

Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission  
USDA Inspection Kitchen

## **Introduction**

Fresno EOC seeks a consultant to conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a new 10,000 square foot kitchen facility.

Fresno EOC proposes building a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspection kitchen to expand preparation and distribution of meals throughout a broad geographic area and employ more people in an area of California that struggles with entrenched poverty and unemployment.

The feasibility study will take into account Fresno EOC Food Service's demonstrated history of operations and growth, projected increased food production demand, job creation and ability to repay a loan.

## **History and Current Operations**

Fresno EOC Food Services established operations in 1965. At its inception, Food Services served lunches to Head Start children and later added the National Meals on Wheels Program in 1972. In the beginning, meals were prepared in satellite kitchens within the City of Fresno, but by October of 1985, the vision of constructing a central kitchen was realized and the state-of-art Food Preparation Center (FPC) was opened. Food Services served 2,000 meals a day when the FPC opened and has grown to its current capacity of 9,300 meals daily, including frozen homebound meals to 1,700 clients weekly. Fresno EOC Food Services personally delivers these meals to clients in Fresno and Madera counties and ships 2,000 boxes with 5 days of meals to Kings and Tulare Counties where they are delivered by another organization to their clients. In 2018, Food Services launched the Food Express Bus, which provides USDA-reimbursed nutritionally balanced meals during summer, and holiday breaks for children in the city of Fresno who would otherwise go hungry. In 2021, Fresno EOC replicated this model with a second bus to serve children in the rural communities of Fresno County and would like to add a third bus, but does not have the current kitchen capacity to do so. Fresno EOC Food Services also has a social enterprise-catering department, which, pre-COVID-19, was able to provide over 50,000 meals for events ranging from business meetings to weddings.

## **Project Details**

The 10,000 square-foot facility Fresno EOC Food Services currently uses to produce these meals was built 39 years ago and has reached capacity for production and storage. Fresno EOC proposes building a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspection kitchen, which would allow Fresno EOC Food Services to expand capacity and provide additional benefits throughout California and across state lines. The USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is responsible for inspecting meat, poultry, and processed egg products for safety, wholesomeness and proper labeling. If Fresno EOC Food Services receives a USDA Federal Inspection Certification, federal inspection personnel will be present at all times during production to ensure all guidelines are followed. The addition of the USDA seal to packaging will allow for the distribution of these meals to clients and organizations throughout the State or country, as well as allowing collaboration with larger vendors and

distributors to transport meals to a broader range of clients. -Fresno EOC's existing kitchen facility will operate concurrently during construction, to allow for uninterrupted service to our clients while the USDA inspection kitchen is built. Once construction is complete, Fresno EOC Food Services will operate both kitchens, using the existing kitchen for congregate meal clients and the USDA inspection kitchen to focus on the production and distribution of frozen meals.

## **Project Impact**

Ultimately, this project will help the recipients of the millions of meals to be produced in the USDA inspection kitchen. The benefits of this project include increased workforce training and job creation in Central California and increased meal production, including medically tailored meals, and distribution to vulnerable populations throughout California and across state lines.

A USDA inspection kitchen will bring increased workforce training and job creation in Central California. Currently, Food Services has 82 employees including drivers, cooks, and administrative staff. The creation of a USDA inspection kitchen will create a second production shift, resulting in an additional 65-70 staff positions. Full capacity is expected to be reached within five years of project completion, with the addition of a third shift, the facility operating 24 hours a day and 150 jobs created.

A USDA inspection kitchen will allow Fresno EOC Food Services to launch additional Food Express Buses to meet the needs of food insecure families and children in the Central Valley.

Fresno EOC Food Services is in discussions with the California Food is Medicine Coalition to assist with building our capacity to provide medically tailored meals. Recipients of these meals may include individuals with acute, chronic or serious illnesses or disabilities who cannot shop or cook for themselves. These vulnerable individuals, a large portion of whom experience poverty, typically have specific overlapping health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease and make up 5% of patients contributing to 50% of healthcare costs. Fresno EOC Food Services has a registered dietitian on staff who will create menus to ensure food content meets customers' daily nutritional requirements. A USDA inspection kitchen would support these healthy menu options and allow Food Services to collaborate with insurance providers and hospitals to develop specific diets to meet patients' needs. The USDA inspection kitchen will benefit residents by providing the necessary nutrition they need to flourish so they do not have to simultaneously face hunger and illness. Better health outcomes among residents in California and in other states receiving these meals will lead to improved health outcomes and will decrease the strain on our already overburdened healthcare system.

Fresno EOC has been working with an architect over the last two years and has initial design plans drawn up, including initial construction estimates.

Location for the kitchen is yet undetermined. Ideally, the feasibility study will include a scenario comparison between purchasing the land and long-term leasing options with analysis of each.