



**Washington State  
Department of Services  
for the Blind**



Strategic Plan

FY 2009 – FY 2015

Lou Oma Durand  
Director

# Table of Contents

Challenges and Opportunities..... 1

Mission Statement..... 2

Statutory Authority..... 3

Agency Goals..... 4

Agency Objectives and Strategies..... 4

Performance Measures and Analysis..... 6

Capacity and Financial Health..... 16

## **DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**

At the Department of Services for the Blind, we use strategic planning as a continuous process that drives everything we do in the agency. As our current strategic plan evolved, we assessed the environment to see what opportunities and challenges exist in both the short and long-term. We analyzed performance data through regular internal GMAP presentations, explored customer expectations, and evaluated our outcomes. We asked critical questions about where we want to be, where we are today, and how we close the gap. We engaged our stakeholders, especially the Governor-appointed State Rehabilitation Council, to provide us feedback on our performance and future expectations.

Based on what we learned, we have focused on a limited number of clear priorities that support the Governor's priorities for our state. Our goals and targets will drive our management and budget decisions as we match resources with priorities. These goals and targets will define the work of programs, teams and individual employees.

DSB faces many challenges in the future. The number of blind and visually disabled residents in the State of Washington continues to grow, especially in the over 65 age group, with unique needs to stay independent in their homes and to have access to information, transportation, health care, community resources and peer support. Federal funding for this group has decreased over the last four years and is not expected to increase in the near future. The nature of our client base is also changing to include more severe and multiple disabilities, including an increase in developmental and cognitive disabilities, mental health issues, substance abuse, etc., requiring enhanced and more comprehensive service delivery strategies and strong partnerships with other providers. And while caseloads and client complexity continue to rise, so do our costs, especially related to assistive technology and higher education.

Our strategic plan recognizes these challenges and sets the groundwork to improve decision making and to strengthen our programs through collaborative efforts with other agencies and the provider community.

## **OVERVIEW**

The Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) was established in 1983 by the adoption of Chapter 74.18 RCW to promote employment and independence of blind persons in the state of Washington through their complete integration into society and to encourage public acceptance of the abilities of blind persons.

To meet this objective, DSB is comprised of Employment Services, Community Programs and Business Services. Employment Services provides for the skills, assistive technology and information that blind and visually impaired residents need to enter into or to remain in the workplace. Community Programs are focused on the elderly, young (together with their families) or other individuals who are not oriented towards the workplace, but need assistance to maintain independence or to get the most out of their education. Business Services provides the agency with the administrative framework to sustain a viable, productive agency. Client services delivery is accomplished with a mix of DSB employees (vocational rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation teachers, information technology specialists, program coordinators for blind/visually impaired, and rehabilitation technicians) partnered with contracted service providers. Client services are tailored to each client's unique needs based on a comprehensive assessment to achieve their individual goals.

## **MISSION**

Inclusion, Independence, and Economic Vitality  
for People with Visual Disabilities

## **VISION**

### Highest Quality Customer Service

We deliver the highest quality services to our customers with warmth, caring, and commitment to our agency values. We are proactive and timely. We tailor our services to each individual in an atmosphere that is friendly and easily accessed.

### Powerful Partnerships

We are the national leader in promoting the skills and abilities of people who are blind and visually impaired. Our community partners view us as a premiere resource. We actively team with participants, the community, and fellow staff members.

### Dynamic Agency Culture

Our culture embraces and rewards creativity and leadership from everyone. Every employee is important to and involved in creating the big picture. We hold ourselves individually accountable and personally responsible. We are committed to continuous self-assessment and improvement. We actively seek opportunities to educate and be educated. We honor and celebrate our differences while providing safe environments. Communications are clear, direct, and with positive intent. Employees are recognized and valued and enjoy working here.

### Effective Business Processes

Our programs are models of best practices, continuous improvement, and reinvention. We are a model of accessibility in our physical spaces and our service delivery. We are successful in capturing all the resources necessary to accomplish our mission.

### Outstanding Outcomes

We create the highest quality outcomes for our participants by meeting the full-range of customer needs in each of our programs. People who are blind and visually impaired go to work in careers of their choice. Participants exit with all the skills needed to manage their lives and careers.

## **VALUES**

We value and encourage a culture where:

**Teamwork,  
Respect,  
Accountability,  
Innovation, and  
Nurturing**

(TRAIN) thrive and are demonstrated at all levels of the organization.

**TEAMWORK** is demonstrated through partnering and collaboration with staff, participants, and the community. Flexibility to deal with each partner and customer as an individual is a key to successful teamwork.

**RESPECT** means treating employees and customers with dignity, and treating others as they would want to be treated; demonstrating compassion for all; honoring differences.

**ACCOUNTABILITY** for fairness in delivery of services and treatment of people; for customer service that exceeds all expectations; for promoting the skills, abilities, and potential of people who are blind and visually impaired; and for demonstrating ethics, integrity, and honesty.

**INNOVATION** comes from an environment where it is safe to take risks and be creative. We embrace change and continuous process improvement. We learn from our mistakes.

**NURTURING** means encouraging employees to be their best through coaching and mentoring; investing in our human resources by encouraging and supporting training, education and opportunities for continuous growth; reinforcing uplifting attitudes; modeling positive intent; and celebrating successes, small and large.

## **REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**

Along with the enabling legislation of Chapter 74.18 RCW and agency rules of Title 67 WAC, DSB operates under the statutes (laws defined in the Revised Code of Washington) and rules (policies defined in the Washington Administrative Code) that govern and oversee all state cabinet agencies. Direct regulatory oversight is provided by the Office of Financial Management, General Administration and the State Auditor's Office. At the federal level, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the Department of Education provides DSB with nearly 80% of our funding.

RSA was established by Congress as the principal federal agency authorized to carry out Titles I, III, VI and VII, as well as specified portions of Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. RSA provides national leadership and administration of,

- basic state and formula grant programs,
- independent living centers,
- rehabilitation training discretionary grant programs, and
- the Randolph-Sheppard Act.

## **GOALS**

1. Improve the economic vitality of residents who have visual disabilities.
2. Improve the security, mobility, health, safety and independence of residents with visual disabilities.
3. Improve program support to gain efficiencies, leverage resources and minimize risk.

