



United States Department of Agriculture

Healthy Corner Stores

Making Corner Stores
Healthier Places to Shop

Foreword

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HEALTHY CORNER STORES GUIDE

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Introduction

What will I learn from this guide?

In this guide, you will learn how to lay the groundwork for planning and implementing a successful program in your community. It's important to note that all communities are different, and there is no "one-size-fits-all" corner store program that works for every State, city, or neighborhood. A number of case studies, resources, and best practice recommendations from organizations that have effectively maintained these programs are included for additional learning and support.

What terms should I know to understand healthy corner stores?

The following terms are used throughout this guide.

- **CORNER STORE:** Typically defined as a small-scale store that sells a limited selection of food and other products.¹ These businesses are also referred to as convenience stores or bodegas.
- **FOOD SECURITY:** All household members have access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.²
- **FOOD INSECURITY:** One or more household members are unable to acquire adequate food at some point during the year because of insufficient money and other resources for food.³
- **LOW FOOD SECURITY:** A majority of food-insecure households avoid substantial reductions or disruptions in food intake, in many cases by relying on a few basic foods and reducing variety in their diets. Households with low food security report reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet with little or no indication of reduced food intake.⁴
- **VERY LOW FOOD SECURITY:** In this more severe form of food insecurity, one or more household members report multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake at least some time during the year because they cannot afford enough food.⁵

What Are Healthy Corner Stores and Why Are They Important?

What is a corner store?

Most communities across America, regardless of their urban, suburban, or rural setting, consider corner stores as important options among their existing retail establishments. These businesses, which are more limited in both physical space and available inventory than supermarkets and grocery stores, often represent quick stops for food, drinks, household supplies, and personal care products.⁷ For some communities, corner stores are the only place nearby to buy food; however, studies show that more than 85 percent of SNAP purchases are made at larger stores.

According to the National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS), the international trade association representing more than 2,200 small retailers, the U.S. convenience store industry includes 152,794 stores (as of December 31, 2014). The majority of these stores (63%) are run by small, independent operators rather than large chain businesses.⁸ These stores reported \$213.5 billion in non-fuel total sales in 2014 and the average store sells over \$265,000 per year in food.⁹ Food sales most commonly include prepared foods, but also include hot dispensed beverages such as coffee, cold dispensed beverages, and frozen dispensed beverages.¹⁰ Many corner stores typically do not supply the full range of foods and beverages necessary to build a healthy diet.

Why are corner stores ideal for public health interventions?

Encouraging and supporting corner stores to stock and sell healthier food and beverage items has become an important goal of many public health stakeholders. The Federal Government, local and State health departments and government agencies, public health philanthropies and non-profit organizations and community groups desire to see improved food options provided by corner stores. First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* initiative references healthy corner store programs as effective community-based strategies to improve health and help prevent childhood obesity.¹¹

Research shows that corner stores are more prevalent in low income communities.

- Low-income areas have significantly more as many convenience stores than higher income areas.¹²
- Hispanic youth are more likely to attend schools with convenience stores and snack stores within 1,300 to 2,600 feet.¹³
- Low-income African-American youth shop at corner stores an average of twice per week, most commonly purchasing chips, candy, and soda.¹⁴



Healthy Diet

The 2015 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* defines a healthy diet as one that emphasizes nutrient-dense foods and beverages – vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, seafood, lean meats, eggs, beans and peas, and nuts and seeds – and limits foods high in sodium, saturated and *trans* fats, sugars, and refined grains.⁶

Currently, many corner store environments do not support healthy eating habits.

- Corner stores tend to sell little fresh produce, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products.¹⁵
- Teenagers who live near convenience stores have higher body mass indexes (BMIs) and consume more sugar-sweetened beverages than those who live farther away.¹⁶
- Proximity to convenience stores within a neighborhood is associated with higher rates of obesity and diabetes.¹⁷
- 29 percent of Philadelphia students shop at corner stores twice a day, 5 days a week, consuming more than 350 calories per visit.¹⁸

And finally, healthy corner store interventions have the power to positively impact the health of community members. Successful programs have shown that:

- Store interventions increase sales of healthy foods as well as customer knowledge about healthy products.¹⁹
- The amount of shelf space dedicated to fruits and vegetables at corner stores is positively associated with increased produce consumption among nearby residents.²⁰

What does a healthy corner store look like?

