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**METRO CHICAGO**

**GOOD FOOD  
PURCHASING  
INITIATIVE**

**ISSUES &  
OPPORTUNITIES**

**DECEMBER 2021**

## INTRODUCTION

Led by the Chicago Department of Public Health, Cook County Department of Public Health, and the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, the Good Food Purchasing Initiative of Metro Chicago (GFPI) works to ensure that institutional food purchasing advances an equitable, healthy, fair, local, humane, and sustainable food system, while creating good food access for all. GFPI focuses on:



### **GOOD FOOD PURCHASING PROGRAM (GFPP) IMPLEMENTATION**

- Fully implementing the Good Food Purchasing Policy with the City of Chicago, its sister agencies, and Cook County Government

### **EQUITABLE SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT**

- Developing a racially & socially equitable regional food supply chain that can meet increasing institutional demand for good food
- Supporting pathways for BIPOC food producers and food businesses to scale operations for sales to public and community-based meal programs, cafeterias, and concessions

### **CREATING A CULTURE OF GOOD FOOD IN ALL INSTITUTIONS**

- Normalizing values-based procurement across all community-based “anchor” institutions in the Chicago region, including hospitals, higher education institutions, cultural institutions, senior living facilities, and others
- Engaging both institutional food service staff and meal program recipients in building food literacy and directing Good Food Purchasing Initiative activities

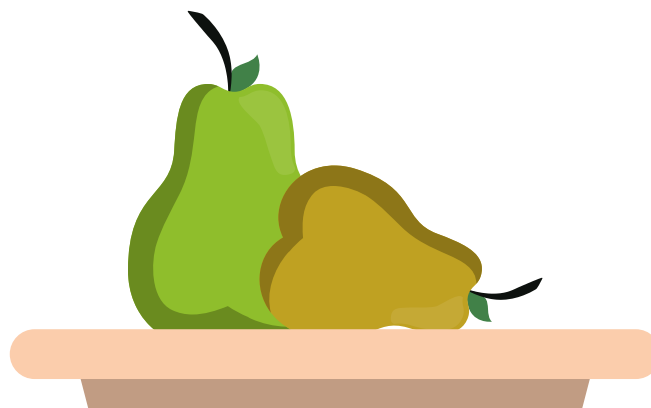
## **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **NATIONAL EFFORTS**

- The Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) was created initially by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council in 2012. With early success in LA, former staff created the Center for Good Food Purchasing to help other jurisdictions across the country adopt and implement GFPP. There are now 15 formal policies adopted, and 23 cities engaged with the Center. The Center is analyzing over \$1 billion in food purchases annually, with great interest regularly from new institutions.
- The Center for Good Food Purchasing is part of Anchors in Action, collaborating with Health Care Without Harm, National Farm to School Network, and Real Food Generation to ensure that community-based anchor institutions in all sectors-- government, healthcare, higher education, and beyond -- are working together to invest in a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy food system.
- HEAL Food Alliance & Food Chain Workers Alliance have supported Good Food Coalitions who are advocating for policy change across the country. Their Good Food Communities Framework specifically identifies ways that local coalitions can champion worker justice, racial equity, environmental justice, and transparency as they advocate for GFPP.

### **ORIGINS OF GFPP IN CHICAGO AND COOK COUNTY**

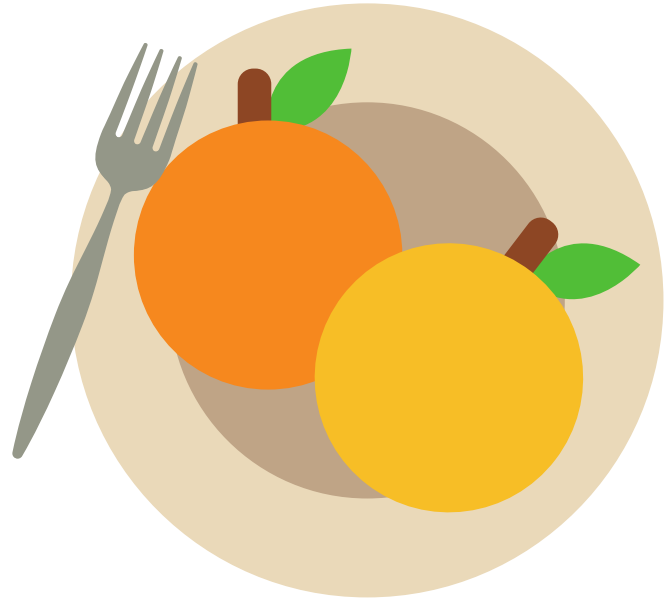
- Inspired by LA, a coalition of organizations formed at the 2015 Chicago Food Policy Summit to advocate for GFPP in Chicago. Public administrators in both the City of Chicago and Cook County Government began to hold meetings to learn more about the policy and start piloting the process.
- Chicago City Council, Chicago Public Schools, and Chicago Park District formally adopted the Good Food Purchasing Policy in 2017, and Cook County Government adopted GFPP in 2018. The City of Chicago and Cook County collectively purchase over an estimated \$118 million in food through meal programs and vending. Project coordinators estimate that this number exceeds \$300 million with concessions and special events included.



