

PART B
Organizational Food Policy Fact
Sheets

ORGANIZATIONAL FOOD POLICY

1) FOOD POLICY

What is Food Policy?

The word “policy” can sound frightening to some people. But food policies are simply:

“...a decision made by an organization that affects how food is produced, served, protected, and disposed. Food policy is a tool to help move us toward community food security.”

Policies define:

- What needs to be done
- Who will do it
- How will it be done

Food Policy in organizations guides how organizations and businesses make choices about food.

What are some examples of Food Policy in Organizations?

- Forming guidelines to encourage the public and companies to donate healthy food to food banks.
- Making the decision to serve healthy, local foods to staff.
- Schools making the decision to offer only nutritious food to students.
- Providing funding to low-income residents to access food programs.
- Transportation subsidies to access food programs for low-income residents.
- Enforcing health and safety rules at food based businesses.
- Institutions deciding to purchase a certain percentage of food that is produced by local farmers.

Food Policy has potential to address 3 key issues:

1) Food Policies could increase access to quality food by hungry populations. For example, food banks could make a policy that discourages the donation of unhealthy items by the public and companies.

2) Food policies could also promote more local, more sustainable farming and production practices, all of which support the environment and local economy. For instance, City Hall could enforce a policy that ensures only BC grown apples are sold at community grocery stores.

3) The creation and implementation of organizational food policies can help increase the access to healthier foods by staff and clients. For example, a community facility could ensure that water, juice, and milk are the only beverages served to youth attending their programs.

To start, what can you do?

Most of us think we have no control over policies and that they are issues officials and bureaucrats deal with. Not true! Changes often come from the bottom-up, from individuals like you who have the energy and passion to get started.

How can YOU influence policy?

- 1) Know your issues, your goals and your opposition.
- 2) Know the policy process and the policy makers.
- 3) Engage stakeholders and develop networks. Make connections between different people and different groups.
- 4) Take action!

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2) HUNGER

What is the Problem?

- Income plays a major role in access to food.
- Just as having enough money is good for health, poverty and inequality have devastating health impacts. Not having enough to eat and not having good quality food can have short and long term effects on mental and physical health.
- People in the community are not aware of food security issues and their root causes. For example, the "Cost of Eating in BC" report shows that people on low income cannot afford to eat a healthy diet, regardless of how well they stretch their budget dollars.

Poverty is the root cause of hunger. However, food programs can play a short term role in alleviating hunger:

- The South Fraser Regional Harvest Box program provides fresh produce to local residents at a reduced rate as a result of bulk purchasing.
- Peace Arch Community Services Food Bank purchases healthy items for their clients to supplement the less healthy donated items. These healthy items are targeted to infants, new mothers, and children.
- The Surrey Food Bank's Gleaning Project organizes volunteers from the community to salvage surplus produce from local farms and backyards. The produce is then made available to the 14,000 clients that access the Surrey Food Bank each month. This food bank also provides the space and tools for local residents to participate in community kitchens and community gardening.

Actions you can take:

- Read "The Cost of Eating in BC" report and share it with others. Brainstorm together on ways to address poverty:
http://www.foodbank.bc.ca/pdf/2005_coeibc_final.pdf
- Donate cash to the food bank so they can buy healthier foods for their clients.
- Support community food programs (i.e. community gardens, community kitchens) through volunteering or fundraising.
- Find out more about how the political party you support works to address poverty and its impacts
- Write a letter to your local government official on the issue of hunger.

Some statistics:

- During 2001, almost one in eight Canadians experienced food insecurity at some point in the year.
- The younger a person, the more likely he or she may report food insecurity. The Canadian Community Health Survey from 2001 found that about 18% of people aged 12 – 44 had experienced food insecurity.

How will action benefit our community?

- As many from vulnerable populations utilize the food bank, improving the quality of donations to the food bank could help to improve the health of food bank clients.
- Every child, regardless of family income, has equal opportunity to succeed at school and in life. By improving the nutritional health among vulnerable populations, there would ultimately be a decrease in child hunger and the associated effects (i.e. poor development).

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3) LOCAL FOODS

What is the Problem?

