



MILWAUKEE COUNTY AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT ALLOCATION Community Support Program Proposal FlexRide Milwaukee

COMMUNITY SUPPORT CATEGORY

Please select the community support category that applies to this proposal:

- Household Assistance.** Proposals may include expenditures related to food programs; rent, mortgage, and utility aid; cash transfers; internet access programs; eviction prevention; unemployment benefits or cash assistance to unemployed workers; housing support: affordable housing; and housing support: services for unhoused people.
- Mental & Behavioral Health.** Proposals may include expenditures related to mental health services; substance abuse services; and other public health services.
- Other Social Determinants of Health.** Proposals may include expenditures related to job training assistance; small business economic assistance; aid to nonprofit organizations; aid to other impacted industries; healthy childhood environments: home visiting and services to foster youth or families involved in child welfare system; social determinants of health: community health workers or benefit navigators and community violence interventions; clean water; drinking water; and broadband.

PROJECT DESIGN

Provide an overview of how the community support project being proposed addresses an urgent community need brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Demonstrate how the project provides a feasible solution to the demonstrated need and is being coordinated with partners. Include any collaboration that will occur during the project. Explain how the proposal falls within Milwaukee County's scope of services. (500-word max response)

FlexRide Milwaukee is an innovative solution to the transportation barrier that prevents thousands of Milwaukee residents from accessing jobs that exist outside the scope of public transit. Our pilot launched in March 2022 and is currently providing about 300 rides per week. This request builds upon a \$4.2 million Workforce Innovation Grant from the State, allowing FlexRide to fully realize its service model and connect thousands of Milwaukee County residents with jobs in three zones: Southern Milwaukee County (Oak Creek and Franklin), Eastern Waukesha County and Southern Washington County, while offering a quality service and keeping rider fares low.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the twin barriers of lack of access to transportation and childcare. Both transportation and childcare have increased in cost due to the pandemic, which threatens an already fragile financial security among many Milwaukee residents and has a significant impact on achieving racial and health equity. These two barriers combine to limit workforce participation among working parents, disproportionately women, and constrain the labor pool available to regional employers.

More than half the jobs in SE Wisconsin exist outside the scope of a 45-minute, one-way trip using public transportation. Areas within Milwaukee County, especially in the far Southern part of the county, often lack transit connections due to the difficulties in serving low-density areas with fixed route transit. This is especially the case for jobs in the manufacturing and warehousing sectors. The economic upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly increased the cost of transportation. Gasoline prices and the cost of used cars are at record highs, placing many jobs increasingly out of reach for unemployed or underemployed individuals.

FlexRide is the project of numerous partners, including participating businesses and business organizations, workforce development entities, including Employ Milwaukee, the Ethnic and Diverse Business Coalition (EDBC)(sourcing local MBE transportation providers as potential subcontractors), and community organizations that provide ongoing outreach to residents to continually improve the service.

FlexRide Milwaukee is designed to supplement existing MCTS services to take users the “last mile” to those parts of our region that have long been difficult to serve with fixed route transit routes. Many current FlexRiders are also MCTS riders, using existing bus routes to access the FlexRide pick up areas. The expansion of FlexRide is designed explicitly to not compete with MCTS, rather to boost its reach into areas currently not served by the transit system.

TRACKABLE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Provide an overview of the project’s goals, objectives, outcomes, and/or outputs that will be achieved by December 31, 2024. Please ensure that proposed project outcomes align with the Milwaukee County vision to achieve racial equity and eliminate health disparities. (250-word max response)

Goal 1: Expand FlexRide Milwaukee to serve riders from across Milwaukee County, accessing jobs in three suburban zones.

Objectives:

-Recruit businesses to participate in FlexRide in expansion zones

Measurable outcomes:

-150 participating businesses

-Capacity to serve 750 FlexRiders at any given time

-Increase % of jobs accessible without a car from <%50 (current) to X

Goal 2: Provide the best possible service for FlexRiders and participating businesses

Objectives:

-Create a board made up of community representatives, participating businesses and workforce development groups to directly oversee FlexRide and ensure continuous improvement

-Track rider satisfaction through regular surveys and immediate feedback on the app. Specifically, on time performance, safety, comfort, convenience and cost effectiveness.

-Track business satisfaction through regular surveys and feedback mechanisms, including on time performance and reliability.

Measurable outcomes:

-Average 4.5/5 rider feedback

-95% satisfaction based on surveys

-95% business satisfaction, based on surveys

Goal 3: Build capacity of small, minority owned transportation companies through serving as subcontractors for FlexRide Milwaukee

Objectives:

-Partner with EDBC to develop pipeline of local companies

-Offer technical assistance and equity infusion to assist local companies in accessing capital necessary to build capacity to participate as subcontractors

Measurable objectives:

-3 small local minority owned transportation companies subcontracted with FlexRide

Goal 4: Serve working parents with transportation services tailored to their needs

Objectives

-Partner with high quality child care centers to position them as “workforce mobility hubs” for working parents.

