



8 Steps to a new school food service

So, your school has decided to investigate opening a canteen or food service - this is a great way to encourage healthy eating amongst students and the wider community. To ensure the food service is successful and financially viable, consider the following steps.

1. School community support

It is imperative to consider the needs and wants of the entire school community. Starting a school canteen requires the support and commitment of everyone. Facilitate a meeting with your school Principal and the parent body to discuss what sort of food service your school should have. For example:

- onsite canteen operated by:
 - the parent body
 - incorporated school board
 - outsourced via a management contract or licensing agreement
- local arrangements with external providers such as another school or shop.



⬇ Download: [Food service options for schools](#) and [Incorporated School Councils and Boards: FAQs](#)

Form a canteen committee

This is a good time to form a Canteen Committee. Include parents interested in being part of the decision making process for all planning, and invite school staff, the school health nurse and perhaps a number of senior students to participate.

⬇ Resource: Canteen committee terms of reference template (members only)

Survey the school

Conducting a survey can be a great way of ensuring you are meeting the needs of the school community. Find out how many days parents/staff/students would like the canteen to operate; spending capacity; who may be willing to volunteer; and popular menu ideas. Consider offering an incentive for completing the survey e.g. raffle draw for a healthy food hamper or cookbook.



⬇ Resource: Canteen survey for students, parents and staff (members only)

Now that you know the school community will support the canteen the planning can continue. Keep in mind, if there is limited support at this stage, you can always park the idea for a couple of terms and then revisit your options.

2. Register with the local council and assess the space

The canteen must be registered with the local council as a food business. They will also be able to tell you what level of food preparation is permitted in your canteen i.e. if you are permitted to prepare food from scratch with raw produce, such as lean meat.

The Environmental Health Officer at the council is a great resource for all your food safety and hygiene concerns and you can expect a yearly inspection from them – you can always contact them if these visits are not occurring.

☎ Reach out: [to your local council](#)

Assess the canteen space and facilities

Make sure the canteen has all necessary appliances and equipment to operate. Take an inventory of fridges/freezers, cookware, crockery and utensils to see what your canteen may be lacking before the doors open. Some suppliers provide equipment (e.g. fridges, freezers) as long as you are stocking their products.

Other missing items such as spoons, cups etc. may be donated by the school community provided they are in good condition. Small appliances such as blenders and toasted sandwich machines must be purchased new and preferably be commercial grade to ensure warranties are not void.

❗ Consider: WASCA members can apply for a [Robin Bromley Visionary Grant to help with large items](#)

3. WASCA Membership

Become a WASCA member and reap the rewards that membership can offer your school. We have extensive experience supporting schools in WA and have tailored our exclusive benefits, expert advice and training to help your canteen flourish. Along with the benefits you value most, such as the Star Choice™ Buyers Guide, communications via eNews and Facebook, and networking opportunities, other services* include:

- Advisory service
- Regular canteen check-in meetings online
- CORE finance training – upskill about Costings, Operations, Record keeping and Expenses
- Food safety and hygiene training
- Exclusive access to the jobs board
- Canteen consultancy.

**fees may apply*

❗ Check: the WASCA [training page](#) and [website for all the resources](#)

4. Create an action plan

Identify tasks, develop a checklist, timeline, and delegate jobs amongst your canteen committee/parent body. Schedule regular meetings to check in with each other. This will keep the momentum going to achieve all tasks leading to the opening of your canteen/food service. Your 'action plan' may include but is not limited to:

- drafting of a canteen policy
- auditing of canteen facilities and equipment
- nominating/employing a canteen supervisor
- completing relevant training
- menu planning
- a plan for launching the canteen.



Planning and organisation is the key to successfully opening your canteen/food service; communicate clearly with everyone involved and keep your Principal informed. If you plan to employ staff, contact [WACSSO](#) for insurance information as well as [Wageline](#) and/or [Fairwork](#) about obligations, responsibilities and wages.

⬇ Resource: Action plan template (members only)

5. Training and resources

School canteens in WA are required to complete the following training. Visit the [WASCA website](#) for further details.

a) Food Safety Supervisor

School canteens must appoint a Food Safety Supervisor and that person must complete Food Safety Supervisor training.

b) Foodsafe® Food Handler training

All paid and volunteer staff working in a school canteen must complete FoodSafe (or its equivalent); WASCA members can access online training for free.

c) All about Allergens

All paid and volunteer staff must complete All about Allergen training. This is free online training to increase skills and knowledge about food allergy.

To further increase skills and knowledge, we also recommend:

- [School canteen online training](#), offered by the Federation of Canteens in Schools
- CORE Finances Training, offered by WASCA.

6. Menu planning

You must comply with the Department of Education's Student Health Care Policy (which includes the Healthy Food and Drink policy). This means:

- Only provide food and drinks that meet the Star Choice nutrient criteria
- At least 60% of items to be green
(e.g. sandwiches, rolls, wraps, salad, soup, water, yoghurt, pasta, curry, sushi)
- No more than 40% of items to be amber
(e.g. 99% juice, pies, ham sandwich, cheeseburger)
- Limit Amber savoury commercial times
(e.g. pies, sausage rolls, chicken nuggets) to be available no more than two days per week
- Red items are off the menu
(e.g. sugary drinks, deep fried food, iced cakes).

Products

By utilising suppliers in the Star Choice™ Buyers Guide you are guaranteed to know they meet the nutrient criteria and are either green or amber. Star Choice suppliers offer exclusive deals and great products for the school canteen market. Request a copy from WASCA, or download a Guide from the WASCA website.

Recipes

The WASCA website has hundreds of great recipes. Best of all, many of them have come direct from school canteens so you know they are popular with children and young people.

Key questions

Aside from choosing delicious and nutritious products and recipes, there are a number of factors to consider:

- Do you have enough people required to make all the items?
- How will items be packaged?
- Is the menu taking advantage of seasonal produce?
- Is the menu compliant with the policy?
- Does the menu contain specials?
- How will the menu be distributed to the school community?
- How much will you charge for each item?

Pricing

You will need to develop a pricing formula specific to your school to ensure you cover all expenses associated with operating the canteen. CORE finances training will help you do this.

7. Launch day

The launch of your canteen is an exciting time! Ensure the whole school community is involved by opening the doors on a school assembly day or plan a special celebration to mark this momentous occasion. Not only will this generate excitement amongst students, parents will want to be part of it too, so hopefully it will generate lots of volunteers!

Canteens are an integral part of the school community, not only do they provide students with nutritious food throughout the day and the opportunity to learn to make healthy food choices, they are a place where parents of the school community can come together to socialise whilst doing their bit for the school.



Strive to make the canteen a place devoid of negativity and gossip, and committed to providing healthy food and drink choices for staff and students.

8. Review and evaluate

Part of the original action plan should include reviewing and evaluating the canteen. Consider if the canteen is financially viable; that the menu is achievable and popular; and the pricing is sufficient to cover operating costs.

Keep in touch with the team at WASCA. We want to celebrate your canteen journey. From the big launch day to a new recipe that was popular, please share your stories with us.

