Anchors in Action Alliance is a first-of-its-kind, national cross-sector partnership among Center for Good Food Purchasing, Health Care Without Harm, and Real Food Challenge. Together these groups represent more than 850 hospitals, 7,800 elementary and secondary schools, 28 public institutions in 14 cities, and 100 plus colleges and universities - representing food service budgets collectively in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

Hospitals, schools, universities, and municipal governments have the potential to improve public and environmental health and to strengthen the economic vitality of their communities. As anchor institutions, they are rooted in place, holding significant investments in real estate and social capital, are among the largest employers in their communities, and are often explicitly oriented toward supporting community health in alignment with their missions.

These three organizations seek to leverage the procurement power and moral authority of anchor institutions to realize their shared vision of a food system that conserves and renews natural resources, advances social justice and animal welfare, builds community wealth, and fulfills the food and nutrition needs of all eaters now and into the future.

Anchors in Action groups drive change by unifying demand within and across institutional networks for supply chains that benefit all people, especially underserved and marginalized communities, ultimately seeking:

- Healthier, more sustainable, and ethically produced food for those who eat in institutions.
- Market access and resources for producers who supply institutions.
- A shift in the entire food system towards health, justice, sustainability, equity, and community ownership.
**THE PROBLEM**

Common practices in our modern, industrialized food system are creating significant global health, environmental, and economic problems. Current policies favor a consolidated food marketplace and large-scale producers and manufacturers, reinforcing structural inequities for communities of color and those that are economically disadvantaged. Food workers struggle to live healthy, dignified lives on poverty wages. Rural communities cope with the economic and environmental impacts of industrial agriculture.

As a result, our nation’s communities are burdened with food insecurity, social inequities, health disparities, and nutrition-related chronic diseases.

*Food is our most intimate and powerful connection to each other, to our cultures, and to the earth, and to fix our food system is to take one giant collective step towards healing our bodies, our economy, and our environment.*

- HEAL Food Alliance

**REAL = HEALTHY = GOOD FOOD**

A healthy food system conserves, protects, and regenerates the human and ecological systems that enable food production to support the needs of all eaters now and in future generations.

This vision for a restorative food system ensures equitable access to affordable, health-promoting food, and provides opportunities for farmers, workers, and eaters to participate in decision-making around the way food is produced, processed, distributed, marketed, consumed, and disposed.

Anchor institutions are embracing their role as anchors by improving public and environmental health and strengthening the economic vitality and equity in their communities.

---

**The Solution: Cross-Sector Collaboration**

Anchors in Action groups are aligning the efforts and leveraging the collective power of these institutional sectors to:

1. Increase the amount of ethically-produced foods being purchased and served at hospitals, schools, and universities around the country.
2. Increase tracking capacity throughout the supply chain so that institutions can make easy choices for ethically produced foods through their broadline and other distributors.
3. Transform the marketplace to make ethically produced foods available and affordable to all by supporting regional, sustainable production.

The three Anchors in Action groups seek to align our individual organizations’ work to:

- Shape the public conversation about food systems change.
- Clarify priority food system standards among institutions.
- Pilot and prove models of food system change at a cross-sector; multi-institutional level.
- Leverage public and institutional moneys to localize food economies and open pathways for equitable food access.

Leveraging the procurement power and moral authority of public institutions will drive change, unify both collective demand and principles that define good food, and create a vision for a better food system that will benefit all people.
WORKING WITH ANCHORS IN ACTION TO SHIFT YOUR PURCHASING AND TRANSFORM THE FOOD SYSTEM

The use of any of the food category procurement standards provided by Health Care Without Harm, Real Food Challenge, or Center for Good Food Purchasing will help make progress toward the Anchors in Action shared goal for a sustainable and equitable food system. These food category procurement standards use food certifications, label claims, and other sourcing criteria as guidance for any institution to leverage their purchasing to achieve public health and community wealth.

While any of the noted standards support the common goal, there are sector-specific considerations. It is important to track, benchmark, and report progress within any one sector (health care, higher education, government) to show trends and overcome barriers unique to the sector.

The following is guidance in navigating available procurement guidance:

- **Health care institutions:**
  Reference the shared Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealth sector-specific criteria, food service benchmarks and the Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards for annual reporting process and requirements. As a public health care institution, the Center for Good Food Purchasing offers additional procurement criteria to align with public K-12 schools, public universities and government purchasing requirements.

