efforts to create opportunities with businesses.
- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider legislation that encourages and incentivizes South Carolina businesses to hire persons who are blind or visually impaired. 2. Consider providing additional funding for a public awareness campaign that creates an expectation of employment for citizens who are blind and connects them with SCCB. 3. Provide funding to expand rural services.

Objective 1.2.4--Increase the number of successful case closures

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Success is measured by the number of consumers who reach an employment outcome and increase their independence and self-sufficiency. The most negative impact would be the result of SCCB consumers being unable to obtain employment and increase independence and self-sufficiency.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When employers refuse to hire blind consumers no matter how many services SCCB provides or how much training is offered.
- Outside Help to Request: SCCB would reach out to local employment agencies and businesses to develop opportunities for consumers.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When SCCB has exhausted all efforts to create opportunities with businesses
- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider legislation that encourages and incentivizes South Carolina businesses to hire persons who are blind or visually impaired. 2. Consider providing additional funding for a public awareness campaign that creates an

expectation of employment for citizens who are blind and connects them with SCCB. 3. Provide funding to expand rural services.

Goal 2 - Provide services to assist eligible consumers who are not seeking employment to maintain the highest level of self-sufficiency possible.

Strategy 2.1 - Develop and maintain consistent and quality individualized service plans.

Objective 2.1.1 - Increase community interaction through home visits and developing new referral sources in unserved and underserved rural counties.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Without home and community meetings it would not be possible to determine the needs of consumers and individualized training could not happen. This would leave consumers unable to maintain their independence and place greater burdens on their communities and families.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When SCCB is unable to respond to citizens with visual impairments due to lack of resources it would be time to reach out for assistance.
- Outside Help to Request: The first step would be to contact other state agencies who serve persons with disabilities. Next would be to contact non-profit and nearby agencies who might also offer assistance.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When no outside assistance can be found and funding does not exist for SCCB to expand services to help all citizens with visual impairments in the state of SC.
- General Assembly Options 1. Consider additional funding for rural services. 2. Consider funding to state agencies in rural counties to assist in expanding services. 3. Consider legislation requiring rural communities to be accessible to the visually impaired with audible traffic islands, safe sidewalks, and Braille markers to identify public areas to assist those who SCCB is unable to serve.

Objective 2.1.2 - Collaborate with nonprofit, social and human service organizations to provide early intervention services.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Blind and visually impaired children would grow up without the tools they need to succeed in society and in school. This would leave children with a visual impairment totally dependent upon their families, communities, charities, and government welfare programs. It would also mean these children would not receive an appropriate education and would be unable to become contributing taxpayers or independent citizens.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When SCCB is unable to respond to citizens with visual impairments due to lack of resources it would be time to reach out for assistance.

- Outside Help to Request: The first step would be to contact other state agencies who serve persons with disabilities. Next would be to contact non-profit and nearby agencies who might also offer assistance. Last would be to contact larger agencies such as the Helen Keller National Center to request assistance.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When no outside assistance can be found and funding does not exist for SCCB to expand services to help all citizens with visual impairments in the state of SC.
- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider additional funding for rural services. 2. Consider funding to state agencies in rural counties to assist in expanding services. 3. Consider legislation requiring rural communities to be accessible to the visually impaired with audible traffic islands, safe sidewalks, and Braille markers to identify public areas to assist those who SCCB is unable to serve.

Goal 3 - Provide the administrative leadership to build a strong team that will strive to fulfill the agency mission.

Strategy 3.1 - Create a diversified, highly qualified workforce with the administrative leadership necessary to ensure accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Objective 3.1.1 - Develop a process to attract highly qualified candidates and heighten employee satisfaction to increase retention.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: Without a diversified workforce the agency could be viewed as discriminatory, and would not benefit from a diversity of experience, thinking, and problem solving. SCCB would also not have a diversified cultural base in staff to meet the diversity of consumers. This would reduce the number of consumers served which would place that burden on the taxpayers and families.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When qualified candidates from a diverse background cannot be hired due to low pay, high caseloads, high travel time, and current counselors are unable to keep up with the demand due to the vacancies.
- Outside Help to Request: Contact local employment agencies and advertise vacancies anywhere possible in print and online.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When the agency can no longer hire or retain staff due to lack of responses to vacancy postings.
- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider additional funds to place more VR Counselors in the field and reduce caseload sizes in high need areas. 2. Consider additional funding for SCCB to offer competitive salaries for highly trained and educated VR Counselors to encourage recruitment and retention. 3. Consider legislation that would make state government agencies model employers of qualified blind individuals by creating an expedited hiring process for blind individuals who meet the minimum qualifications for state vacancies. (Utah & California Model)

Objective 3.1.2 - Provide staff development training to improve employee's skills and provide up-to-date information to consumers.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: The VR profession is an ever changing research and development based profession, lack of staff development and training results in staff not being current with industry trends, best practices, innovations, or research findings. Consumers who are not served in the most up to date manner will be unable to meet the qualifications for available employment opportunities and will be unable to remain self-sufficient as technology changes rapidly.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When staff is unable to answer questions posed by consumers, unable to train or offer training on the latest technology, and is unable to renew their specific licensures due to lack of ongoing development, it is time for help
- Outside Help to Request: Reach out to other state agencies and online for free and low cost training opportunities for staff to build their skills.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When staff is unable to maintain licensures and are not able to provide up to date services to the consumers.
- General Assembly Options: 1. Consider funding for specialized staff training to allow for professional growth and better service to consumers. 2. Consider expanding agencies authority to send staff to national and regional professional conferences. 3. Consider funding for high definition video conferencing to expand training while decreasing travel time and travel costs.

Objective 3.1.3 - Strengthen the communication among the leadership team to create a consistent flow of information to staff.

- Most Potential Negative Impact: An agency without a leadership team that communicates is not providing maximum services and this could result in fewer consumers being served as well as less efficiency within the agency.
- Level Requires Outside Help: When there is no effective communication between agency leadership team members and all attempts at creating better communication fails.
- Outside Help to Request: Request assistance from the SCCB Board.
- Level Requires Inform General Assembly: When all attempts at building a leadership team fail and the SCCB Board is unable to effect change in the agency.
- General Assembly Options: 1. Make monthly leadership meetings mandatory. 2. Include a performance measure in each director's EPMS. 3. Step in and reorganize the leadership team.

Part II. Agency Relationships and Public Input

Relationships

Note: In the agency's reports to the Committee, it has provided information about its partners, customers and stakeholders.⁴¹ The agency may have more than one relationship with an entity.