The way we currently produce and process food is not sustainable. Why?

1. The quality and amount of land available for growing food is declining.
2. Food production has become increasingly dependent on imported finite resources (i.e. gasoline) and on a high level of inputs that are harmful to the environment (e.g. pesticides).
3. Local farmers have trouble competing with the cost of imported foods. Without a strong local farming business community, food for our future cannot be ensured.

How will Buying Local benefit our Community?

- Buying local produce supports the local economy.
- Non-renewable resources like gasoline are saved, as the food does not travel great distances to reach your plate. Pollution caused by travel is also diminished.
- When you buy local, your food has more of the flavor and nutrients it was meant to have by being fully ripened when picked and delivered to you almost immediately.
- Buying locally grown organic food also helps to build a sustainable community food system. Having a long-term and thriving food production business in the community ensures jobs and adequate food supplies for current and future residents.

Actions you can Take:

- Make a conscious decision to buy local products.
- Support your local Farmers Markets.
- Take a look at the Farm Fresh Guide that is produced each year and get to know your local farms and farmers. (www.bcfarmfresh.com)
- Encourage your friends and family to buy local.
- Find out more about the BC Agricultural Land Reserve system (www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/index.cfm?Group_ID=3404)

Success Stories:

- The Surrey Food Bank Gleaning Project makes produce from local farms and backyards available to the 14,000 clients that access the Surrey Food Bank each month.
- The Farmer's Market in White Rock occurs every year and has been successful at attracting local farmers and residents.

Key Messages:

- Local food is fresher and tastes better because it is not shipped from long distances.
- Local food ensures food for future generations.
- Local food is better for the environment because it reduces the amount of fuel needed to transport food at long distances.
- When residents purchase local foods they are supporting their local farmers and their local economy.

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4) HEALTHY EATING

What is the Problem?

- Dietary factors are associated with 4 of the 10 leading causes of death (Coronary heart disease, cancer, stroke, and type II diabetes).
- In the last decade, calories from fat sources have increased by 34%.
- 54% of British Columbians are consuming less than 5 servings of vegetables and fruits a day.
- Childhood obesity is climbing at an alarming rate.
- While poor nutrition could stem from a lack of knowledge or a lack of motivation by the individual, often times, poor nutrition is due to barriers in the environment. For instance, healthier foods cost more than unhealthy food.

Surrey and White Rock residents are facing these nutritional problems. One way to address this is to increase the availability and access to healthier foods.

How will increasing access to healthy foods benefit our Community?

- Healthy eating habits contribute to increased productivity, more positive employee morale, and daily well-being.
- It will help to make the healthy choices the easier choices in an enabling environment.
- Good nutrition improves academic performance.
- Healthy food choices are associated with a decreased risk of chronic diseases including cancer, stroke, obesity, diabetes, osteoporosis, and hypertension.
- Eating well at a young age can reduce childhood and adult obesity.
- When healthy options are readily available and affordable, everyone has a chance to improve their nutritional health.

Success Stories:

- The Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society Communities Together Cooking Program enables the participants to have access to healthy foods regardless of their income level.
- The Healthy Lifestyles Committee is a partnership between Surrey School District, Directorate of Agencies for School Health BC, Fraser Health Authority, and Surrey Parks and Recreation. Amongst other initiatives that the Committee has started to promote healthy living, they have formed a “Kids who Cook” program designed to encourage healthy eating and cooking skills at schools.
- The Langley School Board has formalized a comprehensive nutrition policy for all schools in the district to follow. This policy promotes the availability of healthy items at schools as well as nutrition education.

Actions you can take:

- Serve only healthy food at meetings.
- Make contracts with vendors that provide healthy food.
- Serve healthy foods at fundraising events and parties.
- Serve healthy foods at sporting events.
- Purchase local foods where possible.

Key Messages:

“Make the healthy choice the easy choice.”

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Surrey Delta Immigrant Services Society: www.sdiss.org

Directorate of Agencies for School Health: www.dashbc.org

Langley School District's Nutrition Policy 5001: <http://www.dashbc.org/resources/sd35.pdf>

ActNowBC: www.actnowbc.gov.bc.ca