



# State RTAP Manager's Toolkit



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# Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Overview of the Rural Transit Assistance Program .....	2
About National RTAP .....	6
State RTAP Programs: Status and Trends .....	8
In-House and Outsourced Programs .....	10
RTAP Programs and Components	
Training .....	15
Technical Assistance .....	22
Marketing and Education .....	24
Scholarship Programs .....	27
Conferences and Roadeos.....	29
Research and Data Collection .....	31
Records Management .....	33
Networking and Professional Development .....	34
New RTAP Manager Succession Planning .....	36
Sample Documents and Templates .....	38

## Introduction

The State RTAP Manager's Toolkit is a comprehensive guide to implementing and managing a successful State Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP). Material contained in the toolkit comes from the experiences and expertise of State RTAP managers, and in many cases, is supported by additional research.

The toolkit can be read from beginning to end as a guide for new RTAP managers or those looking to enhance an existing program and can also be used for reference about specific aspects of RTAP program management by skipping to the relevant section(s).

Templates or examples are available for most policies and forms used in RTAP programs, as well as links to other relevant information.

## Acknowledgements

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# Overview of the Rural Transit Assistance Program

## Program History and Mission

Since 1979, the U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) has provided grants to states for transportation systems in communities with fewer than 50,000 people. The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) was initiated in 1987 by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) of U.S. DOT; UMTA was renamed the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in 1991. The RTAP program is now funded by FTA. In Fiscal Year 2021, \$14,265,993 in funding was allocated for the Section 5311(b)(3) Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), with \$2,139,899 (15% of the total amount) allocated for National RTAP and \$12,126,094 (85%) allocated to State RTAP programs.

The mission of the RTAP program is to “make grants and contracts for transportation research, technical assistance, training, and related services in rural areas” (49 U.S. Code Section 5311 – Formula Grants for Rural Areas). Program objectives include promoting safe and effective delivery of public rural transportation services, improving the quality of information and offering technical assistance and training, disseminating training and technical assistance materials, providing peer-to-peer networks and connections, supporting the coordination of public, private, specialized and human service transportation, and maintaining the Rural National Transit Database. Exact wording can be found in Chapter IX of the [5311 Circular](#) (FTA C 9040.1G).

## Program Funding

The RTAP funds are awarded on a formula based on [U.S. Census data](#) regarding the size of the state’s rural area population. Table 9 of the [FTA Apportionments Tables](#) shows the allocations for States and U.S. Territories for Rural Transportation Assistance Program Allocations. Additional funds left over are distributed via the rural area population formula. All RTAP funds are available for the fiscal year they are allocated plus the next two fiscal years.

The 5311 program falls under the umbrella of grant programs reauthorized under MAP-21 legislation (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act). The surface transportation reauthorization bill was signed in July of 2012 by President Obama. Under MAP-21 reauthorization, no changes were made to the RTAP program. For more information about MAP-21 and changes to other FTA programs, visit the FTA's [MAP-21 page](#), or view the FTA’s [5311 Program Fact Sheet](#). On December 4th, 2015, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law, reauthorizing surface transit programs through Fiscal Year 2020, and then reauthorized through Fiscal Year 2021. Details about the FAST act are available [from FTA](#).

## Pooling Funds

In the RTAP section of the 5311 Circular, FTA encourages states to pool funds within a region to support training activities or projects that would have a greater benefit for a wider target area. Types of activities that could be undertaken with pooled funds include regional workshops, training courses, development of technical assistance information, and peer-to-peer activities.

## Eligible Activities

RTAP funds can be used for a variety of sanctioned activities and program components, including training, technical assistance, research and related support services. The purchase of equipment to support these is also allowed. The funds may also be used to cover a state's membership in the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) [Multi-State Technical Assistance Program](#) (MTAP). See page IX-1 of the [5311 Circular](#) (page 90 of the PDF).

RTAP funds do NOT cover administrative expenses in relation to the program (agencies can use 5311 funds for this), and provision of food for training activities is allowable by some State DOTs, is not by others (this is up to the state). Transit agencies or other groups may provide food for training sessions for states that don't allow this expense.

## Important Circulars and Guidelines

RTAP managers should be familiar with a range of FTA circulars, Federal Register notices, and guidance, including the following:

- [5311 Circular](#)
- [Third Party Contracting Guidance](#)
- [Title VI Requirements and Guidelines](#)
- [Grant Management Requirements](#)
- [Environmental Justice Policy Guidance](#)
- [Formula Grants for Other Than Urbanized Areas](#)

Also see the National RTAP [Transit Manager's Toolkit FTA Circulars](#) page.

# About National RTAP

## History and Services

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) was created in 1987 by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) in response to a need for drivers, dispatchers, managers, and other transit professionals to have specialized skills and knowledge to serve their customers in rural and tribal areas. The National RTAP program fills that need in several ways.

The goals of the National RTAP program include promoting the safe and effective delivery of public transportation services in rural areas and facilitating more efficient use of public transportation resources. To meet those goals, the program focuses on the following objectives:

- Improving the quality of training and technical assistance resources available to the rural transit industry
- Encouraging and assisting state, local, and peer networks to address training and technical assistance needs
- Promoting the coordination of transportation services
- Building a national database of information about the rural transit industry

Since its inception, National RTAP has contributed to the achievement of these objectives at the national level by developing and distributing training materials, providing technical assistance, creating web applications, producing reports, publishing best practices, conducting research, and offering peer assistance for rural and tribal transit providers and State RTAP programs.

Technical assistance is provided through the Resource Center, which is staffed Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM ET. The Resource Center can be accessed via phone at 888-589-6821, email at [info@nationalrtap.org](mailto:info@nationalrtap.org), or chat through the [nationalrtap.org](http://nationalrtap.org) website.

The Resource Library, which is part of the Resource Center, contains approximately 700 resources from National RTAP and other organizations, all of interest to rural and tribal transit providers and state program managers. National RTAP has training modules and technical briefs available for download or order. We produce a bi-weekly newsletter ([eNews](#)), which highlights news, reports, and events pertaining to rural and tribal transit. Special announcements are also sent via email to specific groups, such as State RTAP Managers. After it is sent out every other week, eNews is also placed on our website for easy viewing.

National RTAP's training modules, which are shipped at no cost to states and transit agencies, include handbooks, discs, and thumb drives on a variety of transit topics such as safety, maintenance, and customer service. To view all of the training modules, as well as technical briefs and other products, view our [Resource Catalog](#). Several web applications are also available for

use by the rural and tribal transit community, including our [Cost Allocation Calculator](#), [GTFS Builder](#), [ProcurementPRO](#), and [Website Builder](#). These products can be accessed from the [National RTAP website](#).

Finally, National RTAP hosts the [Peer-to-Peer network](#) for rural and tribal transit professionals, including state program managers. This is an informal system whereby National RTAP receives requests for peer assistance and matches the requestor to an appropriate peer mentor.

## Services of Interest to State RTAP Managers

Many National RTAP services are of particular interest to state program managers. All State RTAP Managers are sent a Welcome Kit which introduces our resources and services, receive an introductory Welcome Call, and are automatically added to the [eNews](#) list. RTAP Managers not receiving biweekly eNews can request to be added to the distribution list by contacting [info@nationalrtap.org](mailto:info@nationalrtap.org). The [Peer-to-Peer network](#) is also helpful for new RTAP managers seeking guidance, or those looking to make changes to their programs. Although RTAP managers should feel free to connect with each other outside of the formal peer program, specific requests for help can be targeted by National RTAP staff to the appropriate State RTAP Manager, based on expertise.

