

How to Start a Volunteer Transportation Program

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Bring volunteer driving to your community

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Why Volunteer Transportation Programs?

- Many riders don't qualify for paratransit but may have challenges when using traditional public transit; older adults and adults living with disabilities are most affected
- Cost of alternatives (taxis, Uber) can be prohibitive for many riders
- Public transit infrastructure does not meet every destination type or need, especially in rural areas
- Companionship, community building, relationships and trust are built between riders and drivers

Planning a program for your community

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Volunteer Transportation programs are...

- An important support for older adults and people with disabilities who want to age in place
- A vital connection for older adults and people with disabilities who are confined to their homes and help to combat social isolation
- A community of mutual care, creating connection between riders and drivers

Volunteer transportation programs connect our communities

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Volunteer Transportation programs...

- Have formal policies for riders, drivers and services
- Recruit and train volunteers
- Often use software and IT to coordinate rides
- Usually have a staff person to coordinate rides

Key characteristics of volunteer rides programs

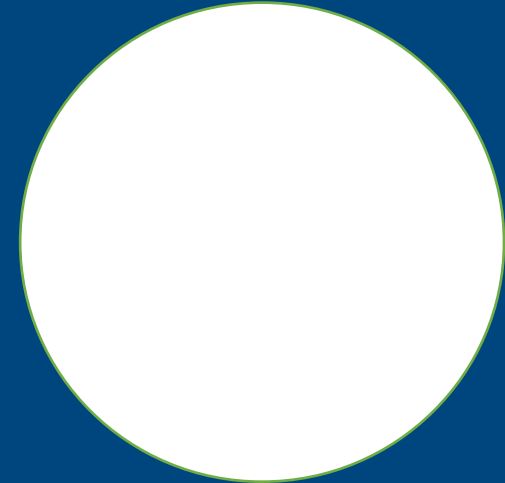
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Step by step

1. Getting started: Program planning
2. Volunteer Recruitment
3. Outreach to riders
4. Train drivers + volunteers
5. Evaluate and iterate

Planning a program for your community



Getting Started-Program Planning

Target Population and Communities Served

- Who to serve? Consider growing an existing community like a housing complex, faith community, neighborhood/community center or Homeowners Association (HOA)
- Where to serve? Consider the geography of destinations your program will offer

Clarify WHO and WHERE

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Getting Started-Program Planning

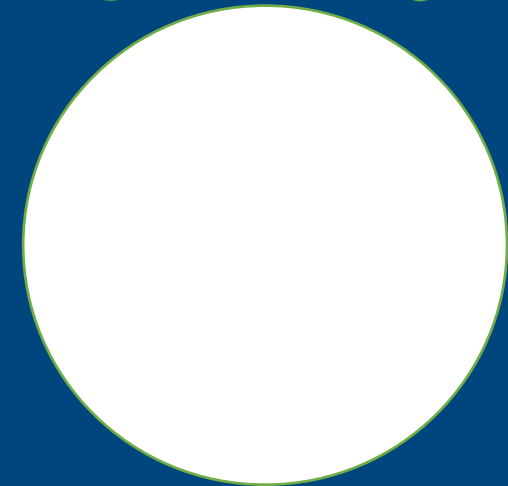
Service Type

What ride types to offer? Consider the services/ride types your program wants to offer:

- Errands
- Grocery shopping
- Non- emergency medical transportation
- Religious services
- Social events

Identify services your program will offer

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Getting Started-Program Planning

Program Funding

- Software acquisition
- Phone lines/office space/computers
- Possible staff time
- Background checks
- Training and supporting volunteers
- Insurance

Make a budget that accounts for a bit of growth

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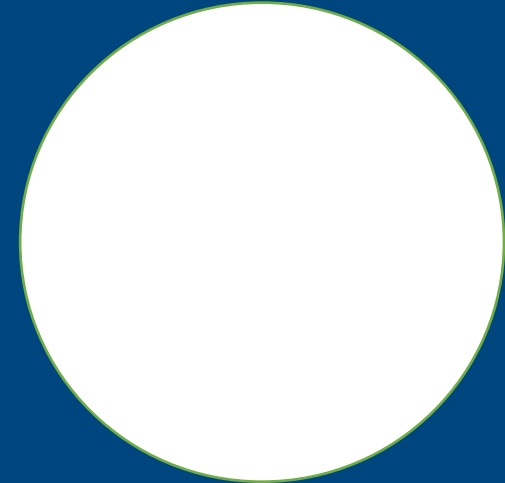
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Getting Started-Program Planning

