Elder Nutrition Program Revitalization
Mini-Grant Awardees

As part of a statewide revitalization effort directed toward the congregate nutrition program, the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR) released a Request for Applications to aging units/ADRCs to fund pilot projects throughout the state. The one-time funding available was divided into two separate funding opportunities. Aging units/ADRCs could submit an application for both mini-grants.

- **Revitalization Innovation Mini-Grants:** A maximum of $20,000 in one-time funding was awarded to each successful applicant who clearly demonstrated new and innovative approaches to revitalizing the congregate nutrition program. Nineteen aging units/ADRCs submitted innovation applications. Eight applications were funded.

- **Revitalization Expansion Mini-Grants:** A maximum of $10,000 in one-time funding was awarded to each successful applicant for start-up costs to replicate one of four 2014 pilot project models in their service area. Twelve aging units/ADRCs submitted expansion applications. Four applications were funded.

**Innovation Awardees**

- **ADRC of Brown County** felt that their dining centers needed a facelift, need to appear and function like a “café” and need to provide opportunities for adults with disabilities to connect while reducing stigma. *Grounded* will be a one of a kind coffee house that is a collaborative venture between non-profit organizations dedicated to providing work experience for individuals with disabilities in the community. *Grounded* will be located within the ADRC. *Grounded* will fill the void of cafes in the market area, standing out from its privately operated peers because it offers a place to socialize, learn, and receive respectful assistance if needed in a coffee house environment. The coffee will be gourmet, the environment is respectful and welcoming, and it will be run through a collaborative partnership of community agencies that share a common vision. *Grounded* will draw in new customers who will be able to purchase affordable coffee and simple bakery and healthy supplemental meal options that are not currently available while ensuring the sustainability of current donation-based congregate dining. *Grounded* is a collaborative partnership of several supportive employment agencies, the public schools, and the ADRC. Older adults will have choices in menu options and the environment will encourage individuals to linger in the café as they attend the many educational programs offered.

- To improve the number of minority populations served in the nutrition program, the **Area Agency of Dane County** will partner with a newly renovated neighborhood center and library to create a dining center in an underserved area
by using a shared kitchen. Unique to this partnership will be intergenerational opportunities for older adults and youth, including reading time with children in the library and other activities. Access to other aging services, such as case management and evidence-based wellness programs, will also be incorporated.

- The **ADRC of Dunn County**’s project will focus on the theme of “Aging Well” by offering wellness days, scheduled consistently at all dining centers or communities throughout the county. It has been suggested by several participants at one dining center that they would like to have massage services to reduce skin hunger before or after meals. Skin hunger is a relatively new term that has been applied to the emotional response created by the loss of touch in our society. Benefits of touch include feeling connected to others, reduction in anxiety, decreased blood pressure, and improved outlook on life. Other participants requested one-on-one nutrition counseling services and having the ability to participate in meals without reservations. The aging unit’s vision for wellness days, in order to meet these concerns, is to offer massage, have a private dietitian service consult, and offer a self-serve salad bar as a healthier option or in addition to a hot entree. The three components together will address total body wellness and aging well. This project will be implemented in all existing dining centers and in at least one of the communities that hosts a restaurant dining center.

- Poverty rates in Forest County are higher than the state average so fresh produce is often not affordable for older adults. As a result, the **Forest County Commission on Aging** proposed adding a tunnel greenhouse that would allow the nutrition program to extend the growing season and utilize an existing community garden to provide local produce at one dining center. The raised garden will be cultivated and prepared by a hired Master Gardener and older adult participants who will be offered the chance to work in the garden too. Supplemental produce will be purchased from local farm stands. Funds will be used for wages for the master gardener and supplies needed. Produce will be grown for dining centers, and seedlings will also be started and sold at an annual spring vegetable plant sale, generating revenue for the continuation of the project. Some of the proceeds will also go toward printing costs of a dining center cookbook.

- **La Crosse County Aging Unit** proposed to open additional dining centers for an evening meal in a more welcoming environment that caters to older adults who work during the day. Programming and entertainment will be targeted to older adults who are entering retirement, with topics such as caregiving, traveling, budgeting, driving, cooking for two, exercise, planning for future medical expenses, benefits of volunteering and other topics.

