



Visualizing the Good Food Purchasing Initiative of Metro Chicago

*A hunger free community report in collaboration with the
Chicago Food Policy Action Council and the Bill Emerson
National Hunger Fellowship*

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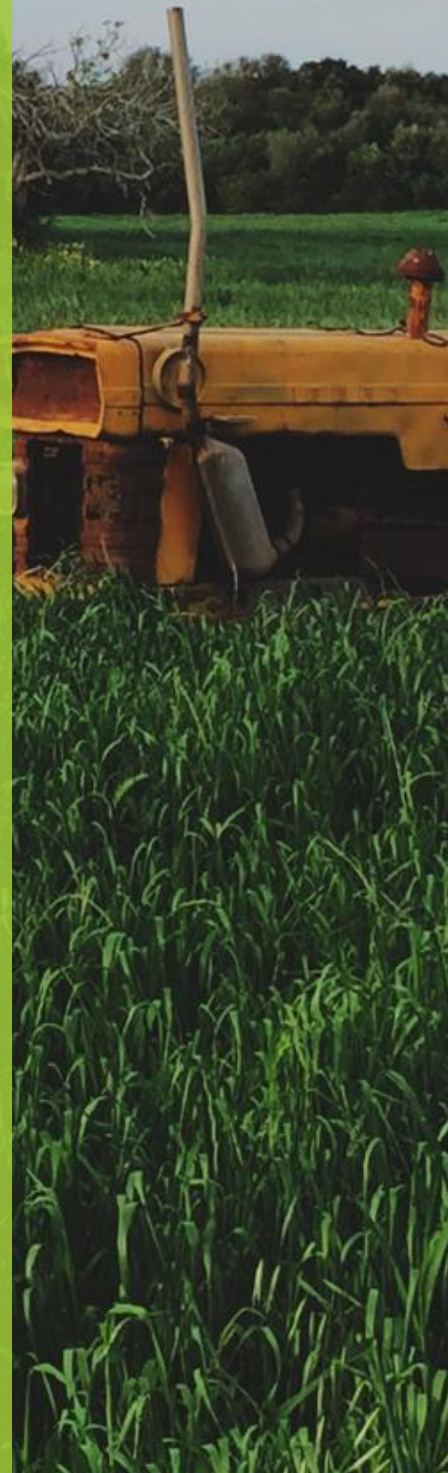
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As an Emerson Fellow, I was paired with a community organization focusing on ending hunger for six months. Fellows are tasked with writing a comprehensive report outlining all of the work we have accomplished and includes the work of the organization and their efforts in reducing hunger in the United States. The following report is based on my time with the Chicago Food Policy Action Council located in Chicago, Illinois.

I would like to take the time to acknowledge
and give my thanks to:

- The entire CFPAC staff for the endless amount of support and encouragement I received working with you all during this time. Lauren Drumgold, thank you for being the best field partner in the world, I couldn't imagine this experience without you.
- My manager, Marlie Wilson for her expertise, flexibility and all of the kindness she extended to me. Marlie, it was an honor and a pleasure being able to work with you.
- Tony Jackson and Paige Clay for their consistent presence even while I was in Chicago. I cannot thank you both enough for giving me the best field placement possible.



Introduction



About CFPAC

Formed in 2002, the Chicago Food Policy Action Council recognizes the inequalities embedded in our current food system. These include the upholding of structural racism in Chicago such as massive inequities in land access, food business ownership, food security, and political power.

CFPAC works to address these inequities and is radically transforming Chicago's food system by building local political power, various programming efforts, creating networks and relationship building with an emphasis on Black and Brown partnerships.



Core Initiatives:



Productive Landscapes



Food Research



Good Food Purchasing Policy

Core Events:



Winter Buyer Supplier Mixer



Food Justice Job Fair



Annual Food Justice Summit

The Good Food Purchasing Initiative: Overview



When presenting on the Good Food Purchasing Initiative CFPAC asks listeners “what does a cafeteria that centers community, sustainability, justice, and equity look like?” So, reader of my Hunger Free Community Report: how would you reimagine the school lunchrooms you've been in during your life? What do they look and smell like? Where and how is the food produced? Do you have an opportunity to help cook? Perhaps similar to me, you envision an accessible community garden where students, staff and community members grow and harvest food together. I see compostable containers to eat out of and a drastic decrease in food waste. More importantly, my ideal cafeteria transcends as a space used during school hours. This is a space where relationships are built through food and culture which is a crucial step in the hopes of understanding and further, changing our food chain development.

What if your city committed to the idealized cafeteria you and your own community had in mind? As important as relationship building is to change a society's attitude surrounding food justice, systemic change is also crucial in order to see a transformation in our current unethical and environmentally unfriendly food system. The mission of the Good Food Purchasing Policy is to reform our current food system by shifting the culture of food to value our communities. This paired with policy that holds our government accountable can advance a good food system for all.

