

Purpose

In August 2018, Meals on Wheels Texas (MOWT) began a study to better understand how the association might play a role in ensuring that all older adults who need a meal get one.

Goals

- ✓ Ensure that all older adults in Texas have access to home-delivered meals (HDM) should they need them.
- ✓ Identify ways to expand our service area throughout the state while preserving as many of the additional services and supports offered by traditional, nonprofit providers.
- ✓ Strengthen the overall home-delivered meal network in the state.
- ✓ Define and begin building a scalable foundation to support the HDM network in adapting and responding to changing market conditions and the needs of managed care organizations.

Methodology



Surveyed programs across the state about their services, coverage area, and capacity to produce more meals and store pre-prepared meals,



Conducted meetings with programs in each of the 11 Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC) regions across the state to learn more about coverage and barriers, and



Mapped the resulting services by county and zip code.

Findings

327
programs

identified across the state of Texas

These programs provide meals in 236 counties across the state with some counties having multiple programs and some having only one provider.

236
counties

have HDM providers

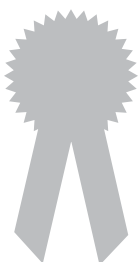
There are only 18 counties in the state where MOWT could not identify a home-delivered meal program. The majority of these counties are sparsely populated. See the next page for a map of coverage by county.

Meals On Wheels programs are not all the same.



Some programs are large organizations that serve one or multiple counties. Others are small, often formed by local churches or activity centers to meet a community need. Some programs have a website. Others are simply found through word of mouth. Some receive public funding, and some rely exclusively on private donations.

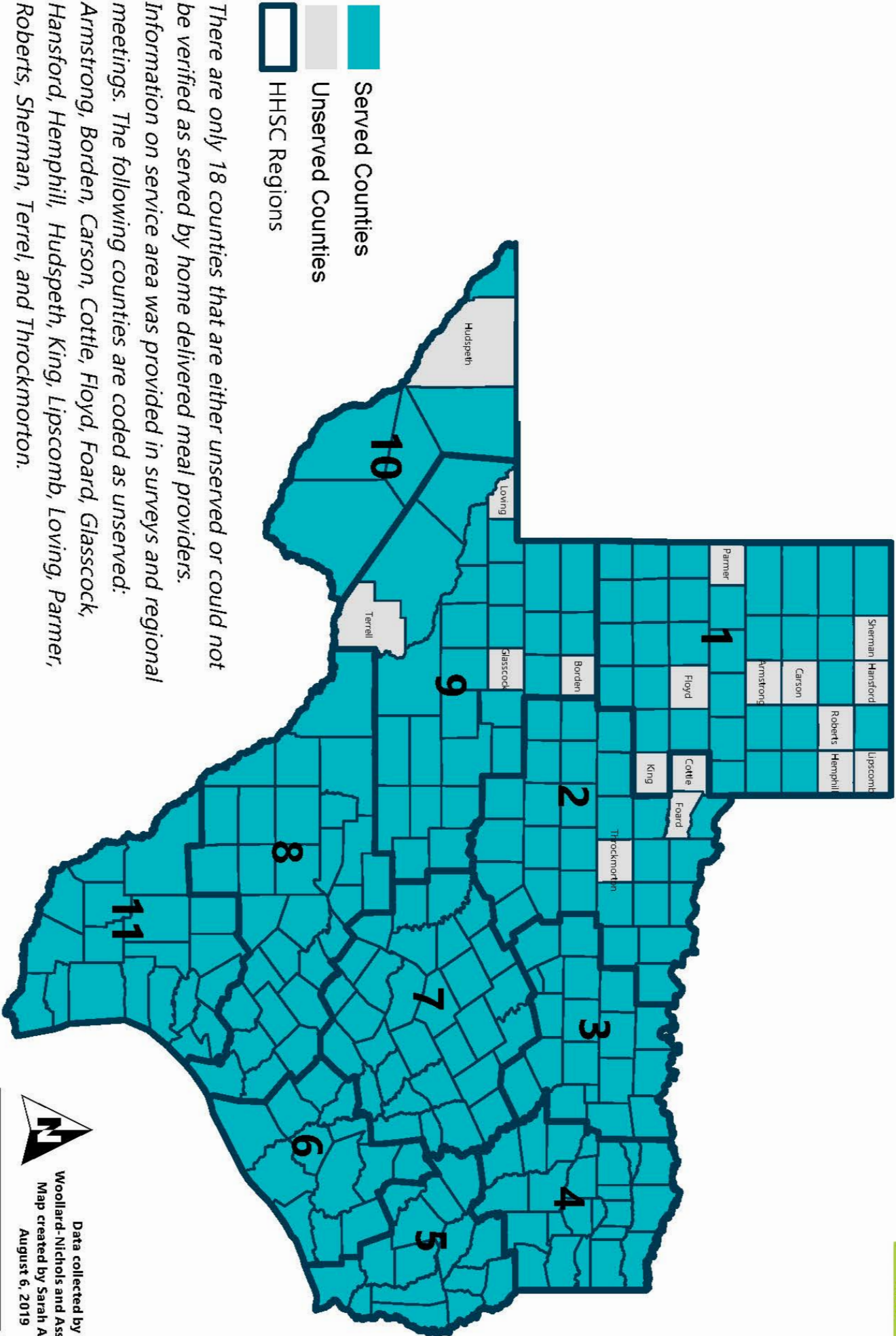
Most of these programs meet the “gold standard” which is defined as providing a hot meal five days a week. Others combine hot and frozen meals, often for individuals who live at a distance from the program, and a few provide only frozen meals.



