# Developing Healthy Public Food Procurement Polices

## Tools for the Assessment of the Public Food Procurement and Policy Landscape

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## INTRODUCTION

# Tools for the Assessment of the Public Food Procurement and Policy Landscape

A comprehensive assessment of the existing food procurement landscape is crucial to the development, implementation, and evaluation of a healthy public food procurement policy that is relevant to the specific context. Resolve to Save Lives has developed example surveys for capturing key aspects of the food procurement and policy landscape. These surveys should be adapted to each local context. Example surveys in this series include:

* **Survey 1:** Overview of Government Institutions’ Food Procurement Processes
* **Survey 2:** Key Informant Interview Tool
* **Survey 3:** Detailed Assessment of the Food Environment in Government Settings

Survey #1 can be used to identify the government institutions that purchase, serve, and/or sell food. Then, for institutions that do purchase, serve, and/or sell food, Survey #2 and #3 can be used for a more detailed follow-up assessment of the food environment and to better understand the food procurement process.

### Glossary of terms used in these example surveys

**Healthy public food procurement policy:** A policy adopted by government ensuring that food the government purchases or serves/sells in government settings align with nutrition standards that promotes a healthy diet and is consistent with recommendations in national or regional dietary guidelines.

**Nutrition standards:** Evidence-based criteria that specify the required nutritional components of foods allowed to be purchased by the government or served/sold in a government setting. These may include nutrient or food-based criteria, e.g., nutrient criteria for purchased ingredients/products, nutrient criteria for meals and snacks as served, food category limitations/prohibitions, required meal or snack components, portion size limits, and criteria for healthier cooking/preparation methods.

**Institution:** A government organization (in some countries referred to as a Ministry, Department, or Agency) that is responsible for the oversight and management of a specific sector of public administration.

**Setting:**A building or place, which may include the property around the building that is owned or controlled by the government; for example, the building and campus of hospitals and schools, senior centers, and childcare centers.

**Venue:** A place that serves or sells food such as cafeterias/canteens, cafes and restaurants, stores/kiosks/tuck shops, vending machines, and concession stands, and other retail outlets.

**Suppliers:** Actors/companies who sell bulk ingredients, products, and pre-packaged food, to agencies and other actors serving or selling food.

**Vendors:** Actors who sell food. These can be formal (contracted) or informal (non-contracted) parties.

**Caterers:** Actors who are contracted to prepare (on or offsite); in some cases, caterers serve food on government property.

## 

## *EXAMPLE SURVEY 1*

# *Overview of Government Institutions’ Food Procurement Processes*

### *Purpose*

*This survey can be used to identify government institutions (e.g., Ministry of Health, Department of Education) that purchase, serve and/or sell food directly or through publicly funded settings (e.g., schools, hospitals, government workplaces, etc.), and understand how these services are managed.*

*This survey is designed to be an example tool that can be adapted to determine whether government institutions do or do not purchase, serve and/or sell food. Institutions that do purchase, serve and/or sell food can further utilize ‘****Survey 2: Key Informant Interview Tool’*** *and* ***‘Survey 3: Detailed Assessment of the Food Environment in Government Settings’*** *for a more detailed follow-up assessment of the food environment and to better understand the food procurement process. Information obtained in this initial assessment will help guide the development of the scope and application of the healthy food procurement policy.*

### *Participants*

*This survey is intended to be conducted with senior leadership at each government institution.*

### *Methods*

*This survey can be conducted via email or can be done as an interview in person or on the phone.*

## 

## EXAMPLE SURVEY 1

# Overview of Government Institutions’ Food Procurement Processes

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of institution: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Title of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact information (email and phone number) for respondent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Please identify where your institution purchases, serves and/or sells food.** Below is a list of settings, venues, programs, and events that typically provide some type of food service. Please consider the following options and check all that apply.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Settings | Food service venues |
| ☐ Daycares or child care facilities  ☐ Schools  ☐ Universities  ☐ Hospitals  ☐ Long-term and residential aged care facilities  ☐ Government workplaces  ☐ Public parks, community centers, sport and recreation facilities  ☐ Senior centers  ☐ Homeless shelters  ☐ Food pantries  ☐ Military bases  ☐ Prisons and juvenile detention facilities  ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  ☐ None of the above | ☐ Cafeterias/ canteens  ☐ Restaurants and cafes  ☐ Snack shops/ food kiosks/ tuck shops  ☐ Mobile vendors  ☐ Vending machines |
| Programs |
| ☐ School meal programs  ☐ After school/ summer programs  ☐ Social services/ social support programs  ☐ Supplemental feeding programs |
| Events, meetings |
| ☐ Sport events held in public settings  ☐ Government sponsored meetings, events and conferences  ☐ Parties/ receptions |

*If you have determined that your institution has no settings, programs or events that purchase or serve food, please stop here and return the survey. If you have determined that your institution does purchase or provide food, directly or through indirect agreements/contracts, please continue.*

1. **How many settings does the institution serve food at?** (E.g., 15 hospitals, 30 schools, 5 military bases, 2 community centers, 5 workplace cafeterias, etc.)
2. **What types of populations does the institution serve?** Please check all that apply.