## LOCAL STAFF & PARTNER SUPPORT

### GFPP IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

- CDPH and CCDPH have both coordinated and guided the policy's implementation within their respective jurisdictions. Health department staff help organize quarterly Chicago and Cook County Good Food Task Force meetings and meet 1:1 with departments and agencies to help them implement GFPP.
- In 2019, CFPAC hired a Good Food Purchasing Project Manager to help CDPH and CCDPH with implementation and technical assistance.
- With research partners at DePaul University, Chicago State University, Roosevelt University, Illinois Tech, and University of Illinois Chicago, GFPI



leaders developed an initial Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework to guide activities in 2019. Roosevelt University's Policy Research Collaborative came onboard as the GFPI Evaluation Coordinator in 2020, and continues to work with the GFPI Evaluation Team on setting up a robust evaluation of the GFPI's intended outcomes on food producers & businesses, meal recipients, food chain workers, animals, and the environment.

### EQUITABLE SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

- CFPAC hired a GFPI Supply Chain Development Specialist to join their team in October 2020 to help develop trainings and outreach materials for local producers to understand GFPP. He has been working on a GFPP Guide for Food Producers and Businesses that will be published in Fall 2021. CFPAC will also be hosting a pilot "Buyer/Supplier Networking Mixer" in December 2021 to help build relationships between farmers, distributors, and institutional buyers.
- CFPAC has partnered with Urban Growers Collective, Advocates for Urban Agriculture, IL Stewardship Alliance, and University of IL Extension to prepare outreach materials and trainings for food growers. CFPAC has also begun to coordinate meetings with regional value chain coordinators across the Upper Midwest who see potential in leveraging Chicago and Cook County's GFPP to support food producers across the region. This group includes representatives from land grant institutions, state departments of agriculture, food policy councils, and non-profit food systems development organizations.

## **LOCAL STAFF & PARTNER SUPPORT, CONT.**

### **SUPPORT WITH EXPANDING GFPP TO MORE COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS**

- In collaboration with the IL Public Health Institute, CFPAC contracted with local consulting firm The Doula Part to launch the “Good Food in Healthcare Cohort” in May 2021. Cohort members are interested in exploring good food purchasing strategies for local hospitals and healthcare facilities, and several are looking into GFPP adoption. The cohort currently includes representatives from seven hospitals around the Metro Area, including Cook County Health, Rush Medical Center, and Advocate Aurora.
- GFPI partners were previously exploring the possibility of GFPP with students, sustainability staff, professors, and administrators through the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC), a collective of 2- year and 4-year colleges located in South Cook County and Will County. Efforts were suspended in mid 2021 due to staffing changes at SMHEC.
- Several partners at other higher education institutions have voiced interest in exploring GFPP adoption. Northwestern University piloted GFPP in 2019, but efforts were put on hold with the COVID-19 pandemic. GFPI partners met with Loyola University in the fall of 2021 to discuss piloting GFPP as well.

### **GFPI FUNDING SOURCES**

Current funding for GFPI is piecemeal. Funders include the Food Land Opportunity Grant (Chicago Community Trust & Kinship Foundation), USDA Local Food Promotion Program, IL Specialty Crop Block Grant (distributed by the IL Department of Agriculture), and the IL State Physical Activity and Nutrition grant (funded by the Centers for Disease Control and distributed by the IL Public Health Institute). In summer 2021, the Rockefeller Foundation funded the initiation of a three-year strategic planning process for GFPI. Rockefeller has committed to funding the emerging three-year plan of GFPI activities through the end of 2024.

### **GFPI COMMUNICATIONS**

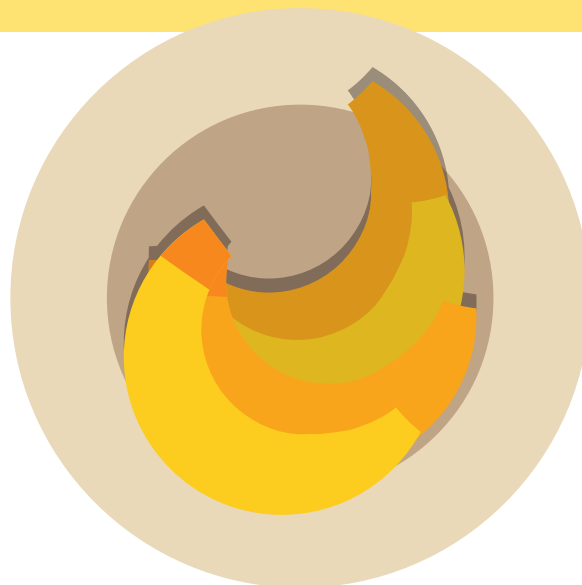
- Project coordinators regularly share updates on GFPI activities with the public, including at the annual Chicago Food Justice Summit (every February) and in the fall during Cook County's Racial Equity Week.
- General project updates on GFPI can be found on CFPAC's website at [www.chicagofoodpolicy.com/procurement](http://www.chicagofoodpolicy.com/procurement).
- The Cook County Department of Public Health also maintains a website for GFPP implementation updates at [www.cookcountypublichealth.org/chronic-diseases/good-food-purchasing-program](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org/chronic-diseases/good-food-purchasing-program).
- GFPI coordinators released an [inaugural Annual Report](#) to document the current state of the initiative in 2020, with plans to release a similar report every year moving forward.

