

August 2016

The Costs of Starting a Travel Instruction Program

Transit authorities and human service agencies looking to start a travel instruction program should consider the following costs when setting their initial budget. This list is intended to serve as a guide and may not be exhaustive.

Staff Time, Fringe Benefits, and Overhead

Whether you will be using in-house staff or contracting with a partner agency, the salary of your travel trainer will be the most substantial cost to offering travel instruction. If you are employing a travel trainer directly, include the cost of salary and fringe benefits. If you are reassigning a current employee whose salary is already accounted for, consider whether you will need to hire someone else to fill the job duties of the reassigned employee. When calculating how many hours per week the travel trainer will work, be sure to include time spent on program administration, marketing, attending continuing education sessions, and working directly with trainees. Also determine whether any overhead costs associated with office usage, such as IT support, HR, and photocopying, should be accounted for in the budget.

Human service agencies looking to offer travel instruction services should establish a strong relationship with the transit authority serving their area. If you would like to offer travel instruction services that require transit authority staff to perform activities outside of their regular duties, ask if there will be any associated cost.

Marketing and Outreach

Building relationships with agencies that can refer consumers to your program and publicize your program to members of the public are critical to the success of a travel instruction program. New programs should focus on marketing and outreach in their first three to six months because they are likely to train few individuals in that time period. Make sure your budget covers staff time for marketing, such as meeting with local human service agency staff, exhibiting at transition fairs and community events, and developing marketing materials.

If you plan to print brochures or flyers, incorporate any graphic design and printing costs as well. In addition, giving away supplies with your program's name can be good marketing. These giveaways can help your trainees if you select supplies that relate directly to riding transit, such as lanyards where they can store their Charlie Card or bus pass, zippered coin purses to help them keep track of their bus fare, or flashlights to help them travel safely at night.

Technology in the Field

Travel trainers should have a cellphone that they can use to contact trainees and that they carry with them in the field in case of emergency. Many programs pay for a work phone for travel trainers.¹ Where possible, programs should also pay for an iPad or Tablet so that travel trainer can record field notes and do other work when they have downtime in the field.

Travel

Most programs ask trainees to pay their own fare, but be sure to budget for bus fare if you plan on paying for trainees. Travel trainers ride the bus during travel training sessions, but often have to drive to get to trainees' homes for intake or to access the bus route they will be training on. Whether the trainer will be using a company car or receiving mileage reimbursement for a personal vehicle, account for any associated costs, including parking. If possible, include funding for the travel trainer to travel to professional development activities, such as Massachusetts Travel Instruction Network meetings and national conferences such as the annual Association of Travel Instruction conference.

Tools for Teaching

Travel trainers often create individualized tools for trainees, such as a cue book with images of the landmarks a trainee will see along their route or a highlighted schedule to help a trainee keep track of what time to go to the bus stop. Helpful supplies could include a laminator and binders. Travel trainers will need a camera or a phone to take pictures of key landmarks and intersections.

Insurance

Check to see whether your current insurance policy covers any liability for incidents that might occur in the field while travel training. Talk to your agency's insurance representative about whether your organization and/or your travel trainers need any additional coverage, such as a professional liability policy.

USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact rachel.fichtenbaum@state.ma.us for additional information on starting a new travel instruction program in Massachusetts. For additional resources, please visit <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/transit/MobilityManagementCenter/Resources/TravelInstruction.aspx>.

¹ One travel trainer whose program did not offer a work phone got a free phone number from Google to use for work-related calls.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks very much to Teri Koopman, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority and Mary Basilone, Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority, for help compiling this information. Thanks as well to the Easter Seals Project Action course *Fundamentals of Travel Training*.

Reference: Rachel Fichtenbaum. (2016) *The Costs of Starting a Travel Instruction Program*. Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Human Service Transportation Office, Quincy, MA