How programs specifically define and classify a “healthy corner store” varies. However, the following table describes typical features of a healthy corner store intervention and how those improvements compare to the store environment prior to program involvement.^{21,22,23}

Typical features of healthy corner store interventions include:

<i>Typical Corner Store Food Environment (Before)</i>	<i>Healthy Corner Store Improvement (After)</i>
Little to no fresh fruits and vegetables available for purchase; limited number of healthier snack foods	Increased availability of fresh produce and frozen/ canned fruits and vegetables made with lower levels of sodium and sugar; whole grain snack items; no- and low-fat dairy products; and other foods and beverages that support a balanced diet
Available produce is unappealing: poor quality; displayed in boxes or in other ways that discourage purchase	Storage equipment such as coolers and refrigerators keep fresh produce and perishable foods fresh; shelving units or baskets improve display aesthetics
Store owners unfamiliar with purchasing, stocking and pricing fresh produce and healthier food items	Store owners and community organizations engage area residents to increase customer interest in, and demand for, healthier items
In-store marketing activities focus on less nutritious items, such as sugar-sweetened beverages, candy and chips	Healthier choices are placed in more prominent locations in the store, near the register or at the entrance of the store. Point-of-purchase promotions such as shelf tags, posters, and price call-outs on healthier foods and beverages to increase customer awareness and purchasing.
Customers are unengaged in motivating store owners to sell healthier foods and beverages	Store owners and community organizations engage area residents to increase customer interest in, and demand for, healthier items

What is a Healthy Corner Store Program?

The goal of healthy corner store programs is universal: to improve access to and consumption of healthy food and beverage items by communities that do not have nearby supermarkets, farmers markets, and stores where fresh produce and healthy items are commonly sold. The most successful programs are multi-dimensional and comprehensive; they involve approaches that target the internal, in-store environment as well as the external community environment. More detail about these components and how to implement them in your community can be found later in this guide.

What are some common elements of successful healthy corner store programs?

- **PARTNERSHIPS** are essential for success. They can result in funding opportunities, broader program support and engagement by local stakeholders, and long-term buy-in by community members. Partners can include local and state health and human services departments, universities, public health agencies, food councils, and community groups.
- **INCENTIVES** are important drivers of program participation and can help motivate store owners to be involved. Common incentives include new store equipment, price discounts, and recognition by the community. For example, the New York City “Adopt a Bodega” program gives stores a star rating based on its achievements.
- **EDUCATING CONSUMERS** to buy, prepare, and eat healthy foods is critical, particularly for those living in communities with lower levels of income and education rates, who are at greater risk for obesity and chronic disease.²⁴
- **INVENTORY IMPROVEMENTS** are common strategies to encourage healthy purchases. Many successful programs begin their intervention by sourcing and stocking healthier foods and beverages, like fresh produce and fat-free and low-fat yogurt. Some stores also change the way healthier items are displayed in-store, making the healthier choices easier to notice and when possible, more affordable.
- **TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE** lead to successful program launches and long-term maintenance. Introductory training and ongoing monitoring is crucial because store owners often lack the knowledge and skills required to effectively buy, stock, price, and market healthier products.²⁵
- **MARKETING** increases program awareness. Changes to the store exterior can make the physical building more inviting, in-store approaches like signage and shelf tags encourage healthier choices at the time of purchase, and local media coverage can contribute to recognition of the changes being made.
- **FUNDING** is often required to make acquiring the necessary program components a reality. Funding can be secured through government grants when offered and/or from organizations that provide small business development assistance.

What are some examples of successful healthy corner store programs?

The Food Trust's Healthy Corner Store Initiative (Philadelphia, PA)

In 2004, The Food Trust piloted an initiative aimed to motivate youth and adults to make healthier food purchases, primarily through education and in-store marketing efforts. Since the pilot's success, the Food Trust's corner store program has grown dramatically in partnership with the Philadelphia Department of Health and with support from other organizations, and has expanded throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The Food Trust program raised awareness of, and provided education about, healthier purchasing habits, and it changed the corner store food environment. The program has many elements, some of which include: (1) increasing store capacity to sell and market healthy food and beverage items, (2) training and technical assistance for store owners, (3) in-store community nutrition lessons, (4) youth education efforts in schools near targeted corner stores, and (5) connecting store owners with community partners, local farmers, and fresh food suppliers to encourage healthy food sourcing.²⁶

The Food Trust also consults with communities across the country to provide technical assistance and training to support similar programs nationwide. For more information, visit www.thefoodtrust.org and check out the Food Trust-founded National Healthy Corner Store Network at <http://www.healthycornerstores.org/>.

