Successful Local Transportation Coordination Case Studies

Coordination Strategy: Establish/enhance volunteer driver programs

Sponsor-A-Ride Program

Background

The Sponsor-A-Ride program, part of the Human Services Council in the state of Washington, brokers transportation for adults 55 years or older and people with disabilities who do not qualify for other public transit programs. The Human Services Council coordinates rides appropriate to client needs with an array of contracted and screened providers. It is also a ticket agent for local transit.

This project demonstrates an innovative approach to funding transportation for older adults who are not eligible for publicly funded programs but cannot afford private pay options because of the frequency of their need or fixed incomes.

With the Sponsor-A-Ride program, money is set aside in an account for an individual rider, either by the individual or by a friend or family member, for transportation. If an individual does not have enough money to pay the full cost of the transportation in his or her account, funds can be used from a general community pot.

The service is client-driven, and the staff helps clients examine all the options and decide which would be best for them. If the individual using the service is able to pay the full cost from his or her account, then that individual can pick any option. However, if the individual is utilizing community funds, he or she is asked to use the most cost-effective option. Grants and donations allow the Human Services Council to supplement the general community fund.

Problem/Opportunity

The Human Services Council has always had senior services and transportation but often heard from the children of older adults that there was a need for safe, reliable transportation for their parent that lived in the rural parts of the county. A large section of the county is not covered by public transit and other transportation options are costly.

Solution

The Human Services Council examined many options and the Sponsor-A-Ride program was developed as part of a larger older adult transportation program. Over time, Sponsor-A-Ride outlasted other aspects of the larger program, partly because it met a need and was self-sustaining.

Service Area
- Serves Clark County, Washington
- 630 square miles
- 432,000 residents
- Encompasses both an urban area and rural areas
- Primary clients are older adults (55 years or older) and people with disabilities

Financial
- Cost to the Human Services Council per ride is $15
- Fare: Clients pay what they can

Operational Characteristics
- Created in 2009
- No agency vehicles; brokerage
- Staffed by one full-time employee

Results
- 20 trips per month

Lessons Learned
- Examined multiple sources for funding

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Drivers for the Sponsor-A-Ride program go through extensive screening, which gives family members peace of mind. The Human Services Council has also surveyed older adult groups to identify what they wanted, and the survey showed the Sponsor-A-Ride model was valuable to these groups.

Customer service representatives help people identify which program the Human Services Council offers that they would be eligible for. They can also look at different programs and funds available to determine what would be best for an individual client.

Results/Benefits

The Human Services Council provides 40,000 rides per month through all of its programs. Sponsor-A-Ride provides 20 rides per month, an amount that has been decreasing due to reduced funding.

Challenges/Lessons Learned

Funding to cover administrative costs and supply the community fund has been an ongoing issue. Currently, several grants are about to run out, and if the Human Services Council is unable find more funding, there is a chance that it will need to put the Sponsor-A-Ride program on hold or scale it back. As things have been tapering down due to budget constraints, staff members have been able to refer clients to other services in the area.

A benefit of this program is that it is self-sustainable, but there is a need to build in a sustainable income base beyond covering the transportation. The Human Ser-

Future Direction

The Human Services Council has applied for a grant to fund a mobility manager position.

MCOTA Case Study
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