



# MEETINGS & CATERED EVENTS

GOOD  
FOOD  
HERE



EAT RIGHT OHIO

# ASSESSING & EVALUATING MEETINGS AND CATERED EVENTS

**Assessing Food and Beverage Products:** Use the Healthy Meal Scorecard and the Healthy Snack/Breakfast Scorecard at the end of this section to determine the healthy food/meal score of selections offered during a meeting or event.

**Evaluating Customer Acceptance:** Staff and customer surveys are an excellent way to increase customer buy-in when introducing new or different options. Use the Healthy Meeting/Conference Evaluation at the end of this section to evaluate the acceptance of food and beverages offered at the end of a meeting/event.

These tools should be completed before any product changes are made to assess the current environment, and periodically as new products are added/changed to assess improvements.

## TIPS AND GUIDANCE FOR USING THESE MATERIALS

**Policy Considerations:** Having a policy stating that food served at organization meetings and events includes healthy options sends a clear message that the health and wellness of attendees is valued. Decide if you want to create a policy that dictates food and beverage standards at one or more of the following events: on-site meetings, off-site meetings, conference events, etc. Having an organization policy is sustainable; even if leadership changes, healthy standards will be a part of routine business operations.

**Phase-in Approach:** If making drastic changes all at once is overwhelming, follow a phase-in approach to gradually improve food and beverage options. Work with vendors/food providers on a timeline and options for ordering healthier foods. Begin

with making small changes to on-site meetings and over time introduce changes to larger catered events and conference dining.

**Catered Events vs. Food from Home:** Often times food is made at home and brought in to share during a meeting or event. Having the same nutrition standards for these snacks and meals is important to uphold the organization's culture of health. Communicate the standards and share ideas about how to work toward meeting them. Utilizing healthy meeting sign-up sheets can make the transition easier. An example of a mealtime D.I.Y. Taco Bar can be found at the end of this section.

Do not serve food if the meeting/event is between meal times; instead include opportunities for physical activity. Healthy beverages may still be provided.



# HEALTHIER FOOD SWAPS

Remember: All food swaps should still meet the nutrition standards.

## BEVERAGE SWAPS:

Choose...	Instead Of...
Water (plain , sparkling or flavored), coffee, tea, 100% juice	Sugar-sweetened beverages
Low-fat or non-fat milk	Whole, 2% milk, or half and half

## BREAKFAST FOOD SWAPS:

Choose...	Instead Of...
Fruit, fresh or canned in water or 100% juice; unsweetened apple sauce	Fruits in heavy syrup
Small whole grain bagels or muffins, low-fat granola bars	Croissants, doughnuts, sweet rolls, pastries
Unsweetened whole grain cereals	Sweetened cereals and refined grain cereals

## LUNCH AND DINNER FOOD SWAPS:

Choose...	Instead Of...
Whole grain pasta salads with light vinaigrette	Pasta salads made with mayonnaise
Whole grain breads	Croissants and white breads
Greek yogurt/low-fat sour cream and vegetable toppings	Butter, sour cream, and bacon bit toppings
Vegetable plate with hummus or whole grain breads with olive oil	Bread basket with butter
Desserts such as fresh fruit, low-fat plain or frozen yogurt	Desserts such as ice cream, cheesecake, pies, cream puffs, cake, pastries, cobbler
Dips such as salsa, hummus, bean-based	Dips made with mayonnaise, sour cream, cream cheese, or cheese sauce



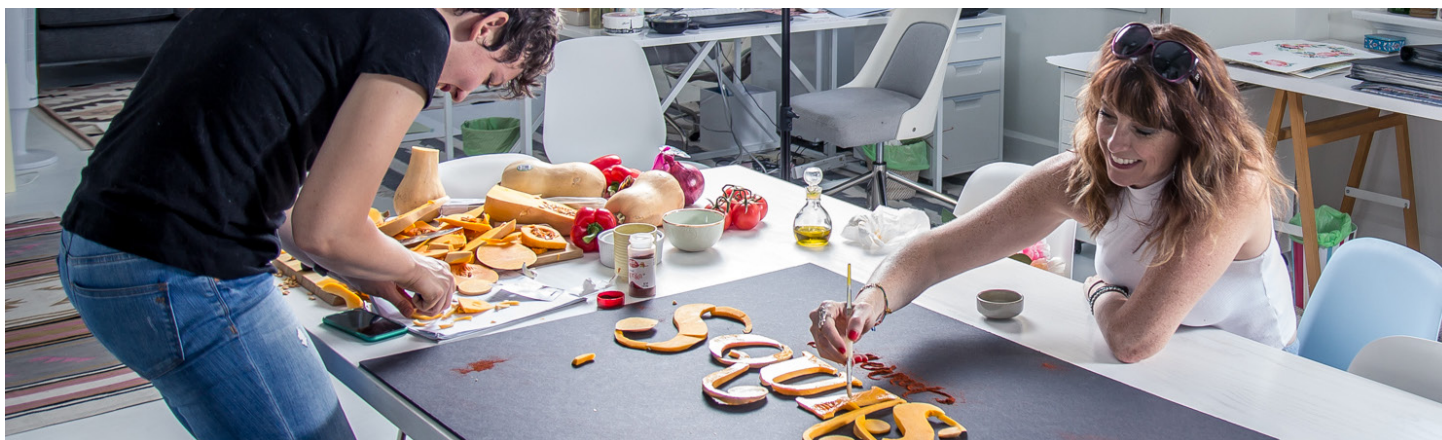
## SNACK FOOD SWAPS:

