



**FAIR TRADE  
TOWNS USA**

# Campaigners' Guide:

## *How to Promote a Fair Trade Procurement Policy in your City or Town*

### Getting Started

First things first – Fair Trade Campaigns is here to help! Please keep in touch with us through the various stages of this project as we can offer strategic support. Second, be wise about whom you choose on your team to manage this project. Many city officials do not have a lot of time on their hands so you want someone who can easily get a grasp on the inner workings of city government and can be timely and thorough with correspondence.

Knowledge is the key to unlocking change at the government level. Most people working for the city have more work than they know what to do with. So, the more you prepare yourself with a good understanding of their operations and existing policies, the better your chances are of attracting their attention and, in turn, creating real change at the city level.

**Good news** – most of what you need to know to get started is public information, and is even featured on a city's or town's website! This is information you can gather in one afternoon with an internet connection and a pot of fair trade tea. **But what should you look for?**

### Sections:

1. Procurement Policy Basics
2. Research Existing Policies
3. Finding City Contracts and Bids
4. Cultivating Relationships with City/Town Government
5. Glossary: Helpful Terms to Know

### 1. Procurement Policy Basics:

#### What is a Procurement Policy (Procurement = Purchasing)?

Procurement means to purchase and Governments spend lots of money purchasing goods and services – from paperclips to buses. They buy food for seniors' facilities, hospitals, offices and more. Sometimes, purchasing policies dictate what they can buy. Policies might specify USDA Grade "A" meat for health reasons, or fuel-efficient vehicles for environmental and financial

reasons. Purchasing policies are a great way to steer government dollars toward products that meet their needs AND promote the public good.

### What Would a Fair Trade Purchasing Policy Do?

A fair trade purchasing policy would require that an institution purchase fair trade varieties of basic products – coffee, tea, sugar, cocoa, etc. – that are available with a fair trade label. This would mean that with every purchase, the institution was supporting the mission of fair trade, and creating a large new market for fair trade goods. Institutions buy in huge quantities – which could mean a lot of new fair trade purchasing in one place. **Working to pass a fair trade purchasing policy is a great way to advance the fair trade movement and values that you care about. This Guide will walk you through getting started on your own policy campaign!**

### How YOU Can Help Pass a Fair Trade Purchasing Policy

A good way to start off is by garnering the ingredients of any good campaign: **people** and **knowledge**.

**People:** A strong Fair Trade Committee can help show decision-makers evidence of wide support for fair trade purchasing. You also want to get those decision-makers on your side.

**Knowledge:** Does your institution directly buy coffee, tea, sugar, and other products that are widely available in fair trade varieties? Do your research – employee cafés might mean a big coffee budget at your city building, or your small town might have a food service contract rather than purchasing food items individually. Often, this information is available online.

## 2. Research Existing Policies:

Before you advocate for new policies, it's helpful to know what is already in place that could help pave the way for fair trade purchasing. Find out all you can about existing resolutions, policies, mayor's executive orders, or any way your city has shown support for issues related to fair trade. Think broadly! Fair trade could be supported from the standpoint of labor rights, fair wages, "green" purchasing, and more (see list below).

### Strategies:

- A. Internet keyword search
- B. Find related offices & committees

### Things to Consider:

- Internet searches may turn up old information; but, unless a policy has been actively revoked, it's probably still in effect. Citing a policy from years or even decades ago is most likely just fine for city government.
- Live people and internet searches are likely to give you different information. Use that to your advantage by trying both.

### A. Internet Keyword Searches:

Do a thorough internet search for the name of your city and these keywords using Google, Bing, and your city website to help you find existing policies and/or the right department or contact to help you get a policy passed.

[Your City Name] and [Keyword], or  
[Your City Name] Policy [Keyword]

#### ***Use these keywords:***

Labor

Wages

Green

Environment/envir  
onmental

Sustainability/sustainable

Conservation

Trafficking

Responsible

Fair Trade

Workforce

***Think of more!***

### B. Finding Related Offices & Committees:

Look through a city directory to see if there's an office of sustainability, labor relations, or issues related to the public good. Giving a quick call to that office and asking about related policies is a good way to get up-to-date information from a live person.

Find a committee in the city to sit on that relates to fair trade. This will give you an insider's look at how government works. You may also be able to contribute to implementation – making sure the purchasers follow through with the policy.

## 3. **Finding City Contracts & Bids**

At the heart of a fair trade purchasing policy is the idea of changing your city's contract language to reflect fair trade aims. All kinds of goals can be achieved through thoughtful contract language, including support for small businesses, paper with recycled content, and fair trade purchasing. In your campaign, existing contracts can also provide valuable information about how and what products are purchased, so you'll know what will need to change to accomplish fair trade purchasing.

