

# Behaviorally informed intervention materials for “Increasing Voluntary Contributions at Congregate Meals Program Sites”



The Administration for Community Living (ACL)'s Administration on Aging in the Department of Health and Human Services piloted different methods of soliciting voluntary contributions for the congregate meals program. Congregate meals sites in Maryland were randomly assigned to receive one of two types of table tents highlighting a donation request, or to not receive any table tents.

The table tents did not significantly increase contributions in the pilot.

The materials below provide the content of the two versions of the table tents sent to sites, and describe the best practices adopted in these designs for effective communications.

This pilot also included an ask to congregate meals sites nationwide to share their strategies to increase voluntary contributions. The interventions shared as a result of this request are also included below.

The table tents were designed with three principles in mind: **make it personal**, **keep it simple**, and **make it salient**. (More information on designing effective communications can be found [here](#).) The way these principles were applied to the table tents is described below:

1

## Make it personal

Include site names and indicate how donating can help their community [relational version] or is relevant to the services the individual receives [reciprocal version].

2

## Keep it simple

Include just the essential information about the program to communicate the key message.

3

## Make it salient

Draw attention to the table tents and highlight the behavioral call to action with a relevant image.

For more information on this intervention or to start a conversation, **please contact [oes@gsa.gov](mailto:oes@gsa.gov)**.



## Westernport Senior Center



Thank you for being a part of our community!

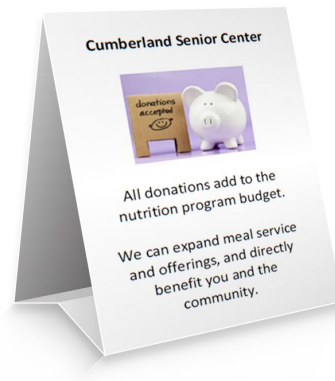
Your contributions help to keep the eating club a stable part of our community.

Include the site name to highlight the local effect of donations.

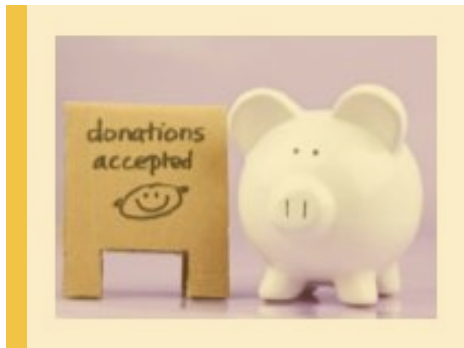
Include an image that brings to mind ideas of the community the donations support.

Highlight the relational nature of involvement in the program.

Keep content short and to the point to communicate the key message.



## Cumberland Senior Center



All donations add to the nutrition program budget.

We can expand meal service and offerings, and directly benefit you and the community.

Include the site name to highlight the local effect of donations.

Include an image that brings to mind the idea that the donations are a contribution to something that matters to the donor.

Keep content short and to the point to communicate the key message.

Highlight the reciprocal nature of a contribution to the program.

## Annex: Example Solicitations

Congregate meals sites from around the country shared examples of how they encourage participants to make voluntary contributions. We're including these for reference and have highlighted relevant behavioral insights.



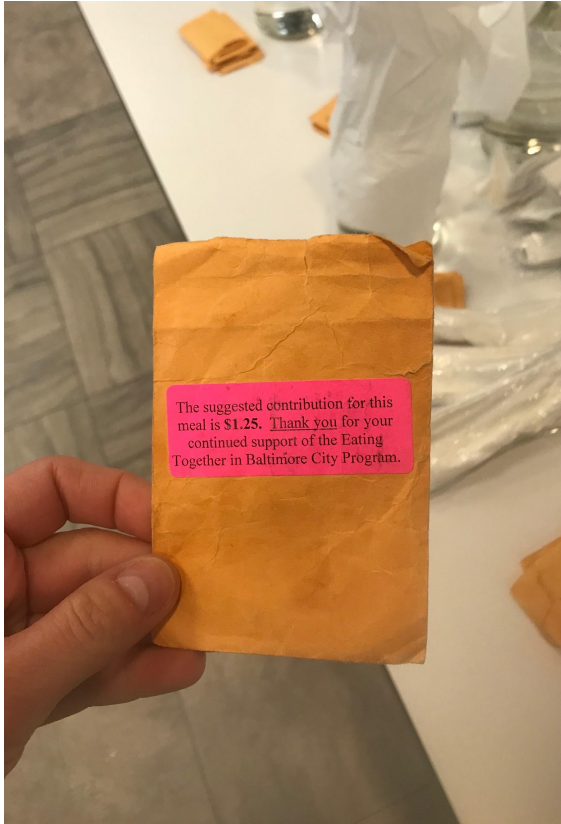
### Millen, Georgia

**Default:** Behavioral scientists can nudge behavior by redefining the passive route - or default - that is taken without need for an active choice.

