

School Meal Program RFP Checklist

1. Facility Transparency & Safety

- ☐ Can we tour your kitchen within 48 hours?
- ☐ Can you provide current USDA certification & health inspection reports?
- ☐ What's your written contingency plan if your kitchen goes down?

2. Food Quality

- ☐ What's actually in the food? (Whole muscle vs. processed protein)
- ☐ Do you use artificial additives or preservatives?
- ☐ Can students taste-test before we commit?

3. Participation Growth

- ☐ What strategies will be used to grow participation?
- ☐ What participation gains have you achieved at similar schools?
- ☐ How do you engage students monthly (taste tests, feedback)?

4. Operational Reliability

- ☐ Who's my named account manager?
- ☐ What's your guaranteed response time for urgent issues?
- ☐ What happens when delivery fails at XX AM?

5. Waste Management

- ☐ How do you track and reduce food waste?
- ☐ What packaging do you use? (Sustainable options?)
- ☐ Do you provide Offer versus Serve training?


6. True Cost Analysis

- ☐ What's the total cost beyond per-meal pricing?
- ☐ How do participation rates impact overall program cost?
- ☐ What hidden costs should we know about?

Final Evaluation Criteria

Before finalizing your decision, evaluate each vendor against these standards:

1. **Quality Standards:** Would you confidently serve this food in your own home?
2. **Student Impact:** Does this partner prioritize nutrition and student satisfaction?
3. **Financial Stewardship:** Can you trust this vendor with your school's budget and reputation?
4. **Partnership Approach:** Will they work collaboratively to solve problems and drive results?

 **Remember:** The lowest bid rarely delivers the best long-term value. Choose a partner who aligns with your district's mission and values.