## Community of Practice Meeting for Medium-Sized Member Programs

## August 31, 2017 8:15 AM – 10:15 AM

The goal of this Community of Practice is to:

* Connect with people who work in programs with budgets within a similar range;
* Share experiences and learn from each other;
* Collaborate and achieve common outcomes;
* Accelerate member learning;
* Validate and build on existing knowledge.

Approximately 120 Members were in attendance. The discussion was moderated by Linda Netterville and Magda Hageman-Apol.

Discussions focused on the key issues you told us in a pre-Conference survey you wanted to discuss, namely:

* Volunteers (retention, recruitment, etc.)
* Funding and fundraising
* Cost of food/meals

The participants were able to choose two of the three topics to discuss. After lively table discussions, a spokesperson for each table gave a brief overview to the larger group of what they had discussed, which we captured in the notes below.

**Solutions and Future Strategies**

1. **Volunteer Recruitment**
* Solicit local businesses to provide recurring and ongoing company volunteers
* Solicit volunteers from university and community college faculty and students
* Take advantage of Meals on Wheels America Ad Council volunteer referrals
* Place volunteer advertising and phone numbers on all meal delivery vehicles
* Use county jail inmates for meal preparations. Provide volunteer inmates with one hot nutritious meal
* To help resolve seasonal volunteer issues, use teachers and stay-at-home moms during summer months
* Solicit local government departments for volunteers, such as fire, police, and elected officials offices
* Solicit other community-based organizations for volunteers, such as fraternal clubs, VFW, Rotary, churches, etc.
* Use local business or community-based organizations to adopt a meal route
* Use local school websites to recruit teachers and school staff. Most school websites provide email addresses for their school staff
* Provide volunteers a job description that details volunteer responsibilities
* Encourage corporate volunteers to man an ongoing regular delivery route
* Challenge local business CEOs to volunteer and challenge other CEOs to participate
* Develop a volunteer Advisory Council – the state association of Texas is a good example
1. **Volunteer Retention**
* Pick a month to highlight and thank your volunteers
* Provide an annual event to recognize and celebrate volunteers
* Provide name badges that include the number of years each person has volunteered
* Have annual volunteer communications, such as satisfaction survey, newsletter, volunteer handbook with guidelines and responsibilities
* Provide a car wash for volunteers’ vehicles
* Get special pins for volunteer service accomplishments
* Need to make sure all background checks are up to date (which vary from state to state)
* Reorganize volunteers by providing celebration dinners, picnics, raffles, etc.

1. **Other Volunteer Tips**
* Provide volunteers to grocery shop for clients
1. **Fundraising Ideas**
* Local grant opportunities are very limited
* Consider using targeted direct mail campaign. If done correctly can be very effective
* Many veterans’ grant opportunities are available
* Offer a senior prom
* Organize a Silver fox fashion show
* Virtual “no dinner” dinner or “No concert” concert
* Develop an outpatient reimbursement program with local medical/hospital system
* Hold a Let’s Do Lunch fundraiser using local restaurants
* Host indoor walkathon, auction, etc.
* Host youth or adult hockey competition or challenge
* Use local food trucks to donate a portion of their proceeds from a designated donation time offer, e.g., a Friday young professional business to business challenge
* Sponsor a gala
* Try a wide variety of different funding venues
* Develop major and individual giving programs to provide sustained funding
* Know your donor audience and use appropriate solicitation
* Sponsor a live auction
* Make sure to track and segment your donor giving levels
* Track donor giving and make sure donor gifts are distributed as donor has requested
* Offer coupon book with discounts or free goods or service for donation
* Follow up with very brief donor satisfaction survey to understand why they are contributing
* Host a special event such as Mac & Cheese Bowl with ticket sales and program sponsors
* Host a free breakfast fundraiser
* Use local artists to provide art for donation
* Use local grocery stores to encourage customers to round up their purchases to buy a meal
* Solicit local utility companies to sponsor a week of meals
* Develop an employee giving program with a company matching program
* Use local potter’s guild to donate bowls to sponsor a meal
* Host local band event or competition
* Host local business with a “Bubbles (retailers), Bottles (grocery/beverage distributor) and Beans” (restaurants) event
* Host a telethon
* Place donation cards on local restaurants tables
* Local restaurants provide gift cards with a percentage of the card going for donation
1. **Cost of Food/Meals**
* Be sure to do an analysis of the cost of all meal preparation
* Dine around town, local restaurants offer all seniors discount or lower cost meals
* Analyze pre-cooked meals vs. meals that are prepared from scratch
* Analyze renting kitchen space vs. purchasing kitchen space
* Analyze the use of kitchens and equipment vs other options
* Analyze low cost options vs. low quality food offerings
* Review all of your options using paid staff vs. volunteers
* Review and understand your OAA funding options
* Cooking on site offers some advantages, such as direct from farm options
* Consider working with caterers to help with meal preparation
* Consider other food preparation partners, such as hospitals, restaurants, schools, etc.
* One member program’s meals were completely funded by client donations
* Volunteers vs. paid drivers have a direct effect on the cost of each meal
* To save on costs, consider group purchasing
* Be aware and know the federal “Good Samaritan Act” for accepting food from grocery stores or restaurants, caterers, etc.
* Consider using shelf stable milk vs. fresh

We plan to have a virtual meeting of the group in early 2018 and a face-to-face meeting at next year’s Conference.