National RTAP Resources by Roles Project: Mapping Training to User Needs

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Abstract

National Rural/Transit Assistance Program (National RTAP) has produced more than two hundred rural and tribal training resources over the past thirty years. Formats include print books, DVDs, technical briefs, eLearning modules, and more. Our Resource Share library database provides access to our own trainings and key partner resources. While there have been many ways to access the resources through this database (title, keyword, subject, etc.), there was not an easy way to find which of our resources have been tagged toward specific role titles.

The National RTAP Review Board identified the need to create quick role lists of our materials for onboarding new hires and providing refresher training to staff in various roles, such as drivers, dispatchers, mobility managers, etc. To address this need, a taxonomy of roles was developed and mapped to our Resource Share records. The resulting project is called the National RTAP Resources by Roles Project. This poster describes the project’s rationale, objectives, development, implementation, utilization and lessons learned.

Introduction

The National RTAP Review Board is a 15-member advisory board composed of State DOT and rural and tribal transit managers that provides in-depth expertise and local perspectives to ensure that producers and services are of the highest quality and are accessible and usable. The Review Board identified the need for rural and tribal transit staff, leaders and stakeholders to be able to access comprehensive listings of National RTAP resources for specific roles (i.e., bus drivers or trainers.)

The Review Board also identified the need to create a comprehensive list of roles across rural and tribal transit agencies and organizations, including the Resource Center Manager, and the roles in the Resource Catalog, to the final roles. A Resources by Roles Committee of National RTAP management, including the Resource Center Manager, made the selections, with the understanding that these would be reviewed initially and periodically by the Committee and the Review Board.

Step 1: Role Creation

To create a concise, standardized list of roles across rural and tribal transit agencies and organizations, the National RTAP Resource Center Manager generated initial taxonomy options from:

• 2018 National RTAP Job Descriptions Survey that included actual roles from a national sample of over three hundred rural transit agencies
• National thesaurus and index (i.e., Transportation Research Thesaurus)
• Role name recommendations submitted by National RTAP Review Board

Figure 2: Roles Planning Documentation

The initial list was reviewed and approved by the Review Board and National RTAP management. The final list consisted of 12 roles, with a role key that defined and listed synonyms and narrower terms.

Step 2: Mapping of resources to one or more roles

An Excel spreadsheet was employed to map the 82 resources listed in the Resource Catalog to the final roles. A Resources by Roles Committee of National RTAP management, including the Resource Center Manager, made the selections, with the understanding that these would be reviewed initially and periodically by the Committee and the Review Board.

Step 3: Resources by Roles Search Infrastructure Creation

The Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) for the National RTAP Resource Library is called Resource Share (Figure 3 at right). National RTAP Technical Support created the search capabilities that users could search for the roles initially and/or by filtering.

Step 4: Implementation, Promotion and Analysis

The Resource Center Manager catalogued the resources to the category Transit Personnel and the relevant subcategories. The Resources by Roles lists were added to our Resource Catalog, and the project was promoted through our newsletter, website, social media, and at conferences. The Review Board, along with former members initially involved in the project, were asked to review and provide feedback on role selection. They were also surveyed on utilization:

How many times did you distribute resources to stakeholders? Because we were using the category Transit Personnel and any of the subcategories:

1. Have you used this distribution resource to identify resources to stakeholders?
2. Have you used this distribution resource to identify resources to staff?
3. Please describe the roles that the Resources by Roles lists are used:

Multimodal
Motor
Bus
Fixed Route Transit
Interurban Transit
...Other, please describe:

Resource Share

Figure 4: Resources by Roles Project Timeline

The Review Board advised that we use “broader roles since rural transit is so diverse and many people are doing multiple roles.” Typically there is a manager, and their duties and roles are constantly changing. A list of the positions are combined with other roles.” Our project had to take into account DOT roles (e.g., Civil Rights or Contracts Manager), which are different than small agency roles. While Harrison et al. (2018) listed over 100 different roles in Central Services & Administration, we listed far fewer overarching categories.

National RTAP creates and distributes transit industry trainings. High quality professional development has helped the program users find what they are looking for even though they may not know exactly what it is. Through the FOREST training process, people were able to access more of our trainings. This project takes the next step and helps specific agencies find on topic trainings by organizational role. The process for selecting resources by role has a built in continuous feedback loop to track usage and recalibrate the lists periodically as needs and resources change.

