

**Blaine**

**BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM**

Interview Guide

Firm ID: \_\_\_\_\_  
Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_  
Also record on pages 1 and 5

FIRM:

\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Blaine, MN Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E:mail \_\_\_\_\_

PERSON INTERVIEWED: \_\_\_\_\_

Job title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of visit: \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER KEY OFFICIALS IN THIS ESTABLISHMENT:

Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Chief Exec. Officer \_\_\_\_\_

Plant Manager \_\_\_\_\_

Personnel Officer \_\_\_\_\_

VOLUNTEER VISITORS:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Note to Coordinator: After placing the ID number on this cover sheet and on pages 1 and 5, remove the cover sheet and file separately to ensure confidentiality of results.**

## BLAINE BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES PROGRAM

### Background

*We believe our existing firms are our best prospects for future growth. The purpose of this program is to see how we can help them grow.*

- I. This program is sponsored locally by the following organizations:
  - Blaine EDA
  - Connexus Energy
  - Centerpoint Energy – Minnegasco
  - Xcel Energy
- II. Technical and research assistance for this program is provided by the University of Minnesota's Department of Applied Economics and the University of Minnesota Extension Service.
- III. Business, government, and educational leaders have agreed to help us work with our local manufacturers on this program.
- IV. The survey is a cooperative effort involving volunteers drawn from other businesses, local government, educational institutions, and the community at large.
- V. The objectives of the program are:
  1. To demonstrate to existing firms that the community appreciates their contribution to the local economy.
  2. To help businesses solve their problems and challenges.
  3. To assist local businesses in gaining awareness of available resources.
  4. To develop collaborative relationships for participating in comprehensive long-range retention and expansion activities.
  5. To build the community capacity and cooperation to sustain growth and development activities.
  6. To contribute to the assessment of Blaine's capacity to accommodate growth of visitor services and hospitality industry.
- VI. Confidentiality - Your individual answers to this survey are confidential and will not be released. Your response will be summarized with those of others to form an overall result in percentages or averages.
- VII. The "Skip It Rule" - If there is a question that you feel might be best to skip, we will do that; just let us know. There is no need to explain your reasons.
- VIII. Copy of Final Report - Copies of the summary will be provided to all firms that participate in this survey.



5. What are the major products or services offered by this establishment and what percentage of your sales come from each one?

Major product or service	% sales
(1) _____	_____
(2) _____	_____
(3) _____	_____
(4) _____	_____
(5) other products or services (specify) _____	_____
Check total (should equal 100%)	100%

6. What is special or unique about your major products or services? (BR&E visitor: Please take detailed notes here.)

7. How is your firm organized? (circle one)

- (1) corporation ("C" Corp.)
- (2) corporation ("S" Corp.)
- (3) partnership
- (4) Limited Liability Company (LLC)
- (5) sole proprietorship
- (6) other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you expect the sales for your products to increase, stay the same, or decrease over the next three years? (circle one)

- (1) increase
- (2) stay the same
- (3) decrease

### Suppliers/Customers

What raw materials or other components are used to create or produce your product or service and where do they come from? *(Please specify point of origin by city, state, and supplier)*

9. Raw Materials or Other Components

10. Point of Origin *(Specify city, state, and supplier)*

11. How are raw materials sent to you? *(Circle all that apply)*

Truck          Rail          Air          Other

12. How do you ship your products? *(Circle all that apply)*

Truck          Rail          Air          Other

13. In what industries are your major customers?

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14. Do you import products or services from other countries at this location? *(Circle one)*

Yes No *(If No, go to 20)*

If yes, what do you import from other countries, and from what locations? *(Match products to locations)*

15. Products, services:

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16. Location(s): *(Specify states and countries)*

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17. Is the percentage of products imported from other states or countries? *(Circle one)*

increasing          stable          decreasing

If increasing or decreasing, what goods or services are involved, and from what location(s)? *(Match products to locations)*

18. Products, services:

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19. Location(s): *(Specify states and countries)*

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20. Do you export products or services to other countries from here? *(Circle one)*    Yes    No

*(If No, go to 26)*

If yes, what products or services do you export, and to what location(s)? *(Match products to locations)*

21. Products, services:

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22. Location(s): *(Specify states and countries)*

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23. Is the percentage of products exported by your company at this location? *(Circle one)*  
 increasing      stable      decreasing

If increasing or decreasing, what goods or services are involved, and to what location(s)? *(Match products to locations)*

24. Products, services:

---

25. Location(s): *(Specify states and countries)*

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26. Are there suppliers or customers that would benefit by being located closer to this facility?  
*(Circle one)*    Yes    No

27. If yes, list the companies and location:

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28. How many employees work at this location? (We'd like you to break this out between full-time and part-time for the two time periods shown.)

	full-time (as defined by firm)	part-time
currently	_____	_____
three-years ago	_____	_____

29. If the number of employees changed from three years ago, please explain the major business factors that led to this increase or decrease.