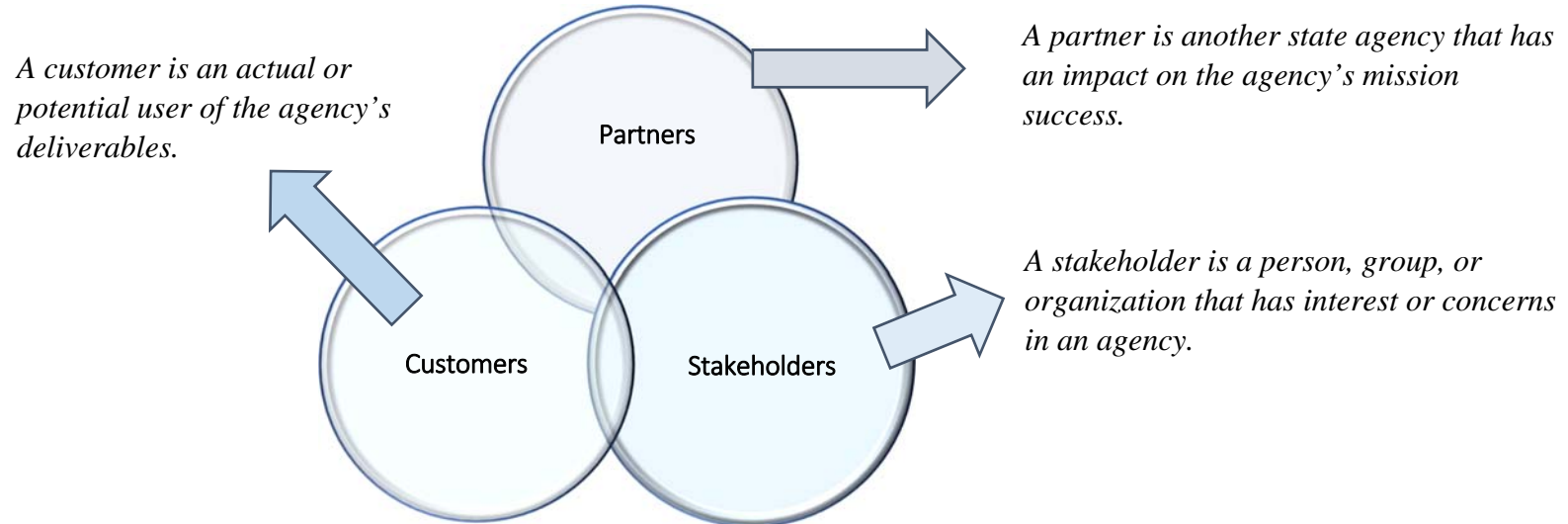


Figure 3. Partners, customers, and stakeholders defined.⁴²

Customers

- Customer and Customer Requirements/Expectations⁴³
 - **Blind and visually impaired individuals** – Eligibility for most services is contingent on meeting the legal definition of blindness: having a central visual acuity of 20/200 in the better eye with best corrective lens or a visual field of 20 degrees or less. Individuals with a severe visual disability that will result in legal blindness also are eligible for services. Legal blindness must be verified by an acceptable eye examination. Additionally, individuals applying for vocational rehabilitation services must be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome and require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment.

Stakeholders

- Stakeholder and Stakeholder Requirements/Expectations⁴⁴
 - **Foundation for the Blind** – Advocates for the Commission.
 - **Client Assistance Program** – Resolves consumer complaints regarding Commission programs and services.
 - **School for the Deaf and Blind** – Individuals would be eligible to apply for Commission services to become competitively employed.
 - **Public Schools** – Partner with the Commission to provide adjustment to blindness services to students.
 - **Consumer Advocacy Groups** – Advocate for Commission programs and services, and partner for training.

Strategic Partners

Table 2. Strategic partners and associated objectives⁴⁵

Description	Current Partner Entities	Ways Agency works with Current Partners
Expand outreach services to the unserved and underserved rural counties	Department of Archives & History -Disability Coordinator	Includes SCCB information at job fairs.
	National Federation of the Blind	Promotes SCCB at their meetings.
	South Carolina Schools for the Deaf and Blind; Goodwill Industries	Promotes SCCB to their consumers and partners.
	Department of Education	Promotes SCCB to schools and other partners.
Recruit community rehabilitation programs	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.
Engage in random case service review process	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.
Maintain an adequate consumer to counselor ratio to ensure expediency of service delivery	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.
Provide adjustment to blindness, assistive technology and job readiness training	National Federation of the Blind; South Carolina Schools for the Deaf and Blind; Goodwill Industries; SC Vision Education Partners	Provides training assistance.
	SC State University Orientation and Mobility Program; Medical University of SC, Storm Eye Clinic	Provides updates on upcoming assistive technology.
	ABLE SC	Provides independent living skills training.
	Blue Cross Blue Shield; Verizon Wireless	Provides sensitivity training.

	Foundation for the Commission for the Blind	Assists with a variety of services.
	Community Libraries; Department of Employment and Workforce	Provides soft skills training for consumers.
	Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, SC Chapter	Provide updates on upcoming assistive technology.
	Richland County Library; SC State Library-Talking Book Services	Provides soft skills training.
	Freedom Scientific	Free online training for JAWS software.
Maintain interagency collaboration and community contacts to increase public awareness of SCCB services	National Federation of the Blind	Talks about SCCB at their meetings and conferences.
	Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, SC Chapter	SCCB is listed as a resource on AERBVI of Charleston website.
	Department of Archives & History -Disability Coordinator	Includes SCCB information at job fairs.
	South Carolina Schools for the Deaf and Blind; Goodwill Industries	Promotes SCCB to their consumers and partners.
	Department of Education	Promotes SCCB to schools and other partners.
	Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)	Provides free consultations.
Expand job search, development and placement opportunities	Goodwill Industries	Offers job placement assistance.
	Blue Cross Blue Shield; Verizon Wireless	OJT and placement opportunities.
	Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs	Provides information and contacts for federal job placement opportunities.
	Department of Employment and Workforce; National Employment Team (NET)-South East	Job placement assistance

	Region; South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department; McKissick Museum/Library USC-Thomas Cooper Library; Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, SC Chapter; Anderson Mayors Committee; Richland- Columbia Mayor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities; SC Governor's Committee; Spartanburg Mayor Committee; Summerville Mayor's Committee; VA Hospital -Non Profit; Greater Charleston Call Center Alliance-Division of Charleston Chamber of Commerce; SC Liaison Industrial Group	
	Medical University of SC, Storm Eye Clinic; SC State Museum; SC State University Assistive Technology Program--USC School of Medicine; American Red Cross -Non-Profit; United Way 211-Non Profit; Harvest Hope Food Bank -Non Profit; SC State Library-Talking Book Services	internships
	Richland County Library	Job search
Increase the number of successful closures by 10% in FY 2015	Goodwill Industries	Skills training and placement assistance.
	Blue Cross Blue Shield; Verizon Wireless	Job placement assistance
	Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs; Department of Employment and Workforce	Contacts for federal job placement.
Maintain 80% of competitive employment placements at or above the minimum wage	Goodwill Industries	Training and placement
	Verizon Wireless	Placement
	Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs	Provides information on companies with federal contracts who must meet the
	National Federation of the Blind	Offers IDL training to rural and underserved areas which allows consumers the opportunity to maintain employment.
	Social Security Administration/Work Incentives for the Blind	Provides work incentives to encourage employment for consumers.

