



## Chapter 3: **Small Stores**

Improving Small Stores in Underserved Areas

## General Strategy Overview

**This chapter discusses the public health role in improving small stores in underserved areas to increase the accessibility and promotion of healthier foods.**

Poor rural and urban areas often lack supermarket access,<sup>4,54,55</sup> and residents of these areas must rely primarily on small stores for their food purchases. Small stores tend to stock items that have long shelf lives and are in high demand, such as pre-packaged processed foods, sodas, snacks, and alcohol, and they are generally more costly because of higher wholesale prices or lower volume of sales.<sup>5</sup> In addition, small stores may dedicate less space to fruits and vegetables and may stock fewer varieties of fresh produce than supermarkets.

Initiatives that encourage small stores to offer high quality and affordable healthier foods and beverages (as encouraged by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*) can be used to improve access to healthier foods for community residents without a full service grocery store. These initiatives to create healthier small stores are usually implemented faster and at lower cost than development of new stores or supermarkets.<sup>56</sup> They can involve activities such as making physical alterations to the store to increase stocking of healthier foods, marketing of healthier foods and beverages, providing technical assistance to store owners, or supporting stores owners around nutrition assistance benefit programs.



### What are Healthier Small Stores?

Small independent or chain stores include corner stores, convenience stores, tiendas, bodegas, drug stores or pharmacies, general stores, dollar stores, small markets, small groceries, and gas stations. They are typically less than 5,000 square feet and many stock liquor, cigarettes, and snack foods, rather than produce and other healthier foods and beverages.<sup>5</sup>

Small stores are considered to be healthier small stores when they stock a variety of high quality and affordable healthier foods and beverages that are within the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*. Healthier foods include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, seafood, and foods with less sodium (salt), saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, added sugars, and refined grains. Healthier beverages include fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products, fortified soy beverages and other lactose-free products, 100% juice, and water. These stores are committed to maintaining space for healthier food items and many also promote healthier foods over other options available for sale.<sup>57</sup>

## Physical Improvements for Access to Healthier Foods

To help small store owners increase the availability and purchase of healthier foods and beverages, it is often necessary to make physical improvements to the interior and exterior environment of the store. Interior improvements can allow for stocking and selling healthier food products, such as display shelving, refrigeration and freezers, dry food storage, and heating and cooling equipment needed for food samples or prepared foods such as salads or sandwiches. Exterior improvements include repairing, remodeling, or restoring storefront areas to make them more attractive.

## Promotion and Marketing of Healthier Foods

Small store interventions often include the marketing and promotion of healthier foods.<sup>58</sup> Interventions can include adding shelf labeling or other point-of-purchase prompts to guide customers to healthier choices, advertising healthier foods, having lower price points for healthier items, or placing healthier options at eye level or in check out areas or other prominent places so they will be more likely to be selected for purchase. These activities may be part of a broader marketing strategy that involves product, placement, pricing, and promotion – the “four P’s” of marketing.<sup>39</sup> For more information, see the call out box on [Marketing and Promotion in Grocery Stores](#) in the [Grocery Stores](#) chapter.

## Accepting Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits in Small Stores

When small stores in underserved areas have healthier food options available, acceptance of nutrition assistance program benefits, like the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), help low-income families afford the healthier food. In addition, many store owners may be interested in offering healthier food options as a way to become approved vendors for the nutrition assistance programs. See the call out box [Federal Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits in Small Stores](#) for a description of WIC and SNAP.

In 2009, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) implemented changes to the WIC food package that brought a wider range of healthier foods to WIC clients. The allowable food package now includes fruits, vegetables, and whole grain cereals and breads, as well as optional food substitution policies, such as substituting soy beverages and tofu for milk.<sup>59,60</sup> WIC programs are administered by a state agency, such as the state health department, which may have additional stocking requirements in order for a store to participate as a WIC-certified vendor.<sup>61</sup>



## Federal Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits in Small Stores

Small stores can be approved vendors for federal nutrition assistance programs funded and administered through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).** This program, previously known as Food Stamps, helps low-income families and individuals purchase food, including healthier items. Consumers receive SNAP benefits through their designated state agency in the form of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, which are much like bank debit cards. Cards can be used at any authorized FNS SNAP retailer. More information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/>.

