



Connecting Older Adults with Community-based Resources and Options

# **AgeOptions Request for Proposals Fiscal Years 2027-2030**

**Nutrition Services  
Congregate Meals  
Home Delivered Meals  
Meal Kit Delivery**

**Applications are Due: April 10, 2026 by 4:59 pm Central Time**

## **RFP materials are available**

on [AgeOptions website](#) and AgeOptions Grants Portal  
*(See page 13 for how to create a Grants Portal account)*

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### **STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

AgeOptions does not discriminate in admission to programs or treatment of employment in programs or activities in compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act; the U.S. Civil Rights Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; The Age Discrimination Act; the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; and the U.S. and Illinois Constitution. If you feel you have been discriminated against, you have the right to file a complaint with the Illinois Department on Aging. For information, call (800)252-8966 (Voice and TTY) or contact AgeOptions at (708)383-0258

We are guided by **our Mission** to innovate, partner and advocate to improve systems and services in order to strengthen communities so people thrive as they age.

### **Our Vision:**

People thriving as they age.

### **Our Values:**

**Commitment**  
**Integrity**  
**Connectedness**

### **Our Beliefs:**

**Quality of Life** is essential to everyone;  
**Communities that care** make a difference;  
**Knowledge** is powerful;  
Good choices depend on **reliable resources**;  
That is why we connect aging with options for living well.

### **Our Diversity Statement:**

The diversity of our organization and communities is a rich asset that strengthens our mission and guides our decisions and direction.

### **Summary**

- AgeOptions is seeking applications for these Nutrition services:
  - Congregate Meals
  - Home Delivered Meals
  - Meal Kits
- Public, private not-for-profit, or proprietary organizations may apply
- Services to be provided in suburban Cook County
- Grant period is Fiscal Year 2027 (October 1, 2026 - September 30, 2027) with possible funding extensions
- Funding sources are:
  - Federal Older Americans Act
  - State of Illinois General Revenue funds
  - Nutrition Services Incentive Program (NSIP)
- Applications are due April 10, 2026 by 4:59 p.m. Central Time

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***In addition, these materials are part of this Request for Proposals and are available on the AgeOptions Grants Portal: Requirements for Recipients of Older Americans Act Title III funds; Nutrition service definitions and standards; Menu standards; appendices; attachments; applications and scoring tools.***

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. AgeOptions and History of the Program**

In accordance with the Older American's Act of 1965 and associated Regulations, AgeOptions is designated by the Illinois Department on Aging as the Area Agency on Aging for suburban Cook County, Illinois. and is responsible for administering federal and state-funded programs and services for individuals aged 60 and older and those who care for them in suburban Cook County.

All funding under this Request for Proposal is contingent upon availability of funding and the acceptance of AgeOptions Area Plan on Aging (and annual amendments to that plan) by the Illinois Department on Aging.

### **B. Goals for Delivery of Services**

The purpose of the Nutrition Program (Older Americans Act Section 330) is to:

1. Reduce hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition,
2. Promote socialization and connection as an essential part of older adults' well-being,
3. Promote health; and
4. Delay the onset of adverse health conditions through access to nutrition, disease prevention, and health promotion activities.

AgeOptions funding priorities are based on the following goals and objectives:

1. To maximize the independence, well-being, and health of older adults, people with disabilities, and those who care for them across the lifespan.
2. All people, regardless of age or disability, should be able to live independently and participate fully in their communities.
3. Every person should have the right to make choices and to control decisions about their lives.
4. All older adults and people with disabilities should have access to needed community services and other kinds of assistance so that they can maintain self-determination, independence, productivity, and inclusion in all facets of community life.
5. To develop and implement comprehensive, coordinated systems, for home and community-based services. This may be accomplished by collaborating, coordinating, and consulting with other agencies responsible for formulating, implementing, and administering long-term care programs.
6. To remove social, economic, and personal barriers to independence for older individuals.
7. To provide services for the most vulnerable older adults that meet their individual needs.

8. To assist the informal family caregiver to help maintain the older person at home.
9. To prioritize services to older individuals with greatest economic need, older individuals with greatest social need, and older individuals at risk for institutional placement. Priority populations may include but are not limited to the following marginalized communities:
  - a. Older adults with Limited English proficiency,
  - b. Older adults with low incomes,
  - c. Older adults who are a member of a diverse population, Racial or Ethnic minority.

