

2025-27 Budget Review

Commission for the Blind

	2021-23 Actual	2023-25 Legislatively Approved *	2025-27 Current Service Level	2025-27 Governor's Budget
General Fund	5,977,652	8,429,871	8,884,498	9,161,859
Other Funds	580,046	1,140,387	1,148,422	1,147,421
Federal Funds	18,638,377	19,299,483	21,905,414	22,116,930
Total Funds	25,196,075	28,869,741	31,938,334	32,426,210
Positions	67	67	67	68
FTE	66.38	67.00	67.00	67.75

* Includes legislative and administrative actions through December 2024.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

As the only statewide organization that provides specialized services to adults who experience vision loss, the mission of the Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB) is to assist blind Oregonians in making informed choices and decisions to achieve full inclusion and integration in society through employment, independent living, and social self-sufficiency. The Commission is a consumer-controlled, seven-member board appointed by the Governor. The Board appoints the agency's executive director.

The agency is organized into five program areas:

- **Vocational Rehabilitation** - the agency's largest program with the goal of assisting Oregonians who are blind or visually impaired to develop skills to maintain or obtain employment.
- **Orientation and Career Center** - a comprehensive teaching center that provides career exploration counseling and comprehensive pre-vocational training on skills such as cane travel, adaptive technology, and Braille. Training facilities and staff are primarily located in Portland, with satellite labs located in Salem, Eugene, Redmond, and Medford. The program also performs job site modification evaluations and recommendations.
- **Business Enterprise** - provides business management opportunities, vocational training, and licensing support to business managers who are blind to manage food service and vending machine businesses located in public buildings throughout the state of Oregon. The federal Randolph-Sheppard Vending Stand Act, enacted in 1935, requires managers of federal buildings to offer blind persons opportunities to establish and operate cafeterias or vending machines. Oregon enacted similar legislation in 1957 that was amended in 2017 (HB 3253) and 2019 (HB 3431).

- **Independent Living Services** - provides training and resources to help Oregonians adjust to vision loss and enable them to live independently in their homes and communities in lieu of moving into assisted living or care facilities. Specialized rehabilitation teachers provide in-home services such as performing assessments, providing referrals to health providers, and other assistance programs, as well as training for techniques of daily living, including orientation and mobility, meal prep, adaptive devices, and Braille.
- **Administration Services** - coordinates the mission and goals of the agency and manages Human Resources, Budget, Accounting, Operations, and Information Systems.

General Fund and Other Funds are used to meet the matching requirements for Federal Funds. Federal Funds can only be expended as described by federal law, regulations, or in grant agreements. These funds are provided through formulas and special grants from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), as authorized by the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. Vocational Rehabilitation Basic Support Funds, often referred to as Section 110, are the primary source of funding and have the varying match rates. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Basic Support has a match rate of 79% federal and 21% state. Independent living and supported employment have a 90% federal to 10% state match rate, with half of the supported employment amount reserved to provide services to youth with the most significant disabilities.

The Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) receives 84.4% of Section 110 Vocational Rehabilitation basic support grant funding, with the Commission receiving the remaining 15.6%. The RSA grant funding maintenance of effort agreement is for the State, so includes both DHS and OCB. This maintenance of effort requirement is based on the prior two years of funding. If state funding is reduced, an equivalent amount of federal funding is lost.

Other Funds include funds received through the Business Enterprise Set-Aside program and Randolph-Sheppard Vending Act, certain cooperative agreements with education providers, bequests and donations, the sale of aid devices to individuals who are blind, and interest income.

BUDGET ENVIRONMENT

To comply with the U.S. Department of Education's federal grant, OCB cannot use federal funds on "indirect employees," or those employees that do not interface directly with clients. OCB has 10 indirect employees funded with a General Fund/Federal Fund split that need to transition to 100% General Fund. The projected cost for shifting all 10 employees to General Fund is \$3 million. During the 2024 legislative session, OCB received \$524,866 General Fund for a portion of these employees. Continuing to transition the indirect staff pay to General Fund will be essential to ensure OCB is budgeted correctly in the future.

OCB intends to submit a request for additional funding in 2023-25 to cover its increased administrative costs resulting from higher caseloads and pay equity evaluations. Additionally, the Commission anticipates requesting approval for a permanent position to transport staff that provide services to clients, and when not transporting staff this position will be a member of the customer service team.

CURRENT SERVICE LEVEL

The 2025-27 current service level (CSL) budget is \$31.9 million total funds and 67 positions (67.00 FTE). CSL is funded with approximately 28% General Fund, 4% Other Fund, and 68% Federal Funds. The CSL total funds budget is \$3.1 million, or 10.6%, above the 2023-25 legislatively approved budget. This increase is attributed to an increase in cost of goods and services as well as state government and services charges.

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET SUMMARY

The 2025-27 Governor's budget for the Commission is \$32.4 million total funds and 68 positions (67.75 FTE), an increase of 1.5% over the current service level, and includes the following investments:

- **Reclassifications** - 19 positions are recommended to be reclassified to align with the Department of Administrative Services' Human Resources Office classification evaluations.
- **Independent Living** - addition of one rehabilitation specialist (0.75 FTE) is recommended to serve an estimated 136 additional clients.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Society increasingly relies on technology to perform daily activities. Available adaptive solutions for individuals who are blind require training and support to ensure that people can access and operate these technologies and remain independent. OCB provides and trains individuals on adaptive solutions to help their clients maintain their independence. As Oregonians age, the need for adaptive solutions and training will increase.

There is a national shortage of professionals in specialized disciplines in the field of blindness rehabilitation, particularly Orientation and Mobility instructors who are certified to teach cane travel to individuals who are blind. As an employer who relies on skilled, committed staff to perform the specialized work of the agency, OCB is facing the challenge of competing with other agencies around the nation to attract and retain workers.

The shift of the workforce from public buildings to a hybrid work model has changed the food service and vending opportunities that exist for entrepreneurs who are blind in the Business Enterprise Program. As a result, OCB has explored other avenues to expand the Business Enterprise Program; however, the number of opportunities has diminished since the pandemic.

Federal legislation transformed the public workforce system to redirect funding from adults to youth requiring pre-employment transition services and services to businesses and their hiring needs.

Among those Oregonians entering retirement, there is an increasing number of seniors experiencing age-related vision loss that affects their ability to perform everyday tasks safely and independently.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES

A copy of the Oregon Commission for the Blind's Annual Performance Progress Report can be found on the LFO website: [KPM - View Report](#)

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