National RTAP is available to provide research help and technical assistance to state program managers. Subrecipients can be referred directly to us for technical assistance or information (we often refer subrecipients to their state programs if they have not contacted them already). State-developed products, if applicable to a wider audience, can also be promoted nationally and included in the Resource Library. States can request to have their nationally-relevant materials in our [Resource Library](#), if we have not already put them there.

National RTAP provides networking opportunities for State RTAP managers, including the [State RTAP Managers' Forum](#), virtual peer roundtables, and events at national conferences, such as breakfasts and roundtables. In the past, National RTAP has hosted a webinar series for RTAP managers; this has been replaced by the forum and peer roundtables.

# State RTAP Programs: Status and Trends

Since the 2017 survey, the trend to outsource state RTAP programs has continued to decline. In 2020, 53 percent of the states provided the program in-house compared to 49 percent in 2017. Types of training programs remained similar to 2017 with most training provided in person (93 percent) and only one third using online training sources. Approximately 70 percent of the respondents also use National RTAP materials and 44 percent reported using National RTAP's eLearning system, which is up slightly from 2017. States continue to depend on in-state and out-of-state conferences for training as well.

Fewer states reported using software, ranging from MS Excel, Black Cat Grant Management and customized software, for grant management. In 2020, 53 percent of the states reported using software compared to 61 percent in 2017.

Data Point	2010	2013	2015	2017	2020
In-house Program	67%	48%	42%	49%	53%
Outsourced Program	33%	30%	30%	27%	27%
Combination (In-House and Outsourced)	n/a	22%	38%	24%	20%
In Person Training	n/a	62%	90%	83%	93%
Online Training	n/a	n/a	47%	33%	29%
National RTAP eLearning	n/a	n/a	0%	39%	44%
In-House Material	n/a	n/a	57%	51%	58%
National RTAP Material	n/a	n/a	67%	71%	69%
Scholarships	67%	76%	n/a	n/a	73%
Paid Travel to In-State Conferences	n/a	n/a	73%	76%	78%
Paid Travel to Out-of-State Conference	n/a	n/a	80%	71%	67%
Use Software for Grant Management	n/a	n/a	40%	61%	53%

\*Questions marked n/a were not asked that year.

There are a few types of training that are required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) such as ADA and Drug and Alcohol. Many states also have a number of trainings that are required. Over the years National RTAP has changed the way the question about training is asked and this year several additional training topics were added. The list below is based on the training sessions that are offered by at least 40 percent of the states. Topics that are new as of 2020 are shown in **bold font**.

Training Course	2010	2013	2015	2017	2020
<b>Active Shooter Training</b>					
ADA	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Asset Management</b>					x



Customer Service	x	x	x		x
Defensive Driving	x	x	x	x	x
Distracted Driving					x
<b>Driver Retention</b>					
Drug and Alcohol Testing	x		x	x	x
Emergency and Accident Procedures	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Federal Grant Preparation/Management</b>					x
<b>Financial Management</b>					
Fleet Maintenance		x	x	x	x
<b>GTFS Training</b>					
<b>Human Trafficking/Maltreatment Awareness</b>					x
<b>Interpreting and Implementing Regulatory Requirements</b>					x
Marketing					x
<b>NTD Reporting</b>					x
PASS		x	x	x	x
<b>Performance Measurement</b>					
<b>Personnel Management</b>					
<b>Problem Passengers/De-Escalation</b>					x
Procurement				x	x
Safety and Security	x	x	x	x	x
Scheduling and Dispatching	x				
Sensitivity Training	x	x	x		x
<b>Sexual Harassment</b>					x
Soft Skills (Communication, leadership, etc.)					x
START or Other Driver Safety					x
<b>State Grant Preparation and Management</b>					x
Substance Abuse/Reasonable Suspicion	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Succession Planning and Preparation</b>					
Title VI				x	x
Train the Trainer				x	x
Transit Operations/Transit 101	x				x
<b>Transit System Design</b>					
Wheelchair Management		x	x	x	x
<b>Working with Transit Boards</b>					
<b>Working with Tribal Transit Services</b>					

A comprehensive summary report of the 2020 State RTAP Manager's report can be found here: [2020 State RTAP Manager's Survey Summary](#).

# In-House and Outsourced Programs

## Making the decision

When choosing the delivery method for a State RTAP program, managers have three options: running the program in-house, contracting the program out to a third party, or a combination of the two. In 2020, 53 percent of the states provided the program in-house compared to 49 percent in 2017. State programs are primarily (53%) operated by Department of Transportation staff. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of programs are outsourced to a consultant, transit association or university transportation center. The remaining 20% use a combination of in-house and consultants to administer the program, many of which outsource the training component of their program. Of the 21 states that outsource all or part of their program management, six use state transit associations, three use university transit centers and eleven use a private contractor or combination of private contractors.

See the [Program Status and Trends](#) page for more information.

The following is an inventory of the self-reported program delivery models for states that responded to the 2020 survey:

States That Run Their Programs In-House	States That Contract Out Their Programs	States That Run a Combination
Arizona	Alabama	Alaska
Colorado	Arkansas	Georgia
Hawaii	California	Massachusetts
Iowa	Connecticut	Minnesota
Idaho	Indiana	New Mexico
Illinois	Kansas	New York
Kentucky	Michigan	Ohio
Maryland	Missouri	Tennessee
Maine	New Hampshire	Washington
Mississippi	Pennsylvania	
Montana	Utah	
North Carolina	Wisconsin	
North Dakota		
Nebraska		
New Jersey		
Nevada		

States That Run Their Programs In-House	States That Contract Out Their Programs	States That Run a Combination
Oregon		
Rhode Island		
South Carolina		
South Dakota		
Texas		
Virginia		
West Virginia		
Wyoming		

The method chosen will be based on many factors, and each state will prioritize factors differently. During a session at the 1st Technical Assistance and Tribal Transit Program Conference & Roadeo in March 2012 (entitled [Managing a State RTAP Program- Secrets of Success](#)), representatives from the Minnesota and Pennsylvania State RTAP programs recommended that State DOTs consider the following questions when choosing their delivery methods:

- How involved does the manager want to be in the daily activities associated with program delivery?
- How much time does the State DOT staff have to spend on the RTAP program?
- What kind of staff resources does the program have?
- What are the state subrecipients’ needs?
- What is the budget for the program?
- Is there another entity in the state that would be a natural fit to deliver the State RTAP program?
- Does the state have travel restrictions that would prevent State DOT staff from visiting training sites?

If the manager finds that running the State RTAP program in-house is the right decision for the state, someone on the State DOT staff will be responsible for carrying out all of the tasks associated with administering and delivering the program. Advantages to running the program in-house are that managers have direct influence over how the program is delivered and regular contact with the subrecipients who request assistance. There are many best practices and samples in this toolkit that can assist with designing the program. However, administering and delivering the program in-house is not right for every state, and if contracting out some, or all, of the program is the best fit for a state, the following section will help the manager develop the structure of that relationship.

