



Chapter 1: Partnerships, Assessment, and Evaluation

Partnerships, Assessment, and Evaluation in Healthier Food Retail

Introduction

This chapter discusses partnership development and includes two partnership activities often conducted with partners—assessment and evaluation.

Building partnerships across multiple sectors is a key component to increasing access to healthier food retail options in your state or region. Partnerships can help you creatively plan and implement your healthier food retail strategy, maximize resources, and improve program sustainability.

The process of partnership development, planning, assessment, and evaluation can be both iterative and cyclical. You may revisit any of these activities throughout your healthier food retail work.

Developing Partnerships

As a public health practitioner, you are familiar with working on issues that involve multiple sectors. Through your existing relationships, you are well positioned to convene stakeholders at local, state, and regional levels to increase healthier food retail options. However, new partners and stakeholders may be needed to successfully initiate and implement efforts in your state.

Discover Who’s Doing What in Healthier Food Retail

A first step is to consider who to partner with for healthier food retail initiatives. You have the opportunity to foster collaborative leadership among a diverse group of partners to address gaps in healthier food retail. These partnerships will allow organizations and sectors to share resources, skills, and experiences, and can help balance the strengths and limitations of individual organizations or sectors. The call out box [Partnerships for Healthier Food Retail: Who to Involve](#) describes a variety of partners often participating in healthier food retail initiatives.



Partnerships and Stakeholders: Use of Terms in this *Action Guide*

In this *Action Guide*, partnerships are associations you form with individuals or organizations to share resources and coordinate activities to address projects of common interest. Stakeholders are individuals or organizations that have an interest in the outcome of your healthier food retail efforts. Stakeholders may actively assist in your activities, or they may choose a more observational role.

Partnerships for Healthier Food Retail: Who to Involve

There is a wide range of private and public sector partners who can potentially contribute to your state healthier food retail efforts. Partners can have varying roles, such as offering technical assistance, providing funding, connecting to a community, or serving as consultants with subject matter expertise. Consider connecting with potential partner organizations and coordinators or managers within the following sectors.

State, Tribal, Regional, and Local Agencies and Departments

Public Health Partners

- ▶ Departments of Public Health and coordinators or managers for related programs, such as nutrition assistance benefit programs
- ▶ State Departments of Environmental Health
- ▶ State Offices on Rural Health
- ▶ Tribal health agencies and tribal human services agencies

Education Partners

- ▶ State Departments of Education
- ▶ Child nutrition program coordinator
- ▶ Farm-to-school coordinator
- ▶ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed)

Agricultural Partners

- ▶ State Departments of Agriculture, and coordinators or managers for related programs, such as nutrition assistance benefit programs
- ▶ Cooperative Extension offices
- ▶ Fresh fruit and vegetable inspection and standardization agencies
- ▶ Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education programs

Urban, City, and Town Planners

- ▶ State and local planning and development departments
- ▶ Transportation planners
- ▶ New urbanism advocates
- ▶ Regional Development Commissions

Private Sector Organizations and Individuals

Retail Representatives

- ▶ Chain supermarkets
- ▶ Independent grocery stores
- ▶ Specialty stores
- ▶ Convenience stores
- ▶ Corner grocers and small stores
- ▶ Bodegas
- ▶ Farmers market managers
- ▶ Public markets
- ▶ Cooperative grocery stores
- ▶ Mobile stores
- ▶ Community supported agriculture producers

Food Industry Associations

- ▶ Grocers associations
- ▶ Distributor associations
- ▶ Farmers market and other local food marketing associations
- ▶ Chambers of Commerce

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Health Care

Hospital and Health System Partners

- ▶ Hospitals and health management organizations
- ▶ Clinics and health centers

Non-profit/Non-Government Organizational Sector

Community Development Associations or Community Organizations

- ▶ Community Development Corporations
- ▶ Economic Development Corporations
- ▶ Community food banks
- ▶ Civic or neighborhood associations
- ▶ Faith-based organizations

Academic and University Partners

- ▶ Departments of Public Health
- ▶ Departments of Agriculture
- ▶ Offices of Sustainability
- ▶ Departments of Urban and Rural Planning

Not-for-Profit Organizations

- ▶ Children's health organizations
- ▶ Health and wellness organizations
- ▶ Food policy/research organizations
- ▶ Community, regional, or state foundations
- ▶ Health insurance foundations

Before engaging with potential partners, you may want to answer some preliminary questions to assist you in identifying key partners for promoting and supporting healthier food retail activities. These questions include:

- ▶ Who are key leaders across different sectors, including health, food insecurity, economic development, planning, community building, and retail development?
- ▶ Are there other partners who may be interested in working on healthier food retail?
- ▶ How can you involve communities with the greatest burden of chronic diseases?
- ▶ What healthier food retail initiatives and activities are underway already?
- ▶ Are specific neighborhoods, localities, or regions being targeted for redevelopment activities that may support healthier food retail initiatives?
- ▶ Are there current and related initiatives that you and your partners may want to track in order to monitor their impact on your healthier food retail activities?
- ▶ What potential opportunities exist for stakeholder input on local, state, and regional healthier food retail efforts?

Knowing what other healthier food retail initiatives are happening at the state and local levels, such as those in [Table 1, Federal and State Plans and Programs of Relevance to Healthier Food Retail Initiatives](#), can direct you to possible partnerships. Existing initiatives may not be focused on public health but may have goals or activities that overlap with your program interests. Identifying these can help you and your partners avoid duplicating efforts, inform you of resources that can be potentially leveraged, and identify potential collaborators. Additionally, local strategies may present opportunities to replicate a promising model or program throughout the state.

