



Final Report Form and PowerPoint Guidelines

The purpose of this report is to document the strategies you implemented for this project, the outcomes, and to help others learn from your experience. Please be honest about any challenges you faced, or things you would have done differently. Some of the information and photos/graphics from this report may be made available to the public, but we will get your permission in advance.

There are no character limits, but be as concise as you can, while including all pertinent information and data you have collected. Most questions are required, but some are noted as being optional. You can fill out this form in SurveyMonkey Apply or you can type your responses in Word and email them to your project manager with any other files you want to submit. This report is due no later than March 31, 2023.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Please provide a 1-3 paragraph summary with the crux of what people need to know about your project and the key outcomes.

Rural Health Network of SCNY, Inc.'s Community Rides Project focused on developing volunteer driver capacity in the southern tier region of New York State. Rural communities lack consistent, affordable transportation options, leading seniors and people with low income to become isolated, delay medical care, or go without health-supportive goods and services. Volunteer drivers, recruited to serve in their own communities, are a cost-effective solution to this issue. This project piloted volunteer driver services in Norwich, a small rural city in Chenango County, NY. Volunteer drivers provided 40 rides to 14 individuals for medical services, shopping, volunteering, and food assistance, with mileage reimbursement at the federal rate. Rural Health Network partnered with the Volunteer Transportation Center, which operates a volunteer driver program in a neighboring region, for driver training and insurance. Staff from Rural Health Network's Getthere Mobility Management division dispatched drivers and set up rides. Driver recruitment was a challenge; the original project goal of providing rides in five rural locations was greatly reduced due to the lack of volunteers. In addition to providing rides, this project aimed to lay necessary groundwork for expanded volunteer driver capacity in the future. The project team developed new driver recruitment materials and piloted a stipend incentive program. Partnering with local videographer Brian Frey Productions, the team created video training modules for mobility and transportation professionals on the topics of Client Self Advocacy and Rural Cultural Competence. A survey of partners including county Offices for Aging affirmed the ongoing need for a volunteer driver program in this region to serve older adults. Building on the learnings and resources created through the Community Rides project, Rural Health Network will continue to work with partners to coordinate regional efforts around the volunteer driver initiative.

TELL YOUR PROJECT'S STORY - Who, What, Where, When, Why & How

- Describe where your agency is located and the service area for the project.

Rural Health Network of SCNY is located in Binghamton, NY. The service area for the project was Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, and Tioga counties in the southern tier of New York State.

- What was the problem or need that this project hoped to address?

This project aimed to improve access to health-supportive destinations for seniors and people with low income in rural New York utilizing a volunteer driver model. Rural communities lack consistent, affordable transportation options, leading seniors and people with low income to become isolated, delay medical care, or go without health-supportive goods and services. Volunteer drivers, recruited from the communities in which they provide rides, are a cost-effective, flexible, and pro-social solution to this issue.

- What were the original project goals, and did they change at all over time?

An original goal of the project was to launch volunteer driver operations in five rural towns with the capacity for on-demand service. It soon became clear that this would not be feasible given the lack of volunteer drivers in the project region. The focus of the project shifted from service delivery to planning and recruitment, to pave the way for a future version of the original project design, when conditions are more favorable. The new project goals, set in October 2022, were to create a video training series for volunteer drivers and to pilot a new recruitment tactic (driver stipends) while continuing to provide volunteer transportation as drivers become available.

- Who were your project partners? Who was your most effective partner?

Project partners included the Offices for Aging in Broome, Chenango, Tioga, and Otsego counties; local agencies operating volunteer programs (Tioga Opportunities and the Deposit Foundation); Volunteer Transportation Center which provided driver training, insurance, and technical assistance; and videographer Brian Frey Productions. On the operations side, Volunteer Transportation Center was very effective at onboarding volunteers and training our staff member to be a driver dispatcher. On the capacity building side, Brian Frey Productions was instrumental in converting our live trainings into video modules for current and future use.

- Who was the target audience for the project?

The target audience for transportation services was rural seniors and people with low income. The target audience for Rural Cultural Competence and Client Self Advocacy trainings was mobility management and transportation professionals.

- What strategies did you use to implement the project?