- **Vernon County Unit on Aging** proposed a partnership with a local hospital system as a franchise partnership with the nutrition program. By partnering with the hospital system, the nutrition program could increase their ability to provide nutritious meals to people in underserved areas and provide one of the components to integrated care: nutrition. The hospital system will incorporate the
nutrition program into their wellness and care transitions programming. Care
providers will be educated to make referrals to the dining center and the care
transition team will add nutrition components to their discharge plans. Patients
will learn to include attendance at the dining center as preparation for needed
treatments and therapies as well as to improve their recovery following treatment.
A series of education and entertainment activities will be scheduled at the dining
center utilizing community partners. Intergenerational opportunities to eat
together will be made available to allow children and grandchildren to eat with
other participants. Additional dining center ambassadors will be recruited to
assist with sharing accurate information, marketing the program, and helping with
activities. The hospital system will assign a lead staff member and hire center
managers. The hospital system to increase resources for the project and provide an incentive to expand participation.

- **Washburn County Unit on Aging** has continually heard from older adults that
they would like more choice and flexibility available to them in the nutrition
program, and they would like to see the need for advance reservations eliminated.
The aging unit decided to propose a project called “Rise ‘n Dine” that will be
similar to the My Meal, My Way model created by Dane County but will offer
breakfast options at a local grocery store and deli. The project will take the
project a step further by offering nutrition education through grocery store tours
twice per month with a registered dietitian and monthly cooking demonstrations
with a professional chef. Participants can have a meal anytime between 7 a.m.
and 11:30 a.m. twice per week without a reservation. Grocery store tours and
cooking demos will be offered at times that correlate with these hours. A Rise n’
Dine coordinator will help participants register and issue them a Rise n’ Dine
membership card. The Registered Dietitian’s grocery store tour and educational
session called “EconoSmart: Healthy Grocery Shopping for Active Older Adults”
will include topics such as Healthy Shopping on a Budget, Cooking for a Few,
Curbing Carbs: Shopping with Diabetes, Hungry for Heart-Healthy Food, What’s
on the Label?, Fiber Finds, and more. The Professional Chef will provide a
public, monthly cooking demonstration called “What’s for Dinner: Healthy
Cooking for Active Older Adults” and each month will focus on a healthy, easy
recipe. While the ultimate goal is to raise awareness of the senior dining
programs and increase dining center participation, older adults will also receive
useful education that will hopefully increase their confidence in incorporating
healthy foods into their daily nutrition. Participants of the tours and cooking
demos will be incentivized to participate through coupons for a free meal at any
of the dining centers in the county.

- **Waushara County Department of Aging Services** proposed to make one
significant change to their dining center operations, called “More choice, more
meals…everyday!” This project will be a study to determine if simply providing
dining center participants with a variety of menu choices every day will make a
difference in participation at the dining centers. The nutrition manager will
determine and test menu enhancements including alternate meat/side item choice,
entrée/daily special, “on the lighter side” vs. traditional menu choice, or special
diet, such as a diabetic option, throughout the pilot project. The NIATx quality
improvement process will be used to make adjustments and determine
impact/success to each menu enhancement before moving on to the next.

**Expansion Awardees**

- **AAA of Dane County** received funding to further expand their *My Meal, My Way
  Model* in which breakfast meals or both breakfast and lunch meals are offered in a
  local café/restaurant setting. The model offers significant choice in menu items,
  flexibility in serving time with no reservations required, a simplified registration
  process, ample transportation options for participants, and an intergenerational
  atmosphere. This model will be available at least one day per week or as
  frequently as funding allows.

- **Barron County Office on Aging, ADRC of Columbia County, and the Forest
  County Commission on Aging** received funding to implement a salad bar at one
  or more dining centers using a garden cultivated by older adult participants and/or
  staff and using local produce. The salad bar may be offered as an addition to the
  meal, as an entrée, or both.

If you have any questions about the statewide nutrition program revitalization effort,
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