



PUTTING HEALTH ON THE AGENDA

A Model policy for Healthy Meetings and Events



THE COUNCIL OF
ATLANTIC PREMIERS
LE CONSEIL DES PREMIERS
MINISTRES DE L'ATLANTIQUE



Sample Healthy Meetings and Events Policy

For use within organizations, agencies, and community groups where foods or beverages are served.

Policy

_____ (name of organization or group)

is concerned with the health of our _____ (employees, members, etc.)

We recognize that:

- People are becoming more interested in choosing healthier foods, being physically active and tobacco-free, caring for our environment, and supporting local producers.
- Heart disease, cancer, and stroke, the top three causes of premature death in Atlantic Canada, are largely affected by what we eat and how active we are, which are influenced by supportive policies in our environments.
- Foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lower-fat dairy products, and leaner meats and alternatives are better choices for supporting health and preventing many diseases.
- An environment which is supportive of healthy choices helps to support healthy people and create healthy communities.

Therefore, effective _____ (date), all activities and events sponsored or supported by this organization will include healthy food and beverage options when food is served and will encourage physical activity, tobacco-free settings, greener options, and support of local products as set out in our Healthy Meetings and Events policy.

For example, we will:

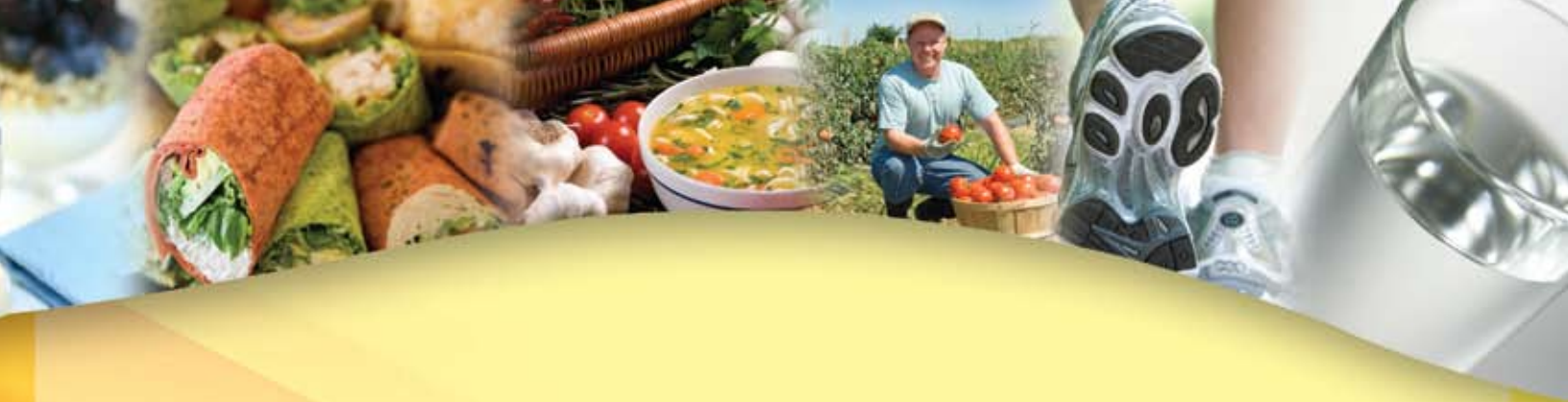
- Serve vegetables and fruit more often
- Offer lower fat milk and alternatives
- Offer a variety of whole grain products
- Consider smaller portion sizes
- Serve plain water more often
- Buy local products whenever possible
- Include physical activity
- Choose greener options whenever possible
- Choose tobacco-free facilities
- Ensure food safety

Signature

Title

Date

Name of organization, agency, community group, worksite, church, school, health centre, etc.



Guidelines for Healthy Meetings and Events

The workplace offers an ideal setting to promote healthy living. The Healthy Meetings and Events policy will make it easier for employees to make the healthy choice and demonstrate your organization's support for the health of staff and community.

Offer healthy foods and beverages

- Boost energy and help fight fatigue during the work day! Healthy eating contributes to overall health and vitality. Ensure that food and beverages provided at work are healthy, flavourful and will be enjoyed by the entire group.
- Choose foods based on Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. Aim for at least 3 food groups for meals and 2 food groups for snacks:
 - Vegetables and Fruit
 - Grain Products
 - Milk and Alternatives
 - Meat and Alternatives
- Serve vegetables and fruit more often. Examples include raw vegetables cut up and offered with or without a lower fat dressing; fruit, whole or cut up, either fresh, frozen, canned, or dried, and 100% vegetable or fruit juices.
- Offer lower fat milk and alternatives. Examples include skim, 1% or 2% milk; fortified soy beverages, lower fat cheeses (21% milk fat or less) and lower fat yogurt (2% milk fat or less).
- Offer a variety of whole grain products. Examples include whole wheat, rye, cracked wheat and multi-grain breads, cereals and pastas; brown rice.
- Serve smaller portion sizes. Examples include half or mini-sized muffins or bagels, smaller entrée sizes, and smaller amounts of fillings in sandwiches.
- Ensure that your menu includes choices for those with special dietary needs and food allergies.
- Order locally produced healthy foods and beverages, when possible.



