



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR

CONGREGATE MEAL CATERING SERVICES

RELEASE DATE: September 1, 2026

QUESTIONS DUE DATE: September 14, 2026, at 4:00 pm PDT

PROPOSALS DUE DATE: October 1, 2026, at 4:00 pm PDT

**CITY OF EAST PALO ALTO
CITY MANAGER'S DEPARTMENT
COMMUNITY SERVICES DIVISION**
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SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION AND INTRODUCTION

The City of East Palo Alto is requesting proposals from qualified organizations/individuals to provide nutritious catered meals for the City's Congregate Meal Program to Older Adults. The City intends to contract with a qualified food service provider capable of consistently delivering meals that are:

- Nutritious and balanced;
- Fresh, safe, and appealing;
- Appropriate for older adults;
- Responsive to dietary restrictions and health-related dietary needs when required;
- Culturally appropriate and reflective of the community served;
- Delivered on schedule and at appropriate serving temperatures; and
- Prepared and handled in compliance with all applicable federal, State, County, and local food safety requirements.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The City of East Palo Alto, incorporated in 1983, is the newest city in San Mateo County with a size of 2.5 square miles. East Palo Alto is one of California's most vibrant and diverse communities in the San Francisco Peninsula nestled within the heart of Silicon Valley. East Palo Alto is centrally located to international travel and is directly adjacent to major neighboring tech companies and employers. Priding itself on its unique and multi-cultural community, East Palo Alto represents youthful, diverse, and hard-working individuals. The City has long believed in supporting its elder population through facilities like the East Palo Alto Senior Center.

The City Manager serves as the Chief Executive Officer and manages programs and policies, ensuring effective execution to support the City's mission. Within the City Manager's Office, the Community Services Division relies heavily on interdepartmental, inter-jurisdictional, and community partnerships to deliver services that enhance the quality of life for East Palo Alto residents with a focused effort on increasing community engagement. The Community Services Division also supports the Senior Advisory Committee, an advisory body whose members are appointed by the City Council. This includes efforts to recruit community members to the board who represent the myriad of skill/talent, interests, and cultural diversity of the community. In addition to managing Senior Services for the City, the division is responsible for maintaining the City's partnership with the non-profit, East Palo Alto Senior Center Inc. (EPASCI), that operates the lone senior center in the community out of a City facility. This facility hosts the congregate meal programs for any older adult resident in the City.

The Community Services Division is led by the Community Services Manager, who is also responsible for the City's parks and recreation programs. Dedicated Senior Services City staff include one part-time Nutrition Site Supervisor and two part-time Shuttle Van Drivers. Both of these roles play an integral part in providing the Congregate Lunch program as many older adults need transportation services. Thanks to grant funding, this critical program helps reduce social isolation and ensures nutritious meals according to strict San Mateo County guidelines.

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With minimal healthy food options in the City, we are seeking a vendor to provide catered meals five times a week Monday through Friday. This vendor will be responsible for communicating with the Community Services Division staff in preparation of meals, tracking, delivery, and reporting. The selected vendor will also be able to provide the City with supplies needed to serve the program. The City is also required to provide quarterly Nutrition Education and Staff In-Service trainings that help staff ensure they are up to date in food safety. These topics and all supporting information is provided by the agency providing the grant for this program. The selected vendor will be required to provide curriculum in this area.

In June 2023, the City was designated Age Friendly from the American Association of Retired Persons and moved to complete an [Action Plan on Aging](#) that allowed the City to understand the needs of the community and provided some projects that should be continued. This plan paid special attention to nine domains: Outdoor Spaces and Building, Transportation, Housing, Social Participation, Communication and Information, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Community Support and Health Services, and Emergency Services. The City earned a Livability Index of 57, which is in the top half of communities in the United States. 1.2

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of this RFP is to provide catered meals and nutrition education for the Older Adults in the City of East Palo Alto through its Senior Center for the next three fiscal years beginning November 1, 2026, to June 30, 2029.

SECTION 2: SCOPE OF WORK

2.1 UNDERSTANDING OF WORK GENERALLY

The selected Contractor shall provide all labor, supervision, food, ingredients, supplies, equipment, packaging, transportation, permits, licenses, insurance, and other resources necessary to provide the required services unless specifically identified by the City as City-provided.

4.1 Meal Preparation

The Contractor shall prepare meals in a properly licensed and permitted commercial food preparation facility.

Meals shall:

- Be prepared using fresh, wholesome, high-quality ingredients;
- Be appropriate for an older adult population;
- Include appropriate portion sizes;
- Limit excessive sodium, added sugar, and saturated fat where practical;
- Provide balanced servings of protein, vegetables, fruits, grains/starches, and other components as specified by the City;
- Be visually appealing and palatable;

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- Be prepared in a manner that maintains appropriate texture, temperature, and quality through delivery and service; and
- Comply with applicable nutritional requirements established for the program.

