Phirun Lach Zoom Audio

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We are going to now go to one of NCMM's grantees, for those who you familiar with our program. And we'll talk a little bit about this after. After Phirun speaks, and team members, three phases to I'm sorry, I keep going from that speaker. We have three phases of grants, we have a planning phase, we have a trial run phase, which we call a limited launch, then we have a pilot phase, you're going to hear from one of our grantees Phirun. Phirun Lach. And I'll let him introduce himself Phirun, if you don't mind, and he's going to tell you about what they've been able to accomplish. And they have been one of our grantees that has gone through all three phases, brown all to you.

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Thank you, Amy. Hi, I'm a pro lock. I'm the transition director from sound generations, based out in Seattle, Washington, and I had the privilege of working with with Amy bill and Sage on implementing this pilot. So I wanted to start off by thanking my predecessor as well. Mark, he started this planning phase and with the focus groups, and I just kind of picked up where he left off and implementing the pilot. So I was privileged with most of the the focus groups and everything done prior to my arrival. So everything was in good order, when it was handed off to me. So I just wanted to thank Mark smutny for doing that. So I'm going to share my slides here.

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And I apologize, I couldn't be there in person had a vacation pre planned. So just kind of maybe next time, or if I'm invited, I will gladly be in person. So let me just Alright, so again, the pilot was named, rising smiles, based enhancing mobility for our community. The focus group was older adults aged 55 and older and adults with disabilities. So a brief overview of the pilot. So it was initiated to address the pressing mobility challenges faced by the groups, which I'll go over later on the East Side Community of King County. So once we met with the focus groups and kind of discovered what, you know, what we were planning on doing so though, the focus question they all agreed upon was on how might we meet culturally appropriate transportation needs, including the need for spontaneous trips, and address social social isolation among the most impacted older adults in the cities of Kirkland, Redmond and Bellevue, which is considered the east side here and in Washington State. And then the criteria that kind of broke it down and some bullet points here, but primarily supportable door to door transportation, to all types of destinations, medical, food related shopping, family, friends, cultural and religious events, safe sheltered from the adverse weather, no long walks to the bus stop, and no long waits, and then vehicles to accommodate all mobility devices. So all of our shuttles are equipped with less. So we can have anybody with any mobility device, be able to access a shuttle. So kind of the background to this is, I mean, there are fixed routes in the area. So large metropolitan area, as well there, between those three cities, and our paratransit services, which are very restricted in terms of their criteria. So a lot of them would not qualify to use you know paratransit offered by by our local provider here. So the key concept elements, again, same the adults kids five and older, self declared disabilities that eligible and companions are allowed. So the change that a big big change a big idea was to offer same day reservations. So normally, the model of demand response require Lisa a three day advance notice to get you scheduled and on the books. But on a pilot they wanted to try out, you know, having same day reservations, because you know, about a lot of people know what they want to do, you know, might be a spur of the moment thing or they might get a last minute call that a appointments open for the doctors. So we had offered the same the reservations, and the pilot phase as well. Excuse me as well. Again, the rise and another change was the rise provided across the cities, the three cities. So with our current with the current model that we offered and hide shuttle, we was restricted by the city limits. So you can travel outside the city that the shuttles operating in. But what this pilot, we did offer that they were able to go between the three cities, which was a big, big difference for for the residents there. And then 10 minute maximum pickup a drop off time. So we we like to stay within a strict schedule to be there within 10 minutes from pickup or drop off. If we are late by by any chance we do, give them a call to let them know we will be running a few minutes late. So to give them that courtesy as well, we don't, we don't like to have a wait outside for a bit longer than 10 minutes. Again, we partner with some community based organizations to make this happen