Firm ID: _____ Supplied by Coordinator
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30a. Does your company have problems recruiting employees in the following categories? (circle one per line)

<u>Category</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>	<u>UNSURE</u>
(a) general labor	1	2	3
(b) general production labor	1	2	3
(c) precision production/specialty skills	1	2	3
(d) clerical	1	2	3
(e) sales	1	2	3
(f) professional/management	1	2	3
(g) information technology	1	2	3
(h) temporary/contract employees	1	2	3
(i) youth employees	1	2	3
(j) other _____	1	2	3

30b. If you answered YES to any of the categories above, please explain the nature of this problem.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Nature of Problem</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

31. Do you expect the number of employees you have in each of the following categories to increase, decrease or stay the same over the next three years? If you expect a change, how many employees will be added or subtracted? (circle one for each and fill in line under "by how many" if necessary)

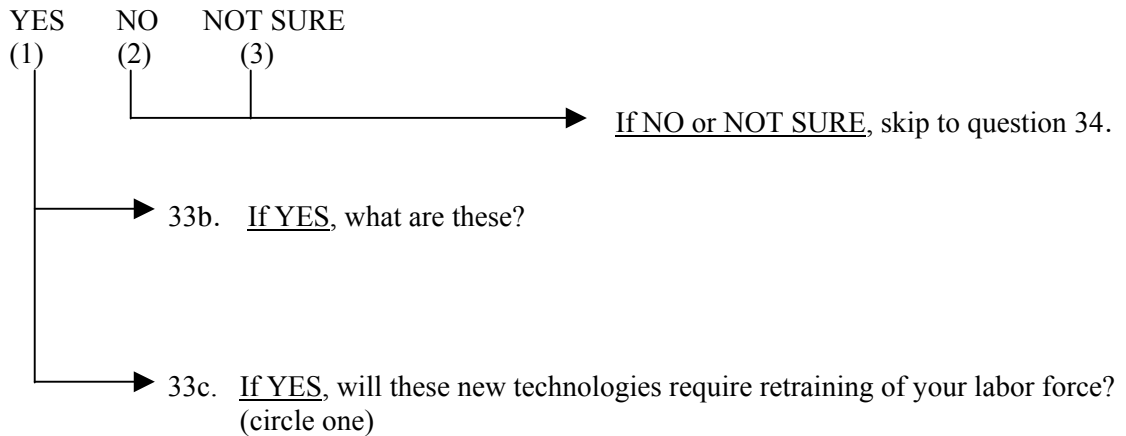
	<u>Increase</u>	<u>Stay The Same</u>	<u>Decrease</u>	<u>By How Many?</u>
(a) general labor	1	2	3	_____
(b) general production labor	1	2	3	_____
(c) precision production/specialty skills	1	2	3	_____
(d) clerical	1	2	3	_____
(e) sales	1	2	3	_____
(f) professional/management	1	2	3	_____
(g) information technology	1	2	3	_____

- (h) temporary/contract employees      1                      2                      3                      \_\_\_\_\_
- (i) youth employees                      1                      2                      3                      \_\_\_\_\_
- (j) other \_\_\_\_\_                      1                      2                      3                      \_\_\_\_\_

32. Overall, how do you rate your employees with respect to their attitude toward work and their productivity? (circle one per line)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
(1) attitude toward work	5	4	3	2	1
(2) productivity	5	4	3	2	1

33a. Are there any major technological innovations on the horizon in your industry that might affect your company? (circle one)



YES      NO

34a. Please indicate where most of your employees live. (Estimate the percentage to the nearest 10 percent.)

	percent
(1) Blaine	_____
(2) Outside Blaine but within 10 miles	_____
(3) Outside Blaine but within 20 miles	_____
(4) Farther than 20 miles	_____
Check total (should equal 100%)	100%

34b. Where does CEO/owner live? (which city)

\_\_\_\_\_



35. Please rate the importance to your business of Blaine attracting/developing the following types of business or facilities. (circle one for each factor)

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important
a) Department stores	5	4	3	2	1
b) High-end grocery stores	5	4	3	2	1
c) Specialty retailers	5	4	3	2	1
d) More variety of places to eat	5	4	3	2	1
e) Sit-down, high end restaurants	5	4	3	2	1
f) Community Center (i.e., meeting space, gym, pool)	5	4	3	2	1
g) Performing arts center	5	4	3	2	1
h) Movie theaters	5	4	3	2	1
i) Expanded service hotel (i.e., Four Points Sheraton, Hampton Inn, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
j) Full service hotel (i.e., Radisson, Crowne Plaza, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
k) Other (specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

36. Does your firm require hotel visits? (circle one) YES NO

37a. If yes, where do they stay now? \_\_\_\_\_

37b. How many room nights/year? Currently \_\_\_\_\_ Three-year \_\_\_\_\_

38. Would you like additional information concerning any of the following subjects? (circle YES or NO for each one). Then in the next column, rank the three most important ones.

