Texas Congregate Meal Initiative: Developing Customer Focused Sustainable Congregate Models for Implementation

- **GINA CARTER** - Texas HHSC Access & Eligibility Services – Community Access
- **NANDITA CHAUDHURI** - Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A&M University
- **LINDA NETTERTVILLE** - Independent Consultant
Background:
Texas Congregate Meals Initiative (TCMI)
TCMI is an INNU Grant Program

ACL’s Purpose: To fund innovative and promising practices that enhance the quality, effectiveness, and other proven outcomes of nutrition programs and services within the aging services network.

Since FY2017: $6.8M has been awarded by ACL to 29 organizations with the expectation that these efforts will eventually be replicable throughout the aging and nutrition network.
Why Modernize & Rethink Congregate Meal Programs in Texas?

**Texas Congregate Meal Trend**

- Meals Served:
  - 2005: 578,0278, 542,8946, 516,1403, 497,8205, 445,9524, 434,1900
  - Population over 60:
    - 2005: 30,17098, 35,28595, 39,76025, 42,55826, 44,52722, 49,80530

**US Congregate Meal Trend**

- Meals Served:
  - 2005: 979,67432, 914,97645, 858,63719, 776,25069, 737,01690
  - Population over 60:
    - 2005: 47,759967, 54,087228, 59,275916, 64,583201, 71,070364

**NOTE**

- Texas population aged 60+ increased 2 MILLION
- Texas served 24.9% less meals
Key Goal, Objectives & Desired TCMI Outcomes

**Key Goal**

Improve the well-being of older Texans by modernizing local congregate nutrition programs

**Key Objectives**

- Conduct a comprehensive gap analysis
- Increase business acumen and program development
- Implement and evaluate a learning collaborative

**Desired Outcomes**

- Increased business acumen and program development skills
- Increase participation in OAA C1 Congregate Nutrition Programs
- Increased satisfaction and participation; Improved well-being and social integration
Pandemic Reopening Challenges

Timing & Pandemic Uncertainties
Operational Considerations
Communication & Outreach
Program Funding & Flexibilities
Moving Congregate Participants from Home-Delivered or Curbside Pickup
Rapid Adaptations & Changes at Sites
Project Phases, Program Barriers, Facilitators
# TCMI Project Phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE 1</th>
<th>PHASE 2 TRAIN &amp; PREPARE</th>
<th>PHASE 3 IMPLEMENT &amp; EVALUATE PILOTS</th>
<th>PHASE 4 SHARE RESULTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RESEARCH &amp; GAP ANALYSIS</strong></td>
<td><strong>16 Meal Provider Proposals $2,500 each</strong></td>
<td><strong>16 Pilots $7,500 each</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 National Conferences</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Surveys of individuals 60+ and senior serving orgs</td>
<td><strong>6-Month Targeted Learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>7-Month Implementation</strong></td>
<td><strong>2 Academic Journal Submissions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 29 Focus Groups at 28 AAAs and Nutrition Providers</td>
<td><strong>Learning Collaborative Workshop &amp; TA</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evaluation to develop Texas specific evidence base</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 State Summit to showcase best practices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Survey of Community Health Providers</td>
<td><strong>16 Pilots $7,500 each</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 State Summit to showcase best practices</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **28 AAAs**
- **254 counties**
- **Nearly 200 Providers**
Stakeholder Input Phase (October 2019 to September 2020)

- **2 SURVEYS: Texas Seniors, Senior Serving Organizations/AAAs**
- **Community Health Provider Survey: Texas Physicians & Nurses**
- **FOCUS GROUPS: 29 Sessions including 28 AAA and their Congregate Nutrition Providers**

- ✓ Key Barriers and Facilitators of Texas Congregate Nutrition Programs
- ✓ Perceptions on Possible Strategies & Solutions
- ✓ Texas Congregate Nutrition Program Innovation Examples
## WHY DECLINE IN PARTICIPATION?
Lack of Awareness, Transportation, Marketing; Changing Senior Demographics & Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior (60+) Survey</th>
<th>Meal Providers Survey</th>
<th>Community Health Provider Survey</th>
<th>Stakeholder Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Aware (46%)</td>
<td>Lack of Awareness</td>
<td>Lack of Awareness (70%)</td>
<td>Lack of Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of CMPs in the area (42%)</td>
<td>Lack of Targeted Marketing</td>
<td>Lack of Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of Transportation (41%)</td>
<td>Lack of Transportation (81%)</td>
<td>Seniors Working Longer, Retiring Later, Caring for Grandkids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Changing Demographics of Seniors</td>
<td>Younger Seniors have Different Preferences for Meals &amp; Activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I would say most of our marketing is ‘word of mouth’”
"A large part of the senior population still does not see themselves as seniors."

