

GOOD FOOD PURCHASING PROGRAM OVERVIEW: 2016–2023

AUSTIN



PURCHASING
PROGRAM

CENTER
GOOD FOOD PURCHASING

PURPOSE

This overview of the Austin area's engagement in the Good Food Purchasing Program is intended to inform next steps for partners in the Austin/Central Texas region and inspire leaders in other cities and regions around investing in a deep, collaborative regional approach to Good Food Purchasing.

BACKGROUND

The Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) has been or is currently being implemented by four Austin-area institutions:

- Austin Independent School District (AISD): a long-standing leader in the Good Food Purchasing Program nationally
- Lake Travis Independent School District (LTISD): an emerging leader
- UT Austin and Austin Convention Center (inactive)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVE

Deepen technical assistance and analytics support for participants to increase the reach, impact, and effectiveness of values-based purchasing in the “Central Texas” region

HISTORY

OFFICE OF
SUSTAINABILITY

CITY OF AUSTIN

The City of Austin’s Office of Sustainability has been deeply invested in GFPP for years. Staff have convened a cohort of institutions and other values-based procurement stakeholders since 2016 and, in 2017, entered into a contract with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to support area institutions to participate in the Good Food Purchasing Program.



Michael & Susan Dell
FOUNDATION

Over the past three years, the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF) funded an Austin-based “proofpoint”, increasing the overall investment of funding in values-based procurement in the region.



The Center offered context from other regions; hosted convenings to support learning across stakeholder groups; generated institution-level and aggregate regional data to support strategy development and transparent tracking of progress; and offered policy recommendations to inform food system planning.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PARTNERS

The following partners were critical in advancing the project objectives:

- City of Austin Office of Sustainability
- Austin Independent School District
- Lake Travis Independent School District
- Sustainable Food Center
- Consultants (Kitchen Sync Strategies, SIFT Consulting)
- Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board
- Center for Good Food Purchasing



ACTIVITIES

Partners generated new tools and resources to:

- Support institutions with values-based purchasing implementation
- Secure a commitment by the City of Austin and Travis County to invest in a sustainable values-based procurement initiative for the region
- Share individual and aggregate data to help set goals, drive action, and monitor progress

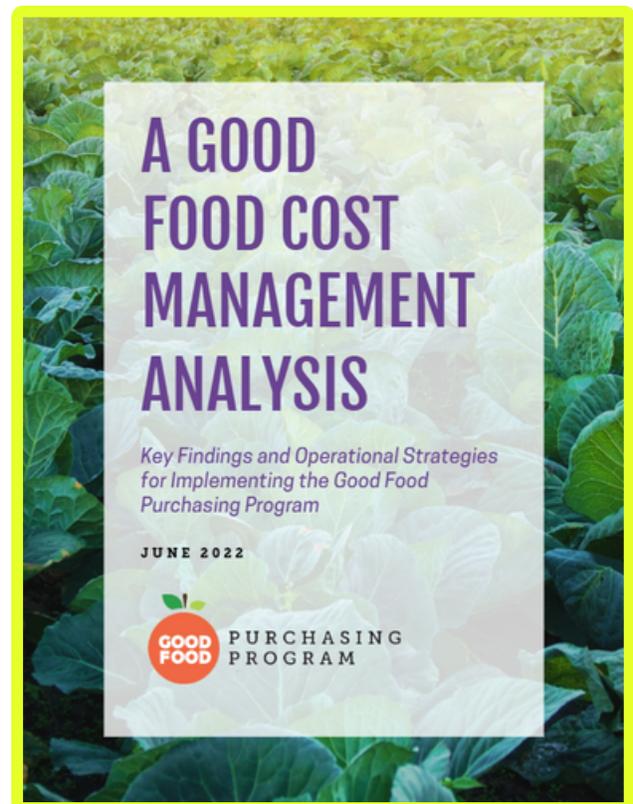
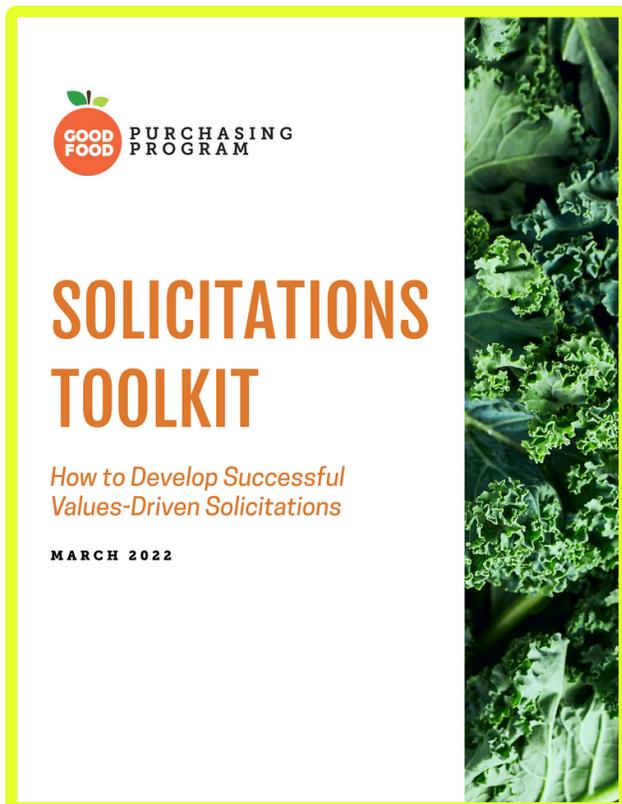
KEY TOOLS for implementation