as well. And yeah, and we also offered additional charter service to provide rides to special events and festivals, music and cultural events, casinos, religious gatherings, etc. So again, a little a little break from the norm that we normally offered with sound generations hive shuttle. Again, so the East Side Community, the east side of King County, I should specify a side of Washington this kind of Spokane area, but he said of King County was a great, great market opportunity. For us just due to the you know, the 41% of the population in these three cities were born. In over 90 different foreign countries 44% speak a language other than English at home. And then those are age 65 and older constitute about 14% of the population out there. And 56 of respondents surveyed report that transportation is a challenge for participating in social and or recreational activities. And about 13% of all households headed by someone aces five or older did not have a vehicle and 39% of renter households headed by someone aged 65 and older did not have a vehicle as well. Lack of personal transportation was one of the main reasons older adults and missed medical appointments are less likely to participate in social and other family events, fragility and social isolation, mental donation, I mean, the rise for free, so there was no fee for the rise. But we do accept donations and door to door service to all destinations in three cities. So a lot of the population with the focus groups anyway that we have interviewed and held meetings with a lot of them were came over here with, with their children for work opportunities. And a lot of them were isolated at home when the children when their children were at work. So there was nothing for them, really to do. And a lot of them had said that they felt totally isolated at home didn't have any friends, you know, obviously, it's in different parts of the world that didn't really have any social interaction. And a lot of them were getting to the point of, you know, just feeling almost depressed, in that sense. So now go have some success story cheerleader. So again, Project Background. So prior to rise and smiles, many communities struggled to access the central services and social opportunities. And again, the target population was older adults and individuals with disabilities, who often facing the biggest barriers to mobility. kind of summarizing the community impact so again, reduce social isolation, especially with people with low incomes, new immigrants and people of color, progress aging in place and continuation of independent lifestyle, culturally intelligent test patient service builds trust and rush HIPAA strengthen the partnership by CBO. So, those that you know, struggle with speaking English, we did offer the language line which are drivers for train to access. So if there was any communication barrier, we will call them English line to make sure we understood, you know, what the writer was saying. And also they understood what we were saying in terms of their transportation. And just some, some data so the pilot ran from October 2022 to June of 2023. So we had nine months of good data here. So during that span, we we serve 165 new riders, the denial rate was less than 2% of requests, which is you know, and our metrics was was really good are are currently hovering last seven or 8%. So, and this is all due to poor having one driver as well. So We have one driver throughout the pilots who have been through city so that means even more impressive what they were able to do. Again, we provided a 1326 one way trips, covering 15,572 miles, and this driver logged in 1335 Bing hours. So we also divide kind of the rides by a purpose for three categories. So medical nutrition and personal. So most of the rides were personal base, and then nutrition 30%. And then medical was 20%, which is offers a different ride pattern in the Seattle area, which is kind of split, you know, down the three about 33% each. Again, this just this is just a couple of the kind of client or writer testimonials that we received. So one of them said, writing smiles shuttle is very nice. I'm using it daily to from my hydrotherapy going to NBCC, which is north Bellevue community center. doctor's appointments, drivers very friendly on Thursday 40 people are riding for senior centers, it's very popular now. Not much waiting period, they have one bus. So doing two shifts for pickups and drop off. People are using the grocery store in malls and going for doctor's appointments. Right now, that one bus and again, same fabric they're sending Oh, and also supplemented with the yellow cab. So if the shuttle does fall, or we can act or give them a ride that day, we do use the taxis, the yellow cabs out here to supplement those requests. So people in registration and dispatch are very, very cooperative. Sometimes if we come out of doctor's office, a little bit later, the bus does wait.

