

New York/New Jersey Area Common Application Form Cover Sheet

Date of application: July 22, 2026

Name of organization to which grant would be paid. Please list exact legal name:
Citymeals-on-Wheels

Purpose of grant (one sentence): Preparation and Delivery of Meals to Older, Homebound New Yorkers

Address of organization: 360 Lexington Avenue, Ninth Floor, New York, NY 10017

Telephone number: 646-866-6294 Fax: 212-687-1296 E-mail: development@citymeals.org

Executive director: Beth Shapiro

Contact person and title (if not executive director): Amy Wickstein, Director Institutional Giving

Is your organization an IRS 501(c)(3) not-for-profit?: Yes ☒ or No ☐

If no, please explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Grant request: \$ 11,000

Check one (based on the organization's priorities and the funder's guidelines):

General support ☒

Project support ☐

Total organizational budget (for current year): \$39,915,358

Dates covered by this budget (mo/day/year): 07/01/2026 – 06/30/2027

Total project budget (if requesting project support): \$N/A

Dates covered by project budget (mo/day/year): N/A

Project name (if applicable): N/A



Proposal to the Vidda Foundation

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

Citymeals on Wheels respectfully requests an \$11,000 general operating grant to help provide reliable access to food for approximately 22,000 homebound older New Yorkers. Those we serve cannot consistently shop or cook because of illness, disability, or limited mobility. Although they receive a home-delivered meal, Citymeals' research found that 60% still experience food insecurity, leaving roughly 12,000 recipients without enough food to meet their needs.

In fiscal year 2027, Citymeals plans to deliver nearly 2.7 million meals while sustaining weekend, holiday, and emergency service and expanding supplemental programs that provide additional food, greater choice, and practical shopping support. The increased request reflects both the scale of unmet need and the growth of programs whose evaluations show reduced hunger and food anxiety, improved food security, and greater financial stability.

A generous \$11,000 grant would furnish more than 1,100 meals, and funds would be fully expended between July 1, 2026, and June 30, 2027.

NARRATIVE

A. Background

1. History and Mission

Citymeals on Wheels was founded in 1981 after restaurant critic Gael Greene learned that New York City's home-delivered meal program did not operate on weekends or holidays, leaving homebound older adults without food during service gaps. Greene and chef James Beard mobilized the restaurant community to deliver meals to 6,000 older New Yorkers. The organization operated under the City's Department for the Aging, now NYC Department for the Aging (NYC Aging), and became an independent nonprofit in 1991. Since our founding, we have delivered more than 72 million meals.

Today, Citymeals provides a continuous lifeline of nutritious food and human connection to approximately 22,000 older New Yorkers across all five boroughs. We are New York City's only nonprofit organization focused exclusively on delivering meals to homebound older adults, a population facing outsized challenges accessing a consistent supply of nutritious food, directly impacting their ability to live independently.

Citymeals envisions a New York City free of elder hunger by 2040, a goal we pursue by bringing together anti-hunger nonprofits, community-based organizations, corporations, and government. We also aim to address social isolation in the population of older New Yorkers, helping those we serve to maintain connections to their communities.



2. Population Served

Citymeals recipients are among the most diverse population in the country, many of whom are impacted by mobility limitations, illness, or physical, psychological, or cognitive disabilities. They range from 60 years of age to more than 100 years old, and span a range of ethnicities, languages, cultural backgrounds, and religions. Nearly 60% are women, more than half are over the age of 80, and 8% are

veterans. More than 62% are white, 27% are Black, 6% are Asian, and 5% represent other backgrounds. Within this breakdown, approximately 20% identify as Hispanic/Latino. In the past year, of our more than 21,300 meal recipients, approximately 31% reside in Brooklyn, 27% in Manhattan, 23% in Queens, 15% in the Bronx, and 4% in Staten Island. Nearly half of those we surveyed during a 2024 study with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute experienced food insecurity in the past year; 45% reported having no friends or family to help them; 65% live on \$15,000 a year or less; approximately 38% have limited ability to prepare food or shop for groceries; 15% rarely cook due to physical or cognitive limitations making meal preparation overwhelming, and 38% cited loneliness and depression.

The need is significant and growing. There are more than 1.36 million people over the age of 65 in New York City, a 33% increase over the last decade, and 18.4% of older adults in the city live in poverty. A year of home-delivered meals costs roughly \$4,000 per person, far less than the average \$120,000 cost of nursing home care, which makes this work both humane and fiscally sound.

