

2026

Meal Guest Survey REPORT



Office of
Homeless Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Homeless Services (OHS) Food Services Unit conducted a survey of meal service participants across shelters and community meal sites in Philadelphia to better understand the experiences, preferences, and barriers faced by individuals accessing these services. The goal of the survey was to collect direct feedback from meal guests in order to improve meal accessibility, menu planning, and overall meal experiences across the OHS network.

Surveys were administered across 39 shelters and meal sites, resulting in 936 completed responses from individuals eating at our sites. The survey included questions about meal access, frequency of meal service use, travel distance to meal sites, food preferences, cultural relevance of meals, and demographic characteristics of participants.

Results show that meal services play a critical role in supporting individuals and families experiencing homelessness and food insecurity by providing a consistent source of nourishment for food insecure Philadelphians. A majority of respondents reported attending meal services multiple times per week, and many indicated that they rely on these services as a consistent source of food. While most participants reported that they rarely skip meals, a significant portion of respondents reported that they sometimes or often skip meals. This identifies an important opportunity for future work to identify the specific barriers or circumstances that lead people to skip meals, so that services can be better tailored to meet their needs.

The survey also revealed important insights about meal timing and accessibility. Breakfast was identified as the most difficult meal to attend for many participants, suggesting that scheduling or location barriers may limit access to morning meal services.

In addition to providing feedback about accessibility, participants shared valuable insight regarding food preferences and meal experiences. Many respondents expressed a preference for hot meals and identified commonly preferred food items such as chicken, fruit, and juice as their favorites. Participants also indicated that while some meal sites provide culturally diverse food options, there are opportunities to expand culturally relevant menu offerings to better reflect the diverse communities served by OHS meal programs.

The findings from this survey provide actionable insights that can inform future improvements to meal service programs across the city. By incorporating participant feedback into menu planning, food procurement, and meal scheduling decisions, OHS and its partner organizations can continue working toward the agency's goal of providing meal services that are satisfying, culturally relevant, and dignified for all participants.

Continued engagement with meal guests will remain an important component of this work. OHS intends to build upon the insights from this survey to further strengthen meal services and ensure that programs remain responsive to the needs of the community.

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Homeless Services Food Services Unit is committed to ensuring that meal services across Philadelphia are accessible and reflective of the needs of the communities they serve. Meal programs are a critical component of the city's social safety net, providing consistent access to food for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and food insecurity.

To better understand how these services are functioning from the perspective of meal guests, the OHS Food Services Unit conducted a city-wide survey across 39 shelters and community meal sites. The purpose of this effort was to gather direct feedback on meal access, preferences, and overall experiences in order to inform improvements to meal programming, food procurement, and service delivery.

This report presents key findings from the survey, along with recommendations and next steps to strengthen meal services across the OHS provider network.

METHODS

To better understand the experiences and needs of individuals accessing meal services across Philadelphia, the Office of Homeless Services Food Services Unit developed and administered a survey to meal site participants across shelters and community meal sites.

**THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT
CONSISTED OF 38 QUESTIONS
ORGANIZED INTO FIVE SECTIONS.**

These sections collected information related to:

- 1** The meal site or shelter where the participant was completing the survey
- 2** Household and residency characteristics
- 3** Meal service attendance and accessibility
- 4** Meal preferences and dietary needs
- 5** Demographic information

Survey questions were primarily multiple-choice, with several open-ended questions that allowed respondents to provide additional feedback regarding meal preferences, cultural food requests, or other concerns. The survey was designed using accessible language to ensure that participants could easily understand and complete the questions. OHS staff was on site to help provide participants with any additional clarity they needed.

The survey was administered across 39 shelters and meal sites within the OHS provider network. OHS Food Services Unit staff conducted in-person survey administration, assisting and supporting participants who needed help completing the survey. Site staff and case managers were encouraged to assist participants with completing the survey during intake or routine interactions when possible. Participants were also able to complete the survey independently by scanning a QR code displayed on informational flyers or by completing a printed version of the survey available at participating sites.

To recognize and compensate participants for their time, OHS offered \$25 prepaid card incentives made possible through the city's Resident Engagement Fund (REF). The REF provides city departments with an administrative tool to offer payment via prepaid

compensation cards for residents participating in engagement activities, ensuring that their expertise and lived experience are valued and appropriately acknowledged. These prepaid cards allowed the department to compensate participants for their time and effort required to take the survey.

To increase accessibility, the survey was made available in both English and Spanish. Participants who required assistance were able to complete the survey with support from site staff or case managers.

Completed surveys were collected and compiled into a spreadsheet for analysis. Responses were manually cleaned and organized prior to analysis to ensure consistency across answer categories. In total, 936 survey responses were collected.

Because participation in the survey was voluntary and respondents were not randomly selected, the results should be interpreted as descriptive trends rather than representative of the entire population of meal service participants in Philadelphia. However, the large number of responses collected across multiple sites provides valuable insight into the experiences and preferences of individuals accessing meal services within the OHS provider network.

RESULTS

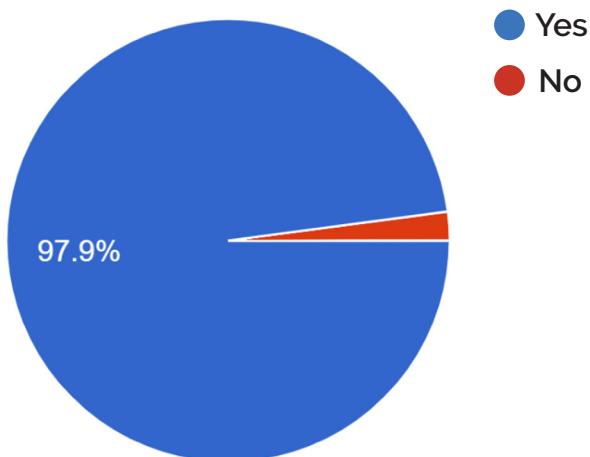
Participant Demographics

A total of **936 meal site participants** completed the survey across **39 shelters and meal sites**.

98% OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTED LIVING IN PHILADELPHIA, INDICATING THAT MEAL SERVICES PRIMARILY SUPPORT LOCAL RESIDENTS.

