

Challenges & Opportunities



June 13, 2019
Travelers Aid International Conference
Charlotte, NC

Challenges *can* turn into
Opportunities . . .

. . . when we're paying attention

Challenge:

Homelessness is a huge problem in San Diego.

- We have been in the top 5 Metro areas for homelessness for the last several years
- In 2018, San Diego was ranked #4, behind Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York in highest Homeless population
- “Greyhound Therapy” no longer seen as a realistic or effective means of solving the problem
- Pressure by the business, tourism, and general residential communities on local politicians to more effectively deal with this problem

Opportunity:

Family Reunification Partnership

- We learned about a new pot of funding that our long term (but not a huge part of our business) partner agency was accessing
- The **Downtown San Diego Partnership** is an organization tasked with improving Downtown San Diego, which includes keeping the streets clean, creating a more welcoming and pleasant environment for visitors and business alike, and planning for future growth
- They were working with the San Diego Housing Commission on a pilot program to send qualified homeless individuals and families home to places of support
- They approached us for advice, case management, transportation assistance, and support

The Lesson:

We were ready

The Result:

*Program is entering
its third year*

- We had been subrecipients of some HUD funding through our local homeless shelter (St. Vincent de Paul Village), but funding had ended in 2016
- We held onto our satellite office there providing some very basic minimal services with the idea that we needed to keep our foot in the door and stay relevant in the homelessness space in San Diego
- We are now beginning our third year in this partnership, which has met or exceeded all its goals, and has earned local awards for its effectiveness
- They bring the funding and homeless outreach; we bring our Greyhound discount program, and case management in two locations

Challenge:

San Diego's Silver Tsunami

- San Diego's senior population has been on a steady incline as Baby Boomers have been aging
- As one of the country's most expensive housing markets, many San Diego seniors struggle to meet all their needs
- When seniors decide what expenses to cut, often their cars are one of the first on the chopping block
- Some seniors can no longer drive due to vision loss or health concerns; they often become isolated or have trouble getting to doctor visits and grocery stores
- Low income seniors often must decide to cut expenses like transportation in order to pay rent or buy food and medicine

Opportunity:

SANDAG (San Diego Association of Governments)

- At a meeting very much like this one, several years ago (2008?), Kathleen Baldwin heard that there “was money in seniors”
- She came back to San Diego, where I, in my development role, told her I had just read about a new funding opportunity for senior transportation funded by a local sales tax, and being distributed through SANDAG to local nonprofits
- Our case manager was queried, and told us he had many seniors asking for transportation every week
- We created a new program and called it *SenioRide*, just for the purposes of qualifying for this grant funding

The Lesson:

We were open to ideas

The Result:

*Program is entering
its 11th year*

- Because we were open to new ideas, this program became a new way for us to evolve
- Because we are small, we are often reactive to trends and policy changes, versus being on the leading edge as policy influencers
- Paying attention to the changing needs of the community can be very effective
- What can you do when you're small?
 - Go to meetings
 - Listen to stakeholders
 - Subscribe to newsletters
 - Read/listen to the local press
- Learn to collaborate with partners: even when it's hard to create partnerships because of competition over limited funding
- Tell your funders about these challenges!

Challenge:

Unemployed people
are in danger of
becoming homeless

- As I just mentioned, homelessness is a very big challenge in San Diego
- Some have places of safety and support outside the region, and then qualify for Family Reunification, but what about those who don't have that option?
- What if they're from San Diego, or need to stay local for other reasons?
- What if the tools they need to become employed are cost prohibitive or unavailable?
- Clients need support to overcome (or avoid) homelessness right in their own communities
- What wrap-around services are needed for these people?

Opportunity:

Community Development Block Grants

- At Travelers Aid, our clients were asking for services we didn't offer, such as identification, trainings, gas vouchers, transportation for work
- We kept track of those requests
- CDBG Grants in San Diego are focused on supporting the LMI (Low to Moderate Income) population
- It wasn't a perfect fit, but we attended the information meetings in 2016 and 2017
- This was a funding source we thought those requested services could fit into; we created a new program called *Moving Up* and applied
- It was not funded the first year, but was in 2018

The Lesson:

We were flexible

The Result:

Moving Up

- We really felt like a consistent gap was becoming evident in our client calls
- Being flexible allowed us to create something brand new to meet the needs of our clients
- One way to reduce homelessness is to send people out of the area, but another way is to help them lift themselves up locally
- The program has become very popular in the past year, and we have more requests than we can handle
- It's also a very, *very* competitive grant process, and we scored 20th for FY20, when only the first 19 agencies were approved (very bitter!)
- We've written to three separate foundations for grant support this year, and will re-apply for CDBG next year

Be ready. Be open. Be flexible.

Being a small agency with few decision makers allows us to turn on a dime, create new projects that can fit in with constantly evolving needs in the community, and to implement new services fairly quickly

But every opportunity isn't a fit, and every challenge cannot be met, *at least not all at the same time . . .* So pick wisely!

Thank you!



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