

ORGANIZATION:

Maryland Department on Aging



MARYLAND'S INNOVATIONS IN NUTRITION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

ABOUT US

The Maryland Department of Aging helps establish Maryland as an attractive location for all older adults through vibrant communities and supportive services that offer the opportunity to live healthy and meaningful lives.

PROJECT PURPOSE

- To transform the Maryland Department of Aging's Senior Nutrition Program using the epidemic of older adult malnutrition as the catalyst to introduce evidence based practices, cost-cutting measures, innovative meal products, and efficient service delivery methods to forge new health care linkages and expand service to older adults in the community.

PROJECT LENGTH

- Two years

KEY PARAMETERS

- **Population targeted:** Age 60 and older, persons at risk of hospital readmission, and/or malnutrition
- **Geographic setting:** Urban, suburban, and rural settings (statewide)
- **Service delivery setting:** Community settings; initial distribution site of meal packages was in the hospital, at discharge
- **Services offered:** Innovative post-hospital discharge meal package services, and development of a malnutrition care pathway approach
- **Number of staff/FTEs dedicated to innovation project:** (paid/unpaid, FTEs): Maryland Department of Aging: 0.75 FTE Project Coordinator, with in-kind support of senior staff, and involvement of Older Americans Act (OAA Nutrition Program Manager (in-kind not counted since the OAA is a federal program and could not be applied for budget purposes)
- **Consulting Registered Dietitian Firm:** procured to assist with specific components
- **Subgrantees:** Maintaining Active Citizens, Inc. (MAC Inc.), a Maryland Area Agency on Aging (AAA) and the Maryland Food Bank. Both were engaged and paid for time and expertise devoted to the project based on executed agreements
- **Total grant funds received:** \$245,975
- **Total project period:** Two years (2017 – 2019)
- **Total funding leveraged from organization (cash/in-kind):** \$85,236 (State funding)

PROJECT COMPONENTS

- A replicable model for a hospital post-discharge community-based malnutrition care pathway.
- Medically-tailored, shelf-stable meal packages for older adults transitioning from hospital to home.
- University-led cognitive- and validation-testing of the Maryland Home Delivered Meal Screening tool.
- Community malnutrition awareness workshops for seniors at risk for falls entitled, "Stepping Up Your Nutrition".

SUCCESSSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Community Based Malnutrition Pathways Toolkit

- **Successes:** A Community-Based Malnutrition Pathways Toolkit was created and was found to be of value to Area Agencies on Aging across the nation.
- **Lessons Learned:** Plan sufficient time for project staff to manage and be significantly engaged in projects that involve Area Agencies on Aging training, since consultants often will not have the context to develop special needs plan (SNP) applicable materials and trainings independently, even if they are content experts.

Meal Packages

- **Successes:** The meal package project received excellent acceptance and usage by patients and succeeded in its client-centered goals. The project team was able to create the first medically-tailored, shelf-stable meal package for older adults in our state and possibly for the nation.
- **Lessons Learned:** Anticipate delays in the learning curve, capturing data and receiving outcomes. Do not allow subgrantees to put project work plan timeline at risk. Intervene early to address problems.

Home Delivered Meal Screening Tool

- **Successes:** Local AAAs in Maryland now have an “app” for their use and a current manual for implementation of this screening procedure.
- **Lessons Learned:** Universities and the aging network work at different paces. This can affect deliverable timeliness.

Stepping Up Your Nutrition

- **Successes:** Met or exceeded programmatic and health outcomes. The workshops are sustainable and offered nationally via steppingupyournutrition.com.
- **Lessons Learned:** Use of a proven, award winning tool can strengthen a new project’s outcomes and success.

PROJECT IMPACT

The department partnered closely with a number of healthcare and AAA partners to fulfill this grant. These relationships continue and enhance each organization’s ability to serve clients effectively. Examples of the project’s Impact:

- One AAA has received funding to hire a dietitian and implement the malnutrition pathway.
- The Consulting Registered Dietitian Firm will continue offering the meal packages to healthcare providers and AAAs.
- A number of pilot projects have stemmed from our partnership with the hospitals.
- Another Department grant will be implementing the meal packages with subgrantees.

ADVICE TO PEERS

This grant project was very ambitious. The recommendation would be not to put too many projects into one grant proposal and consider what is absolutely critical to achieve project goals and what is manageable within the project’s timeframe. The important thing to remember when preparing grant proposals is that they are reviewed and scored based upon clearly defined project goals and objectives and the demonstration of a methodology/approach that is reasonable to achieve them within the project timeframe.

