

Background

The purpose of the non-profit King County Meals on Wheels (KCMOW) is to deliver meals to the region's home-bound seniors.

Home-delivered meals help seniors maintain their health and continue living independently in their own homes by helping them avoid hospitalization and nursing home placement through improved nutrition (1).

Top Areas of Concern:

1. To bring meals into compliance with nutrition standards and better serve clients with various health conditions, KCMOW has had to substantially reduce the salt and fat content of its frozen meals.

➤ There is concern that the resulting alterations in taste may cause clients to decrease their meal intake or leave the program altogether.

2. Certain ethnic groups are underserved by KCMOW.

• An estimated 12.4% of the county's population of people 60 and older is Asian (2), yet only 3.75% of MOW clients identified themselves as Asian in 2012 (3).

• An estimated 11.6% of King County's older adults had limited English skills in 2011 (2), but only about 4.3% of clients in 2012 had limited English skills (3).

➤ These statistics suggest that large segments of the area's increasingly diverse senior population are not being reached.

Goal

Preemptively prevent clients from compromising their nutritional status due to meal dissatisfaction.+

Methods

- Frequent concerns, challenges and requests identified through a needs assessment
- Marketing copy aimed to educate clients on nutritional advantages of KCMOW meals and encourage them to try flavoring with herbs and spices.
- Grant proposal for ethnic frozen meal development
- Survey developed to enable more precise monitoring and evaluation of customer satisfaction

Top Meal-Related Customer Feedback and Proposed Interventions

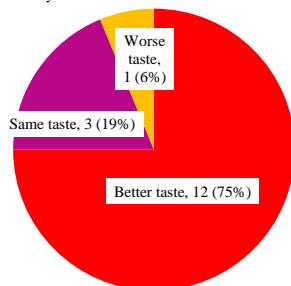
Request/Preference	Challenge	Potential Intervention(s)	Proposed Monitoring
Wider variety of fruits and vegetables (both fresh and cooked)	Cost prohibitive and logistically difficult to source, transport and store.	A spice blend offered as an optional condiment in packet form can enhance the flavor of the current vegetable side dishes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ KCMOW annual survey
Better overall flavor	Salt and fat cannot be used due to regulations and health concerns.	A spice blend offered as an optional condiment in packet form allows clients to control the intensity of flavor without adding salt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Follow-up to customer feedback via the Meal Feedback Survey on surveymonkey.com ◦ Meal-specific exit interview questions
More grain options besides white rice	Cost - the vendor would charge 50 cents more per meal for a side of brown rice.	A spice blend offered as an optional condiment in packet form can enhance the flavor of white rice.	
More fish dishes	The current vendor is unable to find a supplier who will guarantee that the fish they provide are boneless.	Find an alternate vendor or encourage the existing vendor to explore further options.	Continued monitoring of customer feedback, dialogue with the vendor regarding feasibility of additional fish options
More Asian-inspired meals	Current vendor is not equipped or staffed for ethnic meal development, and the addition of such meals may be cost prohibitive.	Apply for funding to develop ethnic frozen meals by partnering with the community centers that serve as congregate meal sites for 12 different ethnic groups in the Seattle metro area.	Grant money received - approximately \$45,000 is requested and necessary to fully implement the Frozen Ethnic Meal Development Project.

Study Design of the Mrs. Dash Field Test

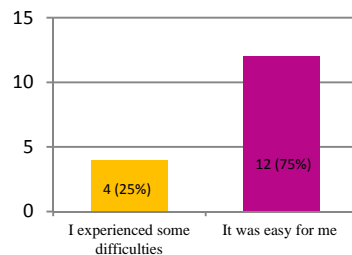
- A convenience sample of 20 existing KCMOW clients recruited and interviewed via phone
- Each sent 5 packets with 0.02 oz of Mrs. Dash Table Blend salt-free seasoning along with their regular meal deliveries
- Packets were obtained by the RD at Senior Services through Mrs. Dash's Dietitian Center
- A week after delivery, participants took a short phone survey

+ Graphs generated within SurveyMonkey.com for Selected Mrs. Dash Field Test Survey Questions

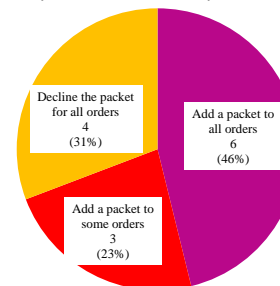
Response to the question:
Compared to the meal/side as you usually have it, what did you think of the meal/side with Mrs. Dash?



Response to question: How challenging was it to use the packets?



Response to Question:
If you had the option to add one spice packet to your dinner orders, would you:



Mrs. Dash Field Test Results

- 12 of 18 clients (67%) would like to keep getting the packets
- 6 of 18 clients (33%) would not want to get packets with their orders
- 3 of 20 clients experienced delivery problems with the packets
- 5 of 18 clients (28%) did not like the small size of the packets

Other Feedback / Highlights:

➤ A client recovering from a recent stroke gave up salt because she doesn't "want to die yet." The **packets made her happy – she didn't miss the salt** as badly.

➤ A caregiver speaking on behalf of her husband said that their top request was always fresh produce, but **Mrs. Dash was the next best thing to garden-fresh vegetables and herbs**.

➤ Several clients called MOW before their follow-up interview to **request more packets**.

Recommendations / Next Steps

- Offer one packet of Mrs. Dash Salt-Free Seasoning (Table Blend) with every dinner order.
- Initiate outreach efforts to convince Mrs. Dash of benefits of KCMOW sponsorship to their brand
- Develop ethnically appropriate frozen meals for ethnic communities underserved by KCMOW.
- Follow up with complaints/suggestions via the Meal Feedback Survey



References

1. Thomas KS, Mor V. *The Relationship between Older Americans Act Title III State Expenditures and Prevalence of Low-Care Nursing Home Residents*. Health Services Research. December 3, 2012.
2. "Table S0102: POPULATION 60 YEARS AND OVER IN THE UNITED STATES, 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates: King County, WA" (PDF file; 96 kb). Available at: <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>. Accessed 3/5/2013.
3. Meals on Wheels – King County. *All Sites New Unduplicated Clients 2012* [data file]. Unpublished raw data, February 2013.

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