# Buying with Purpose:

## Seattle's Guide to Food Purchasing

Seattle

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# INTRODUCTION

The way most institutions currently buy food makes it hard to support a local, fair, and sustainable food system. An alternative to current procurement practices is values-based food purchasing (VBFP). **Values-based food purchasing is buying food in ways that reflect social, environmental, health, and economic values — not just cost or convenience.** **It considers where food comes from, how it was produced, who was involved, and who benefits from food purchases.** Buying food from values-aligned producers and suppliers is a powerful way to invest public dollars in building more equitable and resilient food systems.

Salaam Family Farm from the International Rescue Committee (IRC) New Roots Program in Kent, WA, a current Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program vendor, harvests produce for a wholesale order.
*Photo credit: King County*


Staff and volunteers restock canned goods at University District Food Bank.

The City of Seattle's (the City's) updated Food Action Plan identified VBFP as a top priority, based on community engagement and food system analyses alongside trends and opportunities within existing food programs. The City contracts with dozens of neighborhood food banks and community meal providers to distribute food, and the City's Fresh Bucks benefit program partners with farmers markets and retailers to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables for low-income households. Over $4 million in local public dollars are spent on food each year through City food programs, increasing food access and food security for tens of thousands of low-income Seattle residents from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The City also partners with external institutions, such as Seattle Public Schools, to support efforts to buy more local, fresh, and culturally diverse foods for school meals and snack programs. Many of these efforts focus on equitable purchasing from historically underrepresented food and farming businesses, including women and/or minority-owned enterprises (WMBE), small-scale producers, tribal enterprises, and other Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned entities.

Before the release of the updated Food Action Plan in 2024, multiple City food programs were already implementing or exploring VBFP through current partnerships, contracts, and grants. Discussions with program staff revealed the opportunity to develop shared definitions, goals, and implementation strategies to deepen and accelerate these efforts. Other institutions and regional governments have expressed an interest in this project, including King County, which is working to update its Local Food Initiative for release in 2025.

Values-based food purchasing is not a new concept. Many institutions and cities across the country have adopted food purchasing standards based on leading national programs. Given the City of Seattle's food purchasing landscape and Food Action Plan priorities, City staff and partners decided to develop a VBFP Framework tailored to our specific needs and food programs.

**This report is a summary of Seattle's VBFP Framework development project. It includes:**

- A description of the **Co-Design Process** to develop the framework, including summaries of the workshops and focus groups with community stakeholders to discuss challenges and opportunities with VBFP.

- Six **Core Values** with definitions to guide City food purchases and partnerships.

- **Recommended Implementation Strategies** for the City and other institutional partners, developed by community leaders, City food program collaborators, values-aligned producers, and City staff.

Additionally, some examples of values-based food purchasing initiatives in other major cities are summarized in **Companion Materials**. These models provided a foundation that informed this VBFP Framework.

This VBFP Framework is intended to guide program design, procurement, contracting, and other food purchasing decisions made by City of Seattle food programs and partners. It also provides strategies for future work with partners, institutional food services and community organizations to expand VBFP.

Beatrice Shimirimana from Umoja N'inguvu Farm in Kent, WA shows off freshly harvested cranberry beans.
*Photo credit: Rainier Beach Action Coalition*

## KEY TERMS

Below are some definitions for key terms used throughout this report:

**Collaborator.** A contractor, non-profit organization, agency, food supplier, vendor, food business, or other stakeholder in the food supply chain that is part of delivering City or other regional food programs. These entities have various key roles in supporting VBFP.

**Food businesses.** A farmer, fisher, grower, manufacturer, processor, distributor, meal provider, restaurant, or other commercial food provider.

**Food.** Depending on the program and reference, this can include whole or processed foods, snacks, meal ingredients, or fully prepared meals.

**Procurement.** The process of scoping, soliciting, and awarding contracts or purchases to source food or meals required by one or more programs.

**Supplier.** An entity that grows, produces, or prepares food. This can include farms, manufacturers, processors, restaurants, or caterers. A supplier may also be the vendor, for example when a farm sells its own produce directly to a food program collaborator.

**Supply chain.** The network of producers, processors, and distributors that buy and sell raw ingredients to create products to sell to customers and consumers.

**Value chain.** A group of food suppliers and partners who work together to deliver high-quality products that meet buyers' needs while ensuring everyone across the supply chain benefits. Value chains are more transparent than conventional supply chains, and often offer food that matches the buyer's values, such as protecting the environment, supporting equity, or improving health.

**Values-Based Food Purchasing (VBFP).** Using and prioritizing certain values in addition to price to make food purchasing and contracting decisions. The result is that the food purchases reflect a set of social, environmental, health, and economic values — not just cost or convenience.

**Vendor.** The entity that sells food items to the City directly or to a food program collaborator, such as a food distributor, aggregator, or retailer.

## Existing VBFP Initiatives and Local Efforts

Cities and institutions throughout the U.S. have adopted values-based food purchasing (VBFP) policies and programs like the Good Food Purchasing Program, Healthcare Without Harm, Real Food Challenge, Cool Food Pledge, and Menus of Change. The Center for Good Food Purchasing's Good Food Purchasing Program is a leading national model for public food service institutions. The program provides purchasing standards, criteria, reporting, and verification to help institutions align their food procurement practices with five core values: local and community-based economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and community health and nutrition, and the principles of equity, accountability, and transparency.

See **Companion Material A** for summaries of VBFP initiatives in other cities that were reviewed in developing this report. Examples are included from Los Angeles, New Haven, Austin, New York City, San Diego, Denver, and Chicago.

Previous projects have worked to increase local food purchasing by institutions in the Seattle area. Those include the 2016 "Farm to Institution Strategies" research and report from Cascade Harvest Coalition and Slow Money NW; the 2018-2020 Local Institutional Food Team convened by the King Conservation District; and ongoing Harvest Against Hunger farm-to-community initiatives. These projects also showed the potential for working with different partners to create local food procurement policies.

In Seattle and King County, major institutions have demonstrated strong interest in buying more food and meals that align with community values, and many are already making progress. Even without formal policies in place, local institutions are embracing values-based purchasing of foods that support local economies, environmental sustainability, health and nutrition, cultural relevance, and racial equity.

The City of Seattle alone invests millions of dollars each year in food programs through contracts and grants to dozens of community-based organizations, grocery retailers, food suppliers, vendors, and social service agencies. While the City itself does less *direct* food procurement compared to some other municipalities, these partner organizations purchase and provide food to thousands of Seattle residents. Food purchasing by City-funded food programs is not centralized, so these diverse collaborators make purchasing decisions within their various contracts.

City-funded food purchases come in many forms through multiple programs. For example:

- **Farm to Preschool** provides sustainably grown foods from local farmers to Seattle preschools. Food is provided through take-home bags for families and stipends for preschool staff to purchase local foods for the meals they serve.

- **Food Banks and Meal Programs** provide emergency food and hunger relief to Seattle's most vulnerable residents. Run by social service organizations, food banks and meal programs have increasingly focused on nutrient-dense and culturally responsive food. Through individual and collective purchasing, they are also purchasing more foods from local farmers and food producers.

- **Food Equity Fund** awards grants to community-led food projects, including many that focus on culturally relevant and locally sourced food distribution for food insecure communities.

- **Fresh Bucks** provides eligible customers $40 each month to spend on fruits and vegetables at participating retailers, including farmers markets and a variety of culturally specific independent grocers.

- **Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program** provides students with a fresh fruit or vegetable snack three days per week during the school day, offered in partnership with Seattle Public Schools (SPS). Some produce items are local, organic, or sourced from BIPOC-owned farms.

Contracts for these City food programs are managed by several different City departments and cover a range of costs to meet program and partner needs, including staffing, supplies, services, and food. These City of Seattle contracts provide some parameters for food purchasing, but decisions about where, when, who, and how food purchases are made vary across programs.

Beyond food purchasing, the City of Seattle has worked across departments to encourage more sustainable and equitable procurement of goods and services. These existing initiatives are not specific to food purchases, but they do provide an example and model of values-driven City purchasing policies that can be applied to food programs.

- The City's Department of Finance and Administrative Services leads a Women- and Minority-Owned Businesses (WMBE) Initiative, which supports utilization of WMBE businesses on City contracts. As a part of this initiative, the City is conducting a Disparity Study on the availability and utilization of WMBEs, and to determine whether WMBEs have equal opportunities on City projects.
- The City's Green Purchasing Initiative and Sustainable Purchasing Policy (SPP) promotes environmental stewardship and greenhouse gas reduction when buying goods and services. The SPP includes social equity factors, such as local and international fair labor practices.

Fruteria Sandoval, a retailer for City of Seattle's Fresh Bucks program. *Photo credit: City of Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment*

Outside of the City of Seattle, other Seattle-area institutions are also implementing or exploring VBFP. Some examples are described below.

**University of Washington (UW) Dining**

The 2021-2025 UW Sustainability Action Plan calls for UW Dining to source 35% of their foods from local sources within a 250-mile radius and increase purchases of organic, plant-based, and sustainable ingredients. The UW Dining program also strives to support fair wages and strong relationships between producers and consumers. UW Dining participates in the national Menus of Change University Research Collaborative, an initiative focused on using healthier oils, reducing added sugar, cutting salt, and including more plant protein options.

**Seattle Public Schools (SPS) Culinary Services** provides almost 20,000 meals each day to Seattle students. SPS is transforming the school lunch program by using more fresh, local, and sustainable ingredients. It also focuses on culturally relevant meals and makes efforts to diversify its suppliers by buying from small businesses and underrepresented vendors. SPS has received state, federal, and local grants to help buy values-aligned foods within the federal National School Lunch and Breakfast programs.[1] SPS efforts are also supported by the Healthy Food in Schools partnership with Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment.

