

Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE) Blind Licensee Committee

Friday, December 8th, 2023
Nebraska State Office Building – Omaha
1313 Farnam Street, Omaha
Room #227

Chairperson Sandy Alvarado called the meeting to order at 10:11 AM

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, on the NCBVI Website, and on NFB Newsline®. The notice was sent to the NCBVI.Everyone email list.

Board Members in Attendance

Sandy Alvarado, Chairperson; Andrea Chizek, Vice Chairperson; Ronnie Kellogg, Secretary; Atty Svendsen, Jeremy Richey

Blind Licensees and Trainees in Attendance

Amy Eidenmiller; Tanya Cady; Jim Jirak

NCBVI Staff in Attendance

Eric Buckwalter, NBE Supervisor; Lizzie Heidenreich, NBE Orientation Counselor; Jeff Scheer, NBE Orientation Counselor

Guests

Mark Bolger, Commissioner

Approve Minutes from September 29, 2023

Atty made the motion to approve the 09-29-2023 NBE meeting minutes. Jeremy seconded the motion.

Andrea: Aye

Jeremy: Aye

Ronnie: Aye

Atty: Aye

Sandy: Aye

Motion Passed.

Committee Chair Report, Chairperson Sandy Alvarado

Eric has kept Sandy in the loop about the bids and micro markets.

She introduced Amy, a brand-new vendor in the program.

She also introduced Tanya, a trainee.

She introduced Jeff Scheer, a new NBE orientation councilor.

She mentioned the Emergency meeting about the general liability insurance that we had on Oct 11. That issue was taken care of.

Sandy asked if anyone participated in the NFB's Merchants Division's training on the 9th of November.

Sandy reminded everyone to please make sure they log their training and let Eric know how and where they did it. Training helps with upward mobility.

The Randolph Sheperd podcast counts as training.

Eric reminded everyone that vendors telling him about their training is important because Eric has to do reports for RSA and training needs to be tracked in those reports.

Eric asked if he should send out the list of accepted training possibilities again. Everyone agreed that he should. There are at least two or three podcasts that have popped up lately but the Randolph Sheperd podcast is the only one that is BEP specific.

Jim asked if the monthly Tuesday call with the RSVA is considered an accepted training opportunity. They are. Sandy sends notices of those out every time they occur if she can.

Sandy said that there are webinars that are free that she can share as well if people would like.

Sandy said that the RSVA newsletter goes out to everyone. She currently doesn't share those, but she is willing to start.

Jim reminded everyone about Sagebrush.

Sandy said that Sagebrush has a draft agenda that may be shared if wanted.

Eric and Sandy are still doing their best to learn about setting up certain special vending modes on machines and getting instructions for that from GAD.

Sandy reminded the vendors that their committee is there for them if they need help with communicating with the SLA or other things.

Atty helped create a contact list of all the vendors in the program.

Jim asked if that list has been updated and expressed a desire to have it be so.

Eric said that he'd have to get permission from every vendor first.

He mentioned that when he sends out emails He always uses the BCC field because people may not want their information shared.

The update will not happen before the end of January next year for sure.

State Licensing Agency Report, NBE Supervisor Eric Buckwalter

Vending Site Update

Micro Market Update

If all goes well NBE will be installing four micro market sites on the week of September 18th. Sites include two markets at a DHHS office in Omaha, a DHHS office in Bellevue, the STRATCOM building on Offutt Air Force Base, and the new Nebraska Department of Education building in Lincoln.

Lincoln Regional Center

Next week NBE will be taking over vending operations at the Lincoln Regional Center. This is a huge site with over 20 machines! We are planning on at least three days of install to make this transfer happen as smoothly as possible from the current service provider. One thing we are trialing at the new location is a new coffee system. The Bodecker system is a proprietary pod based system, so individuals in the building will not be able to use their own pods. Pods will be sold from the vending machine, and then the brewer will be free to use. If this proves successful it may be an option for other locations in the future.