SOLICITATIONS TOOLKIT & TEXAS ADDENDUM

Guide institutions in updating their procurement tools to reflect Good Food Purchasing values, including Texas-specific guidance

COST MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS & CASE STUDIES

Provide examples from Austin Independent School District, Minneapolis Public Schools, and San Francisco Unified School District of how successful Program participants have strategically implemented changes while managing food costs



KEY TOOLS for coordination and facilitation

CENTRAL TEXAS PROCUREMENT MAP

Showcases partners who are critical to meaningful Good Food Purchasing change and their roles

SCHOOL FOOD CALENDARS

Highlight key milestones in annual procurement cycles and allow school food authorities and suppliers to plan and improve coordination around values-based procurement opportunities

Values-Based School Food Calendar - SFAs

Values-Based School Food Calendar - SFAs

School Year 1

- August:** ALERT LOCAL SUPPLIERS OF VALUES BASED PRODUCTS (VBP) YOU WOULD LIKE TO PURCHASE DIRECTLY FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2
- September:** REVIEW GPPP RESOURCES TO PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL BIDS IN SCHOOL YEAR 2
- October:** FARM FRESH MONTH!
- November:** DRAFT MENUS AND FOODSERVICE BUDGET FOR UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR; SHARE COMMODITY PROCESSING ITEM REQUESTS WITH TX 20 (OR OTHER PURCHASING CO-OPS)
- December:** ESTIMATE POSSIBLE VELOCITIES FOR VBPS BY ANALYZING MENUS AND GPPP PROJECTION TOOLS; DRAFT SPECS AND SOLICITATIONS FOR DIRECT FOOD PURCHASES (NON TX-20 PRODUCTS)
- January:** SHARE GOOD FOOD PURCHASING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND GOALS WITH SUPPLIERS
- February:** IDENTIFY DESIRED VBPS FOR CONSIDERATION ON SY2 BID AND ADD TO NEW ITEM FORECAST ON TX20 (OR PURCHASING CO-OP) BID; PUBLISH SOLICITATIONS OR RFPs FOR DIRECT FOOD PURCHASES
- March:** TX20 AWARDS FOODSERVICE BIDS FOR CO-OP MEMBERS; SHARE PURCHASING & MENUING STRATEGIES WITH NEIGHBOR SFAs TO LEVERAGE SHARED DEMAND; FINALIZE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR MENUS AND FOODSERVICE BUDGET
- April:** AWARD BIDS FOR SMALL/LARGE DIRECT PURCHASES
- May:** TX20 AWARDS FOODSERVICE BIDS FOR CO-OP MEMBERS
- June:** SHARE PURCHASING & MENUING STRATEGIES WITH NEIGHBOR SFAs TO LEVERAGE SHARED DEMAND
- July:** TX20 AWARDS FOODSERVICE BIDS FOR CO-OP MEMBERS

