



## BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

### Austin Travis County Food Policy Board

#### Recommendation Number: 20211213 4.a.i Supporting Values-Based Procurement

#### **Background:**

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the vulnerable links in our local food system, resulting in food supply chain disruptions that caused economic harm to households, food service workers, small businesses like grocery stores and restaurants, public institutions like schools no longer accessible for school lunches, and the broader food industry across our region. Covid-19 revealed the flaws in a food system built for profit and efficiency at the expense of access and justice. The crisis demonstrated why we need to build a food system that is more transparent, sustainable, humane, and accountable, especially in the era of Climate Change. A strong local and regional economy can pivot quickly to meet changing demands for food. When confronted with supply chain disruptions, our local and regional farms, processing plants, distribution channels, and businesses make our communities resilient.

Institutional food purchasing is an enormous lever for change and a critical tool for equity. The Good Food Purchasing Program is a values-based procurement framework that helps public institutions better understand the source of the food they purchase and provides a methodology to quantify the impact of that food along five core values: nutrition, local economies, valued workforce, environmental sustainability, and animal welfare. This procurement framework, developed by community members and food procurement professionals, is managed by the [Center for Good Food Purchasing](#), and has been successfully adopted by over 60 institutions in 24 major cities across the nation, with over \$1 Billion in annual aggregate purchases. Such Values-Based Procurement is a powerful tool for large scale food systems change that can nonetheless be managed at a local and municipal level. GFPP is robust and has been tested across the nation in multiple cities, adapting to the needs of different institutions.

Since 2016, the City of Austin's Office of Sustainability has led a collaborative effort bringing together a cross-sector coalition of anchor institutions, community-based organizations, academia, philanthropy, nonprofits, and the business community and invested in leveraging the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) as a tool to catalyze transformational food systems change by supporting Austin institutions to participate. This work has been further invested in with the generous support of the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. Unified around a shared vision and set of values, Austin-based institutions involved with the Program have made important gains, but the pandemic has reinforced how much work is left to be done.

Through the launch of the first ever City of Austin’s community-driven food systems planning process, in addition to demonstrating values-based procurement leadership through its convening power, policy adoption, and investments in regional food systems infrastructure, the City of Austin can transform the food system not only with its own purchasing power but also through influencing anchor institutions around regional collaboration. The GFPP framework can serve as an important planning tool in this process to help build, deepen, and activate a unified food system vision, values, and quantifiable targets centered on equity, sustainability, transparency, and accountability. ***The City of Austin can establish itself as a national leader around values-based procurement and transform the food system to become more resilient and better serve the needs of our people and our communities.***

**WHEREAS,**

Local governments across the country, undergirded by community input and support, are drawing on the knowledge gained during the pandemic emergency response to create ambitious, comprehensive, and holistic food plans rooted in equity, sustainability, resiliency, and inclusive economic growth.

**WHEREAS,**

The [City of Austin Resolution No. 20210610-039](#) directs the City Manager to lead the planning and implementation of a just and resilient regional food system, including appropriately

resourcing strategic planning for ending food insecurity, emergency planning and coordination for inevitable disruptions to supply, and values-based procurement for equitable economic and health outcomes and environmental regeneration.

**WHEREAS,**

The Good Food Purchasing Program supports strategic priorities in food plans and cities actively engaged in this program are creating blueprints for multi-year, community-based food plans for advancing a myriad of integrated food policies, programs, partnerships, and investments, which are fundamental to building an equitable and resilient food system.

**WHEREAS,**

The Good Food Purchasing Program has been adopted by local institutions, including the Austin Independent School District, in collaboration and supported by city staff, leading to success bringing more [local and sustainably-produced food](#) into school cafeterias.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board recommends that Travis County and the City of Austin,

1. **Adopt aggregate purchasing targets** that require institutional food purchasing to be coordinated with City Staff, including the City of Austin Food Policy Manager within 5 years. Direct city and Travis County departments to participate by meeting baseline GFPP standards across local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and nutrition, grounded in commitments to racial equity, transparency, and public accountability across anchor institutions, such as school districts, hospitals, universities, and jails to increase

the economic viability of regional High Road, small, BIPOC and sustainable producers. These purchasing targets would be subject to a process of continuous improvement in partnership with GFPP, incentivizing city staff to review and improve sustainability metrics annually.

2. **Include these purchasing targets in the City of Austin food system planning** as specified in City Council Resolution No. 20210610-039.
3. **Collect necessary purchasing data** to identify opportunities and priorities to advance good food purchasing goals.
4. Develop approaches to **streamline the City's and County's food procurement processes** that will support values-based purchasing.
5. **Create an incentive fund** and staff to support; and,
  - a. Dedicate a permanent stream of **government funding for value-chain innovation** among regional suppliers to create shorter supply chains.
  - b. Develop and direct **financial incentives for public institutions** to enable purchasing support for values-aligned suppliers, including BIPOC producers and producers that provide employees fair wages and safe working conditions, high animal welfare standards, and environmentally sustainable production practices.
6. **Bolster and align City of Austin and Travis County staffing** to support this work, including, but not limited to:
  - a. Extend relevant job descriptions to include values-based procurement in roles and responsibilities, or
  - b. Create new positions that focus on food system planning and values-based procurement.

Date of Approval: December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Record of the vote: 7 in favor, none opposed

Attest:



City of Austin, Office of Sustainability, Food Policy Manager/ ATCFPB Staff Liaison