Table 1. Federal and State Plans and Programs of Relevance to Healthier Food Retail Initiatives

| Plan or Program | Description/Overlap | Potential Sources |
|--|---|---|
| State Obesity Plan | Your state may have a plan to address nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention either as part of a CDC-funded initiative or through a state-funded or other mandated initiative. | State plans are available on many of the State Department of Health or Human Services websites |
| State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health | Through a CDC federal grant, all 50 states and the District of Columbia receive funds to help reduce the risk factors associated with childhood and adult obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Thirty-two states receive additional funds to enhance their program and to reach more people, including addressing healthy food access. All states work in schools, early childhood education facilities, workplace, and community settings. The states also work through health systems and communities to reduce complications from multiple chronic diseases. The five-year program began in 2013. | State Programs Funded by CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/state-public-health-actions.htm |
| State Economic Development Plan | A state’s economic development plan will primarily focus on the state’s role in encouraging job growth and opportunities, meeting the state’s housing and transportation needs, and stimulating the state’s economy. States often consider access to transportation for retail and other services. | Governor’s Office State Department of Economic Development or Planning and Budget |
| State Revitalization Plan | While similar in scope to the Economic Development Plan, a Revitalization Plan looks specifically at blighted areas. Many of these plans are local or regional, but some address revitalization on a state level. | Governor’s Office State Department of Economic Development or Planning and Budget |
| Brownfields or Land Reuse Programs | These programs helps states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, cleanup, and reuse brownfields or formally used industrial or commercial properties that have perceived or real contamination. Brownfield sites are funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Program and land reuse sites have not received funding from the EPA Brownfields Program. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry’s (ATSDR) Brownfield/Land Reuse Health Initiative helps communities bring health considerations in land reuse decisions. | EPA Brownfield Program http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/ ATSDR’s Brownfield/Land Reuse Health Initiative http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/brownfields/overview.html |
| Agriculture Growth and Conservation Plans | Many states develop an agricultural growth or conservation plan. These plans are typically created in the State Agricultural Office or Natural Resources Office, and may contain information relevant to accessibility of healthier food grown by local farmers. | State Department of Agriculture or Natural Resources |

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| Plan or Program | Description/Overlap | Potential Sources |
|--|--|---|
| Transportation Plans | State Departments of Transportation or local and regional planning committees develop comprehensive transportation plans that may also address the relationship of transportation to land use, economic development, the environment, and energy consumption. Regional and state efforts may also address transportation coordination of federal, state, regional, and local plans. Transit routes and walking or bike paths are other plans that might provide an idea of accessibility, especially for those with limited car ownership. | State Department of Transportation Local or Regional Transportation Committees Federal Highway Administration field offices: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/about/field.cfm |
| Neighborhood Stabilization Program | The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) operates the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) as part of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. NSP exists to stabilize communities that have suffered from foreclosures and property abandonment through the purchase and redevelopment of foreclosed and abandoned homes and residential properties. NSP grantees develop individualized programs and funding priorities. Activities funded by NSP must benefit low- and moderate-income persons. | Neighborhood Stabilization Program Learning Center: http://hudnsphelp.info/index.cfm HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Program Grants: http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs/neighborhoodspg |
| Regional or Municipal Economic Development and Revitalization Plans | Some municipalities and/or regions of a state may have more specific regional economic development or revitalization plans. These plans may have strategies that are targeted toward specific needs in those regions. | Local or Regional Chambers of Commerce Local or Regional Commissions or Planning Bodies Chamber Directory Search Page: https://www.uschamber.com/chamber/directory US Economic Development Administration Regional Offices: http://www.eda.gov/contacts.htm |





Potential Funding Sources for Healthier Food Retail Strategies

Funding for healthier food retail efforts can come from a variety of sources. Several resources exist that guide you to funding sources specifically for healthier food retail strategies.

- ▶ *Healthy Food Access Portal* from PolicyLink, The Food Trust, and The Reinvestment Fund is a comprehensive Web site on healthier food retail strategies. The Funding section provides a searchable database of available funding. Available at <http://healthyfoodaccess.org/funding>.
- ▶ *Green for Greens: Finding Public Financing for Healthy Food Retail*, from ChangeLab Solutions, provides information on approaching the economic development sector for healthier food retail funding and lists possible funding sources. Available at <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/green-for-greens>.
- ▶ USDA's *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* program provides a list of USDA programs that fund food system strategies. Available at http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_GRANTS.

Foundations are often sources of funding for healthier food retail efforts at a national, state, or local level. Two examples of national, private foundations with an interest in healthier food retail initiatives are:

- ▶ The W.K. Kellogg Foundation. You can find more information on its Food and Community Program at <http://www.foodandcommunity.org/Who-We-Are/overview.aspx>.
- ▶ Kaiser Permanente Community. This organization provides most of its funding, including support of healthier food retail efforts, through regional offices. You can learn more about their programming at <http://share.kaiserpermanente.org/total-health/community-benefit/>.

There may be other organizations that can help you find private sources of funding at the national, state, and local level. One example is the Foundation Center which provides an on-line foundation directory available at www.foundationcenter.org.

Initiate Discussions with Partners

After identifying partners in your state or region, consider ways in which you can encourage them to become involved in your healthier food retail initiatives. Stakeholders may want to get involved in your healthier food retail efforts for a variety of reasons, many of which are not directly related to achieving public health outcomes. They may support your healthier food retail initiatives because of their interests in any of the topics below.

Nutrition Assistance: Increasing healthier food purchase and consumption via food benefit programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Agriculture: Supporting the distribution, marketing, and sales of produce and other products from regional and local farmers.