4. Do you live in Philadelphia? If so, skip to question 6.

905 Responses



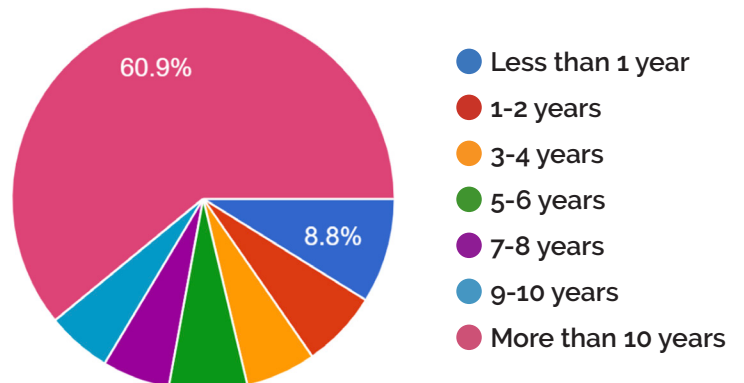
A significant finding from the demographic data is that

61% OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS HAVE LIVED IN PHILADELPHIA FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS

This indicates that the majority of individuals accessing meal services are long-term residents with deep ties to the community, rather than short-term or transient populations. This is important because it suggests that food insecurity among participants is often rooted in longstanding structural challenges rather than temporary circumstances. It also highlights the need for consistent, neighborhood-based meal access in all neighborhoods of the city.

5. If you answered yes, how long have you lived in Philadelphia?

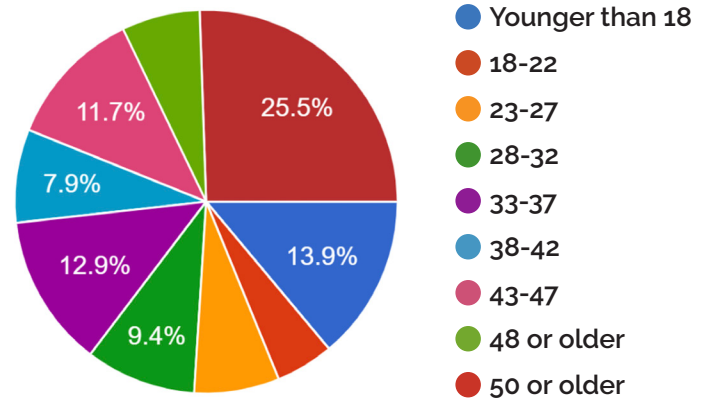
893 Responses



The age distribution of participants shows that while meal services support people across nearly every age group, older adults represent the largest share of meal guests. Participants that are "48 or older" account for approximately 32% of all participants, making individuals in their late forties and above the single largest demographic group using meal services. Considering ways to ensure meals are responsive to the needs and preferences of older adults could be a valuable area for future improvement. Understanding this distribution helps ensure that meal programs are designed to be accessible, nutritionally appropriate, and supportive for all age groups who may be experiencing homelessness or food instability at any life stage.

39. What age range are you in?

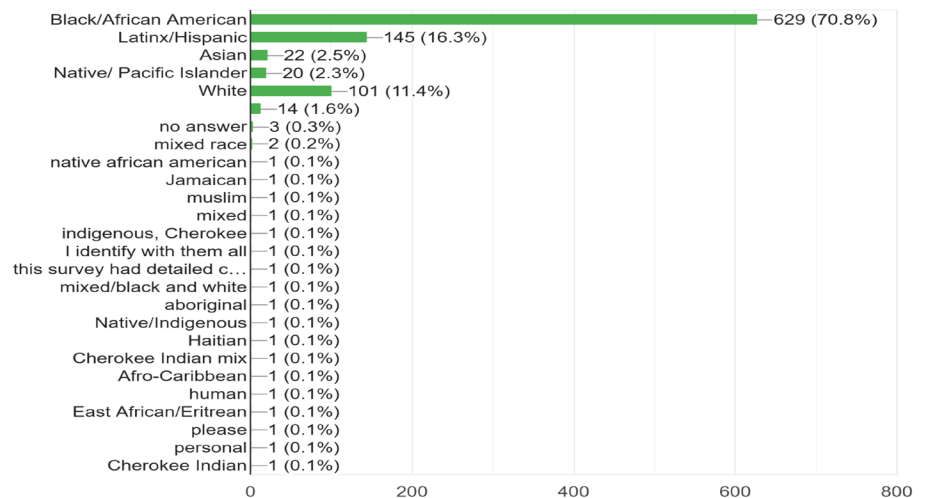
877 Responses



Respondents also represented a range of racial and ethnic identities. A large majority of participants identified as Black or African American (71%), making this the most represented group in the survey. An additional 16% identified as Latinx/Hispanic, highlighting the strong presence of communities of color within the meal service population. Smaller but meaningful proportions of respondents identified as White (11%), Asian (3%), and Native or Pacific Islander (2%). A small number of participants selected other identities, such as Jamaican, mixed race, or Native/Indigenous, but each accounted for only about 0.1% of responses.

Together, these findings underscore the importance of ensuring that meal programs are culturally responsive, reflective of the communities they serve, and attentive to the specific needs and preferences of ethnically diverse participants.

38. What is your ethnic identity? | 888 Responses



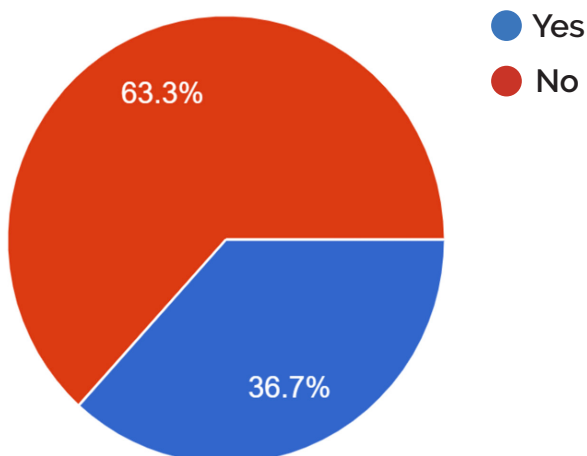
A notable portion of meal guests reported being responsible for children,

WITH 37% OF PARTICIPANTS REPORTED THAT THEY ARE LEGAL GUARDIANS TO CHILDREN.

This means more than one-third of participants are supporting dependents, which has important implications for meal service planning. Legal guardians to children may face additional challenges related to portion sizes, scheduling, transportation, and the need for child-friendly or family-oriented meal options. Understanding that a significant share of meal guests are caring for children helps ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of diverse household types, not just individuals.

2. Are you the legal guardian/parent of any children? If no, please skip to question 4.

811 Responses



Among participants with dependents or caregiving responsibilities, most were responsible for one or two children. Nearly one-third (32%) cared for one child, and just over one-quarter (26%) cared for two. Smaller proportions reported caring for three (18%) or four children (14%), while only a small minority were responsible for five (5%) or more than five children (4%).

The number of children whom participants care for provides important context for understanding the range of family responsibilities represented in the sample. Most participants are responsible for one or two children, while more than a third care for three or more. This variation suggests participants are managing different levels of caregiving demand, which can influence the kinds of support or accommodations they may find helpful as they engage with programs or services. For example, the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP) meal sites use separate infant and child menus to address their unique nutritional needs. Understanding these patterns can help inform food programs that better support households with varying age groups and requirements.

