Nutrition and Aging
Resource Center

Senior Nutrition Program
Promising Spending Ideas

The aging network is constantly adapting and innovating. Based on experiences from the field, this document offers a range of ideas to help programs brainstorm new or expanded ways to meet older adults' nutrition, socialization, and wellness needs with Older Americans Act (OAA) funds and other funding sources. Resources are from ACL's Nutrition and Aging Resource Center except where specified.

Remember: All spending must be related to providing nutrition services (meals, nutrition education, nutrition counseling, other nutrition services) that meet the intents of Title III-C.

More information:

- [Finances Webpage](#)
- [The Amazing Adventures of Captain Funds Finder](#)

Food & Meals

- Increase the number of meals served or locations where they are served
  - Add breakfast, dinner, or weekend meals
  - Send home an extra meal with congregate clients
  - Adding an oral nutrition supplement to persons at nutritional risk
- Extend hours of operation:
  - Multiple seatings to meet capacity limits
  - Update menus to maintain food quality (cold items including sandwiches and salads), heat hot items close to service
- Increase the quality and variety of foods, which may include:
  - Choice in entrees which participants pre-order
  - Add local specialty or seasonal items
  - Connect with farmers to supply local produce

- o Medically tailored meals
- o Vegetarian and vegan
- o Culturally tailored (e.g., Kosher, Halal)
- Purchase in bulk:
  - o Shelf stable meals (food pantries, schools, or recreation departments may provide added storage space)
  - o Frozen meals
  - o Prepackaged snacks
  - o Bottled water
  - o Nutritional drinks
  - o Individually packaged condiments, utensils, and napkin packages
- Partner with food trucks to deliver to participants' homes or set up in communities
- Launch a food truck (be sure to factor in maintenance and operational costs)
- Hand out goody bags or letters from school children during events or meal deliveries
- Work with a chef to create new and nutritious meals or invite someone to teach seniors how to prepare quick, easy, healthy meals on a budget
- Develop a cookbook featuring quick, easy, and nutritious recipes to mail to participants and hand out at events and centers
  - o Include culturally tailored recipes
  - o Create a food demo live or online
  - o Set up a "cooking buddy" program

Remember: Groceries are foods used to prepare meals, they may not be counted as meals for reporting purposes. If groceries are provided, exercise caution. Remember that the Senior Nutrition Program is a meal program. Other federal programs provide older adults with ways to purchase groceries. We do not duplicate those services.

Related Resources

- Using Groceries Tip Sheet
- Short-term food storage and long-term food storage– University of Georgia
- Community Food Partners – Healthy Food Playbook
- Food Truck 101 for Senior Nutrition Programs - Meal Program Innovation

Partnerships & Vendors

- Restaurants and other food establishments
- Restaurant voucher programs

- o Pop-up cafes (temporary restaurants hosted at various locations for a limited time)
  - o Deliver meals or make "to-go" bags
  - o Include culturally diverse restaurants
  - o Part of senior center without walls (programs and services that take place outside of the center)
- Hospitals, nursing homes, or [Food is Medicine Coalition](#) for medically tailored meals and nutrition counseling
- Community organizations (e.g., faith-based, LGBTQ+, or cultural groups) to lease space, cohost events, or conduct programming
  - o Identify new meal sites, caterers/restaurants, meal volunteers, culturally appropriate communications
  - o Enhance equity and diversity, meet OAA's intent to serve those in the greatest economic and social need
- Information technology (IT) Consultants
  - o Help select hardware and software
  - o Bridge communications between IT providers and your organization
  - o Set up hardware for participants to allow for ease of use
- Schools to create intergenerational activities that include meals, cooking, farmers markets, or nutrition education
- Community kitchens or housing authorities to share kitchen space for meal preparation
- Meal delivery services (e.g., Uber, DoorDash) and shipping companies (e.g., FedEx, UPS) to deliver meals[1]
- Parks and recreation centers, churches, local/county/state park facilities to lease space for events
- Dietitians, University Cooperative Extension Staff, or dietetic interns
  - o Nutrition education, cooking demos, nutrition counseling
  - o Expanded menus, menu approval, work with restaurants
  - o Food safety, sanitation monitoring
  - o Create garden
- Wellness and fitness programs to expand classes or formats
- College, university, or academic center
  - o Identify whether new programs are meeting goals
  - o Recommendations on areas to improve quality, equity, meet OAA intents

