



Congregate and Home-delivered Meal Program Request for Proposal Question and Answer Session Minutes February 10, 2026

General Information

- The Question-and-Answer Session was hosted by
 - Wanda Mitchell, Director of Community Engagement
 - Lauren Jirinec, Assistant Director for Health and Nutrition Services
 - Amy Goldstein, Nutrition Manager
- Reminders
 - All responses in this document are considered official. All applicants will be bound by the explanations and decisions written in this document.
 - Going forward, PCA cannot answer any questions about the content of the RFP. The only questions that will be answered will be related to timeline and process
- Bid Categories

Congregate Meal Categories:

 - Hot Bulk Meals and approved Alternate Meals, nonkosher
 - Hot Bulk Meals and approved Alternate Meals, kosher

Home-delivered Meal Categories:

 - Individually Pre-portioned Frozen Meals with fresh complements, nonkosher
 - Cold packs with fresh complements, nonkosher
 - Individually Pre-portioned Frozen Meals with fresh complements, AND Cold packs with fresh complements, kosher.
- Corrections
 - For the Home-delivered Meal Program RFP - There are 2 sections labeled as “Section III.” The section titled “Standard Meal Program Material” is the start of section IV on page 39. The Congregate Meal Program RFP was labeled correctly.
- Timeline Overview

Date	Activity
Thurs, Feb 19th	Intent-to-bid Form Due
Feb 24 th to 27 th	Facility Inspections
Thurs, March 26 th	Proposals due
Tues, April 14 th	Congregate Meal Program Meal Samples
Weds, April 15 th	Home-delivered Meal Program Meal Samples
Thurs, April 23 rd	Oral Presentation

Review of RFP Information

- RFP Proposal Submissions
 - Be sure to submit the correct forms for the program you are bidding on. There are specific forms to be used for the Congregate Meal Program, and specific forms for the Home-delivered Meal Program. The correct forms must be submitted with each meal program proposal.

- Pay attention when writing and organizing your proposal. To be considered complete, proposals must follow the order listed in the RFP and be numbered accordingly.
- Note that there are Bid Price Sheet and Unit Price Analysis Sheets for each type of meal program and each meal category. These are listed on the website as fillable pdfs. They must be fully completed.
- References
 - References will be called between March 27th and April 7th.
 - Please advise all listed references that they will be contacted via email.
 - References may also be called if they do not respond to outreach via email.
 - Ensure that you have secured their permission to use them as a reference.
 - PCA staff cannot be used as a reference.
- Home-delivered Meals – Inventory of Meals
 - For the set menu, PCA requires that the provider maintains a week’s worth of meals and complements at a facility local to PCA. Each week this inventory of meals and complements should be delivered to the MDC, and the inventory in storage should be restocked with the next week’s meals and complements.
 - To accommodate meal choice for participants, PCA will order extra meals of each entrée to build inventory at the MDC leading up to the start of each menu cycle.
 - During the menu cycle, meal orders will fluctuate based on consumer orders.
- Menu Submission
 - Menus submitted must be submitted using the forms on PCA’s website.
 - Once contracts are awarded, different procedures may be followed for the submission of menus and nutrition analyses.
 - Due to the short turn-around time between when the contracts are awarded and the July 1st start of service, menus submitted as a part of the RFP must reflect what the applicant intends to serve at the onset of the contract (on July 1, 2026).
 - A menu review meeting will be scheduled after the contract is awarded and before the onset of the contract. The provider representative and dietitian must attend. During this meeting, changes and alterations to the menu can be made as needed. Any changes will need to be reanalyzed for the menu to be reviewed and approved in time for the start of the contract.
- Facility Inspection Procedures
 - Following the receipt of an Intent-to-bid Form from an applicant (along with a copy of a current Food License and most recent facility inspection); a facility and equipment inspection will be conducted during a site visit to the local kitchen/commissary or storage facility of each applicant as defined in the RFP. This will be conducted by PCA staff and members of the selection committee and will include delivery vehicle inspection. Please make a delivery vehicle available for this day.
 - The facility inspection will be scheduled by email on the business day prior to the visit. The kitchens/commissaries to be inspected must be in operation at the time of inspection. PCA will contact the applicant only. It is the applicant’s responsibility to notify and/or prepare the facility that will be inspected.