## Outsourcing the program

If the manager decides to contract out the State RTAP program, the first step is to inventory the organizations and entities in the state or region that might be a natural fit to take on this role. Are there entities that already provide training, have a relationship with local transit providers, or have specific rural and/or Tribal transit expertise? Examples of common State RTAP program contractors are state transit associations, universities, and private consultants.

Although contracting out a State RTAP program may not meet the federal [procurement](#) threshold requiring competitive proposals (now \$150,000), obtaining multiple bids is an important way to find a qualified contractor. Before the manager can develop the request for proposals, they must also have an idea of what the State RTAP program will do and which of those tasks they would like to contract out. If the manager intends to contract out the entire program, every activity for the program should be reflected in the [scope of work](#). If the manager would like to have a combination of administering the program in-house and contracting out particular tasks, they should be very specific about what which tasks the contractor will be responsible for, how the contractor will report to the manager, and how the contractor's performance will be measured.

There are many different ways to design the delivery of the program, and the following are examples of how respondents of the 2020 Survey of State RTAP programs structure their programs:

- All parts of the program are outsourced.
- 95% of the program is outsourced - mainly the training part. Only the RTAP Program administration and the Spring Workshop sessions are in-house.
- We outsource training, but scholarship and other financial assistance are handled in-house.
- Most of it. Our RTAP contractor provides procurement training (and occasionally other topics) and serves as arbiter on questions related to policies, rules and procedures (most commonly in regard to training/conference scholarship requests or reimbursements).
- Defensive driving, PASS and Drug & Alcohol are outsourced. Other training is provided through National RTAP.
- Driver training is outsourced.
- Individual trainings, workshops, travels to conferences of Section 5311 subrecipients are processed in-house. Our General Training Program, organization of the Spring Transit Conference and Rodeo are outsourced.
- We use RTAP funds for the contract and leadership makes decisions on training needs for the contractor to conduct for both internal and external customers. The contractor also provides the technical "On-Call" expertise when various subrecipient situations arise. The DOT also provides RTAP Scholarship opportunities for attendance to the annual Transit Association Trade Show for our 5311 rural subrecipients. RTAP funds are dedicated to FTA compliance areas and for developing our internal FTA procedures and satisfactory and continuing oversight of our subrecipients.

- We outsource the RTAP program, including technical assistance, research, and training. We outsource: Annual Conference, Quarterly Trainings. In-house: Annual Conference, RTAP Scholarships, Driver Training.
- Training is mostly outsourced. Management of RTAP scholarships is handled in-house.
- The administration of the program (website, scheduling training, etc.) is handled by the consultant, as well as providing most of the training sessions. Our State DOT program maintains regular communication with the consultant and provides technical assistance to grantees on FTA program implementation.
- RTAP funds go to the State Transportation Association for training and program management.

States that contract out some, or all, of their programs have cited many benefits. During a networking webinar that National RTAP hosted for state RTAP managers in January 2012 (entitled [Costs and Benefits of Outsourcing Your RTAP Program](#)), representatives from Florida, Pennsylvania, and Idaho presented the benefits their State DOTs and subrecipients gained by having a third-party deliver the State RTAP program:

- State DOT does not incur the costs of hiring new employees (salary and benefits), as this would need to come out of non-RTAP funds.
- State DOT staff members have time to work on other projects.
- State DOT does not have to hire new full-time people to manage the program nor does it have to add to its staff's increasingly large workload.
- Contractors can have more flexibility than State DOT employees to travel to conduct on-site training and build greater knowledge of training sites' needs.
- The right contractors will already have expertise needed to run the program well.
- It can give subrecipients direct input into the RTAP program planning, giving them ownership over the program.
- Contractors are often able to respond to needs more quickly than a State DOT.
- When there are not enough resources in a State DOT to deliver a good program, the subrecipients might receive a better overall program through a contractor.
- Often times the contractors are 'closer to the ground' and can understand the needs of subrecipients better than a State DOT.
- Having the program delivered by a third-party gives recipients another resource in addition to a State DOT to turn to for training and technical assistance.

When the manager puts the program out to bid, they should advertise the opportunity and solicit as many proposals as possible to ensure that there is a competitive process. The more proposals that are available to review, the more likely the manager will be able to find the right fit for the state's needs. New Hampshire outsourced their program, and has shared the [RFP and related documents](#). After the manager hires a contractor, they are responsible for ensuring that the contractor is in compliance with all of the requirements that apply to receiving federal funds. While not all of the Section 5311 requirements will apply, the RTAP program and the contractors will be

responsible for some of the requirements, such as procurement, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE), and others related to program administration. For more information about what requirements Section 5311 subrecipients must meet, see the [Transit Manager's Toolkit](#).

Whether the State RTAP program is administered and delivered in-house or outsourced, this toolkit can be used to find new ideas to implement at the State DOT or share with the third-party contractor.

# Training

RTAP managers are responsible for making sure that training is available to rural and Tribal transit drivers so that they can fulfill federal and state requirements. This can be accomplished through a variety of means, including providing scholarships for drivers to attend training within or outside the state, hiring trainers to run in-person or virtual training sessions, and putting together conferences during which a large number of operators can come together and train on a few topics. This section will explore creating and maintaining standalone training programs that respond to provider needs. To read more about scholarship programs, see the [Scholarship Programs](#) section.

Types of training include in-person courses (for example, at a conference, or a state-sponsored, instructor-led training course), webinars, and online courses. Like all components of the State RTAP program, the way the manager implements them and the focus depends on the needs of the state's subrecipients, the input of the program's advisory committee, and the policies of the state. The manager will need to consider which courses may already be required (due to state law or policy), and which will be offered complementarily to the core curriculum. Will the program have a required core curriculum, or just a list of classes that are offered and suggested?

For example, the Minnesota RTAP training program is customized somewhat year to year, but retains the same core courses. The core curriculum is set by the state, with additional courses offered depending on provider needs garnered through conversation at the State Spring Workshop, new Federal Transit Administration (FTA) rules and initiatives, and other hot topics year to year. Most state models include a standard set of courses each year, both mandated and elective, and utilize subrecipient feedback to adjust future curricula by adding or removing courses.

## Training Requirements

The federal government requires transit personnel to be trained in two main areas. These are:

- Drug and alcohol training for employees (1 hour) and supervisors (2 hours minimum). See [655.14, Section B](#) of the drug and alcohol regulations.
- Personnel must also be “trained to proficiency” in the use of accessible vehicles and equipment, and the proper way to treat and assist individuals with different types of disabilities. See section [Title 49 CFR Section 37.173](#) for exact wording.

The National RTAP Transit Manager's Toolkit [Driver Training](#) section provides more information about training specific to drivers. In addition, states may have their own training mandates.

