

## Guam Thinks Out of the Box, Delivers Bags of Produce to Older Adults

The Senior Nutrition Program of the Older Americans Act is a unique federal program for older adults. It offers nutritious meals, social opportunities of companionship and volunteerism, and a range of other services that allow older adults to remain healthy and independent at home in their communities. The COVID-19 pandemic called for flexible service provision to ensure access to nutritious, adequate, safe food for older adults. Working with partners has been critical. Below is one example from the network.



In June 2020, Guam’s State Office on Aging (GSOA) began searching for ways to supply healthy food options to seniors at home. The outcome, made possible by CARES Act funding, is now the “Mixed Local Produce Bag Initiative.”

First, the Farmers’ Cooperative Association of Guam (Co-op) put together \$25 bags of local vegetables and fruits. Then, GSOA connected with the University of Guam’s Cooperative Extension & Outreach (CE&O), part of the territory-wide Cooperative Extension System. CE&O advises farmers on promoting their local produce in hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, and village stores. Since things are different during a pandemic and places like hotels have minimal visitors, CE&O is helping the Co-op to be creative with their markets.



This market creativity means getting meals to older adults at home and offering drive-thru options. Produce bags are distributed to southern, central, and northern parts of territory through GSOA partnerships with senior centers, adult day centers, and transportation providers. Community members who are homebound can receive produce via delivery by nutrition program workers who deliver not only food but in-home services like case management.



The Mixed Local Produce Bag Initiative is a win-win-win in Guam. Older adults and caregivers safely receive fresh fruits and vegetables, making their meals more nutritious. The Farmers’ Co-op receives needed GSOA support during a time when some of the territory’s top revenue-driving industries, like hospitality, dwindle. And it’s a win for the University of Guam, which can promote its services and initiatives to aging community members.