### **C. Areas to be Served and Available Funds**

Awards are based on projected FY 2027 revenue, including anticipated federal Older Americans Act funding, NSIP, and State of Illinois allocations to suburban Cook County. **Actual award amounts may vary due to annual federal and state appropriations and/or changes to the Illinois Department on Aging funding distribution formula.**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Estimated FY 2027 Funding</b>
Title IIIC1 Congregate Meals	\$ 2,600,000
Title IIIC2 Home Delivered Meals	\$10,000,000
Meal Kits	\$ 3,600,000

AgeOptions is soliciting applications for suburban Cook County **EXCEPT for these geographic areas:**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Area(s)</b>
Title IIIC1 Congregate Meals	Arlington Heights
Title IIIC2 Home Delivered Meals	Barrington Township Bremen Township Rich Township Maine Township Thornton Township Wheeling Township

AgeOptions reserves the right to revise funding projections or award amounts to comply with legislative, administrative, or judicial requirements.

Nutrition funding is more limited than in prior fiscal years due to flat federal funding. The Governor's Budget for FY 2027 included flat State funding. (As context, in FY 2026 State funding accounted for 81% of AgeOptions Home-Delivered Meals funding.)

Although funding is flat, increasing costs may mean that the funding will not stretch as far; and meanwhile demand is increasing. AgeOptions will prioritize funding in the following order:

1. Home Delivered Meals: Special Diets-Medical
2. Home Delivered Meals: Monday – Friday (one meal per day), general diets and Special Diets-Cultural
3. Congregate Meals: Monday – Friday in-person
4. Meal Kits
5. Home Delivered Meals: Weekend
6. Home Delivered Meals: Second (2<sup>nd</sup> meal per day)

Proposed services already supported by another funding source within the same service area will not be funded. Consistent with the Older Americans Act, grant funds may not be used to supplant existing funding.

#### **D. Notification of Grant Award (Grant Agreement)**

AgeOptions will incorporate all the standards and requirements outlined in this procurement process as well as the applicant’s application (which is the “work plan”) into a “Notification of Grant Award” (NGA). The grant will include service delivery, administrative, and financial terms and conditions, and provisions which, when taken together, define the services that the Grantee will provide. The accepted application will become a binding part of the grant, and the Grantee will be monitored to ensure compliance with the application in accordance with AgeOptions requirements and policies set forth in:

- AgeOptions FY 2027-2030 Service Definitions and Standards
- AgeOptions FY 2027-2030 Title III Requirements
- AgeOptions FY 2027-2030 Request for Proposals
- AgeOptions 2027 Conditions of Award and Performance Deficiencies for Grantees Policy

All requirements included in this document are authorized in actual legislative language included in amendments of the Older Americans Act and the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. [2 CFR Part 200](#). Any further amendments to the law, actions required by other Federal or State laws, court order, and/or administrative/executive directives, will be binding on all applicants.

AgeOptions has adopted as policy all requirements stated in this document and will enforce the same during the grant period, except as directed by the Federal and State governments, or Court of Law. Upon receipt of a Title III award from AgeOptions, successful applicants must comply with the applicable program and fiscal requirements of [2 CFR 200.332](#).

It is the applicant’s responsibility to read and understand the RFP and associated materials and tailor the application and all activities to ensure compliance. Any reference to “grantee” responsibilities will be binding on the applicant organization upon the award of the grant.

## **E. Applicant Eligibility**

Nonprofit and for-profit organizations and government units who have experience providing the services outlined in this RFP may apply. AgeOptions is required to obtain a waiver from the Illinois Department on Aging prior to funding a for-profit organization. Grantees are prohibited from receiving a profit from the grant award.

All applicants must be registered, be in good standing with the Illinois Secretary of State and have a valid SAM Unique Entity ID (UEI). It is the grantee's responsibility to remain current with these registrations and requirements. In addition, the applicant must not be included on any Debarred/Suspended/ Stop Payment/Excluded Parties listings.

**Capacity:** Applicants should apply only for services which they have the capacity to provide. AgeOptions will assess capacity for purposes of the award, based on the applicant's submitted application and their past performance. Modification of the application will only be accepted if requested by AgeOptions.

**Sub-contracting:** Agencies are not permitted to subcontract or assign any part of the work covered under the scope of the agreement without prior written consent of AgeOptions.

**Service Area:** Applicants may propose delivering service to a suburban Cook County municipality area (for each Congregate Meal site), single or multiple townships (for Home Delivered Meal programs), or countywide (for Meal Kits). Applicants who do not have an office or physical presence in suburban Cook County may apply for funds. However, all services must be provided in suburban Cook County. AgeOptions may negotiate service areas with awarded applicants.

