

# Healthy Procurement

---

**“We are working toward creating a city where the healthy choice is the easy choice. This is another step in the right direction.”**

*-Mayor Mitch Landrieu, New Orleans, following the city’s passage of a [healthy procurement policy](#).*



## WHAT ARE HEALTHY PROCUREMENT POLICIES?

Cities can adopt healthy purchasing or procurement policies so that foods served or sold on city property meet basic nutrition standards. While city policymakers may set policy requiring healthy food purchasing, the actual standards are generally determined by those with procurement and health expertise, such as food policy task forces or health departments.

Often times, local governments are one of if not **the** largest employers and food purchasers in a community. By adopting healthy procurement policies, cities can use their purchasing power to provide healthier food to community members and make a positive impact on community health.

## HOW DO HEALTHY PROCUREMENT POLICIES IMPROVE THE LIVES OF BIG CITY RESIDENTS?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than one-third (36.5%) of U.S. adults are obese, and two-thirds are overweight. Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer, some of the leading causes of [preventable death](#).

The estimated annual medical cost of obesity in the U.S. was \$147 billion in 2008 U.S. dollars; the annual medical costs for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher than those of [normal weight](#).

Every year, cities with the highest obesity rates [pay an estimated \\$50 million](#) in direct costs associated with obesity and related chronic conditions. Even cities with comparatively low obesity rates suffer from millions of dollars in preventable health care costs.

What people eat is [heavily influenced](#) by the quality, variety, and cost of food and beverages served and sold in stores, restaurants, workplaces, schools, and other community institutions.

Recognizing the role procurement can play in creating healthy choices, the National Research Council recommend “ensuring that local government agencies that operate cafeterias and vending options have strong nutrition standards in place wherever foods and beverages are [sold or available](#).” Healthy procurement policies can affect significant numbers of city residents. For example, New York City’s procurement policy applies to approximately 250 million meals and snacks served per year at sites around the city which include day care centers, correctional facilities, and senior centers.

The Automatic Merchandising State of the Industry report, put out by the National Automated Merchandizers Association (NAMA), stated that there is an increasing demand for healthy vending, from both consumers and operators. “Vendors reported that healthy food attributed as much as a [25 percent upswing](#) in sales.”

---

## HOW WELL DOES HEALTHY PROCUREMENT WORK?

A systematic review of the research determined that healthy procurement policies can be an effective way to increase healthy food availability and decrease unhealthy food purchasing.

Setting nutrition standards can also be popular with the public and positively affect revenue. In community case study published in the [Journal of Preventing Chronic Disease](#) about Chicago's healthy vending program in city parks, 100% of city staff and nearly nine in ten park visitors approved of the changes. Over the 15 months of the study, average per machine sales increased from \$84 to \$371.

## ISSUES FOR FUTURE POLICY IMPROVEMENT

Encouraging an entire city to eat more fruits and vegetables and fewer unhealthy foods requires a comprehensive approach. In combination with health education and affordable pricing, procurement policies can be a powerful tool in helping community members improve their health. These policies can be applied across a broad spectrum. For example, some cities have set nutrition standards for vending machines only, while other localities have expanded the policy to cover city meetings, cafeterias, schools, community hospitals, jails, detention centers, and senior and child care facilities. Procurement policies are often a good place to start talking to city leaders about nutrition, and can be used as a launching pad for additional discussions about the health of city residents.

## RESOURCES FOR CITIES ON IMPLEMENTING HEALTHY PROCUREMENT POLICIES

Want to learn more about nutrition standards and healthy procurement policies? Please check out the following resources:

[CDC: Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention](#)

[CDC: Healthy Food Service Guidelines](#)

[The National Academy of Medicine: Actions for Healthy Eating and Increasing Physical Activity](#)

[Change Lab Solutions: Using Government's Purchasing Power to Increase Access to Healthy Food](#)

[AHA - Toolkit](#)

[Lets Move Cities, Counties and Towns – Model Food Service Guidelines](#)

[Center for Science in the Public Interest: Healthier Public Places](#)