## GOOD FOOD PROCUREMENT: ISSUE AREAS AT A GLANCE

The following are challenges and opportunities that project coordinators, departments and agencies, and Good Food Task Force members have encountered so far in working toward Good Food Purchasing Initiative goals. Continue reading for more details on each issue areas.

### GOOD FOOD PROCUREMENT: ISSUE AREAS

- The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted institutional food supply chains and caused program disruptions as GFPP implementers have shifted their priorities to pandemic response.
- GFPP implementers have recognized the critical role that contract language plays in ensuring compliance and optimal impact of GFPP.
- Funding for public meal programs at the federal, state and local level doesn't currently meet the need.
- Sustained funding for annual GFPP assessments, which cost \$10,000-15,000 per assessment, is necessary for longevity of the policy.
- Outsourcing food services to third-party management companies provide challenges in conducting GFPP assessments and reaching GFPP goals.
- Coordinators are still looking for how to ensure that there is full transparency and engagement with the public in the GFPP process, with regards to both food purchasing data and GFPP assessments.
- CCDPH and CFPAC have been challenged with balancing breadth and depth in GFPP implementation. More staff dedicated to GFPP would support more comprehensive implementation.
- The GFPP process needs to be adapted for food environments like concessions and vending, which requires more staff support and capacity.



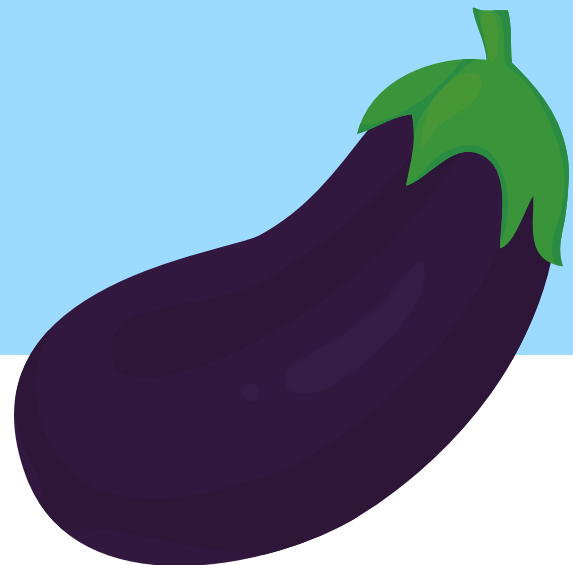
## GOOD FOOD PROCUREMENT: ISSUE AREAS AT A GLANCE, CONT.

### EQUITABLE SUPPLY CHAINS: ISSUE AREAS

- Local food growers and producers need foundational support for their operations before they can begin to explore institutional market development. This includes leveling the playing field for land and water access and support for them to navigate costly and complicated certification processes.
- More local food supply chain infrastructure, like cooperative food hubs for aggregation and warehousing, is required to support market channels from local growers to local institutions.
- Increasing access to capital is critical for growing the number of BIPOC growers and food businesses that can participate in the institutional food supply chain. This includes access to grants, loans and equity.
- Overall, much more support is needed to help demystify the procurement process for small food growers and businesses.
- Procurement specialists also need to listen and learn from local growers and food businesses to make the process easier and more realistic for smaller, local firms to participate.

### BUILDING A GOOD FOOD CULTURE: ISSUE AREAS

- CCDPH, CDPH, CFPAC, and other partners are looking to build a more cohesive, accountable leadership and decision-making structure to guide Metro Chicago's Good Food Purchasing Initiative activities forward.
- Given the complexity of GFPP goals, implementers need to be prepared to handle different stakeholder perspectives and priorities.
- For GFPP to be successful, it must also be connected to robust public outreach and education efforts that engage community members in building a relationship to where their food is coming from.
- As GFPP goals shift what's on cafeteria menus, meal program recipients and those that work in the food supply chain must have meaningful avenues to inform what those meal changes look like.



# GOOD FOOD PURCHASING INITIATIVE

## DIGGING DEEPER INTO THE ISSUE AREAS

Shifting institutional food spend towards good food values requires culture, policies, processes, and priorities to shift. The following are challenges and opportunities that project coordinators, departments and agencies, researchers, and members of the Chicago Good Food Task Force and Cook County Good Food Task Force have encountered so far in working toward the Good Food Purchasing Initiative goals.



