Legislative Services Agency
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Fiscal Services Division

Fiscal Update Article

Iowa Commission for the Blind — Special Meeting

November 5, 2026

Meeting

The Iowa Commission for the Blind (Commission) held a special meeting virtually on September 15, 2026. This meeting is a continuation of the previous meeting held on September 8 to revisit the Iowa Department for the Blind's (IDB's) FY 2028 budget proposal and address the remaining agenda items.

Updated FY 2028 Budget

Director Stacy Cervenka presented the updated FY 2028 IDB budget proposals. Two budget proposals were presented, both of which excluded the previous addition of the mental health counselors. One updated version of the FY 2028 budget included a $1.4 million increase, which is a 44.8% increase compared to the FY 2027 appropriation of $3.2 million and included the addition of a deputy director position. The Commission declined to approve this budget, seeing no need for a separate deputy director position.

The second budget proposal excluded the deputy director position. It included a $1.3 million increase, a 40.4% increase compared to the FY 2027 appropriation. The Commission expressed concern over the request for seven new instructors and transportation benefits. The Commission removed those items from the budget but approved the remaining items. **Figure 1** shows the approved increases.

Figure 1 — Budget Request Increases Approved by the Commission

Budget Item	Requested Increase
Salary/Benefit increases for existing FTE positions	$ 438,878
Field operations intern	10,000
Travel expenses for additional staff to accompany Director	7,000
Inflationary increases to operational costs	108,991
Contract with Aira for services provided to staff for special accommodations	6,000
Driver mileage reimbursement increase	3,000
Fire extinguisher replacements	5,000
Travel expenses for Library staff attending the Iowa Library Association Annual Conference	3,000
Total Increase	$ 581,869

The Commission will meet again to discuss the budget. The date and time is to be determined. The Commission directed Director Cervenka to create a new budget with the approved increases.

Gifts and Bequests

The Commission discussed the receipt and use of gifts and bequests, raising questions on whether a gift or bequest could be used to supplement State funding and creating a supplemental budget out of the Gifts, Bequests, and Program Fund. Currently, the IDB Director has discretion for expenditures out of the Fund up to $2,500. Expending more than $2,500 would require Commission approval.

The Commission also received and approved a gifts and bequests request for an eight-session career seminar series for students who are blind or low vision presented by the Filomen M. D'Agostino Greenberg Music School.

Policy Approval Process

The Commission discussed an update to the policy review process. The process was last updated on March 23, 2026, and adopted on June 20, 2026. Policy reviews are driven by State and federal mandates. The new process requires the Director to provide the Commission with a complete and current list of agency policies, identifying policies that are required to be reviewed or updated during the upcoming year. The Commission can then identify additional policies for review and set a schedule for policy reviews with the IDB for the upcoming year.

The Commission expressed concern over the proposed update due to the potential to overwhelm the Commission if all policies were presented at once for review and decisions. A review cycle was suggested. The Commission directed the IDB to continue to use the most recently updated Board Approval Policy, adopted in June.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment — 2025

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) outlines statewide needs and goals and department strengths and weaknesses. The assessment was conducted in 2025 and determined that the IDB demonstrated strengths in its commitment to independence and employment for its clients, assistive technology, and the supportiveness of its staff. The CSNA also found a decline in the rehabilitation rate and identified many contributing factors. The IDB could also improve access to services, including transportation, with a focus on rural areas. Consistency and perceived service quality could also be strengthened.

The results of the CSNA also reflect generally favorable but not uniformly strong ratings of employment-related services, reinforcing the importance of quality improvement efforts in job placement, communication, and individualized support.

Next Meeting

The Commission will meet again. The date and time is to be determined. The next scheduled Commission meeting will be held virtually on December 15, 2026.

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