Provide adjustment to blindness and independent living skills training to Blind and visually impaired consumers	National Federation of the Blind; South Carolina Schools for the Deaf and Blind	Outreach services
	SC State University Orientation and Mobility Program	Updates on upcoming assistive technology.
	Columbia College; Blue Cross Blue Shield; Verizon Wireless; ABLE SC	Sensitivity training
Maintain community interaction and develop referral sources in unserved and underserved rural counties	National Federation of the Blind	Talks about SCCB at their meetings and conferences.
	Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired, SC Chapter	SCCB is listed as a resource on AERBVI of Charleston website.
	Department of Archives & History -Disability Coordinator	Includes SCCB information at job fairs.
	South Carolina Schools for the Deaf and Blind; Goodwill Industries	Promotes SCCB to their consumers and partners.
	Department of Education	Promotes SCCB to schools and other partners.
	Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)	Provides free consultations.
	Department of Archives & History -Disability Coordinator	Includes SCCB information at job fairs.
Conduct home and community meetings to coordinate individualized training	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.
Collaborate with nonprofit, social and human service organizations to provide early intervention services	BabyNet; PRO-Parents of SC	Coordinates with SCCB to provide free services to children with visual impairments.

Maintain a diversified workforce	indeed.com	Browse resumes and contact potential qualified candidates
	State Ethics Commission	Provides ethical guidance through yearly activity reporting
	SC Human Affairs	Provides consultative services and serves as a collecting house for workforce utilization data
	SC Budget and Control Board	Provides consultative services on HR matters
	Department of Homeland Security/E-Verify	Provides verification of eligibility and identify of hired individuals
Ensure the timely submission of EPMS documents for all permanent employees	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.
Provide staff development training to improve employee's skills	Labor Licensing & Regulation; Insurance Reserve Fund	Provides staff training at no cost
	Helen Keller National Center (HKNC)	Provides staff training
	Hadley School for the Blind	Staff participates in free online courses
	American Red Cross -Non-Profit	Trains outreach staff in CPR.
	SC Division of Technology Operations	Training for I.T. staff
	Training Concepts	Training for I.T. staff on their website.
	Freedom Scientific	Free A.T. training for staff.
Automate and maintain the integrity of agency workflow data systems	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.	Duties performed as job responsibilities of SCCB staff.

Part II. Agency Relationships and Public Input

Public Comments about the Agency

In the House Legislative Oversight Committee’s September 2015 public survey, the opinions of the 143 participants who chose to provide their opinion about the agency were divided, with some expressing no opinion (19.58% - 28).⁴⁶ The significant majority (61.54%) of participants had a positive (13.29% - 19) or very positive opinion (48.25% - 69) of the agency.⁴⁷ A small number (18.88% - 27) of participants had a negative or very negative opinion of the agency. Many participants answered that they had knowledge of the agency through media coverage (25.36% -35), through a personal experience (19.57% -27) or business experience (14.49% -20) with the agency.⁴⁸

Written comments about the agency were provided by 43 survey participants; often, those comments addressed more than one topic.⁴⁹ Some of the topics addressed in the written comments are listed in Table 3. The complete comments can be found online.⁵⁰ Responses to online surveys posted on the Committee’s webpage are provided verbatim as they were received by the Committee. They are not the comments or expression of the House Legislative Oversight Committee, any of its Subcommittees, or the House of Representatives.⁵¹

Table 3. Some topics addressed by survey participants in written comments about the agency.⁵²

Topic	Number of Comments
Management	10
Quality of Service	6
Need for the Agency	6
Awareness of Agency	5
Positive	4

Part III. Resources: Availability and Allocation

Financial Capital

Available - Sources, amount and any restrictions on use

A brief background on the state budget process is included in Appendix A - State Budget.

Historical information about the agency's budget levels over the past five years is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. Agency budget levels for the past five years.⁵³

Recurring Funding					
	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
General*	\$2,218,925.00	\$2,546,936.00	\$2,764,363.00	\$2,964,963.00	\$3,147,333.00
Other	\$193,000.00	\$293,000.00	\$293,000.00	\$293,000.00	\$403,000.00
Federal	\$8,291,325.00	\$7,509,546.00	\$8,433,255.00	\$8,433,255.00	\$8,433,255.00
Carry Forward	\$193,390.53	\$186,891.18	\$227,462.97	\$274,406.26	\$261,774.89
TOTAL	\$10,896,640.53	\$10,536,373.18	\$11,718,080.97	\$11,965,624.26	\$12,245,362.89

*General takes into account beginning base, vetoes, BPI, and the health allocation.

Non-Recurring Funding⁵⁴

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
General	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$21,540 (EB)
TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$21,540