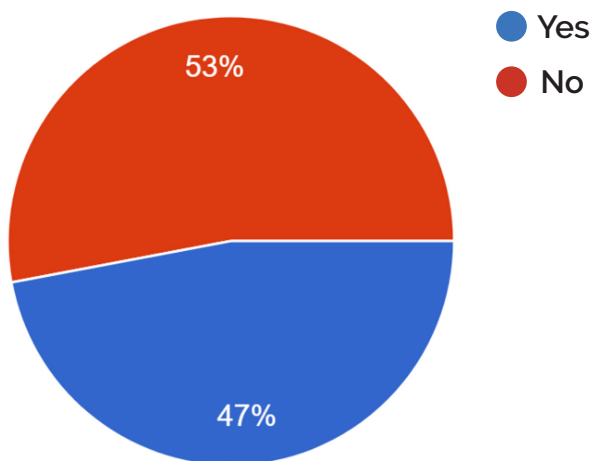
While the data do not measure the direct impact of caregiving on participation or outcomes, recognizing the caregiving responsibilities of some of our meal guests helps frame the broader circumstances in which participants are balancing program involvement with family needs. This context can guide considerations around accessibility, scheduling, and resource planning within the services provided.

MEAL ACCESS AND BARRIERS

To better understand the extent of travel required to access meal services, respondents were asked whether they typically travel to attend a meal service. Nearly half of participants reported that they must travel to reach a meal site, while slightly more than half indicated that they do not usually travel.

10. Do you travel to attend meal services? If no, please skip to question 12.

559 Responses

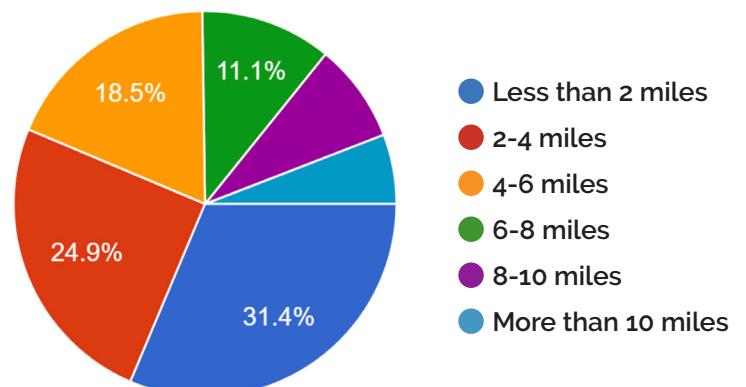


Among those who do travel, the distance varies widely. A notable portion of respondents reported traveling less than two miles to find a meal service, suggesting that although their preferred site is not within walking distance, it remains relatively accessible. Others reported traveling 2-4 miles or 4-6 miles, indicating moderate travel demands that may still pose challenges depending on mobility, transportation options, and personal circumstances.

A smaller but important subset reported traveling 6 miles or more, with some individuals indicating that they regularly travel more than 10 miles to find a meal service. These responses show that while many individuals travel only short or moderate distances, there is a portion of participants who undertake substantially longer trips to reach a meal site.

11. If you answered yes, how far do you normally travel to find a meal service?

325 Responses



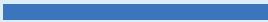
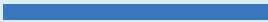
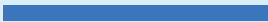
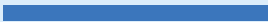
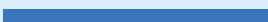
Additionally, participants were asked how often they skip meals because they are unable to access a meal site. While a majority reported that they rarely skip meals due to access barriers, a significant share of respondents indicated that they sometimes or often skip meals when they cannot reach a meal site.

These findings suggest that although meal services provide an essential safety net, barriers related to transportation, scheduling, or geographic availability may still prevent some participants from accessing meals consistently. The range of reported travel distances highlights the importance of having neighborhood-specific meal sites that allow residents to walk to services more easily and reliably.

Meal Attendance Patterns

The survey data shows strong reliance on OHS meal services, with many participants attending meals frequently and consistently. Attendance patterns highlight both need and behavioral trends in how individuals use meal services across the city.

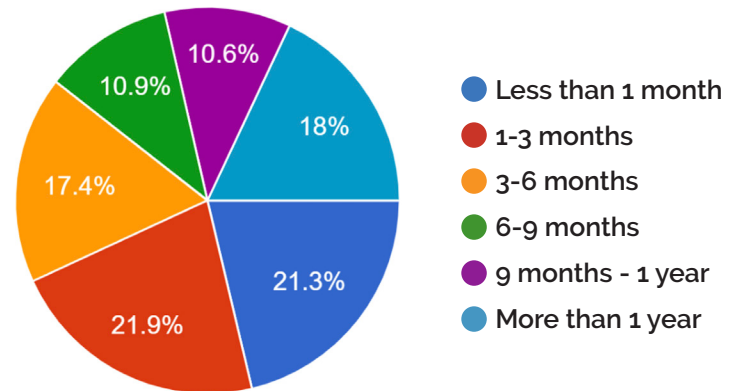
Many respondents reported attending meal services multiple times per week, and a notable portion of participants indicated that they attend meal services more than once per day. These findings highlight the degree to which meal services function as a primary food source for many individuals experiencing homelessness or food insecurity.

**57% SAID THEY RARELY SKIP MEALS****30% SAID THEY SOMETIMES SKIP MEALS****14% SAID THEY OFTEN SKIP MEALS****55% REPORTED ATTENDING
MULTIPLE TIMES PER WEEK****23% ATTEND ABOUT ONCE PER WEEK****13% ATTEND ABOUT ONCE PER MONTH****8% ATTEND EVERY OTHER MONTH**

Participants also reported varying lengths of time attending meal services, with some respondents indicating that they had begun attending meal services recently, while others reported relying on meal sites for extended periods of time. Approximately 21% of respondents reported attending for less than one month, and another 22% have been attending for one to three months, indicating that more than 40% are relatively new to meal services. Additional groups reported attending for three to six months (17%), six to nine months (11%), and nine months to a year (11%). Notably, 18% of participants have been using meal services for more than one year, reflecting a significant number of individuals experiencing ongoing or chronic food insecurity. This distribution suggests that meal programs must meet the needs of both people who are newly entering our provider network and those who rely on our services as a long-term, stable source of food support. Understanding this range helps OHS ensure that services remain responsive, adaptable, and accessible to participants at every stage of need. Furthermore, these findings highlight how meal services serve as a consistent and critical food source for many individuals in both long term and short-term situations.