These goals and the ensuing objectives and strategies are in direct support of the statewide Priorities of Government to:

- Improve the security of Washington's vulnerable children and adults
- Improve the economic vitality of businesses and individuals
- Strengthen government's ability to achieve results efficiently and effectively

## **OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES and MEASURES**

### 1: Improve the economic vitality of residents who have visual disabilities.

1. Increase the quantity and quality of employment outcomes by focusing on gainful employment, including consideration of employee benefits
  - Share best practices between counselors and teams to utilize performance oriented processes and expand their toolbox of best practices through RSA, other rehabilitation agencies and other states
  - Cultivate and track an employer pool
  - Develop outreach for early intervention on job retention
  - Manage services by combining accountability with informed choice
  - Develop a weighted outcome measure that encompasses the existing measures of placements, rehabilitation rate, length of time in the program, client costs and client earnings, including benefits
2. Develop an improved communications network for clients to focus on early intervention
  - Coordinate efforts with other agencies and organization including, but not limited to, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Health, Labor and Industries, Employment Security, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services, Department of Early Learning, Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program and the Washington State School for the Blind
  - Improve employer outreach and education to inform employers of the capabilities of blind and visually impaired workers versus the cost to train new employees
  - Improve employer strategies for retention
  - Improve the use of the Child & Family program as a transition for clients to move into the Vocational Rehabilitation environment
  - Improve agency visibility by developing a targeted marketing approach to maximize resources and skills

- 2: Improve the security, mobility, health, safety and independence of residents with visual disabilities.
  1. Increase Independent Living services and capacity by developing strong partnerships and expanding resources
    - Refine the scope of work in the IL provider contracts
    - Provide comprehensive skills training and adjustment counseling so that clients in the Independent Living program can maintain or increase their ability to engage in their customary life activities
    - Integrate services with other agencies including, but not limited to, Aging and Disability Services Administration, Department of Health and the Department of Veterans Affairs
    - Develop additional financial resources
  2. Improve program efficiencies
    - Optimize agency expertise
    - Continue to apply information technology consistent with the IT Portfolio for efficient and effective client and business services
    - Assist the outside provider community with training and development programs
    - Educate staff on existing coordinated efforts such as tribal and higher education agreements
    - Develop new agreements for coordinated efforts with other agencies
    - Develop techniques to gather, record and report on the effectiveness of Community Programs
    - Maintain and foster a safe environment for clients and staff
    - Improve the procedures for contract development and monitoring to ensure efficiency and effectiveness
    - Define the optimal caseload mix and share best practices
- 3: Improve program support to gain efficiencies, leverage resources and minimize risk.
  1. Reduce turnover and enhance employee performance and engagement
    - Establish an agency-wide employee development plan, formal recognition program and a comprehensive salary review
    - Deploy employee incentive programs
    - Establish career paths to internally develop a future work force
  2. Maximize resources
    - Review agency procedures from a performance assessment perspective to identify the most effective use of limited resources and to streamline processes
    - Develop dedicated funding sources versus depleting reserves
    - Evaluate new technologies to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of those in use

- Assess the client market to identify needs in order to focus resources
- Target administrative spending at the national average for blind agencies
- Take advantage of current technologies to reduce travel time and costs
- Develop new funding sources and alliances with other state agencies, federal programs and private organizations

3. Manage risk

- Utilize Enterprise Risk Management to assess risks for short and long-term planning
- Review and re-write policies and procedures relating to contracts, travel and safety
- Develop a staff education program for policy compliance
- Utilize internal or third-party audits to ensure compliance with current audit issues and to prepare for future regulatory audits
- Improve housing for resident students

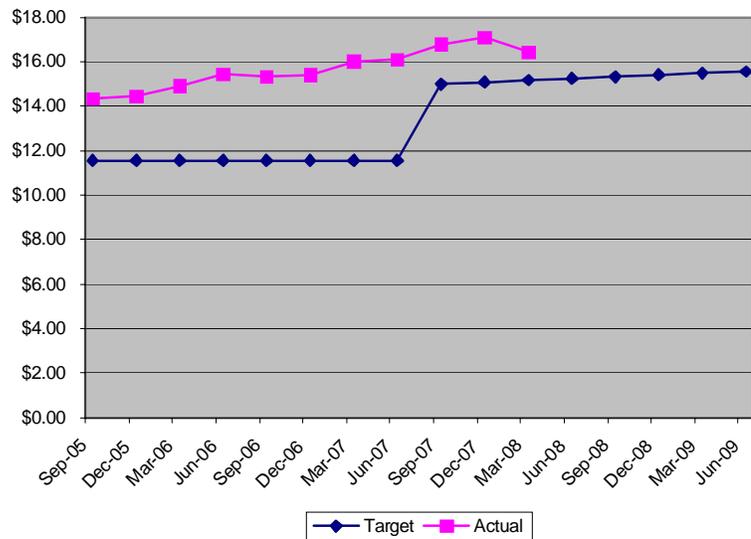
**Performance Measures, Targets and Analysis - Activity Inventory**

**Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services for the Blind**

**Statewide Result Area: Improve the economic vitality of businesses and individuals**

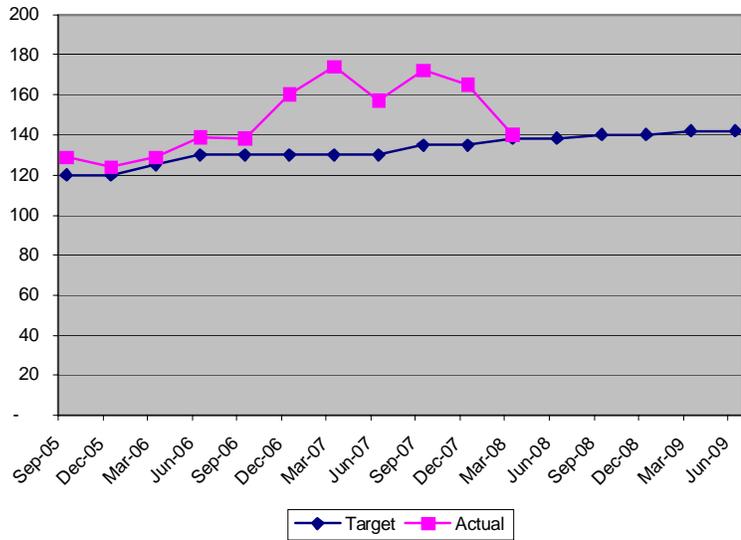
**Average hourly wage of successful Department of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation participant employment outcomes.**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	\$15.56		
	7th Qtr	\$15.48		
	6th Qtr	\$15.40		
	5th Qtr	\$15.32		
	4th Qtr	\$15.24		
	3rd Qtr	\$15.16	\$16.42	\$1.26
	2nd Qtr	\$15.08	\$17.08	\$2.00
2005-07	1st Qtr	\$15.00	\$16.78	\$1.78
	8th Qtr	\$11.55	\$16.10	\$4.55
	7th Qtr	\$11.55	\$16.03	\$4.48
	6th Qtr	\$11.55	\$15.41	\$3.86
	5th Qtr	\$11.55	\$15.31	\$3.76
	4th Qtr	\$11.55	\$15.43	\$3.88
	3rd Qtr	\$11.55	\$14.91	\$3.36
	2nd Qtr	\$11.55	\$14.43	\$2.88
1st Qtr	\$11.55	\$14.34	\$2.79	



