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CHEROKEE NATION®
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Office of the Principal Chief

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Principal Chief
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Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief
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October 29, 2025

TO: Shella Bowlin, Secretary of State
FR: Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief
CC: Bryan Warner, Deputy Chief
Cabinet / Sub-cabinet
Brittany Denny, Executive Director of Human Services
Taralee Montgomery, Senior Policy Advisor
Council Leadership

**Administrative Memorandum Directing the Expansion of and Renaming of the
Cherokee Nation Senior Nutrition Program to the Cherokee Nation Elder
Nutrition Program Utilizing up to \$2m of PHWFA Funds**

The purpose of this memorandum is to direct the renaming of the Cherokee Nation Senior Nutrition Program to the Cherokee Nation Elder Nutrition Program and to expand the program utilizing funds authorized by the [Public Health and Wellness Fund Act, as amended](#).

I. Background

Cherokee Nation operates the [Senior Nutrition Program](#) through the Human Services Department at [15 sites](#) across the Cherokee Nation reservation. Some sites are located on Cherokee Nation owned property and other sites are located on third party property. The program is funded by a mix of federal funds provided under [Title VI of the Older Americans Act](#) and Cherokee Nation general revenue funds, with a small amount of funding supplied by participant fees. The budget for FY 26 is approximately \$1.13 million, consisting of approximately 75% Cherokee Nation general fund revenue.

The benefits senior nutrition programs are self evident, A 2020 scientific review of relevant nutrition programs found¹:

¹ Sadarangani, Tina R. PhD, et al, "Enriching Nutrition Programs to Better Serve the Needs of a Diversifying Aging Population," *Family & Community Health* 43(2):p 100-105, April/June 2020, retrieved October 22, 2025, [Enriching nutrition programs to better serve the needs of a diversifying aging population - PMC](#)

Among the many favorable outcomes are (1) improved nutritional intake, (2) more resources for health-promoting activities and medical care, and (3) support so that functionally impaired older adults can remain in their own homes.

Participants in our Senior Nutrition Program no doubt experience these benefits. Culturally, communal dining among our elders surely yields additional benefits. The act of socializing by Cherokee elders with other Cherokee elders in a safe and caring environment is itself, “good medicine.” Additionally, Cherokee Nation’s vast array of support programs can also be brought to bear to assist elders our Human Services staff encounter through this program. Thus, our elder nutrition program is often a gateway for elders to Cherokee Nation housing, health, public health and language programs.

Our own 2023 analysis² of the program revealed opportunities to expand and improve the program. The 2023 analysis included recommendations for adding sites and recommendations to upgrade and expand specific existing sites. Based on that analysis the program expanded into Stillwell earlier this calendar year. A copy of that 2023 analysis by then Deputy Secretary of State Taralee Montgomery is attached as **Exhibit A**.

Relatedly, during the past six years Cherokee Nation has made significant investments in community building infrastructure, including a number of sites with commercial kitchens.

Under PHWFA, as amended, nutrition qualifies as “Public Health and Wellness Activities and Infrastructure,” making programs such as senior nutrition presumptively eligible for funding under the Act. On October 21, 2025, pursuant to that Act, I issued the FY 2026 PHWFA Spending Framework, which included the following authorized spending area:

- **\$2.3m PHW Elder Nutrition and Elders in Need Program Supplement**
 - *Expansion and improvements of sites, frequency, user experience and third-party partnerships for the Cherokee Nation Elder Nutrition Program, formerly known as “Senior Nutrition.” NTE \$2m.*
 - *Increase Elders in Need program bi-annual utility payments and/or increase maximum participation ceiling, NTE \$320k.*
 - *Administered by Human Services.*

The PHWFA annual spending framework is effective October 31, 2025.

² Montgomery, Taralee, Cherokee Nation Deputy Secretary of State, “Senior Nutrition Site Review,” November 21, 2023, copy on file in Administration.

II. Directive

The Secretary of State should implement a renaming and expansion of the Senior Nutrition Program as follows, utilizing up to \$2m of PHWFA funds.