- **Higher education institutions:**
  Reference the Real Food Standards for sector-specific criteria and work with students to run a Real Food Calculator assessment and identify potential purchasing shifts. The Real Food Standards are aligned with AASHE STARS food purchasing standards and the Calculator results can be used to complete a STARS assessment. As a public college or university, the Center for Good Food Purchasing offers additional procurement criteria to align with public K-12 schools, public hospitals and government purchasing requirements.

- **Government entities:**
  Reference the Center for Good Food Purchasing’s Good Food Purchasing Standards for a metric based, flexible framework that encourages public institutions to direct their buying power toward five core values: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition.

- **K-12 institutions:**
  Reference the Center for Good Food Purchasing’s Good Food Purchasing Standards for a metric based, flexible framework that encourages public institutions to direct their buying power toward five core values: local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition.
There are many similarities in the food category purchasing standards between Anchors in Action organizations. In areas where they deviate it simply signals a difference in the approach each organization takes to shifting the food system through working with their primary stakeholder groups. Internal staff within each of these organizations can assist you in navigating the food supply chain to identify foods that meet associated procurement criteria, set benchmarks, and report progress annually.

- Health Care Without Harm’s national food category purchasing criteria and food service benchmarks focus on criteria for Environmental Sustainability while including some criteria that encourage Local Economies, Nutrition and Animal Welfare. Hospitals are asked to track and report annually on purchases through the Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards application. Additional purchasing criteria are requested and reported by hospitals participating in Health Care Without Harm innovation projects such as ProcureWorks, Seasonal Harvest, or the Cool Food Pledge. This approach showcases both improvements in the health sector food supply chain over the industry standard while also signaling progress in food trends, local community supply chains and meal composition.

- The Real Food Standards are comprehensive, with food criteria for Local & Community Based, Fair, Humane, and Ecologically Sound. The standards differentiate between criteria that meet a high bar for real food (Green) and criteria that represent a significant improvement over the industry standard (Yellow). They also include “disqualifiers” such as labor violations and concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Using the Real Food Calculator, students conduct assessments, using a 2-month sample of invoices to get a Real Food percentage and a breakdown of Real Food purchasing. The Real Food Standards are also the foundation of the Real Meals Campaign, a coalition-led campaign calling on Food Service Management Companies to reorient their purchasing toward real food.

- Center for Good Food Purchasing directs public institutions to shift their purchasing to meet at least the baseline standard in each of five core value categories of the Good Food Purchasing Standards: Nutrition, Local Economies, Valued Workforce, Environmental Sustainability, Animal Welfare. The Center works with participating institutions to: evaluate how current purchasing practices align with the Good Food Purchasing Standards, measure progress annually, and celebrate institutional successes in shifting towards a values-based purchasing model. The Center issues a Good Food Provider verification seal to participating institutions that meet baseline requirements across the five value categories.
HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM seeks to transform health care worldwide so the sector reduces its environmental footprint and becomes a leader in the global movement for environmental health and justice. The Healthy Food in Health Care program harnesses the purchasing power and expertise of the health care sector to redefine hospital food, activate its potential to heal people and communities, and adopt practices and policies to support a healthy, sustainable food system. Visit noharm.org or contact Stacia Clinton healthyfood@hcwh.org for more information.

THE REAL FOOD CHALLENGE leverages the power of youth and universities to create a healthy, fair and green food system. Our primary campaign is to shift $1 billion of existing university food budgets away from industrial farms and junk food and towards local/community-based, fair, ecologically sound and humane food sources – what we call “real food”– by 2020. The Real Food Challenge maintains a national network of student food activists—providing opportunities for networking, learning, and leadership development for thousands of emerging leaders. Visit realfoodchallenge.org or contact Hannah Weinronk calculator@realfoodchallenge.org for more information.

THE CENTER FOR GOOD FOOD PURCHASING uses the power of procurement to create a transparent and equitable food system that prioritizes the health and well-being of people, animals, and the environment. We do this through the nationally-networked adoption and implementation of the Good Food Purchasing Program by major public institutions. Visit www.goodfoodpurchasing.org or contact Alexa Delwiche adelwiche@goodfoodpurchasing.org for more information.