



2018 Business Activation Campaign Final Report

This project was supported by the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and CarShare Vermont.

Introduction

CarShare Vermont sought FY 18 UPWP funding from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) to activate employee members of our existing business accounts by encouraging them to utilize our service and their supporting employers in better integrating CarShare Vermont into their personnel policies and transportation practices. This project proposal stemmed from feedback we had repeatedly heard from our business members—that they needed assistance promoting carsharing and understanding how best to utilize our service to meet their goals (financial, environmental, and social).

As part of the project, we set out to develop a suite of outreach materials targeting employees that we could distribute among our business members to help them promote our service across their organizations. Additionally, we wanted to understand from our business members what information and guidance they needed to best utilize our service and maximize its benefits, such as VMT reduction, cost savings, and employee wellbeing. Finally, we wanted to develop a resource to help businesses evaluate the impact of offering CarShare Vermont to their employees.

Phase I: Market Research

During the summer of 2017 we solicited a proposal from a new design, strategy and communication firm in Burlington called Make New. We had collaborated with Make New on an outreach project earlier in the year and were very pleased with the results.

Make New approached the market research by first conducting a deep dive of our existing business members' usage patterns. Next, they conducted interviews with 17 of our 22 business members (at the time). In some instances, they conducted multiple interviews at one organization to gain perspectives from both administrators and users of our service.

Make New asked questions aimed at understanding the experience as a business user, including notable points of friction and points of appreciation. They also solicited feedback about our communications and systems (e.g. reservation technology). The main takeaways from the interviews for areas of improvement were:

- Improve the on-boarding and education process for new business members so they know how and when it's most beneficial for their employees to use CarShare Vermont
- Provide ongoing communication to keep business members engaged and using the service
- Help clarify and improve the billing process for account managers
- Introduce a mobile app to make reservations even more convenient
- Identify a champion at each business to own the program

We were pleased that our business members also reported a good deal of positive feedback about CarShare Vermont. Of note, they appreciate the convenience of our service, the abundance of pod locations, and the cost savings (for appropriate trips).

Phase 2: Deliverables

After digesting all of the information learned from our business members Make New began to develop outreach and communication materials to both aid in member recruitment and support businesses to better utilize CarShare Vermont. Because CarShare Vermont is a web-based service (i.e. reservations are made online), Make New addressed our online assets first by creating a new business member welcome guide, as well as a dedicated FAQ and orientation for business members that offers tips on using the service.

Next, Make New developed a Business Impact Report template that we can customize and email to each business member annually. The report includes information about CarShare Vermont usage (number of trips and mileage), number of new employee enrollments, emissions reductions, and the cost of our service compared to the federal mileage reimbursement.

Additionally, Make New created print materials, including an updated rack card for businesses and an awareness poster to be distributed to business members to make their employees aware that they can join CarShare Vermont as an employee benefit.

Finally, CarShare Vermont partnered with our software provider to introduce a mobile app to our membership. UPWP funds were not used to pay for this offering, but we

were motivated to make it available in response to numerous requests from our members—both business and individuals.

Phase 3: Connecting with Business Members

During our market research effort with business members, we had a chance to have in-depth conversations and garner important feedback about our service. We also had the opportunity to answer questions on the spot, and in some instances, we were able clarify misconceptions about how to best utilize a CarShare Vermont membership to achieve cost savings.

In addition to our communication through market research, we reached out to our business members and asked for the opportunity to visit their offices in person to meet with staff, answer questions, and onboard any new employees. Several businesses took us up on this offer, and we will continue to ask for outreach opportunities on a regular basis to ensure employees are informed about our service.

Results & Conclusion

We are pleased to report that we successfully increased employee membership among our existing business accounts by 14% during the grant period. This means we on-boarded 33 new employees. Additionally, we added two new business accounts.

We feel that we are well-equipped to continue to engage with our business members and assist them in maximizing the benefits of their CarShare Vermont memberships to achieve their goals—financial, environmental, and social. Our new print and web communication materials fill an important need, providing us with great resources we can easily share with existing and perspective business members.

Perhaps most importantly, we are grateful to have had the opportunity to garner very specific feedback from our business members. We have increased understanding about what they appreciate about our service, what has been confusing or unclear, where we have opportunities to improve, and how we can simply use better communication to try to ease confusion or misconceptions about how it works.