Community Development and Neighborhood Revitalization: Transforming distressed areas into thriving, productive spaces where people want to live, work, and play.

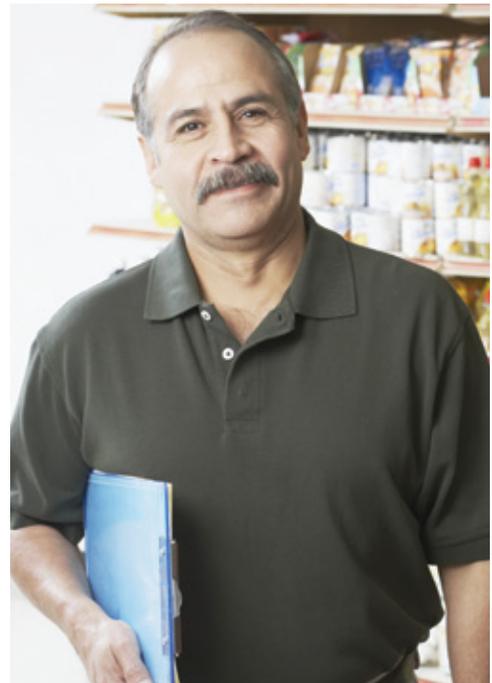
Community Assistance or Support: Collaborating to provide synergistic efforts in serving and supporting the health of community residents.

State or Regional Economic Development: Developing a healthy economy via business attraction and workforce development.

Commercial Opportunities: Maximizing retail potential in untapped or underutilized markets.

Land Use and Urban Planning: Creating community, economic, environmental, and transportation initiatives that take into consideration structural requirements for increasing availability of and access to healthier food retail.

Safety and Crime Prevention: Improving safety of neighborhoods and perceptions of neighborhood safety.



When initiating discussion with new partners, keep in mind that:

- ▶ Finding and creating common ground will generally be more fruitful than trying to enlist others for your own goals or agenda.
- ▶ Supporting the work of other individuals and organizations may be more productive than executing a parallel or competitive process, especially if you are all working with limited resources.
- ▶ Identifying and developing compelling messages for potential partners is a critical element in recruiting partners. In order to interest non-traditional partners, articulate the reasons why healthier food retail is important to them.

Steps for Engaging New Partners

- ▶ Find out if a potential partnering organization has public meetings that you can attend to hear their issues, priorities, and concerns.
- ▶ Review the organization's existing materials.
- ▶ Make contact with the appropriate person within the organization through a phone call or introductory e-mail.
- ▶ For initial meetings or discussions:
 - » Be brief; schedules are tight.
 - » Acknowledge the partners' current contributions to healthier food retail and listen to what they say about their interests, objectives, and perceived limitations to identify your common ground and potential complementary roles.
 - » Focus on how working together could be mutually beneficial and within available resources.
 - » Be precise with what you are requesting from partners, and include a "hook" in the discussion (such as what the partner will gain from the relationship).
- ▶ Be persistent. Although you may provide a lot of information in meetings or discussions, it may take two, three, or more meetings for your messages to resonate with your audience.
- ▶ Develop relationships with individuals first, and then bring all partners to the table together. This can be particularly helpful if there have been or could be conflicts between organizations or individuals.
- ▶ When bringing diverse partners together for the first time, consider hosting a forum, presentation, or panel discussion. These could include sharing of assessment findings or hosting a speaker with broad appeal. Consider bringing community stakeholders, such as a retail vendor or a customer, to tell personal stories about why healthier food retail is important to them.

Maintaining Momentum in Your Partnerships

As the partnerships develop and initiatives get under way, you can help maintain momentum by supporting the partnerships through training, technical assistance, and communication activities. For example, consider the following actions:

- ▶ Convene regular (perhaps monthly) conference calls or meetings so that partners can provide updates, share successes, and brainstorm about ways to address challenges.
- ▶ Host networking and training opportunities where partners have access to one another as well as local, state, or national experts on healthier food retail.
- ▶ Host public round-table discussions where partners are able to solicit feedback from community stakeholders across the state.
- ▶ Offer or coordinate targeted technical assistance to partners working on specific activities or topics through regular calls and meetings, site visits, or a connection to a regional or national technical assistance provider.

- ▶ Develop resource and training materials, such as fact sheets or tools that partners can use in implementing or promoting their activities.
- ▶ Develop and maintain communications with partners using methods such as websites, blogs, newsletters, or social media, and ask partners to contribute. Communications can include updates on healthier food retail activities in the state and nation, partner activities, funding opportunities and upcoming webinars and conferences.
- ▶ Encourage partners to present or lead sessions at regional or state events.
- ▶ Recognize partners for their contributions.

Bringing Stakeholders Together through Food Policy Councils

Food policy councils bring together diverse stakeholders representing public, private, and nonprofit sectors with knowledge in nutrition, health, agriculture, education, community design, and commerce. The goal of most food policy councils is to identify innovative ways to improve local, regional, or state food systems. Improving food systems can spark economic development within the area, increase the environmental sustainability of food systems, or increase access to and availability of healthy and affordable foods.^{22,23}

Many food policy councils provide support and advice in the development of policies and programs to improve local food systems, which often includes leadership and support for improving access to healthier food retail options as part of a greater systems approach. Food policy councils can be commissioned by state, tribal, or local governments, developed at the community level, or created through some combination of these approaches.

Reference names vary from state to state and city to city. You may see alternate terms for food policy councils such as: food systems council, food security council, food and agriculture council, food commission, food coalition, and food advisory group.²⁴

For more information on food policy councils, see the [Resources](#) at the end of this chapter.