The City may establish additional reasonable nutritional specifications prior to contract award or during the contract term. Also, as this program is largely grant-funded, any additional requirements added by the granting entity during the term of the contract shall be passed onto the vendor and must be adopted right away.

4.2 Estimated Meal Volume

The City currently anticipates approximately:

Meals per service day: 20-25 lunches per day (# could fluctuate annually)

Service days per week: Five days a week

Estimated annual meals: 5000-6000

Primary service location(s): East Palo Alto Senior Center

These quantities are estimates only and are provided for proposal and planning purposes. The City does not guarantee a minimum or maximum number of meals unless expressly stated in the final agreement.

The Contractor shall have sufficient capacity to accommodate reasonable fluctuations in participation and meal quantities.

4.3 Menu Planning

The Contractor shall provide proposed menus to the City for review and approval in advance of service.

At a minimum, menu planning shall:

- Provide sufficient variety;
- Avoid excessive repetition of meals;
- Include seasonal foods when practical;
- Include culturally diverse menu selections;
- Consider preferences of the senior population;
- Clearly identify major meal components such as protein, vegetable, and fruit;
- Identify meals designed to address specific dietary requirements; and
- Include nutritional information when requested by the City.

The Contractor shall submit menus at least four weeks in advance unless otherwise approved by the City.

The City reserves the right to request reasonable menu modifications.

4.4 Dietary Accommodations

The Contractor shall describe its ability to provide special meals, which may include:

- Vegetarian meals;
- Vegan meals;
- Low-sodium meals;
- Reduced-sugar or diabetic-friendly meals;
- Gluten-free meals;
- Dairy-free meals;
- Texture-modified or soft-food meals;
- Meals accommodating common food allergies; and
- Other medically or nutritionally appropriate modifications requested by the City.

Proposers shall clearly identify which accommodations are included in the standard meal price and which, if any, require an additional charge.

The Contractor shall maintain appropriate procedures to prevent cross-contact and errors involving special dietary meals.

4.5 Cultural Responsiveness

The City values food that reflects the cultural diversity and preferences of the community. Historically a majority African-American community that is now predominately Latino or Hispanic with a strong Pacific Islander base, East Palo Alto is establishing a sizable population of White and Asian-American individuals.

Proposers are encouraged to demonstrate experience preparing culturally appropriate meals and shall describe their ability to incorporate diverse cuisines into regular menu rotations.

Menu selections should balance nutritional requirements with familiarity, taste, cultural relevance, and participant preferences.

4.6 Food Packaging and Service

Depending on program requirements, meals may be provided as:

- Individually packaged meals;
- Family-style or bulk meals;
- Buffet-style catering;
- Plated meals; or
- Other service formats approved by the City

All packaging shall be food-safe, sanitary, durable, and appropriate for maintaining food quality and temperature.

Whenever practical, the City encourages the use of recyclable, compostable, reusable, or

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environmentally preferable food service materials.

4.7 Delivery Requirements

The Contractor shall deliver meals to the location(s) and according to the schedule established by the City.

Deliveries shall:

- Arrive within the City's designated delivery window of 10:30-11:15am;
- Maintain required hot and cold food temperatures;
- Include the correct number and type of meals ordered;
- Clearly identify special dietary meals;
- Be transported in sanitary vehicles and food-safe containers;
- Include required serving utensils or supplies when specified; and
- Be delivered by trained and professional personnel.

Repeated late, incomplete, unsafe, or incorrect deliveries may constitute grounds for corrective action or termination of the contract.

4.8 Meal Counts and Ordering

The City anticipates providing final meal counts approximately one month before each scheduled service.

Proposers shall describe:

- Required lead time for final meal counts;
- Procedures for increasing or decreasing quantities;
- Minimum order requirements;
- Cancellation procedures;
- Procedures for emergency or last-minute orders; and
- Any applicable cancellation or adjustment fees.

4.9 Food Safety and Sanitation

The Contractor shall comply with all applicable food preparation, sanitation, transportation, storage, and service requirements.

The Contractor shall maintain all required:

- Business licenses;
- Health permits;
- Food facility permits;
- Food handler certifications;

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- Food safety manager certifications; and
- Other permits or certifications required to perform the services.

The Contractor shall immediately notify the City of any food safety violation, Health Department action, permit suspension, foodborne illness allegation, product recall, or other condition that could affect the safety of meals provided under the contract.

4.10 Staffing

Contractor personnel shall be appropriately trained and supervised.

The Contractor shall designate a primary account or contract manager who will serve as the City's principal point of contact and shall be responsible for:

- Menu coordination;
- Nutrition Education;
- Meal ordering;
- Delivery coordination;
- Resolving service issues;
- Invoice questions;
- Dietary accommodation requests; and
- Quality assurance.

