

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2014 Achievement Awards



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**


Program Information

Locality Prince William County
Program Title Veterans Enhanced Transportation Service
Program Category Health and Human Services

Contact Information

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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Courtney Tierney
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Signature 

Call for Entries

Program Title: Veterans Enhanced Transportation Service (V.E.T.S.)

Program Category: Health & Human Services

Program Overview:

The Veteran Enhanced Transportation Service (V.E.T.S.) is a volunteer transportation program for veterans and their spouses. This program is administered through a community partnership between the Prince William Area Agency on Aging (Agency) and Volunteer Prince William's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). The purpose of V.E.T.S. is to offer safe and reliable transportation to veterans and their spouses who are unable to transport themselves to doctors' offices or pharmacies. V.E.T.S. gives Older American Veterans, age 55 or older, the opportunity to volunteer in their community for a great cause. Since April 23, 2013, the V.E.T.S. program has assisted in serving over 25 veterans and/or their spouses, and logged 221 trips.

The Problem / Need for the Program: ¼

The Agency operated a transportation voucher program with federal New Freedom funds from 2011-2012, to serve older adults in the Prince William Area. When the grant period ended, the lack of transportation left a gap in services.

In 2012, an Agency staff person asked for help from the public, with an article in the local newspaper, to transport a disabled veteran to the Veterans Hospital in Washington, D.C., 25 miles away, for medical treatment. This one article elicited multiple volunteers that contacted the Agency with their willingness to transport this veteran. These volunteers wanted to “give back” to this veteran and their community. Realizing that the Agency could not coordinate all of the transportation needs in our community alone, along with the tremendous community response, the Agency reached out to R.S.V.P to set up the V.E.T.S. program.

Description of the Program: 2 ½

The V.E.T.S. program was developed to meet the medical transportation needs of the veterans, their spouses, and their widows, in the Prince William Area, who have no other means of transportation. People eligible for the program can be transported to doctors' appointments or the pharmacy. Prince William County, the City of Manassas and the City of Manassas Park are approximately 25 miles from our nation's capital. This geographic area has a large concentration of veterans that remain in the area after retirement, which gives them the opportunity to age in place. The Agency provides the needed supports and services that enable veterans to remain in their community as independently as possible, and transportation is a critical factor in that independence.

In April 2012, an Agency staff person identified the need for reliable transportation to medical appointments for veterans. Trying to meet the need, the staff person utilized a local newspaper to post an ad requesting a volunteer to transport this veteran to medical appointments. This article solicited a large response from volunteers want to help. Understanding that the Agency did not have the resources to match volunteers with veterans, the staff person started researching ideas on how we could make this idea work.

In January 2013, the Agency reached out to a local non-profit community partner, Volunteer Prince William, to discuss the possibility of creating a program that matches volunteers age 55 and older who can drive with eligible participants in need of medical transportation. R.S.V.P. is a program operated by Volunteer Prince William, with which the Agency has worked with for many years. R.S.V.P. receives federal funding to provide travel stipends for older volunteers who meet financial eligibility requirements. Agency staff knew

from the first meeting that we had identified the perfect community partner to start the V.E.T.S. program.

The Agency worked with R.S.V.P. to develop program policies and procedures. It was decided that the Agency staff would make all appropriate referrals to R.S.V.P. These guidelines include but are not limited to; 1) the rider must be a veteran, spouse of a veteran, or their widow and have no other means of transportation; 2) must be ambulatory and able to get themselves in and out of the volunteer's vehicle; and 3) must allow two weeks for R.S.V.P. staff to coordinate a volunteer for transport service. A referral form was developed (attachment) to ensure clear communication between the Agency and R.S.V.P.

The R.S.V.P. program provides trained volunteers that are covered under R.S.V.P.'s liability insurance, which is a critical issue and concern for many volunteers today. R.S.V.P. is also responsible for soliciting and screening the volunteers, to include checking for a valid driver's license and proof of vehicle insurance. As much as possible, R.S.V.P. tries to pair a volunteer who lives in the same geographic location as the participant. R.S.V.P. encourages volunteers to report their mileage in order to be paid a small stipend based on miles driven.

The first program participant was transported on April 23, 2013. Since that time, R.S.V.P. has documented the transportation that has been provided by volunteers. The utilization of this service has far-exceeded any initial expectations.

Responding to Economic Downturn: ¾

The great recession brought challenges to our older veterans on fixed incomes. Local government was also constrained by limited budgets so the Agency knew a solution would have to be found that did not cost either local government or local citizens. A determined staff member of the Agency reached out to RSVP, a program within a local non-profit community partner called Volunteer Prince William, with a program idea generated through the Agency, called the V.E.T.S. program. Planning meetings were held, RSVP responded and moved quickly on this project.

Use of Technology: ¼

In implementation of the V.E.T.S. program, normal operating technology was utilized. This includes the use of computer for email and internet to research and plan meetings between VPW and the Agency. Electronic referrals were sent from the Agency to RSVP to assist with setting up veterans and volunteers for the V.E.T.S. program. In order to perform the mapping of routes RSVP as well as the appointed volunteers utilized software programs, GPS, and smart phones to assist with the location and mileage for transporting the veterans and/or their spouse.

Cost of the Program: ¾ to 1

The only cost involved is minimal staff time within the Agency. There is no additional cost to Prince William County. In the event another county wanted to replicate the V.E.T.S. program, there would be no additional cost utilizing the model we use here in Prince William County. R.S.V.P. is funded with a federal grant. In order to encourage volunteer participation, R.S.V.P.

has a built in insurance liability in the event volunteers are injured “on the job”. Eligible volunteers receive a small stipend quarterly for mileage reimbursement out of R.S.V.P.’s federal grant budget.

Results / Successes of the Program: ¾ to 1

Initially, the projection to the Federal government under RSVP for this program was 95 trips per year. That number was exceeded by the first quarter. Since the first referral in April of 2013, over 221 trips have been serviced for veterans and their spouses through the Agency and R.S.V.P. As the number of veteran referrals increases, the need for volunteers increases also. The V.E.T.S. program began with one committed volunteer and has grown to 15 committed volunteer drivers for our veterans and their spouses

Worthiness of an Award: ¼ to ½

The V.E.T.S. program is an example of a collaborative effort between a government entity and a local non-profit organization to meet a community need. The Agency identified a need and services were provided, avoiding the use of tax-payer dollars or having to pass on a fee to participants. Utilizing volunteers provides an opportunity for citizens to become involved in their local government and give back to their community. This program, which targets a special population, has exceeded its initial goals and continues to grow serving more veterans and their families every week. This is a program that can be easily duplicated in other communities for any population, not just veterans.