20. How long have you been attending meal services for?

846 Responses



Meal Availability

Easiest:

Lunch (36%)

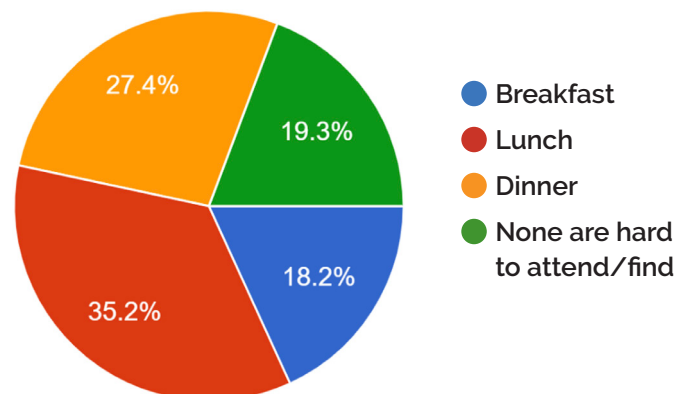
Dinner (27%)

None are difficult (19%)

Breakfast (18%)

21. What is the EASIEST meal to attend/find?

804 Responses



Hardest:

44% reporting breakfast as the hardest meal to attend

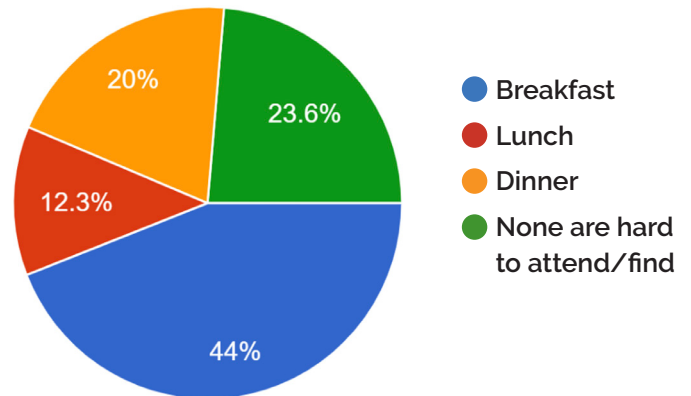
20% reporting dinner

12% reporting lunch

23% reporting no difficulty attending meals

21. What is the HARDEST meal to attend/find?

804 Responses



The survey findings show clear differences in how accessible each meal is for participants. Lunch was identified as the easiest meal to attend (36%), followed by dinner (27%). Nearly one in five participants (19%) reported that none of the meals are difficult to access, reflecting a segment of guests who do not experience major barriers to meals. Breakfast, however, was the least accessible meal, with only 18% listing it as the easiest to attend.

When asked directly which meal is the hardest to reach, breakfast stood out overwhelmingly, with 44% of respondents selecting it as the most difficult meal to attend. Dinner (20%) and lunch (12%) were also reported as challenging for some participants, but at lower rates. Additionally, 23% reported no difficulty attending any meals.

Together, these findings indicate that while lunch and dinner are generally accessible for most participants, breakfast presents a significant barrier. While the survey did not specifically measure the reasons behind this pattern, it may reflect early service times, limited morning transportation, conflicts with shelter routines, or competing responsibilities such as school preparation or appointments. Improving breakfast availability or adjusting its timing may help ensure participants have more reliable access to multiple nutritious meals throughout the day.

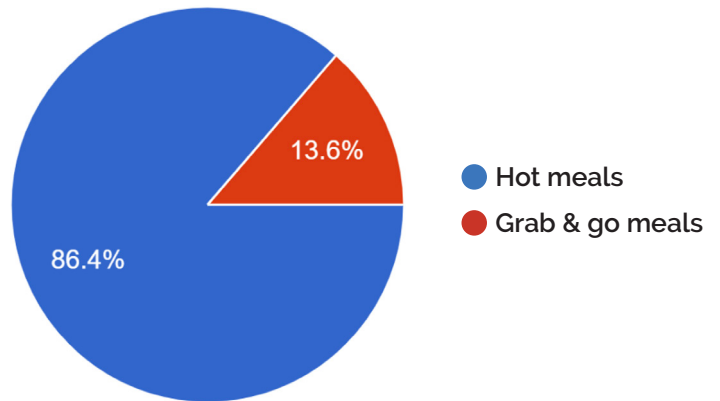
Meal Preferences

Participants expressed a range of preferences regarding meal offerings.

The majority of respondents indicated a preference for hot meals rather than grab-and-go options. Participants also identified several commonly preferred food items across different categories. For a more detailed breakdown of meal preferences, please see Appendix A.

27. What kind of meals do you prefer?

829 Responses



Key Insights

- Meal services are heavily relied upon for the population we serve. **Over 55% attend multiple times per week**, and 25% attend multiple times per day.
- A majority of meal guests are long-term Philadelphia residents. **61% have lived in the city for more than 10 years**, highlighting the need for stable, neighborhood-based meal supports.
- Breakfast access is the biggest barrier: **44% say breakfast is the hardest meal to access**.
- Many participants still skip meals: **43% report skipping meals sometimes or often**.
- More than one-third of respondents (**37%**) are **caregivers for children**, emphasizing the need for family-friendly meal options and scheduling.
- Meal service use is split between new and long-term participants: **over 40% have been attending for less than three months, while 18% have relied on services for more than a year**. This reflects both short-term crisis needs and chronic, ongoing food insecurity.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from this survey highlight the critical role that meal services play in supporting individuals and families experiencing homelessness and food insecurity in Philadelphia. For many respondents, meal sites serve as a reliable and consistent source of nourishment. The high frequency with which participants reported attending meal services suggests that these programs are not simply supplemental resources, but rather essential components of the local food access safety net and are critical to ensuring the Philadelphians have reliable access to healthy foods.

Survey responses demonstrate that a significant portion of participants attend meal services multiple times per week, with some individuals attending more than once per day. This level of reliance underscores the importance of maintaining stable and accessible meal programs across the OHS provider network. Ensuring that meal services are consistently available and geographically accessible is essential to supporting the health and well-being of individuals who depend on these services.

While many respondents indicated that they rarely skip meals due to access issues, the data also reveal that a meaningful portion of participants experience barriers to attending meal services. The survey results suggest that improving the geographic distribution and scheduling of meal services may help reduce

these access barriers. Further exploration is needed to better understand the specific factors contributing to these barriers.

One of the most notable findings from the survey relates to meal timing. Breakfast was identified as the most difficult meal to attend for many respondents.

In addition to issues of access and scheduling, the survey also highlights the importance of providing meals that are satisfying and culturally relevant. Participants expressed diverse food preferences that reflect the wide range of cultural backgrounds within the meal guest population. Commonly preferred foods included Spanish/Hispanic dishes, Jamaican food, and Soul Food/African American cuisine. While no single menu can meet every individual preference, incorporating culturally diverse menu options when possible, may enhance the meal experience and better reflect the communities being served.