Programs also vary in terms of the types of wrap-around services they offer. Some only provide the signature Meals on Wheels meal delivery to older adults who are homebound. Others provide additional meal programs such as congregate meals which allows more active seniors to gather and share a meal and other support services, such as wellness checks, pet support, and home repair services.

Service Area by County

Counties Served by Home Delivered Meal Providers



There are only 18 counties that are either unserved or could not be verified as served by home delivered meal providers. Information on service area was provided in surveys and regional meetings. The following counties are coded as unserved: Armstrong, Borden, Carson, Cottle, Floyd, Foard, Glasscock, Hansford, Hemphill, Hudspeth, King, Lipscomb, Loving, Parmer, Roberts, Sherman, Terrell, and Throckmorton.

DISCLAIMER: Served counties were identified by Meals on Wheels providers through electronic and phone surveys conducted between November 2018 and March 2019. This map represents the most current data available and may be subject to change.

Data collected by
Woollard-Nichols and Associates
Map created by Sarah Axe on
August 6, 2019





Primary Findings

- Local HDM providers already cover the vast majority of the state.
- There is capacity and willingness among local HDM providers to provide additional meals to unserved areas as long as additional resources are identified.
- Local programs are well positioned to serve unserved areas as they know their clients and provide additional wrap-around supports and safety checks.
- Serving unserved areas will require additional resources as volunteer drivers generally are not well equipped for traveling long distance or challenging routes, so paid drivers may be necessary.
- It will take a considered and coordinated approach to move to implementation with a thoughtful oversight group.



Findings from Regional Meetings

- Every region has its own unique qualities that will need to be addressed to create a seamless statewide network.
- There is capacity to produce and store additional meals in every region.
- The average longest delivery route was 25-30 miles from the main distribution point, although several organizations had routes of 100 miles or more (the longest was 140 miles).
- There is interest in partnering with other community organizations in unserved areas to provide food distribution and volunteer coordination.
- The primary reasons for not serving meals in unserved areas are: lack of financial resources, lack of vehicles/appropriate vehicles, lack of volunteers, and challenging terrain (thus the need for specialized vehicles).
- There was general agreement that there needs to be a coordinated and centralized approach to addressing unserved areas.
- The average cost for producing and delivering a meal exceeded current state reimbursement rates.
- Some organizations would appreciate capacity building support to assist them to be able to serve unserved areas.
- There is a desire for coordinated awareness campaigns to raise awareness of the home-delivered meal network.
- Every region agreed that it would be helpful to continue meeting to address strategic issues facing home-delivered meal providers.
- The level of volunteer engagement varied drastically from region to region.
- The majority of meal referrals come from family/friends/peers or community resources such as nursing assistants. On average programs reported between a quarter and a third of referrals come from HHSC or the AAAs.



Next Steps

To develop and cultivate a statewide network, there are certain steps that need to be in place to make that a reality. Pilot projects must test the feasibility of proposed models and additional support must be offered by promoting relationships among programs, offering critical learning opportunities to support programs working within the network, and assisting programs with their equipment and technology needs. Specific next steps include:



Conduct a pilot with one of these potential service models:

- Hub and Spoke
- Alternate meal delivery
- Delivery Sharing



Provide ongoing technical and capacity assistance to local Meals on Wheels providers to enhance their ability to participate in a statewide network:

- Continue regional meetings
- Assist with attending statewide conference
- Provide mentorship



Explore funding options to help programs upgrade equipment and technology.



Advocate for meals reimbursement to cover the cost of meals and delivery.



Enhance Meals on Wheels Texas infrastructure to support ongoing networking efforts.



Promote statewide awareness of Meals on Wheels.