**The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).** WIC benefits provide healthier food options to pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women and to children up to age five who are considered at “nutritional risk.” Consumers receive benefits through their state, which are redeemable at any authorized WIC retailer. They use vouchers, checks, or EBT cards (depending on the state) to purchase approved foods. WIC Cash Value Vouchers (CVVs) are issued as part of standard WIC benefits specifically for the purchase of fruits and vegetables. More information is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/>.

## Working with Partners and Leveraging Resources

As a public health practitioner, you can work directly with partners to address issues that pertain to small stores. The [Partnerships, Assessment, and Evaluation](#) chapter has detailed information on partnering for healthier food retail initiatives. Additionally, there are a variety of potential partners that you can include to improve small stores in your state or region. You may want to include representatives of:

### Small Stores and their Representatives

- ▶ State or local small grocer, corner store, and bodega associations.
- ▶ Small grocers, corner stores, bodegas, and ethnic markets.
- ▶ Corporate offices of convenience or other small store chains.

### Agriculture Offices

- ▶ Cooperative extension agencies.
- ▶ USDA’s Office of Rural Development state offices.

## Nutrition and Food Access Groups

- ▶ USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) regional offices.
- ▶ Federal nutrition assistance programs at the state-level administering agency.

## Planning and Development Groups

- ▶ Community planning and development departments.
- ▶ Planning groups that are involved in new urbanism and that have an interest in sustainable development in urban areas.
- ▶ Urban and rural cultural organizations committed to preserving retail characteristics in certain geographic areas, such as the rural country store or the urban bodega.

## Community Groups

- ▶ Schools or youth groups.
- ▶ Hospitals, health management organizations, or clinics.
- ▶ Other community-based and community-driven organizations, including neighborhood associations, community centers, and faith-based organizations.

## Action Items

As a public health practitioner, you can do the following to work with partners and leverage resources:

- ✔ **Identify regions or communities that would benefit the most** from a small store initiative and share findings of your assessment with other partners and stakeholders. Refer to the [Partnerships, Assessment, and Evaluation](#) chapter for additional information on assessment.
- ✔ **Educate partners about initiatives that support small store improvements** across your state. For example, some states have designated special programming and financing to address issues related to improving food and beverage options in small stores.<sup>38</sup>
- ✔ **Convene or consult with state level administrators of WIC** to explore the possibility for expansion of this program into more small stores. Interest or ability may vary from state to state due to caps on state allocations and reimbursements for nutrition benefits.
- ✔ **Facilitate peer-to-peer networking events** to develop or strengthen collaboration with small store networks or associations. Small store owners who have successfully incorporated healthier foods and beverages into their stores can become skilled peer-to-peer trainers because they understand common concerns and can share how they have overcome challenges.
- ✔ **Regularly update partners and stakeholders** on the progress of small store improvement activities across the state or region.
- ✔ **Get community members and partners directly involved** in training, technical assistance,

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or other events and activities. For example, invite a partner to host or participate in a store “re-opening” or an in-store promotional event for healthier foods and beverages.

- ✔ **Partner with schools or school districts to support healthier small stores** surrounding schools and to address concerns about students purchasing food of low nutritional value on their way to and from school. For example, the Food Trust developed the Snackin’ Fresh program after finding that corner store purchases among school children before and after school of chips, candy, and sugar-sweetened beverages were frequently purchased and contributed about 350 kilocalories per purchase to their energy intake.<sup>62</sup> This program works with schools, youth, and corner stores in Philadelphia to bring healthier snacks to neighborhoods. More information available at <http://thefoodtrust.org/snackinfresh/about.php>.
- ✔ **Facilitate connections with partners and funders to help owners of small stores** with healthier food options purchase or lease Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) machines or other needed equipment.