Common required training topics include Drug & Alcohol Testing, Wheelchair Securement and Lift Operation, Substance Abuse, ADA, Emergency and Accident Procedures, Defensive Driving,

Passenger Service & Safety, and Pre- and Post-Trip Inspection. Below is a list of common training topics, in order of decreasing popularity. Data are from the 2020 State RTAP Manager Survey:

- Wheelchair Securement
- Drug and Alcohol Testing/Reasonable Suspicion
- Defensive Driving
- ADA
- Diversity
- Distracted Driving
- Customer Service
- Transit 101
- Safety

Other training that State RTAP programs sometimes offer includes:

- HazMat
- First Aid
- CPR
- FTA Charter Regulations
- Sexual Harassment
- Transit System Planning
- Grant Management
- Distracted Driving
- Civil Rights (Title VI, DBE, LEP)
- Procurement
- Mobility Management
- Alternative Fuels
- Leadership/Professional Development
- Project Management
- Using Social Media
- Managing Boards
- Succession Planning
- Supervisor Training
- Difficult Customers
- Background Checks
- Volunteer Drivers
- Emergency Management
- Technical Writing
- Charter Service



- Conflict & Stress Management
- Fiscal Management

## Assessing Training Needs

If a manager plans to use subrecipient input to guide training curriculum decisions, they will need to gather data directly from transit agencies who will be receiving the training. Surveying and polling are effective methods for gathering this data. Questionnaires may be distributed electronically, in person at statewide conferences, or via mail. There are many free and low-cost options available to survey agencies. Poll modules or suggestion boxes can be embedded directly onto the program's website.

## Finding Training

Training materials and opportunities can be found in a number of places. Hard-copy training materials could be utilized for self-directed learning or group classes. Organizations that provide training and training materials are listed below. National RTAP provides a [Directory of Trainers](#), and additional links can be found in the [How to Find Almost Anything Toolkit](#).

Organizations that provide in-person training (often for a fee) include the [National Transit Institute](#) (NTI), [National Safety Council](#) (NSC), and Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). FTA also hosts a number of different training sessions across the country and online, some available at no cost. National conferences will host training courses as part of a supplementary conference agenda, and state conferences often provide large-scale training to meet a common need or state requirement.

Webinars are utilized as low-cost delivery methods that reach hundreds of trainees at a time. Organizations that host webinars include [National RTAP](#), [NTI](#), [Easter Seals Project ACTION](#) (ESPA), [CTAA](#), and [State Transit Associations](#). National RTAP maintains a list of upcoming webinars and other training in our bi-weekly [eNews](#).

Online courses are a cross between webinars and in-person training. Sometimes, these last for several weeks and sometimes include an element of homework. [ESPA](#), [CTAA](#), [NSC](#), [Transportation Alliance](#), and many others provide online courses. ESPA's courses focus on mobility management and accessible transportation, while CTAA's offerings include an online PASS Certification program.

Physical training materials, for use in self-directed learning or classes, can be [ordered from National RTAP](#) at no cost. Other places to purchase training materials include [Smith System](#) (driver training), and the [Transportation Safety Institute](#) (TSI). Note that National RTAP does not endorse or

recommend any specific commercial vendors and have provided these links for informational purposes.

## Delivering Training

Based on subrecipient needs, geography, and available funding, the manager may choose to deliver training in a number of different ways. Common models include in-person direct, train-the-trainer, or computer-based. Many State RTAP programs outsource some or all of their training using one of the models below.

In-person direct training involves hiring a trainer to conduct a one-time class, usually provided at a transit agency, meeting, conference, or other gathering. Many states hire a national organization, such as [NTI](#) or [Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility \(SURCOM\)](#) to provide the training to transit systems. Others use an in-house trainer (or trainers). Train-the-trainer is another common model that can cut down on time and money spent training subrecipients. Trainees become certified to teach the same course to others. This is a great way for smaller agencies to have qualified trainers on staff, or at least locally available. Some common train-the-trainer courses include [PASS](#) and [Building Diversity Skills in the Workplace](#).

Colorado RTAP (CASTA) has a 5-year training plan. Some training is offered every year, and other training is offered every other year. That way people are able to plan accordingly as to when they can take the training classes. Colorado DOT and FTA provide them with suggestions for training. They also have one-day retreats where the transit community and stake holders can give ideas. An example of training that CASTA offers drivers is training for transporting people with service animals. The training is done at the agency so that drivers are more comfortable getting information from experts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way many RTAP programs deliver training. Texas RTAP worked with Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA) to develop a comprehensive two-year training program with two dozen courses covering everything from transit management to board training to COVID-19 training. Massachusetts RTAP began delivering fully remote driver training and the hybrid Passenger Assistance Training (PAT) courses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tennessee RTAP started hands-on training for COVID-19, including personal protective equipment (PPE) training. They have a [webpage](#) that explains how to register. For more information on delivering training during a pandemic, see the National RTAP's technical brief [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\): Information and Resources for Transit](#) section on "If you are planning a meeting or conference."

Other options for training delivery that don't involve a trainer are self-directed and online learning. Self-directed learning uses computer-based software to guide trainees through a training topic. Many National RTAP training products include a self-directed learning disc and/or thumb drive. These

formats are especially helpful when broadband or Internet connection are unavailable or limited. For example, the American Samoa RTAP program keeps two copies of each of our safety, emergency procedures, and customer service driver training discs at their facility, so drivers can access the training in a meeting room when they visit.

Online courses can be hosted on an LMS, or learning management system, in another form of computer-based learning. Generally, an LMS requires Internet access. The manager will need to create the content to put in the system, either through authoring tools that come with the LMS, or another medium. Pennsylvania RTAP and its contractor PennTRAIN, the state transit association, use the courses hosted in the LMS to supplement classroom-based training, which is free to PennDOT grantees, a huge advantage to small systems that don't have a lot of money for training.

If a manager decides to pursue training via an LMS, find out if nearby states are already using an LMS. Instead of purchasing or designing a new one, there may be the potential to pay into an existing system. When looking into purchasing one, know that there are many types with a variety of features and prices.

## Finding Trainers

States offering in-person training generally outsource some or all of it to other agencies or private trainers. Training models in each state include maintaining one trainer for all state-level training, hiring trainers on a per-course basis, or having a pool of trainers to choose from. Trainers for large transit systems are sometimes hired to provide training to smaller systems, or smaller agencies are invited to attend the urban systems' trainings.

For states that don't have a framework in place already and who are looking for a trainer for one or more courses, the State RTAP Manager can find appropriate contractors through National RTAP's [Directory of Trainers](#), or by getting in touch with us. [State Transit Association](#) leaders may also know trainers for the region, and they often provide training themselves. Contact with neighboring states' RTAP programs will give the manager some possible trainer leads, and may open the door to multi-state coordination through joint trainings.

Evaluating trainers is an important tool to make sure that the State RTAP program is providing the best possible experience for the state's transit operators. Many states distribute evaluations at each training session or conference to collect this information, and others make sure a member of State RTAP or other State DOT staff attends the training course themselves. Another way to collect this information is to conduct an annual survey of subrecipients and ask them about the effectiveness of the training program.

## Coordinating Training

The [5311 circular](#) encourages states to pool funds to provide services, including training. Many states are using this model currently for some or all of their training classes.

Pennsylvania and Delaware offer training classes to neighboring states. The California RTAP program (CalACT) shares the online training they provide with National RTAP and other states. North and South Dakota routinely coordinate training classes with each other. Washington State RTAP holds some trainings near the border with other states, so both states' operators can attend. Finally, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine hold a conference together called the Tri-State Conference, which includes training for operators in attendance.

A larger coordination effort was the Mid-Atlantic RTAP group, which is currently not active. States in the Mid-Atlantic region coordinated to sponsor training, technical assistance, and peer mentoring activities in the region. Examples include a group of North Carolina transit operators who visited a transportation brokerage operation in Pennsylvania, and a transit manager from New York who was given a tour of a new bus maintenance facility in Virginia. Pennsylvania and Maryland still currently coordinate with each other as a remnant of this group. For states bordering others with similar needs, coordination may save both states time and money in event planning and hiring trainers.

