

Meals On Wheels

Resource Development Plan

Issue:

The Meals On Wheels program (MOW) at Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments has not been financially sustainable for many years. In Fiscal Year 2015-16, Senior & Disabilities subsidized the program through the allocation of over \$225,000 from reserves. Reserves will not be available to continue the program into the future.

In addition to financial challenges, MOW Linn-Benton-Lincoln faces other resource challenges. The backbone of the program is a cadre of volunteers who deliver meals to homes and serve up food at meal sites. Particularly in our more remote areas, it is proving more and more difficult to recruit the volunteers to ensure all geographic areas of our region are covered.

Solution:

Achieve program fiscal self-sufficiency by July 1, 2018 and achieve a sufficient and stable base of volunteers by 2019.

Strategy:

To expand revenue streams in four primary sectors: **1. individual annual donations, 2. business sponsorships, 3. local government support, and 4. foundation grant development** with an emphasis on individual donations and business sponsorships. Additionally, a focus will be made on **enhancing the volunteer base**, which is the backbone of the MOW delivery system.

A central theme to achieving each goal of this plan will be engagement from our communities throughout the region. This includes Meal Site managers, members of the Senior Meals Advisory Committee, MOW volunteers, local businesses, local government, and civic organizations. The ability to achieve a strong and vibrant MOW program will greatly depend on the level of passion and participation from all of these critical partners.

Establishing a Foundation for Success:

The success of this strategy will depend on an effective MOW promotional campaign. This campaign will require adoption of a sharp, professional new brand for the Meals On Wheels program. OCWCOG will adopt the brand developed and made available by the national organization, Meals On Wheels America (formerly MOW Association of America). Brand adoption allows for some localized flare to the brand, yet also provides opportunity to ride the coattails of a national brand and advertising campaign.

With a sharp brand in hand, MOW Linn-Benton-Lincoln will execute an advertising and promotional campaign over a three-month period. While this will involve some conventional

multi-channel market advertising, the campaign will also emphasize other effective promotions, including articles in media throughout the region and the production of a short video that exhibits the real value of MOW to individuals in three communities across the region.

Additionally, it will be important to ensure that MOW has strong internal systems and processes to support a substantial increase in donations. In the early part of 2016, MOW will conduct a review of internal development operations, including acknowledgement and receipting processes, and make appropriate changes to ensure timeliness, accuracy, and consistency with branding and messaging in all donor-facing communications. Training will be also be provided to MOW staff to ensure proper recognition of donors and toward developing warm referrals of future donors.

Foundational work will include the development of a program mission, values, and vision. This will help guide the program for years to come, thus ensuring commitments stay on track with our mission, values, and vision.

Finally, another key to a strong foundation will be identifying and recruiting community allies throughout the region who will join with OCWCOG to make this a success. A Community Campaign steering committee will be formed that will include key community members to ensure that this effort is broad-based and widespread throughout the region.

Goal 1: Expand Individual Donation Receipts

This goal encompasses both the expansion of the current donor base (acquisition campaign) and increasing the average Return On Investment from each donor (cultivation campaign). The focus will be on two primary donor segments:

1. **Direct Mail:** MOW will contract with a professional direct mail firm to implement a data-driven annual direct mail strategy during 2016. This will include an acquisition component, designed to expand the number of active donors in the MOW database, and a cultivation component, designed to increase average giving levels among current donors.
2. **Affinity Giving:** MOW will establish a tiered, named giving society with progressively increasing benefits at each level. This giving society will be designed to strongly connect donors to their local sites as well as to the regional program, and will be advertised to key prospects identified in the existing donor database.
3. **Major Giving:** In consultation with the Community Campaign Steering Committee and site-based staff and volunteers, MOW will identify an initial list of 20 – 30 major donor prospects from the existing donor base and other community relationships. Individual, personalized cultivation plans will be developed for each of these relationships, and key staff, Board, Steering Committee members will be deployed as appropriate to conduct cultivation and solicitation.

Goal 2: Establish Business Sponsors

The Meals on Wheels is a very popular program with significant name recognition from the community, including the business community. Leveraging the national- and local-level branding campaigns, we will work to create an environment where businesses will want to sponsor MOW for positive public relations, or as an opportunity to promote their services or products.

As a first step, we will create a polished sponsorship marketing packet that offers specific, tangible sponsorship opportunities and clearly articulates the value proposition of a MOW sponsorship. We will invite members of the Community Campaign Steering Committee to promote these opportunities, and will train meal site staff to cultivate potential leads for business sponsors in their communities.

Goal 3: Increase Local Government Support

The Meals On Wheels program serves approximately 2,100 individuals each year across the three-county region. Given the value of providing nutrition and a safety check for their constituents, it seems reasonable that local governments will recognize MOW as a smart investment toward reaching the quality of life they seek for their residents.

A positive grassroots campaign in each county will be facilitated to encourage local residents to advocate with their elected officials to support MOW.

Goal 4: Foundation Grant Development

Expanded fundraising will require increased capacity for the MOW program. In addition, future opportunities for a local kitchen and establishing a more local food supply for the meals are all critical objectives toward developing stronger local partnerships and greater regional support for MOW.

Local and statewide foundations will be a good source of support for these projects as well as other capital campaigns required to sustain the MOW program.

Goal 5: Enhance Volunteer Base

Volunteers form the backbone of the MOW delivery system. Marketing and promotion activities implemented under the previous goals will also often include a call for volunteers to join the MOW program in their community. Additionally, MOW will actively seek relationships

with other key community institutions and partners to identify new sources of volunteers, including:

- Partnering with local United Ways to actively promote volunteer opportunities
- Strengthening the relationship between MOW and RSVP, specifically in the area of skills-based volunteerism to support areas such as office operations, donor acknowledgement, and marketing/promotion
- Mobilizing the Community Campaign Steering Committee to identify additional channels (workplaces, churches, schools, etc.) for volunteer recruitment
- Working with civic engagement and student life departments at OSU, LBCC, Western Oregon, etc. to engage student volunteers