State RTAP Manager's Peer Roundtable Summary

January 16, 2024

Our Winter 2024 State RTAP Manager Peer Roundtable was based on questions State RTAP Managers asked within the past year, including discussions during National RTAP/State RTAP 1:1 outreach calls. There were 5 attendees; the states that participated were Connecticut, Florida, Minnesota, and Oregon. The icebreaker question was about a food you like that's special to your state; answers included Boston creme pie, lobster rolls, huckleberry ice cream, pizza, clam chowder, Dungeness crab, Cuban sandwiches, and Tater Tots.

Q: How do you help transit managers with succession planning and onboarding new staff?

A: Minnesota DOT has a leadership program through a consultant. There are 3 levels, supervisor, lead manager, and executive, and the program lasts from 8 months to 1 year. Oregon's small agencies are updating policies and creating and updating checklists in case someone leaves abruptly. National RTAP Executive Director Robin Phillips explained that people should think of the strengths of people around them and give people a chance to try out for leadership roles. Connecticut RTAP will use National RTAP succession planning resources and adapt them to the state.

Q: What should go into a job description for a State RTAP Manager?

A: Since many RTAP Managers also have other roles, it is challenging for them to prioritize RTAP and be actively engaged in the program. Suggestions were education on what RTAPs do so they can best perform their role, a dedicated RTAP staff person for communications, working collaboratively, taking advantage of networking opportunities, and taking advantage of National RTAP resources. Robin suggested that National RTAP develops a survey on key performance measurements to fulfill the role. Every state is different and the RTAP Managers have different job positions. Priorities are also different between the states. The Minnesota RTAP Manager works 50% on RTAP and 50% on communications.

Q: How do you distribute transit capital projects funding?

A: In Connecticut, there is hybrid distribution, and the state handles it. It is the same in Minnesota, a staff person unrelated to RTAP works on capital projects. In Oregon, there is also a different staff

person for capital projects but there is a formula fund for 5311 funding and each agency has an allocation with discretionary funds on the off years, such as 5339.

Q: What type of training are you providing on bus maintenance? (breakout session, moderated by Cindy Frenè)

A: Greater Hartford Transit District sends people to trainings through Connecticut RTAP. Florida RTAP works with a paratransit maintenance training program named the Lively Paratransit Instructional Program (LPIP) https://www.livelypip.com/. The RTAP doesn't use external training that is not compliant with Florida state rules. Stephanie Lewis of Florida RTAP recommended TWC (The Transit Workforce Center) which has several resources for transitioning to zero emissions. National RTAP's training module Tops Shops can be a helpful training tool, but it does not contain any information on electric vehicles.

Q: Has anyone outsourced their procurement function and how has that worked? (breakout session, moderated by Robin Phillips)

A: In Minnesota, there is procurement coordination for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs. Oregon has a capital manager for vehicles and price agreements, but they are not involved with all procurements, including operating costs. The participants agreed that RTAP Managers don't generally play a role in procurements.

Q: If you've ended up with a surplus of RTAP funds because of the pandemic, how have you used it?

A: Oregon RTAP used some of the money to contract RLS & Associates for training, including procurement training. They are also working with Washington Community Liaisons to leverage their training.

There was also a suggestion that National RTAP gather information on what all State RTAPs are doing and share it in a combined document. National RTAP did this during the early days of the program and called it "The State of the States."

Please reach out to info@nationalrtap.org if you would like to suggest any additional topic(s) for our next roundtable, which will be in July 2024.