## Funding Training

The cost of training depends on many factors. Is the State RTAP program coordinating with another group, such as a transit association or another state? Will the training be contracted out to a particular training group or individual? What type of training is it? All of these will impact the cost of the training. These are two examples of training costs from a contractor and an in-house program (keep in mind that the RTAP allocations can be vastly different from state to state):

Missouri RTAP uses Missouri University of Science and Technology as a contractor. They do not charge rural transit agencies for training. They pay the trainer, who is a retired State DOT employee, \$20.00/drive time, \$50.00/training time, \$20.00/layover time, and \$27.00/administrative fees (this information is from 2021). They also provide a University licensed and insured mini-bus that was purchased by the State DOT.

## Tracking Training

Tracking subrecipients' training is important for a number of reasons. Operators need to ensure they're complying with ADA and Drug and Alcohol regulations. Keeping records for all subrecipients is useful for monitoring training coverage and reaching out to agencies lacking training through site visits or one-on-one communication. Tracking data and evaluations for specific training classes will ensure that trainers are teaching the material adequately.

Tracking subrecipient training can also benefit transit agencies in the case of litigation due to a bus accident or other incident. Proving to an insurance company that a driver has been trained to proficiency on safety or another topic can shift liability from the transit agency to that driver.

States use a variety of methods to track training, including spreadsheets and databases. Many states use software that is already available to state employees for human resources or other purposes. Most data come in through class rosters and evaluation forms. Sample evaluation forms are included in the [Sample Documents and Templates](#) section of this toolkit.

#### Best Practices in Training:

- Make training mandatory. Otherwise, agencies will rarely, if ever, find the time or resources to attend.
- Encourage providers to regularly refresh training by holding webinars or using National RTAP's [2 the Point](#) training.
- Accommodate remote and/or small-staffed agencies by varying the locations of trainings and providing webinars when practical.
- Involve the statewide agency, public transit association, and other stakeholders to plan conferences and education.
- Partner with other program managers who provide additional rural program training with transit agencies to round out their offerings.
- Offer a mix of mandatory and nonmandatory training programs.
- When the State RTAP manager receives requests for training from subrecipients, plan to hold trainings on those topics.
- Training received by external trainers is sometimes found to be more impactful than drivers receiving training from their own agency management.
- Provide certificates for training programs.

## Examples of State RTAP Program Training

Indiana RTAP has provided two videos so visitors can take a virtual visit to their 60-person capacity training facility, resource center, and roadeos. Their training room even has a lift, so they can perform passenger assistance training. The program's neighbor Columbus Transit is included in the video; they often provide vehicles for RTAP training sessions.

Access the videos:

[Indiana RTAP Sample Training Video](#)

[Indiana RTAP Wheelchair Training Video](#)

# Technical Assistance

Technical assistance is the provision of specific information and support to help subrecipients comply with applicable state and federal regulations and to implement best practices. In a broad sense, it includes data-gathering or outreach to assess which subrecipients are in need of assistance, and it is generally understood that technical assistance is different from training (though the two could overlap). Many states indicated that they provide one-on-one, hands-on assistance to subrecipients as needed, annually, or at another pre-determined interval.

Technical assistance provided by State RTAP programs may include, but is not limited to, the following topics:

- ADA Complementary Paratransit Service
- Asset Management/Maintenance
- Driver Training and Development
- Drug and Alcohol Testing Program
- Federal Requirements and Reporting
- Financial Management
- Marketing/Branding
- Passenger Relations and Standards
- Planning
- Policy Development and Review
- Procurement
- Program Management
- Project Management
- Safety and Security
- Service Delivery and Design
- Technology

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) uses data to drive its technical assistance program. NMDOT uses the results of the deficiencies and recommendations reported for subrecipients during biennial Technical Oversight and Compliance Reviews to determine technical assistance needs of their Section 5310 and 5311 agencies. The desired results of this data analysis allow for more targeted technical assistance (and relevant training, if necessary) as well as the implementation of best practices strategies. NMDOT coordinates with its Transit Association, which receives RTAP funds, to provide some of this technical assistance/training, including at the annual conference.

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has a Transit Technical Services Program (TTSP) that provides focused technical assistance to Rural Transit Districts. Applications are accepted on a continuous basis. Technical assistance is offered in three areas:

- Financial management and analysis
- Capital project development
- Operational and service analysis

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) provides resources for training and technical assistance to rural transportation providers through an RTAP peer review program. The peer review can focus on the entire agency or one element of an agency. A rural agency initiates the request, which includes a specific problem statement, for a peer review by a team facilitated by the Public Transportation Division of WSDOT.

The West Virginia Department of Transportation Division of Public Transit (DPT) uses its RTAP funds to provide technical assistance related to driver training, marketing, route and service planning, safety and security, drug and alcohol testing, and technology initiatives, including general transit feed standard (GTFS) implementation. The program provides scholarships to attend national conferences and sponsors an annual managers' meeting.

Some states outsource the management of their RTAP funds, to universities or third-party contractors. For example, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) contracts the University of South Florida to manage its Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR). CUTR uses internal and outside contractors to provide specific technical assistance.

State RTAP managers can use National RTAP's [State RTAP Managers' Forum](#) as a venue to exchange information and share best practices as it relates to technical assistance. State RTAP managers can also utilize [AASHTO's Multi-State Technical Assistance Program \(MTAP\)](#) to communicate with other state-level public transit agencies about technical assistance needs and best practices. Transit operators can find technical assistance resources from a variety of sources to include National RTAP's [Peer-to-Peer Network](#) and [Transit Manager's Forum](#), CTAA, and many other organizations that are listed in the [How to Find Anything Toolkit](#).

# Marketing and Education

## Marketing the Program

In states with highly visible State RTAP programs, there is no question about who subrecipients call with a technical assistance request or training question. However, states with less visible State RTAP programs may have trouble reaching subrecipients, no matter how many services they provide. Implementing a marketing program is helpful in reaching those subrecipients, and will boost the visibility of the State RTAP program within the State DOT.

It is much easier to market a program with a recognizable logo and mission than it is to market a vaguely-defined program. About ten years ago, National RTAP went through a branding process in order to create an identity for the program and market it to current and new customers. The program had previously lacked a clear image that was known by all of its stakeholders. Since the branding project was implemented, we have seen an increase in name recognition. The following guidance is provided to assist a State RTAP Manager to market the program in ways that will increase information dissemination. State RTAP program marketing can be accomplished through many vehicles, including word-of-mouth, email, website postings, social media, direct mail, commercials, listservs, and through local councils. The Colorado RTAP program hosts a monthly transit call that is attended by many participants. State DOTs can also be incredibly helpful in promoting RTAP program trainings.

## Creating a State RTAP Website

Easy ways for a State RTAP manager to market the program include setting up a webpage or website specifically for the RTAP program and keeping it up to date. State RTAP managers could also have an “elevator speech” for the RTAP program and use it to increase awareness of the program and its resources both within the State DOT and in the field.

National RTAP’s technical brief, [Driving Your Online Presence](#) contains reasons for creating a website, tips for creating one, and related resources. A best practice is to maintain a page for the State RTAP program that includes scholarship, reimbursement, and other forms that subrecipients need to access, a list of upcoming events, and other pertinent information. Policies for the types of activities that the State RTAP program undertakes are also helpful. Contact information for all of the staff in the program is a plus, as are the contents of a library, if the program provides one.