Assessing the Healthier Food Retail Environment

Assessing the food retail environment is necessary to understand the extent and nature of any disparities in the accessibility and availability of affordable and nutritious food. Assessments can include the number of stores in a given location, the types of food items sold in stores, or the types of marketing approaches that stores employ. Whether you are analyzing existing data or collecting new data, assessments generally require extensive resources or specialized skills. Therefore, it is important to work with partners to conduct your healthier food retail assessments.

When collecting data, make sure you follow local and federal policies related to data collection, including those related to privacy and research, if applicable.

Focus the Assessment

To begin your food retail assessment, you will want to work with your partners to determine your assessment objectives. It is important to consider why you are conducting a healthier food retail assessment, what you hope to learn from the assessment, and how the assessment will be used. For example, you may want to determine healthier food retail availability in either low-income, urban areas around your state or in rural areas, depending on where the greatest needs are and where you may have the most impact given your resources. After outlining your objectives, draft a manageable set of specific questions to answer. These will help you focus and plan your assessment. Specific assessment questions could include:

- ▶ On average, how far do residents in low-income, urban areas have to walk to get to supermarkets or grocery stores that sell healthier food options, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy?
- ▶ What percentage of the state's farmers markets accept or participate in federal food assistance programs, such as Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards for SNAP and WIC?
- ▶ How much fresh produce and other healthier food items do local small stores carry, and what are the different options available in those stores?
- ▶ What are the existing and potential resources and assets available for distribution to small stores to encourage the inclusion of healthier food options? That is, are there financial or other resources available like advertising assistance, funding for equipment or renovations, or training and technical assistance?
- ▶ What products are being marketed at the check-out area and front of store displays?

Plan the Assessment

When planning your healthier food retail assessment, consult CDC's *Healthier Food Retail: Beginning the Assessment Process in Your State or Community*. This document will provide you with an overview of how to develop an assessment of your state's or community's food retail environment. The document describes levels of data; existing data sets (public and commercial); Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping; in-store assessments for availability, cost and quality; and various methodological considerations. It also provides state and community examples. This document is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/hfrassessment.pdf>.

Implement the Assessment

Your implementation plan for the assessment will vary depending on whether you are collecting primary data or whether you will be analyzing existing data. Components of an implementation plan include gathering existing measurement tools, drafting surveys or direct observation forms, training data collectors, collaborating with GIS experts, and helping all assessment partners to understand their roles and responsibilities. To ensure the success of your assessment, keep the following considerations in mind:

- ▶ Use existing reliable and valid tools whenever possible to provide stronger data and to lead

to more appropriate decision-making. If none are available, test your surveys or observation procedures for reliability and, if possible, validity.

- ▶ Use quality control measures to make sure the observation and data collection are being done properly.
- ▶ Work iteratively with data analysts to ensure they have a clear understanding of your assessment objectives.

Assessment in Action: State and Regional Healthier Food Retail Assessments

Several states and communities have undertaken assessments of their food retail environment and reported their findings. Some examples are provided here.

Supermarket Development in Illinois. The Illinois Food Marketing Task Force, facilitated by The Food Trust,* assessed supermarket access throughout their state to identify underserved areas. Recommendations to ensure access to affordable, nutritious food were provided with the assessment. The full report of this assessment, *Stimulating Supermarket Development in Illinois: Healthier People, Healthier Communities, and a Healthier Economy*, is available at <http://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/resources/library/stimulating-supermarket-development-in-illinois-healthier-people-healthier-communities-and-a-healthier-economy>. Information on a resulting project, the Illinois Fresh Food Fund, is available at <http://www.iff.org/illinois-food>.

Central Puget Sound Food System Assessment, Washington. The Regional Food Policy Council and the University of Washington completed a comprehensive assessment of the Seattle area food system, including rural agriculture, fisheries, food deserts, food hubs, restaurants, and more. The food desert chapter provides maps of food deserts in the various counties under study. They also looked at food deserts in relation to their elderly population and vehicle ownership. The full report is available at <http://courses.washington.edu/studio67/psrcfood/>.

Northern Colorado Regional Food System Assessment. The Northern Colorado Regional Food System Assessment was a broad reaching assessment project that included many rural areas. The assessment aimed to “understand the local food system as it relates to public health, economic development and the quality of life.” The report includes assessments in direct marketing of agricultural products, shopping habits, food distribution, access to food, nutrition assistance program benefits, and community gardens. The project background and the full report are available at <http://www.larimer.org/foodassessment/report.cfm>.

* The Food Trust is a nonprofit organization that originally developed a comprehensive approach to increasing availability of healthier food in Pennsylvania. This organization has implemented this framework in other states such as Louisiana, New York, Arizona, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. More information is available at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/>.

Synthesize and Report Assessment Findings

Once you have analyzed your data, you will want to communicate the key findings to your stakeholders, often via a written report or an in-person presentation. When preparing reports or presentations, customize your communications to the audience. Develop different types of communication products that are tailored to different audiences' needs and preferences. For example, policy makers may only be interested in an executive summary rather than a detailed full report. Community members may be best reached through a newspaper article or social media; therefore, you may want to coordinate a press release or web-based posts.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential component of planning and implementing your healthier food retail initiative. It provides a systematic method for demonstrating results and improving your activities by helping you answer overall questions, such as:

- ▶ Did you do what you intended to do?
- ▶ Do you have the right partners?
- ▶ How are partners working together?
- ▶ Are you reaching your intended audience?
- ▶ Did you have your intended impact?
- ▶ Were there unanticipated outcomes?
- ▶ What lessons can you and others apply to future initiatives?