# I. GOOD FOOD PROCUREMENT



## NAVIGATING PUBLIC SOLICITATIONS & CONTRACTS

GFPI project coordinators have identified the critical role that public solicitations for contracts play in implementing GFPP. Each department and agency works with their procurement teams to put out Request for Proposals (RFPs) or Invitation for Bids (IFBs) to food service management companies or food distributors, typically every 1 to 5 years (though sometimes longer). The language in the solicitation for goods or services then becomes the language signed into contract with the food vendor. In order for GFPP to have “teeth,” solicitations should ideally:

1. Include requirements for the bidder to adhere to the agency's GFPP goals
2. Include specific food purchasing data collection procedures for the food vendor to comply with
3. Include GFPP in the evaluation of bids (so that bidders are scored on how aligned they are with GFPP goals and able to provide food that meets the Good Food Standards)

CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC are working to ensure that it is a normal and standard practice to incorporate GFPP language into all food-related contracts. At this time, we are still needing to remind and recommend language when a new solicitation is developed for a food-related contract. There have been several solicitations where CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC missed opportunities to provide recommendations, and ultimately the solicitation was released without GFPP included.

CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC are working with the Center for Good Food Purchasing, Georgetown Law, and other legal experts to ensure that the language we provide for solicitations is going to allow access to complete food purchasing data (including, most importantly for GFPP Assessments, product price point) and that GFPP is a “material term of the contract”—but this work is ongoing. We are still determining what best practices look like in GFPP solicitation language, and how GFPP could be better integrated into the current bid incentives and other tools that procurement administrators already employ to make the contracting process more equitable and fair.

Public procurement also requires free and fair competition amongst multiple bidders. This can make it difficult for partners to help arrange sales between a public meal program and specific farms or food businesses that are aligned with Good Food Standards. Partners are interested in exploring with procurement staff if there are ways to set up a transparent process that would create a “pre-qualified list” of GFPP-aligned vendors that contracted food service management companies and food distributors would be incentivized to buy from.

Size of public contracts is another issue. Administrators have tried to consolidate contracts over the years because it simplifies the process for them (i.e. going out to bid once for a massive contract vs. breaking up the services into multiple smaller bidding opportunities). This limits what types of companies can respond to a public bid. They not only need to be big enough to supply massive quantities of food, but they also need to have in-house legal service to respond to solicitations that are often hundreds of pages long. We are interested in working with procurement partners on creative strategies to “break down” bids and open up opportunities for smaller vendors, especially BIPOC-owned firms, to be able to participate in the institutional supply chain.

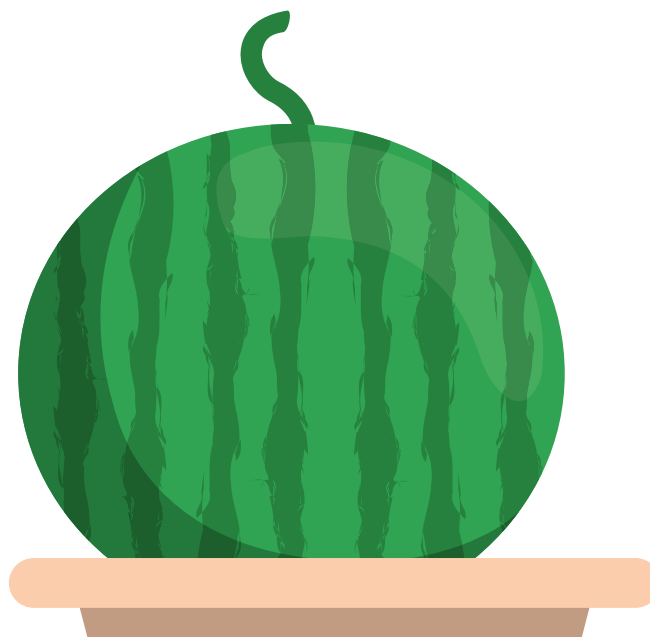
## INSTITUTIONAL FOOD BUDGETS AND PRICE POINTS

The federal government hasn't raised the reimbursement rate for public meal programs very much at all in the last fifty years. For example: in 1998, the school meal reimbursement was \$2.11 for a child eligible for a free meal. In 2021, it's \$3.51-- only 6% higher than it was 23 years ago. Advocates often cite how dismaying it is that they have less than the cost of a latte to spend on labor, food, supplies, and meal administration per meal.

Often institutions are squeezing their budget to make ends meet in feeding large populations of children, hospital patients, and other meal program recipients. For the reforms we are looking to create, we fundamentally need more money allocated to public meal programs (at the federal, state, AND local levels).

Other states (MI, NY) have explored creative incentives for school districts to buy from local farmers, where they can get reimbursed extra for meals that include source-identified local products. A similar policy in IL, tied to GFPP goals, could have a positive impact. Read more about [Michigan's 10 Cents a Meal Program here](#). In 2020, Representative Sonya Harper introduced legislation for "Matching Funds for Fresh Foods" program in Illinois, but it did not move forward last session.

There is a [growing national effort on "true cost accounting"](#) that identifies the externalities of cheap food on people, animals, and the environment. A note that GFPP advocates shouldn't necessarily have to convert harms into dollar values for officials to pay attention, and putting a monetary value on public goods can be a slippery ethical project. However, in the case of food procurement, calculating the "true cost of cheap food" may serve as a bridge to justifying an increase in food budgets for public meal programs.