* Infants, babies (age 0-24 months)
* Young children
* School-age children
* Adults
* Special needs/ disabled
* Seniors
* Employees
* Institutionalized populations
* Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **How are food services managed across the institution?** For example, does the institution coordinate all food purchasing and menus across all settings? Or does each setting coordinate their own food purchasing and menus? Please consider the following options and check all that apply.

* Government institution directly manages all food purchasing.
* Government institution directly manages all food preparation and service.
* Government institution directly manages all food sales in cafeterias, kiosks, and/or other retail outlets, including the purchasing of food and/or preparation.
* Each individual setting directly manages all food purchasing.
* Each individual setting directly manages all food preparation and service.
* Each individual setting directly manages all food sales in cafeterias, kiosks, and/or other retail outlets, including the purchasing of food and/or preparation.
* External caterers/companies are contracted to prepare and serve food onsite at each setting/facility.
* External caterers/companies prepare food offsite and food service is managed onsite by the institution.
* Private, external vendors are contracted to operate restaurants, cafes, food kiosks, vending machines and other retail food outlets.

☐ Informal, non-contracted vendors and hawkers sell food on government property.

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Do any local, regional, or national nutrition standards, dietary guidelines, or other food-related policies apply to food purchased or served by the institution?** (E.g., nutrition standards for school meals or policies promoting local agriculture.)
   1. Are these mandatory? If voluntary, how common is implementation?
2. **Identify which government bodies** have the authority to set requirements regarding public food purchase, service and sale, and what are the processes for policy development and enforcement.
3. **Please use this space to provide any additional comments** or issues regarding food purchased and/or served by your institution.

## *EXAMPLE SURVEY 2*

# *Key Informant Interview Tool*

### *Purpose*

*This survey is an adaptable tool that can be used to gain a more detailed understanding of each institution’s current food procurement practices, including where, how, and by whom food is purchased, prepared, served, and sold, and what influences these processes. It also explores the relevant food policy environment in more detail to understand what nutrition policies, guidelines, and priorities exist that will impact the policy development process. Finally, it looks at the attitudes and buy-in among key stakeholder groups and any potential challenges of making changes to this environment.*

*The interview format utilizes probes to gain a deeper understanding of each setting’s unique situation and needs and allows the opportunity for follow-up questions that can be missed in filling out a survey. The interview process also can be a first step in establishing a longer-term relationship with a key contact that will be fruitful throughout the policy cycle.*

### *Participants*

*This interview is intended for an institution contact that has knowledge of the institution’s current food procurement practices, including a firm understanding of how foods are purchased, served and/or sold across the institution.*

### *Methods*

*This survey should be conducted as an interview, either in person or on the phone.*

## EXAMPLE SURVEY 2

# Key Informant Interview Tool

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of institution: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Title of respondent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact information (email and phone number) for respondent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Please tell me about your role/position** in your institution/setting and how it relates to your institution’s purchase and/or service of food?
2. **How long have you been working in this institution and in this role/position?** If a brief amount of time at this institution, could probe previous work experience.
3. **Please describe the type of programs, venues, events, meetings, etc.** that your institution oversees or contracts with that are involved with food purchasing, service, or sales.

**Probe:** For programs, meetings, and events, ask about the frequency of food purchase and/or service for each answer. For example, are meetings held weekly and is food provided at each meeting? Does the after-school program provide snacks year-round? Etc.

1. **Please describe how food service is managed across your institution/setting.** For example, does the institution coordinate all food purchasing and menus across all settings/venues in the institution? Or does each setting coordinate their own food purchasing and menus?
2. **How familiar are you with the suppliers, vendors, and/or caterers that your institution works with?**

**Probe:**

* 1. How long have you been working with these suppliers? Do you have contracts with these suppliers? If yes, how long are the terms of the contracts usually? Is there a bidding process? Is there a central institution that handles these contracts?
  2. What are your considerations for choosing these suppliers? (e.g., quality, price, variety, nutritional value, location, subsidy, familiarity, etc.)
  3. How often do you consider changing suppliers? Do you feel like you have many or few suppliers, vendors, caterers to choose from? Please elaborate.
  4. Do you think your suppliers (or do you feel like you have access to other suppliers) that have healthy options available? For example, whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, low sodium options, trans fat free oils/fats.

