

## Memorandum

**To:** Vermont Joint Fiscal Committee  
**From:** Monica Hutt, DAIL Commissioner  
**Re:** CRF Request for Funding to Senior Centers and Meals Sites for Senior Meals  
**Date:** August 11, 2020

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**Total Amount Requested: \$600,000.**

The Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) is seeking funding for Senior Centers and Meals Sites responsible for producing meals for Vermont Seniors through Meals on Wheels and for “to-go” meals which took the place of congregate meals through the pandemic. Senior Centers and Meal Sites indicate the costs of meal preparation, throughout the pandemic to-date, significantly exceed the reimbursement they receive through the Area Agencies on Aging. In order to assess the need, we asked those sites to answer three questions for the period April 2020- June 2020:

- What was your total number of meals served (home delivered and take-out/to go combined)?
- What is your average cost per meal for meals served (home delivered and take-out/to go combined)?
- What was your per meal reimbursement rate for meals served (home delivered and take-out/to go combined)?

We received responses from 30 Senior Centers and Meals Sites. Because we did not offer parameters to use in assessing what to include in an average cost, sites used different methods for calculating costs and the costs per meal amount varies substantially across providers. We calculated the gap based on the lowest reported reimbursement rate and their identified cost per meal. Although we heard from 30 providers across the state, not all providers responded. We will reach out to ensure we have information from all of them and plan to distribute the funds through the Area Agencies on Aging. DAIL will work to develop an appropriate allocation methodology in accordance with guidelines.

To-date, no State CRF funds have gone to support nutrition needs for older Vermonters. The Families First Coronavirus Relief Act and the CARES Act was designated for Older Americans Act services and awarded by intrastate funding formula funds to Vermont’s five Area Agencies on Aging. \$3.6 million was targeted for Nutrition Services. Area Agencies on Aging increased the number of meals and increased reimbursement rates to meal providers, but Senior Centers and Meals Sites have indicated that a gap between cost and reimbursement still exists. A more comprehensive report on the adequacy of funding for nutrition services to older Vermonters is due to the Joint Fiscal Committee on August 18, 2020 and will address needs into the future.

DAIL requests CRF support from the Joint Fiscal Committee for Senior Centers and Meal Sites to support vulnerable Vermonters’ nutrition needs. The balance of the potential need will be identified in the August 18<sup>th</sup> report and may be addressed in the FY21 restatement budget.

**Urgency of Request:** There is an immediate need for funding to support the costs to Senior Centers and meal providers associated with increased need during the COVID19 pandemic.