**WHY DECLINE IN PARTICIPATION?**
Stigma & Pride, Unappealing & Unwelcome Settings

**Senior (60+) Survey**
- Feel Unwelcome (36%)
- Don't Need Free Meals (61%)
- Stigma about What Others Will Think (33%)
- Location/Setting Characteristics

**Organizational Survey**
- Believe Program Serves Frail Seniors
- Embarrassment in Accepting a Low Cost Meal
- Negative Perceptions of Facilities & Settings

**Community Health Provider Survey**
- Hesitance to Accept Charity (58%)
- Stigma (50%)
- Do Not Feel Frail Enough (32%)
- Social Setting Dislike (20%)
- Location Dislike (24%)

**Stakeholder Focus Groups**
- Stigma about Being a Senior
- Stigma about Accepting Assistance
- Staff & Client Unfriendliness
- Older & Unappealing Facilities
### Why Decline in Participation?

**Meals and Activity Limitations**

**Senior (60+) Survey**
- Quality of Meals (37%)
- Lack of Variety in Meals (32%)
- Scheduling & Timing of Meals (32%)

**Organizational Survey**
- Lack of Variety & Choice in Meals
- Prefer Home Delivered Meals
- Lack of Funds & Staffing for Activities, Need to Find Volunteers

**Community Health Provider Survey**
- Prefer Home Delivered Meals (44.4%)
- Scheduling & Timing of Meals (31.1%)
- Dietary Issues (26%)
- Quality of Meals (19.9%)

**Stakeholder Focus Groups**
- Facility & Operational Limitations for Activities & Types of Meals
- Different Preferences across Urban and Rural Areas
- Younger Seniors have Different Meal & Activity Tastes

“Sites need to be mindful about different sub-groups of seniors with their different preferences in food choices.”
**WHAT WORKS IN INCREASING PARTICIPATION?**

Regional Adaptations & Strategic Marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior (60+) Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mailings about CMPs (52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local TV Coverages (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Based Organizations/Places of Worship Could Help Market CMPs (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Outreach to the Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and Family are Key in Increasing Participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Health Provider Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Outreach (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Programming Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market to Friends and Family (71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market to Medical Community (40%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergenerational Programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the Seniors What They Want/Survey Seniors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider Continuous &amp; Consistent Marketing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We rebranded our center from a ‘senior center’ to an ‘activity center.’”
WHAT WORKS IN INCREASING PARTICIPATION?
Revitalization of Activities & Settings

Senior (60+) Survey
- Friendly and Welcoming Ambience
- Entertaining Activities
- Engaging & Helpful Classes
- Access to Technology
- Use of Local Restaurants for Setting

Organizational Survey
- Nontraditional & Welcoming Setting
- Nice Facilities that Can Offer Activities

Community Health Provider Survey
- Use Places of Worship, Older Adult Housing and Community Centers
- Improve Overall Programming
- Ensure Location has Transportation & Easy Access

Stakeholder Focus Groups
- Friendly Staff & Location
- Volunteer Opportunities so Seniors Feel Valued in Helping Others
- Free Internet
- Social Activities with Talking and Sharing Opportunities

“We saw a large increase in participation when we started offering Pickle Ball.”
“People like restaurant style food and to have choices… they want excitement… they want to be engaged.”

WHAT WORKS IN INCREASING PARTICIPATION?
Updating & Creative Rethinking of Meals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Senior (60+) Survey</th>
<th>Organizational Survey</th>
<th>Community Health Provider Survey</th>
<th>Stakeholder Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Variety and Diverse Menu Choices</td>
<td>Variety &amp; Appeal in Meal Choices</td>
<td>Improved Meal Quality</td>
<td>Thoughtful and Creative Menu Choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Scheduling &amp; Timing of Meals</td>
<td>Easy Reservation &amp; Access</td>
<td>Meal Timing &amp; Flexibility</td>
<td>Varied Meal Timings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimic Restaurant Setting Meals, not Institutional Type Meals</td>
<td>Varied Timing, Schedule Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>Serving Local Specialties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pandemic Motivated CMP Innovation Examples

Facilitating Social Interaction while Maintaining Physical Distance

**FUN SOCIALS**: Reverse parades, Musical events for people in cars; Elvis impersonator calling Bingo numbers online

**HUMAN CONNECTION**: Volunteers phoned seniors once a week for checkups; Socially distant surprise visits through windows using posters and people in costume

**TECH LEARNING**: Volunteers taught seniors technology skills to connect, shop, access healthcare

**TELEHEALTH**: Programs taught seniors to access health services online
Designing an Innovative Congregate Model Through a Learning Collaborative
TCMI Learning Collaborative: The Building Blocks for Innovation

- Selection of 16 Pilot Nutrition Providers
- Virtual 3-Day Workshop October 2020
- Targeted & Tailored Technical Assistance Curriculum
- Providers Develop & Refine Innovative Low-Cost Business Plans
- TCMI Pilot Innovations
TCMI Learning Collaborative Selected Pilot Sites