EB = Employee Bonuses

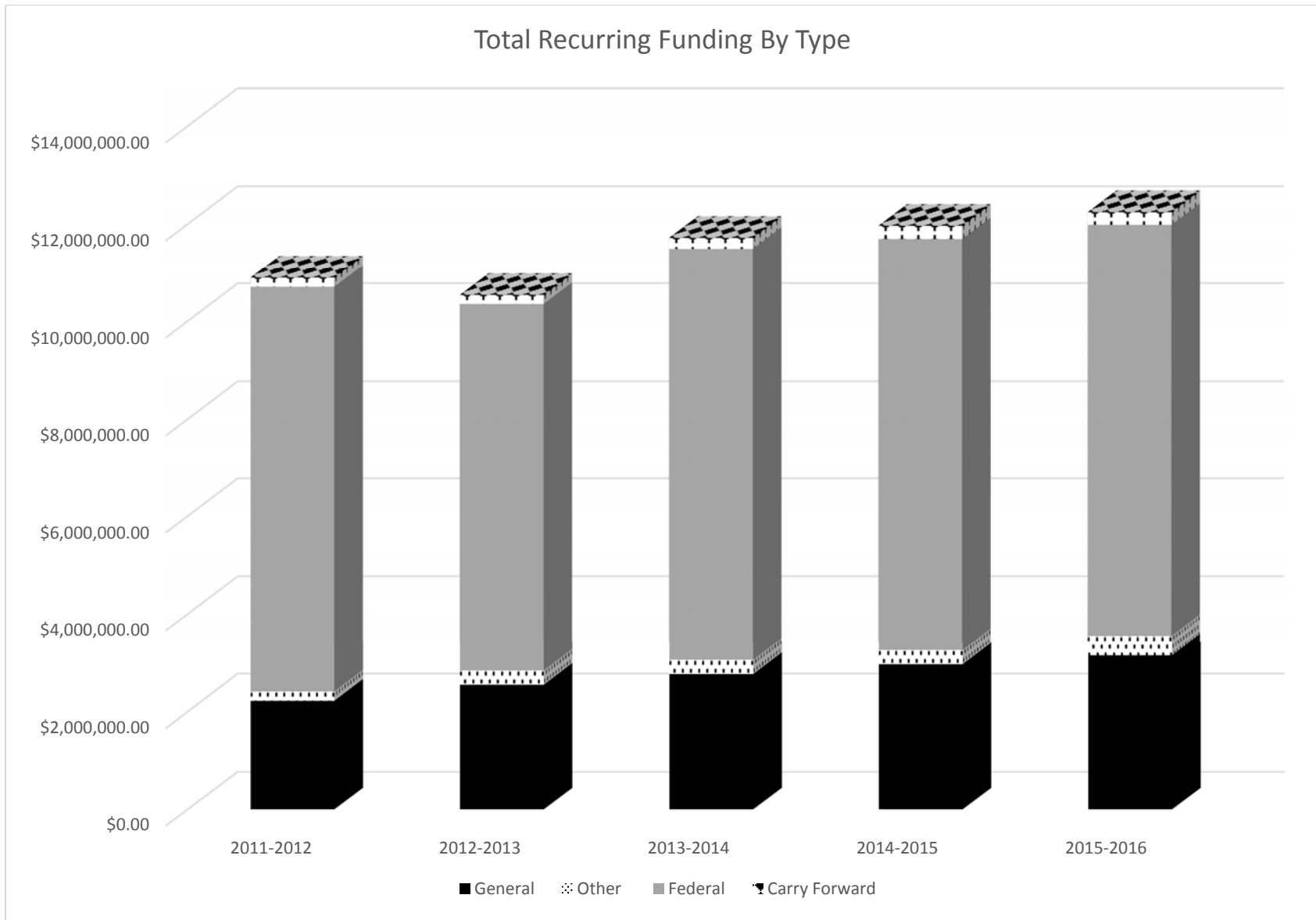


Figure 4. Total recurring funding for the agency by funding type during the past five years.⁵⁵

Part III. Resources: Availability and Allocation

Financial Capital

Strategic Allocation - Amount budgeted to, and spent on, each Objective in the Strategic Plan

Note: There is only one year of information available for allocation of funding by objective as this is a new process for state agencies. Previously agencies only allocated funding by program.

Information on how the agency spent the money available to it by objective and, if applicable, unrelated purpose, is set forth in Table 5.

Table 5. Agency funds available to spend in 2015-16 and where the agency budgeted to spend those funds.⁵⁶

Funds Available (2015-2016)				
	Totals	Source of Funds		
		State Appropriation	Other	Federal
Restrictions on how agency is able to spend the funds from this source:		None	Some*	Some*
Amount estimated to have available to spend this fiscal year: (the rows to the left should populate automatically from what the agency entered in Part A)	\$11,869,863.00	\$3,174,108.00 (27%)	\$262,500.00 (2%)	\$8,433,255.00 (71%)
Are expenditure of funds tracked through SCEIS? (if no, state the system through which they are recorded so the total amount of expenditures could be verified, if needed)		Yes	Yes	Yes
Goal 1 - Deliver quality, individualized vocational rehabilitation services that will assist Blind and visually impaired individuals in obtaining or maintaining competitive integrated employment.	\$7,642,205.00	\$1,391,415.00	\$142,781.00	\$6,108,009.00

Objective 1.1.1-Increase public awareness of SCCB services to the unserved and underserved minorities and rural counties	\$443,220.00	\$266,181.00	\$10,827.00	\$166,212.00
Objective 1.1.2-Expand outreach services to unserved and underserved rural counties	\$701,366.00	\$121,945.00	\$13,273.00	\$566,148.00
Objective 1.1.3-Develop a commensurate ratio of consumer to provider on all caseloads to ensure expediency of service in all areas	\$280,481.00	\$55,848.00	\$15,668.00	\$208,965.00
Objective 1.2.1-Provide adjustment to blindness, assistive technology and job readiness training consistently at EMBRC and in outreach locations	\$2,336,720.00	\$439,155.00	\$66,297.00	\$1,831,268.00
Objective 1.2.2-Expand job search, development and placement opportunities	\$1,056,872.00	\$130,128.00	\$8,995.00	\$917,749.00
Objective 1.2.3-Increase successful placement rate for youth consumers aged 14 to 21 and consumers requiring supported employment services	\$1,104,368.00	\$134,346.00	\$8,567.00	\$961,455.00
Objective 1.2.4-Increase the number of successful case closures	\$1,719,178.00	\$243,812.00	\$19,154.00	\$1,456,212.00
Goal 2 - Provide services to assist eligible consumers who are not seeking employment to maintain the highest level of self-sufficiency possible	\$1,815,673.00	\$505,009.00	\$72,394.00	\$1,238,270.00
Objective 2.1.1-Increase community interaction through home visits and developing new referral sources in unserved and underserved rural counties	\$1,274,618.00	\$228,364.00	\$57,188.00	\$989,066.00

Objective 2.1.2-Collaborate with nonprofit, social and human service organizations to provide early intervention services	\$541,055.00	\$276,645.00	\$15,206.00	\$249,204.00
Goal 3 - Provide the administrative leadership to build a strong team that will strive to fulfill the agency mission	\$2,411,985.00	\$1,277,684.00	\$47,325.00	\$1,086,976.00
Objective 3.1.1-Develop a process to attract highly qualified candidates and heighten employee satisfaction to increase retention	\$724,270.00	\$421,374.00	\$11,443.00	\$291,453.00
Objective 3.1.2-Provide staff development training to improve employee's skills and provide up-to-date information to consumers	\$881,440.00	\$477,132.00	\$20,011.00	\$384,297.00
Objective 3.1.3-Strengthen the communication among the leadership team to create a consistent flow of information to staff	\$806,275.00	\$379,178.00	\$15,871.00	\$411,226.00
Total Budgeted to Spend on Objectives and Unrelated Purposes: (this should be the same as Amount estimated to have available to spend this fiscal year)	\$11,869,863.00	\$3,174,108.00	\$262,500.00	\$8,433,255.00

*Restrictions include the donor wishes, consumer use only, and grant guidelines.

Part III. Resources: Availability and Allocation

Employees

Available - Total number and types

Note: A brief background on the different types of state employees is included in Appendix B - State Employees.

Historical information about the agency’s available and filled full time equivalent (FTE) employee positions over the past five years as well as filled non-FTE employees is provided in Table 6. The numbers for 2010-11 through 2013-14 are as of June each year, the last month in that fiscal year. The November 2015 number represents the most recent information available at the time of publication.