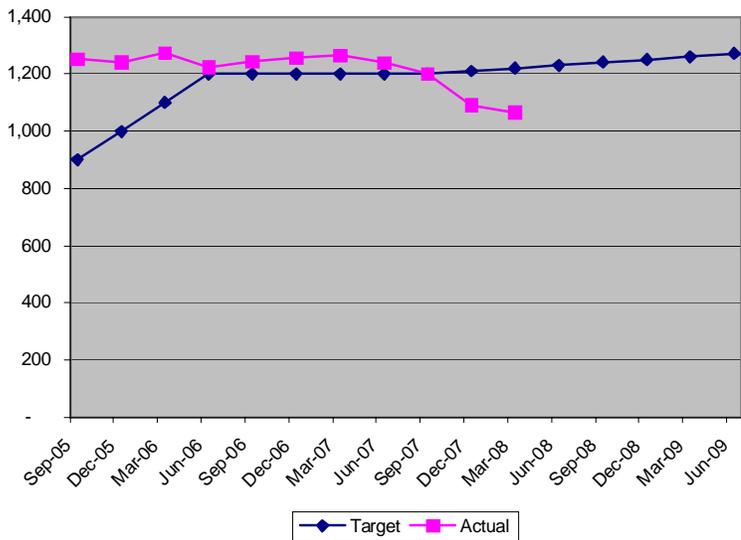
**Annual number of Department of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation clients obtaining employment for the quarter ending:**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	142		
	7th Qtr	142		
	6th Qtr	140		
	5th Qtr	140		
	4th Qtr	138		
	3rd Qtr	138	140	2
	2nd Qtr	135	165	30
	1st Qtr	135	172	37
2005-07	8th Qtr	130	157	27
	7th Qtr	130	174	44
	6th Qtr	130	160	30
	5th Qtr	130	138	8
	4th Qtr	130	139	9
	3rd Qtr	125	129	4
	2nd Qtr	120	124	4
	1st Qtr	120	129	9



**Annual number of Department of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation clients served for the quarter ending:**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	1,270		
	7th Qtr	1,260		
	6th Qtr	1,250		
	5th Qtr	1,240		
	4th Qtr	1,230		
	3rd Qtr	1,220	1,066	(154)
	2nd Qtr	1,210	1,093	(117)
	1st Qtr	1,200	1,201	1
2005-07	8th Qtr	1,200	1,239	39
	7th Qtr	1,200	1,265	65
	6th Qtr	1,200	1,256	56
	5th Qtr	1,200	1,245	45
	4th Qtr	1,200	1,223	23
	3rd Qtr	1,100	1,272	172
	2nd Qtr	1,000	1,241	241
	1st Qtr	900	1,252	352

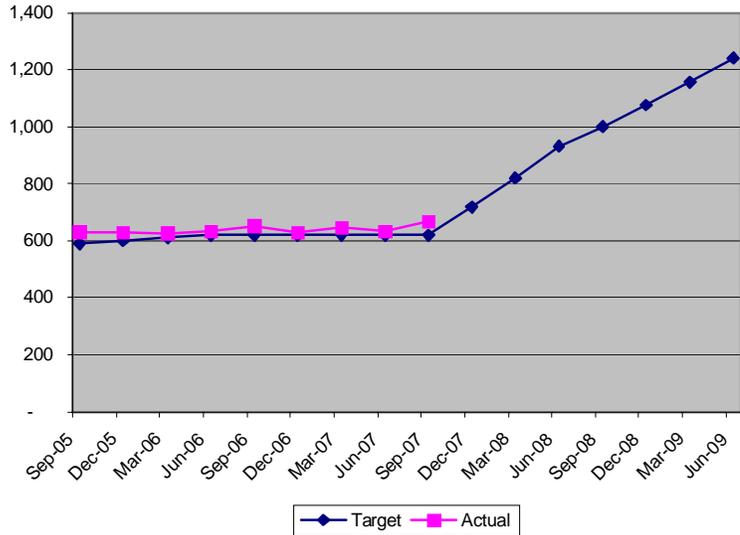


## Community Independent Living and Child and Family Programs

**Statewide Result Area: Improve the security of Washington's vulnerable children and adults**

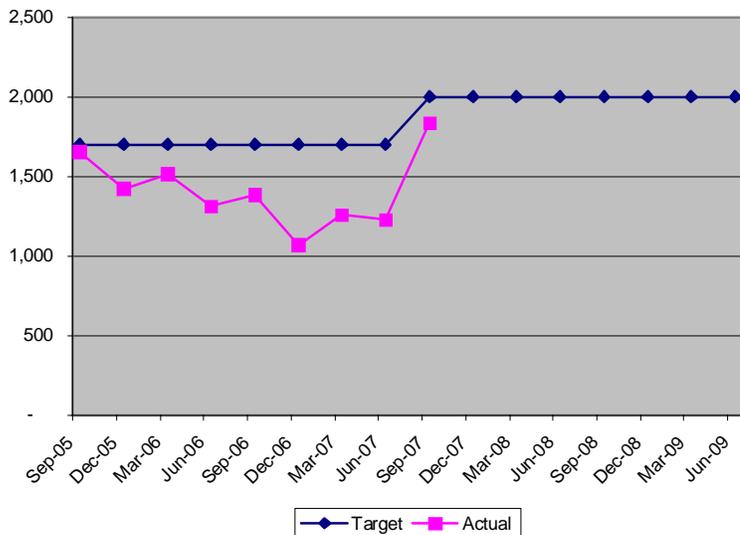
**Annual number of child & family clients served by the Department of Services for the Blind for the quarter ending:**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	1,240		
	7th Qtr	1,155		
	6th Qtr	1,075		
	5th Qtr	1,000		
	4th Qtr	930		
	3rd Qtr	820		
	2nd Qtr	720		
	1st Qtr	620	668	48
2005-07	8th Qtr	620	633	13
	7th Qtr	620	644	24
	6th Qtr	620	629	9
	5th Qtr	620	653	33
	4th Qtr	620	634	14
	3rd Qtr	610	625	15
	2nd Qtr	600	630	30
	1st Qtr	590	632	42



**Annual number of clients served in the independent living program of the Department of Services for the Blind for the quarter ending:**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	2,000		
	7th Qtr	2,000		
	6th Qtr	2,000		
	5th Qtr	2,000		
	4th Qtr	2,000		
	3rd Qtr	2,000		
	2nd Qtr	2,000		
	1st Qtr	2,000	1,836	(164)
2005-07	8th Qtr	1,700	1,228	(472)
	7th Qtr	1,700	1,257	(443)
	6th Qtr	1,700	1,069	(631)
	5th Qtr	1,700	1,385	(315)
	4th Qtr	1,700	1,312	(388)
	3rd Qtr	1,700	1,516	(184)
	2nd Qtr	1,700	1,421	(279)
	1st Qtr	1,700	1,654	(46)

