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Catalyst Program Opens Funding Opportunities To Small and New Nonprofit Organizations

AgeOptions has created a program to actively work with new and/or small nonprofit organizations that would like to apply for grants to provide congregate meal sites or other programs for older adults. The new program, called Catalyst, will increase the availability of congregate dining by assisting organizations with limited experience with government grants or lack of financial support to establish a new congregate lunch site by working with AgeOptions staff.

Congregate, or group, dining provides nutritious meals and social interaction for older adults. AgeOptions currently supports 36 dining programs at senior centers and other locations that are open to all older adults, regardless of where they live.

Catalyst will enable AgeOptions to target specific geographic areas or populations, such as ethnic groups and LGBTQ older adults. "Grass-roots community organizations have community contacts and enthusiasm, and know how to provide a service," said Paula Bartolozzi, AgeOptions grants administrator. Often, though, they don't have experience applying for grants and operating services under grant requirements.

"This is an effort to expand the array of organizations we fund," Bartolozzi said. "We will help them learn how to manage a grant within Older Americans Act requirements and develop the skills for outreach and community collaboration. AgeOptions has been approached by many very enthusiastic and invested organizations in the past that haven't had the wherewithal to take on a grant program. We want to break that barrier."

It is hoped the new agencies will become independent grantees through AgeOptions support and guidance. The number of Catalyst agencies will be determined over the coming months based on AgeOptions' capacity to assist the new agencies.

For more information on Catalyst, contact Paula Bartolozzi, AgeOptions grants administrator, at paula.bartolozzi@ageoptions.org or (708)383-0258.