NADTC Implementation Phase: Volunteer Driver Program, Training, Transit Info Website

North Central NM Economic Development District

NEW MEXICO AREA AGENCY ON *Aging* NON-METRO

Who Are We?
Where are We?

Taos, NM. Rural communities are far from towns and medical centers.
/NACTC photo file

The Volunteer Driver Program VDP) is a collaboration of the Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging (AAA) with community volunteers. The North Central New Mexico Economic Development District (NCNMEDD), the regional Council of Governments in 8 counties in northern NM, oversees the Program. VDP provides on-demand rides to non-emergency medical appointments. Pilot sites are Espanola, Rio Arriba and Town of Taos, Taos County.
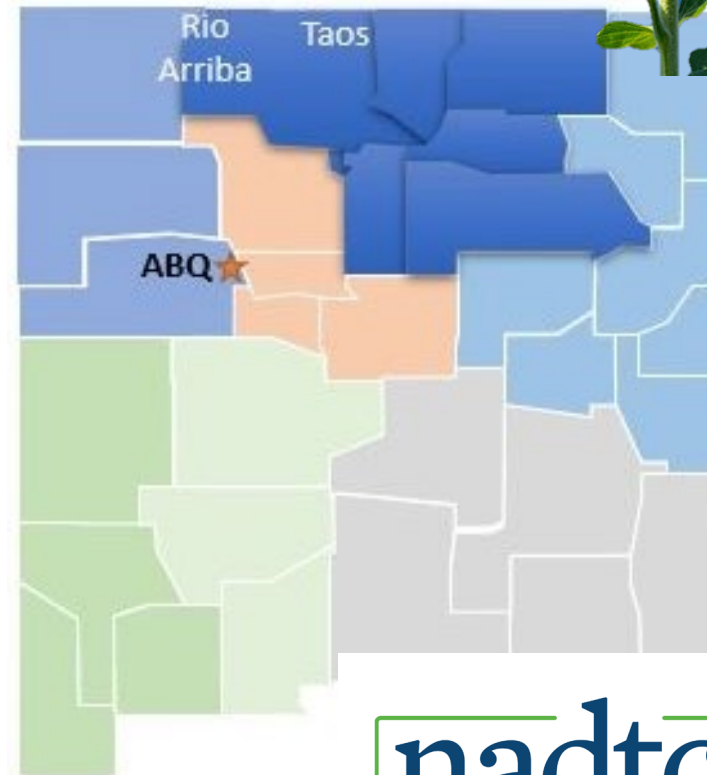
Challenges and Barriers

Volunteer and Rider Recruitment

Hard to reach rural areas most in need of transportation; some areas not served by Senior Centers

Poor Communication

Phone communication is not reliable – e.g. poor signal, do not know how to use phone, no phones, incorrect contact information; no computers at home

Gap in understanding how to use smartphones

Hiring and Team Dynamics

Challenges in hiring volunteer coordinator

Funds for continuation and expansion

Local partnerships; Steering Committee involvement, insight, and support

Lessons Learned

Rural seniors need assistance with communication and technology; be prepared for poor GPS signal in rural areas

Outreach – It is important to collaborate with local governments, organizations, businesses, the Steering Committee in direct support, riders and drivers to reach isolated areas

Marketing – VDP as community partnership for critical senior need; publicity gets quick results

Addressing identified barriers and opportunities – e.g. communication and rider referrals to case management where desired

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Next Steps

Expand service area within pilot sites

Replicate Program in rural NM as a hub and spoke model where hub provides program training, software & support, and assistance with volunteer recruitment

Partner with NMAAA service providers as spokes for VDP transportation /use of Older Americans Act funds for mileage reimbursement of volunteers

Continuity of publicity as community partnership for senior transportation for NEM appointments; resume news media features as corps of drivers expand

Ensure funding continues/expands commensurate to need

Attainment of VDP Goals and Targets

Provide Seniors and Persons With Disabilities a Ride to Non-Emergency Medical Appointments – no rides; late start; rides later provided were less than half of target (12/30 rides in first 15 days of August)

List of riders (20 - 100%) and volunteer drivers/applicants (6 – 150%)

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – no rides but scheduled riders for early August were 80% from rural areas, all older adults – over 80 yrs, with disability (visual and physical), low income, 50% Spanish speaking (On-demand transportation service for Native Americans are available in the Pueblos of the pilot site.)

Provide training to seniors for access of online transportation resources – 3 training (75%)

Develop webpage and online transportation resource hub – 1,784+ site visits since April 2023
(Target – 50 visits)

Sustainability – secured full and on-going funding for pilot continuation and expansion from NM ALTSD; policies and procedures in place for VDP replication; management software installed; Steering Committee and local partnerships active; lessons learned

Sustainability

Funding:
- Molina Cares Foundation - $50K
- NM Aging and Long Term Services Department – Fully Fund VDP/on-going

Expand Capacity:
- Hub and Spoke model - Expand into rural NM through NMAAA service provider partners/OAA funds
- Software for volunteer management
- Training on technology for riders

Outreach and Partnerships:
- Community volunteers
- Collaboration on transportation with UNM and 100% Community Initiative

Celebrate successes, learn from experiences; mileage reimbursement and volunteer recognition program

Thank You!

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