



MINISTRY OF  
**HEALTH &  
WELLNESS**



**JAMAICA MOVES**



# **Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces**

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces




The Ministry of Health and Wellness has developed the Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces in order to provide guidance and support to employers who seek to encourage employees to improve their health. You can use the Guide for the Promotion of Healthy Eating in Workplaces as a resource to enhance the Healthy Eating component of your workplace wellness programme. It highlights how to start a healthy eating programme, actions workplaces can take to support healthy eating and includes supporting tools and resource links to implement your programme. You may use all or some of the suggestions based on the size of your organization, the needs of your employees and what you can manage to implement.

## Why workplaces should be concerned about healthy eating

The working population represents the age group that is most affected by NCDs and as such, the workplace provides an ideal setting to support the promotion of health to a large audience. Workplaces are key spaces for improving wellbeing as working adults spend a third of their waking hours at work <sup>2</sup>. The health of employees impacts their ability to perform and contribute to the workplace. Employees that are nourished and healthy have enhanced physical and mental well-being. Healthy eating combined with active living and a positive outlook can lead to <sup>3</sup>:

-  **Reduced risk of heart disease and some forms of cancer**
-  **Elevated mood, energy and self-esteem**
-  **Reduced anxiety and stress**

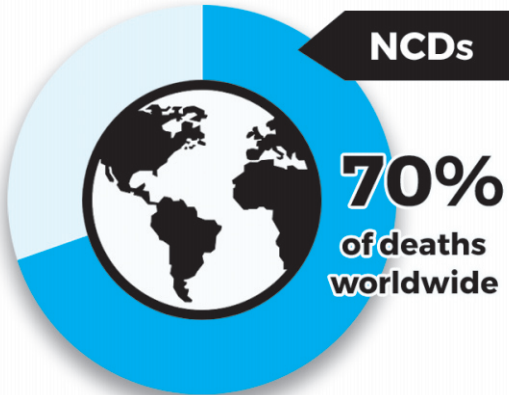
These can help to reduce absenteeism and increase productivity in the workplace. In addition, health promotion in the workplace initiatives addressing healthy diet reported several benefits including <sup>4</sup>:

-  **Increased intake of fruits and vegetables**
-  **Reduced intake of unhealthy dietary fat**
-  **Reduction of body weight and Body Mass Index Measurements**

“The concept of the health promoting workplace (HPW) is becoming increasingly relevant as more private and public organizations recognize that future success in a globalizing marketplace can only be achieved with a healthy, qualified and motivated workforce. For nations, the development of HPW will be a pre-requisite for sustainable social and economic development (WHO, 2018)”.

## Did you Know?

The World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that non-communicable diseases (NCDs), inclusive of heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes, together account for almost 70% of all deaths worldwide.

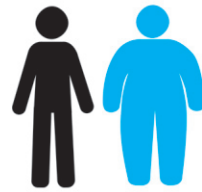


The increase in the prevalence of NCDs is attributable to mainly four risk factors:



Jamaica is faced with a double burden of under and over-nutrition. This means that even though the population is becoming

increasingly overweight/obese, there is also a deficiency in some vitamins and minerals. According to the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle survey III<sup>1</sup>:



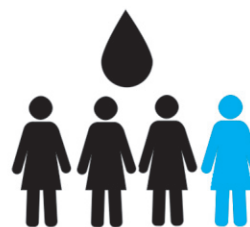
**Approximately  
1 in 2 Jamaicans**  
were classified as being  
**overweight/obese**



**Approximately  
1 in 3 Jamaicans**  
had hypertension



**Approximately  
1 in 10 men**  
were anaemic



**Approximately  
1 in 4 women**  
were anaemic



**Approximately  
1 in 10 Jamaicans**  
had Diabetes

The dietary practices of most Jamaicans are not in keeping with the National Food Based Dietary Guidelines. There is an overconsumption of foods high in salt and sugar and an under-consumption of fruits and vegetables. In fact, the survey indicates that:



Approximately  
**1 in 10**  
Jamaicans consumed  
**excess salt/sodium**



Approximately  
**1 in 3**  
Jamaicans consumed  
**a sugar-sweetened  
beverage at least  
once per day**



Approximately  
**1 in 3**  
Jamaicans consumed  
**fruits at least  
twice per day**



Approximately  
**1 in 4**  
Jamaicans consumed  
**vegetables at least  
twice per day**

## How workplaces can promote healthy eating

Workplaces can help promote healthy eating by creating a healthy eating environment and supporting the personal health practices of employees. A healthy eating environment makes healthy eating choices the easy choice for all which includes:

- Spaces to eat
- Equipment to store, prepare or serve food
- Support for a healthy eating culture

A supportive work environment together with awareness, skills and knowledge in nutrition can help employees put healthy eating into practice.