Table 6. Agency employee levels for the past five years.⁵⁷

General Fund Full Time Equivalent Positions (FTEs)					
	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14	Nov-15
Authorized	50.74	39.87	34.67	34.67	33.67
Filled*	25.93	21.76	24.55	24.26	27.05
Unfilled	24.81	18.11	10.12	10.41	6.62

*At a point in time

Total FTEs (General + Other + Federal Fund)					
	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14	Nov-15
Authorized	136.85	113.85	107.85	107.85	106.85
Filled*	95.00	95.00	96.00	91.00	94.00
Unfilled	41.85	18.85	11.85	16.85	12.85

*At a point in time

Non FTE Employees		
	Temporary	Temporary Grant
Jun-11	15	19
Jun-12	18	4
Jun-13	20	5
Jun-14	17	5
Nov-15	15	4

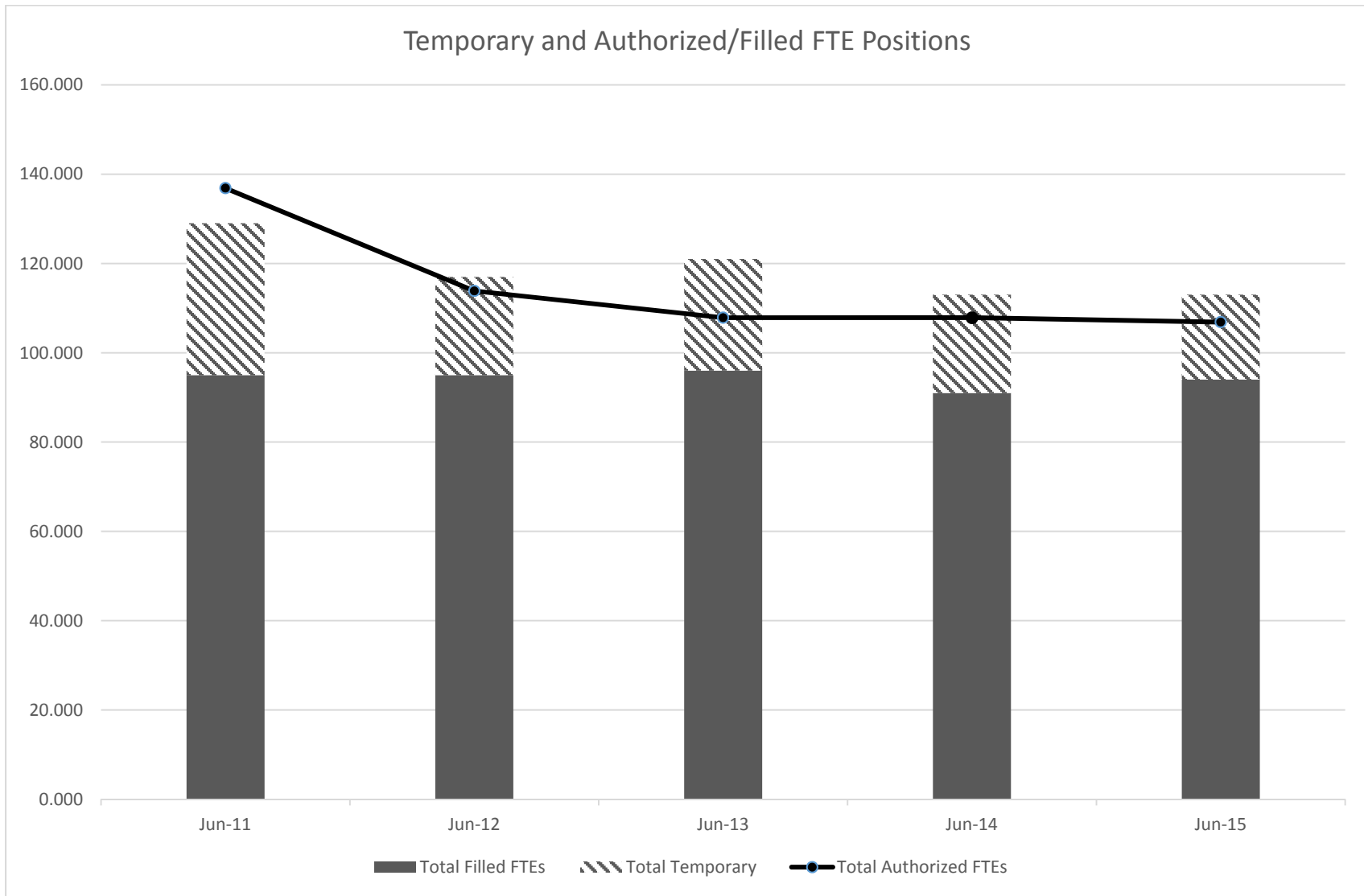


Figure 5. Temporary and Authorized/Filled positions at the agency during the past five years⁵⁸