	YES	NO	Rank three most important
(1) management	YES	NO	_____
(2) supervision	YES	NO	_____
(3) leadership	YES	NO	_____
(4) strategic business planning	YES	NO	_____
(5) continuous improvement	YES	NO	_____
(6) workforce training/technical skills	YES	NO	_____
(7) e-learning	YES	NO	_____
(8) financing assistance programs	YES	NO	_____
(9) marketing strategies	YES	NO	_____
(10) human resource practices	YES	NO	_____
(11) new state regulations	YES	NO	_____
(12) selling to government	YES	NO	_____
(13) recycling business wastes	YES	NO	_____
(14) meeting needs of disabled persons	YES	NO	_____
(15) internet/e-business	YES	NO	_____

- |                            |     |    |       |
|----------------------------|-----|----|-------|
| (16) customer service      | YES | NO | _____ |
| (17) sales training        | YES | NO | _____ |
| (18) other (specify) _____ |     |    | _____ |

39. Do you have any specific questions or special needs on any of the topics listed in question 38 or any other topics not listed above? (describe program and needs)

40. With your permission, we would like to share your answers to questions 38 and 39, your firm name, product, and employment with the agencies that provide this information (i.e., Anoka Hennepin Technical College, Anoka Ramsey Community College, Workforce Center, etc.). Is that OK? (circle)

YES      NO

41a. Would you like additional information concerning any of the following subjects? (circle YES or NO for each one)

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| (1) adopting new manufacturing technology | YES | NO |
| (2) just-in-time inventory                | YES | NO |
| (3) computer-aided design                 | YES | NO |
| (4) computer-aided manufacturing          | YES | NO |
| (5) upgrading manufacturing systems       | YES | NO |
| (6) statistical process control           | YES | NO |
| (7) export/foreign markets                | YES | NO |
| (8) six sigma                             | YES | NO |
| (9) root cause analysis                   | YES | NO |
| (10) ISO and/or quality standards         | YES | NO |
| (11) automation and robotics              | YES | NO |
| (12) documentation                        | YES | NO |
| (13) cell manufacturing                   | YES | NO |
| (14) lean manufacturing                   | YES | NO |
| (15) world class manufacturing            | YES | NO |
| (16) reconfigure business processes       | YES | NO |
| (17) other (specify) _____                | YES | NO |

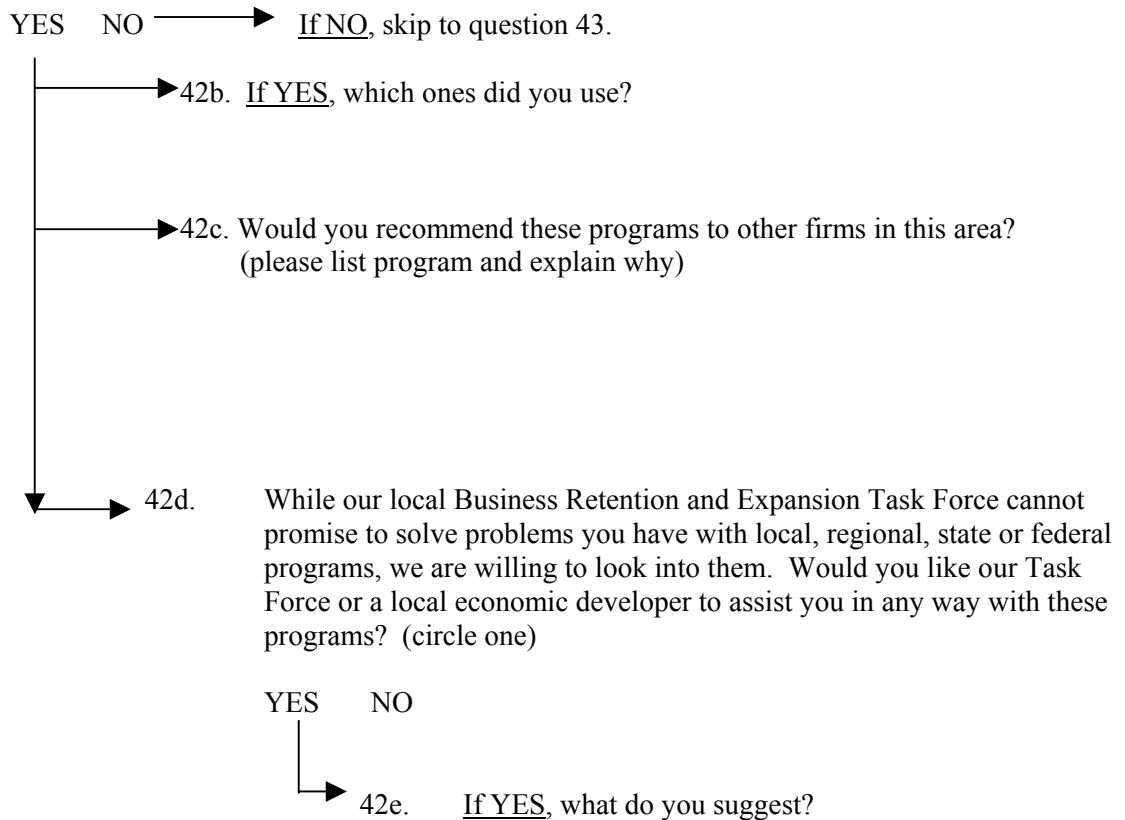
41b. Do you have any specific questions or special needs on any of the topics listed in question 41a or any other topics not listed above? (describe program and needs)

