

Trellis Cost Share and Contribution Policy

Updated January 2026

1. Purpose:

- A. This document serves as a guideline for Older Americans Act Title III service providers in developing and implementing policies and procedures for cost-sharing and voluntary contributions. It clarifies regulations mandated by the Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) in accordance with Section 315(a) of the Older Americans Act.
- B. [The Older Americans Act](#) requires that area agencies on aging shall assure that each service provider (also referred to as a 'grantee/contractor' in this document) shall provide each older person ('program participant' or 'client') with an opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the cost of service.
- C. The document also provides a sample cost share sliding contribution scale and a sample voluntary contribution policy.

2. Background:

- A. Service providers funded under the Older Americans Act (OAA) are encouraged to earn income to defray program costs where appropriate. Cost Sharing and Contributions are policies are located in [45 CFR 75.306 \(Sept. 30, 2025\)](#) and [45 CFR 1321.9\(c\)\(2\)\(x\)](#).
- B. Program Income, in compliance with federal [45 CFR Part 75.307](#) and [MN Board on Aging policy](#), includes, but is not limited to, program participant donations, cost share revenue, and other income received by or due to the grantee/contractor organization, as a result of activities wholly or partially supported by funds from the contract. Service providers must report all program income to Trellis with each financial report. This document refers specifically to program income generated through [Cost Sharing](#) and [Voluntary Contributions](#).
- C. The Older Americans Act (OAA) describes two ways for program participants to contribute to the cost of services: cost sharing and voluntary contributions. The [Federal OAA](#) states: "Voluntary contributions shall be allowed and may be solicited for all services for which funds are received under this Act if the method of solicitation is noncoercive. Such contributions shall be encouraged for individuals whose self-declared income is at or above 185 percent of the poverty line, at contribution levels based on the actual cost of services."

D. Additionally, the OAA includes language that:

1. Prohibits means testing for services.
2. Denial of service to any individual who does not contribute to the cost of the service.
3. Clearly inform the participants that there is no obligation to contribute, and contributions are voluntary.
4. Protect the privacy and confidentiality of recipient contributions.
5. Establish procedures that comply with accounting practices.
6. Contributions and Cost Share revenue should be used to expand the service for which the contribution was made and must supplement (not supplant) funds received under the Act.

E. [MBA state policy](#) includes additional requirements that service recipients shall be provided with clear information, including information in alternative formats and in languages other than English, upon request, explaining that there is no obligation to contribute.

F. Trellis and the service provider may waive individuals from cost-sharing participation for extreme hardship on a case-by-case basis. Exemption decisions should be documented in client files.

3. Cost Sharing

A. MBA requires cost-sharing for the following OAA Title III-funded services:

1. Homemaker
2. Chore
3. Transportation
4. Home Modification
5. Assisted Transportation
6. All Caregiver Support Services

B. MBA prohibits cost sharing for the following OAA Title III-funded services:

1. Information and Assistance, Outreach, and Benefits Counseling
2. Ombudsman, elder abuse prevention, legal assistance, or other consumer protection services.
3. Congregate and home-delivered meals.
4. Any services delivered through a tribal organization.
5. To individuals at or below the federal poverty level.
6. To individuals receiving services through a [Medicaid Waiver or Alternative Care Program](#).

C. Trellis may request a waiver from the MBA to waive the cost-sharing requirement if it can be adequately demonstrated that:

1. A significant portion of persons receiving services under the OAA, subject to cost sharing in a specific geographic area within the 7-county metro area, have incomes below the [Federal Poverty Level](#)
2. Cost sharing would be an unreasonable administrative or financial burden upon the Area Agency on Aging.

D. Title III service providers must report cost-sharing and contribution revenue as part of

their financial report, and funds are considered program income.