ChangeLab Solutions Healthy Small Food Retailer Certification Program (Oakland, CA)

ChangeLab Solutions at <http://www.changelabsolutions.org/> is an organization focused on policy change to improve public health, specifically concerning childhood obesity and healthy eating. The organization works with communities to help them prepare for and participate in policy change by providing research, conducting trainings, developing toolkits and model policies, and providing technical assistance. ChangeLab facilitates the success of healthy corner store programs by leading training courses for health department staff about healthy retail policies and programs. ChangeLab also developed a comprehensive report, *Health on the Shelf* at http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Health_on_the_Shelf_FINAL_20130322-web.pdf, to evaluate the effectiveness of existing corner store programs and provide best practice recommendations to interested stakeholders. Included in the report are instructions on how to join ChangeLab's Healthy Small Store Certification Program, a policy-focused certification system to register participating stores, provide incentives, and track progress and impact.

Shop Healthy NYC (New York, NY)

Shop Healthy NYC at <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/foodpolicy/help/shop-healthy.page> is a New York City Health Department Initiative that works to increase access to healthy food and engage residents and organizations to support long-term improvements in their food retail environments. Shop Healthy was launched in 2012 and grew out of years of previous work targeting over 1,000 "bodegas" in high-need areas. To ensure a sustainable impact on food access, the program works to influence both supply and demand — reaching out to food retailers to increase stock and promotion of healthy foods, working with stores to meet specific goals, collaborating with distributors and suppliers to facilitate wholesale purchases and widespread promotion of healthy foods, and engaging community members to support program efforts.²⁷

Baltimore Healthy Stores (Baltimore, MD)

Baltimore Healthy Stores is part of the Healthy Stores Project at <http://healthystores.org/>, which aims to improve health and prevent obesity and disease in low-income communities using corner store-based interventions that increase availability of healthy foods and promote their purchase.²⁸ The Baltimore program was implemented by researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in partnership with the Baltimore Health Department. Healthy food items were introduced and promoted in stores through five themed phases: healthy eating for kids, healthy cooking habits, healthy snacks, carry-out foods, and low-calorie drinks. Incentives for store owners included shelf labels, posters, in-store nutrition and cooking workshops, customer coupons and a voucher for wholesale orders of healthy food items. Program staff also worked with the Korean Grocers' Association to build relationships and assess barriers to participation among Korean corner store owners.²⁹

How Does My Organization Get Started?

As a community partner or State agency, you have an opportunity to support healthy corner store program development and implementation by providing information and resources to store owners and community members, building relationships and partnerships within the community, and supporting program tactics where possible.

This section provides guidance on how to lay the groundwork for a successful program and ask the right questions at the onset of intervention planning.

Step 1: Understand Your Corner Store Environment

Before embarking on any public health intervention, it is critical to understand your environment and the needs of your target audience. Armed with this information, program directors can develop strategies and approaches that resonate with community members and overcome barriers to successful implementation.

There are several ways to conduct an environmental assessment – the most extensive approach is known as a food system assessment. This type of assessment studies how a community gets its food from farm to fork, including production, processing, distribution, consumption, and even waste disposal.³¹ This type of analysis requires substantial time and resources and may not be feasible for every community or program.

Alternatively, simpler efforts focused on understanding a community's food retail food environment may suffice. These approaches include mapping exercises to determine where corner stores are located within a community and what types of foods are currently sold; price analyses to understand how healthier food items are priced from one store to another; and additional projects that yield data on the availability, quality and pricing of foods and beverages sold in corner stores.

GIS Mapping

Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping helps to locate retail availability in designated areas. GIS can manage, analyze, and represent data that are linked to location (geocoded data). For assessment of healthier food retail, GIS can be used to map the locations of a variety of food retailers. Then, States or communities can begin to identify, visualize, and track potentially underserved areas, as well as optimize placement of new resources to support healthy eating or inform decisionmakers about where intervention is most needed.³⁰

Resources to help you conduct these mapping and assessment exercises are in the table below:

Organization	Resource	Location Online	Type of Resource
USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	<i>SNAP Retailer Locator</i>	www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailerlocator	Mapping tool that identifies locations where SNAP benefits are accepted
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	<i>Healthy Food Retail: Beginning the Assessment Process in Your State or Community</i>	www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/HFRassessment.pdf	Environmental assessment guide including links to additional resources
USDA Economic Research Service	<i>Food Access Research Atlas</i>	http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas.aspx	Mapping tool that provides food access data for populations within census tracts
California Department of Public Health	<i>Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention (CX³) Tools</i>	http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/CX3Instructions_Surveys_Forms.aspx	GIS mapping system, field surveys, and community assets

Step 2: Identify and Overcome Barriers

Healthy corner store programs can result in marked improvements to a community's food environment. Anticipating and planning for the following common barriers to successful implementation can help your program more quickly and effectively affect community members.

