

SHAPING TOMORROW'S TABLE: ENVISIONING THE EVOLUTION OF GFPP IN CHICAGO'S FOOD LANDSCAPE



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CHICAGO FOOD POLICY ACTION COUNCIL

The Chicago Food Policy Action Council (CFPAC), founded in 2002, aims to reform the inherent inequalities in Chicago's food system. These disparities, often rooted in structural racism, include inequitable land access, food business ownership, food security, and political power imbalances. CFPAC's strategy involves building local political power, implementing diverse programs, and fostering networks, with a focus on Black and Brown community partnerships, to radically transform Chicago's food system into one that is equitable and sustainable.

GOOD FOOD PURCHASING POLICY (GFPP)

Building relationships is vital for changing societal attitudes towards food justice, but systemic change is equally essential for transforming the current unethical and environmentally harmful food system. The Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP), first adopted by Los Angeles in 2012 and soon after Chicago in 2017, aims to reshape the food system by promoting community-focused food culture and creating greater racial equity, transparency, and accountability in community meal programs by holding institutions accountable. GFPP encourages major institutions to align their food purchases with five core values: supporting local economies, ensuring environmental sustainability, valuing the workforce, promoting animal welfare, and prioritizing nutrition. These values define "good food," and the standards are reviewed every five years by dedicated food system workers and stakeholders.

Good food, as defined by GFPP, is a human right and involves more than just quality; it encompasses equitable access for all, including low-income and communities of color, aligning with the concept of a "liberatory foodshed." This idea represents a regional food ecosystem free from social and economic oppression. However, the current food system, focused on cost efficiency and mass production, overlooks these values, creating challenges in implementing GFPP. The policy faces hurdles not only with institutional buyers but also with workers and consumers who desire nutritious, affordable, and culturally significant food.

Committing to GFPP means more than just agreeing to the policy; it involves a comprehensive process including purchasing data collection, analysis, action planning, and change-making. A baseline assessment, which includes detailed food spending information, serves as a benchmark for tracking future improvements and progress towards each GFPP standard. This commitment is a significant step towards achieving a "liberatory foodshed," but it requires more than policy agreement for true implementation and impact.

Since its inception in Los Angeles in 2012, the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) has set a benchmark nationwide, prompting cities like Austin, Cincinnati, and New York to explore similar initiatives. Chicago, drawing inspiration from Los Angeles, has fostered a dynamic network of collaborative learning groups. This network encourages the sharing of effective strategies and experiences, not only among different cities but also between local grassroots coalitions, thereby enhancing the program's reach and efficacy (Source: Adam - CFPAC).

THE CURRENT STATE OF GFPP IN CHICAGO

The Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) in Chicago has made significant progress since its adoption. This program, aimed at transforming the way city agencies and departments purchase food, promote health and well-being for Chicagoans and creates a sustainable, socially responsible food system. Key developments include:

- **Adoption by Key Entities:** The Chicago Public Schools' adopted the Wellness Policy that committed to GFPP in June 2017, following the City of Chicago passing a resolution to adopt GFPP in October 2017. In May 2018, both Cook County and the Cook County Board of Commissioners also embraced the program. Currently, the City of Chicago is allocating over \$80 million to improve the food system, positively impacting approximately 380,000 individuals participating in community meal programs (Adam - CFPAC Dashboards).
- **Supply Chain Collaboration:** CFPAC partners with organizations committed to developing supply chains that align with the GFPP principles. This collaboration enables growers to engage actively in the evolving institutional commitment towards responsible and ethical food purchasing.
 - Example: Advocates for Urban Agriculture (AUA), a local nonprofit that works in partnership with CFPAC, actively engages in community outreach through urban agriculture and food business development. AUA offers various resources and programs to enhance urban farming, such as a soil health program providing up to \$1,200 for soil improvement in urban settings. Their Good Practices for Growing in Chicago program guides urban growers in business and agricultural best practices, supplemented with training and mentorship. AUA aims to make professional development accessible for growers of all experience levels, enhancing the viability and safety of urban farm operations.
- **Local Economic and Health Benefits:** The 2022 CFPAC report highlights that the integration of the GFPP into the public meals programs of the City of Chicago and Cook County led to an impressive expenditure of approximately \$118 million on food purchases, aimed at serving community meal participants. This substantial investment goes beyond nourishing the community; it bolsters the local economy by supporting area growers and suppliers. Additionally, it reflects the dedication of the Public Health Department, a key player in this ecosystem, in promoting healthier food choices and enhancing the overall public health.
- **Impact**
 - New Successes
 - The Good Food Purchasing Program has successfully enrolled six new organizations across the country, most notably including Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, thereby broadening its influence in the movement for sustainable food in healthcare systems.
 - In 2023, (GFPP) has made significant advancements in expanding its reach across Chicago. This includes GFPP enrolled partners who bring in new local vendors like Common Market, which has made a substantial investment in local economies across the nation, contributing \$13 million through food purchases.
 - Chicago has forged new partnerships with organizations such as the HEAL Food Alliance and the Food Chain Workers Alliance. These alliances are instrumental in leveraging public procurement policies to advocate for living wages for frontline workers, support infrastructure development for BIPOC producers, and promote better environmental protections. These collaborations exemplify the GFPP's commitment to transforming the food system through policy advocacy and organizing efforts that align with their core values of health, equity, and environmental sustainability.
 - Lastly, Beyond Hunger, an emergency food site located west of Chicago, signed onto the Good Food Purchasing Pledge, a program that complements the Good Food Purchasing Program by offering sites who purchase less than \$1 million worth of food and opportunity to implement GFPP goals within each category value. (new)