Please note that Citymeals does not currently collect demographic information about meal recipients' sexual orientations or primary language spoken. However, our work with community-based organizations throughout the city helps make it possible for meal recipients to speak with case managers in their preferred spoken language to receive information about services, and we partner with organizations that provide services to LGBTQIA+ older adults.

3. Current Programs and Recent Accomplishments

Citymeals ensures that homebound older adults have food every day of the week through weekend meals, select holiday meals, emergency food, and supplemental programs. Meals are delivered through community-based providers and from Citymeals' Meal Distribution Center in the Bronx, where staff receive, store, pack, and distribute shelf-stable food, frozen meals, pantry items, and fresh produce.

During fiscal year 2026 (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026), Citymeals moved several newer programs from pilot stages toward evaluated, scalable models. This progress is significant because **60% of the home-delivered meal recipients we serve continue to experience food insecurity** despite receiving a daily meal. Many also face mobility, health, and financial barriers that prevent them from using food pantries, shopping independently, or preparing enough food at home. Citymeals has responded by expanding the ways older adults can receive food, choose groceries that meet their needs, and access practical and social support. Programs include:

Mobile Grocery

- **Reach:** Approximately 700 older adults per month; 200 participants in the enhanced client-choice model with the West Side Campaign Against Hunger
- **What it provides:** Pantry staples, dairy, frozen meals, and fresh produce delivered directly to the home

- **Participant results** (*interim evaluation, first 100 enrolled*):
 - 93% worried less about having enough food
 - 92% saved money on groceries
 - 89% said it freed up money for bills and necessities
 - 87% said it helped them eat healthier
 - Average savings: \$52 and nearly six hours of shopping and travel time each month
- **FY2027:** Expand the enhanced client-choice model to approximately 300 participants and continue refining accessible ordering, greater food choice, and larger grocery packages.



Sample contents of mobile grocery bag (excludes frozen meals and full produce)

Breakfast Box

- **Reach:** 2,000 older adults across all five boroughs
- **What it provides:** The equivalent of a second daily meal through monthly deliveries of breakfast staples, frozen meals, and fresh produce
- **Participant results:**
 - 90% said the program freed up money for bills and other necessities (average savings: \$60/month)
 - 79% said it helped them avoid hunger
 - 81% said it helped them manage at least one health condition
- **FY2027:** Sustain service for 2,000 participants, increase fresh produce in each box, and develop a Halal option.



Sample of Breakfast Box (contents rotate monthly)

Shopping Assistance

- **Reach:** 100 older adults across two rounds in Brooklyn
- **What it provides:** Grocery vouchers, paired in Round 2 with volunteer shopping support, for older adults facing mobility barriers
- **Round 1:** (*50 participants; \$240 in vouchers over 3 months/ \$80 monthly*): Vouchers reduced severe food insecurity and gave participants the freedom to buy fresh produce, protein, staples, and culturally familiar foods.
- **Round 2 results** (*50 participants; \$240 in vouchers over 3 months plus volunteer support*):
 - Very low food security fell from 36% to 26% among participants with matched pre- and post-surveys
 - High or marginal food security rose from 22% to 36%
 - 95% of respondents who received volunteer help said volunteers met their grocery needs and made food easier to access
 - 60% said working with a volunteer improved their sense of social connection
- **FY2027:** Provide \$80 monthly vouchers for the original Brooklyn cohort for the full year and add 100 older adults across Brooklyn and Staten Island for three months each.

Life Story Club

- **Reach:** More than 220 older adults across seven weekly storytelling clubs, up from four

- **What it provides:** Facilitated storytelling clubs in English, Spanish, and Mandarin that address the social isolation many homebound older adults experience
- **Participant results:**
 - 85% experienced a decrease in loneliness
 - 96% said their club gave them a sense of community
 - 100% reported improved mood after attending
 - 99% felt supported by their club
- **FY2027:** Grow to at least 250 participants, add clubs and language offerings, and introduce evening and weekend meeting times.

4. About Citymeals – Staff and Partnerships

As of July 2026, Citymeals employs 41 full-time employees and 1 part-time employee. Citymeals benefits from the support of nearly 17,000 volunteers each year.

Partnership is central to Citymeals' model. We work with New York City Aging and more than 50 community-based organizations, older adult centers, and food pantries to identify eligible older adults, procure or receive meals, coordinate deliveries, and provide case management. We partner with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute for independent research and evaluation, with West Side Campaign Against Hunger to source and deliver client-choice groceries, and with Life Story Club to create accessible opportunities for social connection among homebound and mobility-impaired older adults. As a designated emergency responder, we coordinate with New York City Emergency Management to reach older adults during crises.