**Providence Swedish Hospital** signed on to the Cool Food Pledge in 2023. The pledge is a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with food service by 25%, especially by increasing and improving plant-based menu options. Practice Greenhealth provides technical assistance to hospitals to achieve their Cool Food Pledge commitment.

[1]As of this writing (May 2025), numerous federal opportunities that funded VBFP support activities or direct food purchases through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been cut or paused indefinitely by the Trump Administration.

**By some rough estimates, the institutions listed above buy a combined $40 million in food annually.** This is only a fraction of institutional food purchasing in Seattle and across the Puget Sound region. Increasing values-based food purchasing within City of Seattle programs, while collaborating with external institutions to do the same, could significantly benefit the local food system.

This diverse institutional and program landscape impacts how the City of Seattle can best work with its food program collaborators and external institutions to increase values-based food purchasing. When launching this project, City staff and community stakeholders determined that any Seattle VBFP framework must be adaptable to these different contexts and functions. An array of support and strategies are also needed to implement and expand VBFP in a variety of program contexts and partner capacities.

Produce from Alvarez Organic Farms in Mabton, WA being delivered by Food Oasis to El Centro de La Raza in Seattle, WA. *Photo credit*: *Food Oasis*

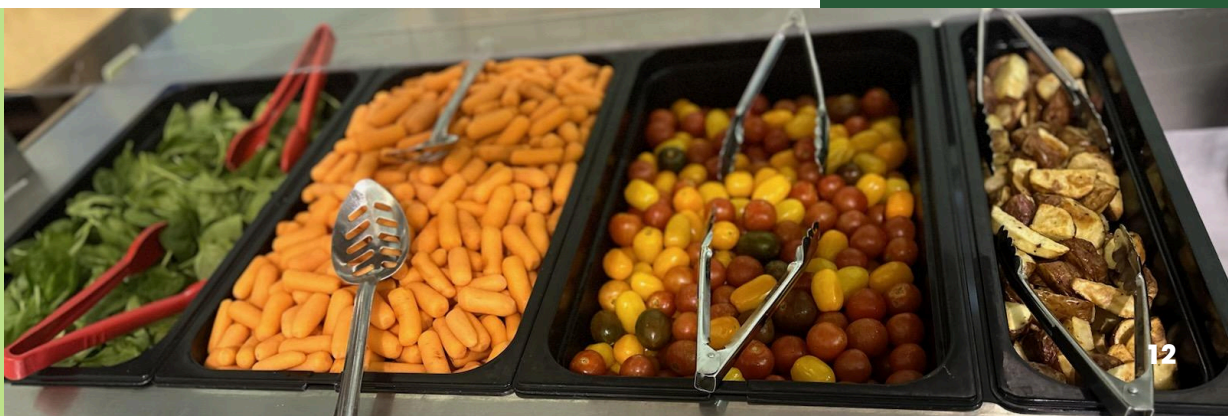
## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2024, the City of Seattle ("City") released an updated Food Action Plan, which identified values-based food purchasing as a top priority. During community engagement to update the Food Action Plan, six Core Values emerged from discussions with community leaders and stakeholders: **local economy, racial equity, environmental sustainability, fair labor, cultural relevance, and health and nutrition**.

Many of these values match those in well-established food purchasing frameworks, such as the nationally recognized Good Food Purchasing Program. However, Seattle's mosaic of publicly supported food programs, policy landscape, and the City's food purchasing scenarios (described above) make it difficult to adopt these existing models at this stage. Instead, City staff worked with community stakeholders to develop a values-based food purchasing (VBFP) framework to meet local needs and community priorities. For example, most existing VBFP frameworks do not include a standalone focus on racial equity and supporting women and/or minority-owned enterprises (WMBE) through food purchasing, which is a priority for the City of Seattle.

The following sections describe the co-design process, research, and analysis that developed the VBFP Framework.

Local potatoes on a salad bar at Seattle Public Schools.
*Photo credit: Seattle Public Schools*



## Co-Design Process

City staff, community food system experts, and food program partners collaborated to develop the VBFP Framework. The process focused on inclusive decision-making, trust-building, and accountability, and deep discussions of systemic inequities in the food system. Over the course of 18 months, these participants gathered in meetings, workshops, and focus groups to refine the six Core Values definitions and discuss how they could be applied in different food purchasing contexts. This approach fostered shared ownership of the framework, increased transparency, amplified marginalized voices, raised awareness, and sets the stage for thoughtful implementation.

Local expertise revealed barriers, unintended consequences, and future opportunities to implement the Core Values in City food program purchases. This produced a comprehensive and actionable framework aligned with City and community goals. The project team also reviewed tools from local and national values-based food purchasing initiatives including Eat Local First, the Anchors in Action Aligned Framework and the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) (see **Key Resources** section). These provided inspiration and helped align Seattle's framework with national standards.

There were three main groups involved in the process:

- **City of Seattle VBFP Work Group** – City staff who manage food programs, grants, and contracts.
- **Community Core Team** - a diverse group of seven people with extensive and applied expertise in farming, fishing, labor rights, value chain development, and community food systems. Through workshops facilitated by Tahoma Peak Solutions, this group served as the backbone leadership for the project with Seattle's Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE).
- **Food Program Collaborators** – representatives from a variety of organizations and businesses who implement City-funded food programs. Through focus groups facilitated by Tahoma Peak Solutions, these individuals also provided feedback on the draft framework.

See **Companion Material B** for a list of participants from each group.

### City of Seattle VBFP Work Group

In 2023, OSE started convening an interdepartmental work group of City staff who manage food programs. Still active, this work group focuses on aligning City-funded food purchasing with the Core Values in the updated Food Action Plan, sharing best practices and tools, and identifying opportunities to increase VBFP. The work group also mapped how food purchasing happens within City food programs, which looks very different depending on program size, scale, and design.

### Community Core Team

In 2024, OSE contracted with Tahoma Peak Solutions (TPS) to co-lead the framework development process. TPS is a Native women-owned firm with expertise in equitable and resilient food systems planning. They facilitated the Community Core Team, a diverse group of seven people with extensive and applied expertise in farming, fishing, labor rights, value chain development, and community food systems.

Over 10 months, TPS and OSE staff designed a series of workshops, interviews, and surveys with the Community Core Team. This collaborative effort also included research on values-aligned purchasing initiatives from other cities. Through workshops, the team refined a draft of the framework's Core Values initially developed by the City VBFP Work Group. They also identified supporting strategies needed to increase values-based food purchasing within City food programs. Engagement with the Community Core Team was designed to facilitate open dialogue and deep reflection on the framework. In particular, the team emphasized the need for effective implementation strategies that were as inclusive and well-considered as the Core Value definitions themselves.

Community Core Team and other project partners pictured below, from left to right: Chris Iberle, CeCe Chan, Gurdeep Gill, Friendly Vang-Johnson, Vero Vergara, Valerie Segrest, Deepa Iyer, Eddie Hill, Yolimar Rivera Vázquez, and Nora Frank-Buckner. *Not pictured:* Adasha Turner.

### Food Program Collaborators

In addition to the Community Core Team, TPS and OSE staff gathered input from City food program collaborators. In October 2024, TPS and City staff organized five focus groups with representatives from food banks, mutual aid groups, community meal programs, large food service institutions, grocers, wholesale buyers, local farmers, producers, and food suppliers.

Participants received a copy of the draft Core Values in advance and a follow-up survey to get individual input on the Core Value definitions. During the focus groups, they discussed current practices, successes, potential challenges, and opportunities for making more values-based food purchases for City programs. Focus groups were designed to include buyers and suppliers to identify challenges and solutions on both sides of the purchasing process. These focus group insights helped further align Seattle's VBFP Framework with community priorities and create holistic implementation strategies.

See **Companion Material C** and **Companion Material D** for summaries of these engagements with the Community Core Team and Food Program Collaborators.

# Seattle's Values-Based Food Purchasing Framework


Staff and volunteers serve meals at the American Polynesian Organization (APO), a Food Equity Fund grantee in Seattle, WA. *Photo credit: APO*

**The City of Seattle Values-Based Food Purchasing (VBFP) Framework is a guide for City food programs and other institutions to buy food that supports local economies, racial equity, environmental sustainability, fair labor, cultural diversity, and health and nutrition.**

The framework is built on six Core Values shaped by in-depth community engagement. The Core Values were crafted to ensure they reflect community stakeholder guidance and the City's commitment to an equitable and sustainable food procurement system. Insights from community food system leaders, food program collaborators, and City staff contributed to the vision, goals, definitions, criteria, and key metrics that follow, with a focus on amplifying community voices and priorities throughout the framework.

These Core Values are intended to guide program design, procurement, contracting, and other food purchasing decisions made by City of Seattle food programs and collaborators. The Core Values are not a binding requirement for City of Seattle programs or collaborators. Each Core Value can be adapted to different scenarios and may not apply to every purchase, procurement, or contract. Some of the potential key metrics would need to be further defined if they are used to measure progress. The Core Values should be considered alongside other factors that inform food purchasing decisions, such as food costs and budgets, logistics, program delivery, and more. If multiple values or criteria conflict in a specific food purchase, prioritization may be necessary. Collaborators and communities are empowered to implement the Core Values in ways that fit their unique programs and situations. This ensures that procurement practices reflect each community's preferences, needs, and goals.


A local food order is delivered to White Center Food Bank. *Photo credit*: *King County*

**CORE VALUE:**

# Local Economy

## Vision and Goals

A thriving local food economy prioritizes small-scale producers, entrepreneurs of color, and supports historically marginalized communities. Keeping food purchasing power within local communities can help build shorter and more resilient supply chains that adapt to regional needs. Buying locally keeps dollars circulating in the local economy, creating a "local multiplier effect" with additional economic benefits. Buying local food also reduces reliance on the global supply chain and ensures that food procurement reflects the cultural diversity of the region.