Obstacle	Why It's A Challenge	How to Overcome
Selecting an Intervention Target	<p>There is no universal, established definition for a corner store</p> <p>There is no existing database that contains corner store data (geographic location, inventory, or sales)</p>	<p>Conduct a community assessment using the tools and resources previously identified</p> <p>Understand the unique needs and desires of store customers/community members</p> <p>Participate in street canvassing to locate and evaluate existing stores and their inventories in your community</p>
Language and Cultural Differences	<p>Cultural norms and dietary practices differ by community (and sometimes within communities)</p> <p>Store owners may have a different ethnic and cultural background than the community members they serve</p>	<p>Develop multilingual educational and promotional materials</p> <p>Where possible, encourage store owners to hire multilingual staff</p> <p>Consider use of multilingual staff</p>
Attaining Store Owner Buy-In	<p>Store owners often lack the time, skills, and understanding to implement a healthy corner store program</p> <p>Store owners may be concerned that their customers will not purchase healthier food items and their store will lose money</p>	<p>Conduct personalized trainings with store owners to familiarize them with program goals and components</p> <p>Start small by offering one or two improved options and allow store owners to experience positive sales results</p> <p>Communicate to store owners the expected business-related benefits of the program</p>
Ensuring Program Sustainability	<p>Corner stores often face high staff turnover rates</p> <p>It may take time to for healthier food and beverage items to turn a profit</p> <p>Funding is often temporary</p>	<p>Perform regular check-ins with store owners and conduct training if there has been a change in leadership</p> <p>Work with store owners to ensure products are being displayed and promoted according to best practices</p> <p>Continually help stores identify sources of funding (grants, loans, etc.)</p>
Sourcing Healthier Food Items	<p>Healthier products may not be sold by the store's distributor or smaller quantities may be cost-prohibitive</p> <p>Store owners may buy their own produce from large grocery stores, where food is often more expensive (this cost is then passed down to customers to realize a profit)</p>	<p>Encourage store owners to explore additional distribution channels, such as wholesale stores and produce markets</p> <p>Work with community partners to determine whether agreements could be made with local farms/farmers markets/urban gardens/co-ops</p>
Redesigning the Store Layout	<p>Many corner stores put unhealthy food items in prime locations, like near the register or at the entrance of the store</p> <p>Store owners may resist changes to the store layout for fear of decrease in sales</p>	<p>Encourage store owners to try small, incremental changes to their stores layout</p>

Step 3: Identify Potential Partners and Build Relationships

Healthy corner store programs are resource-intensive and will likely require the support of a multitude of stakeholders to be successful. These stakeholders can include government agencies and health and human services departments, mayors' food policy councils, local businesses including farmers/producers, nonprofit organizations, universities, schools, and store owner associations. Uniting multiple stakeholders can lead to increased buy-in from store owners, businesses, and community members, increased available resources and expertise, and ultimately increased chance of success.³² Below are some examples of specific stakeholders with which to explore partnerships.

Local Level

- **LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS**, such as mayors' or county offices, can help support the program through promotional, sponsorship, and/or funding efforts.
- **HEALTH DEPARTMENT** staff can identify and analyze related food-access initiatives that could inform program development and implementation. They may also possess relevant health and human services economic data.
- **COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OFFICES AND OTHER SNAP-ED IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES** can contribute nutrition education support through classes and materials, and they can use their relationships with local food producers to help with food sourcing and distribution needs.
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES** may be able to provide funding and support if healthy corner store interventions are taking place within areas undergoing redevelopment.
- **BUSINESSES THAT ARE MADE AWARE OF AND ARE INVESTED IN THE PROGRAM** can contribute useful materials, such as shelving or other physical structures to help display new product inventory. If advertising opportunities are available, additional companies may be interested in helping with marketing efforts.
- **HEALTH CENTERS AND ORGANIZATIONS INVESTED IN THE NUTRITION AND WELL-BEING OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS** may appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the program. Physicians, registered dietitians, and other health professionals can lend their services to educate community members about healthy eating and living.
- **COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS** such as faith-based groups, neighborhood associations, and community action groups tend to have a deep understanding of and familiarity with community members' needs and interests and can be powerful program advocates. Partnering with these groups can increase access to residents, as well as program awareness and engagement. These groups can also act as conduits to community members throughout the program evaluation process.
- **LOCAL MEDIA** can play a major role in the promotion of the program, generating awareness and excitement among community members. Local media stakeholders may include radio stations, television networks, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and blogs.