**Match:** Grantees must contribute a minimum of 15% in non-federal resources as match, unless they request and are approved for a waiver to allow a lower percentage. Priority in granting this waiver will be given to applicants proposing services in communities where local resources are limited or more difficult to obtain, reflecting the program's focus on resource-challenged areas. See "General Requirements for Recipients of Title III Older Americans Act Funds" and "Budget and Budget Justification Guidelines."

**Client contributions ("Project Income"):** Program participants must be given the opportunity to make voluntary contributions for services; however, no individual may be denied service for choosing not to contribute, regardless

of income. See “General Requirements for Recipients of Title III Older Americans Act Funds.”

AgeOptions does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, language, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, political or other opinion, health status, place of residence, economic and social situation or familial status in employment or the provision of services.

## **II. AWARDS AVAILABLE**

AgeOptions will only fund the services identified in this Request for Proposals (Congregate Meals, Home Delivered Meals and Meal Kits Delivery). Please refer to the Definitions and Standards for a complete description of each service.

AgeOptions seeks applications that deliver meals in a flexible, consumer centered, and cost-effective manner. AgeOptions encourages innovative approaches to meal offerings, service delivery models, and the incorporation of participant input.

**AgeOptions first priority is to reach people age 60 and older with Limited English proficiency, with low income, and/or are part of a diverse community, Racial or Ethnic minority.**

### **A. Congregate Meals**

The Congregate Nutrition program serves healthy meals, provides information on healthy aging, and presents opportunities for social engagement and meaningful volunteer roles.

AgeOptions seeks applications for congregated in-person dining programs. There are no residency requirements for clients, and the program is not referral- or assessment-based; the application should specify a specific geographic area within suburban Cook County.

See “Catering/Food Preparation” section below for options on how food may be provided.

To be fiscally feasible, applicants should aim to serve at least twenty-five (25) meals daily at each site. For sites that propose or have a history of serving less than 25 meals per day, AgeOptions may choose not to fund the site or may work with the applicant to develop a cost-effective option.

### Program Design Options

1. Applicants may propose a “traditional” dining site which would serve meals five days per week, typically at lunch (other times will be considered).
2. Applicants may operate a single program at **multiple, rotating “satellite” locations** to increase access to the service. If using multiple locations, the total number of serving days per week (all locations combined) may not exceed seven (7). Participants must be made aware of meals options at all locations.
3. Applicants may propose congregate meals in a **restaurant setting**. However, restaurant programs must provide programming.

### B. Home Delivered Meals

The Home Delivered Meals program addresses food insecurity, supports aging in place, reduces transportation and mobility barriers, and offers regular safety checks. The Program also helps connect clients to additional services and benefits for which they may be eligible.

AgeOptions seeks applications for home delivered meal programs by township. Applicants must be willing to serve the entire township they propose.

#### Program Design Options

1. **General Home Delivered Meals package:** An applicant may propose the “General” HDM service package which includes Monday-Friday meals, Special Diets-Medical, 2nd meals and Weekend meals). “Special Diets-Medical” must include but are not limited to renal, diabetic, vegetarian, gluten free and pureed menus. **Note that 2<sup>nd</sup> meals and Weekend meals will have stricter prioritization guidelines than in previous fiscal years.**  
**and/or**
2. **Special Diets-Cultural HDMs:** An applicant may propose to serve HDM Special Diets-Cultural (“ethnic” home delivered meals). These applicants may choose – but are not required-- to propose “special diet–medical” meals, 2<sup>nd</sup> meals or weekend meals delivered meals.

See “Catering/Food Preparation” section below for options on how food may be provided.

Successful applicants will commit to serving current home delivered meal recipients in the proposed township(s). Eligibility for Home Delivered Meals is determined by the Care Coordination Unit or Managed Care Organization using the "[State of Illinois - Nutrition Referral/Assessment for Home Delivered Meals](#)" tool.

Daily (Monday-Friday) delivery of hot Home Delivered Meals is preferred. However, AgeOptions allows the use of frozen or cold meals in cases where the Care Coordination Unit (CCU)/Managed Care agency/Assessor affirms that the client can prepare the meal, and the Grantee ensures that the client can manage preparation of the meal. If a client cannot manage the reheating of frozen meals, the Grantee must find an alternative option. If delivery does not occur daily Monday-Friday, the provider must offer a mechanism for personal contact with the client to assure their wellbeing daily, Monday through Friday.

