



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 Henrico County

Program Title Transition to Mobile Library Service

Program Category Customer Service

Contact Information

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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

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Title County Manager

Signature 

2014 VACo Achievement Award
Transition to a Mobile Library Service at Henrico County Public Library

Overview

Henrico County Public Library's (HCPL) Bookmobile service began in 1977 with the goal of bringing books and people together outside the traditional library setting. From 1977 through 2011 HCPL's bookmobile service used a large 32-foot bookmobile vehicle that allowed patrons to walk up into the vehicle to browse the collection. In response to budgetary changes and to address the needs of elderly patrons HCPL decided to transition from the 32-foot Bookmobile to a Mobile Library Service using a specially outfitted Sprinter Van. HCPL not only changed the vehicle but how programming and service stops were approached.

Problem

In 2009 when the bookmobile was due to be replaced it became apparent that due to fiscal realities that HCPL needed to rethink how this service was offered. The current vehicle was very expensive to operate and maintain. Additionally, over time the bookmobile's senior population median age had increased from lower seventies to the eighties. When staff visited senior centers those in wheelchairs and walkers often did not come out to visit the bookmobile because they were not able to maneuver the steep steps to browse the collection and the vehicle did not have a wheelchair lift.

Another problem was that the bookmobile service had a set schedule which did not allow for flexibility with the childcare centers. Some childcare centers had been on the schedule for 20 years. Bookmobile staff received requests from new centers that could not be accommodated due to schedule limitations.

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How the program is carried out

HCPL not only changed the vehicle but how programming and stops were approached. The ratio of stops went from 50% Children's (22 childcare centers) and 50% Senior (21 senior facilities) to 30% Children's (12 childcare centers) and 70% Senior (27 senior facilities).

The new childcare schedules would give priority to preschool children most in need. Childcare Centers were divided into two groups, Tier I (highest group) and Tier II (second highest group) of free and reduced lunch program in the area schools as a measure. Tier I would receive priority with monthly mini-visits from staff to their centers. Tier II would receive two mini-visits per year. Childcare activity director of both tiers would call and request a mini-visit for their center.

The senior service would be a monthly one-hour "lobby stop" consisting of rolling book trucks into the facility. Previously staff had visited twice a month for 30 minutes making the schedule very tight and often not leaving enough time for each visit.

Bookmobile staff made personal visits to the director of each childcare and senior facility to explain the changes in service and what effect the change would have on their particular facility. A "Coming Soon" flyer created by Public Relations Office, was handed out to each senior that visited the Bookmobile during the last scheduled visit.

The new Sprinter Van arrived October 2013. Customization to the van included installing a wrap designed by the library's graphic designer and a lift gate, for loading and unloading book trucks. Prior to the van's delivery, HCPL staff worked with an aluminum shelving and book

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truck company to design shelving for the van and design book trucks and a computer work station cart that could be wheeled into stops.

Staffing & Costs

Staffing remained the same through the transition. The difference now is that staff can focus more energy on creating programming like book discussions and story times. And because the stops are longer these programs can be more in-depth. In addition, Mobile Library staff are now able to fill in more often when there are staffing needs at branch libraries.

The cost of the Sprinter Van was \$88,000 (this includes everything), the cost of the originally planned 32 foot vehicle would have been \$200,000. The van also did not have a generator which eliminated expensive maintenance costs that would have been a part of the 32-foot vehicle. The van gets 18-22 miles per gallon of fuel, whereas the previous 32-foot bookmobile vehicle got 4.5 miles per gallon of fuel.

How the program meets criteria

HCPL's challenge of reaching patrons who cannot come into its libraries is becoming increasingly difficult for libraries nationwide with decreasing budgets and staff time. By rethinking how HCPL could serve this population HCPL was not only able to improve and innovate its service, reach the people who most need the library, but also made it much more cost effective and efficient. Additionally the relationships with local senior centers and daycares that had been fostered over years of Bookmobile service were maintained and strengthened. The

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model used to transition from a bookmobile service to a mobile library service could be replicated in other localities facing similar outreach challenges.

Results/Success of the program

Registrations of new patrons have increased 100%, large print circulation has increased 100%, DVD circulation has increased 66% and audiobook circulation has increased 50%. These increases are attributed to the new “lobby stop” service model. Mobile Library (previously called Bookmobile) staff and materials now come into the senior facilities instead of patrons coming outside to the vehicle. Residents who did not come to the old Bookmobile due to weather or not being able to use the stairs on the old vehicle found it much more convenient to visit inside their facility. Mobile Library staff have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from patrons about the change.

Transition from Bookmobile to Mobile Library Service- Henrico County Public Library, Henrico, VA



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