# GETTING STARTED

## How to start a Healthy Eating Programme

It is important for employers to encourage healthy lifestyles among employees while providing a safe and healthy workplace. A

healthy eating programme can be an important step. Everyone plays a role in creating and promoting a work environment that supports healthy eating. You can get started with making changes in the workplace with the following steps <sup>3,5</sup>:



## 1. Assess your Workplace's Eating Environment

In order for your healthy eating programme to be successful, it should take into consideration the type and structure of the worksite, employee needs and personal and organizational health goals. Conducting an assessment of your workplace will assist you in getting this information. The assessment should capture the factors that influence employee health including:

- individual level factors such as lifestyle choices
- the work environment such as physical working conditions and social support
- the organizational level such as culture, policies, and practices.

Consider what your current eating environment is like and what changes can be made to support healthy eating in the workplace. Look at the types of foods and drinks available and how they are offered in canteens, vending machines, meetings and workplace celebrations. Explore how healthy eating information is provided to employees, if at all. An assessment of your workplace can help to decide what your priorities are.

It is important that you involve employees from the beginning as this will reinforce the shared responsibility and commitment the employee and the organization have to employee health, and the overall success of the workplace health programme. The Ministry of Health and Wellness' Healthy Eating Assessment Tool is developed to help you assess the extent of implementation of strategies in your workplace to promote healthy eating and help to prevent heart disease, stroke and related conditions such

as hypertension, diabetes and obesity. The tool may be found in Appendix I and may be downloaded from the Ministry of Health and Wellness' website. An example of an employee questionnaire may be seen in Appendix II.

## 2. Develop an Action Plan

In order for your healthy eating programme to be successful, you need to put in place a basic governance structure or infrastructure to administer and manage nutrition promotion activities. There needs to be buy in from leadership and employees. Your governance structure should provide the strategic direction, leadership, and organization necessary to operationalize the programme elements. This will help to ensure programme objectives are achieved, employee health risks are appropriately managed, and the company's resources are used responsibly. Strategies to ensure appropriate governance include:

- Dedicated senior leadership support to serve as a role model and champion
- Identifying a workplace healthy eating coordinator, council or committee to oversee the programme
- Developing a workplace healthy eating improvement plan with sufficient resources to articulate and execute goals and strategies
- Communicating clearly and consistently with all employees
- Establishing workplace health informatics to collect and use data for planning and evaluation

Take into consideration the interests of your audience. In this case:



- Ask employees, managers and any other key individuals for their feedback and suggestions on priority areas for change.
- Find out why people are interested in a healthy eating programme. Are participants looking for general nutrition information, or more specific programmes such as heart health?
- Be sure to consider what types of programmes have been offered in the past. Which programmes worked? Which did not?
- Know exactly who your target audience is.
- Plan when the programme will be offered (seasonal, or all year).
- Identify who people can go to if they have individual questions or want more help.

In developing your workplace healthy eating improvement plan, consider that the size and scope of each step may be influenced by factors such as your company's size, sector, or geographic location. It is important to remember that a successful programme does not necessarily incorporate all potential strategies. A successful programme is one whose components are carefully selected, implemented efficiently, and is suited to the employee population. It may be more effective to focus on one or two policies/programmes at first and build on early successes rather than poorly implement several interventions at the beginning. Workplace health eating programmes also do not have to cost significant amounts of money. Many effective interventions such as health eating related policy changes exist that are low-cost which is especially important for small and medium sized employers who may not have lots of resources to dedicate to employee health.

Determine and prioritize which strategy your

workplace will implement. Both current health issues as well as employee interests should be considered when prioritizing programme and policy interventions as well as evaluating and making improvements to the workplace health programme on an ongoing basis.