-Offer unique benefits to FlexRiders, including childcare cost assistance and rideshare vouchers for emergencies

Measurable outcomes:

4 high quality childcare centers partnering as Workforce Mobility Hubs

INVEST IN EQUITY & INTENTIONAL INCLUSION

Provide an overview of how the proposed project supports historically underserved, marginalized and/or adversely affected groups. Projects will be scored by their alignment with Milwaukee County’s strategic objectives to (1) achieve racial and health equity, (2) dismantle barriers and (3) invest “upstream” to address root causes of health. Demonstrate how this proposal supports any or all of these objectives. If applicable, include how this proposal was informed by community input and builds capacity of community organizations. (500-word max response).

More than half the jobs in SE Wisconsin exist outside the scope of public transit. This presents a barrier to access for those lacking reliable cars. Pre-pandemic, about 20% of all City of Milwaukee households lacked cars, a figure far higher in Black and Brown communities and a figure most certainly higher today, given the increase in the cost of driving post pandemic. Under our current pilot, about 85% of FlexRiders are African American, and a similar percentage live in poverty. Most of these riders are using the service to access higher paying employment than was previously accessible.

The transportation barrier to employment disproportionately impacts people of color in our community. National studies show that the adverse economic impacts of transit cuts disproportionately impact people of color. The majority of Milwaukee's transit riders are people of color, disproportionately women. For working parents, disproportionately women, the transportation barrier is two-fold: a trip to work includes a trip to daycare. FlexRide Milwaukee is reducing this barrier, and the expanded service will specifically meet the needs of working parents, while also serving non-working parents.

The transportation barrier is a hinderance to economic stability, which is one of the social determinants of health. Steady employment means people are less likely to live in poverty, which contributes to adverse health outcomes.

During the planning phase for the FlexRide Milwaukee pilot, the UWM/SEWRPC project team engaged in focus groups organized by Employ Milwaukee to learn from jobseekers what they would want to see in new transportation services. Respondents said they wanted transportation that took less time than traditional bus routes, was not cost prohibitive, and provided direct service to workplaces as much as possible. This feedback shaped the design of the FlexRide pilot service and underlies our efforts to expand FlexRide and position childcare centers as "mobility hubs" to provide a safe, convenient, and welcoming pickup spot for FlexRiders.

Another clear message from our outreach is that residents want access to employment and other quality of life opportunities near where they live. While FlexRide helps people travel long distances, MobilISE's larger vision and work includes strengthening local transportation service, encouraging safe walking and biking infrastructure, and working alongside community development practitioners in Milwaukee to bring more development to the city.

A key component of FlexRide is community and economic development, beyond the access to jobs. We are intentional in building the capacity of small, minority owned transportation providers to participate as sub contractors in the FlexRide service. This work is done in partnership with Ethnic and Diverse Business Coalition/The Business Council.

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGY

Please select the statement that aligns with the community support project. This project was developed with:

Strong Evidence: can support casual conclusions for the specific program with the highest level of confidence. This consists of one or more well-designed and well-implemented experimental studies conducted on the proposed program with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes.

Moderate Evidence: reasonably developed evidence base that can support casual conclusions. The evidence-base consists of one or more quasi-experimental studies with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes OR two or more nonexperimental studies with positive findings on one or more intended outcomes. Examples of research that meet the standards include well-designed and well-implemented quasiexperimental studies that compare outcomes between the group receiving the intervention and a matched comparison group (i.e., a similar population that does not receive the intervention).

Preliminary Evidence: can support conclusions about the program’s contribution to observed outcomes. The evidence-base consists of at least one nonexperimental study. A study that demonstrates improvement in program beneficiaries over time on one or more intended outcomes OR an implementation (process evaluation) study used to learn and improve program operations would constitute preliminary evidence. Examples of research that meet the standards include: (1) outcome studies that track program beneficiaries through a service pipeline and measure beneficiaries’ responses at the end of the program; and (2) pre- and post-test research that determines whether beneficiaries have improved on an intended outcome.

Provide an explanation to support the statement that most aligns with the project. Include the experimental studies conducted on the proposed project. *Evidence-based strategies can be found through the following: [Results First Clearinghouse Database | The Pew Charitable Trusts \(pewtrusts.org\)](#) and [Homepage | CLEAR \(dol.gov\)](#). (250-word max)

The transportation barrier to employment is well documented. FlexRide Milwaukee’s approach to the challenge is based on national models that have proven successful in other cities, including SHARE Columbus and Horizons in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. These programs are well established and have a long track record of providing access to employment opportunities for individuals experiencing the transportation barrier.