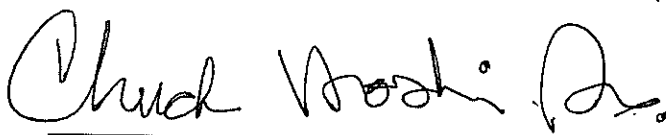
- A. **Rename the Program “Cherokee Nation Elder Nutrition”:** Effective **November 1, 2025**, the program is renamed the Cherokee Nation Elder Nutrition Program to better align with culturally based nomenclature. Renaming a longstanding program will take some time to achieve both in terms of formal reference, internal and external program materials, etc, as well as internalizing the new name in day-to-day casual discussion. The program should fully implement the name change by the end of FY 26 but should immediately begin changing signage, program materials, etc.
- B. **Update and Improve Branding, Public Outreach:** By **December 15, 2025**, the program should make substantial improvements to its branding and public outreach materials. This must include improvements to the program’s webpage on the Cherokee.org website, which is buried under layers of pages and consists of two PDFs, one with program rules and one with sites. From signage at program sites, to community meeting flyers to the aforementioned web page, the site must improve
- C. **Expand to up to three new sites, starting with Dewey:** The program should expand to up to three sites by the end of FY 2026, beginning with an immediate expansion to Dewey to be completed no later than **December 15, 2025**. The Cherokee Nation Community Building in Dewey is already the site of Human Services program staff, Career Services program staff and is managed under a lease by Cherokee Cultural Community, a CCO participating organization. The facility has a commercial kitchen space is a safe location and ample parking. As for up to two additional sites, the Secretary of State should make recommendations for such further expansion taking into account the findings of the 2023 analysis and an updated review of population statistics, proximity to appropriate Cherokee Nation owned facility, relative need and geographic equity, all in consultation with Human Services leadership.
- D. **Increase Days Per Week, Ideally all Sites at Five Days Per Week:** By the end of FY 26 we should maximize the days per week operations of each site. Ideally, all sites will operate five days per week by the end of FY 2026. However, local demand and the sharing of staff between geographically proximate sites may necessitate two or three day per week schedules. Five Days per week per site should be the standard achieved by the end of FY 26 unless the Executive Director seeks and obtains a waiver from this office for particular sites based on good cause shown. In working towards this goal, our 2023 analysis² is instructive:

*Moving forward CN Senior Nutrition Sites should operate on either a M,W,F or a T-TH schedule with larger sites ,or sites considered deserts, operating M-F. It should be the goal of the Cherokee Nation Human Services department to have **a senior nutrition site operational full time in the communities with the highest concentrations of Cherokee Nation elders (age 60+, more than 900 elders).** Additionally, **food should be available full time to elders living in areas that have been identified previously or in the future as “food deserts” by the Cherokee Nation.** (emphasis in original)*

- E. **Make Capital and Equipment Investments:** By the end of FY 26 complete appropriate capital equipment investments at all sites, as warranted. This includes, when approved by this office, repairs, expansions and remodels at non-CN sites. As an interim step, a site-by-site review of capital and equipment needs should be completed by **November 15, 2025.**
- F. **Reinstate Activities Program:** By the end of FY 26 all sites should have completed or scheduled for completion specific field trip activities and on site social and/or cultural activities.
- G. **Implement PHW Elder Nutrition Partners Grants at Up to Two Sites:** By **January 15, 2026**, fully implement a “PHW Elder Nutrition Partners Grant,” to provide substantial, sustaining annual support of up to two existing elder nutrition sites operated by CCO participating organizations. Are target support level should be 1/3, with an appropriate MOU to maintain minimal standards.

III. Conclusion

The PHWFA, as amended, elevates nutrition as a national priority. Our existing Senior Nutrition Program provides substantial nutritional support for many Cherokee elders across the reservation and is therefore an opportunity to scale up and improve that program as a means for reaching more elders, doing so more effectively and achieving even greater outcomes that attend nutrition programs. The renamed and expanded Cherokee Nation Elder Nutrition Program should be implemented immediately, as directed herein.



Chuck Hoskin, Jr.
Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation



EXHIBIT A

Memo

Cherokee Nation
Office of the Principal Chief
Chuck Hoskin Jr.

To: Chuck Hoskin Jr., Principal Chief
From: Taralee Montgomery, Deputy Secretary of State

CC: Shella Bowlin, Secretary of State; Canaan Duncan, Deputy Secretary of State;
Jennifer Kirby, Human Services Executive Director

CC:

Date: November 21, 2023

Re: Senior Nutrition Site Review

Through a combined effort a review was done of the Cherokee Nation Senior Nutrition Sites and the information is detailed below.