### **Catering/Food Preparation for Congregate and Home Delivered Meals**

Applicants may propose one of the following methods for preparing food:

1. On-site preparation by applicant; or
2. Central Kitchen (food is prepared off-site by applicant and transported to the nutrition site); or
3. Catered.

An applicant may use On-site or Central Kitchen food preparation for some meal types (for example, regular diet Home Delivered Meals) and may use a caterer for a different meal type (special diet Home Delivered Meals). Or an applicant may use more than one caterer to allow for variety during the week (for example, Caterer A on Monday/Wednesday/Friday and Caterer B on Tuesday/Thursday).

Applicants who propose to use a caterer must select a caterer from the AgeOptions “eligible caterer” list. The Grants Portal Application Resources section includes the FY2027 “eligible caterer” list. Exceptions:

- Applicants who propose “on site” food preparation or catering from their organization’s central kitchen are exempt.
- Culturally and Linguistically Accessible Service Agencies (CLAS), may request a waiver by providing a justification.
- Congregate programs based in a restaurant setting may request a waiver by providing a justification.

It is in AgeOptions sole discretion to determine the agencies exempt from this requirement.

The Meal Kits program serves frail, homebound or isolated individuals who are age 60 and over, and have the ability to prepare meals or have them prepared.

## C. Meal Kits

AgeOptions seeks applications for a countywide Meal Kit grantee that will deliver “Meal Kits” every other week using AgeOptions approved menus that provide 14 meals per week (28 total each delivery). Each meal provides on average 1/3 of daily nutrition requirements. Applicants must propose delivery of the following tailored Meal Kits: general, Black/African American, Halal, Korean, Kosher and Latine.

Eligibility for Meal Kits is determined by the Care Coordination Unit or Managed Care Organization using the standardized assessment tool.

## **V. AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Funding Period**

The time period of this agreement is for Fiscal Year 2027 beginning October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027. Awards will be for one year. AgeOptions has the option of offering successful grantee one (1), two (2), or three (3) one-year extensions (renewals) for FY 2028, FY 2029, and FY 2030 as specified in this document.

Additional extensions may be considered if AgeOptions determines that postponement of a Request for Proposal is in the best interest of the program.

### **B. Renewal Considerations**

Renewals may be approved on an individual basis for each service, each Congregate Site, Home Delivered Meals Service area, or Meal Kit program, provided all of the following conditions are met:

1. Acceptable performance of grantee,
2. The continuing availability of funding,
3. The mutual agreement on grant terms between AgeOptions and the applicant.
4. There are no changes in program mandates and/or requirements by AgeOptions funding bodies that would result in a revision of the plan for funding allocations.

AgeOptions reserves the option to grant exceptions to the above renewal considerations. AgeOptions reserves the right to establish new criteria for funding reductions for each extension year.

### **C. Funding for Extension Years**

AgeOptions may seek to maintain funding at original levels during extension years; however, any allowable increases or decreases in federal unit costs

will be determined at AgeOptions discretion and informed by changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Funded agencies will be expected to maintain their local cash and in-kind funds in the same proportion for extension years.

**Increase in Funding:** If additional funding becomes available between extension years, AgeOptions will determine, at its discretion, the amount of funding to be allocated either by geographic area, by service type, and/or priority populations. AgeOptions may use one or a combination of the following options when awarding such funds:

- a. Reduce or prevent waiting lists.
- b. Award funds to applicants whose applications were approved through this process but not funded due to insufficient available funds.
- c. Permit Grantees to submit formal requests, with supporting rationale, to expand existing services within funding levels determined by AgeOptions. Decisions regarding any increase will be based on the submitted rationale, overall performance, and the level of community support demonstrated by the Grantee.
- d. Support the development and implementation of program innovations.
- e. Provide demonstration funding for a new initiative.

**Decrease in Funding:** If funding to the suburban Cook County region is reduced and AgeOptions determines that reductions to grantee award levels are necessary, AgeOptions reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to take one or more of the following actions:

- a. Reduce or eliminate funding to programs that are not meeting approved budgeted unit productivity levels. Where AgeOptions identifies unmet need within a service area, it may, at its discretion, allocate funding to another grantee to address that need.  
Reduce meals, as applicable, in the following order: HDM Second meals, HDM Weekend meals, Meal Kits, Congregate in person, HDM Monday–Friday (both General and Cultural), and HDM Special Diets–Medical.  
Review each grant based on service levels and other performance factors to ensure the provision of cost-effective services that best meets the needs of older adults.
- b. AgeOptions may establish maximum AgeOptions Unit Rates. Such rates will be determined at AgeOptions discretion and may be adjusted based on funding availability, program performance, and participant needs.