Food procurement focused on building a robust local food system should increase equitable access to economic opportunities and support for small-scale and underrepresented food producers. This involves sourcing food locally while addressing systemic inequities in access to land, capital, infrastructure, and institutional contracts. Workers across the local food economy—including farmworkers, delivery drivers, grocery staff, and foodservice employees—are essential to the supply chain, yet face wage disparities, unfair labor practices, and limited advancement; they too must be able to thrive. Investing in local economies supports resilience and sustainability, fosters cultural diversity and local business ownership, and empowers communities to reclaim their food systems.

More collaboration between institutions, producers, and community organizations is needed to create trust-based value chain partnerships for food programs.

These partnerships are key to addressing capacity challenges and re-localizing food supply chains. This value also aligns with Washington State policies that encourage and facilitate purchases of locally grown foods through RCW 39.26.090 and DES-090-09.

## Definition and Criteria

Local procurement prioritizes foods that are:

- Grown or produced in Washington State. Procurement should prioritize food grown hyper-locally in the Seattle and King County geographic area, then expand to the Puget Sound region,[2] Washington State, and Western states until procurement needs are met.
- From small-scale[3], locally owned, and underrepresented food businesses, including microenterprises and community-based producers that face systemic barriers to growth accessing institutional contracts.
- Purchased directly from farms or food-producing businesses in Washington State to maximize local impact.
- For specialty items that cannot be grown regionally (e.g., coffee, seafood, cocoa), ethically sourced with priority for small-scale, community-based producers.[4]
- From collaborators who work with community organizations to ensure that food products and menus reflect the cultural diversity, preferences, and values of local populations.

## Potential Key Metrics

1. Percent and total spending ($) on food grown or produced in Washington State.
2. Percent and total spending ($) with small-scale, locally owned food businesses.
3. Percent and total number of contracts with local, small-scale food businesses.
4. Number of local farmers and food producers selling food to institutional buyers.

[2]Consisting of King, Pierce, Snohomish, Skagit, and Thurston Counties; and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Puyallup Tribe, Snoqualmie Tribe, Suquamish Tribe, and Tulalip Tribes.
[3]Small-scale farms and food producers are defined by USDA as farms with less than $350,000 in gross annual revenue. Small-scale food businesses (such as processors, manufacturers, and restaurants) are defined by Washington State as businesses with less than 50 employees.
[4]Also refer to the Fair Labor Core Value for other ethical sourcing criteria and certifications.

Harvest day at Clean Greens Farm, a Food Equity Fund grantee in Duvall, WA.
*Photo credit*: *Black Dollar Days Task Force*

**CORE VALUE:**

# Racial Equity

## Vision and Goals

Racial equity in food procurement helps dismantle systemic barriers and increases equitable opportunities in food production, marketing, and access for historically marginalized communities—particularly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). It prioritizes transparency, inclusion, and economic opportunities for BIPOC producers and food businesses. This value advances long-overdue systemic change to improve social, economic, and environmental conditions for local communities.

Discrimination and lack of information about public procurement processes have excluded BIPOC food producers from contracts and sales to institutional food programs. As a result of these and other historical inequalities, BIPOC food producers are underrepresented in food supply chains. Addressing barriers to participation fosters economic and social justice. Building reciprocal, trust-based relationships within food procurement creates a more inclusive, connected food system that reflects the diversity of its communities.

Procurement systems should recognize historical injustices while actively working to undo the policies and practices that support them. This can include unbundling larger contracts, conducting targeted outreach to small and BIPOC businesses, streamlining bid processes, and ensuring prompt payments. Contracts and purchases should reflect the demographics and cultural needs of the communities served.

Creating equitable economic opportunities can help address challenges with access to land, capital, and unfair labor practices. Every stage of procurement can work to grow equitable economic opportunities, from program design, solicitation, outreach and technical assistance for applicants, proposal evaluation and scoring criteria, and contract management. Procurement practices that promote fairness, equity, collaboration, and accountability support other Core Values in this framework.

## Definition and Criteria

Racial equity in food procurement increases vendor diversity by prioritizing foods purchased as directly as possible from underrepresented food businesses, producers, and suppliers, including:

- Black or African-American, Indigenous, Native American, Hispanic, Latino-a/Latinx, Middle Eastern, North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Asian-owned enterprises.
- Immigrant and/or refugee-owned enterprises.
- Tribal enterprises.
- WMBE (Women- and Minority-owned Business Enterprises).[5]

Racial equity in food procurement also prioritizes purchases and contracts with collaborators, especially food distributors and aggregators, who:

- Provide a supplier or vendor diversification plan and can transparently report on supplier data and demographics, including race and ethnicity.
- Use inclusive sourcing practices, prioritize sourcing from food producers and suppliers who have experienced systemic social and/or economic inequities, and proactively address barriers to entry

## Considerations for Implementation

Advancing equity for BIPOC food producers requires addressing structural procurement disparities and avoiding tokenism, superficial engagement, or one-off purchases. Future work should include ensuring equitable access for BIPOC food producers and BIPOC-owned vendors to:

[5]Also see City of Seattle's WMBE Contracting Initiative.

- Contract opportunities directly with City food programs, with better outreach and transparent solicitations.
- Technical assistance from the City and/or third parties to support capacity building and compliance with institutional requirements.
- Expanded market access to promote long-term economic sustainability.
- More land and capital, especially to support food production at scale.
- Fair prices for food, products, or meals purchased to better cover true production costs.
- Distributors and supply chain partnerships that develop and support BIPOC food producers with needed resources, such as food storage, transportation, technical assistance, marketing, or equipment.

This value helps advance ongoing City of Seattle initiatives that support utilization of Women and Minority-Owned Businesses (WMBE). This value also aligns with the City of Seattle Department of Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) Social Equity Requirements for contracting and purchasing, and the following City of Seattle Executive Orders and ordinances:

- 2005: Equality in Contracting Ordinance 121717
- 2014-03: Equity in City Contracting
- 2019-06: Economic Inclusion and Contracting Equity
- 2023-07: Equity and Opportunity in City Contracting

## Potential Key Metrics

1. Percent and total spending ($) on food or meal purchases from BIPOC-owned food businesses.
2. Total number of BIPOC-owned food businesses providing food or meals for City programs.
3. Percent and total number of contracts with BIPOC-owned food businesses.
4. Percent of primary contractors and vendors with active supplier diversity plans.

CORE VALUE:

# Environmental Sustainability

## Vision and Goals

Environmental sustainability in food procurement protects ecosystems, reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and supports long-term environmental health. This value emphasizes regenerative farming practices, resource conservation, climate-friendly diets, and circular economy principles to support ecosystem health and minimize the environmental footprint of food procurement.

More sustainable practices are needed across the entire food system—from production to consumption to waste management. Food procurement practices should be aligned with Seattle's Climate Action Plan and Sustainable Purchasing Policy, while addressing systemic challenges like waste prevention and reduction and natural resource conservation. This value also aligns with Washington State's sustainable food purchasing guidelines, which promote more plant-based main dishes and foods with sustainability certifications.

## Definition and Criteria

Environmentally sustainable procurement prioritizes foods that:

- Are produced using organic or other regenerative practices that promote soil health, biodiversity, and ecosystem resilience. This includes no-till farming, crop rotation, cover cropping, improving animal habitats and watershed health, and agroforestry.[6]
- Minimize carbon and water footprints to reduce GHG emissions, fossil fuel use, and water consumption throughout the supply chain.
- Reduce use of animal products, especially beef, to lower carbon and water footprints.
- Prioritize plant-based options as main meal offerings.
- Conserve water resources and protect water quality.
- Improve biodiversity through crop diversity, habitat preservation, and sustainable animal grazing practices such as pastured or rotational systems.
- Meet high standards of animal welfare, ensuring no recent violations or lawsuits related to animal treatment.

Environmentally sustainable procurement also prioritizes purchases and contracts with collaborators who:

- Use sustainable, reusable food packaging.
- Reduce food packaging waste.
- Use reusable plates, utensils, and cups for meal service.
- Conduct food waste audits and implement strategies to prevent and reduce food waste, supporting food rescue initiatives wherever possible.
- Track and report environmental metrics such as carbon emissions, water usage, and biodiversity impacts.
- Support initiatives that protect and restore ecosystems, including soil health, biodiversity, and water resources.
- Use marketing and education to promote climate-friendly foods.

[6]Certifications, such as those included in the AIA Environmental Certifications or Eat Local First Environmental Sustainability value, are one way to verify production practices. Other regenerative practices include minimizing use of growth hormones and antibiotics; addressing biodiversity in animal and plant breeding and selection; compost usage; protecting local animal habitats and ecosystems; and not using genetically modified inputs.

## Potential Key Metrics

1. Percent and total spending ($) on foods produced using regenerative or organic practices.[7]
2. Percent of meals provided that are plant-based.
3. Reduction in GHG emissions associated with food procurement (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent [CO2e]).
4. Percent of food producers, suppliers, and vendors that implement food waste reduction and/or water conservation[8] practices.
5. Number and percent of City-funded food programs that implement systems to monitor and measure food waste. This supports prompt interventions and improvements to food waste prevention strategies.

[7]Certifications, such as those included in the AIA Environmental Certifications or Eat Local First Environmental Sustainability value, are a key method to verify production practices.
[8]Some examples of practices from the Anchors in Action Aligned Framework include using drip irrigation rather than furrow irrigation; managing water runoff and using rain catchment systems; or growing crops that require less water.