State and National Level

- **STATE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENTS** can help with a variety of tasks and activities. Staff is likely to be knowledgeable about grant and funding opportunities that may be offered by public health philanthropies and Federal Government agencies. Staff is also likely to have established relationships with regional food producers, which can facilitate procurement of healthier foods.
- **UNIVERSITIES**, especially those with public health schools, can serve as valuable partners through the involvement of students and faculty. Public health students are often required to complete practical experiences, during which they are required to design, implement, and evaluate community interventions – corner stores could be intervention sites. Faculty could be involved with related research projects and may be willing to lend expertise and resources to program development. Affiliation with a university can also increase a program's chances of receiving recognition and funding.

What are the Key Components of Successful, Sustainable Programs?

Now that you've assessed your environment, prevented common barriers to success, and engaged the right partners, the next step is to explore program tactics in greater detail. The following section describes "best practice" strategies and provides recommendations for effective implementation.

Engaging Store Owners

Motivated store owners are vital to a successful healthy corner store program – along with community members, store owners act as program champions. They are primarily responsible for making a program successful and sustainable over the long-term. If the store owner doesn't believe in the program and is unwilling to spearhead intervention activities, the program is unlikely to succeed.

DEMONSTRATE BENEFITS TO THE BUSINESS Naturally, store owners are concerned about the bottom line – they need to know that incorporating healthier foods and beverages into their stores will not result in losses and may even be profitable. Stocking and selling healthier items often requires some upfront investment. Store owners need to understand how the extra work and costs can pay off. Providing data that demonstrate how fresh produce can yield higher profit margins will likely be convincing, as are examples of marketing materials that will bring more customers into the store and lead them to buy the new products. Describing similar nearby stores that have experienced success can also be persuasive.

PROVIDE PERSONALIZED TRAINING Each store owner's experience is unique – from hours worked, to financial reporting mechanisms, to language(s) spoken – learning and training needs differ from store to store. For these and other reasons, one-on-one, personalized trainings conducted onsite may be more effective than large, centralized group trainings. It is important that these trainings are carried out as early as possible in the program development process. In addition to training owners about program components and implementation, specific training on the following topics may be helpful:

- Fresh produce procurement, handling, and pricing
- Healthy product marketing
- Basic nutrition education
- Business planning and expansion
- Customer service and cross-cultural communication



Profit Margins

Profit margins on dairy, bread, meat, and fresh produce often range from 25 to 50 percent or more. The profit margin for value-added fresh products, such as cut fruits or salads, can be more than 100 percent. However, it is important that store operators understand the extra skill, effort, and infrastructure required to realize these potential profits.³⁵

CONNECT OWNERS TO THE COMMUNITY Helping store owners understand their customer base will drive demand for the new products brought into the store. Research shows that many store owners are supportive of making healthy changes to their store environment, but they worry that customers will not buy the new food. Facilitating relationships between store owners and potential partners is also beneficial.

START SMALL Healthy corner store programs can seem overwhelming at first. To ensure early success, help store owners set small, simple goals, such as including three to five new fresh produce items and promoting their purchase and nutritional quality to customers. Such smaller changes can lead to more significant interventions down the road, once store owners gain confidence in selling new products.

Engaging Community Members

Community members should be involved and invested from the program's beginning. Healthy corner store interventions are unlikely to succeed without the support of the people they are meant to help. To help generate interest and demand, community members' input should be sought during planning and throughout implementation. The community assessment you conduct will help you seek input and determine the most effective strategies for engaging your area residents. Below are examples of community engagement activities executed by healthy corner store programs around the country.

