

Older Americans Act Congregate Nutrition Program Quality Review Toolkit: Self-Assessment

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Module 1: Basic Requirements

Use this tool to assess your Older Americans Act (OAA) Congregate Nutrition Program (CNP) through a quality lens. Results do not need to be shared and do not impact grant funding. Tips on completing the self-assessment can be found in the toolkit introduction.

DIRECTIONS: Read each statement below and consider how your program addresses it. Use the web links to learn more on the topic. Respond yes or no to each standard. Give yourself one point for each yes response. Compare your score to the chart at the end.

Numbers in the left-hand column do not indicate priority. These identification (ID) numbers are for reference while working with the document, to reference line items in the Resource Guide, and as a reference with the Action Plan Worksheet. The numbers at the end of each statement are OAA section references.



ID	Basic Requirement	Yes or No
1.1	We provide meals in congregate settings (e.g., adult day care, parks and recreation facilities, libraries, etc., including virtual settings). 306(a)(1), 331(2)	
1.2	We prioritize services for people 60+ in greatest economic and social need. 305(a)(2)(E), 306(a)(4), 306(a)(15)	
1.3	Our program offers person-centered, trauma-informed services that meet the needs of participants (e.g., services that respect individual preferences and experiences and are sensitive to past traumas). 102(41)	
1.4	Our program follows AAA procedures for offering meals to eligible people . 102(40), 339(2)(H-I)	
1.5	Our meal sites offer opportunities for individuals of all ages to volunteer . 306(a)(6)(C)(iii), 307(a)(2)(B)	
1.6	Our meal site provides at least one hot or other appropriate meal per day, five or more days per week. 331(1) (NOTE: If your meal site has written approval by the SUA/AAA to serve less than five days per week, check yes.)	
1.7	We design meals that appeal to our program participants. 339(2)(A)(iii), 339(2)(B)	

ID	Basic Requirement	Yes or No
1.8	Our meals meet the OAA nutrition standards as defined by SUA/AAA policies. 339(2)(A)	
1.9	We follow food safety and sanitation laws when preparing and serving meals. 339(2)(C), 339(2)(F)	
1.10	We provide nutrition screening for all eligible participants. 102(14)(B), 330(3), 331(3), 339(2)(J)	
1.11	Our program provides nutrition education tailored to the unique needs of our community. 214, 306(a)(1-5), 331(3), 339(2)(J)	
1.12	We make referrals for or offer nutrition counseling . 214, 331(3), 339(2)(J)	
1.13	We offer opportunities for participants to socialize in meaningful ways. 330(2), 339(2)(G)	
1.14	We make referrals for or offer other nutrition services . (e.g., weighted utensils, oral nutrition supplements, etc.). 331(3)	
1.15	Our program helps people 60+ access disease prevention and health promotion services . 102(14), 321(a), 330(3)	
1.16	We work with other Title III programs to provide transportation to our meal site and other supportive services . 321(a)	
1.17	We coordinate with other nutrition programs to reduce hunger, food insecurity , and malnutrition among eligible adults. 330(1)	
1.18	We solicit the advice of a dietitian (or person of comparable expertise) , meal participants, and others who know about older adults' needs. 339(2)(G)	
1.19	We have a written policy and procedure manual that details how we provide CNP services. 306(a)(1), 306(a)(4)(A)(ii), 306(a)(13), 307(a)(4)	
1.20	A training program for staff and volunteers is in place. 205(a)(2)(A-B), 306(a)(6)(C)(iii)	
1.21	We provide disaster/emergency relief nutrition services according to SUA/AAA policies. 306(a)(17), 307(a)(28)	
1.22	Our program has a grievance procedure for older adults dissatisfied with or denied services. 306(a)(10), 307(5)(B)	
1.23	Our meals and services are accurately reported . 306(a)(15), 330, 331, 339	
1.24	Our NSIP funds are used to purchase domestically produced food only. 311(d)(4)	
1.25	We encourage voluntary contributions from all eligible participants according to SUA/AAA requirements. 315(b)	
1.26	Our suggested voluntary contribution rate is based on the actual cost of a meal . 315(b)(1)	
1.27	We follow standard accounting procedures for all financial activities (e.g., documenting use of funds, safeguarding funds). 212, 306(a)(15)	
1.28	We monitor program operations (e.g., menus, food safety, outreach, financials) regularly. 306(a)(1), 306(a)(13)(C-D), 306(a)(18), 330, 331, 339	
1.29	We audit program records (e.g., participation records, menu substitutions, food temperatures) to verify accuracy. 306(a)(13)(C-D), 306(a)(18)	
1.30	We evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of our program regularly. 306(a)(18), 307(a)(4)	

Evaluation

Give yourself one point for each “yes” answer for items 1.1-1.30. Then, find your score in the chart below to see the score category and suggested next steps.

