

# COOK COUNTY GOOD FOOD PURCHASING PROGRAM

## 2020 & 2021 UPDATE ISSUE BRIEF



### INTRODUCTION

Coordinated by the Cook County Department of Public Health with technical support from the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, Cook County's Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) works to ensure that public institutional food purchasing advances an equitable, healthy, fair, local, humane, and sustainable food system while creating good food access for all.

Approved by the County Board of Commissioners as a Cook County resolution in May 2018, GFPP utilizes a metrics-based framework to shift the County's food purchases toward five Good Food Standards:

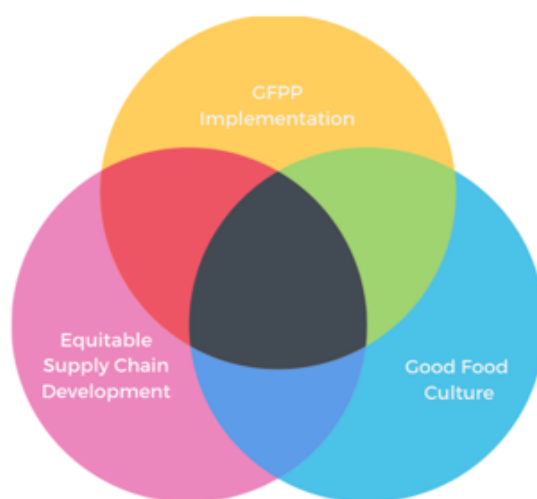
- **Local Economies:** Strengthen regional food economies to create thriving good food businesses and living wage jobs
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Reduce the environmental impacts of food production
- **Valued Workforce:** Promote fair treatment of food-chain workers
- **Animal Welfare:** Ensure the humane treatment of animals (and reduce overall meat consumption)
- **Nutrition:** Encourage healthy food procurement and preparation, and a healthy food service environment

Cook County Government spends approximately \$15 million annually on food through public meal programs and vending. In order to implement GFPP, County departments and agencies that manage meal programs and food environments are collecting detailed food-purchasing data from their vendors. This data is then shared with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to assess the percentage of spend that aligns with each value category. Equipped with this analysis, institutions are developing realistic Good Food Action Plans, reviewing menu items, and shifting contract language with food vendors to reflect their goals.

As Cook County shifts food purchasing towards Good Food Standards, department and agency administrators are working to ensure that the policy results in racially equitable outcomes: Generating economic opportunities for local Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) food growers and food businesses; as well as increasing the quality and cultural relevance of meals provided in County facilities, like Cook County Health sites, Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention, and Cook County Jail. Cook County Good Food Task Force members (which include all procuring departments and agencies, as well as local leaders in food system change) are working collectively to ensure that GFPP implementation builds a more racially equitable, accountable, and transparent food supply chain.

## METRO CHICAGO'S GOOD FOOD PURCHASING INITIATIVE

Cook County's GFPP implementation is part of the Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative (GFPI), an umbrella effort co-led by the Cook County Department of Public Health, Chicago Department of Public Health, and the Chicago Food Policy Action Council. GFPI partners are working to foster values-based institutional food procurement across the region, with the City of Chicago and Cook County Government leading the way. GFPI coordinators released a 2020 Annual Report to document the current state of the initiative, which can be found [here](#). GFPI focuses on three interrelated goals:



### 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

## GFPP IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The following are challenges and opportunities that project coordinators, departments and agencies, and Cook County Good Food Task Force members have encountered so far in working toward Good Food Purchasing Initiative goals.

### 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.
- A major hurdle to GFPP implementation is the funding for public meal programs at the federal, state and local level.
- Sustained funding for the annual GFPP assessment for each meal program, which costs \$10,000-15,000 per assessment (\$30,000-45,000 annually) 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.
- More staff capacity would allow vending and concessions environments to support Good Food Standards through the Good Food Purchasing Pledge, which is an adaptation of GFPP.

### EQUITABLE SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT: 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 navigating costly and complicated certification processes.
- More local food supply chain infrastructure, like cooperative food hubs, 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 County's 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 to understand the market opportunity.

### SHAPEBUILDING A GOOD FOOD CULTURE: ISSUE AREAS

- CCDPH, CFPAC, and other partners are looking to build a cohesive, accountable leadership and governance structure to guide Metro Chicago's Good Food Purchasing Initiative activities
- Given the complexity of GFPP goals, implementers need to be prepared to handle different stakeholder perspectives and priorities
- For GFPP to be successful, the following are required: More intentional food literacy; education about GFPP; concrete processes for stakeholders to inform menu changes