The first strategy used to implement the project was training – we focused on getting one of our mobility managers trained on the Volunteer Transportation Center (VTC) process to facilitate the onboarding and dispatching of volunteer drivers. When we had to pivot the project goals, we focused on training again, this time in creating the Rural Cultural Competence and Client Self Advocacy videos for future use. The second main strategy was making good use of our partners' expertise, from VTC's experience with volunteer driver programs to the area Offices for Aging's knowledge of their population to the technical

expertise of videographer Brian Frey. This strategy gave us the confidence to be adaptable to the many changes the project underwent over time. For example, when volunteer driver recruitment stalled, we were able to form a new agreement with existing partner Tioga Opportunities to reimburse their volunteer drivers to take on trips they would not otherwise be able to provide. We also piloted two new tactics at the end of 2022. The first was driver stipends, intended to improve recruitment; ultimately we found that this was not effective in attracting new volunteer drivers. The second was the recruitment of an AmeriCorps member to drive a Rural Health Network vehicle for this project; this recruitment effort also did not pan out. From these two attempts we learned that compensation was not the biggest barrier to driver recruitment.

- What resources did you use? (e.g., outside funding, technology, technical assistance, consultant expertise, training, partners, etc.)

The project used some capacity from mobility managers funded under FTA 5310 and FTA 5311, as all client calls are routed through our mobility management call center. Technical assistance for planning the volunteer driver program, driver orientation & training, and training a mobility manager as dispatcher was provided by the Volunteer Transportation Center. The project also benefited from the expertise of area Offices for Aging, who provided information about the need for volunteer drivers and assisted with marketing. Training videos were created by Brian Frey of Brian Frey Productions, who has shared his expert skills with Rural Health Network's Getthere program in the past to create instructional travel training videos. This project would not have been possible without funding from the National Rural Transit Assistance Program's Community Rides grant program.

- Did the project follow your anticipated timeline? If not, why?

The project did not follow the anticipated timeline due to the difficulty recruiting volunteer drivers. There are a few possible explanations for this. The COVID-19 pandemic not only made established drivers less available due to sick time, but also made potential drivers reluctant to engage in activities that might put them in contact with strangers. In addition, the cost of gas has increased significantly in the past four months, deterring drivers despite a small increase in the reimbursement rate and availability of stipends. Across the country, Kaiser Health News has [documented a shortage in volunteer drivers](#), with an effect on access to healthcare in rural places. Due to these external factors, we were not able to stick to the timeline of opening five volunteer driver hubs across the service area over the project period; momentum stalled after the first hub launched in Norwich, NY.

- Is there a website or page where one could learn more about your services related to this project? – OPTIONAL <https://gettherescny.org/>
- *Please include in this document (or submit separately) any maps or other images that help provide context or demonstrate the impact of your project.*

OUTCOMES, IMPACT & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- What were the project outcomes? Did you achieve your project goals?

We did achieve the new goals of creating the e-learning video training series and piloting new recruitment methods. Outcomes included: 40 volunteer driver trips, 14 individuals served, for a total of 211 miles traveled. 2 e-learning videos on the topics of Rural Cultural Competence and Client Self-Advocacy.

- What impact has this project had on passengers, partners, the transit agency, and/or the broader community?

This project assisted 14 passengers from Chenango County, NY, in reaching health-supportive destinations including clothing, food assistance, volunteering, medical, and shopping. At Rural Health Network, this project allowed us to focus on laying groundwork for volunteer driver program expansion. While our project did not have a huge impact on the region through services provided, we are optimistic that the regional volunteer driver initiative has been strengthened by the work completed in this project. Moving forward, we will build on the partnerships and resources generated from this project to further the volunteer driver initiative.

- If you have testimonials from people impacted by the project, share them here, ideally with their name and who they are (rider, partner, etc.). You can also share a link to any video testimonials.
- Please share your performance measures here and/or as a chart or spreadsheet attachment.

(See attached spreadsheet) 40 trips for 14 individuals, 211 total miles. 1 geographic “hub” Norwich, NY. Created 2 video training modules, conducted survey of partners. The partner currently running a volunteer driver program noted the overall need for more drivers and the slow recruitment since the pandemic. The partner without a program in their area sees a need for drivers on weekdays. Both partners noted the need for older adults to access medical appointments and shopping/groceries, which aligns with the needs shown in our program.

- Were your initial performance measures valuable, or how have they changed? How will you measure the value of this project going forward?

