Congregate Meal Programs
a value proposition

Congregate meal programs

Serve adults 60+ (and in some cases, caregivers, spouses, and/or younger people with disabilities)
Provide meals in senior centers, schools, churches, farmers markets, and other community settings
Offer healthy meals, social engagement, access to community resources, volunteer roles

Population of Americans 60+
2016: 69 Million
Projected 2020: 77 Million
Projected 2040: 102 Million

Demand on the health care system will grow with the population
Nutrition/malnutrition have a tremendous impact on overall health and health care utilization

How the health care system benefits

Participants vs non-participants
Fewer ER visits leading to admissions 5.4% vs 10.4%
Fewer hospital admissions 8.5% vs 13.7%

How meal program participants benefit

Higher quality diet
A healthy diet is essential to overall wellness
1 out of 2 older adults is at risk or is malnourished
80% of participants say a congregate meal program improved their health

Greater food security
Access to food is a social determinant of health
4.9 million seniors do not have reliable access to enough affordable, nutritious food
54% of participants say a congregate meal supplies 50% or more of total food for the day

Increased socialization
Staying connected is an important part of healthy aging
Social isolation is linked to higher blood pressure, earlier onset of dementia, and other serious illnesses
54% of participants say their social opportunities have increased because of a meal program

Sources: ACL’s 2018 Evaluation of the Older Americans Act Nutrition Services Program Outcomes Report – Part II; U.S. Census Bureau Population Data; The National Foundation to End Senior Hunger and Feeding America’s “The State of Senior Hunger in America 2016.”

acl.gov