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They are working very hard to manage it. In my knowledge, everybody's very happy for the services and facilities. Another one said, Hi, my name is Dave and my wife's name is Lou Paul de, we are really thankful for the rice and smiles for providing us the facility. For our requested rides. We have been getting these services very regularly in a well organized way. And we are grateful for that. Now we are living in South Bellevue and we have no access to any public transport facility. And rising smiles has been giving us such a nice service and made it possible for us to have good mobility. Again, these are just a couple of the stories and this one was that we did a lot of them didn't feel comfortable providing written testimonials understandably so. So. But a lot of them to offer that it was mostly life changing to have this pilot service in place that they're able to get out even for three hours a day, most of them at least a couple of times a week. Can can do this without our partners. Big thanks, obviously to ncnm for funding this pilot and kind of working with us through the whole planning phase to get to the pilot and during the pilot when we are operating and they were very supportive and checking in and making sure you know we had all the resources that we needed. So again, couldn't do it without NCM or for Yeah, for everything. So thank you again. And then also the three primary community based organizations we worked with was a ISC, the Indian American community services, JFS, Jewish Family Services, and C is C which is a Chinese Information and Service Center. So these groups CBOs hosted the focus groups for us. And they played a big role on we had regular meetings, recurring meetings to kind of address any concerns or anything, challenges that we faced and how the feedback that they were getting provide to us so we can kind of restructure and kind of rethink how the pilot went. So it was kind of a work in progress. But towards the end of it, I think we ironed out most of the concerns. So again, with a pilot, you know, we so the ESA has been underserved in terms of paratransit demand response door to door, they've had services in the past that were either discontinued due to lack of funding or just a lack of interest or just lack of awareness, I believe was kind of the three big factors that they weren't able to sustain this type of model. But, you know, this pilot definitely helped us it came at the perfect time because the Washington State Department of Transportation offers a, you know, consolidated grants every every two to four years for for new services. So when we applied to extend the service, you know, after the after the pilot had expired. We provided them the data and kind of the stories of what we've been working on And I believe, truly 100% that it helped us get sustained funding. So we were funded for an additional two years. For 24, this year 2024 and 2025. And, and the grant, yeah, application is going to open up in a couple of weeks. So I'm gonna apply again to sustain for hopefully another four years on top of that, but at least you got the two years and this palette definitely played a major role in doing that. So currently, again, we started a pilot with one driver. And right now we have four drivers on the east side. So we've scaled up, and we've brought in more rides, and again, learning through the the trials of the pilot, you know, kind of in the infancy phase, to now we really, Utah kind of managed it to make it really efficient. And by adding a lot more rights, just some challenges that we face, this will I mean, nothing that goes without any challenges, which was was good. Again, it kind of made us rethink some things. So some cleaning, logistical issues and managing increased demand. So again, with one one driver, with 165 riders, going between three cities, you know, I think that it was hard to explain that to riders that we can offer a ride on the Shuttle because you know, they want to be with friends, their friends were on the shuttle that know the shuttle can't be more than one place at one time. So we can be at three places at the same time to pick up three different people kind of explain that was, was difficult. So again, we need more shuttles, which was in the application for permanent funding, we requested that we get up to up to five shuttles. So we have four now, so we still have room for one more reduced time on the shuttle. Some riders were saying they were on the shuttle for over an hour, which was you know, not not our intention, especially with older adults with mobility issues sitting for that long of the period on a shuttle would be challenging. So we learn how to reduce reduce the wait times on, you know, that they're on the shuttle, to kind of improve our routing. So I'm Trent station accessibility. You know, again, we had the language line to to kind of help with that. And the big issue, again, is a picture of times everybody wants to tell between 10am to 2pm, you know, on the first round is 8am. So from eight to 10, we didn't have much demand. And then from two to four, there wasn't much demand either. A lot of people just wanted to travel within 10 to 2pm window. And a large area of Heligan. Three Cities, this covers quite a bit of square mileage, and then pass it out the traffic. And you know, Seattle, the love the King County weather is kind of proved challenging at times. But again, by adjusting our strategies and working closely with our partners, you know, we overcame these hurdles together. And then lessons learned, we learned apprentice flexibility and responsiveness, child times are much longer curving three cities. So not being so stringent on, you know, the way things are, and being open minded to how we can improve really helped because I think the challenge again, you know, just was internally with staff that, you know, a lot of them were, were were scared of the challenges because they were so used to doing things a certain way. And this, you know, this new model, this pilot model really kind of challenged our thinking which, you know, long winded really helped us the financial viability as occurring, diverse funding sources was key to viability and diminish. Fading of funders was key. Again, we not only got a grant with the Washington public transportation, but King County Metro also offered a lot of funding for us and they provide the shuttles and the gas and the maintenance as well. So, again, big shout out to King County Metro. And desirability, again, feedback was critical. You know, we did this with the intention of listening to our riders about what they wanted, it's not what we wanted as well, what they wanted and, and how they like to structure to be and then their feedback was very impactful to the final product. And then a conclusion, you know, drives a smile significantly improved mobility for our target population, thanks to support again of our partners and community. And I'm looking forward to any questions anyone may have during this time.