The policy was first adopted by Los Angeles in 2017, and was quickly implemented in Chicago that same year. GFPP encourages large institutions to distribute their food buying power toward five core values: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and nutrition. These criteria are the running definition of "good food" and these standards are revised and updated every five years by teams of food system workers and stakeholders committed to the vision of GFPP.

As mentioned below, good food is not only the adjectives named below, but is a human right, not a privilege. By revising the way public institutions purchase food, cities have the potential to provide good food to everyone. Additionally, leveraging policies regarding institutional food purchasing can advance racial equity in the food system. Through a racial equity lens, committing to GFPP means that lower income communities and communities of color have the same access to healthy eating and living as their white counterparts. Distributing food dollars towards local communities can allow pathways and opportunities for smaller, BIPOC food producers, and eaters to participate in what CFPAC calls a "liberatory foodshed" and defines as a "regional food ecosystem, free from social and economic oppression, rooted in accountability, reconciliation, and healing".



Our current food system was not designed to take into account the community values GFPP encourages because it is based on cost efficiency and mass production. This excludes local food initiatives and disregards nutritional food value. Because of these current practices, GFPP implementation runs into many challenges not only with institutional buyers, but workers and eaters. For example, eaters want food that has nutritious value, is cost friendly and also has cultural significance. Knowing where our food comes from is crucial to these goals and necessitates a certain amount of relationship building that cannot happen if there is no infrastructure that supports those connections. The inability to sell products to institutions because of a lack of access to data and information about markets is a barrier and the lack of information about resources and tools such as GFPP hinders the creation of these connections.

That being said, any institution that decides to commit to GFPP is taking a large step forward in the right direction with the ultimate goal being a liberatory foodshed. However, an institution has to do more than agree to the policy in order to truly implement the initiative. The GFPP process includes an initial data collection and purchasing analysis followed by action planning and change-making. A GFPP baseline assessment is one of the first steps of this process and includes several layers of information. For example, complete food spend information for the year. This assessment is used as a benchmark to track improvements in future years. Key accomplishments and key opportunities are noted in the report as well as progress towards each GFPP standard.

Future Prospects

Despite the obvious setbacks that come with trying to shift an already existing system, the Good Food Purchasing Initiative has made significant progress in the last few years. CFPAC in particular has done an incredible job of making ties between GFPP and racial equity work across the food supply chain through networking events such as the Winter Buyer Supplier Mixer, which is organized through GFPP. Additionally, there is a commitment to expose others to GFPP through vendor fairs and workshops throughout Illinois. A Guide for Growers & Food Businesses was recently created with similar intentions of this report, but packed with crucial information and resources for those who are growing food or running food businesses to learn about new market opportunities being created by the Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative. "The guide [is] also useful if [one is] interested in selling food to food concessionaires (restaurants or caterers with public contracts) or publicly-run food festivals (ex: Taste of Chicago)". This resource can be found on the resources and references page of this report. Lastly, one of the most exciting prospects of GFPP in Chicago is a new community fund that launches this year! Almost 400k will be available to support local initiatives in growing and distributing GFPP aligned foods. How exciting!

Aside from the strides GFPP is taking in Chicago, additional states where the Good Food Purchasing Initiative is being implemented include; Boston, Ohio, Washington DC, Texas, and California. Active campaigning of GFPP is found in Colorado, Minnesota, New York and Florida.

GFPP Impacts



Throughout the country, states that have implemented GFPP standards in the last six years have made so much progress when it comes to the five core values. I want to shed some light on those accomplishments.

All of the following statistics come from the official GFPP website which is cited on page 21 of this report.



Valued Workforce

\$20 million has been directed toward suppliers with union wages and worker protections ensuring safe and healthy working conditions plus fair compensation for all food chain workers and producers.



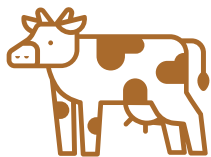
Local Economies

Partner institutions have nearly doubled their annual spend from 14.4% to 22.2% on foods supporting small food processing operations.



Environmental Sustainability

An increase of over 250% in public dollars has been redirected toward producers that reinforce a reduction of energy and water consumption, food waste and greenhouse gas emissions.



Animal Welfare

Institutions enrolled in GFPP have increased their animal welfare purchases by 50% through efforts to source from producers that provide healthy and humane conditions for farm animals.



Nutrition and Health

Partner institutions are now purchasing 42% whole foods or minimally processed foods and have committed to reducing the amount of processed and red meat they purchase by 5% per year.



Visualizing GFPP: Kumu Map

The previous context about GFPP leads me into the core of my work plan with CFPAC which was a focused approach to support the Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative's mission and ensure that institutional meal programs invest in a more equitable, transparent, and accountable food system. In service of this mission, I worked with Marlie Wilson, the Good Food Purchasing Project Manager to further develop a visual network map of all meal programs and food environments that have committed to the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) in Metro Chicago.