- The Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program organized kick-off events to generate community interest. Stores worked with staff from the University of Minnesota's Simply Good Eating Program to conduct cooking demonstrations and share recipe cards for healthy meals using the new, healthier items sold in-store. Stores also engaged youth from the local high school and YMCA to help distribute invitations to residents and organizations in the surrounding area to attend these events. These activities sparked enthusiasm among community members and customers and ultimately resulted in increased demand for fresh produce and healthy foods and beverages.³⁴
- The Louisville Department of Public Health and Wellness partnered with the YMCA to implement its Healthy In A Hurry Corner Store initiative. Each time a new store is certified, the program issues a press release and a ribbon-cutting ceremony to raise community awareness and interest. Elected officials such as the mayor and members of Congress have attended prior ceremonies, which helped to generate local media coverage. More specifically for residents, this program also hosts community events in the evenings for locals to celebrate store achievements.³⁵
- The Washington, D.C., Healthy Corner Store Program helps store owners build relationships with community members in a number of ways. Corner store owners donate food to community events and hire neighborhood residents to work in their stores or as part of committees that work on store improvements. Some stores hang bulletin boards so residents can learn about community announcements and activities. In 2008, D.C. Hunger Solutions, an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center, brought together a local grocery store and MuralsDC to paint a vibrant mural on the side of the grocery store, increasing the appeal and external aesthetics of the store.³⁶

Defining Program Incentives

Because healthy corner store programs are voluntary, incentives may be required to motivate store owners and community members to participate. Incentives that lead to long-term and ongoing programming are optimal. To understand what kinds of incentives are likely to resonate best, it is important to communicate with store owners and community stakeholders to understand their needs.

Some examples of incentives include:

- Recognition by local and/or State organizations for leading efforts to improve the health of community members
- Free onsite trainings and technical assistance provided to store owners and staff

- Free or discounted equipment to store and display healthier food items, including shelving, refrigeration and cooling units, shelf tags, and other display materials
- Support with healthier product sourcing and selection, including the identification of distributors that will provide fresh produce to stores in a cost-effective manner, and other technical assistance
- Free renovations and/or improvements to the interior and exterior of stores, increasing the visual appeal of the building and attracting more customers
- Low-interest loans for store owners or other financial incentives that might be available for the project

Offering certain incentives may require additional funding. Working with your State health department to identify available grant opportunities and exploring opportunities with small business loan and development organizations can help you acquire funding for your program. In addition, local businesses may be willing to offer in-kind services in exchange for advertising or recognition.³⁷ You can also visit the “Available Funding” section of the Healthy Food Access Portal at <http://healthyfoodaccess.org/funding/available-funding> to learn about available grants and funding opportunities for healthy retail programs.³⁸

Providing Nutrition Education

Basic nutrition education for store owners and community members – what foods and nutrients to eat more (and less) of, and why eating healthy is important – is a crucial part of many successful healthy corner store programs. Nutrition education and healthy cooking demonstrations can be held at the store (e.g., brochures and recipes, free product sampling, taste tests, and/or partners hosting offsite events). More information on agencies and organizations that can assist with or provide nutrition education can be found at the SNAP-Ed Connection at <http://snaped.fns.usda.gov>. Schools and after-school sites are ideal locations for nutrition lessons and cooking demonstrations featuring healthier items now sold in stores. Alternatively, free or discounted counseling sessions with a registered dietitian can help families learn to shop, cook, and eat more healthfully.

Team Nutrition, an initiative of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, provides training and technical assistance, as well as nutrition education, to support healthy eating and physical activity in schools and communities. The Team Nutrition online resource library at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resource-library> includes a number of assets that may be helpful in designing nutrition education programs for a healthy corner store initiative.

Another useful nutrition education resource is the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion’s Healthy Eating on a Budget at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget/>. On this Web site, you’ll find additional educational handouts and brochures, sample 2-week menu plans, tips for preparing quick, easy, and healthy meals, and strategies to find and choose healthy options in the grocery store.

For more nutrition education resources, see the final section of this guide.

Making Changes to Store Inventory

Common inventory changes include bringing new, healthier items into stores and changing the way food and beverage items are displayed. Effective strategies to increase awareness, purchasing, and consumption of healthier products include:

- Stocking foods and beverages recommended by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, including fruits and vegetables, lean protein foods, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, whole grains, and snacks with limited amounts of calories, saturated fats, sodium, and sugars.
- Pricing healthier products competitively – even cheaper – compared to their alternatives. This can mean offering bottled water and low-calorie and no-calorie beverages for less than sugar-sweetened beverages that are higher in calories, or making price cuts on fresh produce.

- Regular sales, coupons and discounts on healthier items
- Creating prominent and attractive displays that catch the eyes of customers
- Acquiring refrigeration units and coolers to stock perishable items
- Displaying healthier items at eye-level, near checkout counters, and by entryways, so they are visible from outside and/or when customers first enter the store

Marketing Healthier Product Options

Stocking healthier items only matters if customers buy them and store owners make a profit. Marketing is an important strategy to raise awareness of healthy corner store programs and encourage individuals to buy the healthier options.

