WORKPLACE DINING / COST PLANNING

Corporate Cafeteria Costs: Build Your Monthly Budget

A useful corporate cafeteria budget starts with the number of meals you expect to serve, what the employer pays per meal, and the additional operating costs the employer funds. There is no price estimate on this page presented as a market benchmark: the example below is arithmetic using explicitly chosen assumptions.

01 A worked monthly example.

Suppose 500 people are on site, 60% buy one supported meal per service day, and the example month has 22 service days. The meal price is $12, the employer contributes $5 toward each meal, and the employer separately pays $8,000 of additional operating charges that are not already included in that contribution.

Line	Calculation	Example result
Daily diners	500 × 60%	300
Monthly supported meals	300 × 22	6,600
Employer meal contribution	6,600 × $5	$33,000
Additional employer-paid operating costs	Separately entered assumption	$8,000
Modeled employer cost	$33,000 + $8,000	$41,000
Diner payments	6,600 × ($12 $5)	$46,200

This is a contribution-based model. Diner payments are not automatically a second employer expense or a credit against the employer contribution. The provider's commercial arrangement determines who receives revenue and pays each underlying cost.

02 Test participation before treating the total as a budget.

With the same 500 people, 22 service days, $5 contribution, and $8,000 additional operating charges, 40% participation gives $30,000 in modeled employer cost; 60% gives $41,000; 80% gives $52,000. These scenarios hold the separate operating amount constant. A real proposal may change staffing, fees, or service levels with volume.

The calculator makes these assumptions visible. Use actual attendance patterns where you have them and create separate calculations for different shifts or meal periods instead of treating every meal as identical.

03 Identify costs outside the simple model.

- Opening costs: mobilization, training, initial supplies, and launch communications.
- Facilities and equipment: purchase, installation, maintenance, repairs, utilities, and replacement responsibilities.
- Operating charges: staffing, management, software, payment fees, supplies, and cleaning where separately payable.
- Commercial conditions: minimums, volume bands, pass-through items, price adjustments, taxes, and credits.

Ask the provider to mark each item included, separately priced, excluded, or unresolved. Identify the line containing an included item so it cannot be counted twice.

04 Compare the same calendar.

A month with 22 lunch service days is not a year-round annual budget. Map closures, holidays, seasonal attendance, and any different billing rules. Multiplying a monthly total by 12 only makes sense when the twelve billed months are equivalent.

05 Turn the model into a provider question.

Use this wording: "Here are our service days, volumes, and funding assumptions. Please show which costs you include, which costs change with volume, and how your quote reconciles to the employer's expected cash cost."

Save the assumptions with the result. A single total without its inputs is difficult for your finance team or a provider to evaluate.

Put your next decision in focus.

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