41c. With your permission, we would like to share your answers to questions 41a and 41b, your firm name, product, and employment with the agencies that provide this information (Anoka Hennepin Technical College, Anoka Ramsey Community College, Department of Trade and Economic Development, etc.). Is that OK? (circle)

YES      NO

**FOR ALL TYPES OF FIRMS:**

42a. During the past three years, have you used any local, regional, state or federal programs to help your business? (circle one)



43. Are you currently considering? (circle all that are appropriate)

- (1) expanding —————▶ If this, skip to question 46a
- (2) downsizing
- (3) selling
- (4) merging with or acquiring another business
- (5) relocating
- (6) closing
- (7) none of the above —————▶ If this, skip to question 50.

44. Why are you considering this option? (circle all that are appropriate)

- (1) changing market conditions
- (2) overcrowded building
- (3) no land for expansion
- (4) transportation problems
- (5) crime/vandalism
- (6) low work productivity
- (7) environmental concerns
- (8) rigid code enforcement (including ordinances and building codes)
- (9) high local taxes
- (10) high state taxes
- (11) lease expiration
- (12) poor telecommunications
- (13) insufficient labor supply
- (14) retiring
- (15) another business opportunity
- (16) other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

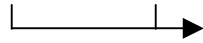
45. If relocating, where are you considering relocating the establishment? (circle all that apply)

- (1) in Blaine
- (2) another city in this county (specify city) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) another city in metro area \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) another state (specify city and state) \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) another country (specify city and nation) \_\_\_\_\_
- (6) undecided



50a. Does your company currently own or lease sufficient property to allow for expansion if necessary?

YES  
(1)      MAYBE  
(2)      NO  
(3)



50b. If MAYBE or NO, what type of land, buildings, and space needs do you foresee?

51. If your firm (or one just like it) was trying to select a new location, how important would each of the following community factors be in this decision? (circle one for each factor)

<b>Business cost factors</b>	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important
wage rates	5	4	3	2	1
transportation costs	5	4	3	2	1
energy costs	5	4	3	2	1
energy reliability	5	4	3	2	1
local taxes	5	4	3	2	1
state taxes	5	4	3	2	1
interest rates	5	4	3	2	1
workers' compensation rates	5	4	3	2	1
unemployment compensation	5	4	3	2	1
employee health care costs	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Other business factors</b>					
availability of labor	5	4	3	2	1
availability of raw materials	5	4	3	2	1
availability of credit	5	4	3	2	1
proximity of four-lane highway	5	4	3	2	1
airport facilities – Mpls./St. Paul	5	4	3	2	1
airport facilities – Anoka County	5	4	3	2	1
availability of industrial site	5	4	3	2	1
quality of telecommunications	5	4	3	2	1
availability of appropriate housing	5	4	3	2	1
availability of water	5	4	3	2	1
quality of water	5	4	3	2	1
area promotion to visitors/new residents	5	4	3	2	1
other (specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

52. In Blaine, are the following business costs higher, lower, or about the same as for your direct competitors from other communities? (circle one for each cost factor)