The performance measures were changed from service-oriented metrics (drivers and riders) to the completion of deliverables (video training modules, partner survey). A future version of this project with a full complement of drivers would be measured based on the original metrics. We have also developed pre- and post- training module surveys to measure increased knowledge in trainees.

- *Please include in this document (or submit separately) at least one chart or spreadsheet to show the data you collected for your performance measures and the impact of your project.*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

- What about this project are you most proud of?

We are most proud of the way we adapted the project. When it was clear that the original project design was not achievable, we had thoughtful conversations internally and with the program officer to develop new goals that would still advance the volunteer driver initiative in the region. We have created resources

and a way of work that will be used in the future.

- What challenges or barriers did you face, internal or external?

As previously described, we faced external challenges related to driver recruitment and the COVID pandemic. We also experienced two changes in senior leadership during the project – while this did not have a direct impact on project operations, it did require additional relationship building with partners.

- What would you do differently if you had the chance?

Given a second chance at the project, we would spend more time focused on understanding and expanding the recruitment pool for volunteer drivers early on in the project. We would wait to launch services until a certain threshold number of volunteer drivers had been recruited and fully trained. We publicized the service and the volunteer opportunity around the same time, and driver availability was not sufficient to keep up with demand.

- If another transit agency was about to start a similar project, what would you want them to know? What could other stakeholders (government agencies, local businesses, advocates, riders, etc.) learn from your project?

Other stakeholders could see the challenges faced by our project as illustrative of the national trend of reduced volunteerism. We would share with other agencies the importance of supporting the workforce (both volunteer and employee) through trainings and resources.

- *Please include in this document (or submit separately) any other files that demonstrate your project outcomes. (e.g., updated marketing materials, reports from consultants, etc.) – OPTIONAL*
1. YouTube links to training videos: [Client Self Advocacy](#) and [Rural Cultural Competence](#). These videos are not listed publicly but are made available to the frontline staff engaged in this project. We are happy to share with other agencies upon request.
 2. Partner Survey Template (attached)

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

- What is the future of the project or service? Is ongoing funding secured?

Volunteer driver reimbursement will continue in a limited capacity through our other funding sources. There is funding to reimburse for volunteer rides to medical destinations (clinics, hospital, pharmacy, etc.) but not for health-supportive social destinations. For the time being, focused attention on building the volunteer driver initiative will be folded into staff's other responsibilities until another opportunity arises. We will continue to assess the need for volunteer drivers as well as the recruitment pool for volunteers; when conditions are more favorable, we are ready to re-launch this initiative. In the meantime, we are finding creative ways to meet clients' needs that would be met using volunteer drivers through other projects, such as recruiting an AmeriCorps member to facilitate emergency food delivery.

- How will your partnership(s) continue after this project?

Partnerships with County Offices for Aging are ongoing. We are always working together to improve mobility and transportation for older adults, and we will continue to partner through referrals, shared advocacy priorities, and marketing each other's programs and services. We will continue to seek technical assistance from Volunteer Transportation Center in the planning and execution of our volunteer driver program.

- Will any policies, plans, or procedures that were developed during the project continue to be used?

Yes. We developed a procedure by which drivers onboarded by the Volunteer Transportation Center could be dispatched to meet clients' needs via our local Getthere Call Center.

- Would you have been able to implement this project/service without this grant? (Yes, No, Unsure)

No. While the regional volunteer driver initiative is an existing area of work for us, this grant allowed us to focus time and attention on planning, building partnerships and creating resources to further the initiative in the future – all activities that we did not previously have the capacity to take on.

- Is there anything else you want to share about your project that did not fit into any of the questions above? - OPTIONAL

POWERPOINT GUIDELINES

- In addition to answering the above questions, please submit a PowerPoint (or conference poster) either in SurveyMonkey or via email to your project manager. If you are interested in doing a conference poster and would like to learn more or see a template, let us know!
- The presentation length should be approximately 15-20 minutes or 15-20 slides and should utilize the Widescreen (16:9) format.
- The audience for the presentation is primarily other rural or tribal transit agencies, but also potentially local, state, or federal agencies or other transit stakeholders.
- Tell the story of the project, with who, what, where, when, why, and how, just to give enough context. Then focus on the outcomes and the lessons you learned and what others can learn from the project.
- Use pictures, maps, and charts to depict your geographic area, service delivery, operations, performance measures, and/or community impact, etc.
- Include testimonials from those involved and impacted, if possible.