

› Planning the changes

Developing a policy

A school canteen policy is important because it:

- ensures long-term commitment to and sustainability of healthy changes
- provides official 'back-up' to healthy changes
- assists in dealing with negative feedback and non-compliance or dispute
- communicates a consistent message to the whole school community
- gives direction and support to canteen staff involved in implementing changes
- provides a plan for change
- defines the role and activities of the school canteen
- guides the operation and management of the canteen
- sets goals for the canteen
- clarifies what the school community expects from the canteen
- reflects the values and practices of the school community
- shares the responsibility so that the canteen manager is supported and not solely responsible.

A good knowledge and understanding of all the practices and processes involved in operating a school canteen are needed in order to develop a sound policy. A school canteen policy needs to be clear and concise, and relevant to the canteen that exists within the school and useful for the people working with it.

When developing a canteen policy:

- provide a copy of the existing policy or a policy example or template to canteen committee members
- discuss the policy documents
- identify areas of the existing policy that need to be changed or areas of the new policy that need to be included based on the information previously collected, for example Department of Education & Training *School Canteens and Other School Food Services Policy* and the Canteen Assessment Activity
- draft a policy – perhaps divide sections of the policy up between committee members with the relevant knowledge or interest.

The canteen policy should be endorsed by the whole school community and should be referred to when making decisions about the canteen. It should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains current and relevant.

HINT: *There are many existing canteen sample policies and templates available for you to use as a guide. These templates are examples only and some sections may not be relevant to your canteen. Your policy needs to be tailored or adapted to be relevant to the structure, operation and goals of your own canteen. (See Information and resources page 36 for a sample canteen policy.)*

A canteen policy may cover aspects such as:

- background/rationale
- aims
- operation
- nutrition guidelines for foods to be offered. Refer to the *'Go for your life' Healthy Canteen Kit – Food Planner* for information about food categories and restrictions on food and drink supply
- strategies for promoting and marketing healthy choices
- linking the canteen to the Health Promoting Schools Framework, for example linking to curriculum, vegetable garden or wider community
- food hygiene and safety and occupational health and safety guidelines and procedures
- canteen management, including:
 - canteen staff/employment (including roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers)
 - volunteers (including procedures for orientation and strategies for reward and recognition)
 - staff training
- financial management, including:
 - pricing and income issues
 - stock management
 - accounting and reporting responsibilities
 - canteen equipment
 - gifts/concessions
- general policy issues – evaluation, review, monitoring, distribution of policy
- endorsement of policy
- appendices which may include nutrition guidelines, canteen manager's job description and canteen management agreement.

Seeking feedback

The draft canteen policy should be circulated to the canteen committee and school community, for example the school council, principal, teachers, parents and friends association and student representative council. This provides an opportunity to get feedback, clarify any questions about the policy and ensure all intentions or concerns have been addressed. This active consultation process will encourage the school community's acceptance and support for the policy.

Finalising the policy

Once feedback has been collected and any resultant changes incorporated, the policy can be finalised and endorsed. This is often done at the school council annual general meeting.

The canteen policy should inform all decision making about the canteen. It should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant.

Note: This resource outlines one way of changing to a healthier canteen but each school may find that the process occurs slightly differently. Developing a canteen policy may occur at the same time changes are being planned and made. The process is evolving and schools may find while implementing changes that their goals and policies alter.

Advertising to the school community

Advertising should be ongoing while implementing the policy and making changes to the canteen. Proposed and planned activities should be advertised to the school community. The policy could be communicated to the wider school community by:

- circulating a copy of the policy via the school newsletter or website, inviting feedback and comments and acknowledging contributors
- displaying a copy of the canteen policy in the front reception area and canteen
- presenting to students at the school assembly
- presenting at staff meetings, school council meetings, parent–teacher evenings, parents and friends association meetings
- providing a copy of the policy to all new parents in enrolment and orientation information packs
- conducting an information session about the policy for canteen volunteers and staff
- encouraging students to run information sessions at lunchtime or talking at assembly
- including the canteen as a regular agenda item at school council meetings
- writing an article for the local paper outlining a summary of the policy.

Planning for change

Once an accurate assessment of the current position has been undertaken, a detailed plan of action should be developed. The action plan identifies the 'who', 'what', 'how' and 'when'. While the Canteen Assessment Activity may have identified a comprehensive list of potential changes, planning changes needs to be realistic. It is good to implement a few small changes and establish long-term goals for the future. Gradually changing to a healthier menu and implementing a healthy canteen policy will improve acceptance and a smoother, more successful transition.

Responsibility for implementing the changes across the school community should be shared. Implementation should not be the sole responsibility of the canteen manager. The outcome of any activities or changes should be recorded.

The table on page 24 will assist the development of a detailed plan of action. Activities and goals identified in the Action Required column of the Canteen Assessment Activity will provide a basis for planning.

When developing an action plan it is important to identify:

- issues that need to be addressed immediately and those that can be addressed later
- operational and structural changes needed to support the introduction of healthier foods
- options or activities that are available to make the change
- the preferred or most practical options or activities
- who will be responsible for each action
- the time and resources that will be required
- when the changes will occur.

Smart planning ensures that a canteen policy is useful and dynamic. It includes changes that can be implemented over time and is not just a collection of broad statements of intent.

Remember: Proposed activities should be linked to the areas of need identified in the initial mapping exercise and needs assessment to address the specific issues identified for your school.

Implementation plan

ACTION REQUIRED TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION	HOW WILL THIS BE IMPLEMENTED?	WHO IS INVOLVED AND RESPONSIBLE?	TIME, RESOURCES AND MONEY NEEDED	DATE FOR ACTION TO BE IMPLEMENTED	OUTCOMES	
<p>Trial preparing and displaying a selection of ready-to-go sandwiches and wraps for sale over the counter at lunchtime.</p>	<p>Decide on a selection of popular fillings to trial. Ensure extra stock is ordered if needed. Plan time to make the extra sandwiches/wraps in the morning when doing lunch order sandwiches. Alter menu to advertise sandwiches available at lunch. Advertise in school newsletter and design flyer. Monitor sales.</p>	<p>Canteen staff – with input from students (for example, Design a Wrap Activity). Canteen manager. Canteen committee media person to liaise with administration staff. Canteen staff and canteen manager.</p>	<p>Extra sandwich ingredients. Paper for flyers.</p>	<p>Start of Term 2.</p>	<p>End of Term 2.</p>	<p>Sales of sandwiches maintained (orders decreased, but counter sales increased).</p>