School Year 2

- August SY2:** ALERT LOCAL SUPPLIERS OF VALUES BASED PRODUCTS (VBPS) ON FINAL MENUS FOR NEXT SCHOOL YEAR AND SHARE YOUR DESIRE TO PURCHASE THEM
- September SY2:** REVIEW RESOURCES SHARED BY GPPP TO PLAN FOR SUCCESSFUL BIDS IN SCHOOL YEAR 2
- October SY2:** FARM FRESH MONTH!
- November SY2:** DRAFT MENUS AND FOODSERVICE BUDGET FOR UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR; SHARE COMMODITY PROCESSING ITEM REQUESTS WITH TX 20 (OR OTHER PURCHASING CO-OPS)
- December SY2:** ESTIMATE POSSIBLE VELOCITIES FOR VBPS BY ANALYZING MENUS AND GPPP PROJECTION TOOLS; DRAFT SPECS AND SOLICITATIONS FOR DIRECT FOOD PURCHASES (NON TX-20 PRODUCTS)
- January SY2:** SHARE GOOD FOOD PURCHASING PROGRAM ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND GOALS WITH SUPPLIERS
- February SY2:** IDENTIFY DESIRED VBPS FOR CONSIDERATION ON SY2 BID AND ADD TO NEW ITEM FORECAST ON TX20 (OR PURCHASING CO-OP) BID; PUBLISH SOLICITATIONS OR RFPs FOR DIRECT FOOD PURCHASES
- March SY2:** TX20 AWARDS FOODSERVICE BIDS FOR CO-OP MEMBERS

Key Takeaways for SFAs

- Values-Based Products (VBPs) make a big splash! Featuring local, organic, and other products can get students excited about their food.
- You won't get what you don't ask for! Be sure to ask suppliers what products you'd like to purchase. It's the first step to successful values-based procurement!
- Talking to each other is key. Sharing which VBPs you're looking for with other SFAs will encourage Texas20 to have distributors offer them in their large bid!
- Don't forget existing tools to help you balance your needs like *managing the cost of Good Food* and *writing effective Solicitations and Bids*. (see QR codes above)

Values-Based School Food Calendar - Suppliers

Values-Based School Food Calendar - Suppliers

School Year 1

- August:** CONNECT WITH SCHOOLS AND DISCUSS WHAT VALUES BASED PRODUCTS (VBPS) YOU EXPECT TO CARRY IN SCHOOL YEAR 2
- September:** CONTACT SCHOOLS ABOUT DIRECT PURCHASES FOR FARM FRESH MONTH
- October:** FARM FRESH MONTH!
- November:** CONDUCT PRODUCTION PLANNING WITH LOCAL PRODUCERS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR VOLUMES FOR NEXT YEAR
- December:** SHARE SCHOOL YEAR 2 PRODUCT SPECS, PRICE ESTIMATES, AND DELIVERY INFO WITH SCHOOLS BEFORE BIDS ARE PUBLISHED
- January:** CONTACT SCHOOLS WITH REQUEST TO ADD YOUR ITEMS TO THE 'NEW ITEM FORECAST' TX20 BID FOR SY2. INCLUDE ALL PRODUCT DETAIL DESCRIPTION, BRAND, MANUFACTURER CODE, DISTRIBUTOR NUMBER, PACK/SIZE
- February:** CAREFULLY READ AND RESPOND TO DIRECT FOOD PURCHASE RFPs FROM PURCHASING CO-OPS (LIKE TEXAS 20) AND SOLICITATIONS FROM SCHOOL DISTRICTS. REMEMBER TO PROVIDE PRODUCT ORIGIN INFO, 3RD PARTY CERT. INFO, AND PRODUCER/PRODUCT VALUES
- March:** CONDUCT PRODUCTION PLANNING WITH LOCAL PRODUCERS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR VOLUMES FOR NEXT YEAR
- April:** CONTACT SCHOOLS AND OFFER SUPPORT WITH HARVEST OF THE MONTH FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2
- May:** CONTACT SCHOOL LEADS AND GATHER LOGISTICS INFO (E.G. OF DROP SITES, DELIVERY INFO, ETC.) FOR SY2 DELIVERIES
- June:** CENTRAL TEXAS PRODUCE GROWING SEASON (VARIES BY PRODUCT)
- July:** CONTACT SCHOOLS AND OFFER SUPPORT WITH HARVEST OF THE MONTH FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2