Discussion

“Until three centuries ago, it was still possible for a specialist to know all the significant books pertaining to his field.” Lipton, 1939.

Sixty years later, this is certainly not the case. A recent web search for transit driver training found 49,200,000 results, beyond what anyone could even begin to read. A number of researchers and organizations have focused on stratification of job groups and knowledge needed for each, what was leveraged to create the final taxonomies for our Resources by Roles project.

• Anderson, et al. (2008) identified duties, knowledge, skills, abilities, and the work context for each job and listed it for the appropriate operations department. To identify job roles they then analyzed the literature on job analysis and organization. Their goal was to develop a comprehensive list of job roles for job-related training needs.
• Herzog, Cleary and Shen (2012) divided the transportation industry into major functional areas of work (e.g., DOT roles, job roles, and key competencies). The National Center for Mobility Management (NCCM, 2016) developed competencies, including knowledge and skills required to successfully perform critical tasks. 
• The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA, 2017) developed a Transit Staff Training Topics by Job Requirement chart (Figure 5).

Figure 5: CTAA Transit Staff Training Topics by Job Duties

The new roles were implemented in June 2018. Download data were collected for May and September 2018. In September, 61%, or 1,570 downloads of 2,220 total downloads (all National RTAP and partner resources) remained the top three lists. 17 of the 92 roles (21%) that were downloaded went from few to no downloads to even more downloads without any promotion (resources featured in our newsletter were omitted from the data). In May, 24% of resources downloaded in September had not been viewed at all.

Users can access the categories in two ways, by searching for categories and subcategories, and filtering down by subcategory after searching results.

Our Resource Catalog, which lists every training module, technical brief, toolkit and web chat that National RTAP produces, is constantly in one of the top three spots for both views and downloads, averaging 210 views over this five month period. Print copies are also distributed at conferences that National RTAP exhibits at. This gives potential users another method to access the Resources by Roles, byコピー/pasting the resource from the online National RTAP Resource Share, or manually entering the titles.

The committee’s selections were reviewed by our Review Board. The review resulted in additions to Resource Catalog lists. Additional customer service resources were added to the dispatch role. Additional emergency resources were added to administrative, mobility manager, safety, and trainer roles. “I’m thinking of people who may have to deal with riders/the public in an emergency,” stated Kari Barr, TXDOT/Program Manager, RTAP and Section 5310.

The Review Board and other customers participated in a usage survey. 50% accessed the Resources by Roles in Resource Share, and 60% accessed them in the Resource Catalog (see Figure 8). 50% felt that the biggest benefit to the project was having the roles in Resource Share, while 20% felt that it was having the roles in the Resource Catalog (20% said both). 40% of respondents searched for resources for drivers and 20% for resources for maintenance staff, transit managers and/or dispatcher staff. Additional resources searched for included mobility manager, head of agencies, safety staff, and board members.

Results

Figure 7: Requests for Roles by Resources

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Figure 8: Resources by Roles Access by Search Mode

Acknowledgements, References, Contact Info

Eddington, Tim Geibel, Katharine Mitchell, Michele Nystrom, Mike Oliver, Kari Ruse, Neil Sherman, Curtis Sims, Jr., Connie Sipe

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Methodology

• Create a concise, standardized list of roles across rural and tribal transit agencies and organizations
• Searchability and filtering within our Resource Share database of over 100 training modules, technical briefs, toolkits and web apps
• Annual and on-demand lists of resources by role online and in print

Project Requirements

• Roles are easily recognizable and aligned with rural and tribal transit culture and industry standards and norms
• Search infrastructure is aligned with format, subcategories and organization
• Resources must map to at least one role and to any number of roles
• Inforamtion must be available as future roles emerge
• Published lists will include only National RTAP trainings, but on-demand lists will include all resources mapped to roles.

Some of our resources, like this Roles and Responsibilities of Transit Managers Training Module, are inherently meant to train a specific role and were easy to map. Others, such as our ADA Toolkit, were mapped to multiple roles (i.e., dispatch staff, drivers, mobility managers, trainers, management volunteers).