

# What's on the Menu?

Iowa's Restaurant Partnership Program



Nutrition and Aging  
Resource Center

## Social Determinants of Health:

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environment where people are born, live, work, play, worship and age. They affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality of life outcomes and risks.

The restaurant partnership program in Iowa focuses on the following SDOH objectives:

1. Decreasing household food insecurity and hunger
2. Increasing health literacy of the population

## Overview of the program:

The Iowa Café program was created to **modernize** Iowa's congregate meal program structure, delivery methods and outreach. The goal was to increase the number of consumers and meals served. The Iowa Department on Aging (IDA) and partners worked together to establish a restaurant partnership program. This assisted with reaching two generations of older adults. IDA streamlined the intake process through use of technology. Lastly older adults who may be food insecure, socially isolated, and rural were identified and provided nutrition education. With targeting efforts, the Iowa Café program helps those most vulnerable to food insecurity.

## Partners:

The IDA works in partnership with multiple organizations with the use of formal contracts:

- Elderbridge Area Agency on Aging
- Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)
- Northeast Iowa Area Agency on Aging
- Local restaurants to develop Iowa Café
- Iowa State University (ISU)

IDA utilized Google searches, local contacts, the Iowa Restaurant Association, local chambers of commerce, and the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) to identify local restaurant contacts to partner with. Less formal agreements were developed between Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), ISU, and IDPH for nutrition education. Providing this nutrition education works towards the goal to increase the health literacy of older adults and their caregivers.

## Funding and Sustainability:

The project is currently sustained by an Administration for Community Living (ACL) discretionary grant. Older Americans Act congregate nutrition funding will be utilized to sustain the project. A restaurant partnership program decreases the need for volunteers and meal site coordinator time.

Restaurants utilize staff for administration of congregate nutrition programs in-kind to allow for greater sustainability and cost savings. Participants are provided with an opportunity to contribute towards the cost of the meal. Some restaurant sites provide a meal discount to the AAAs in order to serve a greater number of older adults.

The Iowa Café program provides revenue to local businesses which also works towards supporting local economies. Nutrition education is provided by ISU's Words on Wellness program which was developed by Registered Dietitians. This is provided to the project free-of charge. Fresh Conversations, a nutrition education evidence-based program, is provided by IDPH through SNAP-Ed funds.

### Social Determinants of Health



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# Timeline

## 2020

- May 2020
  - **Data Gathering:** Iowa congregate nutrition participation trends.
  - **Grant Proposal:** Wrote grant proposal for 2020 ACL Innovations in Nutrition Program and Services (INNU) demonstration grant along with letters of commitment from project partners.
- September 2020
  - **Awarded Grant:** Received ACL INNU grant.
- Fall & Winter 2020
  - **Concept Development:** Developed the Iowa Café concept and replication materials.
  - **Establishment Interest:** Reached out to partners to gain foodservice establishment interest.
  - **Technology:** Purchased tablet technology and software system.
  - **Online Registration:** Launched online registration system for participants.

## 2021

- Spring 2021
  - **Iowa Café Establishments:** Began identifying and recruiting Iowa Café foodservice establishment partners and finalizing contracts.
  - **Menu:** Worked with Registered Dietitian to identify Iowa Café menu choices with restaurants.
- Summer, Fall, & Winter 2021
  - **Iowa Café Openings:** Opened 13 Iowa Café sites.
  - **Marketing:** Deployed Informal marketing strategies utilizing local paper interviews, table tents, window decals, flyers, and business cards.
  - **Nutrition Education:** Provided Nutrition Education to participants in-person, virtually, via e-newsletter, and by mail.

## 2022

- Spring 2022
  - **Iowa Café Expansion:** Total of 15 Iowa Café sites opened with ACL grant project.
  - **Minority Population:** Gathered minority population data to identify sites that reach ethnically diverse populations.
- Summer & Fall 2022
  - **Ethnically Diverse Establishments:** Identify sites for ethnically diverse populations.
- Winter 2022
  - **Update Replication Guide:** Provide updates to grant replication guides based on lessons learned.

## 2023

- Spring & Summer 2022
  - **Data Analysis:** Analyze pre- and post- intervention data.
- Summer & Fall 2022
  - **Conferences:** Present findings to state and national conferences.

## Advice for Replication:

*“Don’t be afraid to think outside of the box and try something new. Chances are, your current business model is already dated. We need to meet the needs of older adults in 2022, but we also need to continue to look ahead to meet the needs of older adults five years, ten years, and 20 years from now. Think about if and how you are prepared to do that. Also, partnerships are extremely important. We rely on all of our partners for success (AAAs, restaurants, chambers of commerce, grocery stores, local newspapers, etc.).”*

Alexandra Bauman, RD LDN | Division Director, Nutrition & Wellness | Iowa Department on Aging

*“Be prepared to hear “no.” We heard a lot of restaurants say “no,” but we kept asking. Once our first site was on board, the concept really took off.”*

Danielle Crail, RD LDN | Healthy Aging Director | Elderbridge Area Agency on Aging

## Tools and Resources:

1. Administration for Community Living. Aging, Independence, and Disability (AGID) Program Data Portal. <https://agid.acl.gov/>
2. Iowa Department of Public Health. *Fresh Conversations*. <https://idph.iowa.gov/inn/fresh-conversations>
3. Iowa Department on Aging. (2018, December) *Condition of Iowa’s Congregate Meal Program*. Retrieved from [https://www.iowaaging.gov/sites/default/files/library-documents/Congregate\\_Meal\\_Program\\_Dec\\_2018.pdf](https://www.iowaaging.gov/sites/default/files/library-documents/Congregate_Meal_Program_Dec_2018.pdf).
4. Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved July 27, 2022, from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>