School Year 2

- August SY2:** CONNECT WITH SCHOOLS AND DISCUSS WHAT VALUES BASED PRODUCTS (VBPS) YOU EXPECT TO CARRY IN SCHOOL YEAR 2
- September SY2:** CONTACT SCHOOLS ABOUT DIRECT PURCHASES FOR FARM FRESH MONTH
- October SY2:** FARM FRESH MONTH!
- November SY2:** CONDUCT PRODUCTION PLANNING WITH LOCAL PRODUCERS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR VOLUMES FOR NEXT YEAR
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- March SY2:** CONDUCT PRODUCTION PLANNING WITH LOCAL PRODUCERS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR VOLUMES FOR NEXT YEAR

Key Takeaways for Suppliers

- Schools are busy places. Approach schools at the right time of the year and try to align your production planning and sales cycles to schools.
- Always provide schools with info about the values reflected in each of your products. Include source ID info and all 3rd party certifications.
- Don't forget about direct sales! Many school districts can make up to \$10k purchases directly without any formal bids.
- Remember: Texas 20 is responsive to its school members. The more SFAs that ask TX20 for a specific product that you carry, the more likely they are to include it in their large foodservice bid.

click or scan here! [Explore resource for school bids](#) [Get oriented with GPPP](#) [Explore Texas Dept. of Ag Farm-to-School Resources](#) [Questions? Contact us here!](#) info@goodfoodpurchasing.org

KEY TOOLS for strategy and goal setting

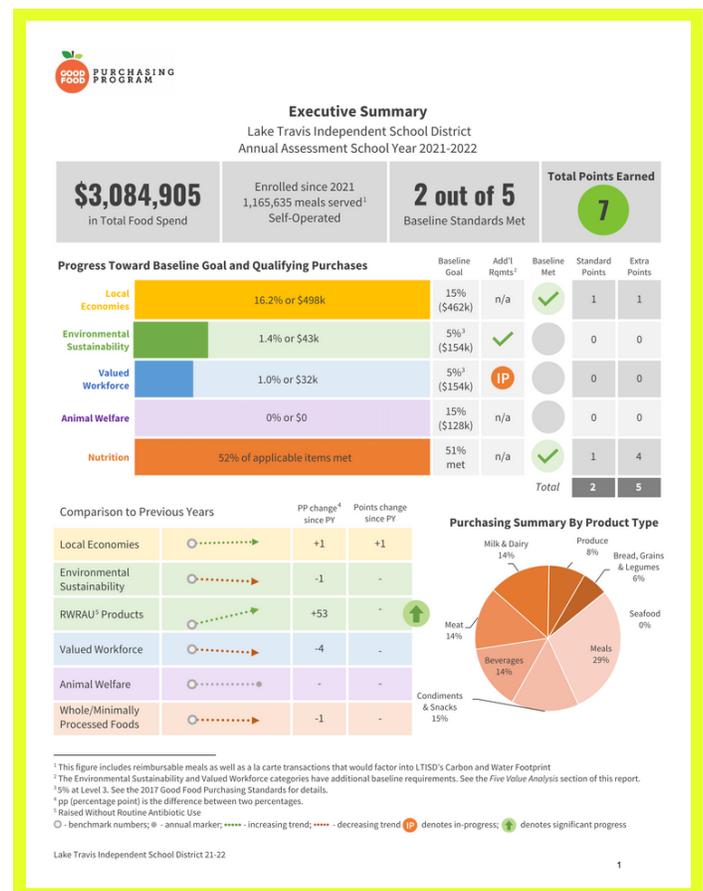
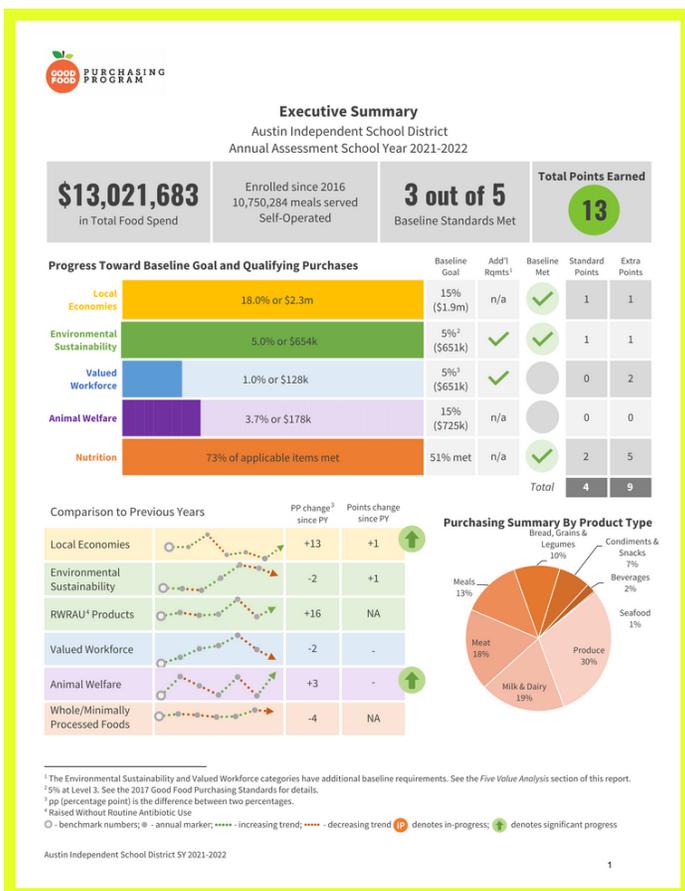
AUSTIN TRAVIS COUNTY FOOD POLICY BOARD POLICY