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[1] Reference to any specific products, process, service, manufacturer, or company does not constitute its endorsement or recommendation by the U.S. government or the Nutrition and Aging Resource Center.

Related Resources

- [Creativity and Innovations Webpage](#)
- [Find A Nutrition Expert](#) – Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- [Contracting Toolkit](#) – Aging and Disability Business Institute
- [Creating and Maintaining Coalitions and Partnerships](#) – Community Tool Box
- [Navigating Network Partnerships](#) – National Council on Aging "Office Hour"
- [Tele or Virtual Nutrition Education for Older Adults](#)
- [Business Acumen Example: Jesse Hill Market Initiative](#)
- [Social Enterprising Aging Network Example](#) - REAL Grille
- [Guide to Working with Restaurants and Grocery Stores for Meals](#)
- [Contracting Tips for Purchasing Meals](#)

Technology

- Purchase devices and accessories to enhance human connection and allow seniors to engage with services (factor in training/maintenance costs)
  - Desktop computers, laptops, and tablets (software, video, and internet access pre-loaded for ease of use)
  - Printers, copiers, and scanners
  - Digital cameras and cell phones (work use only)
  - Chargers, headsets, mice, and keyboards
  - Barcode scanners and other touchless tech
  - [Adaptive and assistive technology](#)
- Buy accounts/subscriptions/programs:
  - Virtual meeting platform for online events
  - Computer programs, including anti-virus software
  - Online design, email marketing, and survey tools
- Enhance the website to accept online donations, offer meal reservations, host an online collaboration tool with other agencies and projects, etc.

Related Resources

- [Tools for Reaching a Remote Audience](#) – National Council on Aging
- [Assistive Technology](#) – Eldercare Locator
- [Help Older Adults Get or Upgrade Computers, Internet](#) –AARP (resources below story)

Marketing & Communications

- Work with a videographer and photographer to create a unique library of images/videos
- Purchase stock images or footage that can be used in promotions
- Buy radio, local newspaper, billboard, social media, and magazine ads
- Donations awareness campaign
- Develop inserts for "to-go" bags (e.g., contact information, recipes, inspirational notes)
- Create educational materials and signage (e.g., tips, fact sheets, recipes)
- Develop or enhance a weekly/monthly nutrition newsletter to mail to participants' homes
- Produce program signage for facilities and community locations
- Translate materials and market in multiple languages

Related Resources

- [Marketing Webpage](#)

Staffing and Training

- Retain IT staff/consultants to develop an app or provide technical training
- Add Registered Dietitians or increase Registered Dietitians' hours
- Pay interns (e.g., college/recent graduates) for communications or admin support
- Hire outreach staff to conduct phone calls, social connections, and in-person home visits
- Add a volunteer coordinator to centralize volunteer recruitment, training, and retention
- Find a mental health or fitness expert to offer training and supply subject expertise
- Analyze program data and identify areas for improvement using a paid evaluator
- Hire someone to survey participants on meals, times, activities, education, etc.
- Attend professional development events (e.g., mental health first aid)
- Bring in a marketing and communications coordinator

Related Resources

- [Staffing and Training Webpage](#)
- [Choosing Evaluators](#) – Community Tool Box

- [Developing Training Programs for Staff](#) – Community Tool Box
- [Volunteer Webpage](#)

