Buncombe County NC - Home and Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG) Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes
Date: Wednesday 7/22/2026
Time: 3:30 to 4:30 pm
Location: Land of Sky Regional Council
339 New Leicester Hwy., Suite 140
Asheville, NC 28806 and ZOOM

Invitees		
Dan Beerman	Suzanne Booth	~~Taylor Foisie~~
Melissa Harmon	Deborah Oldt	Susan Schiemer
Greg Zornes		
Alison Banzhoff	Billie Breeden	Zack Schmitt

Not in attendance: Taylor Foisie

I. Welcome
   a. Approve or Revise Agenda
      i. There were no additions or revisions to the Agenda. Motion made by Greg to approve the Agenda, seconded by Suzanne. Motion carried.
   b. Approve or Revise Meeting Minutes
      i. There were no revisions to the Meeting Minutes. Motion made by Suzanne to approve the Meeting Minutes, seconded by Deborah. Motion carried.

II. Presentation - Eugenio Perez, Executive Director of Better Together Transportation
   a. Before Eugenio founded Better Together Transportation he worked 4 years in paratransit ferrying people to doctor appointments, dialysis, etc. Eugenio learned how a lack of transportation diminishes social living and how the human spirit dies before the human body. Eugenio was inspired to found Better Together Transportation after the deaths of two clients he transported.
   b. Better Together provides free, door to door, wheelchair accessible non-medical transportation for older adults and people with physical disabilities who live within Buncombe County.
   c. Their mission is to unite people through relational transportation.
   d. Eugenio shared anecdotes, stories, and photos of the clients he serves to provide examples of relational transportation.
   e. Better Together Transportation is more than transportation. They use transportation to preserve human connection.

f. Better Together serves older adults age 60 + and adult with physical disabilities who cannot reasonability use public transportation.
g. There is no cost to riders. Riders are allowed 3 round trips per month which include 2 relational rides (i.e., family visits or other social connections, church, etc.) and 1 errand support service ride (i.e., grocery stores, hair salons, adult day care, aging services providers, etc.). Relational rides are scheduled first.
h. Better Together is open Sunday – Thursday from 8:30 am – 5:30 pm.
i. To schedule a ride, one must call 24 hours in advance or fill out a form on the website.
j. The intake process is simple so they won't screen people out who need the service the most. Better Together only needs four pieces of information: name, date of birth, address, and mobility level.
k. Better Together has collected data on their riders since starting their service:
    i. 72% of riders are women, 28% of riders are men
    ii. 55% of riders live in individual homes, 48% of riders live in shared or multi -unit residences (i.e., apartments, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, etc.) and 4% of rider residences is unclear
    iii. The average age of riders is 76 years old.
l. Better Together provides rides to where their riders elect to go and to places that give riders meaning which include in descending order: faith and worship, groceries, administrative errands, friends and family, community and social engagement, personal care, general errands, dining outings, and shopping.
m. A survey taken in the first year of operation showed 92% of riders feel less isolated, 74% of riders leave home more often, and 100% feel safe and secure during rides.
n. BCSAF funding allows Better Together Transportation to pay the driver a living wage so he can live in the city he serves, pay the required insurance costs of $18,000 for an insured van, and more importantly to provide continuity of service to older adults who rely on transportation for their social interactions and connections.
o. Better Together Transportation is looking ahead to the future by:
    i. diversifying their funding and collaborating with aging services providers in the aging network to close the transit gaps in hopes that these partnerships will fund a second van and second driver,
    ii. coding a dispatch software to help schedule and route their rides with a goal of having a consistent workflow and to bring in a training program to dispatch and train other drivers, and
    iii. piloting volunteer programs, such as a companion program in which the volunteer rides along with an isolated older adult and working with churches to have volunteers drive older adults to the church services.

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III. Review of Expenditure Reports
   a. Units of Service – Reviewed
      i. Buncombe County received $25,000 in regional funding that was reallocated and the In-Home Aide Program relinquished funding.
      ii. Jewish Family Services, Meals on Wheels, and Mountain Aging Partners received reallocated funding.
   b. Buncombe County Supplemental Aging Funds (BCSAF) – Reviewed
      i. Most of the providers utilized their funding.

IV. Discuss improvements for the next grant cycle
   a. Schedule – Reviewed
      i. It was decided to discuss the Annual Reporting at the August meeting since the compilation will be done before then.
      ii. Discussion of the Aging Plan will move to the September meeting.

   b. Application/Scoring Sheet
      i. Budget page may need work for understanding as many applicants did not fill out properly.
      ii. Applications are opening earlier – January 8, 2027 and are due February 12, 2027 – per the schedule Susan created.

V. Determine Action Items and Next Steps
   a. Homework for Committee members – review the application and scoring tool and read the compilation of the FY26 End of Year Reports which Billie will send out ahead of the next meeting.