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>A.</b> | Identify the highest impact strategies not currently in place at your workplace  |
| <b>B.</b> | Use this information and your scores to prioritize future strategies that are relevant, feasible and consistent with your organization and employee needs, health issues and health promotion budget |
| <b>C.</b> | Identify which of your priority strategies are feasible short or long term accomplishment  |
| <b>D.</b> | Use the information to develop an Annual Workplace Health Improvement Plan and Budget  |
| <b>E.</b> | Decide on how to monitor and track change  |

### 3. Put Your Plans into Action

You have many opportunities to influence the work environment in order to promote healthy eating and prevent disease. Changing the environment will have a great impact as it affects large groups of workers simultaneously and makes adopting healthy behaviours much easier if there are supportive workplace norms and policies.

The overall workplace health programme should contain a combination of individual and organizational level strategies and interventions to influence health.

Remember that no matter how much you plan or make people aware, healthy eating programmes are voluntary - not everyone will join or be interested.

#### **4. Monitor your Progress**

Plan to evaluate the programmes, policies, benefits, or environmental supports implemented. It is important to assess how well the workplace healthy eating programme can be sustained over time, how it is received by employees and management, and its return on investment. The evaluation should

identify potential gaps in current offerings; and describe the efficiency and effectiveness of the resources invested.

#### **5. Celebrate Success**

Take time to celebrate your successes, both big and small. Recognition of positive changes can build momentum for more changes. Your team may wish to think about ways to share successes, such as hosting a celebration event or posting a success story on the organisation's internal website.



# FOCUS OF A HEALTHY EATING PROGRAMME

The National Food Based Dietary Guidelines (2015) contains eight (8) guidelines aimed at promoting healthy behaviours and practices that will help the population aged two years and older to make healthy food choices. Workplaces that are going to start a healthy

eating programme should focus on the main messages from the National Food Based Dietary Guidelines. You should also ensure that wherever your employees get their food, whether canteens or tuck shops, should offer some healthier food choices.



- 1 Eat a variety of foods from all the food groups daily.
- 2 Eat a variety of fruits daily.
- 3 Eat a variety of vegetables daily.
- 4 Include peas, beans and nuts in your daily meals.
- 5 Reduce intake of salty and processed foods.
- 6 Reduce intake of fats and oils.
- 7 Reduce intake of sugary foods and drinks.
- 8 Make physical activity a part of your daily routine.

## Supporting the Workplace Environment

### Lead by example and foster support

- Lead by Example. Choose healthy foods and drinks for yourself and take meal breaks.
- Encourage employees to be champions and involve them in making changes.
- Support employees with work time to help lead or participate in activities and making changes.

### Develop a workplace policy/guide that promotes healthy eating

- Put in place policies and/or guidelines that encourage or require healthy food and drink options to be available.

A policy is different from a guideline in that a policy has consequences for non-compliance whereas guidelines are not a formal process. Even though a policy is not essential, it can help create sustainability by ensuring that practice becomes embedded within the culture of the workplace.

### Create physical spaces that support healthy eating

- Ensure eating areas are available that include seating, a refrigerator, microwave, sink, etc.
- Ensure there are bins for garbage and recycling near eating areas and that they are cleaned daily

### Promote access and availability of healthy food and drink options

- Provide employees with access to healthy meal and snack options. This applies to food and drinks offered in canteens, vending machines or external vendors operating in your workplace. It also applies to catering, celebrations, and fundraising activities.

### Food service outlets (e.g. canteens and vending machines)

#### Availability:

- Increase the availability and variety of healthy meal and snack options in easy to access locations.



- Provide healthier snacks and drinks that are lower in salt (sodium), sugar and fat.
- Make a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables available in the cafeteria.
- Make existing recipes healthier by using:
  - Ingredients that are lower in fat, trans fat, saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.
  - Whole grain products such as whole grain bread, brown rice and whole wheat pasta.
  - More vegetables and fruits.
  - Vegetables should be cooked just adequately or served raw (adequately washed)
  - Low fat milk such as skim, 1% or 2% milk or yogurts
  - Less processed foods
  - Healthier cooking methods such as roasting, grilling, steaming or baking
  - Less sauces and condiments
- Offer food and drinks in smaller portion sizes, such as small muffins or half sandwich options.
- Provide less healthy food and drinks (such as chips, deep fried food, candy, high fat baked goods) in small portions and a limited variety
- Ensure water fountains, tap water or water coolers are available and easy to access.