In this site, a locked donation box is placed on the counter where clients receive their meals. Positioning it in the serving line makes the donation look like a **default** part of the meal process.

## Annex: Example Solicitations

Congregate meals sites from around the country shared examples of how they encourage participants to make voluntary contributions. We're including these for reference and have highlighted relevant behavioral insights.



## Baltimore, Maryland

***Salience:*** Highlighting information or the availability of resources makes something top-of-mind, in turn motivating action.

Donation envelopes were placed on the table where participants collect silverware and water for their meals. The placement of the envelopes was **salient** to participants, and it was natural for them to pick up an envelope along with the other items before sitting down to eat their meal.



## Annex: Example Solicitations

Congregate meals sites from around the country shared examples of how they encourage participants to make voluntary contributions. We're including these for reference and have highlighted relevant behavioral insights.



**Consumer Contributions**

The actual cost for providing your meal is **\$6.63**


You have the opportunity to make a voluntary contribution for your meal.

Contributions will be used to expand services.

Your contribution is confidential and the amount you choose to give is your choice.

Services will not be terminated or reduced if you choose not to contribute towards the cost of your service, as you are under no obligation.

Please call (336) 786-6155 ext. 233 for additional information.

 YVEDDI  
TRIMM VALLEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, LLC

\* Surry County Congregate Meals

## Boonville, North Carolina

**Anchoring:** Providing a benchmark for a particular belief or behavior can anchor people such that they are more likely to respond in line.

In this site, a notice is posted to serve as a daily reminder to participants about the cost of the service. The stated cost serves as an **anchor** to motivate donations. Indeed, research — including a [project](#) through the Office of Evaluation Sciences — has shown that anchors can lead to increases in both the number of people donating and the amount donated.

## Annex: Example Solicitations

Congregate meals sites from around the country shared examples of how they encourage participants to make voluntary contributions. We're including these for reference and have highlighted relevant behavioral insights.



### Your Donation Matters!

The meal you are enjoying today is similar to one from a local restaurant but costs much less. Our suggested donation is \$3.00 yet we are receiving only 96¢ per meal on average, creating a budget shortfall.

We hope that you understand the value and impact of your donation on this program.

Your generosity helps us to meet our expenses and provide more meals to seniors.

Compare the value	Local Restaurant Prices	Senior Café Site Suggested Donation
Spaghetti & Meatballs	8.00	
Tossed Salad w/ Dressing		
Italian Bread		
Milk	1.25	
Dessert	2.00	
Sub Total		
Tax	.71	
Tip	2.25	
Actual Total	\$14.21	\$3.00



## Greater Waterbury, Connecticut

**Reference dependence:** Setting a reference point can make options that are better than the reference point look even more appealing, and vice versa.

In this site, a placemat is disseminated at cafes to highlight the difference between the price of a meal at a local restaurant and the suggested donation at the Congregate Meals site. The price of the restaurant meal serves as a **reference point**, making the suggested donation seem comparatively low.

## Annex: Example Solicitations

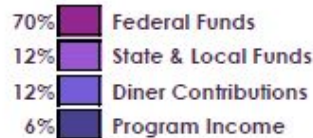
Congregate meals sites from around the country shared examples of how they encourage participants to make voluntary contributions. We're including these for reference and have highlighted relevant behavioral insights.



# Milwaukee County Senior Dining

## Your Contributions Make A Difference

### Where The Money Comes From



### Where The Money Goes

YEAR	NUTRITION PROGRAMS	ANNUAL COST
<b>2017</b>	Congregate Meals = 242,167 Meals on Wheels = 369,071 Total Meals Served = 611,238	\$ 5,065,913
<b>2016</b>	Congregate Meals = 256,384 Meals on Wheels = 356,529 Total Meals Served = 612,913	\$ 4,869,504
<b>2015</b>	Congregate Meals = 262,179 Meals on Wheels = 339,351 Total Meals Served = 601,530	\$ 4,879,442

WE RELY ON AND APPRECIATE  
YOUR PARTICIPATION & SUPPORT.

~THANK YOU!



Visit Milwaukee County Department on Aging Website: [www.county.milwaukee.gov/aging](http://www.county.milwaukee.gov/aging)  
Call Milwaukee County Senior Dining Office: (414) 289-6995

## Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**Cost Transparency:** Making the cost or funding process more transparent can increase trust and, ultimately, buy-in regarding the product or action.

In this site, a notice walks participants through how the senior dining programs are funded and what specifically donations contribute to. This **cost transparency** serves as an act of disclosure that participants may appreciate, in turn increasing their willingness to donate.