## Small Stores in Action: Partnerships in the Healthy Corner Store Initiative in Providence, Rhode Island

Led by the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island (EJLRI), the Healthy Corner Store Initiative (HCSI) is a shared effort with multiple partners working together toward the goal of improving residents’ health by adding healthier options and variety to the food available at small markets, primarily in Providence and Pawtucket, RI. Partners have included: Kids First Rhode Island, Ready to Learn Providence, D’Abate Elementary School, the City of Providence Healthy Communities Office, and the Rhode Island Department of Health.

The HCSI developed out of EJLRI’s summer youth environmental program, the Community Environmental College (CEC), in 2009. In the first year, storeowners in South Providence were asked to participate in the program and two storeowners committed to participation, with a third storeowner in Pawtucket, RI approaching the HCSI to work with her store later in 2010. In its second year the program expanded to additional stores in Providence’s Olneyville and West End neighborhoods.

EJLRI’s youth leaders kicked off the initiative with a special Healthy Corner Store Iron Chef Competition in May 2010. With input and collaboration from partners, store makeover plans and materials were created and new products were purchased through community partners, including the Urban Greens Food Co-op and Confreda Farms in the program’s first year and through Roch’s Produce and Vistar in the program’s second year, which had a special focus on healthy snacks for kids. Since engaging stores one-on-one in 2010 and 2011 and evaluating the success and challenges of each store intervention, EJLRI and partners

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have shifted focus to identify and implement policy changes that could support healthy retail city-wide in partnership with the City of Providence's new Healthy Communities Office.

EJLRI's new year-round afterschool youth program, program, ECO Youth (Environmental Community Organizers), is an outgrowth of the CEC summer program. Staff spent a year giving nutrition workshops to area schoolchildren to promote the project. These efforts have evolved into a new campaign geared to youth called SWAGG Snacks to shift youth perceptions about healthy eating. While EJLRI and partnering community members have been responsible for direct implementation of store activities, identifying supportive city policies, and giving nutrition education to youth, the Rhode Island Department of Health has provided technical assistance and guidance to support project goals, including providing initial funding for development of the HCSI logo and some store promotional materials. Kids First Rhode Island also provided technical assistance and other supports for the project including connections with food distributors and area schools.

## Providing Training, Technical Assistance, and Education

Training and technical assistance is critical when implementing changes for small stores. Small store owners, managers of small store chains, and store owner associations may need information on and assistance with various aspects of becoming a healthier small store, such as sourcing, stocking and promoting healthier foods, accepting federal nutrition assistance program benefits, and finding funding.

As changes to small stores are being made, it is important to inform community residents where healthier foods and beverages are or will be available in their neighborhood and, if applicable, that their WIC and SNAP benefits can be used. This can take the form of promotional materials or educational campaigns that include taste tests, free samples, coupons, and limited discount promotions.

### Training and Technical Assistance to Store Owners

Training and technical assistance, particularly with program implementation and development of marketing materials, may be helpful as small store owners begin to shift their practices toward maintaining healthier inventories. For example, small stores may need assistance in sourcing fruits and vegetables, which is challenging when only small amounts of produce are needed.<sup>63</sup> Small stores may also need training and technical assistance around acceptance of nutrition assistance program benefits, such understanding the WIC food package. While the changes to the WIC food packages are showing increases in the availability of healthier products,<sup>64,65</sup> complying with the federal or state requirements can be challenging and require changes for small stores. For example, store owners may need to modify their in-store promotion of foods, create appropriate shelving or refrigeration space for the foods, or find appropriate sizes of foods in the WIC package from distributors.<sup>65</sup>

## Action Items

As a public health practitioner, you can do the following to provide training and technical assistance to store owners:

- ✔ **Create or adapt instructional guides** (e.g., instructional manuals, replicable training guides, or train-the-trainer programs) on how small stores can sell and promote healthier food options. It may be most efficient to adapt existing guides and to work with local partners to draft guidance on how small stores can sell and promote healthier food options. See the [Resources](#) at the end of this chapter for existing guides. Keep in mind that:
  - ▶ Local groups may want to tailor materials for their own communities.
  - ▶ States have found that online training sessions and other alternatives to in-person sessions can be informative, easily accessible by owners and employees, and offered in languages other than English.<sup>65</sup>
  - ▶ Small store associations or other networks can help disseminate materials by hosting them on organizational Web sites or listservs.
- ✔ **Educate communities about programs** that could assist store owners with physical alterations to improve the overall store environment, such as the purchase or lease of equipment for stocking healthier food.
- ✔ **Collect and disseminate success stories or case studies** of small stores where improvements in healthier food options have resulted in improvements for the business and the community. Share these with communities and store owners and, when possible, pair dissemination of these stories with any training and technical assistance programs. Many stories are available at the Healthy Corner Stores Network Web page at <http://healthycornerstores.org>, or you can highlight stories within your own state or region.
- ✔ **Use peer leaders to offer training and share success stories.** It may be compelling to hear successful store owners present how they were able to start selling healthier food options in their own stores.
- ✔ **Provide training and technical assistance** to store owners on topics such as:
  - ▶ Understanding healthier food and beverage product options.
  - ▶ Sustaining healthier food sales over time.
  - ▶ Modeling successful healthier small store ventures.
  - ▶ Obtaining healthier foods through small stores associations or buying groups (see the [Distribution](#) chapter for more information).
  - ▶ Becoming a WIC or SNAP authorized vendor.
  - ▶ Complying with WIC food package requirements, including addressing any distribution challenges that result from minimum stocking requirements (such as quantity, size, or brand) to become an authorized WIC vendor.

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- ▶ Achieving healthier food and beverage profitability, and marketing these items to customers.
- ▶ Identifying potential partners to obtain funding and other resources. This could include creative ways to fund the start-up of initiatives and obtain resources that could help sustain initiatives over time.<sup>5,66</sup>



### **In-Store and Community Marketing and Education**

To support small stores that sell healthier food options or to increase the demand for healthier food at stores that are beginning to sell them, it is important to develop healthier food promotions or education programs in the stores or in the communities around those stores. In-store and community marketing efforts typically include:<sup>66-69</sup>

- ▶ Special or prominent displays that feature healthier food options. These can be placed within or outside the store, and can create a healthier shopping environment when highly visible, such as placed in the sales area at the front of the store.
- ▶ Shelf or product labeling that identified certain foods as “healthier” and that provides information on those products to customers.
- ▶ Community advertising and discount coupons for purchase of healthier foods.
- ▶ In-store promotion of healthier food options, including cooking demonstrations and taste tests.
- ▶ Community-wide events that can feature healthier foods, such as cooking competitions or other events through which store owners can promote healthier food purchasing and consumption.

## Action Items

As a public health practitioner, you can do the following to provide training and technical assistance on in-store and community marketing and education:

- ✔ **Assist in the development of in-store marketing and promotional materials** and offer technical assistance to help store owners determine the messages that would resonate with their customers. For example, the Apache Healthy Stores project, funded by USDA and supported by the Johns Hopkins Center for Human Nutrition, uses multiple materials to help store owners connect with customers. The program provides intervention materials including educational displays on products that were developed with the approval and participation of tribal leaders. More information on this project is available at <http://healthystores.org/>, along with information and intervention materials on several other corner stores projects.
- ✔ **Help develop materials** that store owners, small store associations, or community organizations can use or adapt to inform customers that WIC or SNAP benefits can be used to purchase healthier food options. For example, the Minnesota Department of Health developed and distributed marketing materials in four languages for retailers to use in promoting new “Fresh Choices” allowed by the revised WIC food package. Materials are available at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/wic/vendor/fpchng/posters.html>.
- ✔ **Support production of community-wide marketing and advertising campaigns** to inform community residents that healthier foods and beverages are available. Use a variety of media, such as newspaper advertising and social media campaigns.
- ✔ **Establish recognition programs**, or the criterion for such programs, to promote small stores selling healthier food items.
- ✔ **Provide in-store promotions** targeted for consumers on topics such as healthier eating patterns as suggested by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* and tips for the preparation of low-calorie foods.





