

Final Report

Friends Foundation for the Aging

1. What problem were you addressing?

We know hunger exists in every community, but it is especially prevalent in aging, low-income, and minority neighborhoods. Nutrition programs with educational as well as feeding components can reduce food insecurity, improve health, and decrease poverty-related challenges.

2. What change did you expect to create? How? What were the desired objectives, outcomes, and outputs of the program and progress made toward each during the reporting period?

Each of the participants experienced positive one-on-one interactions with case managers and dietitians on a regular basis, which will encourage increased healthy habits and serve as a lifeline to some of our homebound and isolated senior population, especially during the ongoing COVID pandemic.

3. How did you measure success--both quantitative and qualitative? A chart of objectives, actions, and results is helpful. Include numbers and demographics of people touched by the work. Explain your organization's efforts toward diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Rise was founded 55 years ago as a Community Action Center, so has had DEI baked in from the beginning, including community voices in programming and board representation, not to mention serving a diverse population (75% Hispanic). They are a beacon of trust and communication in the community.

In addition to the demographics of the registered population of fifty-eight, we surveyed measures of satisfaction. Of the respondents 30% considered themselves English speakers; with the remaining Spanish speaking. DEI measures provided materials in two languages Spanish and English, with one-to-one communication with the participants in their primary language. Only one respondent preferred email as a method of communication everyone else preferred texts or phone calls.

About one-third of the participants are registered clients of Rise within the Community Service Block Grant parameters. Almost 70% of participants live at or above 100% of the Federal Poverty Limit. The ages of participants varied with equal participants born in the 1930s plus 1940s and the in the 1950s. Less than 10% were born in the early 1960s. About 50% of participants send in photos regularly.

4. Please note any collaborations that supported your work and/or ways that you leveraged resources. How did this project engage and empower staff from all levels of your organization?

This project engaged management staff at a local low-income senior housing project which enabled our relationship with the resident seniors to grow exponentially as we were able to offer healthy food, and additional wrap-around services. We participated in an open-house event initially to recruit residents and then the program took off with neighbors informing neighbors. In addition, the program built and fostered internal relationships as they worked together to ensure distribution to all participants. Rise Development Director engaged the management team of the facility and Rise Case Workers participated in in-person events, and one-on-one case management. Volunteers of Rise continued the delivery of items, personal contact with residents.

We also connected with the local mosque with TASK, to arrange to deliver food to the local senior housing project, and have strong relationships with local farmers.

5. Please share any unanticipated outcomes or barriers encountered. Indicate any changes in the program's goals, strategies, personnel or timelines and the reasons behind the changes.

An unanticipated outcome was the benefit to senior volunteers who became actively involved in the program both with creating personal connections with the service recipients and with the creation of dietary healthy meals, and packaging of food boxes.

Overall the start of distribution was delayed as recruitment of volunteers and formation of the framework of materials was developed. However, once distribution began people in line at the Pantry became interested in joining the program making recruitment easier.

While we anticipated the sharing of videos with participants, it soon became clear that access to or use of smartphones and media was a challenge for many. Phone calls and texts became the best form of communication.

We initially anticipated that all participants would be using the Rise Pantry. However, we were able to engage other senior participants that were not initially connected to the Pantry.

6. How do you plan to share and replicate your results?

We share our results on social media. With the interest in the program, we are able to keep a stream of new participants who are interested in engaging with AFUN. The creation of the program spurred additional FUN programming that is grant-funded and geared towards families with children.

7. Include a project financial statement (budget and actual) for the reporting period. Please explain significant variances from the original budget and reasons for the variances (with corrective measures if overages), as well as plans for future sustainability.

Because of generous food donations, we needed to allocate additional funds for fresh food refrigerated storage, and transportation of fresh vegetables, juice, and dairy products. We also retained a part-time project manager consultant, Monica Tarrantino, to work with dietitians and the volunteers to create, launch, and replicate the distribution monthly.

8. Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. How have we helped? Made it harder? What else can we do to facilitate your work?

We appreciate your thoughtful feedback and support of the project as we worked to launch this new program

9. Some comments from participants about the meals:

He likes it and did two meals. Easy. Good. Loved it and made some rice with it. I ate it too quickly to take a picture.