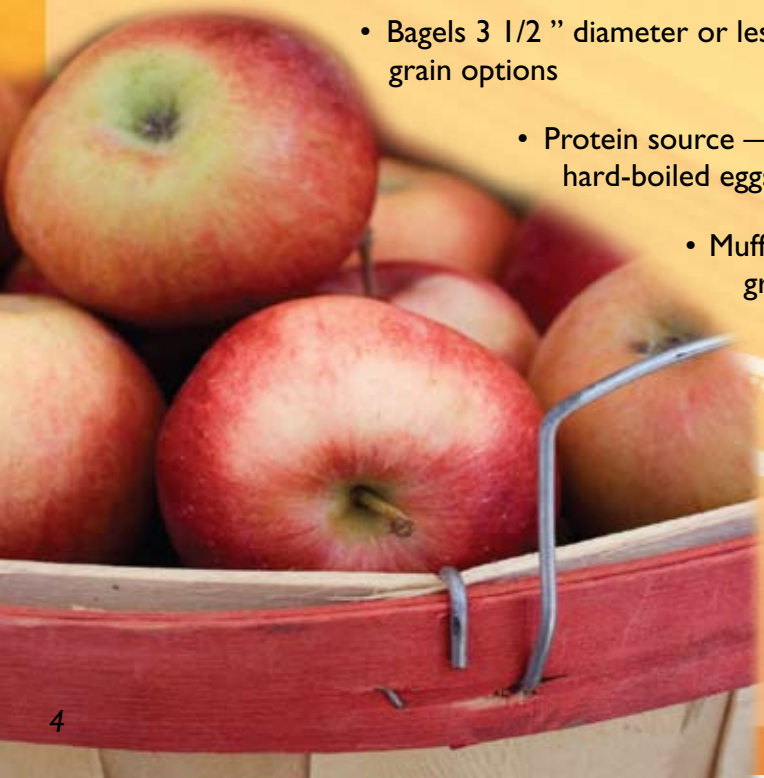


Beverage Suggestions

- Water — request tap water in jugs to reduce packaging and to be more environmentally friendly
- 100% vegetable or fruit juices
- Skim, 1%, or 2%, white or chocolate milk
- Fortified soy beverages
- Coffee and tea served with skim, 1%, or 2% milk

Breakfast Suggestions

- Fruit — whole or cut up; fresh, frozen, canned or dried
- Yogurt (2% milk fat or less)
- Hot or cold whole grain cereals with skim, 1% or 2% milk
- Bagels 3 1/2 " diameter or less, or cut in half — a variety of whole grain options
 - Protein source — nut butters, such as peanut or almond, or hard-boiled eggs
 - Muffins small, mini, or cut in half — a variety of lower fat, whole grain, and fruit options





Snack Suggestions

- Fruit — whole or cut up; fresh, frozen, canned or dried
- Raw vegetables — cut up and offered with or without lower fat dressing or dip
- Yogurt — 2% milk fat or less
- Lower fat cheeses (21% milk fat or less) — ask for $\frac{3}{4}$ inch cubes
- Lower fat whole grain crackers
- Smoothies made with fruit and lower fat yogurt

Desserts

- Fruit crumbles or breads
- Small cookies made with whole grains and fruit
- Low fat yogurt parfaits





Sandwich Suggestions

- Choose whole grain breads, pitas, wraps, or buns.
- Choose lean meats — roasted versions of beef, chicken, turkey, or ham.
- Always include vegetarian options.
- Include a selection of lower fat cheese — 21% milk fat or less.
- Ask for sandwiches with little or no mayo, butter, or margarine or ask for these to be served on the side. Also ask for some lower fat options on the side such as mustard, chutney, hummus, or relish
- Offer toppings of shredded lettuce, mixed greens, chopped tomatoes, or sliced peppers.

Hot Meal Suggestions

- Choose leaner meats, fish, and poultry that are grilled, broiled, roasted, or steamed instead of fried. Offer meat portions that are consistent with Canada's Food Guide recommendations — 2 ½ oz or 75g portions.
 - Serve cooked vegetables with entrees.
 - Offer pasta dishes with low-fat toppings like tomato sauce rather than butter, cream, or cheese sauces.
 - Offer broth-based or pureed vegetable-based soups instead of cream-based soups.
 - Offer vegetarian options.