This public resource is catered to prospective vendors and subcontractors, especially local farms and food businesses in order to better understand which contracts are coming up for expiration and when new food-related opportunities will be released. It also includes information about the contracted food service providers and distributors. This work is in the hopes that BIPOC food producers and workers will have more opportunity to wholesale their products to larger institutions which would not only benefit them financially, but would provide quality food products to the groups of people these large institutions cater to.

The map is a transparent, organized and detail oriented source that provides contact information, the GFPP baseline assessment previously mentioned and completed by all partnering institutions, the number of annual meals each institutions/meal program provides and a total annual food related contract amount.

Chicago Departments and Sister Agencies as well as Cook County Departments and Agencies fund a plethora of institutions and programs. Those who are currently partnered with the Good Food Purchasing Initiative in Chicago thus far include:

- Chicago Public Schools
- Chicago Park District
- Chicago Department of Family and Support Services
- Chicago City Colleges
- Chicago Housing Authority
- Chicago Department of Aviation
- Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events
- Chicago Department of Assets, Information and Services
- Chicago Department of Procurement
- Cook County Department of Corrections
- Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center
- Cook County Health and Hospital Systems
- Cook County Bureau of Asset Management

Collaboratively, these institutions and the meal programs within them spend \$118 million in food. It is estimated that this number exceeds \$300 million when concessions and special events are also taken into account. GFPP recognizes that these funds could be allocated equitably and have a deeper impact if a deeper consideration was given to local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition. The Kumu map includes not only these agencies and departments but also highlights food distributors and food service management companies in Chicago which allows for even clearer connections and future opportunities to be made by viewers.

The Good Food Purchasing Connections map is a public resource that is accessible and available to anyone who wants to see/use it. The goals of the map are to:

- a) Provide information to food producers, distributors, and food service providers who are interested in selling products or services to community food access sites that are implementing the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP)
- b) Provide transparency on the companies that public meal programs and food environments are currently contracted (or subcontracted) with.
- c) Serve as an interactive and user-friendly resource to learn more about the local institutions implementing GFPP

Who should use this resource?

- a) Food producers and businesses in the Metro Chicago region, especially those owned and operated by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and People of Color, looking to sell to Chicago's community food access sites
- b) “Anchor” institutions in the Chicago region, including hospitals, higher ed institutions, cultural institutions, senior living facilities, and others, interested in joining the Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative (GFPI)
- c) Anyone who is interested in learning more about the landscape of institutions implementing GFPP across Metro Chicago: food suppliers, researchers, public officials, food service staff, and of course, eaters!

You can view the updated version of the Good Food Purchasing Connections map [here](#)

In addition to updating and expanding the map, I created a supplemental [guided presentation](#) that walks through navigating Kumu and understanding the information inside the map using Chicago Public Schools as a clear example.

Have fun exploring this interactive source to gain an in depth look at what the Good Food Purchasing Initiative looks like in Metro Chicago!





Conclusion

A Moment to **Reflect**

Take a pause and think back on what your dream lunchroom looks like. What does it smell like? Who is there? What's on the menu? Who has access to the space and where might it be? Use the following page to write or draw these ideas out. Put them into the universe! Ask yourself what role you *will* play in order to support hunger solutions. Are there any values GFPP is missing? The following pages are yours.



My Dream **Lunchroom** Looks Like...





What Will I Do To Support Hunger **Solutions?**

There has been a shift in environmentalism acknowledging the ways in which our current food systems are corrupt, sparking an urgency to create new, sustainable food systems that are accessible and affordable for all people. Localized food systems (farmer's markets and food banks for example) have incredible potential in reducing our environmental footprint while also benefiting local economies and communities. However, localizing our food doesn't consider the capitalist forces that produce social inequalities in the first place. In other words, work within the system is just as essential and cannot be bypassed in the hopes of true food system reform. That being said, the Good Food Purchasing Initiative recognizes that any institution that distributes food has a responsibility to purchase items that advance a good food agenda. GFPP has the ability to hold partnering institutions accountable for how their food spend dollars are being used to create positive and effective change to our food system. This initiative helps to support local and BIPOC food businesses which has a direct effect on the types of foods people have access to. Helping to expand a resource that will create access and opportunity to those who want more transparency about where food is coming from has been inspiring and effective.

Reader, thank you for engaging with my Hunger Free Community Report. I truly believe that the visions your lunchroom dreams entails has the potential to come into fruition if the Good Food Purchasing Initiative is implemented and used to its full potential. I am excited to see how all of us will support hunger free solutions in the future and the ways in which GFPP will expand and grow across the United States.

References and Resources

This report would not be complete without being able to distribute more resources and information about the Good Food Purchasing Policy. See below for a few applicable links.

[Center for Good Food Purchasing Website](#)

[CFPAC's Procurement Site](#)

[CFPAC's Guide for Growers](#)

[GFPP impact report featuring the history, vision, and achievements of the first eight years of the Program.](#)