Farmworkers harvesting in Washington State. *Photo Credit*: *Jackie Johnston, Associated Press*

**CORE VALUE:**

# Fair Labor

## Vision and Goals

Fair labor practices in food procurement ensure that workers throughout the food supply chain are treated with dignity, paid livable wages, and are safe and healthy at work. This value prioritizes workers' rights to organize, racial and gender equity, and workforce development.  These practices help address systemic labor inequities and exploitation, which mostly affect immigrant workers and people of color. Workers in production, distribution, food service, and retail are central to our local food supply chain and must also benefit from institutional food procurement. Enforceable labor standards ensure fair treatment and empower workers to advocate for better conditions. Prioritizing fair labor practices in food procurement fosters equity, justice, and accountability in the food system.

Supporting unions, cooperatives, worker ownership, and increased vendor transparency also aligns labor practices with community values and ethical standards. This supports economic justice for workers and social integrity of the procurement process. Together, these build trust and fairness across the supply chain.

## Definition and Criteria

This Fair Labor value distinguishes between two categories – supplier and producer practices and contractor practices.

1. **Supplier and Producer Practices** – Various collaborators can use these criteria when purchasing food from farms, food businesses, suppliers, and manufacturers. However, in most cases, the City is multiple steps removed from the food sourcing decisions where these criteria could be considered.
2. **Contractor Practices** - These apply to entities that have direct contracts with the City of Seattle for food, ingredients, meals, services, or other programming. Contractors are responsible for their own labor practices and oversight of their supply chains.

The following sections outline definitions and criteria for each category.

### Supplier and Producer Practices

Fair labor in food procurement prioritizes food from suppliers and producers that:

- Are certified by Fair Trade International,[9] Food Justice, Fair Food, Fair for Life, or the Equitable Food Initiative. These certifications demonstrate ethical labor practices or recognize unionized or worker-owned cooperatives.
- Comply with local, state, federal, and international labor laws, including the International Fair Labor Code of Conduct. Producers should not have recent violations, lawsuits, or corrective measures related to local, state, federal, or international regulations.
- Ensure worker safety. Producers must have no recent health or safety violations or lawsuits and must provide a safe work environment for all employees, regardless of immigration status.[10]
- Protect farmworkers from chemical and weather-related risks.
- For farms in Washington State, provide overtime pay to farmworkers in accordance with Washington State law.
- Hire local farmworkers rather than hiring workers through the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Worker program.
- Respect workers' rights to organize. Producers should have no record of shutting down union organizing efforts or retaliation.

[9]For coffee, sugar, and cocoa.
[10]As of July 1, 2025, Washington State provides additional protections for workers related to immigration-related threats from employers.

### Contractor Practices

Fair labor in food procurement also prioritizes contracting with vendors that:

- Comply with Seattle's local labor laws, which include ordinances regarding minimum wage, wage theft, paid sick and safe time, and secure scheduling. Contractors should also inform staff about their rights. This can be done through onboarding, manager training, and by providing plain language resources in multiple languages, such as posters and fact sheets.
- Comply with state, federal, and international labor laws.
- Commit to ensuring their suppliers also comply with local, state, federal, and international labor laws, and work to exclude any food suppliers that do not comply with labor laws. This may also be included in City of Seattle contract terms or agreements.
- Provide dignity and support to workers. This includes providing health care and retirement benefits, workers' compensation, livable wages, and career advancement opportunities.
- Offer employees additional alternative compensation or benefits to enhance well-being and support their long-term stability.
- Partner with unionized businesses and worker-owned cooperatives to promote equitable treatment and empower workers.

## Potential Key Metrics

1. Percent and total spending ($) on fair labor certified foods, worker-owned cooperatives, or unionized businesses.
2. Total number of fair labor certified, worker-owned cooperatives or unionized businesses providing food or meals for City programs.
3. Percent of suppliers, vendors, and contractors that comply with local, state, federal, and international labor laws.[11]

[11]Measured through available data about vendor, supplier, or contractors' labor violations or labor-related lawsuits from local, state, or federal agencies..

Yakisoba and tofu being served for a Seattle school lunch. *Photo credit*: *Seattle Public Schools*

**CORE VALUE:**

# Cultural Relevance

## Vision and Goals

Culturally relevant food procurement reflects the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity of the communities being served. It prioritizes foods that honor traditional practices, accommodates dietary needs, and celebrates culinary heritage. Providing culturally relevant food is crucial to equitable food access.

Many communities face barriers to accessing food that meets their cultural preferences. Purchasing culturally relevant food can help address these systemic barriers. Trauma-informed approaches, community voices, and support for small, culturally relevant producers are key to delivering culturally relevant food programs. Meal planning and procurement practices should focus on foods that are culturally appropriate and preferred by the community. This increases inclusion, sustainability, and equity within food programs.

Through this value, food procurement can uplift cultural traditions, build trust with communities, and provide more pathways for historically marginalized groups to thrive. Producers of culturally relevant foods need better access to land, resources, and markets. Addressing these barriers supports cultural relevance throughout the food system and within relationships in the food supply chain, beyond just the food or meals themselves. Culturally relevant food procurement also has a key role in supporting other Core Values within this framework, including a strong local economy, racial equity, and health and nutrition.

## Definition and Criteria

Cultural relevance in food procurement prioritizes foods that:

- Reflects traditional dishes and culinary practices of diverse and specific cultural groups.
- Meets the cultural, ethnic, religious, dietary, and other needs and preferences of the people served.
- Is culturally affirming and aligns with regional and community preferences.

Cultural relevance in food procurement also includes prioritizing purchases and contracts with collaborators who:

- Center community voices by regularly gathering feedback from food program participants to guide menu planning and reflect cultural and dietary preferences.
- Create welcoming environments for diverse cultural and linguistic communities being served.
- Source culturally relevant foods and work with vendors and producers to meet the community's cultural and dietary preferences and needs.

## Potential Key Metrics

1. Community satisfaction with the cultural relevance of foods served/offered (as measured through feedback surveys or other engagement).
2. Percent of programs that offer culturally relevant food or meals.
3. Percent and total number of contracts with vendors specializing in culturally relevant foods.
4. Percent of meals provided that are culturally specific.

*Photo credit: Public Health Seattle King-County*

**CORE VALUE:**

# Health and Nutrition

## Vision and Goals

Health and nutrition in food procurement ensures equitable access to nutritious, minimally processed, and culturally relevant foods. These foods support physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic well-being. This value addresses systemic disparities in access to nutritious foods while promoting a holistic, community-centered approach to health. Nutrition and food education for individuals and communities are also important to improving community health, alongside food procurement and menu planning.

Procurement choices dictate the food options for eaters participating in institutional food service and food access programs. These programs need to focus on systemic changes to prioritize nutrient-dense foods, cultural relevance, and community engagement in food programs, as opposed to emphasizing individual food choices. Focusing on health equity alongside cultural relevance cultivates a food system that promotes wellness, reduces disparities, and honors ancestral food practices.

Incorporating health and nutrition into food purchasing underscores the connection between food and healing. Food procurement should reflect the broader impacts of nutrition on community health and well-being. This includes addressing disparities in food quality in addition to quantity, supporting community health and wellness through the other Core Values, and increasing transparency in procurement decisions.

## Definition and Criteria

Health and nutrition in food procurement prioritizes foods that are:

- Whole or minimally processed to retain nutritional value, including fresh, canned, and frozen options with minimal additives.
- Nutrient-dense, delicious, and offer variety across all major food groups.
- Reflective of diverse cultural, medical, and dietary preferences to help address inequitable food access.

Health and nutrition in food procurement also includes prioritizing purchases and contracts with collaborators who:

- Offer a variety of food and meal options that meet client preferences and needs (cultural or medical).
- Provide food or meals that offer consumer choice, especially in school and community programs.
- Implement food preparation, serving, and product placement methods that support health outcomes.
- Actively support or advocate for initiatives that expand equitable access to nutritious foods for low-income residents and communities of color.
- Establish policies or guidance for food donations to ensure alignment with health, nutrition, and cultural relevance standards.
- Provide food and nutrition education for individuals and communities, especially to build awareness of ancestral food practices and the spiritual aspects of nourishment.

## Potential Key Metrics

1. Community satisfaction with the nutritional quality of foods served/offered (as measured through feedback surveys).
2. Percent of food and meals that meet health and nutritional standards. These standards may be developed by programs themselves, or adopted from other local, state, or national policies. Standards should include elements that support:
    a. Whole or minimally processed foods
    b. Nutrient-dense foods (foods that provide high amounts of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients without high amounts of added sugar, fat, and salts)
    c. Variety of foods (e.g. number of unique foods offered in a menu cycle)
    d. Culturally relevant options
3. Number and percent of City food programs that integrate nutrient-dense foods in every meal, snack, or food offered.
4. Percent of nutritious food or meals provided that are eaten by participants.

# Recommended Implementation Strategies

The feedback and insights shared by community stakeholders and City food program collaborators during the co-design process identified the following goals, objectives, and potential actions for effective implementation of the VBFP Core Values. Some of these can be pursued immediately by the City of Seattle VBFP Work Group, building off the findings in this report. Others are focused on longer-term systems change and would require planning, funding, and coordination across various sectors and networks of buyers and suppliers. These strategies were created with a focus on centering community voice and priorities.

See **Companion Material D** for a summary of implementation priorities and themes shared by the Community Core Team and Food Program Collaborators.

Seattle's Values-Based Food Purchasing Framework is an incredible opportunity to transform the local food system by addressing historical inequities and building a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient food system. But it will take bold actions, innovation, collaboration, strategic planning, and increased capacity for values-aligned producers and suppliers to realize the full benefits of what this framework can achieve. Below are recommended implementation strategies to get us there.