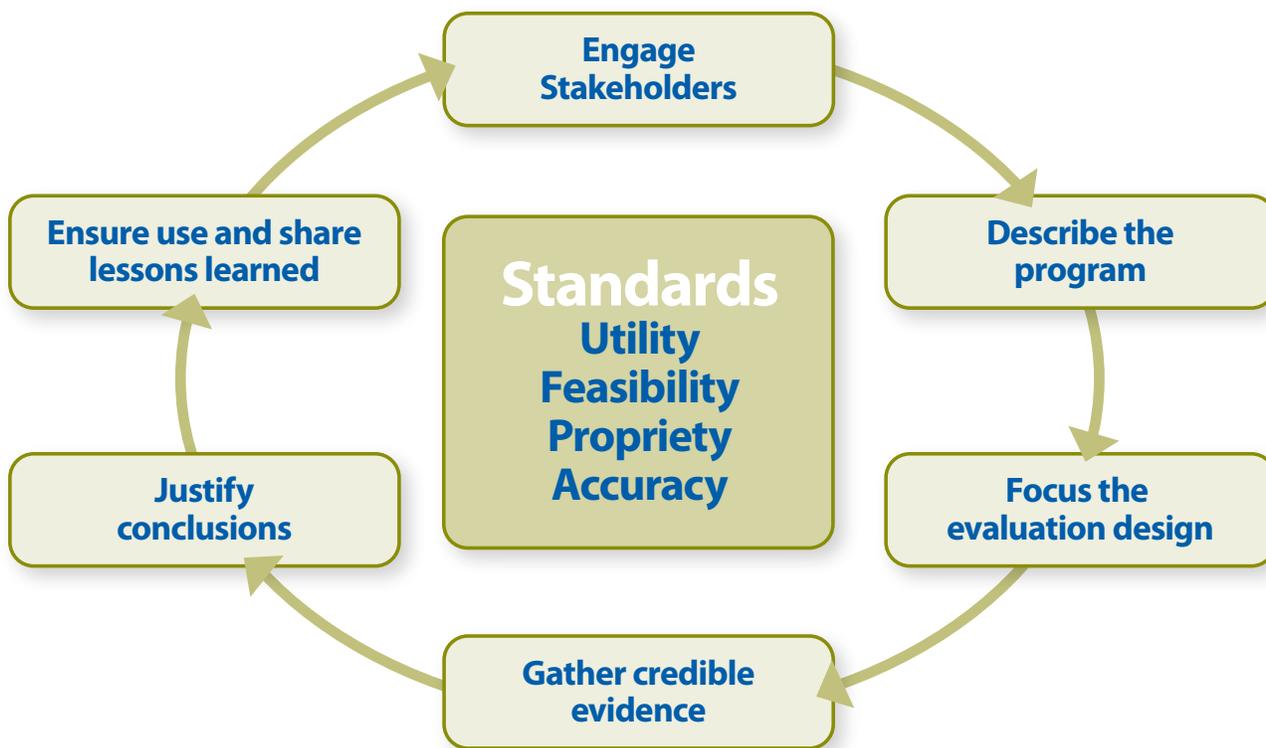
Findings from your evaluation can help build the knowledge base on how to implement healthier food retail strategies, which can assist other public health practitioners as they plan their efforts. The findings can also sustain and re-energize you and your partners for further work on your initiative.

Planning Your Evaluation

One resource for planning and implementing your evaluation is the CDC *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*.²⁷ This framework was developed to provide a common, step-wise approach to public health evaluation. [Figure 1](#) presents the *Steps in the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*, showing the ongoing and iterative process of program evaluation. It also delineates four categories of standards that guide evaluation quality: utility, feasibility, propriety, and accuracy. The CDC *Framework* and accompanying materials, including more information about the steps and the standards, are available at <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/index.htm>.

Another document which may be helpful in your evaluation efforts is *Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan: Setting the Course for Effective Program Evaluation*.²⁸ This workbook, which follows the steps of the CDC *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*, comes from CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity and Office on Smoking and Health. It is designed to help public health program managers, administrators, and evaluators develop an effective evaluation plan. This resource is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/resources.html>.

Figure 1. Steps in the CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health²⁷



Stakeholders and Partners in Evaluation

As shown in Figure 1, stakeholder engagement is an important piece of program evaluation, which allows those groups and individuals who have a vested interest in the program to provide input on evaluation planning, implementation, and dissemination.

Additionally, you may work with partners to supplement your evaluation resources. Partners may have expertise, time, or data that you do not have. Such partners may include:

- ▶ Local universities and colleges (including the Prevention Research Centers; see <http://www.cdc.gov/prc/index.htm> for more information).
- ▶ Research institutes.
- ▶ Public health institutes.
- ▶ Private businesses.
- ▶ Regional or local planning commissions.
- ▶ Evaluators from state, regional, or local public health or other government agencies.



Partnership Evaluation

As part of the evaluation, you may evaluate the partnerships that support your initiative or program. Partnership evaluation is important for determining what is working and what is not in relation to the partnership structure, processes, and progress. Partnership evaluation may be formal through regular process evaluation, or you may informally solicit feedback. To design your evaluation, consider starting with *Partnership Evaluation: Guidebook and Resources* from the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity at the CDC. This document was developed to provide state staff with suggested approaches to and methods for evaluating partnerships. This resource includes examples and tools specific to the scope and purpose of state Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity programs and is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/resources.html>.