## **BUDGET FOR GFPP ASSESSMENTS AND SUPPORT**

Good Food Purchasing Program assessments cost public institutions \$10,000-15,000 per assessment. This cost covers the Center for Good Food Purchasing’s data analysis technology, data analysts, and technical assistance with action planning and purchasing shifts. If we actually ran an annual assessment for every meal program in the City of Chicago and Cook County every year (not including concessions, vending, or catering contracts), the cost would equate to \$150,000 annually. CFPAC has been paying for assessments with grant funding, but this isn’t sustainable for the long-term. We need to include the assessment cost in our public budgets to help ensure the policy can continue.

There are a lot of other local institutions in the Metro Chicago area that have been interested in GFPP, but don’t have the funds to run assessments. For example, there are several community colleges in Metro Chicago that would like to pilot GFPP, but their administrators have had reservations based solely on concerns with the assessment cost. Initiative coordinators have thought about the idea of setting up a local GFPP assessment match fund that would help local institutions that are just getting started with GFPP to cost-share the amount.

## **OUTSOURCING AND PROFIT-DRIVEN MIDDLEMEN**

GFPP implementers have consistently experienced trouble working with third-party Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs) on GFPP. Many FSMCs specifically do not want to share price point information for the products they purchase, which is critical data that the Center requires to run assessments. CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC are working to include data collection compliance language explicitly in FSMC contracts, but we are still concerned with having trouble transparently seeing what they are buying on behalf of public institutions.

Other institutions that are “self-op” (i.e. self operate their meal preparation) do not experience this issue. Public employees are making the purchases directly and can easily access the price point information from the distributors who supply the products. Unfortunately, there is only one major public meal program that is self-op between the City of Chicago and Cook County (the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center). The school district, summer meals at the parks, senior home-delivered and congregate meals, jails, and hospital all use a third-party FSMC.

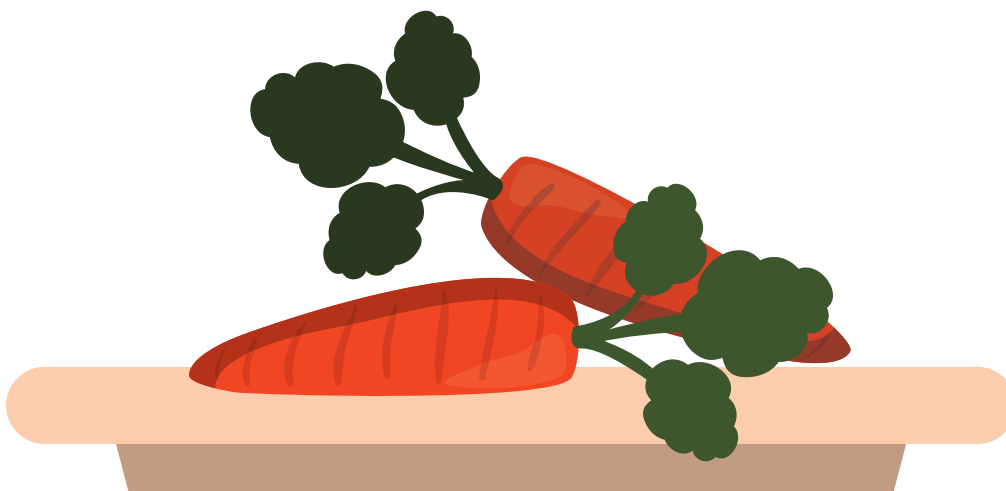
Working with a third-party FSMC may seem like an efficiency for the City of Chicago and Cook County, but it means that there’s one more profit-driven entity between food growers and institutions. The FSMC landscape is extremely consolidated, and often only 1-2 vendors are competing on a bid. CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC would be interested in exploring 1) possibilities for more Chicago and Cook County meal programs to return to self-operated systems; or 2) working to support social enterprises (worker-owned cooperatives or non-profit organizations) to manage City of Chicago and Cook County food services.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND TRANSPARENCY**

As referenced in the previous section, food purchasing data collection --critical for moving GFPP forward-- has been a big sticking point for departments and agencies. FSMCs have blocked efforts to collect data (especially around price point) and even where GFPP implementers have been successful with data gathering, it's taken months to collect the information from vendors. The data received is never as complete as we want it to be. Most vendors are unable to share where the products they are providing are sourced from, for example, and there are valid concerns that the data we've collected is incomplete and/or contains inaccuracies.

CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC have been thinking about better ways to systematize data collection from food vendors in the future. One idea is to require all contracted vendors to submit a quarterly report to the respective jurisdiction's public data portal, so some form of the raw data sets would be publicly available. We don't have this level of transparency yet for GFPP implementation, largely because of outstanding legal questions surrounding data ownership. CDPH and CCDPH are hoping that by including explicit language in vendors' contracts about data collection and transparency, we will be able to start shifting toward this system as we move forward.

