



Food and Nutrition Policy

Purpose and Guidelines

As a community organization supporting historically marginalized and underrepresented communities, specifically Queer and Trans-Pacific Islanders (QTPI) and other gender diverse individuals of color, UTOPIA Washington acknowledges the impact nutritious food has on the health of our community. In addition to breaking down barriers to food access, we are dedicated to providing options that enable positive health outcomes, promote mental well-being, help prevent and manage diet-related chronic disease and respect the cultural needs and dietary preferences of the communities we serve.

Our Food and Nutrition Policy, developed in collaboration with the American Heart Association, demonstrates our commitment to the quality of food we offer our community and serves as guiding principles for food gleaning and purchasing. Additionally, the policy will guide and educate staff responsible for food box assembly and hot meal menu selection and allows these efforts to be sustainable regardless of staffing changes or new community partners. We will utilize the [Healthy Eating Research \(HER\) Nutrition Guidelines](#) as a tool to guide our nutritional priorities.

Overall Nutrition Commitments

To prioritize the health of our community, we commit to increasing the availability of high nutrient foods, focusing on those that fall under the “choose often” category of the HER Guidelines, including whole grains, lean proteins, local fruits and vegetables and low-sodium options. We also strive to distribute items that meet the cultural and dietary needs of the diverse and evolving population that we serve, especially Pacific Islander staples including taro and taro leaves, coconut milk, yams, green bananas, bele manihot, bok choy, sea grapes, ota, breadfruit and fish.

Food Donations

As our primary food source is donations, when gleaning food through community partners (including local BIPOC farms and community organizations and vendors) and individual donations, our overall nutrition commitments coupled with the following principles will guide our choices:

Choose Often	Choose Rarely
Lean proteins	Breaded or pre-prepared items
Dark green vegetables	Sugary beverages or candy
Whole fruits	Large quantities of dessert items
Low-fat dairy products	Heavy creams
Whole grains, such as whole-wheat and brown rice	Foods without nutritious value
Water	

Food Purchases

When grant funding is available, we commit to purchasing items that align with our commitment to nutrition and reflect the cultural diversity of our community. We will prioritize fresh produce, spices, cooking staples and other items on the “choose often” list of the HER Guidelines. We choose not to purchase sugary beverages, candy or food without nutritional value.

1) Schwartz M, Levi R, Lott M, Arm K, Seligman H. Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; 2020. Available at <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>

Special Programs

- Food box deliveries – During our selection and assembly of emergency food boxes and meal kits for our most vulnerable community members (including those experiencing homelessness, older adults and individuals with disabilities) we are committed to prioritizing nutrient dense, ready-to-eat options that meet dietary needs while being mindful of restricted or non-existent storage and preparation capacities.
- Hot meals – When developing the menu for our hot meal services, we will utilize the [USDA's MyPlate](#), as a tool to guide our choices. We commit to ensuring that every meal strives for a balanced, nutrient-dense plate that contains protein, grains, fruit, and vegetables.
 - Every meal should include vegetables for all recipients, including salad as available.
 - Each mealtime will include a healthy vegetarian and/or vegan option for those who prefer.
 - Water (including no-calorie, flavored sparkling water) and coffee will be the default beverages.

Broader Commitments

We will elevate our commitment to providing foods that meet health and cultural needs while supporting other community-led efforts by sourcing fresh, culturally relevant produce from local BIPOC farm(s). By developing gleaning relationships with organizations within a five-mile radius, we will reduce our environmental impact by decreasing air and traffic pollution.

Additionally, we will provide [recipe suggestions](#) from our partners at the American Heart Association to empower individuals to utilize nutritious ingredients available in the food pantry that they may not be familiar with preparing.

Administration and Implementation

This policy, approved by our team on 12/06/2021, will take effect on 1/04/2022 at which time it will become part of the organizational policies and procedures. We will communicate the adoption of this policy through promoting on social media (@utopia_wa), adding to our [website](#), including in our newsletter, sharing directly with community partners and vendors and providing printed copies in food boxes to inform members. All new staff and volunteers will be provided an orientation to the policy by UTOPIA Washington's Wellness Navigator.

1) Schwartz M, Levi R, Lott M, Arm K, Seligman H. Healthy Eating Research Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System. Durham, NC: Healthy Eating Research; 2020. Available at <http://healthyeatingresearch.org>