# 1 Expand VBFP within City of Seattle Food & Meal Programs

**Objective:** Use the VBFP Framework to continue increasing values-based food purchasing and partnerships in City food programs.

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

a. Collect data and assess alignment of current food purchases with Core Values, then improve data collection, set goals and track progress.

b. Provide VBFP trainings, technical assistance, and other educational resources to City staff and collaborators.

c. Develop a VBFP toolkit for City staff and collaborators. This toolkit could build on existing local or national resources. A toolkit should include:

- Suggestions for program design and contracting structures.
- Contracting and purchasing templates and materials.
- A "Buyer's Guide" with more resources and information related to each Core Value, and the food system inequities that VBFP seeks to address.
- A worksheet to help buyers assess how a product or supplier aligns with each Core Value.

d. Develop and test new purchasing and procurement methods across City food programs and contracts. This could include improved vendor outreach and contracting structures, collaborative food purchasing across programs, or incentives for VBFP.

e. Support community engagement and evaluation within City food programs about VBFP. This could include funding for listening sessions, surveys or other methods to collect feedback from program participants.

Food as Medicine programming at Lifelong in Seattle, WA. *Photo credit: Interim CDA*

## 2 Support Relationship-Building and Networking

**Objective:** Strengthen connections between program buyers and values-aligned vendors and suppliers to promote equity and resilience in the supply chain.

### POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

a. Facilitate or co-host match-making events, roundtable events, or vendor fairs to connect City staff, food program buyers, and grocery retailers with values-aligned vendors and suppliers. Include community leaders and youth in these events to encourage and support connections.

b. Compile and share existing directories or resources listing values-aligned vendors and suppliers.

c. Develop buyer and supplier learning cohorts where both groups learn about procurement processes, challenges, and shared values.

d. Fund value chain coordinators, aggregators, and facilitators to provide technical assistance and facilitate partnerships between institutional buyers and values-aligned vendors and suppliers.

*Left:* Rowley & Hawkins Fruit Farm samples local apples at a Good Business Network of Washington networking event. *Photo credit: GrowingBoyMedia*
*Top right:* A student tries radishes from the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program at a Seattle school. *Photo credit: City of Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment*


# 3 Build Vendor and Supplier Capacity

**Objective:** Provide technical assistance for values-aligned vendors and suppliers to help them navigate the procurement processes and requirements of a variety of food buyers, ranging from small organizations to major institutions.

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

a. Offer clear guidance and tools on how to do business with City food programs and other buyers. Guides could cover vendor requirements, a calendar of upcoming City food program solicitations, or a directory of food purchasing program contacts. Content should be in plain language formats and multiple languages.

b. Host workshops covering solicitations, contract compliance, and proposal writing.

c. Fund or partner with technical assistance providers to offer one-on-one support with pricing, cost analysis, or obtaining food certifications (such as Organic or Food Justice certification).

d. Help prepare vendors and suppliers to meet buyers' purchasing standards (e.g., food safety, packaging, delivery, invoicing).

IRC New Roots prepares an order for Meals Partnership Coalition in Seattle, WA. *Photo credit: IRC New Roots*

# 4 Invest in Vendor and Supplier Infrastructure

**Objective:** Increase access to necessary infrastructure so values-aligned food vendors, producers, grocery retailers, and suppliers can reliably meet buyer requirements.

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

a. Support aggregation networks to enable small-scale food producers to pool resources and meet demand.

b. Work with King County and other partners to develop shared food processing, storage, and distribution facilities. These can also help address logistical challenges for small-scale producers.

c. Establish centralized community kitchens to support culturally relevant meal preparation and food entrepreneurship.

d. Work with King County and other partners to preserve, protect, and restore farmland and waterways to support equitable access to land for local, sustainable food production.

Seattle Public Schools' Central Kitchen staff prepare salmon from Muckleshoot Seafood for a school lunch.
*Photo credit: City of Seattle Office of Sustainability & Environment*

# 5 Develop a Regional Values-Based Food Purchasing Campaign

**Objective:** Launch a values-based food purchasing campaign with regional institutions and food buyers to create more systemic change.

## POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

a. Assess supply and demand for values-based food purchasing with Seattle-area institutions beyond City programs. More studies could gather needed information about institutional demand for values-aligned foods and capacity for values-aligned suppliers and producers to meet that demand. An assessment could also illustrate potential economic, social, and community impacts of increasing values-based institutional food purchasing regionally.

b. Engage other institutional buyers to join the campaign, such as colleges, hospitals or corporate cafeterias. Provide technical assistance to help individual buyers set goals and adopt VBFP principles and practices. Facilitate partnerships between buyers and values-aligned vendors and suppliers. As a part of the broader campaign, collect data, stories, and lessons learned across collaborators to demonstrate the feasibility and impact of VBFP.

c. Communicate the impacts of VBFP with the broader community and institutional stakeholders. This could include:

- Collecting and sharing data about supply chain resilience, producer impacts, best practices, and broader economic or social benefits from VBFP.
- Creating vendor and supplier spotlights to amplify stories that highlight the challenges and successes of VBFP. Focus on the roles of BIPOC and other underrepresented small-scale producers and suppliers in building equitable, sustainable, and resilient food systems.
- Educating the public about the importance of institutional VBFP, and consumers' own food choices, in addressing systemic inequities and building a just food system.

# CONCLUSION

The implementation of City of Seattle's Values-Based Food Purchasing Framework requires deliberate efforts to address historical policies and practices that have excluded marginalized communities. By integrating cultural competency, capacity-building, infrastructure investment, and public awareness, the City of Seattle can create an equitable, resilient, and sustainable food procurement system that contributes to the national movement for values-based food procurement.

Children share a meal at Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) in Seattle, WA.

# KEY RESOURCES

The following resources provided critical insights and background, especially as pre-readings for the Community Core Team, throughout the development of City of Seattle's Values-Based Food Purchasing Framework.

**City of Seattle's Food Action Plan**
Updated in 2024, the Plan is City of Seattle's roadmap for building a food system that prioritizes racial equity, sustainability, health, and economic development. The Plan includes actions focused on enhancing purchasing practices to support community values and increase food purchases from local, sustainable, and BIPOC-owned producers.

**Anchors in Action Aligned Framework: Standards and Best Practices Toolkit**
A nationally recognized resource released in 2023 with core value definitions, attributes, and strategies for institutional values-based food purchasing from the Good Food Purchasing Program, Healthcare Without Harm, and Real Food Challenge. The report includes value definitions for local and community-based economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, and community health and nutrition, along with fundamental strategies for applying these values. This framework was developed with input from over 200 stakeholders.

**Eat Local First – Values**
A Washington State resource highlighting the importance of locally grown foods and, resilient, equitable, community food economies. Eat Local First is a key resource that directly supports the VBFP Framework's focus on regional food producers and community-driven food procurement.

**Considerations for Farmers and Food Banks in Forward Contracting**
This 2020-2023 project in King County developed a report and toolkit to support farmers and food banks in the Puget Sound region with forward contracting partnerships and agreements. The project team included South King County Food Coalition (SKCFC), IRC New Roots, Spadework Food Strategy & Sweet Hollow Farm, supported by the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) program of Public Health Seattle-King County with funding from SNAP-Ed.

**Procuring Food Justice Report**

A national 2023 report from Food Chain Workers Alliance and HEAL Food Alliance that includes analysis, case studies, strategies and recommendations for decision-makers to advance grassroots solutions for reclaiming public food supply chains.

**King County Local Institutional Food Team (LIFT)**

A 2020 report from Ecotrust that provided actionable insights on strengthening regional food systems by connecting local farmers, fishers, and ranchers with institutional buyers to support economic resilience and food equity.

**Farm-to-Institution Strategies**

A 2016 report from Cascade Harvest Coalition and Slow Money Northwest that provides insights on market opportunities and impact investing for health and economic development through regional food value chain growth in the Puget Sound region.

# COMPANION MATERIALS

This section offers additional resources from the VBFP Framework development process that expand on the content presented in the main report. The companion materials include the following:

**A: VBFP Initiatives in Other Cities** – summarizes examples of values-based food purchasing initiatives in other major cities.

**B: Participants in Seattle's VBFP Framework Development Process** – lists the City staff, Community Core Team, and Food Program Collaborators who co-designed Seattle's VBFP Framework.

**C: Stakeholder Insights on the Core Values** – provides deeper insights and feedback from stakeholders about the Core Values that underpin Seattle's VBFP Framework.

**D: Stakeholder Insights on Implementation Strategies** – provides deeper insights from stakeholders about the challenges and opportunities with implementing VBFP and summarizes their ideas for how ensure VBFP is successful.

## COMPANION A:

# VBFP Initiatives in Other Cities

Cities and institutions throughout the U.S. have adopted values-based food purchasing policies and programs like the Good Food Purchasing Program, Real Food Challenge, and Menus of Change. Below are examples of values-based food purchasing initiatives in other cities (Los Angeles, New Haven, Austin, New York City, San Diego, Denver, and Chicago) which were reviewed in the process of developing this report.

**Los Angeles, California**

Los Angeles was one of the first cities to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP). The Los Angeles Food Policy Council began developing and advocating for GFPP in 2011. Los Angeles adopted an ambitious Good Food Purchasing Policy in 2012 that directs City departments to align more food purchases with the five GFPP values (local and community-based economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare, and community health and nutrition, and the principles of equity, accountability, and transparency). The policy also encouraged other food service institutions in Los Angeles to adopt GFPP, which Los Angeles Unified School District did in 2012. The food policy council's process and adopted policy both emphasized strong community engagement and stakeholder collaboration. The policy focused on effective implementation, transparency, accountability, and inclusivity. The Urban and Environmental Policy Institute and other partners support GFPP implementation by providing tools, training, and technical assistance for food purchasers. They also support tracking and reporting food purchasing data, food supplier engagement, and menu planning.