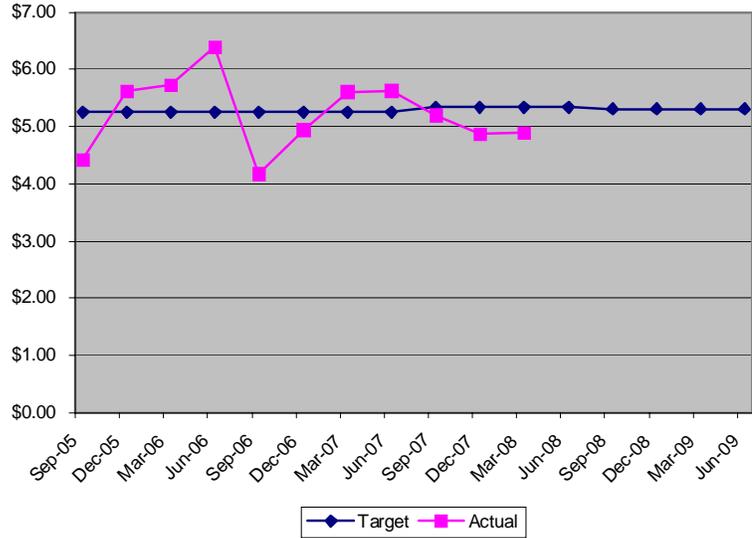


## Department of Services for the Blind - Administration

**Statewide Result Area: Improve the economic vitality of businesses and individuals**

**Ratio of dollars allocated to direct services over dollars allocated to support services in the Department of Services for the Blind.**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	\$5.31		
	7th Qtr	\$5.31		
	6th Qtr	\$5.31		
	5th Qtr	\$5.31		
	4th Qtr	\$5.34		
	3rd Qtr	\$5.34	\$4.89	(\$0.45)
	2nd Qtr	\$5.34	\$4.87	(\$0.47)
	1st Qtr	\$5.34	\$5.20	(\$0.14)
2005-07	8th Qtr	\$5.25	\$5.62	\$0.37
	7th Qtr	\$5.25	\$5.60	\$0.35
	6th Qtr	\$5.25	\$4.94	(\$0.31)
	5th Qtr	\$5.25	\$4.17	(\$1.08)
	4th Qtr	\$5.25	\$6.38	\$1.13
	3rd Qtr	\$5.25	\$5.72	\$0.47
	2nd Qtr	\$5.25	\$5.61	\$0.36
	1st Qtr	\$5.25	\$4.42	(\$0.83)

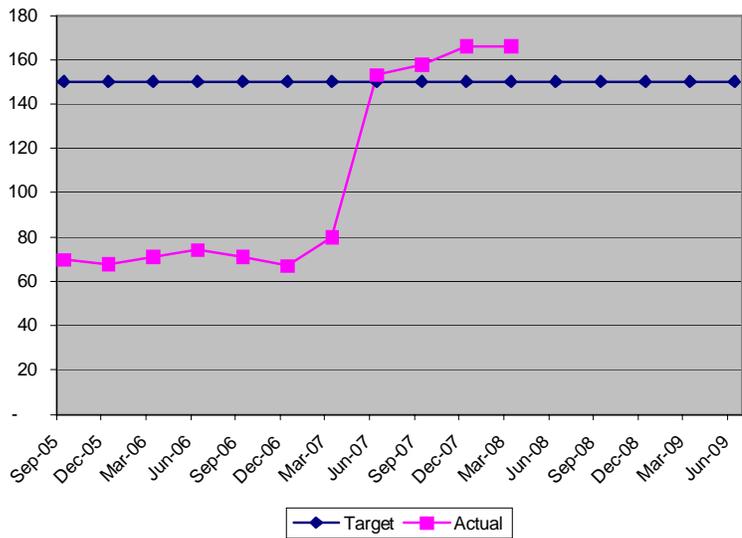


## Telephonic Reading Services for the Blind

**Statewide Result Area: Improve cultural and recreational opportunities throughout the state**

**Number of users of the National Federation of the Blind's telephonic reading services.**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	150		
	7th Qtr	150		
	6th Qtr	150		
	5th Qtr	150		
	4th Qtr	150		
	3rd Qtr	150	166	16
	2nd Qtr	150	166	16
	1st Qtr	150	158	8
2005-07	8th Qtr	150	153	3
	7th Qtr	150	80	(70)
	6th Qtr	150	67	(83)
	5th Qtr	150	71	(79)
	4th Qtr	150	74	(76)
	3rd Qtr	150	71	(79)
	2nd Qtr	150	68	(82)
	1st Qtr	150	70	(80)

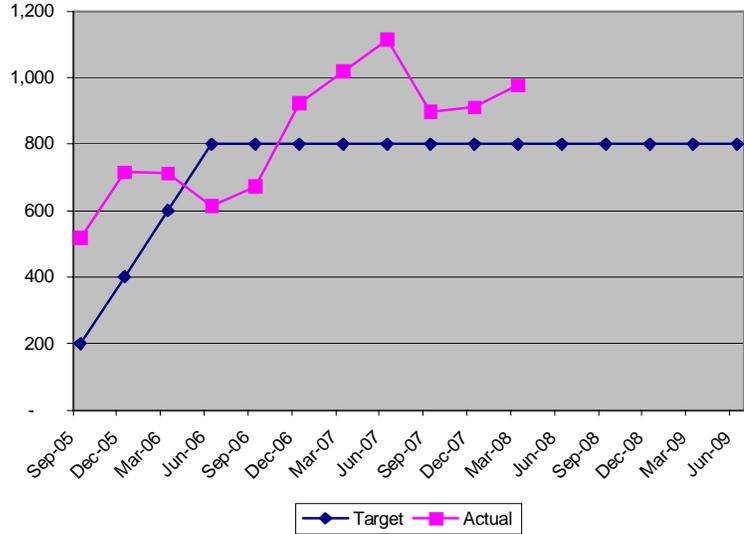


## Deaf-Blind Service Center

**Statewide Result Area: Improve the security of Washington's vulnerable children and adults**

**Hours of service provided to deaf-blind participants by the Deaf Blind Service Center.**

Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	800		
	7th Qtr	800		
	6th Qtr	800		
	5th Qtr	800		
	4th Qtr	800		
	3rd Qtr	800	976	176
	2nd Qtr	800	910	110
	1st Qtr	800	897	97
2005-07	8th Qtr	800	1,115	315
	7th Qtr	800	1,019	219
	6th Qtr	800	923	123
	5th Qtr	800	673	(127)
	4th Qtr	800	615	(185)
	3rd Qtr	600	711	111
	2nd Qtr	400	714	314
	1st Qtr	200	519	319

