State RTAP Manager's Peer Roundtable Summary

January 9, 2023

Our Winter 2023 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 15 attendees; states that participated were Florida, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah. The icebreaker question was on New Year's resolutions and attendees shared: update our State Management Plan and get it approved by FTA, work on trainer training and peer roundtables, assist the state transit office with communication and organization improvements

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Q: Are transit agencies sharing electric vehicles and how? Are states using 5310 funds for EVs?

A: Ohio DOT is not aware of any sub-recipients sharing electric vehicles, but they are contracting with the state of Michigan to purchase some EVs. They are in the early planning phases with CALSTART and working with two smaller systems in Ohio as a pilot project. Minnesota DOT is using 5339 and 5311 funding but is not moving towards electric vehicles at this time.

Q: Is your program moving toward electronic award systems?

NCDOT Integrated Mobility Division will be updating its recently developed Unified Grant Application (UGA) program and wants to make it web-based, in a table of contents fashion. Carolyn Freitag asked for peer-sharing resources on this topic. South Dakota is procuring grant management software. Cara informed the attendees about National RTAPs technical brief Implementing a Grant Management System in Your State.

Q: What are some issues surrounding payments from/to FTA/State DOTs/subrecipients?

A: New Hampshire RTAP identified issues on the project planning aspect for funds, such as working with the New Hampshire Planning Bureau. It is taking more administrative, but it is not affecting the payments of the sub-recipient.

Q: What's happening at the state level to combat human trafficking?

A: Louisiana DOT hosts human trafficking training workshops, including presentations at Director's meetings and conferences, and have half-day workshops for sub-recipients to raise awareness. They use KJ Backpack (led by Kristen Joyner) for in-person training and on Zoom. One of South Dakota's subrecipients has a grant to bring in speakers and trainings on the topic. There is a new Oklahoma training bus with human trafficking resources that will travel to any transit agency in the state to provide training. Florida is working on a state-wide formalized policy template for states to report on human trafficking.

Q: What are your recommendations for best practices for state management plans?

Utah is making great strides with its SMP and is reviewing and updating many individual plans (such as TAM) to become a part of it. Once they finish the plan, they will create training. Louisiana found that multiple entities are using the same funding sources. They received guidance from an expert contractor and are ready to start public engagement and training. Jaimie Ainsworth advises that training should be repetitive – don't worry about saying the same thing over and over again. She also shared the agency's Administrative Handbook, which is a ~35-page supplement (with many exhibits) to the SMP, written in plain language. Ohio is working on a bid for its plan and wants it to be a usable document, broken down into sections with hyperlinks to additional information. They already went through the public review process. New Hampshire will be updating their State Management Plan so it's a useful reference than just a requirement.

Q: Is your state working on any property-related projects? What challenges have you encountered and what recommendations do you have? (breakout session, moderated by Kathy Lyons)

A: South Dakota is working on building new property and remodeling others and are facing challenges with how long the procurement process takes. The state has a Facility Construction Guidebook that may be helpful. New Hampshire encountered challenges when grantee didn't have the technical experience to move forward. The state was clear in the application process about what grantees would be responsible for. They are working on a template for a Project Management Plan and will be able to share it at a future RTAP Manager Peer Roundtable. Two states are having challenges with NEPA.

Texas RTAP Manager Kari Banta asked how people have been handling the demand for facilities. The DOT can give money for planning, but then the transit agencies need to go to the FTA for the rest of the funding. Tennessee is finding a high demand for facilities and are planning for the best use of their capital money. They are also working on a guidebook. South Dakota has a lot of agencies looking to remodel but they need to hire consultants, which prolongs the process. The agencies need to have a plan before they can receive any money from FTA.

New Hampshire RTAP Manager Fred Butler thought that it would be helpful to have an FTA rural transit facilities checklist to lead State DOTs, RTAPs, and transit agencies through the necessary steps. Cara Marcus a Checklist from 2015.

Q: What are your recommendations for best practices for state management plans? (breakout session, moderated by Cara Marcus)

A: Utah is updating its SMP and making great strides. Staff will work on training review, all other plans, and make new plans, like TAM. This will be important for training subrecipients. Louisiana has multiple entities for funding sources, it shares the same Title VI. They got contractors who gave good guidance. One was an expert in procurement and another in DBEs. They will be working on public engagement and then training. Training will be repetitive, saying the same thing over and over. They will supplement the SMP with a 35-page administrative handbook which will be in lay person language, so it is easier for everyone to understand. Both are written by the same person. Ohio is also working on a bid for an SMP. Staff want it to be user friendly and easy to read and will use hyperlinks. They have gotten good feedback from the user review process. North Carolina RTAP Manager Kim Angel has plans for three levels. South Dakota is finishing its triennial plan. More detail was needed, and they were told to check with other states for guidance. It is helpful to find approved language elsewhere.

Q: What is recommended for inclusion in a bid for a consultant for 5311/5310 oversight? (breakout session, moderated by Cindy Frenè)

A: Tennessee DOT is re-procuring its consultant that administers the RTAP program. They'll be rewriting the scope of work and program planning for the next 5 years. Minnesota State RTAP Manager Mariah Kathan and Cindy discussed other topics, such as state-wide roadeos, online training, human trafficking, and ELDT eLearning training.

Q: How are State RTAPs maintaining organization of materials and establishing plans with subrecipients?

Minnesota State RTAP Manager Melinda Estey asked how state programs are maintaining organization of materials and establishing a plan with subrecipients. Four years ago, Louisiana DOT redivided the program manager responsibilities into 4 geographic regions. They are responsible for the contracts with subrecipients in their regions and know the geographic area. This led to an advancement in coordination. Ohio is working on an Excel spreadsheet about document requests from agencies. New Hampshire DOT sends out a calendar to let agencies know when tasks are due. Florida RTAP is getting ready to roll out 30-minute statewide emergency management training. They are doing in person visits with their rural transit agencies and went to various sites.

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 2022.