

San Francisco Ethics Commission's Common Gift Questions



This gift resource presents some of our most-asked questions related to giving and accepting gifts as an officer or employee of the City and County of San Francisco. If the facts of your situation are different from those presented here, please reach out to the Ethics Commission for advice through our [Ethics Advice Portal](#).

Q. I was offered a free ticket to a grantee's holiday party. Can I attend?



Stop! Your department's officers and employees are prohibited from accepting gifts, including free lunch or any gifts from a contractor or from any other [restricted source](#). So, your department may not accept the vendor's offer to cater lunch for your staff.

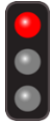
Q. I manage a small team of City employees. We're planning to hold an anonymous white elephant gift exchange for the holidays. Can I participate if this means I will receive a gift from a subordinate?



Caution. Normally, City employees and officials may not accept gifts from subordinates. If the white elephant rules prohibit cash gifts and specify a \$25 limit, you could participate.

Q.

A vendor who contracts with our department has offered to cater our department's holiday lunch for approximately 150 staff members. The holiday lunch will take place at our department's offices. Can we accept this offer?



Stop! Anyone who has a contract with your department — including a grantee — is a *restricted source* of gifts. You cannot accept a free ticket to a holiday party, or any other gift from them. You may attend the party if you pay full price for the ticket and do not accept other gifts. Review the definition of restricted source to be sure the source of the gift is not prohibited. Exceptions to the “restricted source rule” are limited. They likely will not apply to free admission or free food at parties that are optional or unrelated to your City duties.

REFERENCE

A **Restricted Source** is:

- A person who is seeking a contract or permit from your department, currently has a contract with or permit issued by your department, or any registered permit consultant who has contacted your department in the past 12 months.
- Any person who has sought to influence you in a governmental decision in the preceding 12 months.
- If you are a City officer, any registered lobbyist is also a restricted source.

You may not accept a gift from anyone you know or have reason to know is a restricted source for you. If you are uncertain if you can accept a gift, reach out to the Ethics Commission for advice.