**New Haven, Connecticut**

The City of New Haven created a Food System Policy Division in 2016 in response to advocacy and a new food system plan developed by the New Haven Food Policy Council. The division collaborates with grassroots and community-based organizations to ensure programs and policies, including public food procurement, meet the needs and values of residents. New Haven's Food System Policy Division adopted the Good Food Purchasing Program and partnered with New Haven Public Schools and Yale University Dining Services to prioritize local food purchasing.

**Austin, Texas**

The City of Austin's Office of Sustainability convened a Good Food Purchasing Coalition in 2016 with institutions, community organizations, food businesses, and other partners. The coalition supported Austin Independent School District, the Austin Convention Center, and the University of Texas through a three-year Good Food Purchasing Program pilot. As a result of the pilot, Austin Independent School District adopted the program in 2019 as part of its commitment to buying healthy, fair, and sustainable food. The Austin Good Food Purchasing Coalition also supported the school district's GFPP adoption.

In 2021, the City of Austin launched a food system planning process and included a focus on value-based food procurement. In 2022, the Sustainable Food Center led an advocacy effort encouraging the City of Austin and Travis County to adopt GFPP. Recommended implementation strategies included setting values-aligned purchasing targets with anchor institutions, improving food purchasing data collection, streamlining food procurement processes, investing in food value chain innovation and incentives, and increasing City and County staff capacity to support GFPP.

**New York, New York**

In New York City, the Food Chain Workers Alliance, Community Food Advocates, the City University of New York Urban Food Policy Institute, and the Center for Good Food Purchasing established the NYC Good Food Purchasing Campaign in 2016. This campaign coordinated research and baseline assessments with City agencies and advocated for the New York City Council to adopt a Good Food Purchasing policy in 2019. Executive Orders in 2022 solidified the City's commitment to buying, preparing, and serving nutritious food through City agencies. The New York City government operates food service at multiple institutions, including NYC Public Schools, NYC Corrections, and other meal programs. NYC's Good Food Purchasing initiative, inspired by the Good Food Purchasing Program, now supports agencies to buy foods that support the local economy, environmental sustainability, nutrition, animal welfare, a valued workforce, and transparency. NYC's additional adoption of the Cool Food Pledge increased its focus on reducing the climate impacts of institutional food purchasing. NYC is also diversifying procurement to benefit women and/or minority-owned food businesses in New York State. NYC is providing culinary and procurement trainings, tools, improved procurement processes, data collection and reporting, and food education to implement their Good Food Purchasing initiative.

**San Diego, California**

The County of San Diego adopted a comprehensive food sourcing policy in 2023 to promote sustainable, equitable, and local procurement practices. Within San Diego County, Escondido Union School District also adopted the Good Food Purchasing Program in 2020. The San Diego Food System Alliance facilitated workshops, forums, and committees to develop the policy as part of the San Diego County Food Vision 2030 platform launched in 2021. San Diego's food purchasing values are *Local Sourcing, Equity-Informed Sourcing, Elevated Labor Standards, Organic or Regenerative Certification, Low-Carbon Intensity, and Nutritional Co-Benefits*. San Diego's initiative focuses on increasing the amount of sustainable, local foods served by institutions to support local food producers and increase access to nutritious foods for underserved communities. San Diego is collecting data and setting goals, incorporating values into food service contracts, providing tools, technical assistance and training, supporting menu planning, and action planning with values-aligned suppliers.

**Denver, Colorado**

The City of Denver included a Good Food Purchasing Program in its Denver Food Vision 2030 released in 2017, developed by community leaders and government staff. The Denver Sustainable Food Policy Council also advocated for a Good Food Purchasing Program. Participating agencies include the Denver Sheriff's Department, Denver Public Schools, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and child nutrition programs operated by City of Denver. Private hospitals and a local restaurant are also participating. Denver provides training, education, resource development, and monitoring and evaluation tools to track food purchases as a part of GFPP.

**Chicago, Illinois**

The City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, and Chicago Public Schools adopted a Good Food Purchasing Policy in 2017. The Chicago Food Policy Action Council began advocating for GFPP in 2014 and worked with the Mayor's Office to secure a commitment to GFPP. In 2018, Cook County also acknowledged racial inequities in access to resources for residents, communities, and businesses. In 2021, the Mayor and community leaders released the Food Equity Agenda. One the agenda's five priorities is to "leverage City and institutional procurement to support local BIPOC growers, producers, and food businesses." The City's GFPP policy development and implementation is coordinated with the Good Food Purchasing Initiative Steering Council. Chicago is tracking and reporting food purchasing data, developing equitable regional food supply chains, and engaging with food suppliers, food service staff, and consumers to implement GFPP.

**COMPANION B:**

# Participants in the Framework Development Process

This section lists the people who participated in the co-design process to develop Seattle's VBFP Framework. There were three main groups involved:

- **City of Seattle VBFP Work Group** – City staff who manage food programs, grants, and contracts.
- **Community Core Team** - a diverse group of seven people with extensive and applied expertise in farming, fishing, labor rights, and community food systems. Through workshops facilitated by Tahoma Peak Solutions, this group served as the backbone leadership for the project with the Office of Sustainability and Environment.
- **Food Program Collaborators** – representatives from a variety of organizations who implement City-funded food programs. Through focus groups facilitated by Tahoma Peak Solutions, these individuals also provided feedback on the draft framework.

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### City of Seattle VBFP Work Group

2023-2025 Participants

Led by Chris Iberle, Office of Sustainability & Environment

Angela Miyomoto, Human Services Department
Ashima Sukhdev, Seattle Public Utilities
Bridget Igoe, Office of Sustainability & Environment
Chukundi Salisbury, Seattle Parks & Recreation
Daniel Horst,* Office of Sustainability & Environment
Gurdeep Gill, Office of Sustainability & Environment
Jenn Brandon, Department of Neighborhoods
Joseph Rossell,^ Seattle Public Utilities
Leslie Stewart,* Human Services Department
Lisa Chen, Department of Neighborhoods

Liz Fikejs, Seattle Public Utilities
Robyn Kumar, Office of Sustainability & Environment
Seán Walsh, Human Services Department
Tan-Mei Teo,* Human Services Department
Tiffany Anderson, Office of Sustainability & Environment

*^Joined the Work Group in 2024*
**Joined the Work Group in 2025*

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## Community Core Team

2024 Participants

Led by Valerie Segrest and Nora Frank-Buckner, Tahoma Peak Solutions (TPS)

Adasha Turner, Modest Family Solutions & Black Seed Agroecology Farm
Deepa Iyer, Ayeko Farm
Eddie Hill, Food Loop NW
Friendly Vang-Johnson, Friendly Hmong Farms
Vero Vergara, Sweet Hollow Farm & Spadework Food Strategy
Yolimar Rivera Vázquez, Coquí Consulting

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## Food Program Collaborators

2024 Focus Group Participants

| Name and Organization | Focus Group Theme |
|---|---|
| Aaron Smith, Seattle Public Schools | Food Service Institutions |
| Aashay Savla, Aash Farms | Farmers, Producers, and Processors |
| Anahí Garcia, Alimentando al Pueblo | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Angie Wood, Pike Market Senior Center & Food Bank | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Bil Thorn, Sky Island Farm | Farmers, Producers, and Processors |
| Carter Grant, Seattle Public Schools | Food Service Institutions |
| Casey Crane, Food Lifeline | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |

| | |
|---|---|
| Christopher Teeny, Farmstand Local Foods | Wholesale Buyer and Distributors |
| Daniel Horst, African Community Housing & Development | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Eddie Hill, Food Loop NW | Farmers, Producers, and Processors |
| Elliott Smith, Kitchen Sync Strategies | Farmers, Producers, and Processors |
| Emily Penna, FareStart | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Indra Budiman, African Community Housing & Development | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Jacqui Zanotelli, Lifelong | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Jason Austin, Meals Partnership Coalition | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Jeremy Vrablik, Cascadia Produce | Wholesale Buyer and Distributors |
| Joe Gruber, U District Food Bank | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Karla Marifjeren, West Seattle Food Bank | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Katherine Jordan, South Park Senior Center | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Kelly Okumura, Farm to Preschool | Farmers, Producers, and Processors |
| Laura McCormick, United Indians of All Tribes | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Lauren Daniel, Lifelong | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Lexa Dundore, Tilth Alliance | Wholesale Buyer and Distributors |
| Mariah DeLeo, Seattle Good Business Network | Farmers, Producers, and Processors |
| Scott Pinkham, United Indians of All Tribes | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Shana McCann, FamilyWorks | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Thu Bui, Public Health Seattle King County | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Trevor Pogue, Phinney Senior Center | Meal Programs Focus Group Participant |
| Trish Twomey, Washington Food Coalition | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |
| Yamila Sterling, Solid Ground | Food Banks, Food Pantries, and Mutual Aid Groups |

**COMPANION C:**

# Stakeholder Insights on the Core Values

The summary below captures themes and insights from the Community Core Team and Food Program Collaborators that informed the development of the Core Values section of the VBFP Framework.

Through workshops, surveys, and focus groups, community stakeholders reviewed and refined a draft of the framework's Core Values initially developed by the City of Seattle VBFP Work Group. The feedback and insights gathered through the co-design process were critical to shaping the Core Values that underpin the VBFP Framework.

### Local Economy Core Value

*Community Core Team Insights*

- **Localize institutional food purchases:** More institutional support is needed to expand access to contracts and procurement opportunities for local producers.

- **Support for small-scale producers:** Local producers face challenges meeting institutional demands due to limited capacity, infrastructure, and funding.

