



LHTAC

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## Seven Ways To Be Collaborative

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According to a 2005 KDOT statistics report, there are 188 transit providers in Kansas serving 96 counties in public transportation. That adds up to a lot of potential collaboration, if organizations are willing.

"7 Ways to be Collaborative," an article printed in *Federal Computer Week's* April 2007 issue, lists seven desired characteristics to create positive change in government program management by working with other organizations. How can your transit agency take on those characteristics? We'll discuss ideas below. An organization that is best poised for collaboration:



### 1 Values and embraces networks.

Many networks support Kansas transit agencies. Your program consultant at the Kansas Department of Transportation is your first step to tapping into those networks, particularly in the areas of funding, grants management or regulations. Another excellent network is your coordinated transit district (CTD), which represents particular counties in the state and provides a forum for administering state and federal funds and for coordination of service. The Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council (KCTDC) represents all of the CTDs and helps make decisions on vehicle specifications, project prioritization and other essential activities of Kansas transit.

The Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (KS RTAP) at <http://www.ksrtap.ukans.edu> — and the Kansas Public Transit Association (KPTA) at [www.kstransit.com](http://www.kstransit.com) provide training, technical assistance and, in the case of the latter, legislative representation in Topeka and Washington D.C. Sign up to be on a mailing list or attend training or a conference to get everything you can out of these resources.

Another program you and your agency may choose to become involved with is Kansas United We Ride ([ksunitedweride.org](http://ksunitedweride.org)). This is part of a national effort to create coordination plans to serve individuals with disabilities, older adults or individuals with lower incomes. Agencies develop an action plan and a timeline to accomplish goals. Becoming familiar with this effort connects you with state offices in other fields, such as the Kansas Department of Aging, the Kansas Department of Commerce, the Department of Social Rehabilitation Service, and more.

1. **Values and embraces networks**
2. **Understands the big picture**
3. **Understands how to lead from the side**
4. **Knows how to sell**
5. **Is inclusive**
6. **Mitigates the stovepipes**
7. **Values independent program management**

## **2 Understands the big picture.**

Your transit agency is more than a web of bus routes. It is a business with goals, strategies and a mission. When communicating with customers and other agencies, a professional business approach is key to managing your organization.

KDOT's mission statement is: "To provide a statewide transportation system to meet the needs of Kansas. "What is your agency's mission?"

## **3 Understands how to lead from the side.**

Leave your "top-down" management assumptions at the door and allow co-workers to operate using their own professional judgment (within reason). People may surprise you with what they can do.

## **4 Knows how to sell.**

"Sell" is defined here as, "vision, approach, strategic alignment, strategic value, interim progress, incremental outcomes and program successes," through program messages. Become your agency's public relations director if it doesn't already have one. Get the word out about transit programs and achievements with advertisements, press releases, or any other way you can think of. Creativity catches attention!

## **5 Is inclusive.**

Inclusiveness requires a conscious effort to invite others into your agency's activities. Instead of working as an independent organization, perhaps in competition with others, ask them instead to join you in co-sponsoring award recognition celebrations or other events. The recent transportation coordination summits in Kansas are good examples of inclusiveness—inviting others to identify common issues and solutions. This could also include organizations not directly involved in transportation but complementary to it, such as state departments with similar clientele or local organizations with needs for transportation.

## **6 Mitigates the stovepipes.**

Kansas transit agencies are accustomed to operating with multiple funding sources and multiple federal, state, local, and private regulations and guidelines. When those funding sources aren't integrated and force you to operate your system in a less efficient manner, it's referred to as "stove-piping" or "silos." Operating a "senior" bus and a "mental health bus" and a "Medicaid" bus is often the result of stove-piped funding. Work within your communities and with your funding sources to develop operation plans that provide the greatest number of rides for the lowest cost, still meet the requirements of your funding source.

## **7 Values independent program management.**

It is important for a board of directors or executive members of a company to steer clear of close micromanagement. Put trust in your program managers to accomplish their jobs in their own way. This will create a respectful working relationship by allowing them the freedom to do their jobs without being under a microscope.

Collaborating with other agencies and organizations can only improve your own. Share ideas, achievements, events and more. Having another name tied to your agency may even interest people you don't normally reach—and improve ridership. To read "7 ways to be collaborative," visit <http://www.fcw.com/article98084-04-02-07-Print> — and start brainstorming!