**Access:**

- Price healthy food options competitively.
- Ensure healthy food and drink options are visible and in easy to access locations. Consider stocking healthy foods at eye level and putting less healthy options in less visible places.

- Identify healthier food choices on the menu or label accordingly.

**Meetings and Functions**

- Schedule meetings outside of meal times to allow employees time for meals.
- Provide food and drinks at meetings only when necessary, such as meal times.
- Arrange or request healthy catering at meetings, events and conferences.
- Provide plain water at meetings throughout the day.
- Discourage sugar sweetened beverages.

**Around the worksite**

- Consider using the facility's outdoor space for edible gardens
- Encourage employees to bring healthy food and drinks instead of less healthy options



## Breastfeeding Support

There are a number of benefits for employers when breastfeeding mothers are supported in the workplace. These include:

**SIGNIFICANT  
REDUCTION IN:**

- Healthcare costs
- Employee absenteeism
- Employee turnover rates

**SIGNIFICANT  
INCREASE IN:**

- Employee retention
- Employee morale
- Employee loyalty

You may support breastfeeding in your workplace through a number of strategies including <sup>6</sup>:

1. Policy or guide to support breastfeeding women
2. Teaching employees about breastfeeding
3. Providing designated private space for breastfeeding or expressing breastmilk
4. Allowing flexible scheduling to support expression of breastmilk during work. This includes at least two 20-30 minute breaks per 8 hr shift.
5. Giving mothers options for returning to work such as teleworking, part time work and extended maternity leave
6. Providing on site or near site child care
7. Providing refrigerated storage for breastmilk
8. Offering or referring professional breastfeeding management services and support.



# Supporting the Personal Health Practices of Employees

This section provides an overview of actions workplaces can adopt to support the personal health practices of their employees. Use the ideas listed below to support best practices such as: educating and increasing awareness of healthy eating, celebrating and recognizing success, and encouraging participation.

## Educate and increase awareness of healthy eating

Start by gathering some information about employees' current eating behaviours and knowledge of healthy eating. Find out what healthy eating topics or activities they would be interested in. Use the results to identify actions that support healthy eating.

### Examples of topics for educational sessions

- Understanding the Basics
- Weight Management and Body Image
- Fad Diets
- Eating Healthy on a Budget
- Eating Healthy While Eating Out
- Healthy Eating on the Run
- Reading Food Labels and Making Smart Choices While Grocery Shopping
- Reducing Salt Intake
- Planning a Balanced Meal for the Family
- Vegetarian Eating
- Aging Well

## Celebrate, recognize and provide employee support

- Celebrate successes towards healthy eating in the workplace
- Share success stories and ideas with each other and between workplaces
- Use non-food rewards and recognitions, such as e-cards, bulletin boards with photos, flowers, gift cards, fitness and movie passes.
- Encourage participation by providing recognition to each employee who participates in the programme and/or achieves a goal.
- Weight loss challenges are discouraged as some changes to achieve weight loss may not be healthy or sustainable. Weight gain after weight loss is common; this can contribute to feelings of failure, shame or guilt, which is not the intention of a workplace challenge.
- Organize employee appreciation events with healthy catering or potluck with healthy foods and drinks.
- Include healthy foods at celebrations, such as birthday and retirement events. For example, if cake is served, offer smaller portions and include fruits on the side.
- Offer incentives and/or support for employees who are working to improve their personal eating habits and nutrition behaviours, including a session with a Registered Dietitian/Registered Nutritionist or scheduled work time to attend healthy eating programmes and groups.

# Appendices

## Appendix I

### Assessing Healthy Eating in the Workplace

This sample assessment form can be used or adapted to assess your workplace's eating environment and the support available to help employees with healthy eating.

