

## **Meals in Motion: Quick Guide to Food Truck Operations for Senior Nutrition Programs**

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Food trucks can be a competitive, contemporary, and flexible alternative to traditional Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) operations. Food trucks allow SNPs the opportunity to form new strategic partnerships, engage with more seniors (including those most in need), support their communities, and even to experiment with menus and interesting concepts that could expand their current meal services. Food trucks can bring vital nutrition services to vulnerable seniors who are otherwise unable to receive them due to social or physical isolation. During an emergency, a food truck is an ideal model for SNPs to mobilize to meet the meal needs of the older adult population wherever they are needed. They also provide an opportunity for SNP caterers or central kitchens to highlight their culinary abilities and introduce contemporary or culturally diverse food options, entrée choices, nontraditional mealtimes, and various meal types (i.e., breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals).

### **Key Steps to Launching a Food Truck Operation**

1. **Engage key stakeholders.** SNPs are encouraged to begin by discussing plans to use a food truck with their local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and/or their State Unit on Aging (SUA). The local health department should also be contacted to review any requirements for operating a food truck in your jurisdiction.
2. **Select an appropriate vehicle.** SNPs will need to decide on the most appropriate vehicle type for their food truck operations. Options include an all-inclusive food truck vehicle or a detachable food trailer. Both options will have pros and cons for considerations – for example, a food trailer will need an additional vehicle for transporting the trailer from one location to another. Other food truck vendors can be a great resource for information and advice.
3. **Secure registration and staffing.** Once a vehicle type has been selected, SNPs will need to make sure they meet all requirements and regulations for the vehicle’s operation. This will include registration with their state’s motor vehicle regulatory agency, such as the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and purchasing insurance. In addition, SNPs will need a food service license and a certified food manager for the food truck, as well as a capable driver. Every state has different requirements and fees, so SNPs are urged to check their local regulations.
4. **Consider ongoing expenses and equipment needs.** SNPs will need to budget for the cost of maintaining and operating the food truck vehicle – such as gas costs and routine maintenance – and its food service components – such as propane for the stove, steam tables, and a hot water tank.
5. **Anticipate data management needs.** Using the food truck for Title III-C senior meal services requires a point-of-sale (POS) system containing an application designed to track attendance and produce required funding reports that integrates with other SNP meal software. Such POS applications are currently in use at over 50 SNP restaurant partnerships across the country. Making sure the necessary technology is available and can be used from location to location will be important for the success of the food truck.

[Learn more about how SNPs can use food trucks to serve older adults.](#)