1. **Are there any local, regional, or national nutrition standards, dietary guidelines, or other food-related policies that your institution/office follows for the food it purchases, serves, or sells?** List all guidelines and/or policies mentioned and probe, if necessary, on examples of specific nutrition standards or food specifications. If unfamiliar with the policies, ask for copies to be shared with you.

**Additional probes:**

1. Are they mandatory or voluntary?
2. Is the institution in compliance with the policies?
3. Is implementation monitored in any way?
4. If applicable, what are some changes you have made, or opportunities identified, to change food to comply with healthy guidelines. (E.g., changed suppliers or caterers, purchased different products, changed menus, discontinued items, purchased more fresh fruits/vegetables, etc.)
5. **What are the considerations or priorities when making decisions about the food your institution/setting purchases, serves, and/or sells?**   
     
   **Probes** might include: food quality, affordability/cost, variety, nutritional value, availability, consumer acceptance, etc.
6. Of these, what are the top three considerations you consider to be the most important and why? *(Try to list in order of importance (based on actual practice) and collect examples. If nutritional value/health is not mentioned, probe on why)*
7. **How important is adopting and implementing a healthy food procurement policy to you and other key stakeholders in your institution?**   
     
   **Probes** could include overall improved health of population, increased access to clean water, decreased access to sugary beverages, more whole grains, fruits and or/vegetables, less reliance on processed food, etc.
8. **Do you anticipate or can you expand on any potential barriers or challenges that could be expected when implementing a healthy food procurement policy? How would you address these?**   
     
   **Probe:**
9. **Financial:** cost of goods, change in profit/revenue
10. **Physical:** availability of compliant foods, location of competing retail outlets nearby
11. **Social:** stakeholder attitudes, motivation, and knowledge about healthy food, buy in from key stakeholders
12. **Infrastructure:** storing, preparing, selling foods

1. **What is your perception of the importance of healthy eating to your population?**

**Probe:**

1. Do you think the population is educated on the importance of a healthy diet and why? If no, probe their thoughts for potential education opportunities for the future.
2. How do you anticipate the population reacting to changes to menus, products, or other new healthy nutrition standards?
3. **What do you think is key to implementing a successful, sustainable healthy public food procurement policy?   
     
   Probe** specifically in the areas of food purchasing, preparation, service, and/or sales. Can also probe for specific suggestions like staff, financial resources, vendors/suppliers, political will if needed.
4. **What kind of technical assistance or support** do you think staff involved in food purchasing, preparation, service, or sale will need to implement a healthy food procurement policy?
5. **Probe for any additional comments, suggestions, questions here.**

## 

## *EXAMPLE* *SURVEY 3*

# *Detailed Assessment of the Food Environment in Government Settings*

### *Purpose*

*This document is designed to be an example tool that can be adapted to assess in detail how foods are purchased, served and/or sold in different settings within each institution. It contains multiple tabs that allow for tailored assessments of different types of food programs or venues that a setting may have, including food served, cafeterias/canteens, kiosks/tuck shop, mobile vending, vending machines and meetings/events.*

### 

### *Participants*

*This survey is intended to be conducted with an institution contact at each setting that has knowledge of the setting’s current food procurement practices, including a firm understanding of how foods are purchased, served and/or sold across all possible venues within the setting.*

### 

### *Methods*

*This survey can be completed by all settings (or a selected sample of settings) within each institution and should assess all types of food programs and venues within the settings. For example, each school or hospital (or a sample of each) within a system would receive a survey to fill out and complete per their food environment. A hospital, for example, in addition to providing patient meals, may also have a cafeteria that serves employees and visitors, a gift shop that sells snacks, and multiple vending machines. The hospital informant would use this tool to fill out the surveys in the tabs marked:* ***"Food Served", "Cafeterias-Canteens", "Kiosk/Tuck shop"*** *for the gift shop, and also the* ***"Vending Machines."***

*The first tab* ***"Setting Overview”*** *provides a helpful structure for thinking through all of the different types of venues and programs (and how many) might be at each setting. Each subsequent tab is a survey with questions designed for each different type of food program or venue.*

***A note on color coding used:*** *yellow is used to indicate food served (at no or reduced cost), green indicates retail food locations where food is for sale, and blue indicates meetings or events where food is served.*

### [Download the form for Survey 3 here](https://vital.ent.box.com/s/i0fswgnoplnzsy0nes8y32ypeuasauwc)