Choose...	Instead Of...
Cut up fruit and vegetables	Chips and cookies
Whole grain crackers or light popcorn	Refined grain crackers and chips
Plain yogurt and berries, yogurt dip with fruit	Ice cream bars
Whole grain granola bars	Candy and snack cakes
Vegetables with hummus, salsa, low-fat dressing	Chips and dip
Fruit cups in water or 100% juice	Pudding cups

### Steps for working with caterers to determine the menu:

1. Start with the initial menu provided.
2. Identify where modifications are needed to fit the nutrition standards (cooking methods, portion sizes, substitutions).
3. Ask for fruits and/or vegetables to be served in larger portions and variety.
4. Specify that drinking water be provided at all times.
5. Request that whole grain options be used whenever possible.
6. Ask about using lower-sodium options.
7. Request at least one vegetarian option with a meat alternative.
8. Ask about eco-friendly opportunities such as locally-sourced food, reusable dishware and linens, composting, etc.

For more inspiration, tips, and guidance on working with hotels and caterers, refer to the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity Healthy Meeting Toolkit and American Heart Association Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit.





### Action Plan Checklist:

- ☐ Gather commitment and engagement from staff in relevant departments.
- ☐ Assess your current meeting and event food offerings.
- ☐ Identify vendors/food providers (caterers, restaurants, grocery stores) in your area that are possible options for in-house catering.
- ☐ Set up a 15-minute informational interview with vendors. Ask these six initial questions:
  - Do you currently offer healthier items on your menu?
  - What are your healthier menu offerings?
  - Have any other companies requested healthier meals? If so, how is that going?
  - Do you purchase from any local food sources/producers?
  - Can you accommodate special requests such as vegetarian, gluten free or other?
  - Can you provide calorie and sodium content for your menu offerings?
- ☐ Select the vendor(s) you think can best meet your needs.
- ☐ Email your organization to communicate upcoming changes and complete the Healthy Eating/Conference Evaluation at the next several meetings for baseline assessment of food acceptance and ideas for future changes.
- ☐ Plan a longer, in-person meeting with the vendor's primary contact(s) to discuss:
  - Meeting the American Heart Association nutrition standards,
  - Identifying menu offerings that may be acceptable and discuss possible substitutions,
  - Other important issues such as minimum order, cost, notice required, delivery time, supplies, etc.
- ☐ Draft policies (if needed).
- ☐ Decide on a timeline with vendors and begin making changes.
- ☐ Have attendees complete the Healthy Eating/Conference Model Evaluation at the end of meetings/events in which new foods were served; communicate results.
- ☐ Work with vendors to make desired changes as needed based on consumer acceptance and organization needs.

# MARKETING AND PROMOTION

## Product

- Clearly label which items are healthier options

## Promotion

- Include healthy cooking tips and recipes routinely in newsletters and e-mails
- Host “Lunch and Learn,” taste testing, and recipe swap events
  - Tip: Reach out to your local Extension office or health department for support
  - Example topics: Meal Planning; Shopping for Healthy Foods on a Budget; Reading Nutrition Labels; Adding Physical Activity to your Routine; Fats, Carbohydrates, Protein and Fiber; Common Myths and Fad Diets; Salt and Sugar
- Place signage throughout the organization:
  - Good Food Here materials
  - Water First for Thirst campaign signage
- Paint a fruit and vegetable mural or post other healthy food visuals



## Placement

- Place healthy options where they are easily visible.
- Offer healthier options multiple times, including at the beginning and the front sections of the serving line.



