



CASE STUDY

Meals on Wheels

Even for Meals on Wheels America (MOWA), with its 65+ year history of delivering fresh, hot meals to seniors across the country, funding challenges make it hard to keep up with growing demand. At a time when public funding is less dependable for critical programs like this, new financing strategies are needed to fuel operations and support scale. Seeing this story play out all over the country, and for many of its affiliates, MOWA got to work - first by ensuring the development of robust evidence supporting the link between its programs and healthcare outcomes, and second by exploring new sources of capital to build scaling capacity. “We knew we would have to clear some major hurdles to get access to more, and more reliable funding sources,” says Lucy Theilheimer, Chief Strategy and Impact Officer at MOWA; “this seemed like a perfect opportunity.”

Driven by the realities of serving patients with many complex health and social needs, and riding the wave of value-based purchasing, hospitals across the country also are feeling pressure to come up with new ways of reducing healthcare costs - especially for chronically-ill patients

whose hospital stays can quickly add up. Dr. Panagis Gal-iatsatos, Co-Director of Medicine for the Greater Good at Johns Hopkins grounded this change by sharing: “Caring for patients now is a 24/7 job. Hospital and clinical reach only goes so far.”

To address these converging demands, Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland (MOWCM) engaged with Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center to see whether - if supported with new capital investments - they could collectively deliver more value to those they serve. “We recognized that we had a role in the healthcare community but needed to understand how it worked within the community,” shared Stephanie Archer-Smith, Executive Director, Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland.

MOWA brought on Quantified Ventures to determine the resourcing and other needs of both organizations, to design a program that improves patient well-being while reducing overall costs for the hospital, and to sustainably fund MOWCM operations for high-need populations. Dr. Dan Hale, Special Advisor to the President of Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, shared the genesis of the opportunity within Hopkins Bayview. “This program appealed initially for two reasons: one, it seemed like a very good idea to offer enhanced services out in the community; two, it seemed like a new opportunity to secure funding from new sources. Budgets are tight, and the idea that upfront money would be available to launch a promising program made me willing to take this to the head of the hospital, Dr. Richard Bennett, who immediately saw its



Stephanie Archer-Smith, Executive Director,
Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland

“We want people to feel safe in their homes and our programs give them power to make the choice to age in place for themselves.”



Eugene, former chef and lifelong musician, Together in Care client living with COPD

“It’s hard to take the help, but I’m grateful for it and I’m in no position to argue.”

merits.” Throughout the process, Quantified Ventures helped to identify and align the interests of all parties, define critical outcomes, navigate institutional and governmental policies, secure resources to launch the pilot, and estimate potential program impact in economic and human terms.

In January 2019, Together in Care, the pilot program developed through the partnership between MOWCM and Hopkins Bayview, debuted. Its aim is to serve a food insecure senior population following hospitalization for one of four chronic diseases including diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), so that they are supported in their homes with both nutritious meals and visits during recovery. In addition to addressing the basic needs of home-bound seniors with complex health conditions, the program aims to reduce future hospital visits.

Each time a Medicare patient enters the hospital for any reason, the financial costs are high, to say nothing of the stress, concern, and displacement that the patient feels.

The Together in Care program is designed to ensure that any future hospitalizations are clinically necessary, and not the result of inadequately addressed social needs; doing so will reduce costs to Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center associated with insurance penalties if patients return to the hospital within a 30-day window. This drives a shared benefit for all parties. Participating seniors see improved health outcomes; Hopkins enhances the quality of care delivered and reduces costs; and Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland taps in to new and sustainable funding for its programs. Win, win, win.

The program effectively serves as an extension of the medical team at the hospital. Through Together in Care, MOWCM delivers in-home safety checks to help patients avoid falls, asks specific questions of the clients’ health, provides prompts such as medication reminders, and engages socially to help minimize loneliness and depression. These benefits can be achieved with just a 15-30 minute visit to the senior’s home. And, if these benefits lead to reductions in unnecessary hospital stays, then the cost of directly supporting the program would be far less than the penalty of having clients return to the hospital. Meanwhile the seniors can “age in place” in a way that

best serves their needs. Dr. Hale outlines this further, “[Through the program], we are able to identify those first signs of a problem in real time, and get that information back to the medical system. If there is new pain or weight change, or trouble breathing, then that gets to the medical team right away.” While the results are just beginning to come in, there are several positive indicators for program participants, MOW, and Johns Hopkins alike (see “Impact by the Numbers”), including a 78 percent improvement in medication compliance and management. While the pilot is still under way, these are encouraging results.



Richard G. Bennett, M.D., President, Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center

“Our new partnership with Meals on Wheels will not only build on our long tradition of developing innovative models, but also will allow us to prove that the provision of healthy meals by trained volunteers to our patients at highest risk for hospital re-admission can improve patient outcomes and lower health care costs.”

“It was a roll up your sleeves process,” Archer-Smith offered about the financial design process led by Quantified Ventures. She added, “Sustainable funding is everyone’s desire.” In success, this pilot program with MOW Central Maryland is meant to serve as a test case to broaden the offering through an outcomes-based financial transaction. And that’s just the start. “At the end of the day we want to make sure we can replicate this,” said Dr. Galitsatos. ***“Combining nutrition, safety, and housing in order to have better health outcomes - this is the 21st century medical revolution.”***

Impact by the Numbers:

Project Status: Ongoing

Reporting Period: Jan-July 2019

- **3,159 meals delivered** to unduplicated clients
- **78% improvement** in medication compliance
- **33% reduction** in reported fear of falling
- **50% reduction** in the incidents of falls



**Quantified
Ventures**

Quantified Ventures is an outcomes-based capital firm that drives transformative health, social, and environmental impact. Visit the company’s website (<https://www.quantifiedventures.com/>) for more information on how Environmental Impact Bonds or other outcomes-based financing could address your needs.