

LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	HS-9
Title of Program	Veterans Transportation Services
Program Category	Human Services
Submission Date	5/31/2017 9:45:34 AM
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Implementation Date	11/11/2016
FLSA Designation	Non-exempt
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Description of Productivity Improvement

The Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) created a Veterans Transportation Service to assist veterans with accessing and participating in crucial medical treatment. Prior to the creation of this exclusive service, veterans were required to utilize Gaston County's public transportation services, leaving them feeling undervalued and unappreciated. The program began on November 11, 2016 and now serves 38 veterans, completing an average of 121 one way trips a month to VA Hospitals in both Salisbury and Charlotte North Carolina. Since the implementation of our Veterans Transportation Service program there has been a noticeable reduction in reported complaints to Veterans Services and an overwhelming improvement in consumer morale. In addition, the wrapped vans provide a visual representation to local citizens of how their tax dollars are being utilized to provide local veterans with indispensable services.

Description of why this project was initiated

Gaston County initiated the Veterans Transportation Service program to assist the estimated 14,544 veterans living in our community with their healthcare needs in the least stigmatic way. One of the primary barriers for veterans to access healthcare services is often the travel distance to the nearest Veterans Affairs health facility. The lack of timely public transportation to reach these facilities is an additional barrier for veterans, further discouraging obtainment of crucial medical services.

Gaston County Veterans Transportation Service was created with the goal of addressing a multitude of issues. First was the disparity in available transportation services dedicated to local veterans. In addition, the program was intended to improve community relations by providing tax payers with a visual representation of community investment. Lastly, the program was designed to reduce the stigma associated with the utilization of public transportation by local veterans.

Prior to the implementation of the dedicated Veteran Transportation Services, veterans were required to utilize other means of public transportation to attend medical appointments at local VA hospitals. This often resulted in long arduous trips to and from VA hospitals. Concern about the overall health of local veterans and availability of services led to a collaboration between Gaston County's Transportation Services and Veterans Services. This collaboration resulted in two vans being reallocated within the county fleet, being covered in a patriotic vehicle wrap and being utilized to provide veterans with a high level of transportation services. The wrapped vans provide the community with a visual representation of how tax money is being spent to improve the lives of local community members. In addition, the vans provide an alternative to utilizing public transportation.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

The Veteran's Transportation Service is an innovative solution to address a variety of inadequacies associated with transporting local veterans to vital medical services. By reallocating already available resources, Gaston County was able to provide an additional service to the community without accruing any additional costs. The program has the ability for long term sustainment due to the innovative use of existing resources. Gaston County anticipates being able to continually repurpose high mileage fleet vehicles for Veterans Transportation. The vehicles' maintenance is supported through the county motor pool and existing staff are used to provide chauffeur services.

Gaston County was able to reallocate two fleet vehicles (vans) scheduled to be sold at auction that had reached their serviceable mileage limit. There were no costs associated with reallocating the vans. The approximate value of the vans is \$15,000.00/each. A total of \$3,671.44 was invested into the vans to enhance the appearance with a patriotic vehicle wrap. The wrap is used to promote veterans services within the community and provide consumers with an intrinsic sense of being valued. Gaston County was able to utilize already existing staff to drive the vans, eliminating the cost of additional labor. The cost associated with purchasing the resources to implement this program would be approximately \$33,671.44, which was able to be avoided by using already existing resources and staff.

The sense of personal pride created for veterans from the implementation of this program may never be fully measurable but could be one of the most valuable aspects of this program.