Participants also frequently selected specific items such as chicken, fruit, and juice as preferred meal components. These insights can help guide procurement decisions and menu planning across the provider network. Aligning meal offerings with commonly preferred foods may improve satisfaction while reducing waste associated with items guests are less interested in.

Another important takeaway from the survey is the value of directly engaging meal guests in conversations about service improvements. Gathering feedback from participants allows OHS and its partner organizations to better understand how meal services are functioning on the ground and where improvements can be made. Incorporating participant voices into program planning reflects a person-centered approach that prioritizes dignity and respect for those accessing services - one of the key objectives of the Food Services Unit and the Office of Homeless Services at large.

While the survey findings provide valuable insights, they should be interpreted with appropriate caution. Because the survey relied on voluntary participation

and was not conducted using a randomized sampling approach, the results cannot be generalized to all meal service participants across Philadelphia. However, the large number of responses collected across multiple sites provides meaningful insight into trends and experiences within the population served by OHS meal programs.

Overall, the results of this survey represent an important step toward strengthening meal services throughout Philadelphia. By using participant feedback to inform program decisions, OHS can continue working toward its goal of ensuring that meal services are accessible, responsive, respectful of the diverse needs of the community, and build trust with participants.

Recommendations

The results of the survey highlight several opportunities for improving meal services across shelters and meal sites in Philadelphia. Based on the findings, the Office of Homeless Services Food Services Unit has identified several potential areas for program improvement.

1 Increase Breakfast Accessibility

Survey responses indicate that breakfast is identified as the most difficult meal to attend. OHS may explore opportunities to adjust breakfast service times, expand breakfast availability across additional sites, or coordinate meal schedules to better align with the daily routines of participants. Introducing individual grab-and-go breakfast options could also help increase accessibility by allowing individuals to pick up items they can take with them to school, work, or other morning commitments. Participants

noted that they enjoy yogurt, which could serve as an example of a convenient grab-and-go breakfast item that fits well within this model. Improving access to morning meals may help reduce the number of individuals who report skipping meals due to scheduling conflicts or transportation barriers. For organizations or community groups looking to start new meal programs, breakfast represents a critical service gap and an opportunity to meet an identified need.

2 Improve Geographic Access to Meal Services

Some respondents reported traveling significant distances to reach meal services. Expanding awareness of existing meal sites and evaluating the geographic distribution of services may help reduce travel burdens for participants. OHS may also explore opportunities to collaborate with additional community partners to expand meal service availability in areas where participants report difficulty finding meals.

3 Prioritize Participant Food Preferences

The survey identified several commonly preferred foods and beverages among meal guests, including chicken (70%), juice (68%), eggs (65%), salad (57%), and melons (48%). Incorporating these preferences into menu planning and food procurement decisions may improve meal satisfaction and reduce food waste. Continued collaboration with meal providers and food procurement partners will help ensure that commonly preferred foods are consistently available when budgeting is possible.

4 Expand Culturally Relevant Meal Options

Participants expressed mixed perceptions regarding the cultural diversity of foods served at meal sites. Expanding culturally relevant menu options where possible may improve the meal experience for many participants. In this context, "culturally relevant" refers to meals that reflect the familiar foods, preparation styles, and flavor profiles of the diverse communities served across the shelter system.

Because the population accessing meal sites can be transient, especially those seeking emergency housing, it can be difficult to consistently gauge which meals will best reflect participants' cultural backgrounds and preferences. OHS may work with meal providers to incorporate culturally diverse recipes that reflect the backgrounds and preferences of the communities being served. Meal providers can incorporate culturally relevant foods while maintaining nutritional standards by adapting traditional recipes, familiar flavors, and preparation styles.

5 Continuing Participant Engagement

The survey demonstrated the value of directly engaging meal guests in conversations about service improvements. OHS should continue collecting participant feedback through surveys, focus groups, or community meetings to ensure that meal services remain responsive to evolving community needs. Maintaining open channels of communication between meal guests, providers, and OHS staff will help strengthen program responsiveness, increase service quality, and build trust among participants.

Limitations

While this survey provides valuable insights into the experiences of meal service participants, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results.

- 1** First, participation in the survey was voluntary, which may introduce response bias. Individuals who chose to complete the survey may differ from those who did not participate, potentially influencing the distribution of responses.
- 2** Second, the survey was not conducted using a randomized sampling approach. As a result, the findings should not be interpreted as representative of all individuals accessing meal services across Philadelphia. Instead, the results should be understood as descriptive trends among the participants who completed the survey.
- 3** Third, several survey design and administration issues may have affected response accuracy. Because the survey was administered across multiple sites, and in some cases, completed independently, some participants experienced confusion related to wording, numbering errors, and inconsistent formatting. Staff reported that certain questions, such as those involving numeric ranges, frequency scales, or multi-part items, were misread or misinterpreted by some participants. A number of respondents also appeared unsure about which questions applied to them, leading to skipped items or partial responses.

These concerns underscore the importance of considering the reading grade level of future surveys. While efforts were made to ensure accessibility, some respondents may benefit from a survey written at a lower literacy level, with simplified language, shorter question structures, more visual cues (such as icons or checkboxes), and availability of the survey in multiple languages. A more universally accessible design would help ensure that all participants, regardless of literacy level or language background, can provide clear and accurate responses.

Despite these limitations, the survey represents a significant step in understanding meal service experiences across the OHS network. Direct participant feedback offers valuable insight into how services function on the ground and highlights opportunities for improvement.

FUTURE WORK

Future efforts will continue building on this work by expanding opportunities for participants across the entire system to share their experiences. Additional languages may be incorporated to better support individuals whose primary language is not English or Spanish. OHS may also explore using focus groups, guided interviews, or community meetings to gather deeper qualitative insights that are not easily captured through surveys alone. Additionally, findings from this survey will directly inform OHS Food Services Unit procurement practices. By incorporating participant preferences into purchasing decisions, OHS aims to ensure that the foods being sourced and distributed across meal sites better address the needs and preferences of the community, ultimately improving both satisfaction and meal utilization.

Future work will also include a deeper analysis of barriers to meal access. This may include factors such as early service times, transportation limitations, or conflicts with other responsibilities such as preparing children for school or attending appointments. Understanding these barriers in greater detail will help inform more targeted program improvements.

By continuing to engage participants and incorporate their feedback into program planning, OHS can further strengthen meal services and ensure that programs remain responsive to the diverse needs of the communities they serve.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: MEAL PREFERENCE DATA

This appendix provides a detailed breakdown of food and beverage preference data collected through the OHS Meal Services Survey. While the main report summarizes high-level trends, the following tables offer a fuller view of participant selections across all meal components. This data is intended to help guide procurement decisions, inform menu planning, and support providers in offering meals that better align with participant tastes and cultural expectations.