**What you're looking for:** You're looking for bid specifications or contracts that might cover coffee, tea, sugar, cocoa, or food services in general. You might find a food service contract that covers all of these products, or a single contract for tea. You might find "Food Concessions for Golf Course," "Food Service for Veteran's Home," or you may honestly come up empty-handed. The sites will likely make you download the documents you find, and we suggest you save everything you find in a folder, renaming it with a note helpful to you, such as, "Veteran's Home – Lists Herb Tea But Not Coffee, Sugar or Cocoa." You're trying to find contracts that might

include any of our four products. Look through the whole contract, even if it's tedious, and zero in on any lists of food products you can find.

#### How to find contracts and bid solicitation:

1. Do an internet search for [Your City's Name] "procurement". If that doesn't work, try using the word "purchasing," "bids," "specifications," or "contracts" instead. You can also look for "general services" or "administration" to find the related offices within your city, and click through the links or call those offices, asking for "procurement."
2. Once you find the procurement site, there will be a way to search for bid solicitations. Hopefully, you can search for contracts at the same time. Because these sites are designed for vendors, they sometimes list only "open" bid solicitations – goods or services that the city wants to buy right now, rather than existing contracts. You'll want to look for both solicitations and contracts eventually, but contracts are a good way to get started, if you can find them.
3. Click through into the contract search tool. Try to find a field that allows you to type in a general keyword or product, or just use the site's basic search function. Get ready for some dead ends and some holy grails, and start putting in these keywords one at a time:

|           |            |          |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| Food      | Coffee     | Café     |
| Grocer    | Tea        | Catering |
| Grocery   | Suga       | Meal     |
| Beverage  | Cocoa      | Meals    |
| Beverages | Concession |          |

Make sure to save everything you find. You may want to keep a running list. Write up a short paragraph you can share with others in your campaign, or with the media. Try to take note of quantities. If your city requires a cup of coffee to be served daily to each resident in a veterans' facility, for example, you can find out roughly how many residents there are, and get a sense of the potential impact if all coffee was switched to fair trade. Or, the total dollar value of the contract might be useful information.

By researching contracts, you'll also get to see who currently sells to the city. These vendors are going to be your best bet for finding easy-to-purchase fair trade products for your government to buy. Take note of the name of the vendor, and do an internet search for [vendor name] + "fair trade," or look for online catalogs. The Fair Trade Campaigns staff may also be able to help you make use of vendor information.

## 4. Cultivating Relationships with City/Town Government

### Power is in relationships. Here are a few pointers to ensure success:

1. **Reciprocate** – Relationships with elected officials such as city council members must be mutually beneficial. Take the high road and research their work and area of focus. Go out and support an upcoming event. Do them a favor so that when you knock on their door they feel like they owe you one.

2. **Stay Current** – Find out *before your meeting* how Fair Trade relates to their current work. At the meeting, you can thank them for any past support of related issues, such as sustainability. Take note if they inhabit a role with special clout, such as chair of an important committee.
3. **Communicate Professionally** – Thoroughly review correspondence. Be prompt and positive.
4. Prepare Appropriate Materials for Meetings
5. **Anticipate Questions** – and formulate responses ahead of time.
6. **Think From Their Perspective** – Before you head into a meeting, think about the impact of the policy, and why your contact would want to support it. (Ex: First City in IL to have a Fair Trade Policy; Contributing to city’s commitment to fair labor).
7. Always recognize people’s efforts! Share victories, use publicity to thank collaborators and celebrate successes.

## 5. Procurement Terminology:

**Award** – a process in which a city/town offers to sign a contract with a vendor for goods or services. When a vendor is selected to sign a contract to sell to a city, that contract is said to be “awarded” to that vendor. Sometimes only one vendor is selected, sometimes multiple vendors receive awards

**Bid** – an offer from a vendor that wants to provide goods or services at a specific price

**Bid Solicitation** – a process in which an entity describes the goods or services they’d like to buy

**City/Town Resolution** – a formal expression of opinion made public, usually by vote of an elected governing body, such as a City or Town Council

**Contract** – a document signed by both the city and the vendor, saying the vendor will sell them goods or services at a specific price (also called a “price agreement”)

**Distributor** – a type of vendor contracted for delivering goods, such as fresh food, beverages or packaged goods

**Food Service Provider** – a type of vendor contracted for making, transporting and/or serving prepared food for institutions, restaurants, and anywhere that has concessions

**Office Supply Company** – a type of vendor contracted for providing and transporting office supplies

**Procurement** – purchasing (by government agencies or institutions)

**Procurement Policy** – the rules and regulations that govern the process of acquiring goods or services for a government or institution

**RFP (Request for Proposal)** – a type of bid solicitation

**Vendor** – a company that sells goods or services to the city, or wants to do so