Part III. Resources: Availability and Allocation

Employees

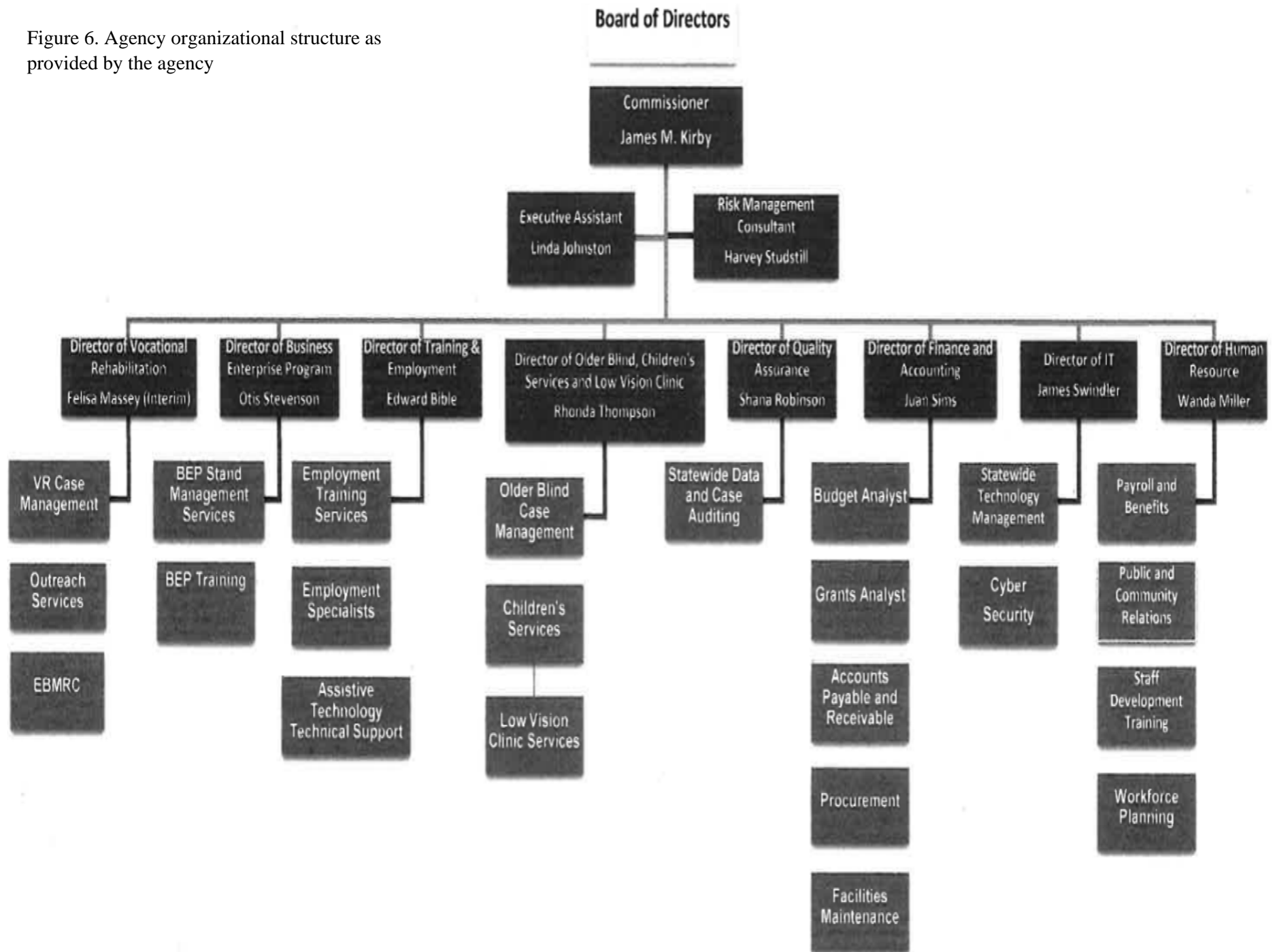
*Strategic Allocation*⁵⁹

Table 7 provides information on the number of employees at the agency, by department, from 2010-11 through 2015-16. Figure 6. on the next page provides information on the agency's current organization chart.

Table 7. Number of employees at the agency, by organizational unit, from 2010-11 through 2015-16.⁶⁰

	Jun-11	Jun-12	Jun-13	Jun-14	Nov-15
Commission for the Blind	1	1	1	1	1
Quality Assurance	1	1	1	1	1
Commissioners Office - Administrative	1	1	1	1	1
Accounting - Finance	8	8	7	8	9
Human Resource - Payroll & Recruiting	4	2	4	4	4
Information Technology	1	2	2	2	2
Business Enterprise Program	12	12	12	12	12
Training and Employment	13	12	12	12	12
Consumer Services	40	47	47	42	42
Prevention and Older Blind	14	9	9	8	10
Temporary	34	22	25	22	19

Figure 6. Agency organizational structure as provided by the agency



APPENDIX A. GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT BACKGROUND

State government’s **total budget**, which is found each year in the appropriations act, is **made up of three funds: federal, general, and other**. The annual appropriations act authorizes a maximum amount that agencies may spend for the fiscal year. The General Assembly may adjust the agencies’ authorizations. The state’s general fund, on the other hand, is South Carolina’s bank account; those are the taxes and fees that are available to the General Assembly to appropriate every year.

Table 4. Background on the budget process.

Federal Funds (Fund Code 5000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorization • Examples: Medicaid; Education; Higher Education – Research and financial aid grants; Federal gas tax
Other Funds (State Earmarked = Fund Code 3000) (State Restricted = Fund Code 4000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorization • State Earmarked (a.k.a. Fund Code 3000 or Other Funds) - Special revenues which are to be used for a specific use; typically the revenue is from the agency providing some type of service for which it earns fees and the earmarked funds are those portion of fees that are kept by the agency (i.e. tuition and fees for universities; DNR license fees; etc.) • State Restricted (a.k.a. Fund Code 4000 or Other Funds) - Special deposits, primarily debt service and trust funds; these funds earn interest and the interest goes back into the account (i.e. bonds, trusts, etc.)
General Funds (Fund Code 1000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriated • South Carolina’s Bank Account

When the funds are authorized or appropriated, it can be **recurring or non-recurring**. Non-recurring dollars are money available to spend on a one-time expense. Examples of funds that are authorized or appropriated on a non-recurring basis include (a) excess money (e.g. projected year end surplus not included in recurring estimate; cash in the bank that exceeded previous year’s estimate; vetoed items sustained by the General Assembly); (b) money from lawsuits where the State is a plaintiff; and (c) capital reserve funds.

The **Annual Appropriations Act** generally consists of three main parts. These parts are provided in Table 5.

Table 5. Main Parts of the Annual Appropriations Act.

Part IA	Part IB	Part II
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes funding levels for state agencies • Looks like a “budget” • Also known as the “Dollars” section of the Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary laws effective for the fiscal year • Regulates the expenditure of funds appropriated to agencies in Part 1A and may make provisions for the operation of state government • Also known as “provisos” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent provisions of law • Not included in the annual appropriations act since fiscal year 2000-2001

In previous years, there have also been Part III and even Part IV to the Appropriations Act, which were utilized for various purposes.

The budget process includes three main phases in its **timeline**. These phases are illustrated in Figure 7.

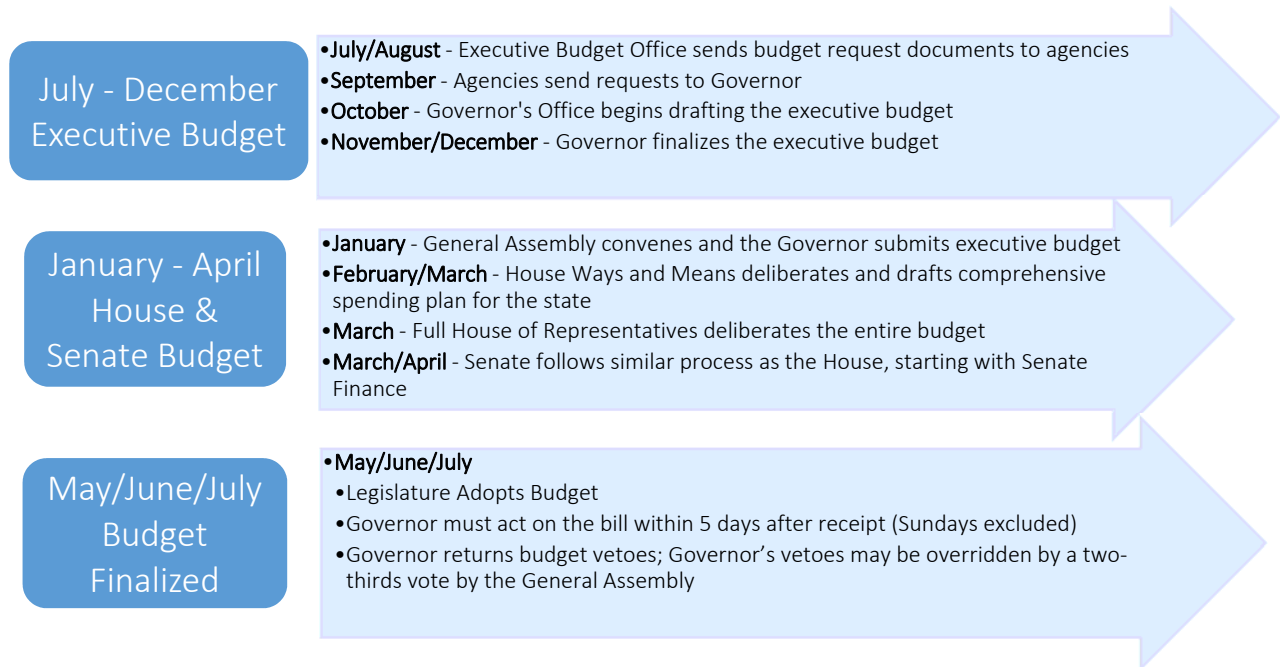


Figure 7. Phases of the budget process.

