

# Good Food Purchasing Program Standards, Resources, and Best Practices Toolkit

INFORMED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA LOCAL FOOD PURCHASING COLLABORATIVE

## The Good Food Purchasing Program

The Good Food Purchasing Program provides a framework to guide institutions, policymakers, and community-based organizations and grassroots coalitions in using public food dollars to support community values and reimagine a food system based on racial equity, transparency, and accountability. The program was developed in 2012 by the Center for Good Food Purchasing in consultation with more than 200 representatives of governments, institutions, food systems advocates, and community-based organizations. As of September 2023, 67 institutions in 25 cities across the country were participating in the Good Food Purchasing Program. These institutions represent more than \$1.2 billion in annual purchasing power and serve more than 3 million people each week.

This toolkit provides food services teams at hospitals, schools, and correctional facilities with all the information they need to implement values-based procurement and to consider participating in the Good Food Purchasing Program.

## The Good Food Purchasing Program's Purchasing Standards for Food Service Institutions

The Center for Good Food Purchasing has devised a scoring methodology and rating system to analyze how institutional food purchasing aligns with the Good Food Purchasing Program's five core values: local and community-based economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and community health and nutrition.

In July 2023, the center released [Good Food Purchasing Standards 3.0](#), which incorporates 10 years of lessons and insights from 100-plus partners' experimentation and collaboration. Previous versions of the standards focused on definitions and methodologies for identifying values-aligned purchasing. Standards 3.0 includes an additional component: how values-based procurement can be implemented to meet purchasing goals. It also includes provisions for strengthening equity, accountability, and transparency. Updates are accompanied by the following tools to inform implementation of specific requirements detailed in the standards:

[FAQ](#)

[Labor Law Guidance](#)

[Policy Template](#)

[Plant-Based Menuing](#)

[Fundamental Strategies](#)

[Community Health and Nutrition](#)

[Product Categories](#)

[Levels of Processing](#)

[Locally Led Verification](#)

[Qualifying Additional Strategies](#)

[Affidavit for Sustainability](#)

[Food Waste Audit Guidance](#)

[Improving Data Quality](#)

## General Resources for Implementing the Good Food Purchasing Program and Values-Based Procurement

While the Standards are very detail oriented, there are also high level resources to implement the Good Food Purchasing Program or to move toward values-based procurement.

- Incorporating five-values purchasing goals in solicitations and vendor contracts: [Good Food Purchasing Program Solicitations Toolkit](#) presents best practices, tools, and real-world examples.
- Thinking strategically about cost (many products that qualify in the Good Food Purchasing Program do not come at a cost premium): [A Good Food Cost Management Analysis](#) and case studies from the [Austin Independent School District](#), the [San Francisco Unified School District](#) and [Minneapolis Public Schools](#) offer cost management best practices.
- Sharing resources with vendors and supply chain partners: [Good Food Purchasing Program Vendor Resources](#) helps suppliers understand the program and institutions increase their chances of meeting purchasing goals.
- Planning: [The Action Planning Toolkit](#) adds and updates resources.



## Getting Started

*Interested in taking the next step? Here are some ways to get started:*

- Start small. Consider focusing on one item at one location to get buy-in and build momentum from there.
- Consider a [Harvest of the Month](#) menu, featuring one local item per month.
- Set up farm or supplier site visits for staff, administrators, teachers, students, and family members to increase support and engagement.
- Plan around your scale. For smaller institutions, going directly to a farmer or supplier may be the most feasible way to establish purchasing relationships. For others, partnering with a food hub, existing distributors, or both may be more cost effective or efficient.
- Use seasonal purchasing to maximize local, sustainable, and plant-forward menus.
- Partner with institution-level, municipal, and county procurement authorities to develop solicitations that reflect values-based purchasing goals and priorities as well as regional commitments to greenhouse gas emissions reduction, climate action and decarbonization strategies, and social equity.
- Understand and leverage procurement tools and purchasing thresholds. The following California Department of Education state-level thresholds may be higher than the thresholds of individual counties, municipalities, or institutions:
  - » Micro purchase <\$10,000 — no price comparison
  - » Small purchase <\$250,000 — price comparison
  - » Formal procurements >\$250,000 — public solicitation
  - » Sole source or noncompetitive procurement (when competition is deemed impossible or there is only one viable vendor) — no public solicitation



- For operators working with a group purchasing organization (GPO) or prime vendor, understand the percentage of spend allowed and the justifications for off-contract purchasing and use those flexibilities to the greatest extent possible to reach purchasing goals.
- Use micro purchasing to trial new products at a small scale to minimize risk and cost.
- Whenever possible, negotiate directly with suppliers to achieve the best possible price.
- Engage with community-based organizations and other institutional food service leaders to help broaden outreach to values-aligned suppliers.
- When purchasing goals cannot be met through the catalog of a distributor that provides a wide range of products to businesses across multiple industries, identify products available only locally or only through values-aligned suppliers.
- For self-operated facilities limited by storage capacity, consider renting or leasing storage space off site for better economies of scale in purchasing.
- If not self-operated, and where operationally feasible, identify opportunities for scratch cooking pilots or initiatives.

**Perhaps most importantly, celebrate incremental progress because the community impacts of good food purchasing can be profound.**

**See our sector-specific information and resources:**



[Schools Toolkit](#)



[Hospitals Toolkit](#)



[Corrections Facilities Toolkit](#)

For more information on the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#) and the [Center for Good Food Purchasing](#), contact [info@goodfoodpurchasing.org](mailto:info@goodfoodpurchasing.org).

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