Other Installs

After the first of the year NBE will also be installing new locations at BSDC in Beatrice, two YRTC facilities in Kearney and Hastings, a DHHS office in York, a DHHS office in Hastings, and the new USDA office in Lincoln. There is still time to bid on the USDA office location, bids are due by 5:00 PM on Monday, December 11th.

NBE Licensed Vendors

There are currently 12 Licensed Vendors in the NBE program. One Vendor who is in their probationary period. Three other individuals are in training for the program and several of these should be obtaining sites as probationary members early next year.

Vending Site Complaints

There were no significant vending site complaints in the past quarter. The SLA has made note that some sites continue to have issues with machines not being as clean as the SLA would like to see. Also, some sites do seem to be a little understocked, with several empty coils for extended periods of time. Now that the SLA is fully staffed, extra attention will be paid to these issues and the SLA will be working with individual Vendors to address these issues.

Other Items

Over Machined

Several Vendors have reached out to the SLA regarding their concerns that certain sites of theirs are over machined – meaning that there are too many machines in a location to

meet the needs of the volume sold to the customers. The SLA has already worked with one site to reduce the number of machines in a location. Over machining can lead to wasted product and loss of profit for Vendors. If you would like to discuss the number of machines at your location(s) please reach out. Details like these is one great example of the things the SLA will be able to more quickly address now that we are fully staffed. Reducing the number of machines usually requires a conversation between the SLA and the location as the agency is who holds the contract – and some contracts do have the number of machines written into them.

NBE Retreat

The SLA and the NBE Committee are planning to host a NBE Retreat this spring. More information is to come. If you have ideas of topics, presentations, or hands-on training please reach out to Eric or Sandy, your NBE Committee Chair to share.

Q&A:

Atty asked if the coffee machines that are currently on trial can connect to the water source.

- Eric explained that they are handlined in so that vendors won't have to worry about removing a canister to get tap water.

Atty asked if there is a sufficient variety of coffee for vendors to sell from the prospective coffee machines.

- Eric explained that there is quite a good variety, but vendors do have to order the pods by the case. They come in 9 sleeves of 15 pods or 15 sleeves of 9 pods; something like that. It's all new. There are different coffees, teas, and broths to sell.
- The machine flips the previous pod that was in into a canister, so vendors only have to empty that. The entire pod can be recycled as well.

Jeremy asked if vendors can substitute the pods for Folgers or something else.

- The answer was no.
- Lizzie explained that The pods have a shelf life of a year.
- Eric explained that Greater America is are current source for the pods.

Jeremy asked how to handle the coffee grounds when recycling the pods.

- Eric explained that in this case, coffee grounds may be left in the pods when they are recycled.

Sandy asked how many of the new coffee machines are on trial.

- Eric said there are two.
- Sandy explained that vendors' can share orders with each other when and if the proprietary machines become popular.

Update on Profit and Loss Reports

Eric said that there were no major updates on P&Ls and reminded vendors to Please continue to get them in on time.

Every vendor has gotten an updated P&L template.

Please let Eric know of any troublesome locked rows.

Atty asked if vendors need to start using the new ones now or later.

- Eric explained that vendors need to use them now.

For most people there weren't major changes to the new template, but the fiscal year was updated.

Atty asked how the new Micro-markets will fit into the P&L.

- Eric explained that There will be an updated template for vendors operating those.

Jeremy asked if vendors can get rid of locations they are no longer operating on their P&Ls.

- Eric said they can.

Atty asked if there was any information about why meters on some soda machines were inexplicably giving a reading of zero.

- Eric said that the cause of the readings has yet to be found and that finding it will have to wait for now.
- Eric said that if a meter gives a 0 reading, vendors should put 0 on the P&L.
- If the machine is not in service at all, Put N/A.

Atty expressed her understanding that Cantaloupe does not track cash transactions.