- Decals, signs, and shelf labels are effective in-store approaches to generate customer interest and increase the healthier product purchases.
 - Research shows that these kinds of point-of-purchase nutrition promotions also increase consumer knowledge about nutrition and can increase sales of fruits and vegetables.³⁹
- Flyers, brochures and other print and digital materials can be distributed by government agencies, health clinics, and community organizations to increase awareness.
- Pitching local reporters and media outlets about the program and its potential benefits to the community can lead to free media coverage.
- Advertisements can be placed in daily and weekly newspapers, and public service announcements (PSAs) can be placed on local radio and television.
- Nutrition-based lesson plans that feature healthier foods and beverages sold by the store can be developed with teachers and incorporated into school curricula.

Sourcing Healthy Foods and Beverages

Corner stores often source their products from a variety of distributors. Bringing healthier products into corner stores can be challenging because existing distributors may not offer small quantities of fresh produce at cost-effective prices, and store owners may not be aware of all of the distribution channels available to them. Partner organizations can support stores in sourcing healthier foods and beverages in several ways:

- Help stores identify and connect with distributors that offer healthier foods and beverages at wholesale prices.
- Help stores pool their orders with other businesses for lower prices. This can be accomplished through the development of a store owner co-op. If deliveries are made at a central location rather than individual stores, further cost savings can be realized.
- Offer strategies to source foods directly from local farms, farmers markets, and urban gardens. Alternatively, leftover produce from any of these could be sold in corner stores for a reduced price.
- Share information on produce wholesale markets by providing store owners with a list with contact information.

Where Can I Find Additional Resources?

This section includes additional resources to help you plan and implement a healthy corner store program. These resources include reference Web sites, toolkits, and promotional and educational materials that have been developed for successful programs across the country.

Resources

- Healthy Corner Stores Network: <http://www.healthycornerstores.org/>
- Healthy Eating on a Budget: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/budget>
- MyPlate 10 Tips Nutrition Education Series: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html>
- Nutrition through the Seasons: <http://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-through-the-seasons>
- SNAP-Ed Resource Library: <http://snaped.fns.usda.gov/snap-ed-library>
- What's Cooking? USDA Mixing Bowl: <http://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/>

Toolkits

- Adopt a Shop – A Shop Healthy Guide: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/pan/adopt-a-shop-guide.pdf>
 - For organizations looking to support a local food retailer in stocking and promoting healthy foods and beverages.
- Creating Healthy Corner Stores – An analysis of factors necessary for effective corner store conversion programs: <http://goodfoodla.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Creating-Healthy-Corner-Stores-Issue-Briefer.pdf>
 - Understand the motivations and arguments for implementing corner store conversion projects, how they are designed to meet their goals, and how best to ensure produce sales can be sustained over the long-term.
- Getting to Grocery: <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/getting-grocery>
 - Designed to help advocates and public health agencies coordinate and leverage the tools available through local government and other organizations to bring grocery stores into low-income communities.
- Grocery Store Merchandising Tips: http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/grocery-store-merchandising-tips.original.pdf
 - 10 merchandising tips to help you sell healthy foods.
- Health On the Shelf: http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Health_on_the_Shelf_FINAL_20130322-web.pdf
 - This toolkit describes how to create a strong and healthy small food retailer certification program that requires participating stores to increase the variety of healthy foods they sell, reduce the offerings of unhealthy foods, and proactively market healthy options with help from a sponsoring agency or organization. It provides step-by-step instructions for developing a certification program, with ideas and examples from existing programs.
- Retail Fruit & Vegetable Marketing Guide: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/RetailFruitandVegMarketingGuide.aspx>
 - This guide is written for store owners and is full of helpful ideas, tips, and resources that will make a fresh produce marketing plan more successful.

- Why Sell Healthy Food? Stocking more healthy foods could mean better business for you: http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/phcsn-sell-healthy-guide.original.pdf
 - This guide offers tips on healthy product selection, pricing and display, promotion and marketing, and equipment and refrigeration.
- Shop Healthy Implementation Guide: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/pan/shop-healthy-implementation-guide.pdf>
 - A comprehensive resource for starting a healthy corner store program, based on the experiences and lessons learned from Shop Healthy in New York City.
- Shop Healthy NYC Postcard: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/pan/shop-healthy-postcard.pdf>
 - An example of how community members can express demand for healthier foods and beverages to be sold in corner stores.