When departments and agencies complete GFPP Assessments, we'd ideally like to have those assessments available to the public for review as well (as [New York City's Office of Food Policy just released](#)). There has been a shared concern with the assessments being made available to the public without being first situated in the context of the work that public administrators are doing, for fear of the information being misinterpreted and/or misused. Other institutions across the country, like DC Public Schools, have provided public workshops and feedback sessions where they release their assessment in combination with a presentation to discuss the results further. We are interested in moving toward a similar public reporting process with all GFPP-enrolled institutions.



## **BREADTH VS DEPTH**

CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC currently have limited capacity to support both the breadth and depth of technical assistance needed to support all County departments and agencies with GFPP implementation. Breadth is important: Understanding the overall procurement system for the City of Chicago and Cook County has been critical to understanding the challenges and opportunities with GFPP. There are also opportunities emerging across multiple departments and agencies that highlight the importance of not just drilling down with one specific department or agency. For example: possibly bulk purchasing GFPP aligned-products for multiple meal programs, shared menu planning for environments that feed overlapping populations, and working with the same vendor that is contracted with multiple agencies.

However, depth is important too. Collecting data, developing a meal program's Good Food Action Plan, revising menus (for seasonality, meat reduction, cultural relevance, and nutrition), supporting solicitation revisions, creatively accounting to balance meal program costs, developing community feedback processes and public communications, and conducting new annual assessments requires capacity and expertise that is outside of CCDPH, CDPH, or CFPAC's current ability to provide at the fullest level for each agency.

If we are going to realize the outcomes we would like to see GFPP create, institutions need more expertise and capacity to attend to the full implementation process. Ideally, there would be one FTE GFPP specialist assigned to each public meal program, with the relevant skills and experience to support meal program transformation toward GFPP values. In the meantime, hiring one FTE staff member within each jurisdiction, who can spend the majority of their time on GFPP, would be an excellent start.

## **COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The pandemic has continued to cause supply chain shortages and massive price fluctuations for many of the food products that are available for institutional use. Unpredictable changes in demand have made planning and forecasting difficult for all stakeholders that are part of the supply chain. This has made reaching GFPP goals more challenging. For example, several higher animal welfare poultry operations have shifted their supply from institutions toward more retail/grocery outlets given the higher demand they have received in that market, leaving a shortage in the institutional market.

Prioritization of pandemic response by GFPP partners (CCDPH, CFPAC, County departments and agencies, food vendors, and Task Force members) also shifted what progress looked like over the past year and a half. While COVID-19 may have delayed our planned process for GFPP over 2020, it also highlighted just how important the government's role is in investing in a more resilient, sustainable, and healthy food system that builds racial and economic equity.

## **ADAPTING THE GFPP PROCESS TO WORK IN ALL SETTINGS**

GFPP was designed to work well with large public meal programs that can access itemized food purchasing data from inventory management systems. In theory, the steps are simple:

1. The department/agency collects itemized, detailed food purchasing data;
2. The Center for Good Food Purchasing analyzes how much is being spent on products that meet the Good Food Standards;
3. The Center generates a GFPP Assessment with recommendations;
4. The department/agency creates a Good Food Action Plan with support from CCDPH or CDPH, CFPAC, and the Center, and assigns staff tasks to make shifts toward the Good Food Standards;
5. The department/agency collects data again, and works with the Center to reassess and measure their progress.

Cook County and the City of Chicago operate different kinds of food environments that do not all adhere well to the GFPP process outlined above. For example, vending and concessions contracts are logistically difficult to manage data collection, action planning, and progress monitoring processes. These environments include multiple vendors who buy food in smaller quantities and don't maintain inventory management systems that track purchases. However, these environments could also be critical opportunities for 1) reaching a broad public with good food; and 2) creating opportunities for smaller, local growers to start selling into wholesale markets.

The Center has developed a tool called the Good Food Purchasing Pledge to better work in these unique settings. The pledge gives vendors an opportunity to choose a strategy in each of the five Good Food Values to work on, and they must verify and report out on their progress annually. It does not require them to complete a full data collection process or analysis.

The Pledge could be a good alternative structure for concessionaires and smaller food buyers to participate in GFPP and still open up opportunities for local farmers and more sustainable, healthier foods. The major concern is that CCDPH, CDPH, and CFPAC, as technical assistance providers, do not currently have the capacity to sustain Pledge programs throughout all of these environments. CFPAC is currently adapting and experimenting with the Pledge with a small number of local food pantries to understand how it might operate in that space, but are still struggling to figure out ways to ensure we have enough TA support available to walk all entities through the process.