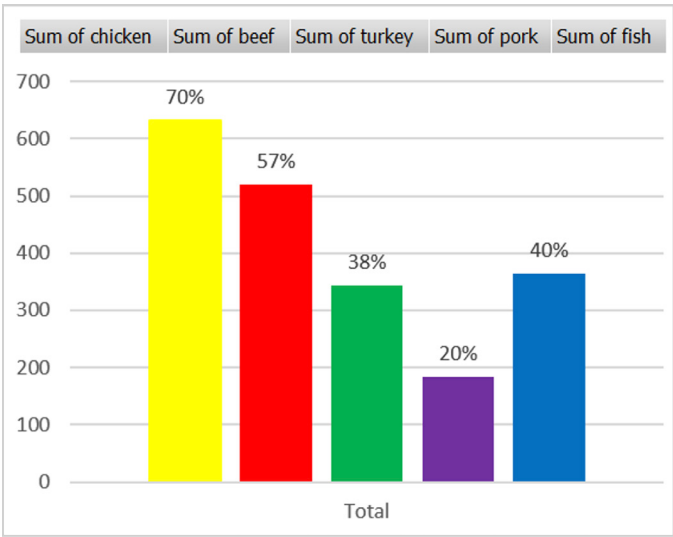
It is important to note that preference selections do not necessarily reflect consumption patterns or satisfaction with meals currently served. Instead, these findings represent participant choices when asked about their ideal food options within key categories.

The sections below present preferred meal components across proteins, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, grains and beverages.

A. Protein Preferences

Participants were asked about their preferred meat options. Chicken was the most commonly selected choice, with 70% indicating it as a preferred protein. Beef followed with 57%, while fish (40%) and turkey (38%) were moderately preferred. Pork was selected by a smaller portion of respondents (20%).

These preferences show a clear tendency toward poultry and fish compared to red meats or pork. Although the dataset does not capture the reasons behind these choices, the distribution offers useful context for understanding which protein sources may be most acceptable within the meal services provided. This information can help inform menu planning and ensure that offerings align as closely as possible with participant tastes, while recognizing that preference data do not directly measure consumption patterns or satisfaction.



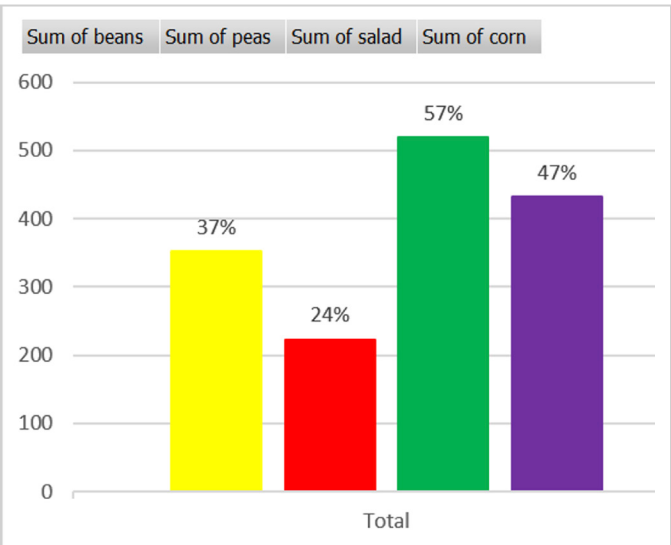
Values

- Sum of chicken
- Sum of beef
- Sum of turkey
- Sum of pork
- Sum of fish

B. Vegetable and Legume Preferences

Participants reported a range of preferred vegetable options. Salad was the most commonly selected choice, preferred by 57% of respondents. Corn was also frequently chosen, with 47% indicating it as a preferred item. Beans were selected by 37% of participants, while peas were preferred by 24%.

These preferences indicate that participants tend to favor lighter or more commonly served vegetables such as salad and corn, with moderate interest in beans and peas. To help broaden exposure to a wider variety of vegetables, we also conduct on-site taste-testing demonstrations, where we prepare a healthy menu item and invite participants to sample it and share their feedback. These trends can help inform menu variety and ensure offerings reflect participant tastes, recognizing that preference data alone cannot predict satisfaction or overall dietary patterns.

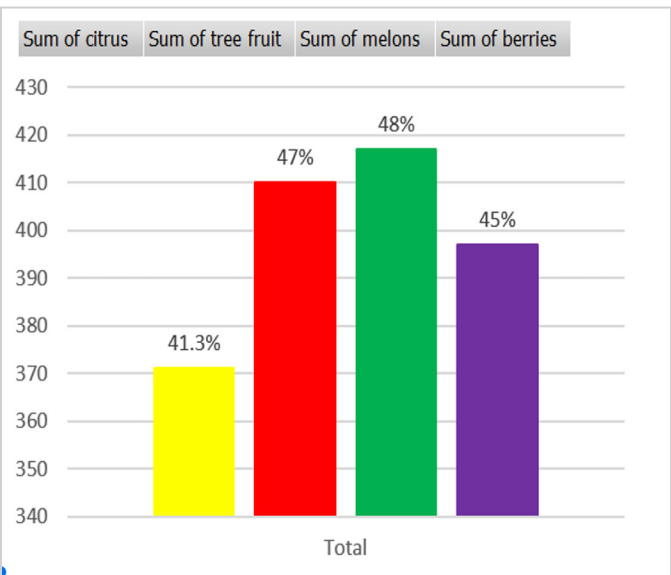


Values

- Sum of beans
- Sum of peas
- Sum of salad
- Sum of corn

C. Fruit Preferences

Fruit selection remained consistently strong across all categories. Melons showed the highest engagement at 47%, followed closely by tree fruits such as apples and bananas at 46%. Berries, including strawberries and blueberries, also performed well at 45%. Citrus fruits, such as oranges and clementines, had slightly lower but still solid engagement at 41%. Overall, the data indicate broad interest in all fruit types, with only small differences between categories.