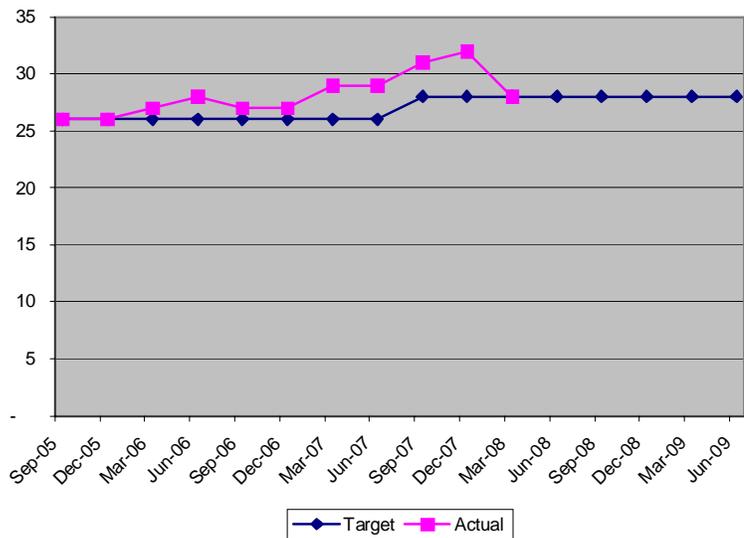


## Blind Vendor Food Services Operations in State Buildings

**Statewide Result Area: Improve the economic vitality of businesses and individuals**

**Number of business enterprise program clients served by the Department of Services for the blind.**

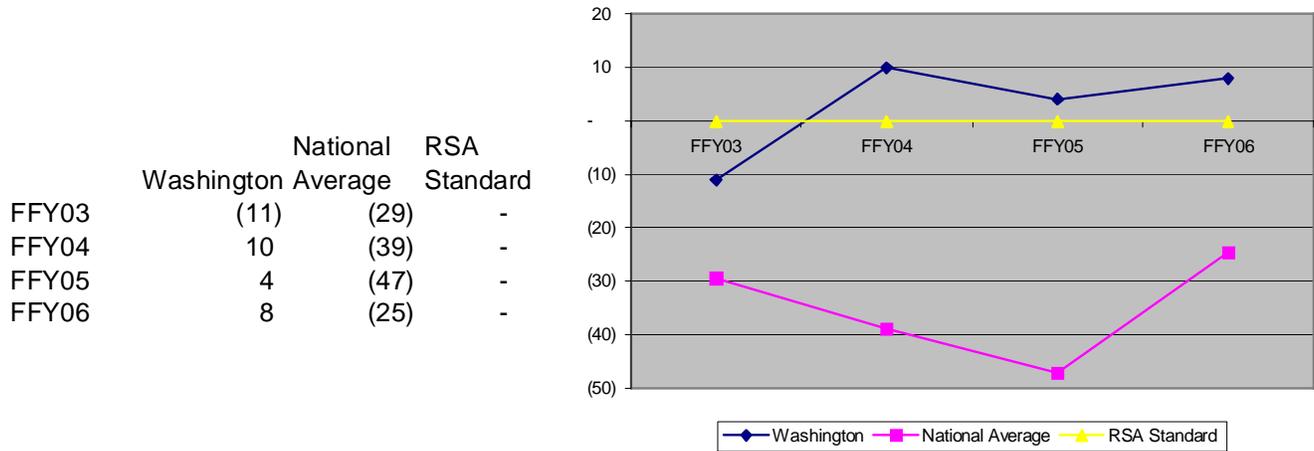
Biennium	Period	Target	Actual	Variance
2007-09	8th Qtr	28		
	7th Qtr	28		
	6th Qtr	28		
	5th Qtr	28		
	4th Qtr	28		
	3rd Qtr	28	28	-
	2nd Qtr	28	32	4
	1st Qtr	28	31	3
2005-07	8th Qtr	26	29	3
	7th Qtr	26	29	3
	6th Qtr	26	27	1
	5th Qtr	26	27	1
	4th Qtr	26	28	2
	3rd Qtr	26	27	1
	2nd Qtr	26	26	-
	1st Qtr	26	26	-



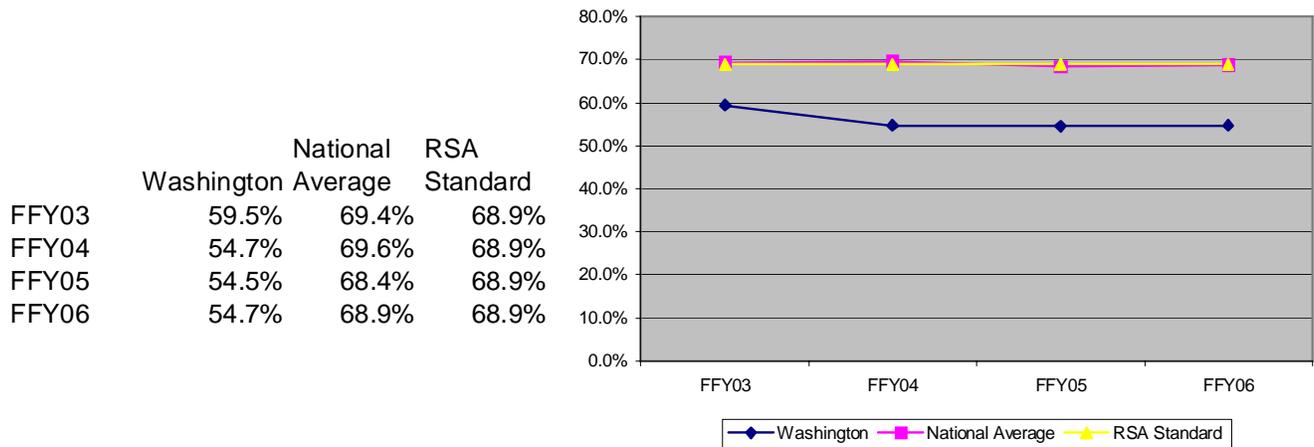
## Performance Measures, Targets and Analysis – RSA Standards and Indicators

RSA has established a series of standards and indicators for basic vocational rehabilitation results. The following charts compare DSB with the standards and averages for blind agencies.

Indicator 1.1 - How many more or fewer clients achieved employment versus the previous year?

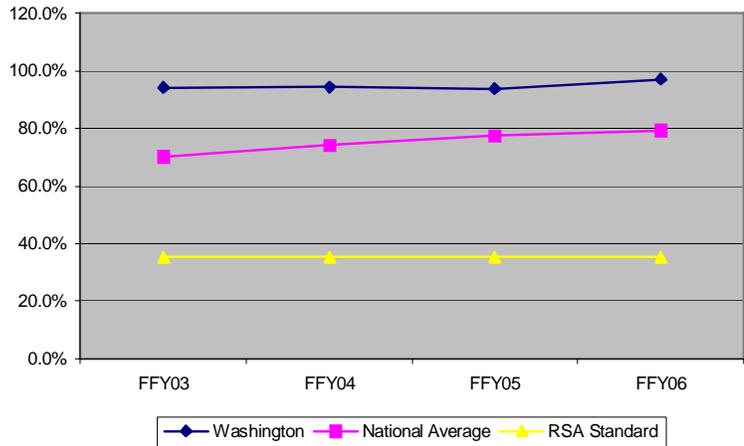


Indicator 1.2 - Of the individuals whose cases were closed after receiving services, what percentage achieved employment?