- E. Cost-sharing contributions are based on a program participant's income and the cost of the service provided to that individual. Generally, cost sharing follows a sliding contribution schedule that provides a range of suggested contributions based on income.
- F. In most cases, service providers must develop two policies: a Voluntary Contribution and Cost-Sharing policy. These policies must explain how the service provider will implement and administer the cost-sharing policy.
- G. Service providers must share these policies with participants to grow and support program services.
- H. Contribution or Co-payment "statements" may be provided to clients but must not carry forward a balance due amount.

	Cost Sharing	Voluntary Contributions
Title III-B Supportive Services	Required – Except where it is prohibited (see 1.B above)	Required
Title III-C: Nutrition Services	Not Allowable	Required
Title III-D: Evidence-based Disease Prevention and Health Promotion	Required	Required
Title III-E: National Family Caregiver Support Program	Required	Required

* Exceptions require annual approval by the Minnesota Board on Aging.

- I. MBA recommends a level of cost sharing at 50%. For individuals unable to cost-share at 50%, a sliding scale, based solely on gross income levels and the cost to deliver services, can be used.
 - 1. Participant income level will be based on the self-reported gross income of the older individual service recipient. Personal assets, savings, and/or other property are not to be considered. Income verification is not required.
 - 2. A means test shall not be used to determine eligibility for services.
 - 3. Caregiver Services ([Policy 7.E](#)): In cases where the caregiver and the care receiver are married and at least one is 60+ years old, both incomes will be used to determine the cost-share amount. The two-person household income column on the cost-share sliding scale will be used to determine the cost-share amount.
 - 4. Variations to the sliding scale that comply with the intent of the policy and encourage financial contributions by users are allowed. For example, if a provider has been successful in generating higher levels of cost sharing through the use of a different scale, the provider may continue to use that scale. Scales that vary from the Trellis -

5. The Grantee must publish the cost share sliding scale and advise clients of the opportunity to contribute towards the cost of the service. The Grantee shall submit a copy of the cost share sliding scale and related client education and notification materials to Trellis within the first month of the contract for review, comment, and approval.

4. Voluntary Contributions:

- A. As noted above, voluntary contributions are free will contributions a grantee/contractor receives from participants. These contributions qualify as program income and are subject to the rules outlined in the [Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for HHS Awards](#).
- B. Voluntary contributions are allowed for all OAA services. Voluntary contributions, however, do not replace the cost-sharing policy outlined above. Such contributions should be encouraged for individuals whose self-declared income is at or above 100% of the poverty line, at contribution levels based on the actual cost of service.
- C. The service provider should publish a schedule of suggested contributions and should advise clients of the opportunity to contribute towards the cost of the service. In no case shall the service provider deny the provision of service to a consumer who is unable or unwilling to contribute.
- D. Voluntary contributions should be used to expand the service for which the contribution was given.

5. Sample Cost Sharing Policy and Sliding Contribution Scale:

A. In some cases, the samples below include figures that must be updated on an annual basis (e.g., [Federal Poverty Level](#)).

TITLE III COST-SHARE SLIDING SCALE

% of Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG)	Annual Income 1 person 60 years + In a single or multiple person, <i>non-spousal</i> household	Annual Income 2-person <i>spousal</i> household (at least 1 is 60 years +)	Individual Cost Share as Percentage of Service Total Unit Cost	SAMPLE Cost Share for a \$100 Service Total Unit Cost	SAMPLE Cost Share for a \$100 Service Total Unit Cost
				Total Unit Cost	Individual's Cost-share Amount
≤ 100%	\$15,650	\$21,150	0%	\$ 100	\$ 0
>100% to 150%	\$15,651 - \$23,475	\$21,151 – \$31,725	10%	\$ 90	\$ 10
>150% to 200%	\$23,476 - \$31,300	\$31,726 - \$42,300	25%	\$ 75	\$ 25
>200% to 250%	\$31,300 - \$39,125	\$42,300 – \$52,875	50%	\$ 50	\$ 50
>250%	\$39,126 and above	\$52,875 and above	100%	\$ 0	\$ 100



SAMPLE Cost Sharing and Voluntary Contributions Policy and Procedure

The sample policies outlined below are intended for use as a template. Service providers who choose to use these documents should customize these templates for actual program costs and service contribution structures.