# HEALTHY MEETING SCORECARD

	0 points	1 points	2 points
Is water available?	No	Yes, but not enough for all and/or takes some effort to access	Yes, it is freely available and easily accessible
Is there a whole/sliced fruit option available? (Not juice)	No whole fruit options are available	Yes, but not enough for everyone	Yes, enough for everyone to have a full serving
Is there a non-fried vegetable option available?	No non-fried vegetable options are available	Yes, but not enough for everyone	Yes, enough for everyone to have a full serving
Is there a whole grain option available?	No whole grain options are available	Yes, but not enough for everyone	Yes, enough for everyone to have a full serving
Is there a lean meat and/or meat alternative available?	No lean meat or meat alternative is available	Yes, but not enough for everyone	Yes, enough for everyone to have a full serving
Are unsweetened dairy items available?	No dairy options are available	Yes, but not enough for everyone	Yes, enough for everyone to have a full serving
Are cookies, candies, sweets and/or pastries available?	Yes, in large portion sizes	Yes, but only in small portion sizes	No cookies, candies, sweets and or pastries are available
Are salty, high saturated fat snacks available?	Yes, in large portion sizes	Yes, but only in small portion sizes	No salty, high saturated fat snacks are available
Are vegetarian options available?	No	Unappealing vegetarian option or too few servings	Appealing vegetarian options, including a meat alternative
Are sugar-sweetened beverages available?	Yes, only sweetened beverages are available	Yes, sweetened and unsweetened beverages are available	No, only water and unsweetened beverages are available
Are opportunities available for brief activity breaks?	No	Yes, but not hourly	Yes, hourly
Column point totals:	0	1 x ____ = ____	2 x ____ = ____

**Grand total:** \_\_\_\_\_

A total score of 18 or more - Congratulations! You hosted a healthy meeting!

A total score of 12 - 17 - You are on the right track!

A total score of 11 or less - Improvement needed.

# HEALTHY MEETING/EVENT SURVEY

[ORGANIZATION] is conducting a survey to gather information about the food and beverages served at [EVENT]. Our goal is to offer healthy options you will enjoy. Thank you for your input.

1. Do you think this meeting provided enough healthy food options?

- ☐ Yes, there were plenty of healthy food options
- ☐ No, there were not enough healthy food options
- ☐ I do not know or do not have an opinion

Additional ideas/thoughts to share: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Did you like the food served at this meeting?

- ☐ Yes, very much
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ No, not at all
- ☐ I do not know or do not have an opinion

3. What were your favorite food options provided at this meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What were your least favorite food options provided at this meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you like the beverage options provided at this meeting?

- ☐ Yes, very much
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ No, not at all
- ☐ I do not know or do not have an opinion

6. Do you have any additional suggestions or recommendations about the foods and beverages served at this meeting? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What healthy foods and beverages would you like to see offered at future meetings? \_\_\_\_\_



# DO-IT-YOURSELF TACO BAR

A fun twist on the traditional potluck! Everyone brings one or two ingredients to create a buffet style bar. Simply write your name next to the ingredient you would like to bring!

## TORTILLAS

Soft Corn Tortillas: \_\_\_\_\_

Whole Wheat Tortillas: \_\_\_\_\_

Baked Tortilla Chips: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## FILLING GRAINS

Brown Rice: \_\_\_\_\_

Quinoa: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## TASTY TOPPINGS

Diced Tomatoes: \_\_\_\_\_

Shredded Lettuce: \_\_\_\_\_

Sautéed Peppers and Onions: \_\_\_\_\_

Corn: \_\_\_\_\_

Low-fat Sour Cream: \_\_\_\_\_

Low-fat Cheese: \_\_\_\_\_

Radishes: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## HEARTY TOPPINGS

Black Beans: \_\_\_\_\_

Pinto Beans: \_\_\_\_\_

Chicken: \_\_\_\_\_

Lean Ground Beef: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## FLAVORFUL SALSA

Tomato Salsa: \_\_\_\_\_

Salsa Verde: \_\_\_\_\_

Corn Salsa: \_\_\_\_\_

Guacamole: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## FRUITY SIDES

Fruit Salad: \_\_\_\_\_

Assorted Melons: \_\_\_\_\_

Diced Pineapples: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## BEVERAGES

Water: \_\_\_\_\_

Fruit Infused Water: \_\_\_\_\_

Unsweetened Iced Tea: \_\_\_\_\_

Tea and Hot Water: \_\_\_\_\_

Coffee: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## SERVICE WARE

Plates: \_\_\_\_\_

Bowls: \_\_\_\_\_

Napkins: \_\_\_\_\_

Spoons/forks/knives: \_\_\_\_\_

Cups (hot & cold): \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from Columbus Public Health's Growing Healthy Kids Columbus Coalition

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For more D.I.Y. meal and snack ideas, go to: [columbus.gov/healthygatherings/](http://columbus.gov/healthygatherings/)

# SAMPLE POLICY

## RATIONALE OF POLICY

[Insert organization] is committed to the health and well-being of our employees. The strong relationship between diet and health and the increasing rates of overweight and obesity make supporting nutritious choices at work part of our commitment to health. The following guidelines were designed to make the healthy food and beverage choice the easy choice. By following these guidelines, we can promote better health and help reduce risks for chronic diseases.

