Citymeals-on-Wheels

Suggested by: Ian Fraser

Current Request	$11,000	**Organizational Budget**	$39,925,358
Previous Grant Amount	$7,500	**Last Site Visit**	2024
Grants Since 1998	22	**Project Budget (if applicable)**	n/a
Total Grants Awarded	$143,868	**Purpose**	General Operating Support

Mission

To provide a continuous lifeline of nutritious food and human company to homebound elderly New Yorkers in need, helping them to live with dignity in their own familiar homes and communities.

Organization History

Founded in 1981, Citymeals-on-Wheels has delivered over 72 million meals to homebound older New Yorkers across all five boroughs. Serving nearly 22,000 adults aged 60+ annually who cannot shop or cook for themselves, the organization provides both short-term support and ongoing deliveries, often the only source of nutritious food for 14% of recipients. Citymeals employs 41 full-time and one part-time staff and is strengthened by nearly 17,000 volunteers annually. Working in partnership with NYC Aging and more than 50 community-based meal delivery organizations, case management agencies, older adult centers, and food pantries, Citymeals envisions a hunger-free New York City by 2040, uniting partners across sectors to combat elder hunger and reduce social isolation.

Recent research from the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute found that 60% of Citymeals recipients experience food insecurity despite receiving a daily home-delivered meal. As a result, Citymeals has continued to expand and evaluate programs addressing the finding that one daily meal is insufficient for many recipients. Evaluation includes participant surveys, interviews, case manager feedback, and food-security screening, with findings used to increase food choice, address barriers related to mobility and meal preparation and expand social connection programs.

Update on Last Grant and Current Request

The Vidda Foundation's support last year helped Citymeals maintain reliable meal service for approximately 22,000 older New Yorkers while expanding supplemental programs for those needing more than one meal per day. Key developments include:

- Breakfast Box reached 2,000 older adults, providing an additional daily meal through monthly deliveries of breakfast foods, frozen meals, and fresh produce. By April 2026, Citymeals had delivered more than 644,000 Breakfast Box meals; 90% of participants reported that the program

freed up money for other necessities, 81% said it helped manage a health condition, and 79% said it helped them avoid hunger.

- Mobile Grocery served approximately 600–700 older adults, delivering pantry staples, dairy, frozen meals, and fresh produce directly to their homes. An enhanced client-choice model reached more than 200 participants, with 93% reporting less worry about having enough food and 92% reporting grocery savings.
- Shopping Assistance served 100 older adults in Brooklyn, providing grocery vouchers and, in its second round, volunteer shopping assistance for participants facing mobility barriers. Among evaluated participants, very low food security declined from 36% to 26%, while high or marginal food security increased from 22% to 36%.
- Life Story Club expanded from four to seven weekly storytelling clubs serving more than 220 older adults, providing opportunities for connection among socially isolated and homebound participants. Among evaluated members, 96% reported a greater sense of community and 100% reported improved mood after attending.

Citymeals requests an increased renewal of $11,000 in general operating funding for its meal delivery programs. The organization identifies rising food, labor, packaging, and transportation costs along with the operational demands of expanding programs to accommodate food preferences, health and cultural needs, accessible ordering, and volunteer shopping support as primary challenges, which contributed to the increased funding request.

While Citymeals does not receive federal funding directly, changes in federal funding for its community-based partners are expected to increase demand or require Citymeals to fill service gaps. Administrative expenses are funded separately through support from the Citymeals' Board of Directors, New York City government grants, and other administrative grants, ensuring that all private funding, including funding from the Vidda Foundation, goes directly toward programs.

Notes

While the organization is projecting a $5.7 million operating deficit in FY 2027, Citymeals has substantial assets. The most recent audit shows unrestricted net assets of $81.3 million.