- It was explained that Cantaloupe does do that And that vendors can build a report with the cash data present using Cantaloupe's system.

Late Fee Discussion

Eric recalled that vendors brought up late fees for tardy P&Ls and set aside payments at the Last meeting.

The concern was specifically about whether the SLA was enforcing the penalty.

Everybody usually gets their P&Ls and set aside payments in on time anyway and they even tend to voluntarily send in their late fees when they don't.

The SLA will do better at following up if P&L's and set aside payments are late.

If P&Ls are late, the late fee will be assessed. In addition, the Business Office will be notified.

Eric explained that any extenuating circumstances must be expressed beforehand to him. If this is done, maybe the late fee can be waved. This will be on a case by case basis.

Jim asked if vendors can take off late fees on their P&Ls.

- Eric said no.

Sandy asked if anybody has been using the new electronic system to pay set aside.

- Eric explained that one person has been.
- He said that the instructions to do it can be sent out again if wanted.
- Eric reminded everyone that If they use the electronic method, to please send an email to the ncbvi.nbe email address and CC Tami Dun and Brandy Harper.
- Eric explained that each electronic payment goes into a state accounting fund.
- The business office has to make a receipt of each payment so they can pluck them from the huge system and document that they belong to NBE.
- If that doesn't happen, the accounting division of the state will simply guess what money belongs to what program.

Several Vendors mentioned issues with their banks processing the payment electronically or charging money to do this.

Eric expressed his appreciation for the feedback and urged vendors to email the NCBVI.nbe email address and Eric outlining why this electronic method of paying is not working. The information can be compiled and different methods can be explored.

Cantaloupe Reactivation Fee Discussion

Cantaloupe is charging a fee of 10 dollars if the device is reactivated after it is deactivated.

The SLA proposes that if a new vendor is coming in, a new device will go on those machines unless the SLA is short on devices.

If the telemetry device goes bad, the SLA will pull from the deactivated ones that are still good.

The SLA cannot easily pay the fee on any vendor's account, so vendors will have to pay it.

Vendors may write the reactivation fee and any credit card fees off on their P&Ls.

If there is a lot of machines at a new site, reimbursement may be an option, but the reactivation fee can't be written off on P&Ls if it is reimbursed.

Discuss Training for Next Quarterly Meeting

Sandy explained that the training that was planned for this meeting won't take place, as the person who was going to be providing the training wasn't able to make it.

She expressed the idea that we can do it next time when the individual can be with us in person.

Sandy asked what other options people could think of in case we can't do that.

Atty suggested that if we can't have a training on retirement, we could discuss how the micro-markets are going and what the vendors operating them are learning. It might affect everyone if micro-markets become more popular.

The micro-market operators can Share their experiences and explain what works and what doesn't.

There was a general ascent to her idea.

Eric suggested that if retirement training can't happen, the SLA may be able to provide a tour of the micro-market inside the Nebraska Department of Education.

Everyone seemed to love his idea.

Set Date for Next Meeting

Atty made a motion that we have our next meeting on March 8, 2024 at 10:00 AM in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Andrea seconded the motion.

Andrea: Aye

Jeremy: Aye

Ronnie: Aye

Atty: Aye

Sandy: aye

Motion Passed.

Atty made a motion to adjourn the meeting

Jeremy seconded the motion.

Andrea: Aye

Jeremy: Aye

Ronnie: aye

Atty: Aye

Sandy: Aye

Motion passed.

Meeting Adjourned.

Training

Venders At Training

Atty, Sandy, Jeremy, Andrea, Jim, Ronnie, Amy, and Tanya.

Eric started off by mentioning how the vending and service industries have changed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. He wondered how people felt about the new year and what it could bring for people's vending businesses. He asked what people were excited about. Is it a new technique, a new machine, a business expansion, something they just learned that they can apply next year, anything else?

The discussion took place.

The staff answered the question also.