Eat fresh, eat local!

- Serve locally grown and produced foods often — they are fresher and less expensive when in season. You also support local farmers and producers and reduce shipping costs and environmental impact.
- Ask caterers what local healthy foods they can supply.
- Choose foods in season, such as berries in the summer and apples in the fall. These are more likely to be local foods.

Physical Activity

- Physical activity helps reduce stress and fatigue and promotes greater ease and comfort.
- Encourage people to walk, wheel, or cycle to and from the meeting, if distances allow.
- Include a walk on the agenda, perhaps replacing a coffee break with an activity break. Let people know beforehand so they can bring a jacket or comfortable shoes.
- Meet or have a networking break while you walk.
- Include stretch breaks on the agenda — even five minutes can re-vitalize participants.
- Respect participants' comfort levels. Let them know that the activity is optional and encourage them to go at their own pace. Specify the length of time for the break so you can get back to the agenda.
- Ensure that the environment is safe for the activity.





Choose greener options whenever possible

- Help care for our environment by reducing unnecessary packaging and waste. Reduce, re-use, and recycle whenever you can:
- Use regular dishes and utensils if facilities are available for proper washing and storage or choose disposable dishes that can be composted.
- Serve water and other beverages in pitchers rather than individual bottles or cartons.
- Choose nametags that can be returned and re-used.
- Recycle. Provide blue boxes to collect glass, cans, and paper.
- Walk, wheel, or cycle to the meeting if it's close-by. Encourage carpooling if the meeting's at a distance.
- Use e-mail and file sharing to distribute agendas, minutes, and reports, to save paper. If you do have to print files, choose two-sided printing when possible.

Choose tobacco-free facilities

- Host meetings at smoke-free properties (inside and out) to protect meeting participants from exposure to second-hand smoke. Ensure that all venues and events are tobacco-free — meeting spaces, social events, outdoor events, accommodations, and transportation, if provided.
- Be aware that all government and public buildings are smoke-free in Atlantic Canada. If you are arranging a meeting with participants from outside the region, share this information on your website or in your literature.



Ensure food safety

- Tips to keep meetings foods safe:
 - Keep foods at recommended temperatures. Keep hot foods hot (60° C or higher) and cold foods cold (4° C or lower).
 - Minimize the time between food delivery and food service.
 - Wash hands before handling or consuming food.
 - Ensure food is prepared in a licensed facility.
 - Discard food that has been left at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Call your local environmental health office if you have questions or concerns.
- Ask participants about food allergies and special diets when planning your event. Many caterers will easily accommodate such diets if asked in advance.





Suggestions for introducing the Healthy Meetings and Events Policy:

Raise awareness and create support among your group's leadership.

Work with senior leaders to gain support for the Healthy Meetings and Events policy – their encouragement and role modelling is important for the successful adoption of the policy.

Inform and build partnerships with representatives of affected groups or those with an interest in the policy.

Widen your base of support to ensure success. Consult a local dietitian to ensure support and expertise on food and nutrition issues. Larger organizations could form an Advisory Committee that includes: occupational health and safety representatives, food service providers, support or administrative staff that organize catering for meetings, and where possible a registered dietitian. Inclusion of all parts of the organization, and interested partners, such as other departments and local health organizations should be encouraged. Smaller groups would need to build support among key staff or volunteers.



Review your current practice for organizing meetings.

Determine if there are issues (such as existing contracts with suppliers) and supports (such as kitchen facilities or staff champions) that will affect implementation and evaluation of the Healthy Meetings and Events policy.

Seek support in implementing and evaluating the Healthy Meetings and Events policy.

Develop a plan to introduce the Healthy Meetings and Events policy. Larger organizations may wish to pilot the policy within an interested worksite and may need a phase-in plan for implementation, as well as promotion strategies, evaluation plans, and monitoring tools.





Implement the Healthy Meetings and Events policy.

Make support and advice available in the beginning stages of implementation while meeting planners, including administrative support staff, adopt the policy. Help to troubleshoot issues around cost and convenience, following examples in the policy. Provide guidance and support to meeting planners as they apply the guidance to menu items available in their workplace.

Evaluate

Develop and implement a plan to evaluate and regularly monitor the Healthy Meetings and Events policy.

Considerations for next steps...

Don't limit your thinking to just healthy meetings! To enable people to eat healthier everywhere, start thinking about incorporating healthier items into onsite cafeterias and canteens. Even vending machines, traditionally full of unhealthy items, can be stocked with healthier options such as lower fat grain products (pretzels and baked snacks), dried fruit, nuts, water, and 100% juice.