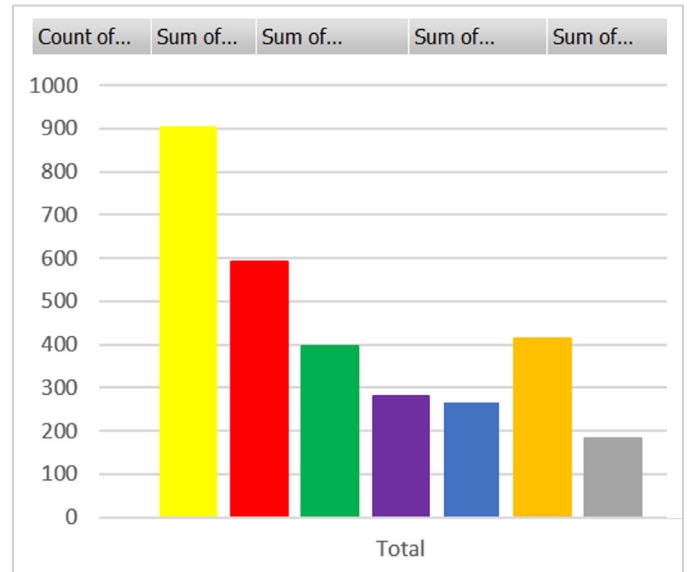


Values

- Sum of citrus
- Sum of tree fruit
- Sum of melons
- Sum of berries

D. Dairy Preferences

Dairy product preferences indicate a strong interest in both traditional breakfast staples and versatile cheese options. Eggs were the most frequently selected item at 64.8%. Yogurt also showed substantial appeal at 46%, suggesting a demand for convenient dairy options. Among cheeses, American cheese was selected by 44% of respondents, followed by cheddar at 31%, mozzarella at 29%, and string cheese at 20%. These findings point to a broad preference for accessible, commonly used dairy items that can be easily incorporated into a variety of meals.

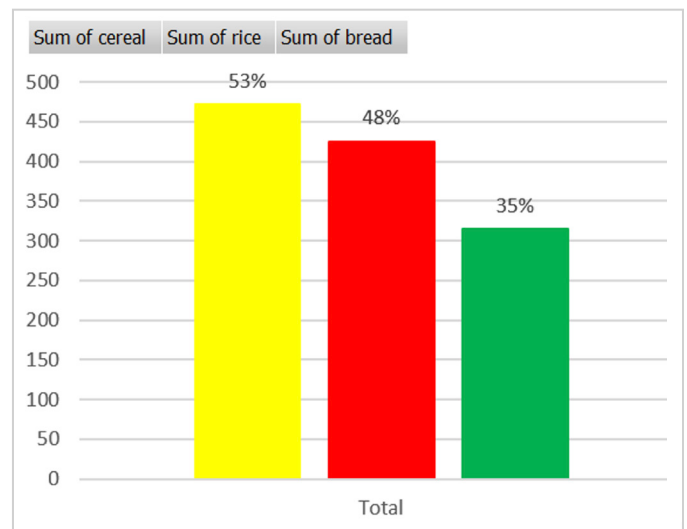


Values

- Sum of dairy
- Sum of eggs
- Sum of Amrcn Chz
- Sum of Ched Chz
- Sum of Mozz Chz
- Sum of yogurt
- Sum of String Chz

D. Grain Preferences

Grain preferences reflect steady interest in familiar, versatile staples. Cereal was the most frequently selected grain option at 53%, indicating an appeal for quick, ready-to-eat choices. Rice followed at 48%, suggesting a preference for grains that pair easily with a variety of meals. An additional 35% of respondents selected other bread as their preference. Overall, these findings point to a preference for accessible, widely used grains that can support a wide variety of meal planning.

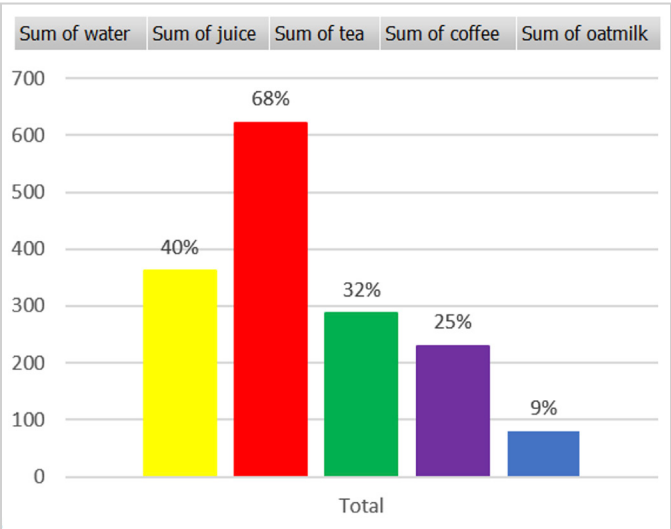


Values

- Sum of cereal
- Sum of rice
- Sum of bread

F. Beverage Preferences

Beverage preferences varied widely, with juice emerging as the most frequently selected option at 68%. Water followed at 40%, tea at 32%, and coffee at 25%. Oat milk accounted for 9% of selections, indicating a smaller but distinct interest in alternative dairy options. Although soda was not included as an official survey choice, several participants wrote it in as a preferred beverage, representing 2% of responses. Some participant preferences may not align with items that OHS is permitted to purchase under current grant restrictions. For instance, OHS funding cannot be used to buy items such as soda; however, individual shelters may choose to provide these items using alternative funding sources. Overall, these findings highlight a strong preference for juice, with meaningful but varied selections across other beverage types.



Values

- Sum of water
- Sum of juice
- Sum of tea
- Sum of coffee
- Sum of oatmilk

APPENDIX B: SURVEY



OHS's role within the larger Philadelphia community is to garner information as to how we can best make meal experiences satisfying, culturally relevant, and dignifying for all participants. We hope that this survey will allow us to cater toward meal service participants in a more thoughtful manner. Within the survey you will find 5 sections which total 38 questions.

Section 1: Family/Individual

1. At which shelter or meal site are you currently?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Are you the legal guardian of any children? If no, please skip to question 4.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. If you answered yes to the previous question, how many children are under your care?
 - a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
 - f. More than 5
4. Do you live in Philadelphia? If no, skip to question 6
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. If you answered yes, how long have you lived in Philadelphia?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 3-4 years
 - d. 5-6 years
 - e. 7-8 years
 - f. 9-10 years
 - g. More than 10 years
6. Where in the city do you have you had the easiest time finding a meal service?
 - a. North Philadelphia
 - b. South Philadelphia
 - c. West Philadelphia
 - d. Northeast Philadelphia
 - e. Southwest Philadelphia
 - f. Center city
 - g. None
 - h. Other (please list here)
7. Where in the city have you had the hardest time finding a meal service?
 - a. North Philadelphia
 - b. South Philadelphia
 - c. West Philadelphia
 - d. Northeast Philadelphia
 - e. Southwest Philadelphia
 - f. Center city
 - g. None
 - h. Other (please list here)
8. What day of the week do you have the easiest time finding a meal service?
 - a. Monday
 - b. Tuesday
 - c. Wednesday
 - d. Thursday
 - e. Friday
 - f. Saturday
 - g. Sunday

9. What day of the week do you have the hardest time finding a meal service?

- a. Monday
- b. Tuesday
- c. Wednesday
- d. Thursday
- e. Friday
- f. Saturday
- g. Sunday

10. Do you travel to attend meal services? If not, skip to question 12.

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. If you answered yes, how far do you normally travel to find a meal service?