This is a voluntary self-assessment for the purpose of identifying strengths and opportunities in your OAA CNP. Results do not impact grant funding.

Score	Results and Next Steps
0-15 points 	Stop! This score indicates your program meets few of the OAA CNP basic requirements. Before taking action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review instructions and relevant web links. • Contact your AAA for guidance. • Consider retaking the self-assessment to ensure accuracy.
16-29 points 	Caution. This score indicates that your program meets many, but not all, OAA CNP basic requirements. Your program is on the right track and has opportunities to increase compliance. Focus on items marked “no” in your assessment. Use the weblinks and Resource Guide to find tools for the items marked “no.” Develop an action plan to address improvement areas. Contact your AAA for guidance as needed.

If your program’s score is 30, all basic requirements are met and points for optional criteria may be added.

Optional Criteria

These are areas of the OAA where the language implies flexibility with terms like “where feasible,” “to the maximum,” or “practical extent.” While not mandatory, implementing these practices can significantly enhance your program’s quality and reach. ACL strongly encourages implementing these practices at a level appropriate to your program.

ID	Optional Criteria	Yes or No
1.31*	Our meals are provided in settings as close to where most eligible older adults live as is possible. 339(2)(E)	
1.32*	Where possible, our program uses locally grown foods (e.g., buying locally grown foods, specifying local foods in contracts, or operating a garden). (339)(2)(L)	
1.33*	To the best of our ability, we adjust meals to meet special dietary needs , including cultural considerations/preferences. 339(2)(A)(iii)	
1.34*	Our program follows AAA/SUA guidance on reaching and serving older Native Americans and coordinating services provided under Title VI . 306(a)(11), 307(a)(21)	
1.35*	Where possible, we work with local schools and other facilities that serve meals to children to provide intergenerational meal programs. 339(2)(D)	

Add one point for each “yes” answer for optional items 1.31-1.35. The highest possible total score for items 1.1-1.35 is 35.

If your score is between 30 and 35, go to the Intermediate module. This score indicates your program is achieving all basic OAA CNP basic requirements and some or all the optional standards. You are ready to go beyond the basics into advanced and innovative operations.

- Celebrate your success!
- Complete the intermediate and innovative self-assessment modules.
- Identify areas for continued growth and innovation.
- Use the [Resource Guide](#) to find additional technical assistance resources for each standard.
- Use the [Action Plan Worksheets](#) to achieve your goals for the items marked “no.”

Module 2: Intermediate Operations (complete Module 1 first)

Module 2 does not contain OAA requirements. This module uses examples of OAA CNP operations that go beyond basic OAA requirements in areas such as variety, frequency, or coordination of services. These are best practices or emerging trends in service delivery. You may identify comparable examples of intermediate operations from your OAA CNP program.

DIRECTIONS: Read each statement and consider how your program addresses the example. Use the weblinks to learn more on the topic. Enter the most appropriate response from the three options. After completing this module, think about examples of intermediate operations from your CNP that are beyond basic OAA requirements in areas such as variety, frequency, or coordination of services.