Articulates investments and staffing needed for a comprehensive city and county-led Good Food Purchasing initiative that can be advanced through budgets and legislation

CENTRALIZED DASHBOARD & INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Help set goals, drive action, and monitor progress. Inputs for the dashboard are based off of individual institutional performance metrics, including, most recently:

- [AISD 21-22 assessment](#)
- [LTISD 21-22 annual assessment](#)



WHAT WE LEARNED

The investments of both the City of Austin and MSDF, leadership by local partners and institutions, and the growing library of resources available to institutions working on GFPP or values-based procurement in the region, have provided a solid foundation for continuing GFPP efforts moving forward. Yet there are important opportunities still available to fully activate the partners, infrastructure, data, and technical assistance resources for a sustainable, growing initiative and transformative food system change.

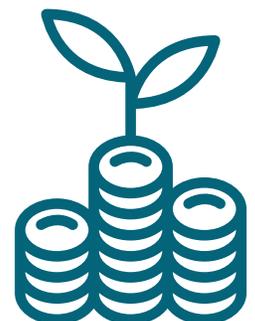
Improving communication and coordination can accelerate the good values-based procurement work already happening. Procurement change is highly collaborative work, and many of the barriers faced in moving the needle on values-based procurement can be addressed through creating feedback loops and coordinating institutional actors, suppliers, and technical assistance providers to work more collaboratively and efficiently.

Facilitating Collaboration



Funding for key staff is needed. Sustainably funding investments in planning, education, and facilitation and coordination is a critical component in ensuring that work moves forward in alignment with clearly defined goals that strategically inform investments in infrastructure, food purchasing incentives, or other direct investments in the regional food system.

Strategic Investment



WHAT WE LEARNED

Continued

City and/or County-based staff can coordinate strategy and monitoring across sectors.

A sustainable strategy should adequately fund public-sector staffing, such as the City of Austin Office of Sustainability, to ensure policymakers, private businesses, public food service operators, and community-based organizations are engaged in a coordinated strategy, setting direction and metrics for the region, transparently reporting progress, and identifying ways funding and policy priorities can support achieving the collective vision.