#### **D. Termination of Grant**

AgeOptions reserves the right to terminate a grant with an applicant as outlined in the “AgeOptions Performance Deficiencies of Grantees Policy”. This may be due to noncompliance with the standards set forth in this Request for Proposals and/or due to significant nonperformance by the provider. The grant/designation may also be terminated for circumstances beyond the control of the applicant, such as insufficient funds, changes in

federal or state mandates, natural disasters and fires that prevent complying with the terms of the grant/contract.

In addition, the grant/designation may be terminated by either party upon sixty (60) days written notice and explanation to the other party. Upon termination, the grantee/designation shall be paid for work satisfactorily completed prior to the date of termination if funds are available.

## **VI. APPLICATION PROCESS THROUGH AGEOPTIONS GRANTS SYSTEM**

### **A. Creation of Grants Portal Account**

AgeOptions widely publicized this Request for Proposals. Interested organizations must create an “Organizational account” on AgeOptions Grants Portal. The application, budget and required attachments can be found on and must be submitted via AgeOptions Grants Portal\*. Submission through the Grants Portal does not guarantee acceptance or funding, and AgeOptions reserves the right to determine completeness and eligibility of an application.

Organizations that do not have an “Organizational account” must register with AgeOptions. To register, e-mail [rfp@ageoptions.org](mailto:rfp@ageoptions.org) with the following information:

- Legal Name of Organization
- Address (street address, city, zip code)
- Phone number
- Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN)
- Full name, title, e-mail address and phone number of the designated contact person

AgeOptions will create your organizational account and send an e-mail to your designated contact person with the log-in information. It is the potential applicant’s total and sole responsibility to assure receipt of the log-in information. The deadline for applicants to register is **April 1, 2026**.

*If you require a reasonable accommodation, please e-mail [rfp@ageoptions.org](mailto:rfp@ageoptions.org) or contact Zhanyl Mukashova, Grants Manager at 708-383-0258. Requests for reasonable accommodation must be submitted by April 1, 2026. AgeOptions reserves the right to determine, in its sole discretion, whether and how to provide accommodations.*

### **B. Submission of Applications**

After you have created a Grants Portal organization account (see previous section):

1. Complete your “Organization profile.”

Once you have access to your organizational account, you must provide information about the organization and download several attachments.

2. Complete your application(s)

You will complete a separate application for each Title program you are proposing to provide. For example, if you are applying for both Congregate Meals and Home Delivered Meals, a separate application must be submitted for each program and service area. If you are applying for Home Delivered Meals in two separate (non-adjacent) townships, you must submit two separate applications. There is no minimum or maximum number of services for which applicants must apply.

For each application you will complete:

- Details
- Narrative responses to questions (an attachment upload)
- Projected demographics of clients to be served
- Budget (Excel file upload plus webpages)
- Budget justification
- Requested Reimbursement schedule
- Program-specific attachments

The application must be submitted using AgeOptions Fiscal Year 2027 application via the AgeOptions Grants Portal.\* Applications must be complete and legible. The application and all other accompanying documents are available on the Grants Portal – <https://ageoptions.smartsimple.com>. **To receive a log-in, contact [rfp@Ageoptions.org](mailto:rfp@Ageoptions.org) by April 1, 2026.**

*\*If you require a reasonable accommodation, please e-mail [rfp@ageoptions.org](mailto:rfp@ageoptions.org) or contact Zhanyl Mukashova, Grants Manager at 708-383-0258. Requests for reasonable accommodation must be submitted no later than seven (7) business days prior to the application deadline. AgeOptions reserves the right to determine, in its sole discretion, whether and how to provide accommodations.*

Applicants are responsible for carefully reviewing this Request for Proposals (RFP) and all associated specifications before submitting an application. If an application is accepted, the applicant assumes full responsibility for all errors and costs resulting from failure or neglect to comply with instructions and specifications. AgeOptions shall not be responsible for any such errors or associated costs.

Applications may be withdrawn by providing written notice to AgeOptions no later than **May 10, 2026**. Applicants are solely responsible for all costs associated with preparing and submitting an application; AgeOptions will not reimburse applicants for these costs.