# II. EQUITABLE SUPPLY CHAINS



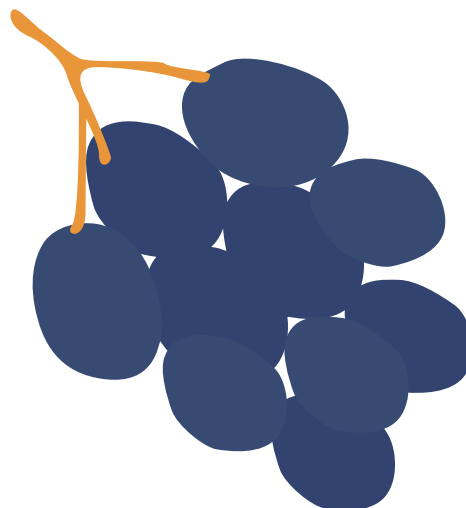


## ACCESS TO LAND AND WATER FOR GROWERS

Before local food growers and producers, especially BIPOC growers, can begin to explore institutional market opportunities, there are several fundamental needs that the City of Chicago and Cook County Government, with their community partners, must address first. For urban and peri-urban farmers, access to high quality land for growing food is challenging, and there are very few opportunities across Metro Chicago where a beginning farmer can identify a patient pathway to land ownership. Affordable water access for growing crops is another issue that many urban growers within the Metro Chicago area are also confronting. Coordination amongst Chicago and Cook County officials to address barriers to land and water for growers is a fundamental need that must be supported to help build a resilient and scalable local food system.

## ACCESS TO CAPITAL AND FINANCING

Selling to community-based institutions is not going to make sense for every farm's business model. For those farms that are interested in serving their community in this way, though, they need assistance in determining how to include this market channel in their overall business plan. They will also likely need assistance in accessing capital to help ensure their farm is prepared to sell into larger markets. The current funding landscape is piecemeal and difficult to navigate for emerging farms and food businesses. Local governments can play a role in both coordinating access to funding and leveraging public sources of funding to support emerging farms and food businesses.



## **SUPPORT WITH FOOD SAFETY CERTIFICATIONS**

Because institutions rely on such long supply chains to procure their food, there has been a complex web of food safety requirements developed to prevent foodborne illness from spreading to meal recipients. These food safety standards can be difficult for small farmers to meet-- not because their farms aren't safe, but because the paperwork and sanctioned safety protocols can be time consuming and expensive to implement. The Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification, for example, can cost hundreds of dollars per audit, and an auditor may have to visit several times if a farmer needs to become certified in multiple crops. Hospitals, schools, and senior meal programs understandably want to ensure that they are doing whatever they can to prevent the populations they serve from getting sick, but the regulatory landscape provides yet another hurdle for small farmers who want to sell to community-based institutions. The USDA has responded to this challenge by developing a "Group GAP" model, whereby one entity can certify multiple farms within their network. Advocates for Urban Agriculture is currently exploring how they can support this Group GAP model in Chicago.

## **SUPPORT WITH THIRD-PARTY GOOD FOOD CERTIFICATIONS**

The Center for Good Food Purchasing's Good Food Standards are mainly based on third-party certification programs ([click here](#) for a list of which certifications qualify). For example, a product will score highest in Environmental Sustainability if it is USDA Certified Organic. A farmer's produce can still qualify for this Good Food Standard if the farm signs an affidavit about their growing practices, but GFPP is predominantly driving demand toward products that hold certifications. Farmers and food producers with certified products have a competitive advantage within the GFPP framework. However, becoming certified can be time consuming, require lengthy paperwork, and cost a lot of money to attain. Chicago and Cook County, along with community partners, need to be working with local BIPOC growers and food businesses to ensure that certification doesn't pose as a barrier to them being able to supply an institution and qualify for the Good Food Standards. Grant funding and technical support for the certification process could be helpful to farmers in exploring certification.

## **LOCAL SUPPLY CHAIN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The institutional food supply chain is characterized by high volume demand that has been served by long, complex, and highly consolidated supply chains. The economies of scale achieved by larger, corporate food businesses has pushed many medium and small-scale producers out of the supply chain. Much of the local and regional infrastructure that used to exist for smaller farmers has disappeared (if it ever existed in the first place).

If smaller and medium scale farmers are going to compete in wholesale and institutional supply chains, they will need creative strategies to achieve their own economies of scale and manage logistics efficiently. Cooperative enterprises, like food hubs, offer one such strategy to help provide shared warehousing, processing, distribution, and marketing services for multiple farmers without adding new, profit-driven middlemen in between farmers and buyers. Over the past two years, Illinois Institute of Technology researchers have been exploring the feasibility of a cooperatively run food hub, owned and operated by BIPOC growers, that could serve institutional market channels. The study is anticipating to publish their results in Spring 2022.

## **SUPPORT NAVIGATING INSTITUTIONAL PROCUREMENT**

For smaller farmers that have only sold through direct-to-consumer channels, selling wholesale can be a daunting new enterprise. There are few resources tailored to small farmers about becoming an approved vendor for a food distributor or participating as a subcontractor on a bidder's response to a City or County solicitation. In October 2020, CFPAC hired a GFPI Supply Chain Development Specialist to help develop trainings and outreach materials for local producers to understand GFPP and the institutional market. He has been working on a GFPP Guide for Food Growers and Businesses that will be published in Fall 2021. CFPAC will also be hosting a pilot "Buyer/Supplier Networking Mixer" in December 2021 to help build relationships between farmers, distributors, food processors, and institutional buyers. CFPAC has engaged several local partners in planning these efforts, including Urban Growers Collective, Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Illinois Stewardship Alliance, and U of IL Extension. CFPAC has also started to coordinate meetings with regional value chain coordinators across the Upper Midwest who see potential in leveraging Chicago and Cook County's GFPP to support GFPP-aligned producers across the region. While these efforts are a start, there is still much more coordination, training, and support needed to ensure that the procurement process is transparent and easy to navigate for food growers and businesses of all sizes.