Name of Institution: \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessor: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

AREA: WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT			
<i>Policy/Guide to Promote Healthy Eating</i>	YES	NO	SCORE
Policy/guide that supports healthy food and drink options at meetings is in place (policy/guide exists, is written and posted/visible)  <i>Answer "yes" if policy/guide makes vegetables, fruits, 100% fruit juices, trans-fat free/low salt/low sugar snacks or meals available during meetings.</i>	2 pts	0 pts	
Policy/guide that supports healthy food and drink options in workplace food service outlets such as canteens, vending machines and tuck shops is in place (policy/guide exists, is written and posted/visible)  <i>Answer "yes" if policy/guide makes vegetables, fruits, 100% fruit juices, trans-fat free/low salt/low sugar snacks or meals available at canteens, tuck shops and vending machines.</i>	2 pts	0 pts	
Maximum score: 4 points	TOTAL		



<b>AREA: Workplace Environment</b>			
<b><i>Physical Spaces that Support Healthy Eating</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Eating area is provided away from work distractions and includes seating and tables	2 pts	0 pts	
Hand washing sinks are available	2 pts	0 pts	
Refrigerators are available	2 pts	0 pts	
Microwaves and/or toaster ovens are available	2 pts	0 pts	
Maximum score: 8 points	<b>TOTAL</b>		
<b><i>Provision of Access to Healthy Food and Drink Choices at food service outlets</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Healthy food and drink options are in easy to access locations	1 pt	0 pt	
Canteens, vending machines and tuck shops provide a variety of healthy food and drink choices	1 pt	0 pt	
Recipes use healthy ingredients; recipe ingredients are lower in fat, trans fat, saturated fat, sodium and added sugars. Whole grains, vegetables and fruits are used where possible	2 pts	0 pts	
Smaller portion sizes are available eg. Small muffins or half sandwich and entrée options	1 pt	0 pt	
Most (more than 50%) of the food and beverage choices available in canteens, tuck shops and vending machines are healthier food items  <i>Answer "yes" if the healthy foods are items such as skim / 1% milk, water, unsweetened flavoured water, 100% fruit juice, low salt, low fat and/or low sugar snacks and meals</i>	2 pts	0 pts	
Less healthy food and drink options (eg chips, candy, deep fried foods and high fat / sugar baked goods) are available in small portions and a limited variety	1 pt	0 pt	
Water fountains, tap water or water coolers are available and in easy to access locations.	2 pts	0 pt	
Healthy food and drink options are priced competitively.	1 pt	0 pt	
Healthy food and drink options are placed at eye level with less healthy choices in less visible places	1 pt	0 pt	
Nutrition information is provided on the menu or label to help employees with making healthy food choices. Examples include labelling healthy food choices with a symbol and/or providing calories, sodium and fat content on the menu	2 pts	0 pt	

<b>AREA: Workplace Environment</b>			
<i>At meetings or events</i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Healthy food and drink options are available at meetings and functions	2 pts	0 pts	
Meetings are scheduled outside of meal times to allow for meal breaks	2 pts	0 pt	
Food and drinks are offered at meetings and or functions only when necessary, such as meal times	2 pts	0 pts	
Plain water is offered at meetings	2 pts	0 pt	
<i>Around the worksite</i>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Outside spaces are used for edible gardens	2 pts	0 pt	
Maximum score: 16 points	<b>TOTAL</b>		
<b>Breastfeeding Support</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Policy/guide that supports breastfeeding for employees is in place (policy/guide exists, is written and posted/visible) <i>Answer “yes” if the policy/guide is included as a component of other employee policies/guides or is a separate policy/guide related to breastfeeding.</i>	2 pts	0 pt	
Private area that is furnished is provided (other than restroom) that may be used for employees to express breastmilk	2 pts	0 pt	
Flexible paid or unpaid break times that allow mothers to express breastmilk are provided	2 pts	0 pt	
Free or subsidized breastfeeding support groups or educational sessions are provided <i>Answer “yes” if these sessions address breastfeeding as a single health topic or if breastfeeding is included with other health topics. These sessions can be provided in person or online; onsite or off site; in group or individual setting; through onsite staff, community groups or health care practitioners.</i>	2 pts	0 pt	
Paid maternity leave is offered which is separate from any accrued sick leave, annual leave or vacation leave	2 pts	0 pt	
Maximum score: 10 points	<b>TOTAL</b>		