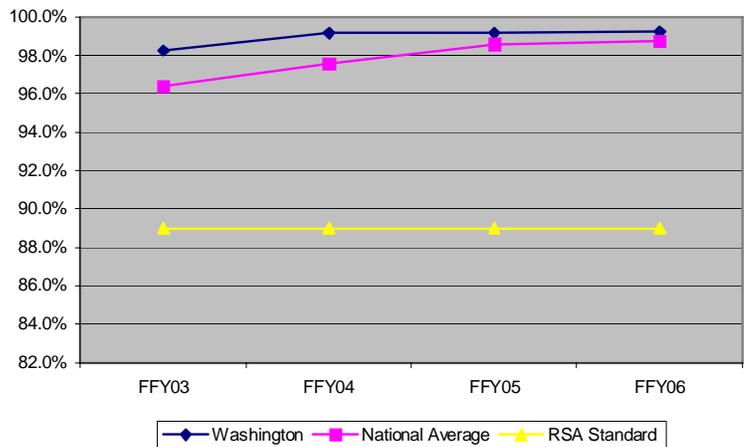
**Indicator 1.3 - Of the individuals who achieved employment, what percentage achieved competitive employment?**

	Washington	National Average	RSA Standard
FFY03	94.3%	70.3%	35.4%
FFY04	94.5%	74.4%	35.4%
FFY05	93.8%	77.6%	35.4%
FFY06	97.0%	79.5%	35.4%



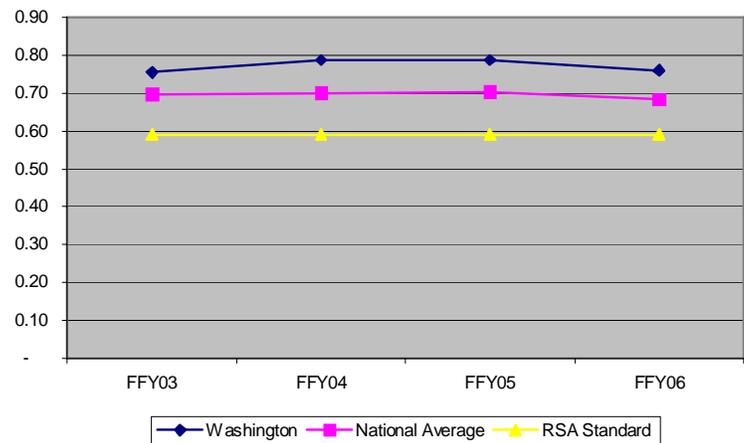
**Indicator 1.4 - Of the individuals who achieved competitive employment, what percentage had a significant disability?**

	Washington	National Average	RSA Standard
FFY03	98.3%	96.4%	89.0%
FFY04	99.2%	97.6%	89.0%
FFY05	99.2%	98.6%	89.0%
FFY06	99.2%	98.7%	89.0%

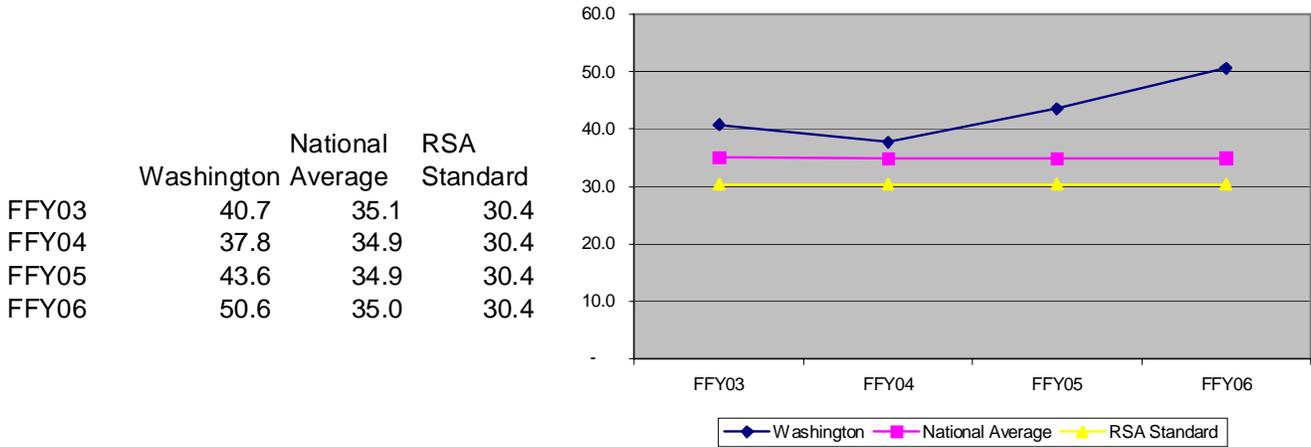


**Indicator 1.5 - What is the ratio of the average hourly wage of individuals who achieved competitive employment to the average hourly wage of all employed individuals in the state?**

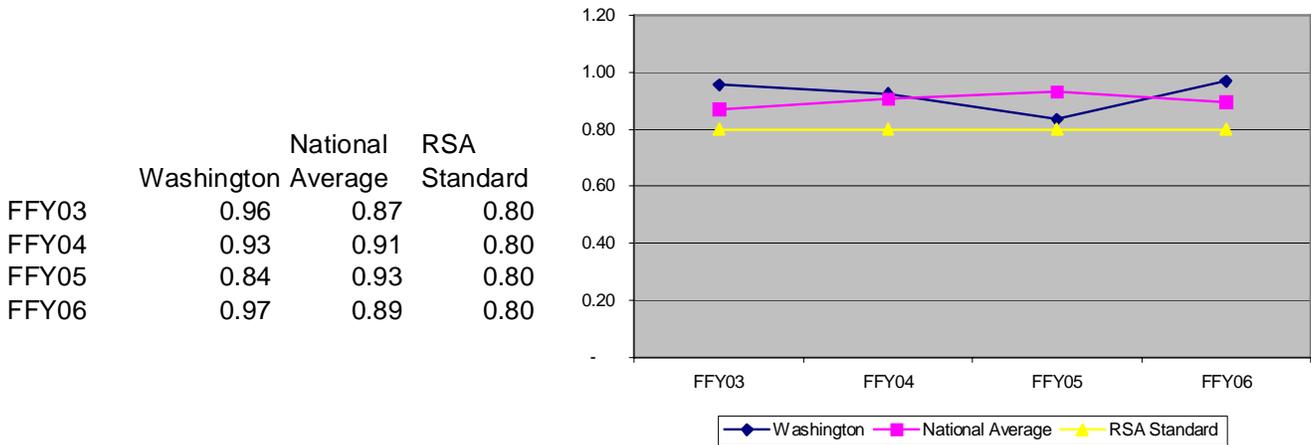
	Washington	National Average	RSA Standard
FFY03	0.75	0.70	0.59
FFY04	0.79	0.70	0.59
FFY05	0.79	0.70	0.59
FFY06	0.76	0.68	0.59