AgeOptions reserves the right to accept or reject any application, in whole or in part, submitted in response to this Request for Proposals. In addition, AgeOptions reserves the right to reject applications that are determined by AgeOptions to propose insufficient costs to cover all or any necessary service components.

The applicant is reminded that the competitive application process is governed by laws and regulations enforced by Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies. If there is an indication of any formal or informal effort by competing applicants to influence proposed costs of services and/or service areas, AgeOptions shall ask appropriate agencies to investigate.

### C. Technical Assistance Sessions

Please join us for a technical assistance session to learn more about the process. All sessions will be conducted via Zoom.

The sessions will be held as follows:

<p><b>Identical Technical Assistance Sessions.</b> All potential applicants should attend one of these Technical Assistance Sessions. The March 9<sup>th</sup> session is open to all but geared to first-time applicants.</p>
<p><b><u>March 9, 2026 (2:00-4:00 pm)</u></b>  Click here: <a href="#">March 9 ZOOM link</a>  <i>Meeting ID: 881 1264 7308 Passcode: 545605</i>  <i>One tap mobile</i>  +13092053325,,88112647308#,,,,*545605# US  +13126266799,,88112647308#,,,,*545605# US (Chicago)</p>
<p><b><u>March 11, 2026 (1:30-3:00 pm)</u></b>  Click here: <a href="#">March 11 ZOOM link</a>  <i>Meeting ID: 865 9941 4628 Passcode: 514206</i>  <i>One tap mobile</i>  +13092053325,,86599414628#,,,,*514206# US  +13126266799,,86599414628#,,,,*514206# US (Chicago)</p>
<p><b><u>March 12, 2026 (9:00-10:30 am)</u></b>  Click here: <a href="#">March 12 ZOOM link</a>  <i>Meeting ID: 813 2493 7027 Passcode: 490220</i>  <i>One tap mobile</i>  +13126266799,,81324937027#,,,,*490220# US (Chicago)  +13092053325,,81324937027#,,,,*490220# US</p>

<p><b>Final Question and Answer session (no agenda)</b></p>
<p><b><u>April 6, 2026 (2:00-3:00 pm)</u></b>  Click here: <a href="#">April 6 ZOOM link</a>  <i>Meeting ID: 859 1191 1855 Passcode: 461422</i>  <i>One tap mobile</i></p>

+13126266799,,85911911855#,,,,\*461422# US (Chicago)  
 +13092053325,,85911911855#,,,,\*461422# US

*To request reasonable accommodations for the Technical Assistance Sessions, please submit your request to [rfp@ageoptions.org](mailto:rfp@ageoptions.org) or contact Zhanyl Mukashova, Grants Manager 708-383-0258. Requests for reasonable accommodation will be accepted up to two (2) business days prior to the event.*

#### **D. Ongoing Technical Assistance**

AgeOptions reserves the right to issue clarifications and/or changes to any part of this Request for Proposal process. These will be published on the AgeOptions Grants Portal. Clarifications and changes will be binding on successful applicants.

AgeOptions staff will provide ongoing Technical Assistance by way of responding to questions. Submit questions in writing to [rfp@ageoptions.org](mailto:rfp@ageoptions.org).

Each week, AgeOptions will publish a summary of the questions received and the corresponding responses via AgeOptions' Grants Portal for all to review. In fairness to all applicants, questions, and responses from applicant conferences and technical assistance sessions will also be posted online. AgeOptions will not identify the source of the question in our posting.

The final Q&A will be posted the morning of **April 8, 2026**. After that point, AgeOptions will respond to questions to the inquiring organization as needed and as time permits until the Technical Assistance deadline. Technical assistance will be available only until Friday, **April 10, 2026**, 4:00 p.m. CST.

Applications will not be reviewed prior to submission, but reasonable questions on applications, service criteria, standards and service areas will be addressed by an AgeOptions staff member upon request and as time permits.

#### **E. Due Date for Applications**

The application must be submitted by **April 10, 2026 at 4:59pm**. [Please note the deadline to register for a Grants Portal account – which is necessary to create an application-- is **April 1, 2026**.]

Late and “draft status” responses shall not be accepted and shall automatically be disqualified from consideration. Applicants will receive a confirmation e-mail once they successfully submit an application. Additionally, the status of applications listed in the Grants Portal will change from “Authorized Representative Approval” to “Submitted to AgeOptions.” Please verify that you have both received a confirmation e-mail and that the status of

the application has changed to “Submitted to AgeOptions” to verify your application has been successfully submitted.