Program Examples

- DC Healthy Corner Store Program: <http://www.dchunger.org/projects/cornerstore.html>
 - DC Central Kitchen launched an affordable wholesale delivery service—featuring fresh local produce and healthy snacks—at participating corner stores.
- Healthy Food for All: Encouraging Grocery Investment in Colorado: <https://www.denvergov.org/Portals/771/documents/Grocery-Initiative-Report.pdf>
 - This report outlines the task force’s policy recommendations for developing healthy, affordable food retail in underserved communities—ensuring that everyone can have access to healthy, affordable food.
- The Food Trust & Philadelphia’s Healthy Corner Store Initiative: http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/hcsi-y2report-final.original.pdf
 - This report offers lessons learned, problems, and identified solutions as well as a guide for how Philadelphia set up one of the most successful corner store initiatives.
- Shop Healthy NYC! How to Adopt a Shop: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/pan/adopt-a-shop-guide.pdf>
 - Intended for individuals or community groups that want to Adopt a Shop to support their local food retailer in stocking and promoting healthy foods and beverages. It contains simple steps to Adopt a Shop with ideas and resources for each step of the process.
- ChangeLab Solutions’ Healthier Food Environments Initiatives: <http://changelabsolutions.org/landing-page/healthier-food-environments>
 - Includes tools to help communities build access to healthy, affordable, fresh food by attracting grocery stores, improving the corner store environment, making restaurants healthier, building community gardens, creating farmers markets, and more.
- The Ohio State University (OSU) Healthy Corner Stores: A Best Practices Brief: http://aede.osu.edu/sites/aede/files/import/imce/2011_3.pdf
 - OSU shares best practices for the establishment and operation of successful healthy corner store initiatives.
- Healthy Stores/Baltimore Healthy Stores: <http://healthystores.org/>
 - The Healthy Stores projects aim to improve health and prevent obesity and disease in low-income communities through culturally appropriate store-based interventions that increase the supply of healthy foods and promote their purchase.

- Minneapolis Health Department Healthy Corner Stores: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/living/new%20cornerstores>
 - The Minneapolis Health Department teamed up with corner store owners to improve access to fresh produce and healthier foods such as low-fat dairy and whole grains. Store owners learned important skills for buying and handling produce, and colorful signs helped customers choose healthier food options. Community-based organizations also helped deliver messages to their community, allowing this work to grow.
- Louisville Healthy In A Hurry Corner Store initiative: <http://www.ymcainlouisville.org/social-responsibility/social-services/healthy-in-a-hurry-corner-stores.html>
 - The Louisville YMCA partnered with the Louisville Department of Public Health and Wellness along with the Center for Health Equity for the Healthy In A Hurry Corner Store initiative that addressed the lack of fresh produce and vegetables in low-income areas of the community. The initiative was grant funded and provided the infrastructure and expertise for three stores to carry fresh fruits and vegetables.

Retail Signage

HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Sip smarter

Drink water or unsweetened beverages.





HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Don't forget the fruit

Add bananas, peaches, or strawberries to your cereal or yogurt.





HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Skip the salt

Buy foods labeled "low sodium," "reduced sodium," or "no salt added."





HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Brighten your plate

Choose vegetables rich in color.





HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Cut the fat

Switch to skim or low-fat (1%) milk to get important nutrients with less calories and fat.





HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Buy whole wheat

Pick foods labeled "100% whole wheat" or "100% whole grain."





HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Don't forget the veggies

Buy frozen or canned vegetables for quick, easy, and nutritious meal additions.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Do something new

Eat fruit for dessert to satisfy your sweet tooth!



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Try whole grain versions

Choose whole wheat breads, brown rice, or whole wheat pasta.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Try yogurt

Low-fat and fat-free yogurts are smart sources of protein and calcium.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Eat more fiber

10% or more on the label is a good source.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Reduce the salt

Rinse canned beans and veggies to lower their salt content.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Go green

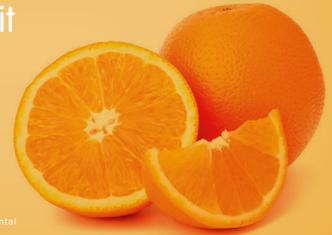
Try dark green leafy lettuce on a sandwich.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Pack smart

Send kids to school with a piece of fruit in their lunchbox.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Snack on fruits

Dried fruits make great snacks.



HEALTHY EATING TIPS

Eat plants for protein

Try beans and peas, hummus, soy, nuts and seeds.



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