



Fuelling Recreation in Your Community Toolkit



Are you doing your part to support healthy kids in your community?

Your Role in Supporting Healthy Food Environments in Your Recreation Facility

- As a recreation facility in your community, part of your mandate is to provide a supportive and healthy food environment.
- Serving food in your facility that is in line with food available in schools provides consistent messaging for children and youth.
- Patrons in your community are asking for healthier options – you can provide them with this!

According to a Recreation Venue Food Choice survey conducted in the Leeds and Grenville area' ...



65.8% of respondents indicated that they purchase food from recreation facility food services (e.g., canteen, vending machines, etc.).



79.9% indicated they buy food from a canteen/snack bar/concession stand. The remaining **20.1%** is purchased from vending machines.



Taste was the number one reason people purchased foods (**35.5%**), followed by nutritional value (**25.1%**) and convenience (**22.4%**).



56.4% of patrons report they would purchase healthier food options if they were available.

The top choices for healthier foods that patrons would like to see available at recreation facilities were:

- Fruit (fresh or cups)
- 100% fruit juice
- Yogurt
- Water
- Wraps
- Real fruit smoothies
- Chocolate milk
- Trail mix

Four steps to get started in your facility!

- 1** Improve the nutrition of what you sell – You don't have to stop selling certain items altogether – instead you could look for healthier options, such as lower sodium hotdogs, lower fat hamburgers, using whole grain buns, and switching to an oil that has zero trans-fat.
- 2** Remove the products that are not selling well – If you have unhealthy foods that are not selling, removing them will result in more money being available for healthier items. This also creates a less competitive environment for healthier food items.
- 3** Replace these items with healthier options – profits are least likely to be affected if you replace the less popular unhealthy items with healthier choices.
- 4** Promote the changes that you have made in your facility – Posters, contests, and social media are all ways to promote the new healthier items available.

What steps can you take to get started today?

Success Stories across Ontario

Here are some examples of what other recreation facilities across the province have done to create healthier vending and canteen options.

Town of Gananoque

In 2011, the Town of Gananoque passed a bylaw that energy drinks will not be sold on Town properties. This was a request that was brought to council by the community. Still today, in 2017, there are no energy drinks being sold on Town properties!

Oxford County - Blandford Blenheim

In the township of Blandford-Blenheim, the manager of Parks & Recreation worked with Oxford County Public Health to create a healthier food and beverage environment in one of their local arenas. They did this by:

- Adding new healthier items to their canteen's menu.
- Offering healthier menu items at a lower price than the less healthy items.
- Increasing the price of less healthy menu items.
- Altering their hours of operation and staffing to align with the peak hours of the arena.

North Dumfries

In the township of North Dumfries, the manager of Parks & Recreation worked to create a healthier beverage environment by:

- Moving their vending machines to easy-to-access areas where water was otherwise unavailable.
- Increasing the percentage of water bottles available in their vending machines and decreasing the percentage of pop cans/bottles available.
- Increasing the price of pop in their vending machines.
- Decreasing the price of water in their vending machines.
- Eliminating advertising for less healthy beverages.
- Requiring advertising of water to be prominent.

Lucan Biddulph

In the township of Lucan Biddulph, the manager of Park & Recreation worked to create a healthier food environment by:

- Prohibiting advertising of foods in the "Offer Less" or "Not Recommended" categories.
- Removing all candy machines, slushie machines, and nacho machines from their facilities.
- Decreasing the number of beverage vending machines from 3, down to 1.
- Offering smaller sizes of chip bags and pop.
- Increasing the price of pop in their vending machines and canteens.
- Lowering the price of water in their vending machines and canteens.
- Installing a water bottle filling station in their main lobby.
- Adding milk, chocolate milk, fruits, and eggs to their canteen's menu.

Strategies to overcome barriers and mitigate profit loss

We often hear that a major barrier preventing recreation facilities from offering healthier food and beverage items is profit loss. The strategies below have been successful in mitigating losses in recreational facilities across Canada:

- Follow consistent guidelines throughout your facility – canteens and vending machines should follow same guidelines and sell similar products.
- Transition in steps rather than a whole overhaul at once – Start by removing the unhealthier items that are not selling well and then highlight the healthy options that replace them.
- Place “Offer More“ items in the most visible location (e.g., at eye level in a vending machine, on the counter at a snack bar).
- Competitively price healthy options; price “Offer More” options lower than “Offer Less” options, and increase the price of the “Offer Less” items. You can then use the profits to subsidize any losses associated with making healthy choices more affordable.
- Simplify choice by offering less menu items. For example, offer 2 kinds of pop instead of 10. Then you can also offer water, 100% fruit juice, milk, chocolate milk, and coffee/tea. Offer 10 menu items with only 2-3 of them being less healthy choices.
- Work with vending and concession contractors to find marketing strategies that will increase the sale of “Offer More” items.
- Find healthier alternatives for popular sellers. For example, use whole wheat buns for all of your sandwiches/hot dogs/hamburgers. Fry with unsaturated oil. Sell 100% fruit juice instead of juice cocktails and other sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Serve smaller portions of “Offer Less” items, such as French fries or ice cream.
- Consider the hours of operation for your canteen. Are there times where it is open and no profit is being made? Adjust your staffing according to this. For example, if your canteen is open Wednesday nights and sales do not regularly occur, you may consider closing it on those nights.

