

Grow Your Business with Equity

Strategies to Advance Equity in Food Hubs

Food hubs have the potential to create a more equitable food system that values quality jobs, healthy food access, local economic growth, small business development, and sustainable agriculture. Food hubs designed with these equity considerations can provide opportunities for growers and producers, aggregators and distributors, and the consumer. Below are strategies for developing profitable, equitable food hubs that create more just, fair, and inclusive food systems and local economies.

- **Engage residents and community groups in the food hub planning process** - Involve diverse community members in food hub planning from idea to implementation. Residents and stakeholders can provide crucial insight into issues such as location, hiring, and product mix. The following Community Engagement Resource Guides are helpful for thinking about how to engage your community:
 - [Community Engagement Resource Guide: What It Is](#)
 - [Community Engagement Resource Guide: Why Use It](#)
 - [Community Engagement Resource Guide: Checklist](#)
- **Connect to small and mid-sized farmers and producers** – Locate farmers and growers in the region that have had difficulty accessing broader urban markets, especially low-income farmers, because these growers may be looking for new aggregation, marketing, and distribution opportunities to scale their production.
- **Prioritize local farmers of color** – Identify and reach out to farmers and vendors of color to support historically marginalized producers and strengthen a diverse regional farm economy. Immigrant farmers and farmers of color may grow culturally appropriate foods that will meet consumer demand in their communities.
- **Choose a location that maximizes equity benefits** – Select a site in a low-income neighborhood, or a community of color, to maximize benefits for these residents. In addition to improved food access, siting your hub in a low-income community will facilitate local hiring, workforce development, and, if done well, a commitment from the community to support the hub.
- **Employ members of the community** – Local hiring can help un- or under-employed residents of underserved communities benefit from the economic development brought by the food hub. Food system jobs are often an opportunity to employ workers who have previously been excluded and overlooked.
- **Assess demand for different products** – Engage residents of local communities, restaurants, and institutional buyers to find out which produce items and value-added products are most desirable. Understanding customers' product preferences and creating a culturally relevant product line ensures that food hub products will have a dedicated customer base.

- **Make the food hub a community asset** – Make the food hub an inviting, appealing asset to the community. In addition to offering healthy food, the physical appearance of the food hub can help revitalize a neighborhood. If possible, serve your community by providing broader services such as educational opportunities and community programming.

Check out PolicyLink's Equitable Food Hubs Tool in the [Equitable Development Toolkit](#) – It's available online [here](#).