Evaluation of Healthier Food Retail Strategies

In this *Action Guide*, the following healthier food retail strategies are discussed: grocery stores, small stores, farmers markets, mobile food, transportation, and distribution. Specific examples of evaluation questions, potential indicators, and data sources for each of these healthier food retail strategies, as well as for partnerships, are provided in the [Appendix: Examples of Evaluation Questions, Indicators, and Data Sources for Individual and Overarching Strategies](#).

Although you and your partners may be eager to answer a multitude of evaluation questions, make sure that your evaluation plan is feasible given your time and resources. Discuss constraints with your stakeholders as you focus the evaluation, prioritize evaluation questions, and decide on the design and methods. This most likely will be an iterative process until you come to consensus with your stakeholders.



Evaluation in Action: State and Local Healthier Food Retail Evaluation Efforts

The program evaluations described below provide examples for four of the six healthier food retail strategies described in this guide, i.e., grocery store, small store, farmers market, and mobile food vending initiatives.

Pennsylvania: Fresh Food Financing Initiative. The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) was a financing program aimed at drawing supermarkets and grocery stores to urban and rural underserved areas.²⁹ A number of different evaluations have examined the impact of FFFI using a variety of methods including archival data review, case study, and econometric analysis.

The Food Trust and The Reinvestment Fund[†] monitored and reported on initial outcomes for FFFI that included:²⁹

- ▶ The number of applications submitted.
- ▶ The number of applications approved.
- ▶ The amount of funding approved through grants and loans.
- ▶ The number of projects approved.
- ▶ Total jobs created or retained.

The program received 206 applications. As of June 2010, the FFFI approved 93 of them, representing 88 projects approved for funding. More than \$73 million in loans and \$12 million in grants were disbursed for supermarket projects. The projects created or retained over 5,000 jobs in Pennsylvania.²⁹

A study of the impact of a supermarket opening in two communities (one urban and one suburban) looked at real estate prices and economic activity in the surrounding community.³⁰ The study indicated that:

- ▶ There was an increase in nearby house values associated with the opening of a grocery store. This positive effect was greater for properties that had lower average prices and that were not immediately next to the new grocery store.
- ▶ There were increases in both employment and wage earnings proportionate to amount of direct expenditures.

[†]The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) finances neighborhood revitalization in Mid-Atlantic communities. TRF is a CDFI and has been in operation since 1985. It finances projects around housing, community facilities, supermarkets, commercial real estate, and energy efficiency. TRF also gives public policy expertise through helping clients develop solutions and through data sharing and analysis. More information available at <http://www.trfund.com/>.

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The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative is described in more detail in the [Grocery Stores](#) chapter. You can also learn more about the FFFI, including ongoing evaluation results, at <http://www.trfund.com/pennsylvania-fresh-food-financing-initiative/> and at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/programsta/nutrition.html>.

Hartford, Connecticut: Healthy Food Retailer Initiative. In 2006, the nonprofit organization Hartford Food System (HFS) developed the Healthy Food Retailer Initiative (HFRI) to encourage small stores in Hartford to offer healthier foods. By 2008, forty of the approximately 130 small stores joined the HFRI and agreed to convert 5% of their shelf inventory to healthier food items.³¹

The University of Connecticut Center for Public Health and Health Policy (CPHHP) partnered with HFS to conduct a longitudinal evaluation of the HFRI project. Stores participating in the HFRI were compared to control stores. Measurements included:³¹

- ▶ Changes in the availability and quality of healthier foods in participating stores.
- ▶ Changes in the promotion of healthier foods within participating stores.
- ▶ The relationship between customer purchasing habits and healthier food availability in corner stores.

From January 2009 through January 2010, evaluators conducted four complete store inventories in 52 corner stores (28 HFRI stores and 24 control stores), measuring changes in the availability, quality, and promotion of healthier foods. To measure customer purchasing habits, evaluators conducted face-to-face interviews with 372 customers of 19 participating stores.³¹

Evaluators found an 8% increase overall in the inventory scores for availability of healthier foods at stores. Larger stores had higher overall scores, but smaller stores demonstrated the most improvement from baseline to follow-up. There was not a significant difference between the HFRI stores and the control store scores at any point throughout the study. While there was substantial variability in the inventory scores for stores, stores certified to accept Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits tended to have higher scores.

Evaluators noted that even when healthier options were available in stores, there was little in-store or community promotion of these healthier options.³¹ They also found that customers tended to purchase more fruits and vegetables when the store stocked a wider variety.³²

CPHHP shared the results of the evaluation with HFS and recommended that future interventions could be more targeted to generate desired changes. For example, they could work with a smaller number of stores who are highly invested in the program and provide them support for promoting healthier options in the store.³¹ HFS will use the findings and recommendations from the evaluation to inform future planning and implementation.

You can find more information about the HFRI and ongoing efforts at <http://www.hartfordfood.org/> and <http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/the-evaluation-of-the-healthy-retailer-program.html>.

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Massachusetts: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits at Farmers Markets.

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and the Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) collaborated to increase the accessibility of farmers markets for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit recipients by:³³

- ▶ Providing funding to assist with the purchase or rental of point of sale terminals.
- ▶ Subsidizing transaction fees associated with SNAP purchases.
- ▶ Supporting community outreach and promotional efforts targeted to SNAP recipients.
- ▶ Funding nutrition incentives to increase SNAP recipients' purchases at farmers markets, such as dollar-to-dollar match incentives up to \$10.00 or a one-time coupon.

To evaluate the success of the program, DAR conducted a survey of managers of participating farmers markets. The evaluation questions focused on determining:³³

- ▶ Amount of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) sales.
- ▶ Costs of operating EBT machines.
- ▶ Challenges experienced by participating markets in processing benefits.
- ▶ Success of outreach efforts.
- ▶ Effect of financial incentives on SNAP purchases.