## **V. EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS**

The evaluation of applications will be based on, but not limited to, the funding considerations, the summary of technical criteria, application format and completeness, and the level of competition.

Any misrepresentation within the application is grounds for disqualification from the review process.

### **A. Funding Considerations**

AgeOptions will only fund services identified in this Request for Proposals for the suburban Cook County service areas as listed in the Funding Tables herein. Please refer to the Service Standards for a complete description of the allowable services for this RFP.

AgeOptions reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to increase, decrease, or reallocate funding levels based on available funding, utilization of resources, or other factors determined by AgeOptions before or during the grant period. The effective date of any adjustment shall be the date of notification by AgeOptions, and the grantee shall implement such changes immediately upon notification.

AgeOptions also reserves the right to delay reimbursements to grantees during the grant period if payments to AgeOptions from its funding sources are delayed. Note: Due to state and federal cash flow considerations, reimbursements may be delayed up to 120 days. Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring they have sufficient non-AgeOptions funding reserves or access to a line of credit to cover grant expenditures during any delay.

AgeOptions priority is to direct program efforts and funding to older adults with the greatest social and economic need. Applicants are required to prioritize older adults who face barriers to receiving services due to racial, cultural, economic, or other factors documented by the applicant.

The following circumstances may influence AgeOptions decisions regarding the awarding of funds:

1. AgeOptions may respond to community needs or established service provider relationships to justify granting/contracting for a service at variance to some standards.
2. AgeOptions may identify methods for providing services to meet the needs of communities, especially for the low-income racially/ethnically diverse population, and limited English-speaking populations.

3. AgeOptions may set aside funds until an appropriate application is received.
4. AgeOptions may negotiate with an applicant to adjust the unit rate, scope, geographic area, or purpose of a proposed program as needed.
5. AgeOptions reserves the right to transfer funds between Federal Older Americans Act funding sources as permitted under the law that may increase or decrease the total funding available.

All applications will be evaluated by AgeOptions, in its sole discretion. Awards will be made to applicants whose applications meet the criteria outlined in this RFP and the Service Definitions and Standards. Note: Submission of an application or a high evaluation score does not guarantee that any funding will be awarded, in full or in part. Funding may be delayed, reduced, or withheld entirely based on availability of resources or other factors determined by AgeOptions.

Organizations may submit multiple applications for individual sites and/or may provide both Congregate and Home-Delivered Meal services from the same location. Each site and each service application will be evaluated independently.

## **B. Minimum Requirements**

Applications that do not meet minimum requirements will be deemed unresponsive and will not be considered. Appeals will not be considered for unresponsive applications.

1. The application and all accompanying documents are typed, legible, complete, and on AgeOptions application forms or a reasonable facsimile.
2. The applicant demonstrates the ability to administer programs in compliance with AgeOptions requirements as described in the Request for Proposal (RFP). Consideration will be given to all of the following items:
  - a. Proposed service activities are allowable (see service standards, definitions, and basic requirements).
  - b. Applicant contributes a minimum of 15% in non-federal resources as match **or a request and justification for a lower match are provided.** (Note: If the justification is not approved, and the applicant is selected to be a grantee, AgeOptions will require an increase of match to 15%).
  - c. Applicant clearly identifies the match and it is an allowable source. [2 CFR Part 200 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)
  - d. The application includes a budget justification.

## **C. Application Format and Evaluation**

Applications will be evaluated in the following categories:

1. Needs Statement

2. Program Plan and Design
3. Outreach and Community Support
4. Innovation
5. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
6. Performance Experience and Capacity
7. Budget

AgeOptions staff will review applications and determine a “consensus” score for each question and for each service. Each question will receive a numeric score. The consensus points will be totaled for each service. **The application must achieve at least 60% of the total possible points to be considered approved.**

The weight of each category of the application is displayed in the following table:

Scores by Section	Congregate Meals		HDMs Non-Cultural Package		HDMs Special Diets-Cultural		Meal Kits		
	Possible points	% of total	Possible points	% of total	Possible points	% of total	Possible points	% of total	
Needs Statement	10	6.8%	8	5.6%	10	6.8%	10	6.8%	
Program Plan & Design	40	27.4%	42	29.2%	42	28.8%	36	24.7%	
Outreach and Community Support (Access and Community Connection)	11	7.5%	9	6.3%	9	6.2%	15	10.3%	
Innovation (Social Isolation and Food Insecurity)	10	6.8%	10	6.9%	10	6.8%	10	6.8%	
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)*	11	7.5%	11	7.6%	11	7.5%	11	7.5%	
Performance Experience and Capacity	26	17.8%	26	18.1%	26	17.8%	26	17.8%	
Budget	38	26.0%	38	26.4%	38	26.0%	38	26.0%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100%</b>	
	<i>*DEI-related points</i>	<b>25</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>18.5%</b>

AgeOptions may waive minor, non-material variations or request clarification from the applicant.