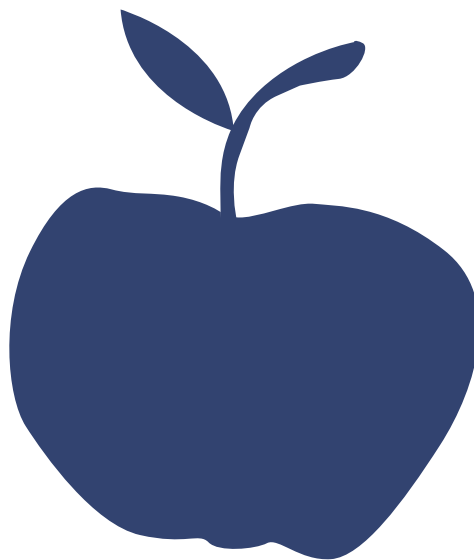
# III. A CULTURE OF HEALTH



## LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE OF THE GOOD FOOD PURCHASING INITIATIVE

Cook County Government and the City of Chicago have been leaders in the Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative (GFPI), setting an example for other anchor institutions on what's possible when institutions invest their food spend in building community wealth and health. While the Cook County Good Food Task Force and the Chicago Good Food Task Force have been established within their respective jurisdictions to guide GFPI internally, CCDPH, CDPH, CFPAC, and other GFPI partners are still working to determine how resources and priorities should be decided at the umbrella initiative level.

Currently, GFPI's Leadership Team includes: Cook County Department of Public Health, Chicago Department of Public Health, Chicago Food Policy Action Council, and evaluation coordinators at Roosevelt University's Policy Research Collaborative. These partners are currently working with consultants at the Groundswell Alliance to develop a three-year strategic plan, which includes establishing a more robust and distributed leadership structure that will ensure GFPI is accountable to the stakeholders that the effort is predominantly intended to support: BIPOC food growers and businesses, food chain workers, and meal program recipients.



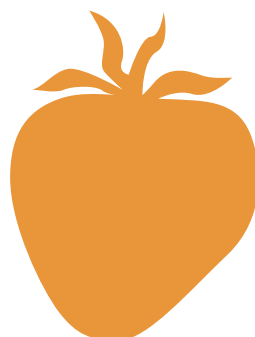
## BALANCING DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDER PRIORITIES

One of the strengths of the GFPP framework is that it approaches food purchasing change holistically, towards changes that have positive impacts on farmers, food businesses, workers, public health, animals, and the planet. While there can be strong alignment between these values, sometimes shifting spend toward one Good Food Standard can compromise another. For example, in looking for higher welfare meat products for the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, the antibiotic-free, grassfed beef patties qualified for Environmental Sustainability and Animal Welfare, but were higher in fat and didn't count toward the Nutrition Standard.

This is just one example of how GFPP implementation requires a delicate balance of everyone's different priorities. As departments and agencies develop Good Food Action Plans and County leadership explore how to prioritize time and resources in service of GFPP, these dissonances will continue to arise. Leaders must be prepared in how to move forward fairly and develop tools—including robust stakeholder feedback processes—to help weigh the impacts of different decisions.

## FOOD LITERACY AND GOOD FOOD EDUCATION

As GFPP implementers have begun to explore menu changes and food purchasing shifts with public institutions, organizers have acknowledged the critical role that education and stakeholder engagement plays in making these shifts. For example, reducing red meat offerings on a menu without educating meal recipients can result in objections and complaints. Providing education (and marketing/promotion) on why menu shifts towards the Good Food Standards are better for health and sustainability must be part of GFPP implementation. Moreover, GFPP implementers should explore opportunities for menu changes to be co-created alongside farmers, food chain workers, and meal program recipients, so that food environments are more seasonal, culturally responsive, and celebrated.



# GOOD FOOD PURCHASING INITIATIVE

## NEXT STEPS

The detailed challenges and opportunities for change documented in this issue brief are by no means exhaustive. Implementers of the Good Food Purchasing Initiative of Metro Chicago welcome further input from local growers, food chain workers, food businesses, food service providers, community organizations, institutional administrators, and meal program recipients. Please reach out to staff listed on the Contact Us page (pg 23) to get in touch and share your feedback on what's missing from this report.

Implementation staff will be working with partners to creatively address the challenges identified in this report over the coming years. In 2021, the Good Food Purchasing Initiative partnered with consultants at the Groundswell Alliance to conduct a three-year strategic planning process that engaged over 40 stakeholders in identifying how to prioritize time and resources towards achieving the initiative's vision. Partners will be finalizing this plan in early 2022, which will be published on [CFPAC's website](#).

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