Overall, the program increased the number of farmers markets that accepted SNAP from 30 to 58 in one year, and increased SNAP sales by 510%. The evaluation also found that there was a significant increase of more than \$1700 in SNAP sales for farmers markets that offered an incentive program compared to those that did not.³³ Market managers also reported that costs associated with equipment and fees were most likely to influence whether or not they would maintain SNAP certification.³³ Therefore, Massachusetts DAR is working to maintain and build partnerships to sustain financial support for these critical elements of the program.

You can learn more about SNAP usage at Massachusetts farmers markets at <http://www.wholesomewave.org> and at http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/farmers_markets.htm.

New York, New York: Green Carts. The New York City (NYC) Green Carts Initiative aims to increase access to healthier food by increasing the number of mobile food carts that offer fresh produce. The Green Carts may only operate in designated underserved precincts of NYC.³⁴ The NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) conducted an evaluation of this initiative. They monitored initial outcomes including:

- ▶ Number of Green Cart permit applications submitted.
- ▶ Number of Green Cart permits approved.
- ▶ Number of Green Cart applications on the waiting list.
- ▶ Number of program violations.

A total of 501 permits were issued from 2008 to 2011.³⁴ Other initial outcome data are described by borough in the report by NYC DOHMH to the NYC Council.

NYC DOHMH is also evaluating the intermediate project outcomes:

- ▶ Changes in the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Continued

- ▶ Changes in the availability and variety of fruits and vegetables in neighborhood food retail establishments.

Fruit and vegetable consumption data were collected at five points through the Community Health Survey (CHS) between 2002 and 2010. The CHS collects data on about 10,000 randomly selected New Yorkers each year. These analyses are not yet complete.

Evaluators assessed if the presence of Green Carts affected overall availability and variety of fresh produce in neighborhoods (i.e., did the Green Carts influence other neighborhood food retail establishments to stock more produce). To do this, the evaluators measured the existence and types of fruits and vegetables in a sample of permanent food retail establishments in selected neighborhoods with Green Carts and comparison neighborhoods without Green Carts. Data were collected before Green Carts were implemented, and at two points after implementation.

In Green Cart precincts, there was a significant increase in the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables at retail establishments from 2008 to 2009. This increase was maintained in 2011; from 50% of retail establishments selling fruits and vegetables in 2008 to 69% in 2011. For variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, there was an increase from 2008 to 2009 and this increase was maintained in 2011; from 31% of retail establishments selling 10 or more types of fruits and vegetables in 2008 to 38% in 2011.

In addition to the evaluation conducted by NYC DOHMH, researchers at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine conducted an evaluation study to examine where Green Cart vendors tend to locate and whether or not they generally comply with program requirements to sell fresh produce. Researchers first identified 61 carts and then used GIS analysis to determine the distance of carts from one another and from notable landmarks, such as a medical center. The analysis revealed that Green Cart vendors covered only approximately 57% of the areas of high need and tended to cluster together around areas likely to have high pedestrian traffic, creating Green Cart hot spots.³⁵ Researchers also interviewed or observed 21 vendors and found that some were selling disallowed products such as sugary drinks and cookies. The researchers offered the following recommendations:

- ▶ Expand community partnerships to create additional demand for fresh produce in areas where there was little cart coverage.
- ▶ Have community groups recruit residents of underserved neighborhoods to become Green Cart vendors.
- ▶ Explore acceptance of SNAP/EBT for Green Carts.
- ▶ Expand efforts to recruit more prospective vendors to the Green Cart program.
- ▶ Have community groups help Green Cart vendors to distribute themselves more evenly throughout the allowable areas and to comply with program requirements.

NYC DOHMH has responded to these recommendations. For example, they gave out 10 small grants to community business organizations that supported training and community outreach, including helping potential vendors apply for permits. Also SNAP/EBT is now accepted by many Green Cart vendors. You can learn more about the NYC Green Carts program and get updated reports at <http://www.nyc.gov/greencarts>.



Partnership, Assessment, and Evaluation Resources

CDC, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO)

Healthier Food Retail: Beginning the Assessment Process in Your State or Community provides public health practitioners with an overview of how to develop an assessment of their state's or community's food retail environment. The document describes levels of data; existing data sets (public and commercial); Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping; in-store assessments for availability, cost and quality; various methodological considerations; and state and city examples. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/hfrassessment.pdf>

The *Health Bucks Intervention Tool Kit*, hosted by the Center for Training and Research Translation and part of the evaluation materials for the Health Bucks practice-tested intervention summary, includes a healthier food retail strategy logic model. <http://www.centertrt.org/?p=intervention&iid=1109§ion=10>

Developing an Effective Evaluation Plan: Setting the Course for Effective Program Evaluation helps public health practitioners understand the key components of an evaluation plan, why evaluation planning is important, and how to develop an effective evaluation plan during the overall planning process. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/cdc-evaluation-workbook-508.pdf>

The *Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Council* practice-tested intervention summary includes an evidence summary, core components, resources for implementation, and intervention materials that can be used by public health practitioners. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/programsta/nutrition.html>

The *Evaluation Framework*, hosted by the Center for Training and Research Translation, can be applied to the evaluation of programs or policies, particularly those focused on environmental and behavioral obesity-related outcomes. Using the framework generates a logic model for the program or policy that can then help guide evaluation efforts. Additionally, there are materials describing some healthier food retail interventions, which include existing evaluation plans, logic models, and findings. http://www.centertrt.org/?p=evaluation_framework