## Small Stores in Action: Training and Technical Assistance Efforts

### **Supporting Small Stores through Technical Assistance in Minneapolis, Minnesota.**

In 2008, Minneapolis City Council passed a Staple Foods Ordinance which required that corner stores carry five types of fresh produce. A 2009 assessment conducted by the Minneapolis Health Department (MHD) found that 75% of stores were not meeting the requirements of the ordinance, and that the produce was often not visible to customers. Therefore, MHD implemented a technical assistance program to support the corner stores in implementing the ordinance. In 2010–2011, the program worked with nine stores in low-income neighborhoods. In 2012, the program was expanded to include 30 stores, through partnerships with community-based organizations. MHD supported the stores by assisting with product displays, store layout, signage, program promotion, tracking sales, and training on handling produce. Additionally, MHD worked with store owners and distributors or produce growers to help store owners procure affordable or local foods as well as providing owners with information on business development resources from the city. In return, the stores had to agree to several activities, including increasing healthier foods, displaying the foods and marketing materials, and participating in training. The program Web site provides assessment and evaluation tools used and reports that include implementation details, lessons learned, and evaluation results. Available at <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/health/living/cornerstores>. Additionally, a summary of the core program elements, evidence, implementation guidance, and potential public health impact are available from the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/programsta/nutrition.html>.

**Supporting Corner Stores and Bodegas in New York, New York.** The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) has worked with over 1,000 bodegas and nearly 100 supermarkets to increase the supply and marketing of healthier

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items in the stores, such as fresh produce, whole grain bread, low-fat milk, and low-salt canned goods. NYC DOHMH supports the bodegas in many ways. Materials for promoting and displaying healthy items are provided, such as in-store displays, appropriate shelving and storage, and window advertisements. NYC DOHMH encourages and helps stores apply for permits to sell fresh fruits and vegetables outside of their store on the sidewalk, and has supported farm-to-bodega components.<sup>70</sup> NYC DOHMH also encourages stores to sell healthier foods in the deli and “grab-and-go” sections.

This initiative was originally called Healthy Bodegas but is now titled Shop Healthy NYC in order to encompass all types of food retail vendors. The initiative has a multi-level approach, working with stores to address inventory and placement/promotion, with customers to ensure product demand (via an Adopt a Shop Program), and with distributors to ensure stores have easy access to healthy foods (see the [Distribution Strategies in New York, New York](#) call out box in the [Distribution](#) chapter). The *How to Adopt a Shop* toolkit walks community members and organizations through the process of approaching and partnering with stores to support increased inventory, placement, and promotion of healthier foods. NYC DOHMH gives workshops to support use of the toolkit. Additionally, a *Shop Healthy NYC!: Implementation Guide* provides information on working with food retailers, food suppliers, distributors, and other community groups. The New York City *How to Adopt a Shop* guide and the implementation guide are available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/living/shophealthy.shtml>.