APPENDIX B - STATE EMPLOYEES

Type of State Employees⁶¹

The main entity who keeps track of employees is the Division of State Human Resources within the Department of Administration.⁶²

There are four main types of state employees which are as follows:

(1) **Temporary** - These positions are full-time or part-time positions created for a period of time not to exceed one year.

(2) **Time-Limited** - These positions are positions established to perform work directly associated with a time-limited project. The main difference between a temporary employee and a time-limited employee is the time-limited employee is employed to work on a particular project, and is employed only until the goals are met or the funding ends for that project.

(3) **Temporary Grant** - These positions are positions established to perform work directly associated with federal grants, public charity grants, private foundation grants, or research grants.

(4) **Full-time Equivalent (FTE)** - Within the full time type of employment (FTE), there are two main groupings, classified and unclassified. Agencies are granted a specific number of classified and unclassified FTE positions as part of the budget process, which must be kept in balance throughout the fiscal year.

(a) **Classified FTE** - In the classified system, each position is assigned to a class. A class is a group of positions sufficiently similar in the duties performed; degree of supervision exercised or received; minimum requirements of education or experience; and the knowledge, skills, and abilities required that the Division of State Human Resources applies the same State class title and the same State salary range to each position in the group. The State class titles are grouped into the following categories: Administrative, Information Services, Education, Health Services, Human Services, Technical Services, Law Enforcement and Regulatory Services, Trade Services, and Agricultural and Natural Resources. Each State class title is assigned to one of 10 State salary ranges, or pay bands. The classified system is governed by sections 19-702 and 19-705 of the State Human Resources Regulations, Classification Plan and Classified Employee Pay Plan.

(b) **Unclassified FTE** - In the unclassified system, each position is assigned to an unclassified State title. Unlike the classified system, however, unclassified titles do not have class specifications, which outline examples of the duties performed; degree of supervision exercised or received; minimum requirements of education or experience; the knowledge, skills, and abilities required; and a State salary range for the position. Therefore, State agencies are afforded greater flexibility with unclassified positions than with classified positions. The unclassified system is governed by applicable portions of section 19-706 of the State Human Resources Regulations, Establishment

of Unclassified Positions and Unclassified Employee Pay Plan. There are four distinct groups of unclassified positions:

(b) **Unclassified FTE** (cont.) - There are four distinct groups of unclassified positions:

(1) **Agency heads covered by the Agency Head Salary Commission,**

The compensation of agency heads covered by the Agency Head Salary Commission is governed by the Commission.

(2) **Executive compensation system,**

In the Executive Compensation System, each position is evaluated by the State Division of Human Resources based on the Hay Method of Job Evaluation. Through this evaluation process, each position is assigned a given number of points based on the three attributes of Know-How, Problem-Solving, and Accountability. The sum of these points is then used to calculate a salary range for the specific position. The position is assigned an unclassified title; however, the salary range is tied to the evaluation of the specific position, not the title assigned to the position. Therefore, different positions with the same title may have different Hay evaluations and salary ranges. The Executive Compensation System is primarily utilized for deputy directors or other high level management positions within State agencies.

(3) **Academic personnel, and**

(4) **Unclassified other,** which includes teachers, agency heads not covered by the Agency Head Salary Commission, and other positions exempted from the State Classification and Compensations Plan by the General Assembly.

The compensation of academic personnel and unclassified other positions are governed by the agencies within the provisions the State Human Resources Regulations and other applicable state laws.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Visual Summary Figure 1 is compiled from information in Commission for the Blind, *Restructuring and Seven-Year Plan Report*, found at “Restructuring and Seven-Year Plan Report,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind,” <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/2015AgencyRestructuringandSevenYearPlanReports/2015%20Commission%20for%20the%20Blind.pdf> (last accessed February 19, 2016). Commission for the Blind, *Program Evaluation Report*, found at “Program Evaluation Report,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind” <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/2015%20Program%20Evaluation%20Reports/Commission%20for%20the%20Blind%20Program%20Evaluation%20Report.PDF> (last accessed February 19, 2016).
- ² Commission for the Blind, *Restructuring and Seven -Year Plan Report*, Purpose, Mission and Vision Chart.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ Visual Summary Table 1 is compiled from information in Commission for the Blind, *Restructuring and Seven-Year Plan Report*, found at “Restructuring and Seven-Year Plan Report,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind,” <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/2015AgencyRestructuringandSevenYearPlanReports/2015%20Commission%20for%20the%20Blind.pdf> (last accessed February 19, 2016). Commission for the Blind, *Program Evaluation Report*, found at “Program Evaluation Report,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind” <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/2015%20Program%20Evaluation%20Reports/Commission%20for%20the%20Blind%20Program%20Evaluation%20Report.PDF> (last accessed February 19, 2016).
- ⁵ *SC Constitution*, art. XII, sec. 1. The full text of the SC Constitution is available on the SC General Assembly’s website, “SC Constitution,” <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sconstitution/sconst.php> (last accessed July 27, 2015).
- ⁶ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-5. The full text of the unannotated version of the SC Code of Laws is available on the SC General Assembly’s website, “Code of Laws,” under “South Carolina Law,” <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/statmast.php> (last accessed July 7, 2015).
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-20(B).
- ⁹ SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “Standard Practice 9,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Standard Practices,” <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/committeefinfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/SP06252015.pdf> (last accessed July 5, 2015).
- ¹⁰ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-20(A).
- ¹¹ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-20-30(C)(1).
- ¹² *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-20(C).
- ¹³ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-50.
- ¹⁴ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-70.
- ¹⁵ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-80 and sec. 2-2-90.
- ¹⁶ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-100 through 120.
- ¹⁷ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-30(C)(2).
- ¹⁸ SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “Subcommittees -2016,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/S1.pdf> (last accessed February 26, 2016).
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Standard Practice 10.4.
- ²¹ SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “September 2015 Survey Results,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” and under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind” <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/Survey/September%202015%20Survey%20Results.pdf> (last accessed February 19, 2016). The survey is closed. The survey sought comments from the public about the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank, the School for the Deaf and Blind, the Commission for the Blind, the Department of Public Safety, and the Treasurer’s Office.
- ²² SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “Provide feedback about a state agency,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports.”
- ²³ SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “Commission for the Blind,” under “Committee’s Seven-Year Study Cycle” and under “Agencies Currently Under Study,” <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/AgencyPHPFiles/SchoolForDeafandBlind.php> (last accessed February 26, 2016). The agency’s 2016 Annual Restructuring Report has not been posted online as of February 26, 2016. All 2016 Annual Restructuring Reports will be posted online at the same time. Pursuant to Committee Standard Practices, some agencies have requested and been granted extensions for submission of these reports to the House Legislative Oversight Committee.
- ²⁴ Standard Practice 11.1.
- ²⁵ As a staff study is similar to a bill summary, the disclaimer required by House Rule 4.9 for bill summaries prepared by staff has been modified.
- ²⁶ Standard Practice 11.4.
- ²⁷ Standard Practice 11.5 -11.7.
- ²⁸ Standard Practice 11.8-11.9.
- ²⁹ *SC Code of Laws*, sec. 2-2-20(C).