- Ongoing Programs and Projects
 - Cook County Department of Public Health continues to coordinate and organize Good Food Task Force meetings that ensure transparency of information by keeping track of contract cycles, collect purchasing data from suppliers, and develop action plans.
 - CPAC's GFPI Community Fund, in partnership with Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative (GFPI) Community Fund aims to increase GFPP by aligning produce and food products in the Metro Chicago region through financially supporting systematically marginalized, local farms and food businesses striving to meet GFPP standards. The grant will award 5-10 applicants with unrestricted grants ranging from \$40,000 to \$80,000. Grant recipients will also receive tailored, technical assistance during the grant period duration.
 - CFPAC is working to form a Pathways Guide (by early March) - an instruction manual on how hospitals can have their own local procurement policies - like the Guide for Growers.
- Challenges
 - Sustained funding for the annual GFPP base-line assessment for each institution and organization, which costs \$10,000-15,000 per assessment. CFPAC, at times, offers support by covering half of the baseline assessment cost. One of the barriers is that institutions and organizations are interested in the training but not paying for the assessment.
 - Outsourcing food services to third-party management companies provide challenges in conducting GFPP assessments and reaching GFPP goals.
 - Reaching capacity in supporting the GFPP implementation at these private institutions is becoming increasingly difficult because of limited institutional and staff capacity.
 - Ex: A takeaway from our first cohort in our Good Food Healthcare Program was that healthcare staff of the 7 participating organizations were overextending themselves to be able to attend the 8 webinars over the 1 year commitment. One approach that proved successful used by Rush University Medical Center, was to have the proper number of staff and resources to share the responsibility in taking part in webinars, and implementation.
 - Local food growers and producers need foundational support, such as, plowing fields for land and water access and support navigating costly and complicated certification processes, for their operations before they can begin to explore institutional market development.
 - Corporations, driven primarily by the goal of increasing shareholder value, are naturally inclined to pursue strategies that maximize profits and consolidate their control over the industry. One such strategy involves limiting the sharing of supplier information, making collaborations more challenging due to their stringent certification requirements and a keen interest in the internal workings of partner companies and agencies.

Moreover, in an effort to navigate through stricter regulatory landscapes, corporations may adopt Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. However, these CSR efforts may not sufficiently offset the more impactful measures taken by corporations. In this context, the need for procurement transparency becomes crucial, serving as a critical element in balancing corporate strategies with broader ethical and regulatory standards.

ANTICIPATED TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Expansion of Policy Scope

- Broader Institutional Adoption: Anticipate broader adoption of GFPP by additional public institutions and private entities.
 - Metro Chicago GFPP Cohort for Higher Education: This cohort is launching in the beginning of 2024 with 8 organizations involving community, private, and public colleges. The desired outcome is to have 1 or 2 organizations implement GFPP by the end of the program timeline.

- Good Food in Healthcare Cohort: From Spring 2021 to Fall 2022, a collection of 7 healthcare organizations, including Rush University Medical Center, participated in learning about GFPP and were provided technical assistance in the program's potential implementation in healthcare systems because of the importance and correlation between diet and health.