- a. Less than 2 miles
- b. 2-4 miles
- c. 4-6 miles
- d. 6-8 miles
- e. 8-10 miles
- f. More than 10 miles
- d. Other (please list below)

12. Have you had to show identification at meal service? If you answered no, please skip to quest 14.

- a. Yes
- b. No

13. If you answered yes, what form of identification were you required to show? If you answered no please skip to question 14

14. How often, if ever, do you skip a meal due to not being able to get to a meal site?

- a. Rarely (Once a week or less)
- b. Sometimes (2-3 times a week)
- c. Often (More than 3 times a week)

15. Have you ever attended an outdoor food service?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. Have you ever received additional care/services while at a meal site (ie: medical attention, showers, laundry, clothing, etc). If no, skip to question 18.

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. If you answered yes, what services did you receive? (Please circle all that apply)

- a. Medical care/treatment
- b. Drug care/treatment
- c. Mental health counseling
- d. Showers
- e. Laundry
- f. Extra clothing
- g. Other (please list below)

Section 2: Meal Services

18. How often do you attend meal services?

- a. Always (multiple times in one week)
- b. Often (once a week)
- c. Sometimes (once a month)
- d. Occasionally (every other month)

19. How many times a week do you attend meal services?

- a. 1-2 times a week
- b. 2-3 times a week
- c. 3-4 times a week
- d. 4-5 times a week
- e. 5-6 times a week
- f. 6-7 times a week
- g. I attend meal services multiple times in one day

20. How long have you been attending meal services for?

- a. Less than 1 month
- b. 1-3 months
- c. 3-6 months
- d. 6-9 months
- e. 9 months- 1 year
- f. More than 1 year

21. What is the easiest meal to find/attend?

- a. Breakfast
- b. Lunch
- c. Dinner
- e. None are hard to find/attend

22. What is the hardest meal to find/attend?
- a. Breakfast
 - b. Lunch
 - c. Dinner
 - e. None are hard to find/attend

Section 3: Meal Preferences

23. Do you think that free meal sites serve culturally diverse foods (ie: traditionally African American, Asian, Latinx, etc foods)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Sometimes
- d. Other (please list below)

24. If you answered yes or sometimes to the question above, please explain your answer.

25. If you answered no, is there a specific cultural dish that you would like to see served at meal services?

26. What kind of meals do you prefer?

- a. Hot meals
- b. Grab & go meals

27. Do you have any dietary restrictions? If yes please list them below. If no, skip to question 28.

28. What kind of meat do you prefer to be served at meal services (please pick your top three choices)?

- a. Chicken
- b. Beef
- c. Turkey
- d. Pork
- e. Fish
- f. Other (please list below)

29. What kind of vegetables do you prefer to be served at meal services (please pick your top two options)?

- a. Beans
- b. Peas
- c. Salad
- d. Corn
- e. Other (please list below)

30. What kind of fruit do you prefer to be served at meal services (please pick your top two options)?

- a. Citrus (oranges, clementines)
- b. Tree fruit (apples, bananas)
- c. Melons (cantaloupes, watermelons)
- d. Berries (strawberries, blueberries)
- e. Other (please list below)

31. What kind of dairy products do you prefer to be served at a meal service (please list your top 3 options)?

- a. Eggs
- b. American cheese
- c. Cheddar cheese
- d. Mozzarella cheese
- e. String cheese
- f. Yogurt
- g. Other (please list below)

32. What kind of grains do you prefer to be served at a meal service (please list your top choice)?

- a. Cereal
- b. Rice
- c. Bread
- d. Other (please list below)

33. What beverage do you prefer to be provided at meal services?

- a. Water
- b. Juice
- c. Tea
- d. Coffee
- e. Oatmilk
- f. Other (please list below)

34. If you answered juice, what kind of juice do you prefer? If not, skip to question 35.

- a. Apple juice
- b. Orange juice
- c. Grape juice
- d. Other (please list below)

Section 4: Additional Information

35. What is your preferred language?

- a. English
- b. Spanish
- c. French
- d. Mandarin
- e. Other (please list below)

36. If you answered with a language other than English, have free meal sites provided language accommodations (ie: translators). If you answered no, skip to question 37.

- a. Yes
- b. No

37. What is your ethnic identity?

- a. Black/African American
- b. Latinx/Hispanic
- c. Asian
- d. Native/Pacific Islander
- e. White
- f. Other (please list below)

38. What age range are you in?

- a. Younger than 18
- b. 18-22
- c. 23- 27
- d. 28-32
- e. 33-37
- f. 38-42
- g. 43-49
- h. 50 or older

APPENDIX C: OUTREACH FLYER



Office of Homeless Services

OHS MEAL SITE GUEST SURVEY

Distribution of this survey will allow OHS and our meal site partners to enhance meal experiences, making them more satisfying, culturally relevant, and dignified for all participants. Our goal is to help meal sites and OHS better understand and thoughtfully cater to the needs of their guests.

Incentives will be provided to those that participate!

THE SURVEY WILL BE ADMINISTERED ON THE FOLLOWING DAY:

- _____
- _____

Questions? Email Amara.OConnell@phila.gov or
Leah.Daubs@phila.gov

APPENDIX D: QR CODE FLYER



**Tell Us What
You Like To Eat!**

**Take Our Quick
Survey Here:**



OHS hopes to use this feedback to ensure meals are satisfying, culturally relevant, and dignified. This brief survey should take no more than 20 minutes.

**Thank you for your time and
valuable input!**

APPENDIX E: RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT FUND INCENTIVE RECEIPT

Compensation details (*distributor fills out first portion*):

City Agency: ___OHS_____

Engagement/Contribution: Meal Guest Survey_____

Location: _____Darlene Morris - 616 N 43rd St_____

Date: 12/16/25_____

Card Value: ___\$25_____

Last 4 Numbers on Card: _____

Thank you for your time. Please fill out the information below to confirm you've received a gift card for your participation.

Confirmation of receipt:

Name: _____

Address: _____616 N. 43rd St._____

Zip Code: _____19104_____

Date of Receipt: 12/16/25_____

I confirm that:

6. *I am not an employee of the City of Philadelphia.*
7. *I have not been issued \$600 or more in compensation from the Philadelphia City Fund or the City of Philadelphia this calendar year, **including** this gift card.*
8. *I received the gift card referenced above.*
9. *I understand that this gift card cannot be replaced if lost or stolen.*

Signature_____

Date_____