Partnership Evaluations Guidebook and Resources provides how-to guidance on partnership evaluation following the *CDC Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*, and provides state examples. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/partnershipevaluation.pdf>

Developing and Using an Evaluation Consultation Group is a technical assistance guide that describes how to develop, facilitate, and evaluate an Evaluation Consulting Group. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/evaluationconsultationgroup.pdf>

The *Health Equity Resource Toolkit for State Practitioners Addressing Obesity Disparities* from DNPAO aims to increase the capacity of state health departments to work with and through communities on implementing effective responses to obesity among populations that are facing health disparities. The toolkit provides a planning process for creating policy, systems, and environmental changes to reduce obesity disparities and achieve health equity. Examples are provided for addressing disparities through healthy food retail, with a focus on underserved communities. http://www.cdc.gov/Obesity/Health_Equity/pdf/toolkit.pdf

DNPAO undertakes evaluability assessments to better understand innovative initiatives and policies being implemented in states and communities. There are “Spotlights” from the assessments on food policy councils that summarize program functions and accomplishments and provide considerations for those wanting to implement similar initiatives. <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/resources.html>

CDC, Other Divisions

The Division of Cancer Prevention and Control developed the *Guidance Document for Comprehensive Cancer Control Planning* as a resource for Cancer Control Program grantees. This resource includes a Partnership Toolkit that outlines many of the action steps highlighted in this chapter in detail. <http://cancercontrolplanet.cancer.gov/>

The *State Program Evaluation Guides: Developing and Using a Logic Model* was developed by the Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention. This guide provides a general overview of the development and use of logic models as planning and evaluation tools. http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/nhdsp_program/evaluation_guides/logic_model.htm

CDC's *Evaluation Efforts* Web site provides information on CDC's *Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health*. This Web site also provides additional evaluation resources such as manuals and a self-study guide. <http://www.cdc.gov/eval/index.htm>

National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR)

The NCCOR *Measures Registry* is a searchable database of diet and physical activity measures relevant to childhood obesity research. The purpose of the registry is to promote the consistent use of common measures and research methods across childhood obesity prevention and research at the individual, community, and population levels. These measures could be used for assessment or evaluation. <http://nccor.org/projects/measures/index.php>

National Cancer Institute

The *Measures of the Food Environment* Web site, updated weekly, provides a compilation of articles that include community-level measures of the food environment. The "Instruments" section provides a list of potential instruments made available by researchers that address a variety of food environments. The Web site also provides links to peer-reviewed publications from studies that have relied on the instruments. <https://riskfactor.cancer.gov/mfe>

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The *Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit* provides standardized measurement tools for assessing various aspects of community food security. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan-electronic-publications-from-the-food-assistance-nutrition-research-program/efan02013.aspx>

The *Food Environment Atlas* provides food environment indicators to examine factors related to food choices and diet quality. It also provides an overview of a community's ability to access healthier food. USDA Food Atlas has over 160 indicators that are related to the food environment, including indicators on health and well-being, and community characteristics. Regarding retail, the Food Atlas provides indicators in the areas of access and proximity to grocery stores, availability of food stores, and local foods. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas.aspx>

The *Food Access Research Atlas* uses a map of the entire United States to show the census tracts in the nation that are food deserts based on multiple indicators of food access. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas.aspx>

Healthy Corner Stores Network (HCSN)

HCSN provides a resources page with information on surveys and assessment. This includes in-store assessment tools, store owner surveys, sample materials, and resource guides. <http://www.healthycornerstores.org/tag/surveys>

Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic

Good Laws, Good Food: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities and *Good Laws, Good Food: Putting State Food Policy to Work for Our Communities* are law and policy toolkits for local and state food policy councils, respectively, trying to navigate their food systems. The documents provide information to help food policy councils develop and succeed, and describe how to make changes in the food and agriculture systems. <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/foodpolicyinitiative/publications/>

Community Commons

Community Commons is an interactive resource that went live in the fall of 2011, with over 2,500 community initiatives posted on the searchable national map. Community Commons allows users to access maps, apps, and data for healthier food retail assessment at state, county, zip code, census tract, block group, and address levels. Users can create contextualized maps and other data visualization products, and are required to register for a free account to access data and other resources. <http://www.communitycommons.org/>

Policy Map, from The Reinvestment Fund

Policy Map offers on-line mapping capabilities based on more than 10,000 indicators related to demographics, real estate, city crime rates, health, schools, housing affordability, employment, energy, and public investments. It includes data available from a supermarket study on food access; a subset of the data is available for free. A subscription is required for detailed information. www.policymap.com

ChangeLab Solutions

New Opportunities for Public Health: Working with Redevelopment (podcast) highlights ways for public health staff to partner with redevelopment agencies to build healthier communities, exploring strategies to overcome some of the challenges they may face.

<http://changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning/new-opportunities-redev>

The *Healthy Planning* Web site offers a variety of resources and training and technical opportunities on planning for healthier food retail strategies with nontraditional partners.

<http://changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning>

American Planning Association (APA)

APA's *Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning* is written for planning bodies and outlines policies and justification for incorporating food systems into a city or region's planning process. Their "General Policy #3" specifically addresses supporting food systems that improve the health of residents, and discusses retail venues and farmers markets. <http://www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm>

Northwest Health Foundation

Framework and Tools for Evaluating Progress toward Desired Policy and Environmental Changes: A Guidebook Informed by the NW Community Changes Initiative offers community-based organizations and coalitions practical tools and methods to use when evaluating policy and environmental change initiatives. The guidebook focuses on activities around healthy eating and active living. Available at <http://nwhf.org/resources#handbooks>, click on "Northwest Community Changes Guidebook."