States with in-house RTAP programs often use the State DOT website and IT professionals to create an RTAP page or site. Examples of states that have done this are [Indiana](#) and [Minnesota](#). Contracted programs generally have more flexibility in designing an RTAP website, as is shown by



the diversity of pages from [Missouri](#) and [Kansas](#). Further examples of RTAP websites can be found in the [Find Anything Toolkit](#).

Many free software options are available to build a website that's independent from the State DOT page, including National RTAP's [Website Builder](#). Website Builder is helpful for contractors and states who want a customizable State RTAP page. If the state's website is not meeting its subrecipients' needs, consider building a website with National RTAP's Website Builder, which can be seamlessly integrated into a State RTAP webpage. Several programs, including [Indiana RTAP](#), have built sites using Website Builder.

## Newsletters



Newsletters are an effective method for getting information to subrecipients, and a potential tool for collecting data as well.

National RTAP sends out [eNews](#) every other week. We use it to update state programs and transit systems with new products, relevant information from partner agencies, relevant training events, and at times, to collect responses to questions. A State RTAP newsletter can function in a similar way, informing subrecipients of deadlines, state events, vehicles for sale, etc. The editor can also share statewide subrecipient data and collect information via a survey link.

Anyone can create a newsletter using many different free and low-cost software programs. The easiest way of distributing a newsletter at low-cost is to use a web-based service. An informal survey of several RTAP managers indicated that [InDesign](#), [MS Publisher](#), and [Constant Contact](#) are being used to create and distribute digital newsletters. Note that National RTAP does not recommend or endorse any specific commercial software.

Print newsletters function in the same way as web-based newsletters, but can cost more in terms of paper, supplies, and postage. If a state lacks adequate Internet access, using print newsletters exclusively or in conjunction with web-based newsletters can be a good option. Several states also partner with their state transit associations or other similar organizations to produce a newsletter. Doubling up on this effort can save both agencies time and money. This toolkit contains [examples of RTAP newsletters](#).

## Lending Libraries

Maintaining a lending library for a State RTAP program benefits subrecipients, who often don't have the funds or resources to obtain critical training and informational materials on their own.

Developing an up-to-date collection, implementing a lending policy, and tracking lending, are great ways to meet the needs of the state's transit providers. Time put into developing a system in the beginning can save headaches down the road. State RTAP programs with lending libraries include Illinois, Indiana and Kansas.

In order to maintain a lending library, the manager should be adding new items, getting rid of outdated materials, and lending training books and videos. In order not to lose items, the manager will need to keep track of loans. Tracking items in and out of the library can be as simple as using an Excel spreadsheet, but the more automated the process is, the easier it will be to keep track of the items.

State RTAP Managers can also talk to State DOT librarians, if the DOT has one, for lending library tips. The librarian may be able to help set up a system and track the resources.

## National RTAP Tools

### ResourceShare

This free web-based library application allows users to search, order and download National RTAP's free products directly from the National RTAP Resource Library. National RTAP provides a [Resource Library search widget](#) for embedding on an organization's own website. It is simple to copy the code, and National RTAP technical support staff are available to assist State RTAP programs if they need help.

### Website Builder

Since it was launched in 2011, [Website Builder](#) has allowed users to create and design websites that are hosted on the National RTAP server free of charge. For this updated version of Website Builder, National RTAP has used customer feedback to make product improvements. Website Builder Version 3.0 makes it easier for users to create and edit their sites by providing a basic template, simplified design functions, and new support resources.

# Scholarship Programs

Seventy-three percent of those responding to the 2020 RTAP Manager's Survey provide scholarships to subrecipients. States typically allow scholarship money to be used for attendance at conferences, rodeos, workshops, and other training. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some State RTAP programs also began providing scholarships for virtual trainings. Hawaii allows for equipment purchase with scholarship funds, if the equipment is related to training. Scholarship guidelines are outlined in policies that are often posted on the State RTAP webpage. RTAP Managers can, based on funding levels and need, impose guidelines such as monetary amount allowed per scholarship, eligible use of scholarship money, and number of scholarships per person, per year. RTAP programs may also have a maximum number of scholarships given out total, per year. For example, an RTAP program may give out scholarships for in-state training only, for out-of-state training, or the attendee might need to have a matching contribution from their agency. See the [Sample Documents and Templates section](#) of this toolkit for examples.

## Scholarship Policies

Most State RTAP programs that have a scholarship program also have a scholarship policy. An explicit policy (preferably public) is a best practice. It will let subrecipients know exactly how many trainings they can attend with the funds, what costs are eligible, how much they can spend in total, and will allow them to plan their training schedule accordingly. States generally require scholarship applicants to submit a proposal prior to the event, and approve each scholarship individually. Once approved, the applicant will attend the event and submit the final paperwork. Payments will be made at that point. State RTAP managers will need to evaluate the proposals and deliver the payments.

Policies generally include how the money can be used, exactly which expenses can be reimbursed, eligible recipients, and how the application process works. Most programs provide a link to a downloadable PDF of the policies, scholarship application, and other necessary documents. Some programs have implemented online application forms. In order to write a scholarship policy, the RTAP Manager will need to consult their advisory group (if they have one), and use their budget for guidance about how many scholarships the program can reasonably offer.

Washington RTAP developed policy on their website for scholarships that details eligibility/non-eligibility based on factors including non-profits and urban systems and a peer review manual. Nebraska RTAP has developed a policy that includes out of state travel. In Nebraska, scholarship recipients are asked to carpool rather than use separate cars for travel reimbursement and limit food expenditures. Idaho's RTAP program allows for scholarship limitations/caps to be exempt when the applicant is attending an event hosted by the Transportation Department.

Texas, Minnesota, and Oregon RTAP automated their scholarship application process.

Some scholarship management tips include:

- Scholarships must be submitted a certain number of days (such as 30+) before the scholarship event.
- Travel expenses must be submitted within xx days for in-state travel and within xx days for out of state travel.
- The RTAP Manager should obtain a hotel receipt, or verify with the hotel that the person was there.
- Learners have to provide an online evaluation of the session and how they will implement/utilize the information they learned.
- Many states require backup documentation to support all charges in order to be eligible for reimbursement, so retain all associated paperwork.

# Conferences and Rodeos

State RTAP Managers organize conferences and rodeos, and often provide scholarships so subrecipients can attend these events as well. Many State RTAP programs hold regular conferences, either on their own or in partnership with other organizations. Most of the time the other organization is a State Transit Association, but it may also include other government entities, other states, non-profits, universities, and vendors. Approximately 27 states host a rodeo, and of those, 75% indicated that they host it in conjunction with other organizations, most often with state transit associations. Some states prefer to partner with a transit agency or non-profit. Conferences are ideal venues for communicating with subrecipients, gathering information about needs (such as training and technical assistance), and reminding subrecipients about the programs and services that the State RTAP program has to offer.