The successful implementation of GFPP in Chicago's healthcare systems could be transformative. It would not only change how the GFPP operates within these organizations but also set a precedent for other public and private entities considering similar initiatives. The key challenge lies not in the feasibility of implementing GFPP in such settings, but rather in demonstrating its effectiveness and positive community impact to encourage broader adoption.

Focus on Community and Education

- Educational Programs: Increased investment in educational initiatives to raise awareness about sustainable and healthy food choices.
 - Engagement with Public Schools: The Chicago Public Schools system, one of the largest in the nation, adopted GFPP in June 2017. This adoption affects a significant portion of the city's food procurement, impacting over 380,000 students and aims to redirect nearly \$80 million annually in public procurement dollars. The integration of GFPP into schools is a crucial step in educating the younger generation about sustainable and healthy food choices. Chicago is only a handful of cities that have implemented GFPP into their school systems, but could it go further?
 - Encouraging students to learn about GFPP
 - Educational programs that actively teach students and youth in cities about GFPP have yet to be firmly established. There are ways of simplifying the process and integrating GFPP not only through procurement in school systems, but through learning and education.
 - Incorporate GFPP Topics in School Curriculum: Integrate GFPP principles into subjects like science, health, and social studies to provide a structured learning environment. This could be a lesson that is taught for one day with a hands-on activity that shows the importance to students.
 - Field Day: Many schools partner with local organizations to show community engagement to students. The schools could begin to partner with organizations involved in sustainable food practices for guest lectures or field trips, providing real-world insights.

There is a real possibility of integrating GFPP learning into schools for students to access knowledge they otherwise won't be introduced to. For example, having cities that already have partnerships with their school systems to agree to pilot learning programs for their schools. Moreover, leveraging social media as a platform to disseminate information and engage students could serve as an effective strategy to enhance the initiative's reach and impact.

Enhanced Emphasis Best Practices in Food and Agriculture

- Foster and Strengthen: Shifting cities to implement sustainable systems necessitates funding for various key aspects: developing and integrating new procurement policies, training staff to adhere to these policies, establishing and maintaining relationships with compliant suppliers, and ensuring continuous monitoring and evaluation of the program's impact. Furthermore, additional resources may be needed for community outreach and education to build understanding and support for the program. The capital investment, while substantial, is an essential step towards realizing the long-term benefits of a more sustainable and ethical food system, which includes improved public health, stronger local economies, and a reduced environmental impact.
 - More Capital Needed: Many local organizations and institutions in Chicago want to implement GFPP, but are running into a similar problem - funding. As mentioned previously, about \$15,000 are needed to just complete a baseline assessment. This is capital many organizations cannot afford to invest out of their budgets. Raising awareness on sponsorship for these assessments would encourage more organizations and partnerships in implementing GFPP.
- Support for Urban Agriculture and Local Food Businesses: On March 17th, 2023, the City of Chicago's Community Growers Program launched, aimed to enhance urban agriculture and increase food equity in communities with limited food access. This \$2M initiative, developed in partnership with the City of Chicago Food Equity Council, which seeks to empower local growers by establishing urban agriculture sites, thus providing residents with more fresh produce options and creating wealth-building opportunities for growers.

- Additional new funding opportunities and equitable supply chain support include:
 - Early Stage Food Incubator Program: The Early-Stage Food Business Incubator Program will allocate funding to innovative food incubators, focusing on communities facing significant food insecurity and developing food corridors. The program will offer 4-6 organizations awards between \$300,000 to \$400,000 for a year, to support diverse initiatives like mentorship, kitchen space, and retail pop-ups. Priority will be given to proposals enhancing food hubs and corridors, and tackling barriers to accessing nutritious, culturally relevant food.
 - Chicago Good Food Fund: The Good Food Fund will support food entrepreneurs in areas with limited food access, focusing on expanding and enhancing the food industry through a community and equity-based approach, developed in collaboration with the Food Equity Council. The City will award a \$5 million fund to one organization, which will distribute sub-grants across the food ecosystem in under-served communities, while \$2 million will be allocated for the fund's administration and for providing specialized food industry coaching for two years. The selected agency will also form a governance board for fund oversight and community outreach, and will be encouraged to grow the fund with the City's support to ensure its sustainability.

