**Overview**

The Agency on Aging Northeastern Illinois is seeking applications from organizations interested in providing Older Americans Act Title III-C1 Congregate Meal services. Nutrition services are provided to assist older adults to live independently by promoting better health through improved nutrition and reduced isolation through a program coordinated with other supportive services. As outlined in the Older Americans Act, the purposes of this program are:

* To reduce hunger and food insecurity;
* To promote socialization of older individuals; and
* To promote the health and well-being of older individuals by assisting such individuals to gain access to nutrition and other disease prevention and health promotion services to delay the onset of adverse health conditions resulting from poor nutritional health or sedentary behavior.

Meals are to be provided throughout the county service area to provide maximum coverage to older individuals in greatest economic and social need, with particular attention to low-income older individuals, including low-income minority older individuals, older individuals with limited English proficiency, and older individuals at risk of institutionalization, and older individuals residing in rural areas. Nutrition providers are expected to have an active role in the network of organizations providing services to older adults and work collaboratively with other service providers.

**Service Design**

Congregate meal sites should be located in easily accessible areas with a high concentration of older adults in greatest social or economic need. Examples of meal sites include senior centers, township buildings, park district buildings, senior housing developments, places of worship, banquet halls, and other civic organization buildings. All nutrition sites must be open to all eligible clients regardless of an individual’s membership or affiliation with the host site organization. Congregate meal sites in restaurants are allowable with approved menus and approval of the Agency on Aging.

All nutrition sites must pass a local health department inspection at least annually. A site manager with valid Certified Food Protection Manager certification must be present when the site is operating. All other staff and volunteers handling food must be trained in safe food handling practices.

Meal quality, food presentation, customer choice and site atmosphere have been found to be important to the success of congregate meal programs. Congregate meal sites should be a place of warm and authentic social interaction around a quality meal. The dining space should have an inviting and attractive atmosphere and be conducive to socialization and a pleasant meal experience. Although disposable paper and plastic serviceware is allowable, more appealing non-disposable serviceware is preferred. Procedures to welcome and assist newcomers with making friends and socializing should be in place.

Meals provided must meet nutritional analysis requirements, or menu plan requirements, as detailed in the Nutrition Standards. Menus must be planned in advance of service and approved by a Registered Dietitian. Menus should be appetizing offering a variety of flavors, colors, and textures. A hot meal should be served; however, cold meals may be provided occasionally as appropriate.

III-C1 service providers will be required to perform the following activities:

1. Congregate meal sites should provide at least one meal a day, five or more days a week. However, the Agency on Aging may grant exceptions if the nutrition provider submits documentation of the need for an exception and serves meals at least 5 days per week throughout the service area.
2. Cost per unit will be reasonable and justifiable based on the report “Older Americans Act Nutrition Program Evaluation: Meal Cost Analysis” Mathematica Policy Research, September 25, 2015. A reasonable cost increase may be used to extrapolate cost from the date of the study forward. Grant applicants should provide written explanation of how projected cost per unit agrees with this information. See Appendix A.
3. Nutrition providers are responsible for collecting all necessary client registration information, ensuring this information is kept confidential, and timely and complete data entry into AgingIS. The purpose of this information is to meet all state and federal reporting requirements.
4. Clients are to be given the opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the cost of the meal. A confidential system of collecting voluntary donations from clients is to be established and implemented. Clients may not be denied a meal because they cannot or will not contribute the to the cost of the meal.
5. Nutrition education is to be presented at least two times per year and it is strongly recommended that nutrition education be provided quarterly and more frequently if possible. The purpose of nutrition education is to inform individuals about available facts and information that will promote improved food selection, eating habits, nutrition and health-related practices. Material presented should be from credible sources with valid credentials in nutrition science. Agency on Aging staff are available to assist nutrition providers with suggestions of topics and sources of information.
6. The nutrition provider is to collect input and feedback from program participants. The Area Agency on Aging may mandate a specific survey instrument or specific survey questions be used and results reported to the Area Agency.
7. Be responsible for reporting requirements for these services. Visit the Agency on Aging website (www.ageguide.org) for additional information on reporting requirements.

Applicant Organization: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person Name, Phone & Email: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In a clear and concise narrative, respond to each of the following items. Please review Appendix B, the program rubric, for guidance and scoring information.

