



Hospitals: Tips for Buying Local

Recognizing that providing great food options is an important aspect of promoting health and wellness for their patients, staff and visitors, health care facilities throughout the Northwest are increasingly localizing their supply chains.

Wondering how you can get started or deepen existing programs? See the tips and resources below.

- **Identify products for sourcing locally:** Start small and select a handful of products (fruits, vegetables, cheese, meats, or bread) you use most by volume. Then find out which of those are available locally and in which season. Do you want to start with your in room service or your hospital café? Determine which menu items make the most sense to buy regionally and start where you are able.
- **Find suitable vendors:** Use FoodHub to search for suitable vendors who meet your various criteria. Once you've identified vendors you'd like to learn more about, use FoodHub's message center to connect with potential partners and discuss volume needs, price points, and your requirements for delivery, packaging, liability insurance and food safety. Ingredient lists are often of particular concern to hospitals. Be sure to ask detailed questions about labels and processing facilities as appropriate. You might also consider visiting your local farmers market and walking the stalls to see which regional products are readily available in your area. Also, ask other health care food service professionals which local vendors they are working with as those that are already working with health care facilities might be predisposed to doing business with you.
- **Purchase local products direct or through a distributor:** In some instances you may want to work directly with suitable vendors, in which case you'll want to negotiate delivery terms directly. In other cases it might make more sense to bring regional products in through your mainline distributor. In either case, FoodHub makes it easy for you to identify best method of delivery.
- **Develop seasonal menus to support incorporation of locally produced foods:** Look at current menu items for easy places to bring in local seasonal items such as salad bars, seasonal vegetable and fruit sides or healthy deserts. As you expand your procurement develop new menu items to include the expanded variety of foods available locally.
- **Set procurement goals and measurement strategies:** The impact of your decision to buy local products is enhanced if you set long and short range procurement goals, for example, 30% fresh produce purchased from local sources within 3 years with a 15% goal in the first year. For more information on developing plans and policies see resources below.
- **Include your staff:** Purchasing regional products will impact procurement and kitchen staff; including them in the beginning of your process can create opportunities to address challenges early. In particular this change may mean more time required to establish purchases and prepare food as well as changes in delivery schedule.
- **Promote your efforts to your customers:** Extend the impact of your purchasing to increase understanding of the benefits of healthy, regional foods by posting information about local products on the menu.

Resources for Buyers - Healthcare Institutions:

- **Healthy Food in Health Care:** www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org Key resource documents:
 - [Healthy Food In Health Care: A Menu of Options](#) (pdf)
 - [Seasonal Foods: A New Menu for Public Health](#) (pdf)
 - [Case Study: Incorporating Locally and Sustainably Produced Foods into Food Services](#) (pdf)
- **Seasonal Produce Guides:** [Oregon Harvest Calendar](#) ; [Washington Harvest Calendar](#)
- **Glynwood Guide to Serving Local Foods on Your Menu:**
<http://www.glynwood.org/assets/PDF's/ReportsandGuides/GuideLocalMenu.pdf>
- **Green Guide for Health Care, Food Service Credits:** Tool for planning and measuring success for sustainability in food service operations (including procurement). www.gghc.org
- **Guide to Developing Sustainable Food Procurement Policy:**
www.foodalliance.org/sustainablefoodpolicy/index.html