The current FlexRide pilot includes a research component led by UWM and funded by the National Science Foundation. This pilot concludes at the end of October 2022, after which the findings will be available. The research component of this pilot measures the program’s impact on economic stability (employment, increase in wages) for users and satisfaction with the service. Preliminary data indicate that the impact of the program is significant.

ARPA REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Provide a detailed overview of the applicant’s experience managing federal funds. Detail any experience ensuring accurate data collection and adherence to federal reporting requirements. If this is an internal application, detail any experience managing contracts and ensuring reporting deadlines are met. If this is an external applicant, detail any experience receiving funding from Milwaukee County and ensuring reporting deadlines are met.

MobilISE has no experience in Federal grants or County funding to date, but as a recipient of ARPA funds through the Workforce Innovation Grant program, we are building this capacity, relying on the expertise of our board of directors and external contracted service providers.

Our board of directors includes representatives from SEWRPC and the Business Council, as well as current and former public officials with extensive experience in Federal and county grant management. Our board

has created a Steering Committee to advise our efforts in developing the capacity necessary to effectively manage ARPA dollars.

We have engaged with CLA, a national financial services firm that specializes in Federal grant management, to handle all aspects of grant management for the \$4.2 million in ARPA we are receiving under Workforce Innovation Grant. Should Milwaukee County choose to allocate ARPA funds toward this project, CLA would be tasked with management of those funds as well.

ARPA FUNDS REQUESTED

Provide the total request amount to be spent between 2022 – 2026. Explain how funds will be incurred and encumbered by December 31, 2024. Include if the project has matching funds or resources. (250-work max)

Our request of \$1,400,000 would support:

-\$1,125,000 core FlexRide Milwaukee service from 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2024. This on-demand transportation service is provided by transportation companies operating under contract with Mobilize/FlexRide Milwaukee. The current contract, with the transportation company VIA, runs through March 2023. We are issuing an RFP in September 2022 for a new contract to start April 1, 2024. We are also working with TBC/EDBC to develop a pipeline of local MBE transportation companies to act as subcontractors under the new contract.

-\$100,000 FlexRide administration

-\$75,000 marketing, promotion and community outreach

\$100,000 gap financing and technical assistance for MBE transportation providers

Our chief source of matching funds is a \$4.2 million Workforce Innovation Grant, \$3.6 million of which is directly applicable to the core FlexRide Milwaukee service from 1/1/2023-12/31/2024. Other funds have been committed from United Way (\$50K)

In kind contributions come from Employ Milwaukee, SEWRPC and Workforce Development Board of Washington, Ozaukee and Waukesha Counties.

BUDGET

Complete the short-form budget and provide a formula for your calculation by defining the expense item, number of units, and cost per unit for the requested project period. Please add rows as necessary. In the table below, outline any matching funds or resources. **Please note:** all costs needed for a project should be included in the budget below (example: staffing capacity, rent/space, utilizes, etc.).

Expense Item	Description	Total Cost
Personnel Expenses (including fringe benefits)		
1. FlexRide Milwaukee Administration	Executive Director, Transportation Services Manager, Admin Support 1/1/2023 to 12/31/2024	\$500,000
2.		
3.		
Professional Services		
1. FlexRide Milwaukee Core Service	Service performed by transportation service providers under contract with Mobilize, including local MBE subcontractors. Service period: 1/1/2023 – 12/31/2024	\$5,400,000
2. Marketing and outreach	Promoting FlexRide Milwaukee and supporting ongoing community engagement	\$150,000
3.		
Supplies & Equipment		
1. Office space lease/utilities	Lease 12/1/2023 to 12/31/2024	\$30,000
2.		
3.		
Capacity Building Resources for Implementation		
1	Equity infusion (gap financing) for MBE transportation subcontractors	\$150,000
2.	Technical assistance for MBE transportation subcontractors (EDBC partnership)	\$50,000
3.		
Total Calculations		
Total Expenses		\$6,130,000

Other Revenue Source (s)	Committed or Available Revenue Amount	Potential Revenue Amount
Workforce Innovation Grant (portion for FlexRide core service)	\$3,558,000	
United Way	\$50,000	

Bader Philanthropies		\$50,000
Wisconsin Employee Transportation Assistance Program		\$500,000
Waukesha County Transportation Funds		\$200,000
Participating business contributions		\$200,000
Total Other Revenue Amount	\$3,608,000	\$1,200,050