Currently there are 14 sites operational. Under this new review it is proposed to provide 9 part-time sites (two or three days per week) and 5 full-time sites (M-F) with an additional 2 new full-time sites for a total of 16 Senior Nutrition Sites. This review also includes;

- 1) consolidation of resources for efficiency and fiscal responsibility
- 2) expanded access to meals via van services and meal delivery
- 3) increased wages for employees
- 4) a review of areas with highest concentrations of elders who are underserved.

Simple changes resulting from the review is the 1) a policy change to dictate an elder being any Cherokee Nation citizen who is 60+ and to dictate the quality or mechanism of food provided. 2) The development of an activities coordinator to serve at the sites for activities for the participants.

Increased wages for Cherokee Nation Senior Nutrition Site Employees and budget considerations –

It was reported by Human Services that the total budget (attachment A) for senior nutrition sites is \$1,098,850 annually through a combined series of funds. After reviewing the budget employees who are serving at senior nutrition sites should be raised from \$13/hr to \$15/hr remaining consistent with the standard indicated in the Executive Order of employee wages.

An activities coordinator is noted in the budget for nutrition sites at \$34,912 with a budget for supplies at \$30,000/year. Activities coordinators should be implemented but this can be absorbed into other duties in Human Services. Coordinators should be actively engaged with CNB National Treasurers, CCO and other internal

groups to provide classes and outreach to elders. Activity coordinators should operate much the same as cooks with shared sites.

Review of Policies and Procedures –

Cherokee Nation Human Services should amend current policies to include two mandates.

- 1) an elder should be considered any Cherokee Nation citizen age 60+
- 2) Cherokee Nation Human Services should consult with Public Health and Cherokee Nation Health Services to review the menu and dietary guidelines for elder nutrition sites, including a mandate of cooked food vs. frozen or reheated meals.

Expansion and review of operational sites –

1. Current operational sites broken down by location and district include –

District #1
Wisdom Keepers
Dry Creek
Caney/Taliholt
District #2
Greazy
Oaks
Kenwood
District #3
Evening Shade
Belfonte
Marble City
Tsa-La-Gi
Porum
District #4
Nowata
Spavinaw
District #5
Foyil

2. A review of Cherokee Nation citizens, elders age 60+, indicated the need for expansion in three communities where the number of elders exceeded 1000.

Tulsa, Oklahoma – 3718 elders located in Tulsa proper, with two known external partners in that area.

Tahlequah, Oklahoma -1926 elders are located in or near Tahlequah proper. Currently Cherokee Nation and HACN operate one site at Wisdom Keepers near downtown Tahlequah. It is the belief of this review that the existing site cannot accommodate the full need and a site should exist in a more rural area near Tahlequah or in a more general location in Tahlequah.

Additionally, there are three sites listed below with high concentrations of elders who would qualify but, have other resources in the area *OR* do not have viable resources to produce CN Senior Nutrition Sites currently.

Muskogee, Oklahoma – 1385 Cherokee Nation citizens age 65+ are located in rural communities surrounding Muskogee including communities like Braggs, Gore and Ft. Gibson and Summit. All of which have locally operated nutrition sites in their communities.

Stilwell, Oklahoma – 1029 Cherokee Nation citizens age 65+ are located in or near Stilwell proper. Currently Cherokee Nation operates a site in Greasy and two external sites are operated in Stilwell and Westville.

Bartlesville, Oklahoma – 962 elders located in Bartlesville proper and surrounding, with one known external partner in that area. We do not recommend engaging in a site in the Bartlesville area because of the relationship that exists between Delaware (the other provider).

Consistency review –

Moving forward CN Senior Nutrition Sites should operate on either a M,W,F or a T-TH schedule with larger sites, or sites considered deserts, operating M-F. It should be the goal of the Cherokee Nation Human Services department to have a senior nutrition site operational full time in the communities with the highest concentrations of Cherokee Nation elders (age 60+, more than 900 elders). Additionally, food should be available full time to elders living in areas that have been identified previously or in the future as “food deserts” by the Cherokee Nation.