Investing in community leadership is key. External advocacy and accountability ensure that policymakers are continuously engaged around how investments in staffing and regional food systems align with and are advancing the priorities of their constituents. Organizations like Sustainable Food Center that are deeply rooted in relationships with community members, growers, and institutions can build coalitions and coordinate strategic campaigns to ensure progress toward regional targets.

Tap into the networks and expertise of existing technical assistance providers.

Technical assistance providers, including both consultants and existing resources that public food purchasers utilize, like Education Service Centers and the Texas Department of Agriculture, should be engaged to strategically build and market resources for buyers and suppliers to agencies across the state and regional producers. This strategy could significantly increase the ability of institutions and sellers, regardless of size or participation in a program like GFPP, to make meaningful and high-impact shifts in values-based food purchasing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing Barriers: Food System Planning

During the course of the MSDF project grant, the City of Austin Office of Sustainability, in partnership with Travis County, embarked on a food system planning process. The Office of Sustainability has an interest in continuing to invest in high-impact opportunities to meet the needs of institutional buyers and suppliers in the region, building on the learnings from the project to ensure more Good Food makes it to consumers in Austin/Travis County-based public food service operations.

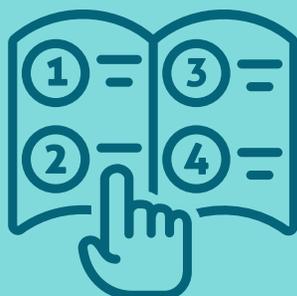
Based on the lessons learned, the Center has identified the following recommendations as those that help address the barriers that have limited the overall growth and effectiveness of values-based procurement work at the individual institution and regional levels.

The recommendations have been organized into four main guiding areas of priority:

Planning



Education



Facilitation & Coordination



Investments & Infrastructure



RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued

PLANNING

Assessing institutional demand, opportunities, and potential impact of values-based procurement expansion is a critical component of the GFPP planning process, supporting data-informed next steps including collaboration within an existing policy framework and growing network as well as monitoring and communicating outcomes and influence.

Research & Assessment

Partner Collaboration

Tracking & Communicating Impact

Foodshed Assessment Based on GFPP Targets

Facilitate understanding of what institutional demand currently can be met with in-state production, via what supply chains, and at what cost, as well as the extent to which values-aligned products are available.

Current Good Food Purchasing Program performance can be viewed on the [Austin GFPP dashboard](#).



RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued: Planning

Locally-led Verification

Evaluate opportunities to [incorporate locally-led verification of production practices](#) for non-certified, values-aligned products, such as with local partners like Common Market.

Values-Based Procurement & Meal Participation

Invest in understanding and communicating the connection between values-based procurement and meal participation at public institutions and develop best practices and peer learning opportunities to strengthen

Reporting & Transparency

Create plans and mechanisms for reporting and transparency, identifying data points that are most useful for tracking and communicating impact related to the investment of public food dollars in alignment with community values or Good Food Purchasing framework.

Determine how reporting will be visualized and communicated publicly relative to the Food Plan or other City commitments.

Utilizing Existing Policy Framework

Evaluate opportunities for City to implement GFPP values into current procurement processes within existing policy framework, such as through changes to contracts and/or solicitations based on climate plan implementation that align with sustainability and/or animal welfare goals of GFPP.

Critical Scale

Engage researchers to assess critical scale for values-based procurement/GFPP implementation, or the scale of institutional engagement that would generate adequate demand to drive markets for values-aligned producers/distributors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued: Education

EDUCATION

Support for producers, suppliers, distributors, and buyers in navigating the procurement process is key in aligning goals and strategies, building resources, and ensuring effective collaboration.

Technical Assistance

Distributor & Buyer Engagement

Capacity-Building

Producer/Supplier Education

Conduct producer/supplier education regarding the procurement process overall, key differences across institution types, values-based procurement priorities overall, and how interested producers/suppliers can access market opportunities.

Technical Assistance Provider Partnerships

Explore continued or new partnerships among local technical assistance providers, targeting point of procurement (for buyers) and point of sale (for suppliers,) including Sustainable Food Center, ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture, Texas Department of Agriculture, and Education Service Centers.