16 PILOT SITES CHARACTERISTICS:

- Urban, Suburban and Rural
- Non-Profit Organization and City/County Supported
- Single and Multiple Congregate Sites
- Racially Diverse Target Populations

Program Size: Unduplicated Congregate Participants Served (150-11,218 Unduplicated Participants)

Program Size: Number of Meals Served (11,386-565,839 Meals)
PILOT SITES RESPONSIBILITIES:

✓ Participate in the TCMI Learning Collaborative to Learn from Subject Matter Experts and Peers
✓ Learn from Year 1 Needs Assessment Lessons
✓ Learn about Innovative Programming, Community Partnerships, Low-Cost Marketing, Business Acumen Building, Program Success Tracking
✓ Plan & Implement Pilots (2.5 K for Participation in Learning Collaborative, 7.5 K for Pilot Implementation)
✓ Showcase Success with Replicable & Sustainable Models
Targeted Assistance Curriculum

- Identification and Refinement of Pilot Innovations
- Explanation and Development of Logic Models
- Learn from the Experts - Marketing Tips
- Assistance with Pilot Proposal Development
## Four Types of TCMI Innovative Pilots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology Based Programming</td>
<td>Developing Internet Skills, Using Social Media Platforms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Dining Models</td>
<td>Choice of Dining Times, Choice of Meal Options, Creating Restaurant Ambience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebranding and Marketing</td>
<td>Change Program Name &amp; Image, Promotion through Social Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Wellness</td>
<td>Health Kiosk, Telehealth, Master Class Online with Socialization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Collaborative & TA Outcomes

Virtual Workshop Evaluation

- Workbook questions were useful
- My congregate meal knowledge increased
- Information was relevant for future innovation
- Sessions were appropriate for current program
- TCMI Workshop was well-organized
- Overall positive rating of day’s sessions
- Interacted with others via networking opportunity

Overall Rating of Targeted TA

- Technology Programming
- Creative Dining Models
- Marketing / ReBranding
- Health and Wellness Programming

- Disagree
- Neither
- Agree

- Moderately helpful
- Very Helpful
- Extremely Helpful
What do Pilots Look Like?
City of San Antonio: Congregate Innovation

- Rebrand to Healthy Eating Program
- Target both current and new members

Marketing

- Development of nutrition education curriculum
- Identify higher education institutional partners

Nutrition Education

- Recognize and reward participation
- Outreach to prospective members

Incentive Program
Meals on Wheels Victoria
Connection Café Pilot

Goal: Expand program to targeted seniors hungry for social connection with meal as an ancillary benefit.

Connection Focused Programming

- Programming geared towards fostering social connection
- Development of community partnerships for delivery

Dining Model Enhancements

- Component-based grab-n-go meal concept
- Menu development and efficient production schedule

Marketing / Rebranding

- Rebrand: Connection Café
- Targeted outreach to both previous & new clients
- Utilize social media and digital billboards
TCMI Implementation Going Forward
TCMI Project Next Steps

**Assist**
- Assistance to implement 16 Texas Congregate Pilots that add to the congregate nutrition program strategies and help learn from each other

**Identify & assess**
- Select & measure outcomes, successes and innovations best practices from pilots

**Disseminate**
- Share findings at State and National Conferences and other aging network settings

**Develop**
- Assemble Resources with key suggestions, tool-kits, and protocols based on pilots that could be used for future replicability, scalability and sustainability
Evaluation: Using Socialsuite Dashboard

- Impact management software
- Tracks cross-site and site-specific metrics
- Pre-, mid-, and post-implementation data collection
Outcome Measures of Success

Increased Client/Program Outcomes
Participation
Satisfaction
Awareness and Knowledge
  Nutrition
  Health and wellness
  Technology
  Program Offerings
Engagement in the Program
Social Isolation/Connection
Program Visibility & Reach
Social Connection Measure & Scales

- Pre Post Loneliness
  - The De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale & UCLA Loneliness Scales

- Pandemic-Related Questions
  - Social Isolation

- Program-Related Questions
  - Peer & Social Connection
Factors Promoting Sustainability & Scaling

❖ Low Cost Innovations
❖ In-Kind Community Partnership Assistance
❖ Volunteers & Ambassadors from Clients
❖ Repeatable Sponsorships
❖ Equipment & Resources
❖ Overall Institutionalization
TCMI Website
https://ppri.tamu.edu/tcmi/

- Needs Assessment Findings
- Learning Collaborative Workbook Questions
- LC Workshop Materials and Supportive Resources
- Request for Congregate Meal Pilot Proposal
- COVID-19 Resources and Innovations
- Texas Pandemic Innovations
- Learn from the Marketing Panel Resources
THANK YOU!

Contact Information:

Nandita Chaudhuri Ph.D.
Research Scientist, Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A&M University
(979) 845-6759
nchaudhuri@ppri.tamu.edu

https://ppri.tamu.edu/tcmi/