1. **Program Planning**
   1. Describe how your organization assessed the service area and the target population to be served. Include your plan to target services to those in greatest economic and social need as outlined in the Older Americans Act (OAA) including: Persons 75+, older adults living alone, older adults identified as minority, at or below poverty level, limited English speaking and other hard-to-reach older adults. See Appendix C.
   2. Describe the proposed nutrition sites and how they relate to providing comprehensive coverage of the service area and target population. Note if your organization or another organization is currently operating the site. For sites your organization is planning to operate, please state when operation is expected to start and describe the current status of your organizations work to open the site.

Include information on the number of days a week the sites will serve meals and if any sites will also be a C2 home delivered meal site or provide other community dining. Describe any recreational and/or enrichment activities that will be provided by your organization or another organization to participants at the site.

* 1. Describe previous senior nutrition program experience, other experience serving older persons, or any other relevant history and experience of your organization.

1. **Program Design and Delivery**

**Congregate Meal Presentation** **– Meal quality, food presentation, customer choice and site atmosphere have been found to be important to the success of congregate meal programs.**

* 1. Describe the meal choices that will be offered and state how meals will be prepared and/or identify the source of meals (i.e. caterer). If menus have been developed, attach a copy of the most recent menu and signed approval sheet from a Registered Dietitian. If menus have not yet been developed, describe your organization’s proposed process for developing approved menus including approval by a Registered Dietitian.
  2. Each project is to provide special menus, where feasible and appropriate, to meet the particular dietary needs that arise from health requirements, religious requirements, or ethnic backgrounds of eligible individuals. Please indicate if your organization offers, or plans to offer, special menus and how the special menus will meet the needs of clients in the service area.
  3. Full cost per unit must be reasonable and justifiable based on the report “Older Americans Act Nutrition Program Evaluation: Meal Cost Analysis” Mathematica Policy Research, September 25, 2015. A reasonable cost increase may be used to extrapolate cost from the date of the study forward. Provide a written explanation of how projected cost per unit agrees with this information. See Appendix A.
  4. Describe the atmosphere in which participants will be dining. Describe how meals will be presented, plated and served to participants.
  5. Describe the process for obtaining feedback on meal quality from participants and incorporating feedback into future menu planning.
  6. Describe the planned nutrition education program, frequency of delivery, and how outcomes will be measured.

1. **Program Operations**
   1. Describe the congregate meal program organization and the duties/responsibilities of each paid employee. Describe the background check, training and evaluation process for congregate meal program paid employees. Specifically describe how congregate meal employees receive food sanitation training either food hander training or Certified Food Protection Manager Certification.
   2. Site Manager -- Leadership, particularly by the site manager is central to the success of a congregate meal site. Describe the specific hiring and training practices to ensure the site-manager will provide leadership to the congregate program and create an inclusive and comfortable environment for all dining participants.
   3. Volunteers -- Describe the recruitment, background check and entire training process for congregate meal program volunteers. Specifically describe how food handler training will be provided to volunteers.
   4. Access – Each site must be conveniently accessible to the older population and must meet Section 504 handicapped accessibility requirements.
      1. Will all congregate dining sites meet 504 handicapped accessibility requirements? Describe how any access limitations of the sites will be addressed to enable handicapped older persons to participate.
      2. Describe how participants will get from their homes to each of the proposed sites. Describe public transportation routes or any agreements with transportation providers to facilitate access to congregate meal sites.
   5. Describe the process for evaluating congregate meal participant satisfaction and outcomes. For example, surveys may be conducted by phone, mail or internet. Provide samples of surveys and/or questions.
   6. Describe the current, or planned flow, of data collection from client intake through Area Agency on Aging report submission. Include a discussion of procedures for ensuring timely and accurate input into AgingIS.
2. **Outreach, Public Information and Coordination**
   1. Describe the public awareness efforts your organization will undertake to assure that the maximum number of eligible older persons know about services and will have an opportunity to participate.
   2. Describe the process for collecting input on the overall congregate meal program from congregate meal participants and from other individuals/organizations in the community with expertise in the needs of older adults in the service area.
   3. Describe how your organization will coordinate with other organizations in the community and provide relevant letters of support from community organizations.