<b>Business cost factors</b>	Much Lower	Lower	About the Same	Higher	Much Higher
wage rates	5	4	3	2	1
transportation costs	5	4	3	2	1
energy costs	5	4	3	2	1
energy reliability	5	4	3	2	1
local taxes	5	4	3	2	1
state taxes	5	4	3	2	1
interest rates	5	4	3	2	1
workers' compensation rates	5	4	3	2	1
unemployment compensation	5	4	3	2	1
employee health care costs	5	4	3	2	1

53. In Blaine, are the following factors more favorable, less favorable or about the same as for your direct competitors from other communities? (circle one for each factor)

<b>Other business factors</b>	Much More Favorable	More Favorable	About the Same	Less Favorable	Much Less Favorable
availability of labor	5	4	3	2	1
availability of raw materials	5	4	3	2	1
availability of credit	5	4	3	2	1
proximity of four-lane highway	5	4	3	2	1
airport facilities – Mpls/St. Paul	5	4	3	2	1
airport facilities – Anoka County	5	4	3	2	1
availability of industrial site	5	4	3	2	1
quality of telecommunications	5	4	3	2	1
availability of appropriate housing	5	4	3	2	1
availability of water	5	4	3	2	1
quality of water	5	4	3	2	1
area promotion to visitors/new residents	5	4	3	2	1
other (specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

54. In Blaine, how would you rate the following community services? (circle one for each service)

<b>Community services</b>	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Very Poor
elementary and secondary schools	5	4	3	2	1
child care	5	4	3	2	1
recreational facilities	5	4	3	2	1
ambulance services	5	4	3	2	1
health care/hospitals	5	4	3	2	1
health care/senior services	5	4	3	2	1

fire protection	5	4	3	2	1
police protection	5	4	3	2	1
road / street maintenance	5	4	3	2	1
snow removal	5	4	3	2	1
telecommunications/Internet,cell phone, cable	5	4	3	2	1
zoning / land use planning	5	4	3	2	1
building code	5	4	3	2	1
economic development	5	4	3	2	1
other (specify) _____	5	4	3	2	1

55a. Do you use Anoka County Airport? (circle one)      YES    NO

55b. If yes, how? (circle all that apply)

- a) shipping
- b) receiving
- c) corporate travel
- d) recreational
- e) other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

55c. What improvements to Anoka County Airport would make you more likely to use it?

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56. Do you use Internet at work? (circle one)      YES    NO

57a. Which type of Internet service do you use? (circle all that apply)

- (1) wireless
- (2) standard telephone
- (3) DSL telephone
- (4) T-1 lines
- (5) cable-modem
- (6) other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_



57b. Which type of Internet service would you want? (circle all that apply)

- (1) wireless
- (2) standard telephone
- (3) DSL telephone
- (4) T-1 lines
- (5) cable-modem
- (6) other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

58. Is cell phone reception or “dead” areas an issue for you? (circle one)                      YES              NO

59. Do the following features have an impact, no impact or negative impact to your business? (circle one for each letter)

	Positive Impact	No Impact	Negative Impact
(a) natural environment	+	none	-
(b) distance from Mpls./St. Paul Airport	+	none	-
(c) community diversity	+	none	-
(d) National Sports Center	+	none	-
(e) TPC Golf Course	+	none	-
(f) wildlife	+	none	-
(g) festivals or events	+	none	-
(h) lodging	+	none	-
(i) sit-down restaurants (not fast foods)	+	none	-
(j) other _____	+	none	-

60. Which of the above features (a-i) do you feel should be the focus of a marketing image for Blaine? (list the letters for your top three choices)

- \_\_\_\_\_ First choice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Second choice
- \_\_\_\_\_ Third choice

61. What is your overall opinion of Blaine as a place to conduct business? (circle one)

- (5) excellent    (4) good    (3) fair    (2) poor    (1) very poor

62. What is your overall opinion of Blaine as a place to live? (circle one)

(5) excellent (4) good (3) fair (2) poor (1) very poor

63a. What is the most important reason your business is in Blaine?

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63b. If you could do it over again, would you choose Blaine? (choose one) YES NO

63c. If not, why not?

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64. We have covered a lot of issues. Help us set some priorities on how we can help your firm or what we should work on to help all of our existing firms grow and expand. Please give your additional comments.



*Thank you for your cooperation with our Business Retention and Expansion Strategies visitation program.*

*We cannot promise to solve the concerns you mentioned, but we will promise to try. If we can help you in the future, please call:*

*Curt Larson*

*Blaine EDA*

*763-785-6147*

*We appreciate the time you've given us and the contribution your firm is making to our local economy.*

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status or sexual orientation.