

North East Kingdom and Lamoille County
Elders & Persons with Disabilities Committee

Meeting Agenda

April 1, 2021, 10:00-11:30am

- Welcome and Introductions
- Discuss status of partner budgets
- Discuss new requirement for following open meeting law
- Discuss development of required annual workplan for E&D committee
- Discuss membership, potential for new partners, committee procedures, and other topics which may become elements of the annual workplan
- Appoint committee officers to facilitate open meeting procedures?
- Adjourn

Meeting Notes

Attendees

Doug Morton (NVDA), Rob Moore (LCPC), Katharine Otto and Tim Bradshaw (VTrans), Karen Desrochers (NEKCOA), Christopher Mitchell (NKHS), Jeanne Kern (CVCOA), Nick D'Agostino and Tasha Green (RCT), Andrea Stauffeneker and Peter Coutu (Riverside and Lamoille Adult Day centers)

Overview of new way of running E&D committee

Doug explained purpose for new way of running the E&D committee is to make statewide apples to apples comparison among groups, provide some common structure statewide, provide continuity of work and institutional knowledge when staffing changes and/or partner groups change, etc.

Most important part of the changes is to give opportunity for public to access and participate in E&D conversations.

Agendas and meeting notes will be posted on RPC and RCT websites. Web meetings will be recorded. Goal is to have more participation from other community members and potential partners.

Funding Budget Status Update Discussion

Tasha sent everyone the snapshot of budget status per partner in an email dated 4/1/2021, 9:45am. Nick provided an overview of the numbers. NEKCA has been low spending for several years, prior to COVID, and COVID seems to have driven their needs for spending even lower. Nick explained there is an overlap in their clients with clients of NEKCOA so that it is likely most if not all people are getting the rides they need. This introduces the thought: should this group speak with NEKCA and ask them their desire to continue to participate as a funded partner versus a community partner.

Jeanne asked and Nick explained the COVID impact overview on this program. Nick explained for a while at the beginning of COVID there were very few rides needed because everyone was staying home (good thing). In the past few months or so need for rides has been slowly ticking up and RCT expects that trend to slowly continue as more and more people are vaccinated. Tasha explained that RCT has been as accommodating as they possibly can be when funds are unspent, i.e. an additional ride request is granted, but RCT is constantly keeping a close eye on the numbers and those extra rides may need to be limited if demand starts to exceed unspent funds. Nick said capacity on all busses is 50% per State guidance, and the Johnson Shopper is back up and running 2x per month.

Jeanne asked if the 50% capacity limit was impacting riders, i.e. not enough room on the bus for me to get on. Nick explained that in the beginning of COVID there were times that was an issue in specific circumstances, but as COVID went on regular daily demand simply dropped off so the 50% capacity is generally speaking sufficient to meet the needs. Example Nick gave is the US2 Commuter pre-COVID was about 35 riders per day and now is about 8-10 riders per day, leaving capacity on the bus if additional people (about 5-10 people) were waiting at a bus stop. Similar impact to volunteer driver services: pool of drivers is down but so is demand. Even though they are not ride sharing due to COVID, RCT volunteer driver pool is big enough to meet those demands currently. That could change as more people are vaccinated and want to go out more, for example when Adult Day centers open up again. Nick emphasized that RCT can always use more volunteers in the driver pool even in normal times, and especially during COVID. Historically, RCT provides roughly 1000 volunteer rides per day with a pool of around 90-100 drivers. Total rides per day and volunteer driver pool are both down significantly during COVID, and logistics of 1 passenger per vehicle is an ongoing challenge to manage.

Nick and VTrans explained the upcoming budget year is proposed to be level funded (even if some money is left on the table for the current budget year) so none of the E&D partners need to be concerned in the short term about having enough funds to provide rides to their clients.

Workplan discussion

VTrans recommends following template and other regional examples to create ours. They have examples of various goals and projects. Suggestion for ours include: list of member entities, roles different partners play in the community and in the E&D group, expectations for data from RCT, inviting new beneficiary partners versus community advisory role partners.

Need to have discussion about model of distributing finance, i.e. cap of money versus cap of # of trips versus ticket to ride. Suggestion that our to-be-determined model is, very similar to how it is currently done by CVCOA, to say to partner/client you have this many trips in a month and you decide how to use them locally, while medical trips outside the region are guaranteed to be funded by other existing sources. RCT always good about taking case by case exception of an extra ride if the capacity is there, RCT defers to the Partner to determine eligibility for E&D and they work together if a different fund source is needed – this part of the conversation is not important to most riders since they don't care who pays for the ride they just need a ride. Shuttles and vans and volunteer drivers are used strategically in combination with fixed routes to provide the appropriate services to the various needs.

Need to have conversations with potential partners for new services, identify needs, identify what service might look like to fill that need, be creative via collaboration.

Adult day center staff in Riverside and Lamoille are not yet fully vaccinated so hoping for early May they will be and can then follow the re-opening guidance.

Workplan draft will be completed by Doug and Rob. Will also send examples from other regions to the group.

What process will we use to determine the share per partner entity of the total grant amount each year? What is the current process? A verbal explanation in the workplan is probably good, not necessarily a detailed math formula. Meeting schedule 4x per year, 10am on the 1st Thursday of June, September, December, March.

Our workplan should include the type of data collected and shared and available, because data can help show gaps in service. Describing/defining Funded or Beneficiary Partner versus Community Advisory Partner. Should we require Cash match for the federal funding, if not require should there be an allowance for individual partners to enhance their offerings to their clients, such that those moneys are flexible to use as needed above and beyond the base level funding provided from VTrans to RCT? Partner Match not currently required in this region but do in other regions. Currently and historically, the large volume of volunteer drivers in the RCT team is counted as “in-kind” match for the federal money. If that ever were to become not allowed by federal rules or if the volunteer network at RCT were to shrink, our current model would be required to change. Therefore, should we think about preparing now for that future possibility?

VTrans reminded the group of original/fundamental purpose of the E&D program is to increase access to more trip purposes, via other partners and existing partners. Doug has reminded this group during past meetings that the original legislative intent when the E&D program was first established was not to cover 100% of needs, rather it was considered by the legislature as a small patch to a known large gap in serving needs of Vermonters.

CVCOA at one point in the past brought a small fund to the table to help cover the high usage of their clients. Are other partners open to that?

Rob and Doug will develop the draft workplan between now and the next meeting on June 3, 2021, 10-11:30am, via zoom. They will distribute the draft workplan along with examples from other regions in advance of the meeting. An objective of the next meeting will be to receive feedback from the group to edit and finish the plan document. Rob and Doug can then finalize the plan and submit it to VTrans.