Funding Sources

- Local governments
- Nonprofits focused on older adults and adults with disabilities
- Faith-based groups
- Transit/public transit agencies
- Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-B
- Federal Transit Administration Section 5310

Funding source is often related to target population



Getting Started-Program Planning

Volunteer Management Software

- Select software to manage rides, riders, drivers, administrators/coordinators
- Many programs exist—look for your needs
- Ensure the program selected has a way to manage driver's insurance and license expiration with automated system

Comparison shop to identify the best software for you

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Getting Started-Program Planning

Policies and Procedures

- Translate your program plans to policies in writing to ensure your team + community have clarity about the program's characteristics
- Clear policies ensure you can communicate strategically to stakeholders in your community

Craft policies that outline your program

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Getting Started-Program Planning

Volunteers and Insurance

- Programs should have insurance to protect drivers and the organization beyond what the driver's car insurance policy offers—this is especially important for things that may happen that are unrelated to the vehicle or driving (such as a client fall or medical issue)
- Select and purchase insurance for your program—this can be an add-on to an existing organizational umbrella policy or purchased as a standalone product (companies like VIS, CIMA specialize in volunteer insurance)
- All drivers will need to have insurance that meets state minimums, also need to make sure your **program** has insurance as well

Shop for insurance that fits your needs

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Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteers are the Backbone of Your Program!

- Develop a plan to communicate about your program to community partners and target populations
- Plan to recruit volunteers first AND on an ongoing basis

Volunteers are essential for your success

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Volunteer Recruitment

Consider Different Volunteer Types—Diversify!

- Drivers
- Phone answering/transportation coordinating
- Volunteer Recruiters

Everyone can help- even non driving older adults

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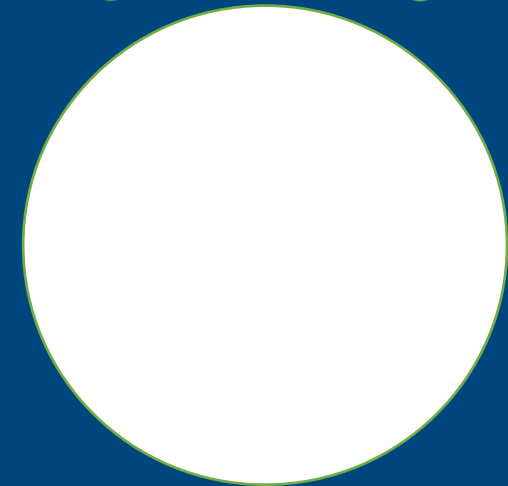
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Volunteer Recruitment

- Farmer's Markets
- Social media/Facebook neighborhood pages/NextDoor
- Expos/public events
- Print Ads
- PSAs
- NADTC Every Ride Counts Volunteer Driver Campaign

Look for outreach in areas you serve- keep it local

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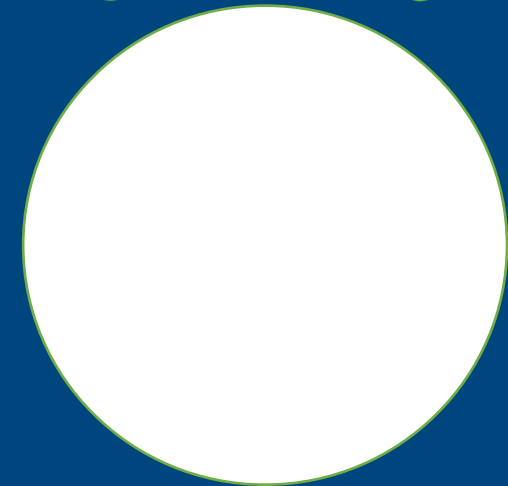
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Volunteer Recruitment