Rodeos are typically held in conjunction with conferences but may also be stand-alone events. Drivers are recognized and rewarded for their performance in front of their supervisors and peers, which can boost morale and help with driver retention. These contests also serve as training opportunities for drivers and maintenance technicians where knowledge can be shared between participants and experts are often on hand to answer questions. Some states have regional rodeos whose winners then compete in state rodeos. State rodeo winners may go on to compete nationally or internationally, in rodeos like the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) International Bus Rodeo. The most common type of rodeo is the traditional bus rodeo, in which drivers compete by driving through a series of obstacles, performing safety checks, and other events such as wheelchair securement. National RTAP has produced the [Bus Rodeo Toolkit](#), a guide to organizing and judging this type of rodeo. National RTAP also published a Best Practices Spotlight Article on [Driver Training Best Practices: Bootcamps and Bus Rodeos](#), with examples of thriving rodeos in Nebraska, Connecticut, and Montana.



Less common is the maintenance rodeo. [Arizona](#), [Florida](#), [Washington](#), [Tennessee](#) and other State RTAP programs have held maintenance rodeos, testing maintenance employees' knowledge of van maintenance, electronics, and equipment diagnosis.

California RTAP recommends having a rodeo over the weekend when drivers are more likely to be available. New Mexico RTAP suggests having special events for drivers. Texas RTAP schedules their rodeo at the beginning of their conference. They have successfully made it a fun, family event through the State Transit Association's independent funding for additional activities and refreshments.

State RTAP programs typically provide scholarships for rural providers in the state to attend either in-state or out-of-state conferences and rodeos. See the [Scholarships](#) section of this toolkit for more information.

# Research and Data Collection

Many State RTAP program managers collect data in addition to National Transit Database (NTD) data for their subrecipients (the Rural Module of the NTD is a requirement of the Section 5311 Program). The type of data collected varies by state, and includes financial and operational information. This is a list of some responses to a question we asked State RTAP Managers, “What type of data do you collect?”

- Ridership statistics
- Mileage statistics
- Cost/trip data
- Financial reports
- FTA compliance information
- Capital projects
- Information for the transit directory
- Training registrations and results
- Assets
- Employee information
- Languages spoken in transit areas
- Vehicle inspection records
- Transit agency responses to customer comments
- Other performance measures

During a series of interviews, several State RTAP Managers noted that one of the main reasons they collect data, other than for compliance with state or federal regulations, is to assess the needs of subrecipients. Making decisions about training to be offered in the upcoming fiscal year, as well as development of an annual work plan, were two of the data uses mentioned.

## Collecting Data

States collect data mainly with software programs, polls, surveys, and direct outreach. Several free and low-cost Internet programs exist to make it easy to send out surveys to email lists. The best way of communicating with subrecipients to collect data will depend on the number and make-up of the state’s providers. States with a low number of subrecipients may be more likely to respond to a survey if it is presented informally in an email, while states with many transit agencies may find they do not have the time to do this kind of targeted outreach. Getting out into the field on a regular basis is another method by which State RTAP Managers in Illinois, Mississippi, and other states collect data about subrecipient needs.

## Partnering with Universities for Research

Subrecipient data can be used in many applications, such as deciding where to spend funds and evaluating how programs are running. More specialized and comprehensive research projects that benefit state programs and their subrecipients have traditionally been undertaken by university research centers. For instance, CUTR, the [Center for Urban Transportation Research](#), works closely with the Florida DOT and State RTAP program to complete research projects beneficial to the transportation sector.

Types of projects that partner organizations such as universities could take on include research about how changes in legislation affect subrecipients, developing websites to disseminate information, and setting up call centers. The Illinois RTAP Program ([Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center](#)) assists the Illinois DOT with its Capital Needs Assessment and Transportation Asset Management Plan. Funding is provided through FTA programs and the RTAP program provides the information that powers these services.

## Data Collection for Annual Reports and Workplans

Many State DOTs are required by their states to develop an annual work plan, which usually includes a description of current program activities, how the State RTAP program carries them out, new programs and services for the upcoming year, as well as how funds will be spent. The State DOT will specify the format of the annual work plan. View [examples of annual work plans](#). Annual work plans should strive to include a variety of training strategies and initiatives offered.

## NTD Data

State RTAP Managers are not likely to be responsible for collecting [National Transit Database](#) (NTD) data, but they should be aware that under the Section 5311 program, the state is required to submit this data to the Rural NTD on behalf of subrecipients. Generally, the Section 5311 (Formula Grants for Rural Areas) Manager is in charge of this (if that is a different role than the State RTAP Manager), but they may also participate in data collection or technical assistance in this area.



# Records Management

State RTAP Managers should be familiar with federal and state records management requirements. RTAP Managers also provide technical assistance to transit agencies that are transit authorities or part of a local government, who may also have record management requirements and responsibilities that are either established by the state or the local government. Recipients of federal funding are required to keep records on file for three years after completion of project activity. See [FTA Record Retention Frequently Asked Questions](#), which includes links to legislation, for additional information. Transit agency managers may come to RTAP Managers with questions about records management, and the National RTAP [Transit Manager's Toolkit](#) provides in-depth guidance throughout each section.

In addition to FTA record management requirements, RTAP Managers should be familiar with state record management requirements. In addition to the state statute, RTAP Managers should have on file guidance documents and should provide them to subrecipients. For example, the New Mexico State Records Center and Archives publishes a records retention schedule which must be adopted by municipalities and transit districts. The West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History publishes a county records management manual. The Alaska State Archives publishes a local government model general administrative record retention schedule.

A good practice is for State RTAP programs to maintain a narrative history. They may want to recommend that their subrecipients do so as well. For transit agencies, the narrative history (typically in bullet format) documents key milestones, such as year of founding, major fare and service changes, facility construction, and ridership. The narrative history is provided to Board members and staff and is often posted to the website for the general public. States that promote the use of narrative histories include Alaska, New Mexico, and West Virginia.

For more information on federal record retention requirements, please see the following regulations, circulars, and guidance:

- [2 CFR 200 Record Retention and Access](#)
- [FTA Circular 5010.1E](#)
- [FTA Record Retention FAQs](#)
- [National Archives Federal Records Management](#)

# Networking and Professional Development

Though State RTAP Managers may be physically isolated from one another most of the time, there are many opportunities for connecting electronically and in person throughout the remainder of the year. Webinars and forums specifically for State RTAP Managers can be excellent tools for sharing information between programs. Additionally, the U.S. DOT and FTA have an abundance of trainings available through e-learning opportunities, and in addition many State RTAP Managers congregate at certain conferences year-to-year. The Transportation Safety Institute also offers an array of courses that RTAP Managers can tap into.

National RTAP regularly hosts breakfast meetings for RTAP Managers at events like [CTAA's annual EXPO](#), and the biennial [FTA State Programs Meeting](#).

National RTAP hosts the [State RTAP Managers' Forum](#), used solely by State RTAP Managers and National RTAP to ask questions and to share information.

AASHTO's Standing Committee on Public Transportation (SCOPT), hosts the [MTAP \(Multi-State Technical Assistance Project\) alerts platform](#). RTAP managers can use the platform to share and obtain technical assistance expertise with other RTAP Managers around the country. RTAP program funds can be used to join MTAP.

## Conferences and Webinars

State RTAP Managers generally attend certain conferences as time and money allow, including the AASHTO/APTA/CTAA [State Public Transportation Partnerships Meeting](#), State Transit Association meetings, [CTAA EXPO](#), and the [Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference \(RIBTC\)](#). More conferences can be found in the [Find Anything Toolkit](#).