- The applicant can note that a facility is not available on specific dates on the Intent-to-bid Form. PCA will honor those dates and schedule the inspection for a date the facility is available.
- If an applicant is planning to use prepackaged frozen meals produced outside of the local area, the applicant must have a local facility from which to distribute the frozen meals and all fresh complements that are a part of the menu. Frozen meals not produced locally (as defined in the RFP) must be prepared in a USDA-inspected facility. Local distribution/storage sites will be inspected. Applicants proposing to use frozen meals produced outside of the local area will receive 80% of the earned facility inspection score.
- Proposals submitted by applicants without a local facility will not be considered.
- Applicants who do not pass the facility inspection will be disqualified from bidding and will be notified in writing.
- Applicants who fail to submit an appropriate food license and related documents with their Intent-to-bid Form will be disqualified from bidding

Questions and Answers for both meal programs:

1. Q: What are the current most popular items chosen by both the congregate and home delivered meal participants?
A: PCA is declining to respond to this question at this time.
2. Q: If a provider is awarded both congregate and frozen contracts, can menu meetings for both be held on same or concurrent days?
A: Yes, menu review meetings can be scheduled on concurrent days if multiple contracts are awarded for different meal programs.
3. Q: In the RFP it states that unit prices will be fixed for the full three-year contract term (7/1/26–6/30/29) but on the bid price sheet it states, "prices submitted must remain at a firm maximum for a period of 90 days after submission of price bids". Can PCA confirm whether any annual CPI-based adjustments or negotiated year-over-year increases will be permitted, or if the Year 1 proposed unit rate is expected to remain unchanged for Years 2 and 3?
A: It is expected that the unit rate will remain fixed for all 3 years of the contract; however, PCA remains open to discussions regarding rate-changes should significant changes occur.
4. Q: We would like to request a second opportunity to submit Questions by Thursday, February 19th. That would be one week after the conclusion of the Q&A Session (2/10), the Distribution Center Tour (2/11), and the Senior Center Tour (2/12). This will allow potential bidders to ask Questions that take into account the unofficial answers provided on 2/10 as well as the information gathered from the Tours.
A: No. There will be no additional time for questions after the formal Q&A session.
5. Q: PCA indicates that facilities must be in operation at the time of inspection, and that bids may not be considered if the bidder lacks a local facility, including proposed facilities not currently in operation. Will PCA consider a bidder compliant if the bidder has a local facility secured under an executed lease/contract (to be activated only upon award, since the facility would be utilized exclusively for PCA) that is not yet operating, provided the facility will be fully operational prior to service start and available for inspection once activated?
A: No

6. Q: Can PCA confirm whether a bidder is considered non-compliant if the bidder has a local kitchen secured under an executed lease/contract, but the facility is not currently operating at the time of inspection?
A: Correct, the facility must be in operation at the time of the facility inspection for an applicant to be considered.
7. Q: Is your organization seeking to change from its current meal vendor partner as part of this RFP process?
A: PCA is required to release an RFP to potential new vendors every 3 years.
8. Q: When was the last time your organization conducted an RFP that resulted in selecting a new meal vendor partner?
A: PCA is declining to respond to this question at this time.
9. Q: Can you clarify how pricing should be structured and whether there is a suggested range?
A: Pricing should be structured based on the unit price analysis sheet found under the meals RFP section on PCA's website. The total cost of the meal must include the food and non-food costs. There is no suggested price range.
10. Q: Are we able to use refrigerated or non-refrigerated rental trucks?
A: Rented trucks can be used. For the Home-delivered Meal program, the delivery vehicle must be temperature controlled. For the Congregate Meal Program, the meals must be temperature controlled during transportation with a temperature-controlled vehicle or other means, such as cambro-style containers.
11. Q: We noticed that several of the nutritional standards outlined in the RFP (including sodium, carbohydrates, fats, and calorie ranges) do not align with the Older Americans Act (OAA) guidelines. Are these nutritional requirements negotiable or flexible, or must all meals strictly meet the standards as written?
A: The menu and nutrition standards in the RFP are not negotiable.
12. Q: If a menu cycle changes every six months, with updates occurring in October and April. Would this schedule be acceptable under the program requirements?
A: The menu cycles run from January to June and July to December. Seasonal updates can be made in October and April; these changes are typically to fresh fruits that have seasonal availability.

Questions and Answers for the Congregate Meal Program:

1. Q: Can all congregate meals be frozen and shipped to distribution center or sites and heated at facilities?
A: No
2. Q: Will we be bidding on milk, snacks, utensils, and beverages also?
A: The bid must include all food and non-food items. There is no separate bid for complements or supplies.
3. Q: Can PCA provide the current contracted unit rates by incumbent vendor, including a breakdown of kosher vs. non-kosher meal pricing (rather than a general rate range), to better understand the current pricing structure?
A: No. The current price range per meal is: \$4.08 to \$6.05