The below tables can help you decide which foods and beverages to sell:

In your canteens:

Offer More	Offer Less
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • White milk (1% or 2%) • 100% fruit juice • Chocolate milk • Smoothies • Single serving yogurt • Fresh fruit • Fruit cups packed in water • Veggies and dip • Popcorn • Baked chips • Frozen yogurt tubes • Granola bars • Hummus and pretzels • Tortilla chips and salsa • Chili 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop • Slushies • Fruit drinks/cocktails • Sports drinks • Candy • Chocolate Bars • Cakes/cookies/other baked goods • Chicken Nuggets • French fries/poutine • Hot dogs/sausages • Hamburgers • Deli Meats
	Not Recommended
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Drinks

In your vending machines:

Non-refrigerated food items:

Offer More	Offer Less
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granola bars/cereal bars • Fruit bars • Trail mix • Unsalted almonds, cashews, mixed nuts • Low sodium pretzels • Cereal • Baked Chips • Popcorn • Crackers • Fruit cups • Tuna/cracker snacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candy • Chocolate Bars • Packaged cakes/cookies/other baked goods • Chips/cheese puffs/doritos

Refrigerated beverages:

Offer More	Offer Less	Not Recommended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • White milk • Unsweetened fortified soy beverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chocolate milk • 100% fruit juice • 100% vegetable juice • Flavoured fortified soy beverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop • Diet pop • Energy drinks • Fruit drinks/cocktails • Sports drinks

Other tips for getting started:

1. Decide which percentage of healthy options your facility would like to start with and then transition slowly in phases. For example:
 - Phase 1:** 20% “Offer More” options, 80% “Offer Less” options
 - Phase 2:** 40% “Offer More” options, 60% “Offer Less” options
 - Phase 3:** 50% “Offer More” options, 50% “Offer Less” options
2. Consider portion size. Offer smaller juice, pop, and milk containers (e.g., cans/boxes instead of bottles, and offer 500ml water). Offer smaller bags of chips and chocolate bars.
3. Consider if vending machines are necessary in your facility. If your canteen offers food and beverages and you have a water fountain, vending machines may not be necessary in your facility. Consider decreasing the number of vending machines or not having them at all.

Working with your vendor:

Tips for negotiating your contract and Request for Proposal (RFP):

If you are currently in a contract with a vendor, try to work with them to find out what healthier options they have available. Here are some steps you may consider in doing this:

- 1) Review your existing contract.
- 2) Inform your vendor of the intention to offer some healthier vending items.
- 3) Discuss and plan a timeline for implementation with your vendor.
- 4) Identify changes that you are able to make while still working within the terms of your contract.

If there is no existing contract or your contract is coming up for renewal, you might want to consider developing a request for proposal (RFP).

What is a Request for Proposal (RFP)?

An RFP is a document that communicates the guidelines and plans for healthy vending; including your expectations about the types of foods and beverages stocked in your machines.

RFPs help to communicate your expectations before creating your contract, so that you can ensure that your plans are included prior to signing.

You may consider including the following criteria in your RFP for healthier vending:

Products:

- Require a minimum or maximum percentage of foods or beverages within categories of the Nutrition Standards: **Offer More**, **Offer Less**, and **Not Recommended**. The distribution of healthier products (e.g., Offer More) can be phased in over the length of the contract to increase to all or mostly healthier items.
- Require consistent re-stocking of products.
- Specify that energy drinks may not be sold.
- If sugary drinks are to be sold, limits on product size could be considered (with preference given to smaller sizes).
- Approval by recreation staff of any new food or beverage to ensure they meet their nutrition standards.

Pricing:

- Require a pricing model that encourages the purchase of food and beverages in the “Offer More” category over the food and beverages in the “Offer Less” and “Not Recommended” categories. Prices charged for “Offer More” food and beverages should not exceed the prices charged for items in the “Not Recommended” category.
- A decreased profit margin on competitively priced healthy options can be compensated for by raising the prices on less healthy options.

Placement:

- Require items in the “Not Recommended” category to be placed in the positions with lowest selling potential.
- Require items that are in the “Offer More” categories be placed in the positions with highest selling potential. In a vending machine, this may be the top row, left-most displayed products, and top or left-most sale buttons. Consider children’s heights; not just adults’. What children see first is different than what adults may see first.

Promotion:

- Require that vending machines and display sleeves not promote food and beverages in the “Not Recommended” category.
- Require that promotional items (e.g., vending banners) promote a healthy and active lifestyle. Require facility approval prior to implementing promotional changes.

Monitoring:

- Supplier(s) must agree to maintain the set percentages of each food and beverage category throughout the term of the contract.
- Require a report of contents within each Nutrition Standards category and sales summary at regular intervals, e.g. every 6 months.
- Require supplier(s) to assess which categories the supplied food and beverages fit into.
- State that unscheduled monitoring audits may be carried out by the organization or a qualified third party at any time throughout the agreement.
- Request a list of strategies the supplier(s) will use to stock the vending machines with healthier choices.