PROGRAM PROMOTION BASICS

Why educate?

- Make your program and services known to more older adults, family members, and caregivers.
- Create awareness of your program among community leaders.
- Strengthen existing partnerships and form new ones.
- Recruit volunteers and partners.
- Recognize the contributions of staff and volunteers.
- Find organizations and opportunities to support your work.

☆ Supporting your program through promotion is just as important as supporting the people you serve.

Start small.

1. Identify a program champion to lead your promotion efforts. Program champions are those who already bang the drum for your program out in the community. Harness their passion to help you with your promotion efforts.

2. Create a portfolio that includes a list of your program activities, impact data, and success stories.

3. Develop a two-sentence pitch (often called an "elevator" pitch) that program staff can use, so you're always ready to educate others.

Ideas for Pitch Development

Option 1: Use this basic statement about senior nutrition programs.

Our senior nutrition program provides nutrition services for older adults in our community, including home-delivered meals and meals served in group settings like senior centers. Our services also offer a vital link to other home and community-based supports that increase socialization, independence, and well-being.

Option 2: Fill in the blanks of this statement with specifics about your program.

[Program name] provides nutrition services to seniors in [community/region]. Just this year, we served [number] home-delivered meals and [number] meals at [pandemic-safe events (e.g., grab-and-go, curbside)]. But our program goes beyond food – we work to reduce social isolation and focus on overall health and well-being. We [describe services that focus on more than food], and we connect older adults with other community supports like [other service (e.g., falls prevention classes)].

Option 3: Craft a unique statement using the following bullet points as a guide.

- Name of your program
- Who it serves and in which area(s)
- Key services, including those beyond food
- A striking statistic related to your services

☆ Practice with friends, family, or colleagues to refine and get comfortable with your pitch.

Develop an outreach list.

Make a list of community leaders (formal and informal), potential partners, media allies, and others you'd like to reach. Your list might include:

- Aging agencies
- Food/nutrition organizations
- Community action groups
- State and local representatives
- Local news outlets (TV, radio, print/digital)
- Well-respected residents and other influencers, especially those who are older adults.
- Faith-based leaders
- Mayor
- City council members

☆ Call on community "gatekeepers" – people who act as go-betweens to help you expand your reach.

Choose communication channels.

Different types of communications may be effective for different people on your list. Consider what each person or group might be most responsive to:

- Phone calls and letters
- Email marketing
- News/press releases
- Letters to the Editor
- Blog posts
- Social media
- Peer-to-peer engagement (virtual or in-person)
- Community meetings (e.g., town hall)
- Program events

☆ If resources are limited, pick the "top 3" channels in your community.

Follow best practices.

- Know your audience and always keep them in mind. Communicate what they want to know.
- Share outcome data. Numbers can be powerful! These data also help with media attention.
- Tell a story. Personal and local perspectives are relatable and inspire others.
- Connect the dots. Explain the relationship between your activities and impact.
- Be prepared. When you educate others, expect follow-up questions and requests.
- Use plain language. All people welcome an easy read – even executives.
- Make the ask. Clear calls to action help your audience know what you want them to do. For example, you may ask them to share information on your program in their organization newsletter or attend an event at your program site. If you don't ask, you don't know!

Learn more.

- Communications to Promote Interest (Community Toolbox)
- Funding in Action Writing Guidance (CDC)
- Advocacy Toolkit (NCOA)
- Telling Your AAA's Story (Aging and Disability Business Institute)
- 10 Tips to Harness the Power of Stories (NCOA)
- UCEDD Resource Center - Public Policy Analysis and Education (AUCD)
- How to Collect Powerful Testimonials from Program Participants (NCOA)