Need for the Policy

The number of older adults needing help is growing, and public resources used to pay for this help are diminishing. To help sustain the services our organization provides to a growing aging population, and to comply with grant funders' requirements ([Minnesota Board on Aging](#) and/or [Trellis](#)) individuals participating in OAA-funded services, will be asked to share in the cost of the service – or a portion of the cost, based on ability to pay.

Cost-Share Sliding Scale and Basis of Service Contribution

Cost-sharing contributions will be based on the service recipient's (and caregiver, if applicable) gross income as well as household size (and relationships), using the following cost share sliding scales and by using the following service costs:

[SERVICE NAME]- \$XX.XX/HOUR IS THE BASIS FOR CONTRIBUTION STRUCTURE

Contribution as a Percent of Cost of Service	Percent of Federal Poverty Guidelines	<u>Annual Income</u> 1 Person 60 years plus in a single or multiple person, <i>non-spousal</i> household	<u>Annual Income</u> 2 Person <i>spousal</i> household (at least 1 is 60+)	Recommended Service Contribution – Based on the cost of \$25 per hour
0 %	100% of Poverty Level	\$15,650	\$21,150	Voluntary Contribution
10 %	101-150%	\$15,651 - \$23,475	\$21,151 – \$31,721	\$2.50/Hour
25 %	151-200%	\$23,476 - \$31,300	\$31,726 - \$42,300	\$6.25/Hour
50 %	201- 250%	\$31,300 - \$39,125	\$42,300 – \$52,875	\$12.50/Hour
100 %	More than 250%	\$39,126 and above	\$52,875 and above	\$25.00/Hour



Determining Income

Cost-sharing participation will be based solely on the gross income of the person served. Personal assets, savings, or other property will not be considered when determining income levels. Income will be determined solely by a confidential declaration of income by the individual with no requirement for verification.

Low Income and Cost Sharing

Cost sharing will not be implemented for an individual whose income is at or below the federal poverty line. In such cases, the individual will be given the opportunity to make a voluntary contribution to the program.

Collection of Cost Share Contributions

Individuals eligible for cost sharing will receive a mailed reminder of cost share contributions due. Mailings will state that no one will be denied service based on inability or unwillingness to pay. [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will not carry forward any balance due from one period to the next.

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will ensure that cost share payments are made and can be accounted for confidentially.

Collection of Voluntary Contributions

Program participants will be notified of the full cost of service and asked to make a recommended donation to help offset program costs. Voluntary contributions will be made in a manner consistent with Federal law and [MBA policy](#), including the collection, safekeeping, and accounting of all funds.

Note to Providers: Be sure to adjust the monthly income columns each year to reflect the current federal poverty rate guidelines.

Service providers also have flexibility in setting up the sliding contribution scale. The 10-25-50-100% contribution scale is recommended, but you may submit other versions to Trellis for approval.

Accounting for Cost Sharing and Voluntary Contributions

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will account for cost share contributions separately from voluntary contributions, as required by funders (Minnesota Board on Aging and Trellis). Cost share and voluntary contributions will be reported to Trellis in the manner stipulated in the grant agreement.

Use of Cost-Sharing Contributions and Voluntary Contributions

All cost-share and voluntary contributions received by [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will be used to expand program services.



When to Inform the Participant of Cost Sharing / Voluntary Contribution Policy

Participants will be informed of [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]'s Cost Sharing and Voluntary Contribution Policies at intake or as close to intake as deemed appropriate by agency professionals working with the program participant. Policies will be explained verbally and in print and can be made available in alternative languages by request.

No Denial of Service

Individuals who are unable or unwilling to pay specified contributions based on the cost-share sliding scale or who do not wish to make a voluntary contribution to the program will not be denied service. This will be explained verbally and in print to participants; at the same time, other contribution information is reviewed with the prospective program participant.