#### **D. Requests for Additional Information**

Prior to a funding decision, AgeOptions staff may:

- Request a special presentation by the applicant(s)
- Conduct a site visit
- Request references
- Interview staff
- Request additional clarification of information
- Or otherwise verify the contents of the Application.

If an applicant does not comply with requests for information and cooperate in a timely manner, AgeOptions may reject the Application as non-responsive to the solicitation. Applying does not entitle the applicant to an award or a contract.

### **E. Rejection of Applications**

AgeOptions reserves the right to accept or reject any and all applications, to waive technical defects, and to accept or reject any part of any application submitted in response to this RFP.

Proposals must be presented in the format and sequence detailed in this RFP. Failure to do so, and/or to respond to specific questions or requirements is sufficient for an application's automatic disqualification.

In order to be considered, all applications must be submitted independently and without collusion with any other contractor.

### **F. Competitive Applications**

AgeOptions will attempt to avoid duplicate provision of Title III-C services in the awarding of funds. AgeOptions reserves the right to award funds, so there are sites geographically spread throughout suburban Cook County.

In competitive situations, the grant will be awarded to the applicant receiving the highest total score. In the event of a tie, the award will be made to the current grantee. If there is no current grantee, the final decision will be made by the AgeOptions Board of Directors, as advised by their Program Committee. All awards will be contingent upon the availability of funds. AgeOptions may grant exceptions to this competitive process to address the need for Home Delivered Meals Special Diets, both Medical and Cultural (see below).

**Congregate Meals applications will be considered competitive if** two or more applicants request funding to serve the same population within the same geographic area. This includes sites that prioritize the same population and are located within the same township and/or

- within 1.5 miles of another site in the West Suburbs (Lyons, Riverside, Proviso, Leyden, Norwood, Berwyn, Cicero, Oak Park, and River Forest); or
- within 2.5 miles of another site in the North or South Suburbs.

**Home Delivered Meals applications will be considered competitive if** two or more applicants propose the same service design option, within the same township. (See Home Delivered Meal "Program Design Options.")

### **G. Notification and Appeal Process**

Decisions on applications will be mailed to the applicant on or around July 1, 2026. An applicant not satisfied with the evaluation process may file a written appeal as outlined in the "AgeOptions Appeal Procedures."

At AgeOptions discretion, an appeal hearing may be scheduled with the applicant if additional information is required to assist the AgeOptions Board of Directors in reviewing and considering the appeal.

## **H. Debriefings**

Applicants whose applications are not funded may also request a debriefing, which will provide feedback that can assist applicants in developing applications for future funding. Debriefings will take the form of advice to applicants on their application's strengths and weaknesses in terms of the evaluation and review criteria. Debriefings are not part of the Appeal Process.

Requests for debriefing must be made in writing (via e-mail) and submitted within seven (7) calendar days after receipt of notification of funding or denial of funding. Debriefing requests will not be granted if there is an active appeal, administrative action, or court proceeding. The written debriefing request shall include the minimum of the following:

- The name and address of the requesting party
- Identification of grant program.
- Reasons for the debrief request

Please send requests to:

Zhanyl Mukashova, Grants Manager  
[RFP@ageoptions.org](mailto:RFP@ageoptions.org)  
Subject: Debriefing request

## **I. Agreements**

Revised budgets that reflect the actual awards are due to AgeOptions by August 21, 2026. Successful applicants may be required, at AgeOptions sole discretion, to submit an additional or revised work plan to further clarify components of their program(s).

Final approval of any grant will be communicated through a formal Notification of Grant Award (NGA) issued by AgeOptions. NGAs, requiring signatures from both the applicant organization and AgeOptions, are expected to be issued prior to October 1, 2026, contingent upon AgeOptions receipt of an award from the Illinois Department on Aging.

Service under the grant shall commence October 1, 2026. AgeOptions will **not** reimburse any work or expenses incurred prior to this date.