4.11 Quality Assurance

The Contractor shall maintain a quality assurance program covering food preparation, portion control, temperature control, delivery accuracy, cleanliness, customer satisfaction, and corrective action.

The City may periodically evaluate meals based on factors including:

- Taste;
- Freshness;
- Appearance;
- Temperature;
- Portion size;
- Menu variety;
- Delivery timeliness;
- Order accuracy; and
- Participant feedback.

The Contractor shall promptly investigate and respond to service complaints.

2.2 BUDGET

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The City's Community Services Division budgets \$55,000-\$70,000 annually for the provision of meal services based on City Council Authority.

2.3 PROJECT PROGRESS MEETINGS AND REPORTING

Progress meetings and reporting shall include virtual meetings via Microsoft Teams, Zoom or other mutually agreed upon location between City staff and Consultant.

Meetings shall be held as often as deemed necessary but at least every six months. Minutes and outstanding action items for all meetings should be prepared by the Consultant and furnished to all attendees and concerned parties within five working days of the meeting.

SECTION 3: PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT

3.1 SELECTION SCHEDULE

The City anticipates the following schedule:

Task	Date
Release date	September 1, 2026
Questions due date	September 14, 2026
Responses provided	September 21, 2026
Proposals due date	October 1, 2026
Evaluation of proposals	October 5-9, 2026
Reference Checks & interviews	October 12-16
City Council award of contract	November 17, 2026
Agreement execution, insurance submission	October 21-November 30, 2026
Kick-off meeting	December 1-4, 2026
Agreement Term	June 30, 2029

The City retains the right to change this schedule as needed.

3.2 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Each proposer must submit one electronic copy of the full proposal via email to Community Services Manager Maurice Baker at: mbaker@cityofepa.org utilizing the subject "Proposal for EPA Congregate Meal Catering Services RFP submitted by [Vendor name]." To be considered, proposals must be received at the address listed above **no later than the date and time listed on the cover page as "Proposals Due Date."** Any proposals submitted after this date will not be considered.

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3.3 FORMAT

The proposal should be concise, well-organized, and demonstrate the Proposer's qualifications and experience as applicable to this Project. Do not exceed 25 pages, including all attachments. The proposal shall not include any unnecessary promotional material.

The proposal shall include the following items and shall be organized as follows:

1. Letter of Transmittal

Describe your firm or team's interest and commitment in providing consulting services for the City of East Palo Alto. The correspondence shall include the name, title, address, and telephone number of the individual authorized to represent the firm or team. The transmittal letter must include a representation by the Proposer that, except as disclosed in the Proposal, no officer or employee of the Proposer is directly or indirectly a party to or in any other manner interested financially or otherwise in the City of East Palo Alto.

2. Description of Proposer

A brief description of your company's background, size, office locations, and history as it may be relevant to the services required. If your offices are in more than one city, indicate which office(s) will provide the services. Describe your experience providing similar services for other public agencies, with an emphasis on California jurisdictions and agencies, and any related projects or studies.

3. Work Plan and Approach

Discuss your understanding of the Scope of Services to be performed. Describe the method for plan completion, realistic approach, and other issues critical to this plan.

4. Personnel Background

Name, position, summary of qualifications, resumes, related experience, and proposed responsibilities of project manager and all personnel involved in this project. For each such person, clarify his or her role in the project.

5. Team Experience

Listing of at least three similar agreements performed within the past five years that we can review and follow up with if needed. Please include the following information:

- Client's name, point of contact, email, and phone number
- Description of work and date of completion
- Key personnel involved

6. Exceptions to the RFP

If the Proposer takes exception to any portion of the RFP, the specific portion of the RFP to which exception is taken shall be identified and the reason(s) for the exception explained.

7. Cost

The Proposal must include a projected total cost expressed as a not to exceed amount of charges to the City. The Proposal also must state the cost per meal for each year of the proposed agreement for the products provided including meals of all types (special dietary restrictions, supplies, etc.) and pricing for any additional items that complement

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the items we receive) Proposer shall be responsible for all travel and per diem incurred in the performance of this agreement; thus, any such expenses shall be included in the prices and should not be presented as separately payable items. The Proposer may offer optional additional related services not specifically listed in this RFP that would complement this project. Each such option must include a time and cost total.

SECTION 4: QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the information in the RFP package must be submitted by email addressed to Community Services Manager Maurice Baker at mbaker@cityofepa.org utilizing the subject "Questions for EPA Congregate Meal Catering Services RFP submitted by [Vendor name]."

All questions must be received by the date and time listed on the cover sheet as "Questions Due Date." All answers will be posted on the City's website. If necessary, a clarification addendum will be issued and will be available at www.cityofepa.org/rfps.