- **Land and resource access:** Many local food producers, particularly BIPOC-owned businesses, face barriers to accessing land and other resources necessary for scaling operations.

- **Economic resilience:** Strengthen regional economies by keeping purchasing power as local and as close to Seattle as possible, then expand sourcing to wider geographic areas until sourcing needs are met. Local food supply chains are more resilient and can mutually reinforce community interests and sustainability.

- **Equitable market opportunities:** More institutional support is needed for suppliers and entrepreneurs of color, and others affected by systemic economic harm within local food supply chains.

### Local Economy Core Value

*Food Program Collaborator Insights*

- **Defining local:** Allow for flexibility for programs to define what "local" means to them. For Seattle-based efforts, "local food" might range from foods produced in Seattle to the broader Washington region.

- **Focus on Seattle-based and small-scale producers:** Prioritize producers whose operations and sales are concentrated in the Seattle area, especially those whose business viability depends on the Seattle market. Prioritize working with small-scale Washington producers to strengthen the regional food economy.

### Environmental Sustainability Core Value

*Community Core Team Insights*

- **Strive for ecological balance:** Ecological food systems envision a state of balance and reciprocity among all living things, where nothing is wasted.

- **Promote regenerative practices:** Support farms and businesses using agroforestry, improved grazing, and crop rotation to enhance biodiversity and soil health.

- **Reducing waste:** Encourage food waste audits, food rescue efforts, and incentivize reusable packaging.

- **Prioritizing climate action:** Align procurement strategies with Seattle's climate goals by focusing on seasonal, plant-based, and organic options.

- **Role of institutional food purchasing:** Achieving full regional environmental sustainability is not something the City of Seattle can do on its own. However, the City can contribute to that vision by procuring goods and services from organizations and businesses who are working to have smaller carbon footprints or treat the land and water with respect.

## Environmental Sustainability Core Value

*Food Program Collaborator Insights*

- **Certifications and identifying practices:** Alternative certifications like Certified Naturally Grown and The Real Organic Project are credible, farmer-driven alternatives to USDA Organic. Referring to "climate smart" practices would align with past USDA and federal terminology. This definition also doesn't explicitly reference whether purchases of GMO crops are discouraged.

- **Small-scale farmers face barriers to certification:** Use caution with certification requirements or standards, which may unintentionally exclude small farmers who practice sustainable methods but lack capacity to pursue formal certification.

## Racial Equity Core Value

*Community Core Team Insights*

- **Historical context:** Acknowledge the long-standing injustices faced by African-Americans, Native Americans, and refugees from Latin America, Asia, and Africa due to policies, racism, colonization, and exploitation in the U.S. food system.

- **Equity in access and ownership:** Racial equity requires addressing disparities in access to and control over land, markets, compensation, and capital—recognizing that these inequities stem from stolen land, exploited labor, and ongoing economic exclusion. This extends through the entire food system, from on-farm labor, to processing, distribution, restaurants, and retail.

- **Supporting BIPOC farmers and producers:** Provide technical assistance, increasing procurement transparency, and offering support through distributor roles to ensure BIPOC producers have equitable access to markets.

- **Addressing barriers:** Reduce tokenism and improve access to contracts and RFPs, while equipping producers with the tools needed to supply institutions. More transparency in contracting processes is also key.

- **Connecting rhetoric to action:** Shift from guilt-based narratives to learning-based approaches with collaborators to focus on sustainable, actionable changes.

- **Elevating marginalized voices:** Centering community voices through reciprocal relationships, fair pricing, and leadership opportunities in procurement processes.

## Racial Equity Core Value

*Food Program Collaborator Insights*

- **Sustainable market access for BIPOC and small-scale farmers:** Short-term or direct purchasing efforts alone are insufficient. Long-term change requires building stable, diverse market channels—including through mission-aligned distributors—to ensure lasting economic viability for underrepresented producers. Predictable, long-term forward contracts and funding for infrastructure can also support BIPOC producers.

- **Reciprocity and relationship building:** Foster mutual, community-centered relationships between vendors, producers, and buyers to rebuild interconnectedness and social trust within the food system.

- **Representation in procurement:** Prioritize purchasing from BIPOC-owned farms, distributors, and tribal enterprises, while recognizing intersections with other forms of identity and inclusion, such as immigration status. The "WMBE" certification is somewhat confusing when focusing on racial equity, since it also includes gender.

## Fair Labor Core Value

*Community Core Team Insights*

- **Workers' rights and cooperative ownership:** Guarantee workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Support democratic decision-making and cooperative ownership of food businesses to empower workers.

- **Safe and dignified work environments:** Ensure workers have access to safe conditions, health benefits, and protections from workplace hazards. Treat all workers ethically, without discrimination, and foster cultures of respect.

- **Equity and labor justice:** Address systemic inequities in labor practices also promotes racial, gender, and migrant justice.

- **Livable wages:** Pay wages and prices sufficient to cover basic needs—food, housing, healthcare, childcare, education—while allowing for discretionary spending and quality of life.

- **Transparency and accountability:** Vendors should transparently report labor practices and comply with labor laws to ensure fair treatment.

## Fair Labor Core Value

*Community Core Team Insights (continued)*

- **Encourage certification:** Certifications such as Fair Trade and Food Justice Certification can help guarantee ethical labor practices, especially for non-local foods.

- **Fair labor throughout the supply chain:** Fair labor principles should guide procurement decisions throughout the food supply chain, ensuring that suppliers, processors, and distributors adhere to ethical labor practices.

## Fair Labor Core Value

*Food Program Collaborator Insights*

- **Certification challenges for small businesses:** Traditional certifications can favor larger businesses due to paperwork and cost. Community-trusted small businesses can demonstrate ethical practices through relationships and integrity to serve as proxy for certifications.

- **Supporting worker well-being:** Promote healthcare, living wages, and educational opportunities to enhance overall worker well-being and professional development.

- **Intersection with buying from local producers:** Purchasing primarily from small, local producers allows for direct confirmation or verification of labor practices, ensuring workers are treated ethically.

- **Community and participatory approaches:** Participatory practices, community agreements, transparency, and knowledge-sharing can support multicultural workforces and promote fair labor across the supply chain.

### Health & Nutrition Core Value

*Community Core Team Insights*

- **Culture, traditional knowledge, and ancestral foods:** Prioritize seasonal, plant-based, nutrient-dense, minimally processed foods that connect to ancestral practices, cultural relevance, and local origins.

- **Holistic approaches to health & nutrition:** Consider physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic well-being. True health is interconnected with justice, community wellness, and the ethical treatment of workers, animals, and the environment.

- **Systemic focus over individual responsibility:** Food purchasing and consumer education should emphasize structural issues in food programs and nutrition, rather than placing the burden solely on individuals.

- **Education for future generations:** Support community education, especially for youth, about the enjoyment of healthy foods, understanding taste, and maintaining a connection to the origins and healing properties of food.

- **Community-informed procurement decisions:** Encourage transparency, reducing purely market-driven procurement practices, and ensuring marginalized communities have a voice in food purchasing decisions. This can help counterbalance the current food system driven by market demands, racial capitalism, and colonialism.

- **Importance of storytelling and community narratives:** Food narratives can emphasize procurement that honors individual and community stories.

### Health & Nutrition Core Value

*Food Program Collaborator Insights*

- **Clarify terms:** Terms like “whole” and “minimally processed” may require further definition or standards to be meaningful in procurement and program evaluation. Subjective terms like “delicious” might be less effective.

- **Consider adding animal welfare:** Standards supporting ethical treatment of animals should be included in values-based food procurement policies.

## Cultural Relevance Core Value

*Community Core Team Insights*

- **Defining cultural relevance:** Culturally relevant foods are those connected to a group's shared identity, history, and practices, including traditional recipes, preparation methods, and consumption patterns at specific events or gatherings.

- **Intentional purchasing decisions:** Procurement decisions can reinforce and sustain cultural identities. Buyers must consider who benefits from these choices and who is excluded, striving to balance representation, access, and fairness.

- **Culturally relevant foods within institutions:** Including culturally relevant foods in public institutions (e.g., schools, meal programs) supports both nutritional and cultural equality for historically marginalized populations.

- **Food is tied to identity and well-being:** Culturally relevant foods are deeply connected to nourishment, comfort, and familial or ancestral traditions. They extend beyond taste to body needs, rituals, and social practices within households and communities.

- **Community engagement:** Center community voices to define food needs and procurement practices. This supports providing culturally specific foods, from sourcing ingredients to preparation and access. It also helps acknowledge mixed cultural traditions in some families.

- **Trauma-informed approaches:** Recognize the historical inequities faced by BIPOC communities in food systems. Trauma-informed approaches and systemic solutions are essential for addressing inequities and supporting culturally relevant, BIPOC producers, communities, and eaters.

- **Intersections with racial equity, nutrition, and sustainability:** Cultural relevance intersects with equity, nutrition, and sustainability considerations, requiring thoughtful inclusion in values-based procurement strategies. Cultural relevance also includes addressing barriers to institutional market access for culturally relevant suppliers. Such barriers include land access, scaling challenges, food safety regulations, and upfront costs.

### Cultural Relevance Core Value

*Food Program Collaborator Insights*

- **Program-specific cultural relevance:** Culturally relevant procurement should reflect the distinct needs and preferences of each community, avoiding assumptions or treating communities as monolithic. Getting feedback for specific programs from communities directly through surveys or other participatory methods ensures food meets their tastes and traditions.

- **Representation in sourcing decisions:** Ensure that participating families see themselves reflected in the farms and producers supplying their food, strengthening connections between communities and the food system.

- **Intersection with environmental sustainability:** Cultural relevance should also include aspects of environmental sustainability; sourcing should avoid supporting practices that perpetuate ecological harm.