**Indicator 1.6 - What was the increase or decrease in the percentage of individuals who achieved competitive employment who had their own income as a primary source of support at closure compared to the percentage who had their own income as a primary source of support when they applied for VR services?**



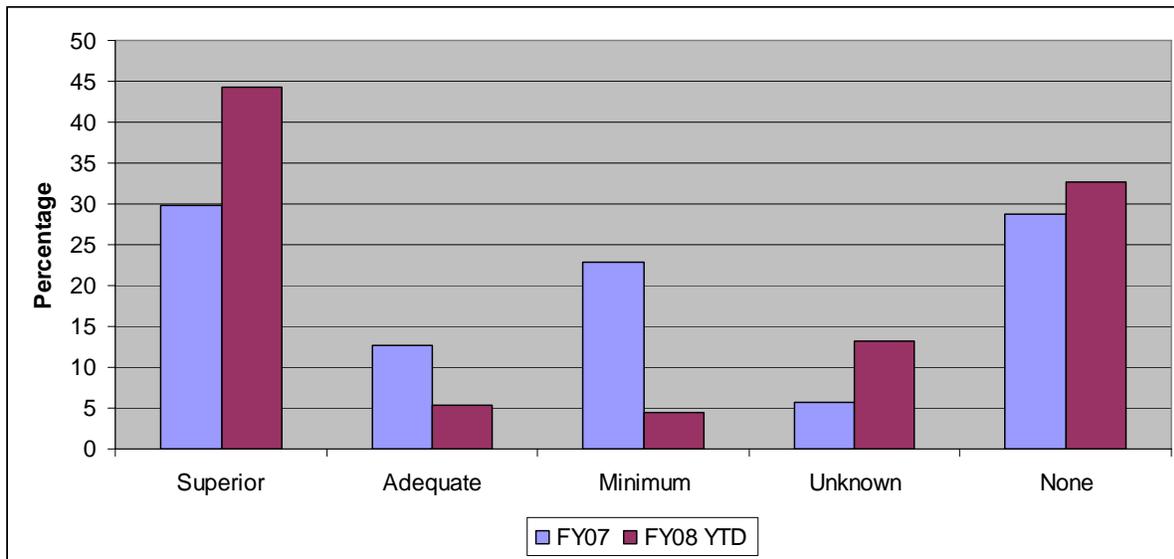
**Indicator 2.1 - What was the ratio of the minority population served by the VR program compared to the ratio of the nonminority population served by the VR program?**



**Performance Measures, Targets and Analysis – other indicators**

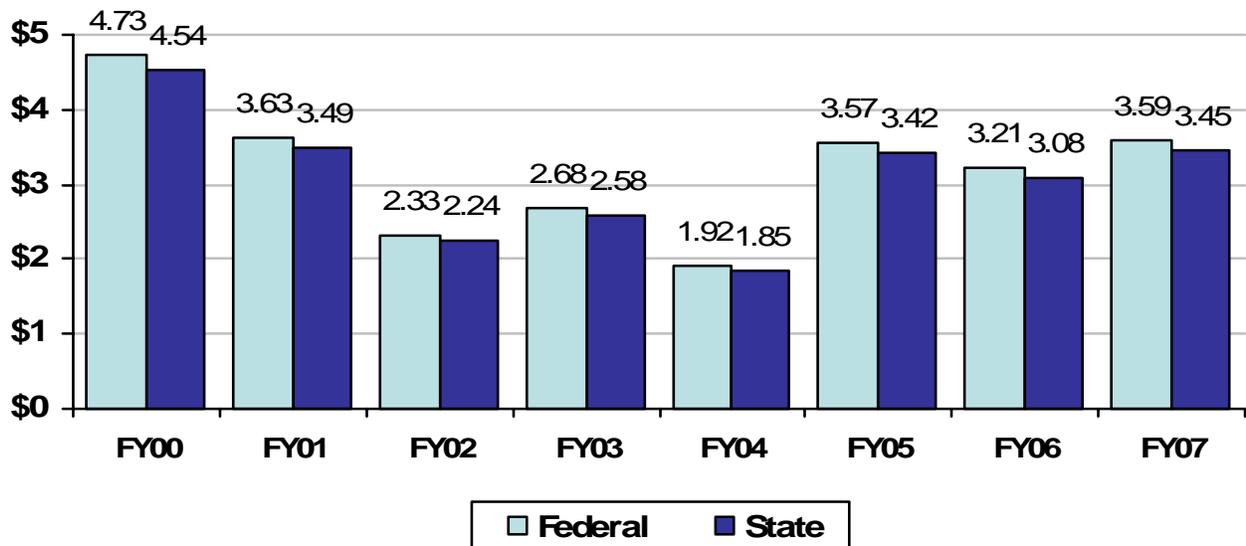
**Placements with benefits** – Besides the salary level of clients obtaining employment, DSB has also placed an emphasis that the clients should receive benefits from their employment.

FY2007					FY2008 as of May				
Superior	Adequate	Minimum	Unknown	None	Superior	Adequate	Minimum	Unknown	None
30%	13%	23%	6%	28%	44%	5%	5%	13%	33%



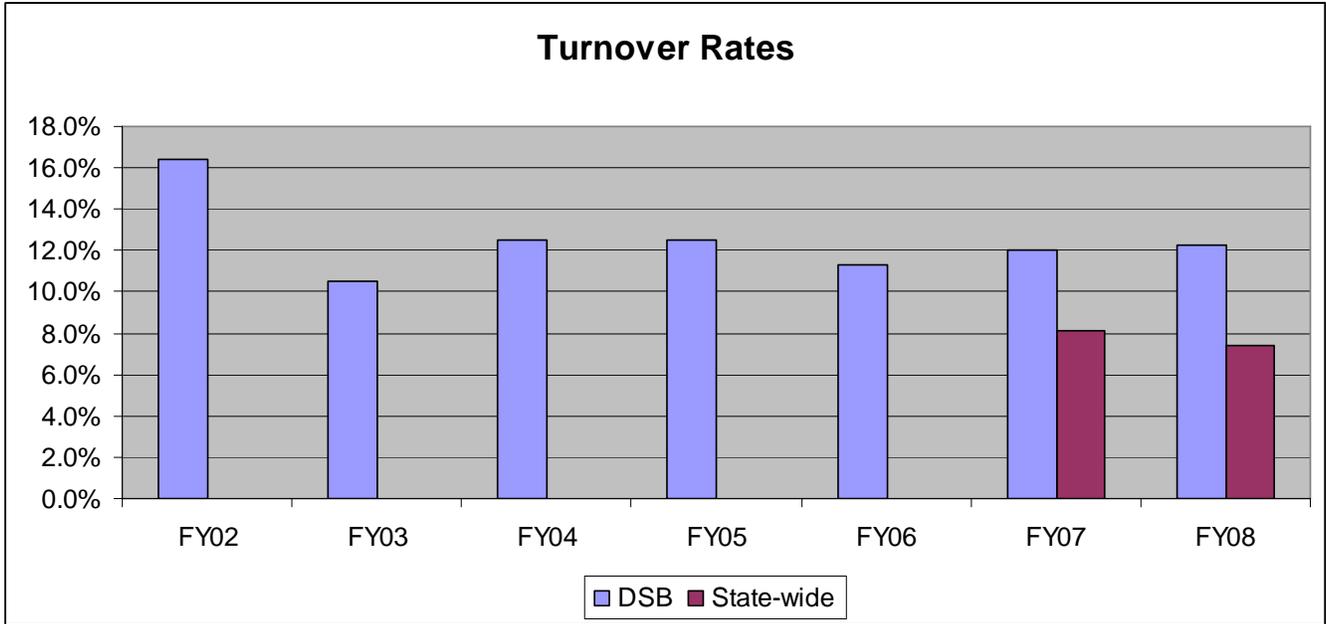
**Return on investment** – This ratio is based on the tax revenue derived solely from the clients increased income. Participant’s rehabilitation costs were shared between state and federal sources. Similarly, both state and federal government tax the additional income of the participant by state sales tax as well as federal income tax.