## POLICY COMPONENTS

Effective [insert date], it is the policy of [insert organization] that when foods and beverages are purchased with [insert organization] funds, served on [insert organization] property, and/or served at [insert organization]-sponsored meetings or events, the vendor must comply with the following nutrition standards recommended by the American Heart Association:

### Food Standards:

At least [insert percent] % of foods provided should meet these standards:

#### **Snacks (except plain nuts and nut/fruit mixes)**

- ≤ 200 calories per label serving
- ≤ 240 mg sodium per label serving
- 0 g trans fat per label serving (no partially hydrogenated oils)
- ≤ 1 g saturated fat
- No candy (sugar-free mints and gum are acceptable)
- No regular chips (baked chips and pretzels are OK)
- Grain-based bars ≥ 10% daily value dietary fiber and ≤ 7 g total sugars per label serving

#### **Plain nuts and nut/fruit mixes**

- Serving size ≤ 1.5 ounces (1 ounce preferred)
- ≤ 140 mg sodium per label serving

#### **Entrees**

- ≤ 500 calories
- ≤ 15 g total fat (excluding nuts, seeds, cheese, and products containing nuts or nut butters)
- ≤ 2 g saturated fat (per 200 calories; excluding nuts, seeds, cheese and products containing nuts or nut butters)
- 0 g trans fat per label serving
- ≤ 230 mg sodium
- ≤ 10 g sugar (excluding fruits and vegetables that do not contain added sweeteners or fats)
- ≥ 2 g fiber (if product is grain-based or potato-based)

#### **Meals**

- ≤ 700 calories
- ≤ mg sodium (≤ 525 mg preferred)
- ≤ 5 g saturated fat
- ≤ 105 mg cholesterol
- ≤ 0.5 g trans fat (no partially hydrogenated oils)
- At least 2 servings (1 – 1.5 cups) of vegetables and/or fruits

**Beverage Standards:**

At least [insert percent] % of beverages provided should meet these standards:

- Water: (plain, sparkling and flavored) ≤ 10 calories per serving
- Fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk and milk alternatives (soy, almond, etc.): ≤ 130 calories per 8 fluid ounces
- 100% fruit or vegetable juice (no added sugars/sweeteners, except non-nutritive sweeteners): 120 calories per 8 fluid ounces, 150 calories per 10 fluid ounces, 180 calories per 12 fluid ounces
- Unsweetened coffee and tea: Fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk or non-dairy creamer only
- All other beverages: ≤ 10 calories per serving

**Implementation Standards:**

The vendor must:

- Work with [insert organization] staff to highlight healthier options using signage or displays.
- Promote healthier portion sizes by using smaller sized dishware and serving ware.

**Considerations:**

The vendor should consider:

- Providing nutrition information for each food and beverage offered including (but not limited to), calories, sodium, sugar, and saturated fat.
- Providing a variety of prepared foods that appeal to consumers with diverse dietary requirements and preferences, including but not limited to vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, low sodium, and low sugar.
- Strategically placing foods and beverages to encourage consumers to select healthier options.

**Monitoring, Compliance and Review**

- An employee survey will be administered [annually] that evaluates the use of the policy and seeks further suggestions for its improvement and ongoing implementation.
- An assessment of [meetings/events] will be administered [monthly] by [insert staff member/committee/organization] to evaluate compliance with the policy standards.
- [Insert name of organization] will evaluate and update this policy [6 months] from implementation and every [2 years] after, at minimum.

Signature (Organization)	Date
Signature (Vendor)	Date

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**Resources:**

Exceed: The Tool for Using Healthy Food Service Guidelines. (2017). Change Lab Solutions. Retrieved from [www.exceedtool.com](http://www.exceedtool.com)  
Healthy Workplace Food and Beverage Toolkit. (2014). American Heart Association. Retrieved from [www.heart.org/foodwhereur](http://www.heart.org/foodwhereur)  
Key Components of Food Procurement & Vending Policies. (2015). Public Health Law Center. Retrieved from [http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/PHLC.fs\\_.healthy.vending.procurement.WEB\\_.2015.pdf](http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/PHLC.fs_.healthy.vending.procurement.WEB_.2015.pdf)



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