Distributor Education

Support distributor education about values-based procurement, including communication of regional goals using shared language and terminology, market priorities, procurement calendars, and definitions.

Buyer Education

Support buyer education about values-based procurement. Circulate the [Solicitations Toolkit](#) and other resources to support capacity-building.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued: Facilitation & Coordination

FACILITATION & COORDINATION

Procurement is deeply collaborative work, facing barriers that can be addressed by creating feedback loops and coordinating institutional actors, suppliers, and technical assistance providers.

Regional
Approach

Centralized
Alignment

Robust Partner
Engagement

Investment in Municipal Capacity

Ensure ongoing investment in dedicated City staff with adequate capacity to coordinate overall GFPP initiative, and ensure adequate representation from private sector in facilitated GFPP spaces.

Opportunities for Engagement

Convene specific opportunities for private sector engagement, like trade shows, and engage and invest in local food organizations to host regular convenings with producers/suppliers and buyers.

Collective Purchasing

Support coordination within Education Service Centers and purchasing cooperatives like TX20 to achieve outcomes through collective purchasing and to expand access to values-aligned products across the region.

Economies of Scale

Facilitate buyer-to-buyer information sharing and coordination to achieve economies of scale and more uniform values-aligned item specifications, especially to enable coordinated supply-side responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued: Facilitation & Coordination

Feedback Loops for Centralized List of Suppliers

Create and maintain centralized and/or institution-level outreach lists of suppliers for coordinated solicitation distribution, and develop feedback loops for suppliers on the outreach list to inform continuous improvement of individual procurement processes.

Strategic Vendor Engagement

Engage Department of Defense vendor(s) as part of a values-based procurement strategy, so values-aligned products can be procured through these distribution channels.

Reporting & Transparency

Create plans and mechanisms for reporting and transparency, using data points that are most useful for tracking and communicating impact related to the investment of public food dollars in alignment with community values or Good Food Purchasing framework.

Determine how reporting will be visualized and communicated publicly relative to the Food Plan or other City commitments.

Coordinated Timelines

Support coordination of timelines and innovation across buyers to support smaller buyers in taking advantage of product specifications and offerings that larger institutions like AISD are able to procure through TX20.

Create a 20-month timeframe calendar to establish shared language, highlight key goals and action items, and outline timing between key actors that may have conflicting calendars.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continued

INVESTMENTS & INFRASTRUCTURE

It is critical to sustainably fund investments in planning, education, and facilitation and coordination to ensure collective goals that strategically inform investments are clearly defined and supported. A sustainable strategy should adequately fund public-sector staffing to ensure policymakers and partners are engaged and working in alignment with the collective vision.

Committed
Investments

Leveraging
Infrastructure

Local
Incentives

Coordinated Food Hub

Leverage infrastructure and facilitate and coordinate relationships via a food hub or existing value chain partners to establish consolidated drop sites for suppliers, value-added processing, and other mechanisms to address limitations of conventional distribution channels and labor constraints within institutions.

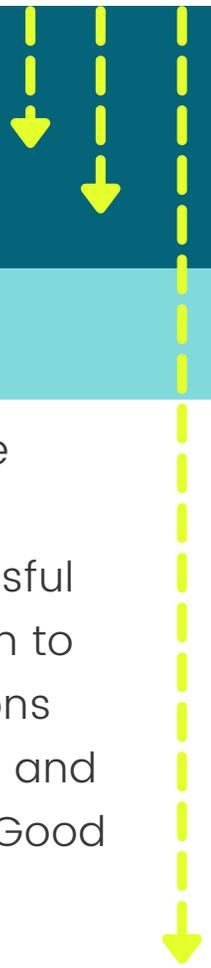
Local Incentives

Invest local funds into Good Food Purchasing Incentives to support local institutions in purchasing more GFPP-aligned food products.*

Assess sequencing needs to determine if funds could be spent down with existing supply and infrastructure, or if investment in supplier education and/or food hub or similar values-aligned distribution is a prerequisite.

*State-level investment is common, but barriers were flagged to using this model in Texas.

