

Behavioral Design Strategies for Vending Machine Operations

The strategies presented here are based on the behavioral design standards in the [Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities](#). These standards are organized into six categories: Placement and Layout, Product Innovations and Defaults, Pricing and Promotion, Tableware, Information, and Organizational Policy. The category “Tableware” is not included here because it is not relevant to vending machines. The strategies suggested here are further organized into subcategories.

Placement and Layout

Strategically place foods and beverages and design the layout of food service venues to foster selection of healthier foods and beverages.

Subcategory	Strategy	Visual Examples (Figures)	In Use	Will Implement	May Consider
Food Presentation	Place healthier foods and beverages at eye level or just below eye level.	Vending Beverages: Rows A, B, C, and D Vending Food: Rows A, B, and C			
	Give visual diagrams (such as planograms) to vendors to show them how to display healthier products.		NEA*		
	Place all less healthy foods and beverages in the lowest vending positions.		NEA*		
	Place lower-priced healthy items to the left of higher-priced less healthy items.	Vending Food: Rows D and E			
	Place healthier items to the left of less healthy items.	Vending Food: Row D and E			
	Reduce the number and type of unhealthy options.		NEA*		
	Keep machines full, while prioritizing healthy items and minimizing waste.		NEA*		
	Package healthier fresh items—such as fresh sandwiches, sandwich wraps, fruits, and vegetables—in transparent containers.	Vending Food			
	Make sure customers can see the package fronts of healthier items.	Vending Beverages Vending Food			

*NEA: No example available



Subcategory	Strategy	Visual Examples (Figures)	In Use	Will Implement	May Consider
Vending Area and Equipment	Create flow paths that emphasize healthier choices.	NEA*			
	Use equipment that makes healthier foods visible, attractive, and easy to access—for example, vending machines with clear glass and good lighting or refrigerated shelves that are open and well-lit.	Micro Market Vending Beverages Vending Food			
	Use clear glass and colorful displays to enhance the visibility and appearance of healthier foods.	Micro Market Vending Beverages Vending Food			
	Use refrigerated vending machines to ensure that healthy fresh foods last longer.	Micro Market Vending Food			

*NEA: No example available

Product Innovations and Defaults

Use product innovations and the inclusion of healthier options as default choices at decision points to encourage healthier choices.

Subcategory	Strategy	Visual Examples (Figures)	In Use	Will Implement	May Consider
Product Availability and Ratio	Make healthier items the default choice by making them the easiest to select.	Vending Beverages Vending Food			
	Make 75% of items in vending machines healthy. Or try offering 100% healthy items to make it easier to manage your stock.	Vending Food			
	Reduce the variety of less healthy snacks.	NEA*			
	Offer a variety of healthy, lower-sodium soups and microwavable foods, such as canned chili or dry noodle cups.	NEA*			
Portion Size	Offer smaller portion size options, such as 8-ounce drinks or half sandwiches.	NEA*			
	Offer larger package sizes of healthier items.	NEA*			
	Offer only smaller package sizes of less healthy items.	NEA*			
	Limit the size of sugar-sweetened beverages to 12 ounces or less. Offer water and unsweetened beverages in larger containers.	NEA*			

*NEA: No example available

Pricing and Promotion

Use price incentives and marketing strategies to highlight healthier food and beverage items.

Subcategory	Strategy	Visual Examples (Figures)	In Use	Will Implement	May Consider
Marketing	Introduce healthier items by giving samples to customers.	NEA*			
	Promote healthy options through social media and in-house communication methods, such as intranet sites, email messages, or worksite wellness newsletters.	NEA*			
Pricing and Economic Incentives	Offer healthier foods and beverages at a lower price than less healthy items.	NEA*			
	Promote healthier items through sales and pricing specials.	NEA*			
	Price bottled or canned water lower than sweetened beverages (caloric or noncaloric) of the same or similar size.	NEA*			

*NEA: No example available

Information

Use information, displays, decorations, and signage to highlight healthier choices.

Subcategory	Strategy	Visual Examples (Figures)	In Use	Will Implement	May Consider
Signage	Use color-coded signs to identify and highlight healthier foods.	NEA*			
	Encourage the selection of healthier options by using traffic light colors (green, yellow, and red) to identify healthier foods that can be consumed more often.	Vending Beverages Vending Food			
	Label food products in ways that are relevant to customers' interests in their health, community, or environment—for example, "locally sourced" or "certified organic."	NEA*			
	Use signs that are easy to interpret—for example, by using colors, simple images, or few words.	NEA*			
	Use pictures of nature, healthy foods, physical activity, or fun activities to motivate healthy decision-making.	Vending Food			
	Use vending machine covers that show healthier products, like water.	Vending Beverages Vending Food			
	Use floor decals, such as green arrows, to lead customers to 100% healthy vending machines.	NEA*			

*NEA: No example available

Subcategory	Strategy	Visual Examples (Figures)	In Use	Will Implement	May Consider
Food and Nutrition Literacy	Combine healthy labeling systems with a health communications campaign designed to resonate with customers.	NEA*			
	Conduct lunch and learn sessions for food service employees and customers.	NEA*			
	Offer taste tests to incentivize and encourage sales of healthy items.	NEA*			
	Offer healthier seasonal, regional, and culturally preferred foods.	NEA*			

*NEA: No example available

Organizational Policy

Adopt policies, practices, and programs that support a culture of health in your organization and encourage the use of food service guidelines and behavioral design standards in all onsite food venues.

Subcategory	Strategy	Visual Examples (Figures)	In Use	Will Implement	May Consider
Policies, Practices, and Programs	Establish food service policies that include behavioral design strategies in all current and future contracts and permits for all onsite food and beverage service.	NEA*			
	Offer space near vending machines for employee lunch and learn sessions.	NEA*			
	Feature information about pricing and promotion incentives for healthier foods and beverages in employee wellness material.	NEA*			
	Work with employee wellness programs to support food service policies, develop requests for proposals for vendors, select vendors, and conduct customer outreach for all onsite food and beverage services.	NEA*			
	Conduct customer surveys to identify food preferences and guide the addition of healthier items to vending machines.	NEA*			
Infrastructure Support	Implement policies that require vending machines that can support healthy offerings, such as refrigerated machines for fresh foods.	NEA*			

*NEA: No example available