- Staff who coordinate rides are very important to protect driver's time
- Answer phones/manage incoming requests
- Communicate with volunteers
- Receive inquiries from new clients
- Respond to riders' and drivers' concerns and questions

Transportation coordinators can be volunteers

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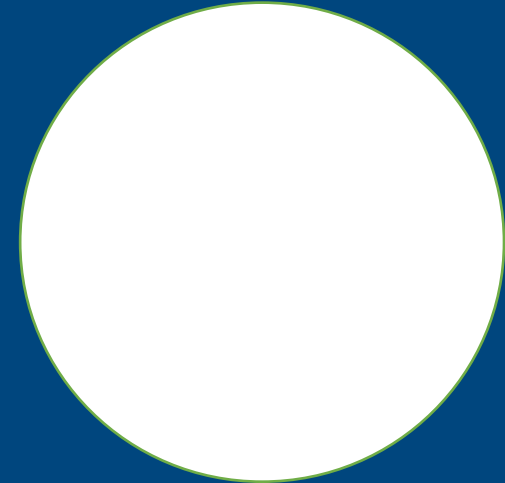


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Outreach to Riders

- There is typically high demand for volunteer transportation programs
- Reach out to underserved members in your community who may benefit from transportation program

Look for opportunities to share with underserved

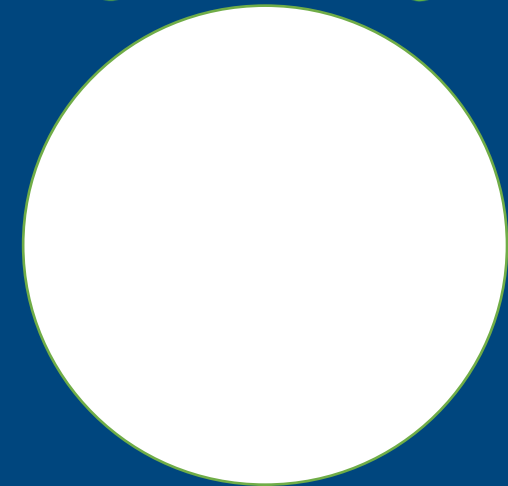


Outreach to Riders

- Doctor's Offices
- Area Agencies on Aging/Senior Centers/Community Centers
- Interest groups in faith communities
- Word of mouth
- Senior living expos
- ***Most riders in volunteer transportation are seniors aging in place—they live in their own homes but no longer drive***

Word of mouth is good outreach—encourage it

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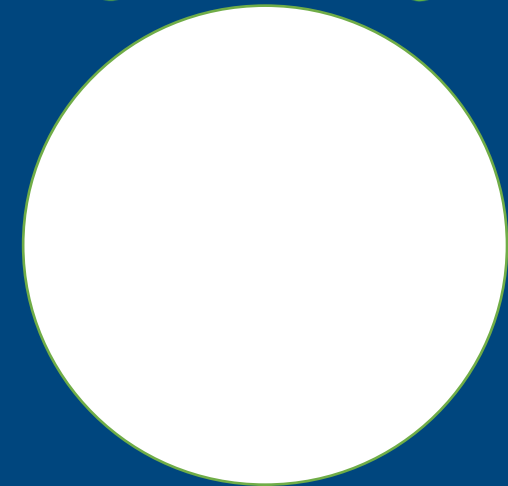
Train Drivers and Volunteers

Before onboarding a NEW volunteer, make sure you have:

- Verified their Drivers license
- Conducted a background check (this should be done for ALL volunteers)
- Verified that the driver is maintaining active insurance that meets state standards
- Conducted reference checks or interviews

Create a checklist to streamline the process

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Train Drivers and Volunteers

- Consider regular intervals for onboarding new volunteers
- Review software, policies, answer questions
- Driver + Rider agreements

Create community of volunteers with training

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Evaluate + Iterate

- Annual survey (or more frequently) of riders and drivers
- Look for gaps in service, experience, areas to grow and improve
- Evaluate for equity and community needs

Continual improvement to close gaps

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Evaluate + Iterate

- Share your program with other volunteer transportation programs
- Learn from one another and create our own community

Thank you