4. Q: Does each congregate site operate with meal service Monday through Friday?
A: All nonkosher sites operate Monday through Friday. Two of the kosher sites operate Monday through Friday, and one Kosher site operates three days a week, Tuesday through Thursday.
5. Q: Will meal quantities remain consistent, or are they likely to fluctuate significantly week to week?
A: Meal quantities are generally in a consistent range, but meal sites place orders based on reservations from seniors and so will fluctuate to some degree day to day and week to week.
6. Q: Under the Grab-and-Go meals identified in the Congregate RFP found on page 25 Part B #3, it states that these meals are ordered by sites one to three times per week in larger quantities. Would PCA please provide the current estimated order volumes (e.g., average and/or range per site and per ordering cycle) to support accurate production planning and forecasting?
A: The meal orders by the centers participating in the Grab and Go program range between 15 and 140 meals per order, totaling approximately 1220 meals across 11 sites per week.
7. Q: On page 26 of the RFP - It states that two festive meal occasions can have on-site chef assistance. Please describe these two festive meal occasions in detail. For clarification, Are these two festive meals per senior center for all 22 sites? Please describe in detail the cadence, is this per quarter or annually?
A: All meal sites are allotted 7 festive meals to use throughout the fiscal year, scheduled ad hoc based on the event. Menus for festive meals are different than holidays and set menus to enhance the special event or occasion, such as volunteer appreciation day, St. Patrick's Day, or Phillies opening day. Of those 7 occasions, all meals sites can select 2 occasions that are "chef-assisted" where the vendor is onsite at the meal program to enhance the serving and meal experience.
8. Q: On page 36 of the RFP, Part D, it states that nutrition education will be provided once per quarter at all congregate sites: Is that nutrition education required to be in person, or would this be written and/or recorded?
A: Nutrition education must be completed in person and cannot solely be a handout or written materials.
9. Q: Would you provide a current sample congregate site delivery schedule based upon the information provided on page 32; Part D #4?
A: Meal site times are specific to each location and start between 11 am and noon. At the start of each fiscal year, the vendor will receive details about the specific meal start times for each location. Delivery schedules are determined by the vendor to ensure that meals are delivered at least 30 minutes before the start of the stated lunch time for each meal site. The delivery schedule depends on the number of trucks and drivers to accommodate the locations listed in Section I, Part C.
10. Q: On page 21 of the RFP, Part A.3 - the Protein Nutrition Requirements states a minimum of 25 grams per meal. Is this protein requirement per entree or per meal including the entree with milk?
A: Nutrition analysis must include all meal components from the entrees, all sides and fresh complements, including milk.

11. Q: On Page 23 of the RFP, part A.4 - it states that water should be available for all participants at every meal - Is this currently provided by the site via a water fountain or does the caterer need to provide individual water bottles or bulk water by site?

A: Tap water is offered with all meals by the meal site. Bottled water is not required for the meal program

Questions and Answers for the Home-delivered Meal Program:

1. Q: Would you provide the current number of participants per week that are registered on the Home Delivered Frozen Meal Program?

A: The approximate weekly number of meals for each meal type can be found in the RFP, Section 1, Part A.3 . The number of participants is not reflective of PCA's needs as the number of meals varies by participant.

2. Q: How many participants receive home delivered meals currently either fresh or frozen?

A: The approximate weekly number of meals for each meal type, including frozen, can be found in the RFP, Section 1, Part A.3 . The number of participants is not reflective of PCA's needs as the number of meals varies by participant. There are a small number of participants who received the fresh cold packs on Fridays to enjoy over the weekend which are reflected in those weekly approximations.

3. Q: On page 14 of the RFP, Part 3.E, it states that in some cases the two or three compartment meal will be heated at the MDC. How often are the meals currently heated at MDC for transport?

A: Meals are heated Monday through Friday for daily delivery for a small selection of consumers as deemed necessary by their care plan.

4. Q: Are HDM participants allowed to choose 5 menu items or 7 menu items per week?

A: The number of menu items selected by participants is determined by their care plan. Most participants receive 7 meals, however this can range between 3-14 meals per week.

5. Q: Please describe your approach to individually numbering meals, including how meal numbers are assigned and used for identification, tracking, and delivery accuracy.

A: Each meal is assigned a unique identifying number used by the vendor and MDC staff.

6. Q: Can PCA provide the current contracted unit rates by incumbent vendor, including a breakdown of kosher vs. non-kosher meal pricing (rather than a general rate range), to better understand the current pricing structure?

A: No. The current price range per meal is: \$4.16 - \$6.13.

7. Q: What is your current cost for home delivered meals including transportation and staff coordinating volunteers, etc.

A: There is no use of volunteers for the home-delivered meal program. The current price range per meal is: \$4.16 - \$6.13. This is the total cost based on the food and nonfood costs as broken down on the Unit Cost Analysis Sheet found on the Meals RFP section of PCA's website.

8. Q: Please define what it means for fresh complements to be "different" for each week of the five-week menu cycle.

A: The items should vary within the category. This includes different options for fresh and cupped fruits, fruit juices, different bread types, different desserts, etc.