COMPANION D:

# Stakeholder Insights on Implementation Strategies

The summary below captures themes and insights from the Community Core Team and City Food Program Collaborators that informed the development of the **Recommended Implementation Strategies** section of the VBFP Framework. During workshops and focus groups, community stakeholders considered the following questions:

- *What **challenges** do you face when trying to make or fulfill food purchases that align with these Core Values?*
- *What **opportunities** do you see to implement these values in a realistic and impactful way?*
- *What **types of support** do you think the City and its collaborators could provide to help sustain and grow values-based food purchasing?*

This summary provides a deeper understanding of how the **Recommended Implementation Strategies** were refined and contextualized through community collaboration.

### Challenges in a Globalized Food System

Our global food system creates numerous challenges that make it hard to buy food based on community values. Local institutions, food producers, food businesses, and community-based programs operate at various scales within this dominant system. Below are some of the common challenges identified by Community Core Team members and focus group participants.

- **Food system inequities and historical harms:** Many BIPOC producers face barriers rooted in historical inequities. These barriers include discrimination in land access, funding, and market access, particularly for public and institutional food procurement. Addressing these disparities requires trauma-informed approaches and systemic solutions.

- **Lack of community accountability:** Community input and feedback is not reflected in the larger food economy. The global food system operates in response to market forces. This has created disparities in access to food retail in some communities, a lack of food choices in grocery and food service settings, and more. Large food access programs have limited methods to ensure community accountability since consumers and clients are usually not involved in food procurement and distribution decisions. Institutions, such as City or County governments and school districts, have not fully committed to ending hunger, supporting small-scale and BIPOC farmers, or localizing supply chains. Communities lack access to decision-makers in these institutions to advocate for programs or policies that address these issues. As a result, community-based, grassroots solutions attempt to tackle these issues directly, but with fewer resources.

- **Supply chain power & resource imbalances:** Institutional procurement is challenging, especially for small and under resourced food producers. They struggle to meet required purchasing volumes and logistics, and they lack the resources to scale up. Small and under-resourced food producers may not have the time and capacity to navigate institutional food procurement processes. Institutional buyers face challenges with limited seasonality of local foods and the time needed to source from multiple, small-scale vendors.

- **Lack of food systems knowledge:** Consumers, producers, institutional buyers, and other stakeholders in the supply chain may not have the same awareness of food system issues. They may not share the same understanding of values, historical and current inequities, supply chain imbalances, or potential solutions.

- **Lack of funding and support for food producers and suppliers:** Values-aligned food producers and suppliers lack reliable technical assistance and funding to buy equipment, improve processes, and improve operations. Without this support, it is hard for them to reach larger, wholesale buyers, either independently or through cooperative marketing.

### Challenges in the Regional Food System

Buyers and suppliers attempting to apply one or more of the Core Values to food purchases may face particular challenges. Below are some of the common pain points that were identified by Community Core Team and focus group participants.

- **Transparency and information gaps:** It is challenging to source more from values-aligned businesses without clear information about producers, foods, and suppliers, especially when some local items or only available seasonally. Purchasing data related to the Core Values is not being collected, tracked, or reported in a cohesive way across programs.

- **Food prices:** Food access programs are already trying to feed a lot of people with limited budgets and are sensitive to food prices. In some cases, implementing VBFP may raise food costs, reduce the purchasing power of food programs, and impact their capacity to serve food insecure communities.

- **Balancing competing Core Values:** Some values may conflict in practice. One example is a tropical, culturally relevant food that doesn't grow locally. This would require further prioritization and thoughtful compromise.

- **Logistical barriers:** Managing procurement from multiple small-scale vendors can be complicated and time consuming. It requires dealing with unprocessed items, ensuring deliveries are on time, and addressing knowledge gaps about local growers and producers. This may add to the time and labor of food buyers, which also increases costs.

- **Established sourcing practices:** City food programs, collaborators, and other institutional food service partners already purchase food from established suppliers and vendors who may or may not be values-aligned. It can be challenging to change those purchasing relationships, especially without external advocacy.

- **Focusing on identities within procurement decisions:** Focusing procurement on racial, gender, or cultural identities can limit support for suppliers who align with different values that may not share those identities. Strategies that address broadly shared social, economic, or environmental issues that affect many communities can help overcome this barrier.

- **Lowest-bid procurement processes:** Procurement processes, especially for publicly funded programs, often require competition. Larger vendors have more resources to participate and frequently offer lower prices due to economies of scale. This makes them more likely to win contracts. In turn, this increases their capacity to compete for future contracts. Smaller vendors with fewer resources, especially BIPOC-owned businesses that are historically under-resourced, are at a disadvantage in lowest-bid procurement processes that do not consider other values beyond price.

- **Lack of physical and social infrastructure for producers:** Small-scale food producers and suppliers need access to processing facilities, cold and frozen storage, transportation, and value chain coordinators. These supports would help them better access institutional buyers, and overcome challenges with some products that only grow seasonally.

### Ideas to Address Challenges

Collaborators can use multiple approaches and actions to address known challenges. Below are suggestions from the Community Core Team members and focus group participants.

- **Use trauma-informed approaches:** Design programs that address the food system inequities that BIPOC communities face.

- **Provide support for small-scale, BIPOC, and underrepresented producers:** Offer technical assistance, forward contracts, and business development resources to help these producers scale up and succeed in institutional markets. Address infrastructure gaps by supporting regional and local food hubs that provide value-added processing facilities, aggregation, distribution, and marketing.

- **Improve transparency, engagement, and awareness:**
    - Develop comprehensive, values-aligned vendor and supplier lists to facilitate procurement.
    - Raise public awareness about the impacts of the industrial food system and the benefits of local, values-aligned supply chains.
    - Share purchasing metrics and outcomes of values-based food procurement efforts across multiple values.
    - Host community engagement sessions or establish advisory committees for food purchasing.

- **Conduct an economic impact study or assessment:** A study on the economic effects of a values-based food purchasing initiative can help identify scalable, strengths-based strategies that are most likely to benefit local food producers and businesses. It can also highlight activities that can meet other community needs alongside the biggest economic impacts.

- **Provide incentives and subsidies:** Provide funding to City food programs and collaborators to help cover increased labor or food costs from more values-based food purchasing.

- **Support collaborative models and simplify processes:** Support collaborative marketing models that help small-scale suppliers aggregate and meet institutional demands. Pilot more collaborative purchasing models with buyers. Simplify procurement so that both suppliers and buyers can focus on building value chain partnerships.

- **Set policies with goals and a vision for food systems reciprocity:** Policies and programs should better articulate what the intended goals and impacts are throughout the food supply chain. This can include setting intentions around impacts on the land, food producers, and improving access to healthy food for eaters. Programs can also outline how supply chain partners will be acknowledged and compensated.

- **Support solidarity economies within programs and policies:** Create new ways to procure food that rely less on market-based, competitive processes. Programs can identify methods for food and meal sourcing that better acknowledge and compensate producers outside of market-based procurement. Examples the City could implement include:
    - Contracting with farmers and food producers to purchase the crops they choose to grow.
    - Hiring farmers to grow food on public land specifically for City programs.
    - Collective purchasing of five key foods from values-aligned suppliers, with fair pricing for local sourcing.

- **Capacity and relationship building:** Facilitate collaboration throughout the value chain by funding coordinators to connect producers, distributors, and buyers. Organize networking events or meetings to build relationships between institutions and small-scale producers. This could create a more connected “good food purchasing ecosystem” and culture with people across programs to build trust and equitable access for suppliers.

- **Education and outreach**
  - Provide training for procurement staff and community-based partners on VBFP principles and benefits.
  - Launch outreach campaigns to inform values-aligned suppliers about procurement opportunities and engage a wider network of institutional food service partners.
  - Educate the public, especially youth, about systems, policies, and procedures that affect food supply chains and procurement to build knowledge and leadership.

- **Strategic planning and flexibility:** Tackle logistical problems by rolling out new approaches in stages, find new ways to store and transport food, and adjust procurement strategies to meet seasonal availability.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The workshops and focus groups with the Community Core Team and Food Program Collaborators were designed and led by **Valerie Segrest**, BSN, MA, Principal and Co-founder of Tahoma Peak Solutions, **Nora Frank-Buckner**, Senior Consultant at Tahoma Peak Solutions, and **Lisa Wilson**, Consultant at **Tahoma Peak Solutions**. This team led analysis of community stakeholder feedback and initial development of this report.

**Valerie Segrest** is a Native Foods Nutritionist and an enrolled member of the Muckleshoot Tribe. Her work focuses on Indigenous food systems, environmental stewardship, and advancing values-based food frameworks that honor cultural relevance, equity, and sustainability.

**Nora Frank-Buckner** is a leader in food sovereignty and food systems advocacy throughout the Northwest. She specializes in building collaborative solutions that amplify the stories of Native food producers, foster equitable food policies, and uplift sustainable food systems that center cultural and community values.

**Lisa Wilson** brings expertise in collaborative food systems work and stakeholder engagement. She is committed to supporting values-driven initiatives that prioritize sustainability, equity, and community well-being through effective partnerships and strategic implementation.

Tahoma Peak Solutions is committed to fostering Indigenous inclusion in climate action, food sovereignty, and sustainable systems. Our work integrates community-driven approaches to create equitable solutions for current and future generations.

Members of the Community Core Team reviewed a final draft of the report, including **Deepa Iyer** at Ayeko Farm and **Yolimar Rivera Vázquez** at Coquí Consulting.

**Chris Iberle** and **Bridget Igoe**, Food Policy & Programs Strategic Advisors at **City of Seattle's Office of Sustainability & Environment** also contributed significant writing and organizing of content in this report. **Kelly Okumura** helped with copyediting and led the graphic design and layout.

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