Citymeals also participates in the Roundtable, a coalition of New York City food pantries that purchases collectively to lower prices. Citymeals contributes its buying power, warehouse storage at the Distribution Center, and delivery capacity, reducing costs for our partners and for us.

B. Funding Request

1. Overview of Request

Citymeals respectfully requests an \$11,000 general operating grant to support the purchase, preparation, packing, transportation, and delivery of meals and supplemental food for homebound older New Yorkers. The grant would help sustain year-round service, including weekend and holiday meals, emergency food, and expand programs that provide additional food to recipients whose needs exceed one home-delivered meal per day.

In fiscal year 2027, Citymeals plans to deliver approximately 2.7 million meals to nearly 22,000 older adults across New York City. This includes sustaining the core meal-delivery system that ensures recipients have food every day of the week while expanding services for the roughly 12,000 current meal recipients who experience food insecurity despite receiving a daily meal.

Flexible support will help Citymeals maintain and strengthen several connected programs. Breakfast Box will continue providing the equivalent of a second daily meal to 2,000 older adults, with fresh produce increasing to an average of ten pounds per box and a new Halal option in development. Mobile Grocery will deliver food to more than 700 older adults each month, while its enhanced client-choice model grows from 200 to approximately 300 participants. Shopping Assistance will continue monthly grocery vouchers for the original Brooklyn cohort and add 100 older adults across Brooklyn and Staten Island. We will also expand

our partnership with Life Story Club, which will grow from approximately 230 to at least 250 participants, add Russian and Haitian-Creole offerings to its current English, Spanish, and Mandarin clubs, and introduce more evening and weekend meeting times.

These programs respond to the financial, physical, and social barriers homebound older adults face, including insufficient income, limited mobility, difficulty carrying groceries, the need for food that reflects participants' health and cultural preferences, and limited opportunities for meaningful connection.

The increased request reflects program growth and the evidence that these services reduce hunger, food anxiety, financial strain, and social isolation. Flexible support also strengthens the infrastructure that makes this work possible: procurement, warehouse operations, packing, and delivery across all five boroughs.

Citymeals will fully expend the grant between July 1, 2026, and June 30, 2027. Because the request is for general operating support, funds will be applied where they can most effectively sustain reliable food access and respond to changing participant needs.

C. Evaluation

Citymeals evaluates both the reliability of food delivery and the extent to which our programs improve participants' daily lives. We track meals and grocery packages delivered, recipients served, enrollment and participation, and completion of scheduled distributions. For supplemental food programs, we also assess whether participants experience less hunger and food-related anxiety, greater access to nutritious food, reduced financial strain, and fewer barriers to shopping and meal preparation.

Our evaluation methods include pre- and post-program surveys, participant interviews, case manager feedback, purchasing and redemption data, and the validated USDA six-item Food Security Screener. Citymeals works with the CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute to strengthen survey design, analyze matched participant data, and assess outcomes beyond the number of meals delivered. Recent evaluations have measured changes in food security, grocery savings, the ability to afford bills and necessities, dietary quality, program satisfaction, ordering accessibility, and the value of volunteer shopping support.

Life Story Club uses a parallel evaluation process focused on social connection. The program tracks referrals, enrollment, attendance, participant feedback, and changes in loneliness through pre- and post-program measures. Life Story Club reports progress to Citymeals regularly, allowing both organizations to monitor participation, identify referral barriers, and refine club formats, language offerings, and scheduling.

Citymeals uses evaluation findings to make concrete program improvements. Participant feedback has informed increased fresh produce and additional dietary options in Breakfast Box; accessible telephone and text ordering in Mobile Grocery; volunteer shopping support for participants with mobility barriers; and expanded language, evening, and weekend options through Life Story Club. Evaluation also helps Citymeals determine which models are ready to grow and where additional testing or operational changes are needed.

D. Statement on Government Funding

As previously shared last year, Citymeals does not receive federal funding, though we receive support from New York City government and some targeted New York State grants. Many of the community-based organizations we partner with do rely on federal funding. As that landscape shifts and food becomes less affordable, we anticipate that we may need to grow to serve a larger population or step in to fill gaps in other organizations' coverage. We are monitoring the situation closely and preparing to respond.