Supplies & Materials

- Indoor/outdoor tables and chairs
- Tablecloths (disposable and cloth)
- Pop-up tents in a variety of sizes or table umbrellas
- Disposable and non-disposable meal supplies in bulk, including:
  - Serving platters, plates, bowls, cups, utensils
  - "To-go" cartons/containers
  - Paper products such as bags, paper towels, and napkins
- First-aid kits and emergency preparedness supplies
- Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors
- Cleaning and sanitizing supplies (e.g., gloves, masks, safety barriers)
- Care packages with inserts, healthy snacks, and recipes
- Birthday/greeting cards to mail to participants
- Office supplies such as pens, paper, clipboards, computer paper, and toner ink

Related Resources

- [Emergency and Disasters Webpage](#)
- [Vendor Locator](#) – American Rental Association
- [Emergency Supplies Checklist](#) – Webstaurant

Rural Communities

- Establish a community food garden (factor in costs for care and maintenance)
- Set up a greenhouse or partner with a local organization to operate one
- Partner with a farmer/farm stand for ingredients or have participants pick up produce
- Partner with local organizations (e.g., Cooperative Extension, National 4-H Youth Development Program) to build capacity
- In areas of food shortage, buy livestock (e.g., cows, chickens); factor in costs to feed, care, and house animals[2]
- Increase the number of meal deliveries (including shelf-stable and frozen meals) and meal delivery time slots to fit agricultural work schedules

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[2] This option should be used on rare occasions. The Senior Nutrition Program is not intended to establish or run small farms. All program activities must meet the requirements and intents of Title III-C of the Older Americans Act.

- Partner with a regional organization, chef, or restaurant to deliver meals

Related Resources

- [Markets & Gardens Webpage](#)
- [How to Create a Community Garden](#) – American Community Gardening Association
- [Addressing Nutrition and Social Connection Needs of Rural Adults during COVID-19](#)

Events & Activities

- Create an event for nutrition participants:
  - Festivals or outdoor events focused on nutrition, socialization, or exercise
  - Clubs centered on participants' interests (e.g., books, chess, bingo, tea, knitting)
  - Weekly or monthly outdoor activity (e.g., group trail walks, yoga, tai chi)
  - Host "dinner and a movie"
- Invite a guest speaker to talk about a nutrition or health-related topic
- Museum tour (virtual or in-person) to deliver nutrition and health education

Related Resources

- [Social Isolation Basics & Materials Webpage](#)
- [General Resources and Strategies Webpage](#)
- [Senior Nutrition Program Activity Guides](#)
- [Celebrate the Senior Nutrition Program Webpage](#)
- [Safety Guidance on Events & Gatherings](#) – CDC

Facilities & Equipment

Always follow all policies and procedures regarding purchasing, and when necessary, request approval before purchasing.

- Lease additional space, including additional parking space for staff or participants
- Remodel or modify facilities to comply with state and local requirements and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Refresh facilities with new paint, lightning, or decorations
- Upgrade or update heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems
- Install air purifier systems

- Purchase equipment, such as:
  - Back-up generator for kitchen equipment
  - Weather-related items for the nutrition site (e.g., snow shovels, fans, air conditioners)
  - Additional refrigerators and freezers, and replace other outdated equipment
  - Storage shelves or units, including renting storage space

Related Resources

- [Policies and Procedures Webpage](#)
- [Emergencies and Disasters Webpage](#)
- [Information and Technical Assistance on the ADA](#) – ADA.gov
- [Ventilation in Buildings to Reduce the Spread of Disease](#) – CDC

Transportation

- Purchase vehicles (e.g., van, delivery truck) (factor in gas, insurance, and maintenance)
- Purchase weather-related items (e.g., snow tires, ice scrapers, window washer fluid)
- Partner with a local provider to offer rides to community events, activities, and centers
- Take advantage of existing transportation like jurisdictional vehicles or school buses
- Purchase pre-filled ride cards to distribute to seniors who use public transportation

Related Resources

- [Approaches for Promoting Lifelong Community Mobility](#) – University of Michigan
- [ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles](#) – U.S. Access Board

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