

# Training Strategy Recommendations for Senior Nutrition Programs



The National Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging contracted with Kauffman and Associates, Inc., to conduct a technical assistance and training needs assessment evaluation on the business drivers and training and technical assistance needs of senior nutrition programs. The evaluation included an environmental scan, a focus group and interviews with subject matter experts (SMEs), and a national survey of senior nutrition programs. Below are key findings from the evaluation.



The rapidly aging and increasingly diverse United States population, along with the evolving impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing rates of food insecurity, make the work of the nutrition and aging services network more complex and essential than ever. Senior nutrition programs need accessible, dynamic, and targeted training to successfully meet these challenges.

## Business Drivers

- Ability to adapt to market changes and develop new business models
- Competition with for-profit food service companies
- Increasingly diverse client population
- Need for multiple business drivers
- Importance of strategic partnerships
- Nutrition-focused staff and strong understanding of nutrition basics



*“Those [strong nutrition] programs are versatile...They have food pantries, they have cafes to help finance them. They’re constantly evolving, which is what you have to be, especially in times like this.”* -Subject Matter Expert



## Gaps in Training

- Entrepreneurial skills and business acumen
- Developing inventive partnerships
- Foundational nutrition knowledge
- Working with an increasingly diverse client population
- Availability of trainings at regional and local levels
- Availability of trainings in rural areas
- How to conduct needs assessments and market analyses
- Providing medically tailored meals
- Technology and computer skills



**37% of survey respondents identified “new business approaches” as an area where staff and individuals want a large amount of training.**



*“Having multiple sources of funding, so that programs are not limiting themselves to one single funding source...those programs that are strong and innovative go beyond just funding for older adults...They are sustainable by integrating into their community.”* -Subject Matter Expert





*“When we’re doing all of this post COVID, it’s going to be a different world...it’s going to take a market analysis and individuals looking within their community to find out what those opportunities, partnerships, and competition are.”*

-Subject Matter Expert



## Training Recommendation

- Obtain input from multiple levels of senior nutrition program staff
- Provide training based on role and experience level
- Offer peer-to-peer training opportunities in a virtual format
- Provide more training to address basic nutrition education
- Provide pre-recorded, modular trainings and video formats
- Provide training based on geographic needs
- Offer emergency preparedness training
- Provide training on needs assessments and market analyses



Over **40%** of the survey respondents indicated that staff need a moderate amount of training in:

- Understanding local and national food trends
- Food quality
- Malnutrition



*“I do think that the peer-to-peer [approach] is a great way to go...Even if it was a smaller group where you can Zoom conference each other. It’s that connection [that] makes a big difference.”* -Subject Matter Expert



**35%** of programs that operate and serve in rural areas indicate feeling “Not Prepared” to provide medically tailored meals, compared to 27% among those that serve urban areas.



Directors indicated that **1 out of 5** staff need a large amount of training in working with diverse staff and clients.



Tribal communities have developed inventive partnerships. They are very prepared to provide socialization services, deliver wellness and evidence-based self-management programming, and culturally and ethnically appropriate meals, as well as contemporary menu offerings, to their clients.

For more information on the these findings, please visit:  
<https://nutritionandaging.org/tatnsurvey>