In the past, National RTAP has held a State RTAP Manager webinar series. Although the series is currently not running, RTAP managers can watch [archived webinars](#).

## Peer Networking

State RTAP managers are encouraged to use National RTAP's [Peer-to-Peer Network](#), which connects RTAP managers with each other to answer specific questions or provide guidance. RTAP Managers are encouraged to post their programs' annual or quarterly newsletters, in order to share best practices and rural transit news, that would shine a positive spotlight on initiatives in their

respective states. We also host [State RTAP Manager Peer Roundtables](#) twice a year, which gives participants the chance to discuss issues of interest to State RTAP programs. Summaries of the Peer Roundtables are posted after the events. Additionally, RTAP Managers convene at the special breakfasts National RTAP hosts at many conferences.

## Reaching Out

State RTAP managers are generally happy to share their experience with other states. [A list of RTAP managers](#) from each state and territory is available on our website. For other organizations with which State RTAP Managers should be familiar, particularly if they need technical assistance, see the [How to Find Anything Toolkit](#).

# New RTAP Manager Succession Planning

New RTAP Managers often begin with little guidance about how to maintain and expand the

1. Inventory the documentation left by the previous State RTAP Manager. What systems and programs did they have in place? Find out from colleagues in the State DOT what the former State RTAP Manager did.
2. Is there an RTAP advisory board already in place? Have a meeting with them to find out the state of the program, future goals, and as a general introduction.
3. If there is no advisory board, call or visit a sample of subrecipients to find out their thoughts on the RTAP program and what they are hoping for in the future.
4. Discuss priorities with other colleagues in the State DOT, RTAP advisory board and/or committee, and consult the annual work plan. Reach out to other State DOT Managers to see what their experiences have been, lessons learned, etc.
5. If [parts of the program are outsourced](#), the RTAP Manager should go over the contract(s) with the contractor(s) to make sure all parties understand what they are responsible for.
6. Read the RTAP section of the [5311 Program Circular](#).
7. Check in with the finance team in the department to understand the RTAP allotments and current status of funds in case there is a situation anyone needs to address quickly.
8. Get in touch with subrecipients, either through email, phone, or a hard-copy letter.
9. Visit subrecipients as much as possible to get to know them—this is the number one best practice cited by many RTAP managers.
10. Perform a [survey](#) of all subrecipients electronically to collect preliminary information from them, if this has not been done before.
11. Contact another State RTAP manager, get in touch with [National RTAP](#) to connect with a peer, or use the National RTAP [State RTAP Managers' Forum](#). New RTAP Managers can reach out to a network of RTAP managers for tips, pointers, resources, and opportunities to coordinate efforts.
12. Visit [nationalrtap.org](#), especially the [State RTAP Programs](#) section.
13. Use National RTAP [resources](#) and [web apps](#) to enhance outreach in the State RTAP program.
14. Sign up for National RTAP's weekly newsletter - [eNews](#).
15. Participate in National RTAP [State RTAP Manager Peer Roundtables](#), which are held twice a year.
16. Use the National RTAP [Directory of Trainers](#) as a resource to find trainers and topics.
17. The National RTAP [Calendar of Events](#) can provide information on events that State RTAP programs are hosting as a resource to others. State RTAP Managers should also review the calendar regularly to provide information to your subrecipients of upcoming events.

National RTAP is a great resource that State RTAP Managers should not only be aware of but also be knowledgeable about and encourage subrecipients to become involved with for training and technical assistance. All new State RTAP Managers receive a National RTAP Welcome Kit with information about National RTAP, and a one-to-one virtual tour of the National RTAP website.

Having a new State RTAP Manager at the helm is often a good opportunity to create or revamp existing programs and services. Here are some suggestions for approaches:

- **Scholarships:** Create a scholarship policy and let subrecipients know scholarships are available. See the [Scholarship Programs](#) section of this toolkit for further information.
- **Trainings:**
  - Survey subrecipients to find out what trainings they need or want.
  - Review findings from subrecipient site visits to determine if there is a statewide need for certain areas.
  - Talk with other RTAP Managers to see what trainings they are seeing a greater demand for.
  - Decide how training will be offered - is the training better suited for online or in-person?
  - Find out who may already be offering it and see if there is an opportunity to collaborate or leverage existing training.
  - Many product vendors have training resources available to subrecipients. For example, vendors of bus lifts often provide free online videos on their website and/or on platforms such as YouTube that can be shared with transit agencies.
  - See the [Training](#) section of this toolkit for further information.
- **Conferences and Rodeos:** Consider working with an established organization, like the [State Transit Association](#), to make the process easier and less time-consuming. See the [Conferences and Rodeos](#) section of this toolkit for further information.

# Sample Documents and Templates

## Scholarship Documents

Arizona RTAP scholarship [preapproval form](#)  
California RTAP (CalACT) [scholarship forms](#)  
Colorado RTAP (CASTA) [scholarship form](#)  
Connecticut RTAP [scholarship application and agreement](#)  
Idaho RTAP website including [scholarship FAQs and forms](#)  
Maine RTAP [scholarship information and form](#)  
Maryland RTAP [scholarship forms](#)  
Massachusetts RTAP [scholarship application](#)  
Minnesota RTAP [scholarship information and application](#)  
Montana RTAP [scholarship guidelines, application, and reimbursement form](#)  
New Hampshire RTAP [scholarship form](#) template and [scholarship application](#)  
New York RTAP [scholarship guidelines](#)  
North Dakota RTAP [travel authorization form](#)  
Ohio RTAP [scholarship form](#)  
Washington RTAP [scholarship form](#)  
Wisconsin RTAP [scholarship application form and guidelines](#)

## Grant Documents

Massachusetts RTAP Helping Hand Mini Grant [information and application](#)

## Newsletters

California RTAP [CalACTION](#)  
Florida RTAP (CUTR) [Bulletin](#)  
Indiana RTAP (RLS) [Dispatch \(TAP-IN\)](#)  
Kansas RTAP (KU) [Trans Reporter](#)  
Maryland TAM/RTAP [newsletter](#)  
Minnesota RTAP [newsletter](#)  
Missouri RTAP (MSU) [eNewsletter](#)  
New Hampshire RTAP [newsletter](#)

Washington RTAP [Spotlights Newsletter](#)

## Procurement Documents

[Example RFP](#) from New Hampshire RTAP

[Financial spreadsheet](#) from New Hampshire RTAP

## Training Documents

Washington State RTAP's [contract with WSTIP](#) (Washington State Transit Insurance Pool) for training

Wisconsin DOT's [training cost breakdown](#)

Delaware Transit Corporation's [post-training assessment form](#) and [refresher training policy](#)

[Training course request form](#) from Delaware

## Templates and Forms

Connecticut RTAP [technical assistance form](#)

Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) has a [webpage](#) with vendor responsibility forms, including piggybacking forms, a Sample of a First Quarter Section 5311 Operating Assistance Requisition

Kansas RTAP [Memorandum of Agreement](#) template

[Medical qualification forms](#) from Indiana RTAP, such as a post-accident investigation form and medication information form. This page also includes templates for job descriptions.

[Templates](#) and [technical assistance request form](#) from Ohio DOT/RTAP

[Regional rodeo event reimbursement](#) form from Texas RTAP

[Blank policy form](#) from Delaware Transit Corporation