

Keys to Successful Training Programs

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

Introduction

Michele Brooks, Connecticut RTAP; Kaitlyn Richardson, Nebraska Safety Center; and Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP; presented three examples of successful training programs at the 2019 National RTAP Technical Assistance Conference in Portland Oregon last September.

One presentation focused on How to Plan a Bus Rodeo. The second addressed a Driver Training Bootcamp, and the third presentation focused on an Approved Trainer Program. In this article, I'd like to share with you the highlights of each presentation.

Keys to Successful Training Programs: How to Plan a Bus Rodeo

Help already exists to plan a Bus Rodeo event. Timelines, schedules, a list of equipment needs, event diagrams, and scoring sheets are all available on the National RTAP's website, Bus Rodeo Toolkit.

Michele Brooks, Connecticut RTAP, pointed out that a key to Connecticut RTAP's Rodeo success is new rodeo coordinators at the provider/transit agency level. Connecticut RTAP follows the National RTAP rodeo planning toolkit by establishing a core planning committee that includes an overall rodeo coordinator, decision makers, funders, and representatives from operations and marketing. Connecticut RTAP's Bus Rodeo also has a designated coordinator from each agency/organization funded by Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT). It helps that CDOT requests agencies to assign a designated coordinator to help with the bus rodeo event.

The designated agency coordinators are the contacts for the overall rodeo coordinator. The rodeo coordinator sends marketing materials, registration information, course materials, and also assigns a practice day to the designated agency coordinators. In turn, the agency coordinators recruit drivers, find volunteers, put up the marketing posters, and share rodeo event information.

Having designated coordinators helps build peer-to-peer learning opportunities at the agency level, such as helping each other practice for the rodeo event. Designated coordinators also build excitement for the rodeo within their agencies and recruit cheering sections for drivers participating in the event.

Keys to Successful Driver Training: Driver Training Bootcamp

Advance: Innovation and Safety in Transit is a partnership between the Nebraska Department of Transportation, The Nebraska Safety Center at the University of Nebraska Kearney, College of Business and Technology, and the Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Nebraska Omaha, College of Public Affairs and Community Service. This partnership receives funding from the Nebraska DOT for driver training.

Part of this effort included the development of a driver bootcamp. Kaitlyn Richardson, coordinator for Advance: Innovation and Safety in Transit, said that drivers who attend the two-day class gain experience in passenger assistance, safety, sensitivity, defensive driving, and networking with other transit agency drivers.

The bootcamp covers topics such as disability awareness and sensitivity, ADA regulations, wheelchair securement, and mobility options for passenger assistance. Defensive driving topics include managing and reducing risk, the Sipde drivers education method, distracted driving, rules of the road, and professionalism.

The facility where the bootcamp is held (located in Kearney, NE, and unique to Nebraska) includes a large driving area, facilities to practice hands-on driving with buses, and an impaired driving simulator. There are also simulated buildings to practice door-to-door or curb-to-curb services, hands-on mobility securement, and practice using a fire extinguisher.

Nebraska also brings in volunteer guest speakers from the fire and police departments, NDOT, Great Plains Safety and Health Organization, Operation Lifesaver, and Safe Kids – Child Passenger Safety. The

combination of class topics, hands-on participation, and guest speakers on specialized topics gives attendees a well-rounded training to be professional transit operators.

Keys to Successful Driver Training: Kansas RTAP Approved Trainer Program

The Kansas RTAP Approved Trainer Program was established to help provide more driver training throughout Kansas. RTAP training is funded by Kansas Department of Transportation for 5310 and 5311 operations. Anne Lowder, KS RTAP outreach coordinator and lead driver trainer, said that approved trainers help provide more training for transit operators than she, alone, is able to provide across the state.

Kansas RTAP wanted to structure the program to be sure approved trainers provide consistent, high-quality training, and that operators are receiving the best possible training and information on the three, core RTAP courses (Passenger Assistance, Defensive Driving, and Emergency Procedures).

The program provides an application process to become an approved trainer. It starts with a policy that outlines the responsibilities of an approved trainer, such as opening their trainings up to other agencies within their multiple-county region, posting scheduled trainings on KDOT's shared, Blackcat calendar, and entering their trainings and participants in a new KS RTAP Approved Trainer portal. Also, an approved trainer two-day workshop is provided every two years to update training materials and share best practices in transit training.

Summary

The three programs presented under Keys to Successful Training Programs at the 2019 National RTAP Technical Assistance Conference all had unique training ideas and successes. Connecticut RTAP's Bus Roadeo utilizes designated agency coordinators to improve participation in its State Bus Roadeo Event. Nebraska DOT collaborated and developed a training facility for transit operators that allows both classroom training and hands-on training at a facility large enough to allow on-site driving and mobility training that improves best practices for their transit operators. Kansas RTAP works with approved

trainers throughout the state to increase opportunities for transit operators to receive high-quality, consistent RTAP trainings. In all, each program is unique but equal in their mission to provide quality driver training and peer-to-peer connections.

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