Review of Existing sites-

Sites that are currently operational should be further reviewed for functionality, including open days. We reviewed the existing sites based on staffing, scheduling, resources and number of eligible elders. Our recommendations are to combine resources and create a part-time and full-time schedule. Benefits include, more stable employment for staff, more fellowship opportunities for elder participants and more reliable resources for elders.

The current sites require a review and some attention based on their size and/or equipment, as follows;

Marble City Senior Nutrition, currently located at 711 N. Main – it is recommended that this site needs repairs/expansion and should be combined with services available at the new Marble City Community Building.

Evening Shade Community Center, currently located at 453929 E. 995 Rd. – This site is on the CCO list for FY 2024 Capital improvements.

Greasy Community Center, currently located at 467505 E. 932 Rd. – This site is in need of substantial repairs and improvements and is not on the CCO list for FY 2024 capital improvements.

Oaks Senior Center, currently located at 324 E. Cherokee BLVD. – this site is not owned by the Cherokee Nation and it is recommended that space owned by the tribe be allocated for this use in the same community.

Nowata Senior Center, currently located at 1018 Lenape Drive – this site is small but, owned by Cherokee Nation. Opportunities for expansion should be explored for this site.

Kenwood Senior Center, currently located at 1147 County Road 487, - this nutrition site should relocate to the new Community Building in Kenwood upon its completion and provide daily van and delivery service to community members.

Sites that are recommended to see changes –

Sites that are recommend to see changes to their services are as follows;

Oaks Senior Nutrition Site – When this site relocates to the new Oaks Community Building, a new schedule of Tuesday and Thursday should be instituted with van service and delivery available to Kenwood location on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. This approach would employ a van driver at the Oaks site on off days (M,W,F) and still provide access to meals.

Marble City Senior Nutrition Site – This site is located in a food desert and currently serves M-TH. This site should be relocated to the new Marble City Community Center and extend its service to be M-F.

Spavinaw Senior Nutrition Site – This site should be moved from a M,TU, Wed schedule to a M,W,F schedule to remain consistent with needs in the area. The Kenwood site is 20 minutes away and currently feeds M-F and provides van access.

Foyil Senior Nutrition Site – is a unique model and should remain open at least one day per week, with the current operations occurring on Tuesday or Tuesday/Thursday schedule.

Implementation of van delivery services of drive-thru sites –

Cherokee Nation Human Services should complete further review on sites that could utilize delivery services to reach more elders who may be home bound or are not aware of our program.

Partnerships with Cherokee Nation Community Centers/ CCO –

It is the opinion of this review that Senior Nutrition sites should pair up with Cherokee Nation Community Centers were applicable. These partnerships should be mutually beneficial for CCO, HACN and Human Services in that Senior Nutrition sites in that the Cherokee Nation space cost pool policy should apply. There are several cases that already exist proving that this partnership is beneficial. For FY 2024 a formal MOA partnership should be in place with community centers who would like to serve as nutrition sites. This will include but is not limited to;

- A formal MOA between the community org, Human Services and CCO
- Guidelines on when the center is required to be open for nutrition purposes.
- Standard financial allocation amounts as prescribed by the Cherokee Nation Elder Nutrition program.

Partnerships with the Housing Authority of the Cherokee Nation and external entities –

It is the opinion of this review that CN Senior Nutrition Sites that currently exist inside HACN properties should be improved. These partnerships should include agreements for space, staffing and activities provided to elder participants.

Please see the following pages for budget information -

Congregate meals by site:

CONGREGATE MEALS
FY'23

	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	TOTAL
District #1													
Wisdom Keepers	388	449	364	375	409								2,075
Dry Creek	0	0	0	115	161								276
Caney/Tailhot	121	127	181	179	157								765
District #2													
Greasy	0	0	0	143	0								143
Oaks	249	233	199	213	185								1,079
Kenwood	402	341	461	422	588								2,214
District #3													
Evening Shade	220	205	272	256	293								1,246
Belfonte	139	127	122	124	140								652
Marble City	474	482	486	451	580								2,473
Tsa-La-Gi	297	281	314	318	414								1,624
Perum	377	377	413	360	326								1,883
District #4													
Nowata	53	15	0	0	0								68
Spavinaw	79	107	98	79	101								464
District #5													
Foyil	74	59	47	43	70								293
	2,972	2,903	2,985	3,108	3,484								15,252