Programs such as the Early Stage Food incubator program and Good Food Fund are programs that will surely help provide the capital many local organizations need in supporting their food businesses or urban agricultural ventures, but is this enough to sustain the growing number of organizations interested in the GFPP initiative? The effectiveness of the initiative could be significantly enhanced by raising awareness through collaborations with existing systems, such as leveraging the network and resources of Chicago Public Schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The recommendations I've included below reflect changes I've observed or learned about in the past few months. While I'm not an expert in this field, I am privileged to have had the opportunity to expand my knowledge about GFPP. Additionally, should Chicago's CFPAC host its first annual gala, I would be delighted to accept an invitation - read below for more information.

- Enhancing GFPP Visibility: A lack of awareness about the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) is a significant issue among institutions, local entities, and the public. To address this, it is recommended to harness social media for creating engaging content tailored for various groups such as students, corporations, agencies, and local businesses.
- Cost Considerations for Initiation: Questions arise regarding the \$15,000 cost for baseline assessments and whether alternative methods exist for different organizations and institutions. Exploring other initiation strategies that don't require substantial funding from organizations like CFPAC is crucial. Introducing cost-share funding for baseline assessments could mitigate the financial burden.
- Sustaining Long-Term Commitment: The HealthCare cohort previously mentioned faced challenges in maintaining minimal participation in a monthly webinar series (totaling 8 sessions over a year) focused on GFPP implementation. While other priorities are understandable, fulfilling such commitments requires dedicated staff allocation. The absence of designated personnel and resources significantly complicated the program's facilitation for local organizations. Prior to conducting a baseline assessment, it's necessary to evaluate the commitment capacity of organizations or institutions that are interested in participating.
- Strategic Capacity Planning: Institutions should assess their capacity to integrate GFPP internally before extending it to a broader system or agency. This step is essential for effective GFPP implementation.
- Regulatory Compliance and Repercussions: Institutions need mechanisms to enforce GFPP standards and address non-compliance among suppliers. This could involve policy changes to facilitate values-based procurement, redefining responsible bidding, imposing escalating penalties, and forming community advisory councils for support.
- Enhancing Transparency in the Supply Chain: It's important for institutional meal program administrators to publicize supply chain data, such as food contract details, supplier assessments, and labor violations. This transparency, facilitated by tools like CFPAC's Kumu map, encourages communication and connection between community members and organization. Further technological enhancements to these tools are needed for better user experience and visual options.
- Collaboration Among GFPP Cities: Cities with GFPP initiatives should collaborate more frequently, sharing ideas and forming connections. An annual meeting for cities to discuss GFPP-related ideas, goals, challenges, and initiatives is suggested to foster a more unified and effective approach. It is better to work together than apart on such an important and taxing issue.

Message From Avyan to Readers: In my role as an Emerson Fellow at CFPAC over the past five months, I've been deeply inspired by the remarkable dedication and enthusiasm I've witnessed in advancing Good Food Purchasing across Chicago. This unwavering commitment to transforming systems for the benefit of community members has reinforced my belief that our individual strengths are indeed a reflection of our community's support and unity. It's a powerful reminder that we flourish most when we come together to uplift and assist one another.

RECOGNITION AND TRIBUTUES

- I want to recognize The Congressional Hunger center - Tony Jackson, the entire Chicago Food Policy Action Council team, Marlie Wilson, Mabel Shui , Adam Peterson, and Alex Rodriguez.
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SOURCES CITED, REFERENCES, AND RESOURCES

This comprehensive report incorporates all sources that have contributed information regarding CFPAC and GFPP. To access additional information and resources, please click on the relevant links below.

[CFPAC - GFPI Community Fund](#)

[CFPAC's Procurement Process](#)

[CFPAC's Guide for Growers](#)

[CFPAC - Metro Chicago Institutions Adopting Good Food Standards](#)

[City of Chicago Early-Stage Food Incubator](#)

[City of Chicago Chicago Good Food Fund](#)

[Good Food Purchasing Program Implementation in Chicago and Cook County](#)

[Good Food Purchasing Program - 2012-2019 Impact Report](#)

[Center for Good Food Purchasing General Website](#)

[Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative 2022 Annual Report](#)

[Food Chain Workers Alliance and Heal Food Alliance - Procuring Food Justice Report](#)

[The Common Market 2022 Report](#)

[Center for Good Food Purchasing 2023 Overview](#)

[Cook County Good Food Purchasing Program 2020 and 2021 Update Issue Brief](#)

[Heal Food Alliance - Good Food Communities](#)

[Advocates for Urban Agriculture - Good Practices Program](#)

[Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Coastal Management Program: Cultivating Productive Landscapes](#)

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