



Nevadans for the
Common Good

MEALS ON WHEELS IN NEVADA

Program Description: Meals on Wheels (MOW) is a program that currently provides a nutritious meal to an average of 4000 home-bound Nevada seniors every day in both urban and rural communities. Seniors run the risk of inadequate nutrition for a variety of reasons including the physical inability to purchase food or prepare meals, loneliness, and poverty. The health consequences of inadequate nutrition in term of physical and mental functioning, risk of or progression of disease, and premature institutionalization can be life-threatening. Whether recovering from a one-time health event or experiencing a long-term disability, this program can make the difference between maintaining independence or the need to move into a nursing home. Providing programs like MOW that enable seniors to remain in their homes has health benefits for the individual and cost savings to the state. Statistics from the Meals on Wheels America organization¹ demonstrate the cost savings. MOW decreases the rate of falls which cost our nation \$34 billion each year. The cost of providing a senior the Meals on Wheels program for one year is roughly the same cost as one day in a hospital. It is a win-win situation. **Nevadans for the Common Good recommends the state increase funding for this valuable program to cover the portion of the meal cost not covered with federal dollars in order to eliminate the waiting list and to adequately fund the program.**

Funding Details: Funding for the MOW program is a combination of federal and state dollars. Per 2014 figures², 43 states provide an equal or greater share of the program cost than the federal government. Nevada is just the opposite. In fact, Nevada is ranked lowest in the country for funding with current federal funding at \$3.9 million and only \$165,875 contributed by the state. Most, if not all, of the state money goes to the agencies providing meals in rural Nevada since they have disproportionately greater expenses. The cost for these agencies can be as high as \$11 per meal. The combined funding they receive doesn't cover their full cost, however, so they must supplement from their own budgets or fundraise to operate their programs.

79% of the meals based on allocation of the federal money³ (approximately 3,200 meals) are distributed by agencies in the urban areas of the state. The average cost to provide a meal in the urban areas is \$5.50. These programs receive slightly less than half this amount (\$2.65) in federal funding. The remainder of the meal cost must be covered by the agency providing the meals which has resulted in a waiting list of ~600 people primarily in Clark County. Someone recovering from a medical event can't wait weeks or months for this service. For individuals with ongoing long-term issues, a lengthy wait can lead to deteriorating health with higher medical costs and greater likelihood of placement in a nursing home.

Funding Request: Funding must be provided at a level that covers current meals plus the waiting list. **Nevadans for the Common Good recommends that the state appropriate \$5 million for this program in the next fiscal year.** Per our initial calculations, based on last years figures from the Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division that administers the program, this amount will cover program costs in both the urban and rural areas and eliminate the waiting list.

¹Meals on Wheels Nevada 2016 Fact Sheet, www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org

²<http://www.agid.aci.gov/DataGlance/SPR/>

³per conversations with Nevada Division of Aging and Disability Services personnel