9. Q: Are participants currently allowed to choose their compliments/component pack, or do the five weeks simply rotate?
A: No, they have a rotation for the weekly set of fresh complements and cannot select which items they receive.
10. Q: Would you please provide list of your current Choice Meals offered?
A: No
11. Q: Clarify whether menu items may be reused from previous menus. If reuse is permitted, please describe any limitations or required timeframes before an item may reappear.
A: Yes, menu items from past menu cycles can reappear as approved by the PCA team during the menu review process at the menu review meetings.
12. Q: How important is it to have medically tailored meals in Philadelphia? (i.e. Diabetes, renal, cardiac)
A: PCA is looking for what is in the meal specifications and nutrition requirements in the RFP document.
13. Q: Define what constitutes a “menu change,” including the required frequency (e.g., at least every six months). Please specify whether a menu change requires a full recipe change or if changes to the main entrée component and/or side items qualify.
A: Menu cycle information can be found in Section IV, Part A.1. Each menu cycle should introduce changes to the meals presented for entrees and sides to introduce different and new options for participants.
14. Q: If the Set Menu and Choice Menu include the same offerings: approximately 35 meal options, along with 4–5 rotating specials throughout each six-month period, including a variety of breakfast, lunch, and dinner selections - can you please confirm whether this overall menu structure and level of choice would meet the RFP expectations?
A: The breakdown of meal types for the frozen meal menu can be found in Section III. Part A.2. Each 6-month menu period must include 35 different meal options and should be updated and changed for the following menu period. PCA is looking for greater than 4-5 menu items to change when presented with a new menu.
15. Q: On Page 26 of the RFP, it states the holiday meals are written using the food-based menu pattern and not nutrient requirements? Can you confirm that is correct and includes components.
A: The food-based menu pattern encompasses the full meal – entree, sides, and complements and is to be used for all holiday meals.
16. Q: On Page 26 of the RFP, are holiday meals offered as a choice for that week or automatically sent to all participants in place of one meal?
A: Holiday meals are sent to those who receive the standard meals per week. Choice participants receive their pre-selected choice meals.
17. Q: On page 27 of the RFP, both Internal/External Labeling is different than what the updated FDA requires. Would you be able to confirm this information is correct?
A: These are not FDA regulated meal labels. The labeling requirements that PCA requires are outlined in section III – Meal Specifications, Part D.3.
18. Q: For meal labeling, are two separate labels permitted, one for nutrition information and one for heating instructions?
A: Each meal must have all required information with clear, easy to read font. How that is affixed to each individually frozen and cold pack meal can be designed as needed.

19. Q: Would you please provide a current sample delivery schedule to the MDC, including the number of delivery days, delivery windows/times of day, delivery frequency per day, and required delivery timeframe—along with clarification on whether fresh components are delivered at the same time as the frozen meals or separately (e.g., directly from the caterer or distributor)?

A: The MDC can accept deliveries 5 days a week (Monday – Friday) from 7am – 2pm. Deliveries can include both frozen and fresh complements or it can be delivered separately based on vendor’s preference. Vendors can deliver more than one time a day, depending on the MDC and vendor needs.

20. Q: Does the delivery vehicle need to be temperature-controlled if traveling short distances to the distribution center?

A: Yes

21. Q: Can you please confirm whether commercial carrier delivery (e.g., FedEx) is permissible for meal distribution, provided all food safety and temperature control requirements are met?

A: No, it is not permissible.

22. Q: Will you be prioritizing vendors who can supply both the non-kosher and kosher options?

A: These are separate contracts and will be considered separately.

23. Q: What are your biggest challenges with home delivered meals and what could a provider do to reduce challenges.

A: That is not something PCA is able to provide information on right now, but we value your question.

24. Q: Would you please confirm that Appendix B on page 22 of the HDM proposal is complete, including the artificial trans-fat information? It looks as if there may have been another page missing.

A: There is no missing information in the meal specifications or standard meal program material. Appendix B can be found on pages 38 & 39

25. Q: If meals are produced and shipped from a USDA-certified facility outside of PA. Would this approach fully satisfy the RFP’s “local” requirement, or would the absence of a local distribution facility affect the evaluation score (e.g., receiving only partial credit such as 80%)?

A: For the home-delivered meal program, frozen meals produced at a USDA-certified facility that is not local, must also have a local distribution facility. That local distribution facility will be inspected and that will receive 80% of the earned facility inspection score.

26. Q: If a bidder is proposing HDM and Fresh packs, do they have to be separate proposals or will one work as long as both prices have been identified?

A: Each contract and bid category must be a separate proposal and submitted as a separate email. The three categories for home-delivered meals are: 1. nonkosher frozen, 2. nonkosher cold pack, and 3. kosher frozen and cold pack together.

Additional Questions from MDC Tour

1. Q: Boost Nutritional Drinks were noted at the facility. Is this provided by the vendor?

A: No, this is provided by a vendor outside of these contracts.

2. Q: What system is used by the MDC to track deliveries?

A: Roadnet