**Benefit to Cost Ratio: Taxes from Increased Earnings**



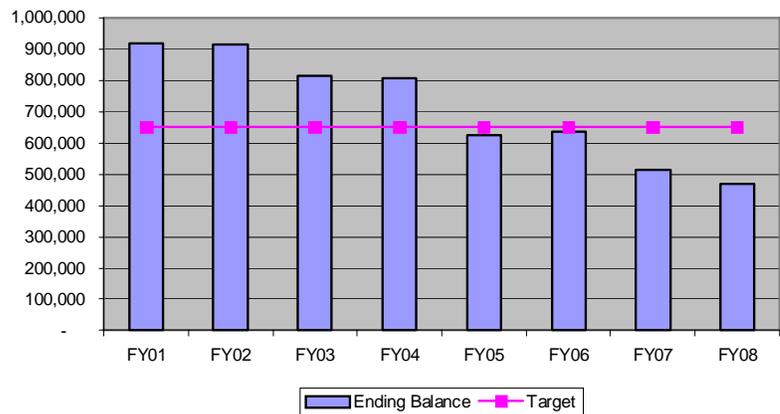
### Agency turnover

	FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08 through May
DSB	16.4%	10.5%	12.5%	12.5%	11.3%	12.0%	12.3%
State-wide						8.1%	7.4%



### Business Enterprise Program Fund Balance

	Ending Balance	Target
FY01	918,911	650,000
FY02	915,633	650,000
FY03	812,028	650,000
FY04	806,085	650,000
FY05	623,630	650,000
FY06	638,013	650,000
FY07	514,239	650,000
FY08	467,221	650,000



## **ASSESSMENT OF CAPACITY AND FINANCIAL HEALTH**

Based on the data above, DSB's overall capacity and financial health are in a strong, sustainable position. However, based on the funding restrictions between programs, there remain two areas that are in jeopardy of sustaining their benefit to the State.

Independent Living provides services to blind and visually impaired residents that are not immediately bound for employment. Rising costs and increasing demand have maximized the use of resources available to this program. Internally, DSB has restructured the process for contracted providers, but this will not save enough to provide for the need in the State. Based on projected costs, it is anticipated that this program will only be able to provide services to 860 clients for fiscal year 2009.

The Business Enterprise Program has also been burdened by increased costs. Additionally, they were assigned the task to pay for the NFB-NEWSLINE<sup>®</sup>. This is a program managed by the National Federation of the Blind to provide newspapers in a verbal format. The impact has been a declining fund balance which will significantly limit the ability of the program to develop new vendor locations or to sustain the current operating level.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE**

DSB is a Small Cabinet Agency reporting directly to the Office of the Governor. Internally, the Executive Team is comprised of the Director, Assistant Director for Employment Services, Assistant Director for Business Services, Human Resources & Community Services Manager and a Workforce Training Consultant from the University of Washington. This team meets semi-monthly and is responsible for agency finances, policies and staffing revisions. The Management Team, comprised of the Executive Team and 12 other managers and executive support staff, meets quarterly and is responsible for core planning and day-to-day operations.

The direct customers for DSB include our clients and their families. It is projected that approximately 115,000 residents of the State of Washington are legally blind. Our current case load is near 3,900, or 3.4% of the eligible population. There are currently no waiting lists for services provided by the department.

The State Rehabilitation Council provides direct public and consumer guidance to the Director and the Washington State Independent Living Council prepares the State Plan for Independent Living in conjunction with DSB and the DSHS - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. These councils do not provide direction or regulatory oversight, but do provide for stakeholder interaction.

Partnerships are key to the success of DSB. With only 50 field staff serving clients with extremely specialized needs, the department relies on key partnerships to provide products and services to the clientele. To accomplish this, counselors are authorized to directly contract for specific client services. DSB also participates in the statewide, regional and national activities of the American Council of the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind, the National Federation of the Blind, the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

The workforce of 75 full time equivalent employees at DSB is comprised of 67% program delivery staff, 19% agency support staff and 14% supervisors/managers. 26% of the employees have bachelor degrees and 40% have masters. 32% of the staff hold professional certifications, 27% of the staff are disabled, 7% are veterans and 12% receive additional compensation for dual language skills. The ethnic mix of

the employees of 10% Asian, 4% black, 6% Hispanic and 80% white is comparable to the statewide profile. 74% of the employees are over 40 with an average age of 48. 84% of the employees are represented by the Washington Federation of State Employees. DSB is highly committed to fully accommodating disabled employees. We ensure that employees have the tools and resources necessary for them to be a productive workforce. Over the past seven years, DSB has had a turnover rate of 13%.

To provide services across the state, DSB has offices in Seattle, Tacoma, Lacey, Vancouver, Yakima and Spokane, with additional workspace available in Kennewick. Connectivity between these offices is provided through a standard Microsoft Windows 2003 network connecting to the State Government Network (SGN.) The smaller rural offices connect into the SGN via Digital Subscriber Lines (DSL) connected via MultiProtocol Label Switching (MPLS.) The larger Lacey and Seattle offices connect into the SGN via fractional T1 lines.

The nature of our business has been greatly impacted by new technologies in the field. Although traditional canes, magnifiers and Braille are still very much employed, the mid to late 1980's brought an onslaught of new technologies such as: PC screen reading software, Braille notetakers and text-to-speech systems. More recent technology includes the KNFB-Reader which is a small digital camera that reads the image to the user and the KNFB Mobile which applies this technology to a cell phone.