Safeguard Home Delivered Meals

The Knock

Behind closed doors across Wisconsin,

- 22,607 home-delivered meal (HDM) participants received meals **(*72% are age 75+,* 50% *live alone, reside in rural areas &/or are at high nutrition risk,* and *1 in 5 have lost weight unintentionally)*.**
- To qualify, participants cannot leave their homes unassisted or prepare adequate meals.
- Many live miles from affordable food (16% are food insecure). **25% *live on income at/or below poverty*** level.
- **One-third** have ***no one else coming to check on them or visit.***

So they WAIT… Wait for the knock, a warm meal, & to be seen. Home-delivered meal services offer proven solutions.

These Solutions Include:

- Reduced social isolation & loneliness
- Reduced health care costs and nursing home admissions, and increased ability to age in place
- Increased food security and improved diet quality
- Improved nutrition status
- Access to additional supports
- Reduced fall risk & increased home safety

"When you can't get outside, it is like being in solitary confinement. The knock, the meal, the visit- it's everything." *HDM Participant*



A Cost-Effective Investment

~$14 a day provides a meal, socialization, and a wellness check. We can serve an older adult **for an entire year for ~the same cost** as a day in the hospital or 10 days in a long-term care facility. (5)

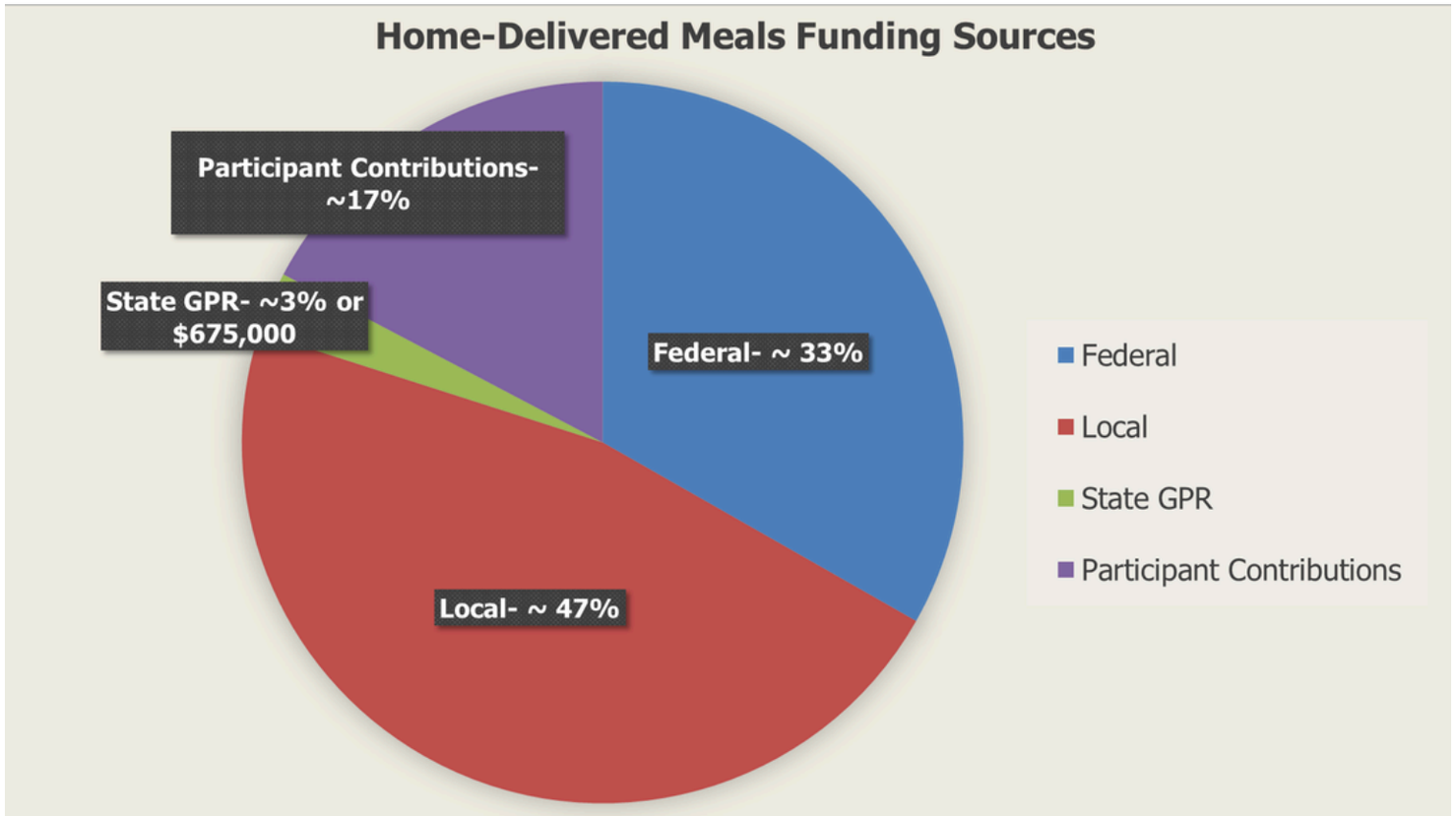
WI contributes less for HDMs than other Midwest states.
IL: $55.3M, MI: $11.7M, MN: ~$2.7M,
OH: ~$1.5M, WI: $675K

"That knock is the miracle coming…"

For more than 50 years, programs funded through the Older Americans Act (OAA) have helped adults age 60 and older remain safely and independently in their homes by providing Home-Delivered Meals. However, the system is stretched beyond its limits.