³⁰ “The History of the Commission”, SC Commission for the Blind (last accessed March 2, 2016), <http://www.sccb.state.sc.us/history.php>

³¹ *SC Code of Laws*, sec 43-25-10.

³² Commission for the Blind Website, Organizational Structure Page. <http://www.sccb.state.sc.us/orgstructure.php> (last accessed March 3, 2016).

³³ Commission for the Blind, Restructuring and Seven -Year Plan Report, Purpose, Mission and Vision Chart.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Information in this section is compiled from Commission for the Blind, 2016 Annual Restructuring Report, Mission, Vision & Goals Chart.

³⁹ Information in this section is compiled from Commission for the Blind, 2016 Annual Restructuring Report, Mission, Vision & Goals Chart and Strategy, Objectives & Responsibility Chart.

⁴⁰ Information in this section is compiled from Commission for the Blind, 2016 Annual Restructuring Report, Objective Details Charts.

⁴¹ Commission for the Blind, Restructuring and Seven-Year Plan Report, Key Partners Chart, Key Customers Chart, and Key Stakeholders Chart. Commission for the Blind, Program Evaluation Report, Strategically Planned Partners Chart and Partner Details Chart.

⁴² Commission for the Blind, Restructuring and Seven-Year Plan Report, Key Partners Chart, Key Customers Chart, and Key Stakeholders Chart.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Information in this section is compiled from Commission for the Blind, Restructuring and Seven -Year Plan Report, Key Stakeholders Chart and Key Customers Chart.

⁴⁵ Information in this section is compiled from Commission for the Blind, 2016 Annual Restructuring Report, Objective Details Charts.

⁴⁶ SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “September 2015 Survey Results,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind”, <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/AgencyPHPFiles/CommissionFortheBlind.php> (last accessed February 10, 2016).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “September 2015 Survey Results,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind”, <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/AgencyPHPFiles/CommissionFortheBlind.php> (last accessed February 10, 2016).

⁵² SC House of Representatives, House Legislative Oversight Committee, “September 2015 Survey Results,” under “Citizens’ Interest,” under “House Legislative Oversight Committee Postings and Reports,” and under “Commission for the Blind”, <http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/Survey/September%202015%20Survey%20Results.pdf> (last accessed February 10, 2016).

⁵³ Table 4 information is compiled from a review of documents provided during an interview of Les Boles at the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office. Les Boles, interviewed by Charles Appleby, June 2015 and February 2016. These amounts do not include Aid to Subdivisions funds.

⁵⁴ House Ways and Means Committee considers all non-recurring funding, non-recurring general funds. Interview of House Ways and Means Staff Budget Director, Daniel Boan. Daniel Boan interviewed by Charles Appleby, January 2016.

⁵⁵ Figure 3 information is compiled from a review of documents provided during an interview of Les Boles at the South Carolina Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office. Les Boles interviewed by Charles Appleby, June 2015 and February 2016.

⁵⁶ Commission for the Blind, 2016 Annual Restructuring Report, Strategic Budgeting Chart.

⁵⁷ Table 7 information is compiled from the following sources: Authorized - Review of General Appropriations Acts from fiscal year 2010-11 through fiscal year 2014-2015 which are available on the General Assembly’s website under “Legislation,” and under “Budget Bills,” <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/budget.php> (last accessed March 2, 2016). Filled - Charts produced through the South Carolina Enterprise Information System by the South Carolina Department of Administration’s Division of State Human Resources.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ This information is compiled from information obtained from the South Carolina Enterprise Information System by the South Carolina Department of Administration’s Division of State Human Resources; and interviews of Commission for the Blind’s Staff in February 2016.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* The numbers are as of June each year, the last month in that fiscal year.

⁶¹ Information was provided to the Committee during the June 30, 2015 Economic Development, Transportation, Natural Resources and Regulatory Subcommittee meeting by Ms. Kim Adyette, State Director of the Division of Human Resources for the SC Department of Administration. Division of State Human Resources, Department of Administration, <http://admin.sc.gov/humanresources> (last accessed March 2, 2016).

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<http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/2015AgencyRestructuringandSevenYearPlanReports/2015%20Commission%20for%20the%20Blind.pdf>

SC House of Representatives, Legislative Oversight Committee. "September 2015 Survey Results."

<http://scstatehouse.gov/CommitteeInfo/HouseLegislativeOversightCommittee/Survey/September%202015%20Survey%20Results.pdf>

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March 22, 2016

The Honorable Nathan Ballentine
The Honorable Mia S. McLeod
The Honorable Walton J. McLeod
The Honorable Bill Taylor

SC House Legislative Oversight Committee
228 Blatt Building
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you and the other members of the Oversight Committee. A special thank you to Carmen McCutcheon for her invaluable assistance. The process has been a great compliment to the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment currently being conducted at the Commission for the Blind. Working on the two studies has been an incredibly insightful learning experience for all involved.

The Staff Study completed by your team demonstrates where this agency was one year ago. Since that time we have been undergoing a Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment to assist us in transitioning to the new Workforce Investment Opportunities Act. The preliminary report has provided us with positive feedback in many areas and challenging opportunities as well. The two studies have provided the agency with opportunities that have resulted in a number of changes since the first report to the Committee in March 2015.

A new agency Strategic Plan has been developed and implemented by the Senior Management Team. Monthly team meetings are held to discuss progress on the goals, strategies, and objectives. Data is shared on a monthly basis and each program director can see where progress has occurred and challenges remain. New partnerships among the programs have been developed and communication throughout the agency has greatly improved.

The large number of vacancies have been filled with only 4 remaining through the entire agency. Our transition age youth program has seen a 57% increase in referrals. Counselors in Vocational Rehabilitation and

Children's Services have teamed up to visit elementary and high schools across the state which has increased awareness and referrals. The Vocational Rehabilitation program and Training & Employment program have joined to recruit new community partners to provide services in underserved areas of the state. We have a staff member who has been attending numerous Native American events across the state to spread awareness of our services to underserved minorities.

At our main campus the Human Resource department has expanded our online resource file, created and distributed radio spots, created an electronic agency training calendar, and has reduced the time to fill a vacancy by over 30%! The Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center has a new director and is going to be studied as Phase II of the Statewide Needs Assessment. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program has revised the outreach home management positions as JOBS specialists to provide greater supported employment services.

We appreciate the opportunity to share the progress the agency has made and look forward to the recommendations from the Committee that will assist us in serving our consumers and achieving our vision.

Sincerely,

Signature Redacted

James M. Kirby

Commissioner

/emr

The mission of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind 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.