<b>AREA: Personal Health practices</b>			
<b><i>Educate and Increase Awareness of Healthy Eating</i></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Brochures, videos, posters, pamphlets, newsletters, or other written or online information that address the benefits of healthy eating are provided.  <i>Answer “yes” if these health promotion materials address the benefits of healthy eating as a single health topic or if the benefits of healthy eating are included with other health topics</i>	2 pts	0 pts	
Educational seminars, workshops, or classes on healthy eating are provided.  <i>Answer “yes” if these sessions address healthy eating as a single health topic or if healthy eating is included with other health topics. These sessions can be provided in person or online; onsite or off site; in group or individual setting; through onsite staff, community groups or health care practitioners.</i>	2 pts	0 pts	
Images and messages in common areas, food service outlets and vending Machines support Healthy Eating	2 pts	0 pt	
Maximum score: 6 points	<b>TOTAL</b>		
<b>Celebrate, Recognize and Provide Employee Support</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>SCORE</b>
Successes towards healthy eating are celebrated in the workplace	1 pt	0 pt	
Employees are encouraged to share success stories and ideas for healthy eating.	1 pt	0 pt	
Non-food rewards and recognitions are used such as e-cards, bulletin boards with photos, fitness passes	2 pts	0 pt	
Recognition is given to employees who achieve a healthy eating goal or participate in a healthy eating activity	2 pts	0 pt	
Maximum score: 6 points	<b>TOTAL</b>		

Summary Score	Maximum Score	Your Workplace Score
<b><i>Workplace Environment</i></b>		
Policy/guide to promote healthy eating	4	
Physical spaces that support healthy eating	8	
Provision of access to healthy food and drink choices	26	
Breastfeeding Support	10	
Total Score for Workplace Environment	48	
<b><i>Personal Health Practices</i></b>		
Educate and increase awareness of healthy eating	6	
Celebrate, Recognize and Provide Employee Support	6	
Total Score for Personal Health Practices	12	
<b>Total Assessment Score</b>	<b>60</b>	

## Appendix II

### Sample Employee Questionnaire

These are examples of questions you could ask employees to gather information about their eating behaviours and their knowledge of and interest in healthy eating. Adapt these questions to meet your workplace's needs. Consider your capacity to address results before you ask a question. Use results to identify actions that support healthy eating. Repeat the assessment at a later time to see how employees' eating behaviours and knowledge of and interest in healthy eating have changed.

1. How healthy is your eating at work?

Very healthy \_\_\_\_ Healthy \_\_\_\_ Unhealthy \_\_\_\_ Very unhealthy \_\_\_\_ Not sure \_\_\_\_

2. Are you interested in improving your eating habits at work?

Not interested, I am already eating healthy at work \_\_\_\_

Not interested, I am not interested in eating healthier at work \_\_\_\_

Interested, I am considering improving my eating habits at work \_\_\_\_

Interested, I am planning to make changes soon \_\_\_\_

Interested, I have already made changes \_\_\_\_

3. My knowledge of healthy eating is:

Very low \_\_\_\_ Low \_\_\_\_ High \_\_\_\_ Very high \_\_\_\_ Unsure \_\_\_\_

4. What are your barriers for healthy eating at work?

Not having a place to eat \_\_\_\_

Not having a place to store food \_\_\_\_

Not many healthy eating options at the food service outlets \_\_\_\_

Influenced by co-workers eating habits \_\_\_\_

Many unhealthy foods available in the food service outlets \_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you think would help support you with eating healthier at work?

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6. Additional comments:

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### Appendix III: Action Plan Template

<b>Date</b>	<b>Organisation:</b>						<b>Plan created by:</b> (include key contributors))
<b>Goal:</b> Over the course of the coming year what are the changes that we are aiming to achieve?							
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Target audiences</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Expected Results</b>		<b>Actual Results and reflections</b>	
What are the measurable changes we will make to achieve the bigger goal?	Who do we want to reach?	Which strategies will we use to help us reach our goal? These may be existing or new strategies	When and where will the strategy take place? Who is responsible for the strategy? What resources do we need?	Outcomes Why are we doing this? What changes do we want to see?	Indicators How will we measure these changes?	Record the actual changes that happened. What did we accomplish? What worked well? What can be improved?	

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