SECTION 5: SELECTION

5.1 SELECTION PROCESS

The City will establish a ranking based on how each proposal meets the qualifications of the Scope of Services and the requirements of the RFP. The proposal shall conform to the Format as listed in Section 3.3. It is important that all listed items be included in the proposals. **Proposals which do not comply with all the requirements may not be considered.** The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.

During the selection process, the City reserves the right, where it may serve the City's best interest, to request additional information or clarification from proposers, or to allow corrections of errors or omissions. At the discretion of the City, firms submitting proposals may be requested to perform follow up interviews as part of the evaluation process.

The selected Consultant shall be required to enter into the City's Standard Professional Services Agreement (see **Attachment A**) in substantially the same form.

At the conclusion of the evaluation, the City will enter into contract negotiations with the top-ranking firm. If negotiations with the top-ranking firm are unsuccessful, negotiations will terminate, and the City will undertake negotiations with the second-ranking firm. City staff will make recommendations to the City Council, which reserves the right to reject any or all proposals. The selection process will be completed when a contract is executed.

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, and to waive any and all irregularities to choose the firm which, in the City's opinion, best serves the City's interests.

Proposals will be evaluated by a committee of City employees and partners. Points will be assigned based on the Proposer's effectiveness and efficiency in supporting each item being rated.

The City reserves the right to retain all proposals submitted and to use any idea(s) in a proposal regardless of whether that proposal is selected. Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the firm of the conditions contained in the request for proposals, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between the City and the firm

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selected. All proposals and material submitted will become the property of the City and will not be deemed confidential or proprietary. All proposals are records for the purposes of the California Public Records Act and may be shared in their entirety in accordance with that law.

5.2 SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection criteria for rating submitted proposals shall be as tabulated in the table below:

CRITERIA	POINTS
Qualifications & Experience	20
Approach to Senior Nutrition and Meal Quality	20
Menu Quality, Variety, and Cultural Responsiveness	15
Service Delivery and Quality Assurance Plan	15
Cost & Overall Value	15
Dietary Accommodation Capabilities	10
Client References	5
TOTAL	100

5.3 SELECTION SCHEDULE

The City reserves the right to evaluate proposals for a period of sixty (60) days from the submission due date before deciding which proposal, if any, to accept.

SECTION 6: PROTESTING A PROPOSAL

If you wish to protest the submission of another proposal, the substance of another proposal, the entity staff is recommending for contract, or anything else regarding this RFP, you must follow this procedure:

- a. Submit all protest claims via email to Community Services Manager Maurice Baker at mbaker@cityofepa.org, with a copy to City Attorney John Lê at jle@cityofepa.org as well as to all proposers whose proposals are mentioned, directly or indirectly. All claims not stated in this email are deemed waived and cannot be raised at a later date. The subject line of the email should be “[Agency name]’s Proposal Protest for East Palo Alto Senior Services Strategic Assessment and Plan RFP. If you wish to contest the submission of another proposal or the substance of another proposal, that email must be sent within 72 hours of the proposal and cost proposal due date. If you wish to contest the entity staff is recommending for contract, that email must

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- be sent within 72 hours of when the staff report listing that entity is published, which is generally (but not always) ten to twelve days before the relevant Council meeting.
- b. If you are the subject of a protest claim, directly or indirectly, you have the right to submit a response to any filed protest claim. Submit all response claims via email to Community Services Manager Maurice Baker at mbaker@cityofepa.org, with a copy to City Attorney John Lê at jle@cityofepa.org as well as to the protesting entity. All counterclaims not stated in this email are deemed waived and cannot be raised at a later date. The subject line of the email should be “[Agency name]’s Response to Proposal Protest for East Palo Alto Senior Services Strategic Assessment and Plan RFP.” That email must be sent within 72 hours of when the protest claim was sent.
 - c. Staff will evaluate all protest claims and any counterclaims. Staff may or may not issue a response to the protester or respondents.
 - d. Failure to follow this procedure constitutes a waiver of any claims regarding this RFP.

SECTION 7: DURATION OF CONTRACT

The proposed contract term shall be for December 2026 through June 2029. The proposed Scope of Work listed above must be complete by June 30, 2029. Based on City Council decision, this agreement can be evaluated annually.

SECTION 8: DISCLAIMERS

Each Proposer is solely responsible for all costs related to preparing the proposal. This request for proposal does not commit the City to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of a proposal in response to this RFP. The City reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, to negotiate with qualified proposers, or to cancel the request.

The City may require the proposer to submit additional data or information the City deems necessary to substantiate the costs presented by the proposer. The City may also require the proposer to revise one or more elements of its proposal in accordance with contract negotiations.

END OF DOCUMENT