Home delivered meals by site:

FY '23

	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	TOTAL
District #1													
Wisdom Keepers	0	0	0	0	0								0
Dry Creek	192	216	216	10	24								658
Caney/Tailhot	14	27	29	20	19								109
District #2													
Greasy	244	296	260	32	185								1017
Oaks	23	89	77	90	73								352
Kenwood	131	132	159	155	213								790
District #3													
Evening Shade	146	133	170	162	144								755
Belfonte	55	92	92	74	86								389
Marble City	21	13	4	0	36								74
Tsa-La-Gi	98	109	129	100	138								570
Perum	116	123	122	138	116								613
District #4													
Nowata	10	4	0	0	0								14
Spavinaw	0	0	0	0	0								0
District #5													
Foyil	17	24	3	7	16								67
Totals	1065	1258	1251	786	1048								5408

Budget associated with current sites –

Food: 5-days a week meal site serving 25 participants daily

\$2,500 per month = \$25,000

\$3,000 November & December = \$6,000 = \$31,000

2-3 days a week meal site serving 25 participants

\$1,250 per month = \$12,500

\$1,500 November & December = \$3,000 = \$15,500

Full time: Cook	\$13.00	\$34,912	40 hours
Part time: Cook	\$13.00	\$26,184	30 hours
Part time: Transporter	\$13.00	\$26,184	30 hours

Existing grocery costs by site:

	April-23	May-23	June-23	Jul-23	August-23	Sep-23	October-23	Nov-23	December-23	Jan-24	February-24	Mar-24	TOTAL
District #1													
Wisdom Keepers	\$ 2,101.58	\$ 2,421.16	\$ 2,310.97	\$ 1,758.51	\$ 70.15								\$ 8,662.35
Dry Creek	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,487.03	\$ 1,887.60								\$ 3,344.63
Caney/Talbot	\$ 1,040.02	737.78	\$ 617.75	\$ 1,286.25	\$ 1,300.11								\$ 4,243.12
District #2													
Greasy	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,549.31	\$ -								\$ 1,549.31
Oaks	\$ 1,104.77	\$ 2,183.12	\$ 1,731.62	1830	\$ 1,639.01								\$ 8,467.52
Kenwood	\$ 1,763.78	\$ 3,473.32	\$ 1,963.24	\$ 1,711.43	\$ 2,304.47								\$ 11,256.24
District #3													
Evening Chase	\$ 2,581.99	\$ 1,829.97	\$ 1,163.7	\$ 2,509.82	\$ 992.27								\$ 9,077.75
Belfonte	\$ 1,354.19	\$ 1,525.80	\$ -	\$ 534.37	\$ 2,358.60								\$ 5,753.96
Marble City	\$ 4,315.89	\$ 2,298.59	\$ 1,773.46	\$ 1,955.20	\$ 1,908.21								\$ 12,251.35
Tsa-La-Gi	\$ 1,531.39	\$ 2,813.30	\$ 1,879.21	\$ 1,493.73	\$ 2,012.86								\$ 9,530.49
Ponam	\$ 1,975.70	\$ 1,662.41	\$ 2,422.85	\$ 1,711.05	\$ 2,218.90								\$ 9,990.91
District #4													
Novata	\$ 91.26	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -								\$ 91.26
Opavna	\$ 654.44	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -								\$ 654.44
District #5													
Poyll	\$ 396.49	\$ 75.65	\$ 120.31	\$ 779.27	\$ 91.90								\$ 1,463.62
	\$18,911.51	\$18,254.32	\$13,783.11	\$18,504.97	\$16,873.05								\$86,437.06

New estimated annual budget per site:

Full time sites (7): Groceries \$31,000- \$35,000 per year; staffing \$245k per year; NEW rent \$300/month by site
 \$25,200 = \$305,200 operation cost per year for all 7 full time sites

Part time sites (9): Groceries \$15,500-\$16,000; staffing \$235,656 per year; NEW rent \$150/ month by site
 \$16,200 = \$267,856 operation cost per year for all 9 part-time sites

New activities budget \$30,000 per year

New total budget - \$603,056 - \$605,000 annually for all sites