Today, **more than half (43) Wisconsin counties** report that they must **maintain waitlists, cannot serve their entire county, must prioritize who receives meals, &/or have reduced the number of meals provided each week.**

Flat or small funding increases despite rising food and delivery costs, growing demand, and a shortage of volunteers result in many programs being unable to offer meals to all eligible older adults.



The impact is significant:

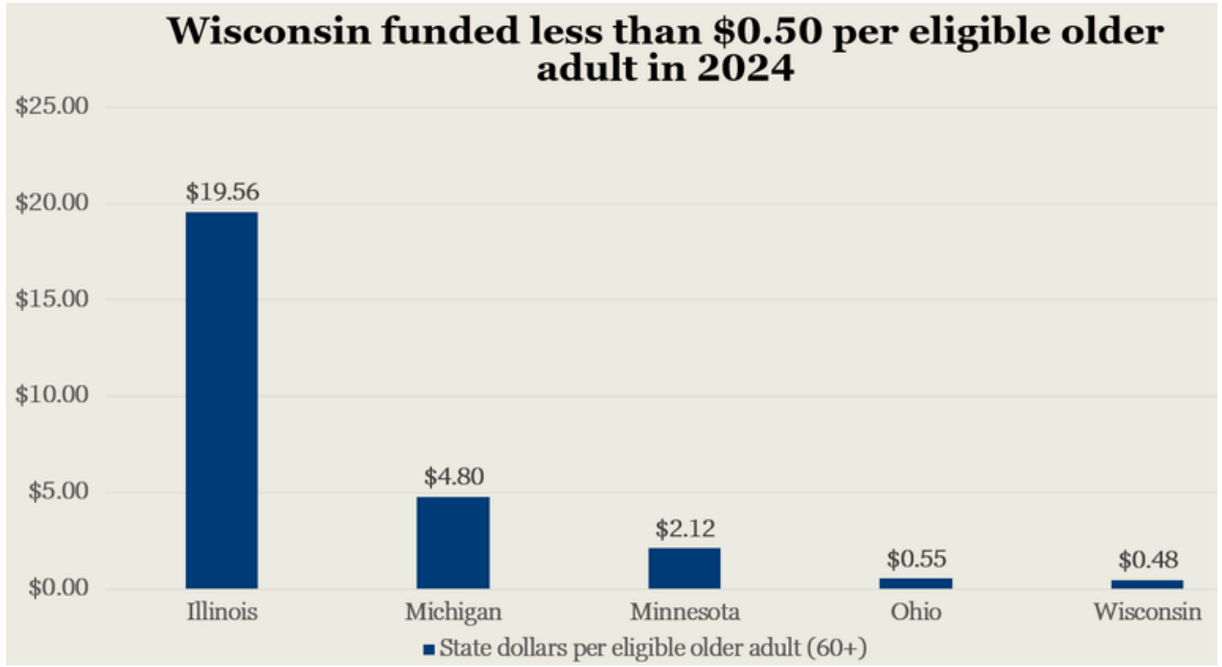
Hunger and Isolation put older Wisconsinites at risk for costly health issues

Home-Delivered Meal (HDM) programs **currently reach only about 1.95% of Wisconsin's adults age 60 and older.** Nearly 3 in 10 Wisconsinites will be age 60 or older by 2030. The avg. of state funding in the five Midwest states = $5.50/per eligible population.

Almost 95% have at least one chronic condition, and nearly 80% have 2 or more. **Most can be controlled or prevented by proper nutrition.**

With additional investment, more older Wisconsinites would have access to this basic support, leading to decreased risk for malnutrition, isolation, falls, hospitalizations, and premature nursing home placement — all of which carry far higher costs for families and taxpayers.

HDM services are one of the most cost-effective investments we can make to help older adults age safely in their communities.



Wisconsin's annual HDM meal program expenses are ~$39 million. Federal and State dollars combined provide ~$8.3 million, leaving a funding gap of ~$31 million and a heavy burden on local government & participants that is not sustainable. **We are asking for state funding of $5.50/per eligible population, ~ $7.7 million/year.**

Please help us end the wait.
Fund & Support Home Delivered Meals.

We urge you to prioritize funding and support for the OAA Home Delivered Meals Program. Join us in safeguarding the well-being and dignity of older Wisconsinites by ensuring they have continued access to this essential program!

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See Me, Deliver to Me

What do you see as you go by?

I am here, waiting for a knock, a home-delivered meal, a friendly face… but with limited volunteers and funding low, some days go by in empty space.

A warm meal is more than food. It's comfort, care, and a few moments of conversation and connection. It keeps me safe, strong, and seen.

Please see me, remember me, I am still here, still hoping, still real. Help bring meals to those like me, so every heart this service touches can heal.

Anonymous

Safeguard Meals on Wheels Sources:

1. Meals on Wheels America, National Snapshot 2026 https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/research/fact-sheet-supporting-senior-health-and-independence-while-saving-money/
2. Based on federal fiscal year (FFY) 2025 Home-Delivered Meal Expenditures
3. Wisconsin 2025 Older Americans Act Report
4. Wisconsin Statwide Advocacy Survey 4-30-26
5. Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources HDM Profile & Reports 3/26
6. Wisconsin FFY 2025 Expenditures Chart, Wisconsin Department of Health Services
7. "GWAAR Service Area Meal Prioritization-Waitlist Notification Form," Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc., 2024-2026