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ID	Intermediate Standard	Doing, planning to do, or not planning to do
2.1	We create partnerships to develop meal site locations close to where most of our target population lives.	
2.2	We use multiple meal delivery models (e.g., café models, grab-and-go, restaurant programs, choice menus/salad bar, breakfast/ evening/weekend meals) to meet the needs of our community.	
2.3	Our meal site collaborates with the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program to act as a voucher distribution point or host site.	
2.4	We offer expanded opportunities for socialization (in person and/or virtual) beyond eating together to promote friendships and meaningful connections that reduce loneliness and isolation.	
2.5	We use food insecurity and malnutrition screening tools to help prioritize those in greatest economic and social need.	
2.6	We assist individuals on our standby list to receive alternative resources to meet their nutrition, health, and social needs.	
2.7	We use multiple methods (e.g., surveys, listening sessions, focus groups) to obtain participant feedback on meals and services throughout the year.	
2.8	We offer nutrition education sessions led by registered dietitians, cooperative extension agents , or SNAP-Ed educators.	
2.9	We cultivate business relationships to sustain the program.	
2.10	We provide specialized staff training (e.g., serving diverse populations, person centered/trauma informed service, warm hand-off referrals).	
2.11	We regularly inform participants on how their voluntary contributions are used.	
2.12	In addition to federal funds and voluntary contributions, our program has at least two other sources of income .	
2.13	We calculate the total cost of our meals annually and when we see significant cost changes.	
2.14	We use management tools (e.g., production sheets, standardized recipes, food product specifications, substitution lists) to control meal quality and cost.	
2.15	We prepare for emergencies by including an approved emergency menu in our disaster plan and keeping shelf-stable supplies on hand.	

Evaluation

Scores are not calculated in this module. The examples in this module are beyond basic OAA requirements in terms of variety, frequency, or coordination of services. You are encouraged to add your own intermediate operations.

- “Already doing”: Use these items to market and promote your program.
- “Planning to do”: Use the [Action Planning Worksheets](#) to achieve your goals from the items marked.
- Adapt any of these strategies to meet your organization’s needs, budget, and capabilities. Review the [Resource Guide](#) for each example in this module.
- This is a voluntary self-assessment to identify strengths and opportunities in your OAA CNP. Results do not impact grant funding.

Advance to the Innovative self-assessment if at least one intermediate example is met.

Module 3: Innovative Operations

Module 3 does not contain OAA requirements. This module uses examples of CNP operations that go beyond OAA basic requirements and intermediate operations. These examples use complex business structures and proactive partnerships to create sustainable programs that meet the challenges of a competitive business environment. Include examples of innovative operations from your OAA CNP.

DIRECTIONS: Read each statement and consider how your program addresses it. Use the linked webpages to learn more on the topic. Select the most appropriate response from the three options. After completing this module, think about examples of comparable innovative operations from your CNP program that are based on complex business structures and proactive partnerships that create sustainable methods of providing OAA CNP services.

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ID	Innovative Standard	Doing, planning to do, or not planning to do
3.1	We use technology and electronic devices (e.g., card scanners) for meal registration and to track meals served.	
3.2	We collaborate with local farmers and agricultural organizations to host farmer's markets or community-supported agriculture (CSA) box distribution.	
3.3	We offer multiple types of medically tailored meals or culturally tailored meals to meet the special dietary needs of program participants.	
3.4	We prioritize services using a tiers-of-service approach to ensure people with the highest need are served.	
3.5	We provide nutrition counseling using telehealth.	
3.6	We partner with community care hubs to provide recently discharged patients nutrition and other payable services.	
3.7	We provide medical nutrition therapy to eligible participants with diabetes or chronic kidney disease, which is funded through Medicare.	
3.8	Our website offers multiple options to make voluntary contributions and community donations (e.g., bank draft, credit card, money transfer apps, etc.).	
3.9	We use data to foresee trends and tailor our program to appeal to a diverse 60+ population.	
3.10	We form strategic partnerships to meet the needs and preferences of our community.	
3.11	We use a formal process to attract and evaluate potential foodservice providers (e.g., caterer conference, outreach to area foodservice professionals).	
3.12	We use financial strategies , such as blending and braiding of funding, to broaden the reach of services to eligible participants.	
3.13	We maintain current information on total operating costs for each of our service delivery models.	
3.14	We use a fee-for-service or private pay model that does not disrupt or reduce services for those in greatest economic and social need.	
3.15	We use a quality assurance process to plan, monitor, evaluate, and enhance program services.	

Evaluation

Scores are not calculated in this module. The examples in this module are beyond OAA basic requirements and use complex business structures and proactive partnerships to sustain OAA CNP services. Include your own innovative CNP operations.

- “Already doing”: Use these items to market and promote your program.
- “Planning to do”: Use the [Action Planning Worksheets](#) to achieve your goals from the items marked.
- Adapt any of these strategies to meet your organization’s needs, budget, and capabilities. Review the [Resource Guide](#) for each example in this module.
- This is a voluntary self-assessment to identify strengths and opportunities in your OAA CNP. Results do not impact grant funding.