CONCLUSION



The engagement of Austin-area leaders and partners in the Good Food Purchasing Program has highlighted effective considerations and strategies that are critical to the successful implementation of a deeply collaborative regional approach to promoting values-based food purchasing. Recommendations related to planning, education, facilitation and coordination, and investments and infrastructure can help guide prospective Good Food leaders and partners in expanding values-based food purchasing in regions across the U.S.

APPRECIATIONS

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Sustainable Food Center | Hallie Casey, Simone Benz

Austin Independent School District | Ryan Mikolaycik, Caroline Juarez, Jewel Amberger

Lake Travis Independent School District | Lianka Soliz, Marissa Bell

Kitchen Sync Strategies | Elliott Smith

SIFT Consulting | Sarah Elliott, Luthien Nyland, Jill Carlson Groendyk |



Center for Good Food Purchasing Project Staff | Peter Cohen, Alexa Delwiche, Colleen McKinney, Laura Edwards-Orr (formerly), Sara Elazan (formerly)

Produced by the Center for Good Food Purchasing with contributions from Alexa Delwiche, Co-Founder & Executive Director; Colleen McKinney, Director of Engagement; and Lauren Taniguchi, Communications Manager.



APPENDIX A: PARTNER ROLES

Continued

Austin Independent School District & Lake Travis Independent School District

Two institutions, Austin ISD and Lake Travis ISD, have played strong leadership roles locally and nationally, working to shift purchasing and helping, through their experiences, to bring awareness to the key barriers to deepening values-based procurement in the region.

Austin ISD completed its [seventh assessment](#) in the program and developed key tools (such as a budget projection tool) that have supported institutions across the country with planning for changes to their purchasing to align with the Program. Some of AISD's key strategies include:

- Prioritize purchasing organic items (e.g. chicken meatball product)
- Conduct significant vendor education and engagement, improving data quality and program performance overall

Lake Travis ISD enrolled in the Program and completed their [first two assessments](#). In just the first two years they showed significant improvement in multiple areas, including:

- Increasing local purchasing from 14.8% to 16.2%
- Decreasing per-meal carbon footprint by 16%

APPENDIX A: PARTNER ROLES

Continued

City of Austin Office of Sustainability

The City of Austin Office of Sustainability has led the coordination of local values-based procurement efforts since 2016, building a cohort of local institutions and other partners seeking to exercise procurement as a mechanism for food systems change. The office's investments in assessments for Austin Independent School District, the Austin Convention Center, and University of Texas, Austin Dining Services have measured these institutions' alignment with Good Food Purchasing Program values and guided the implementation of changes to their food purchasing practices. In addition, the office's leadership has facilitated an ongoing space for additional institutions to learn from one another, share resources, and stay up-to-date on values-based food purchasing efforts in the local region.

Austin Travis County Food Policy Board & Sustainable Food Center

While convening and facilitation are roles that the Office of Sustainability is well-suited for, over time it has become clearer that policy change is an essential element of accelerated values-based purchasing in the region, and Office of Sustainability staff are not positioned to lead policy advocacy efforts, especially across jurisdictions. Two channels were activated over the course of the project to deepen policy advocacy capacity. The first was leadership from the appointment-based Austin Travis County Food Policy Board, which can advance policy recommendations to the City Council and County Commissioners. The second was an external, community-based organization, Sustainable Food Center, stepping into an increased policy advocacy and coalition-building role that built on the momentum the City had gained over the previous several years.

APPENDIX A: PARTNER ROLES

Continued

Consultants

Consultants with technical expertise were able to closely examine some of the key barriers that these institutions faced and created new tools that can be widely used or adapted to address those barriers. This included the development of a [Solicitations Toolkit](#) (SIFT Consulting), including a [Texas addendum](#), which was geared toward providing relevant examples and customizable language for institutions at any stage of engagement to more effectively use their procurement processes to meet their values-based procurement goals. Additionally, engagement between institutions and vendors helped identify missing feedback loops between these parties that meant opportunities were being left on the table, resulting in [vendor](#) and [buyer procurement calendars](#) (Kitchen Sync Strategies) that create clarity around key milestones and encourage timely communication about product or procurement opportunities between these key actors.