## Addressing Other Common Concerns for Small Stores

In both rural and urban underserved areas, small store owners often face challenges around costs, profitability, competition, and consumer behavior. These factors can contribute to whether or not a store owner decides to participate in a healthier store initiative. For example:

- ▶ Small store retailers often have a tough time sourcing fresh produce and other healthier food options from distributors at a volume appropriate for the size of their customer base and the capacity of their storage and display areas.
- ▶ Store owners may not be able to offer competitive prices for healthier food items compared to larger stores, particularly when they are not able to purchase wholesale.
- ▶ Store owners may be hesitant to change their store format and products when facing competition of other retailers who may offer cheaper, less healthy products that have a longer shelf life and a higher profit margin.
- ▶ Store owners may perceive that there is insufficient demand for healthier items<sup>68,71,72</sup> or that customers will not purchase the healthier items if the prices that the store has to charge are too high (due to the smaller volume of business), thus leading to low turnover of products and spoilage of produce.<sup>68</sup>

## Action Items

As a public health practitioner, you can do the following to address concerns about costs, competition, and consumer behavior:

- ✔ **Assist with measures that help small store owners or managers source healthier options** from distributors at affordable prices. The [Distribution](#) chapter provides action items to help all retailers gain access to improved distribution channels. Additionally, you may:
  - ▶ Facilitate meetings or conversations with distributors so that they can understand and address state stocking requirements for authorized WIC or SNAP retailers.<sup>65</sup>
  - ▶ Consider working with local farmers as a source for fresh fruits and vegetables, possibly getting a lower cost for small store retailers because they would be purchasing directly from the farmer. Alternatively, work with local farmers who may be interested in selling their produce at a farmstand outside of the store, such as on a sidewalk or in a parking lot.<sup>67</sup> This can bring foot traffic to the store without the storeowner risking produce spoilage. Check zoning regulations to make sure that this is allowable in your area.
  - ▶ Help store owners source and promote frozen and canned fruits and vegetables that are low in sodium, packed in water or juice, and have no added fat or sugar, as recommended in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010*.
- ✔ **Select stores to participate in pilot or other start-up programs** whose owners are committed to implementing changes to improve availability of healthier food items within their communities.
- ✔ **Explore partners who may be able to provide incentives** to small stores that encourage them to sell healthier foods. There may be existing mechanisms available for incentives, such as waived or reduced permit fees or selling or leasing EBT equipment at reduced costs. For example, see the call out box [Small Stores in Action: Incentive for Stocking Fruits and Vegetables in West Virginia Small Stores](#).
- ✔ **Help store owners learn about customers' interests in healthier foods and beverages** by facilitating community meetings or focus groups of community residents to discuss healthier food preferences, or by implementing a community survey.<sup>68</sup> This can help store owners get to know their customers and help build buy-in for store improvements. In addition, inform storeowners of:
  - ▶ The types of healthier food options customers would like to see offered.<sup>68</sup>
  - ▶ How new customers may be recruited if healthier options are available.<sup>68</sup>
- ✔ **Ensure that the healthier food products you encourage are culturally desirable** and appropriate, and that training or marketing materials are offered in languages and styles suitable for the retailers and for their customers.

## Small Stores in Action: Incentive for Stocking Fruits and Vegetables in West Virginia Small Stores

As part of the Change the Future WV program, West Virginia's Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department Board of Health passed an incentive policy that reduces costs of the Retail Food Permit depending on how much fresh produce is sold at the store. The stores receive a 20% reduction in the permit cost for each type of fresh fruit or vegetable offered (up to a 100% discount). Signage and technical assistance are provided to stores taking part in the program. There are now 34 stores in the Mid-Ohio Valley carrying fresh fruits and vegetables, compared to only 7 stores at baseline. More information can be found at <http://www.changethefuturewv.org/> and in the document *Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice: Real-life Stories and Practical Tools from Change the Future WV* at <http://ctfwvresources.com/building-a-legacy.php>.





## Small Stores in Action: Washington State Department of Health Healthy Corner Store Initiative

Through its *Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW)* funding, Washington State Department of Health (WA DOH) provided \$40,000 (over a two-year period) to eight local health departments to develop and implement two projects, one of which was the Healthy Corner Store Initiative (HCSI).

For HCSI, each local health departments implemented a three-phased project to improve up to two small or corner stores in low-income communities. WA DOH did not, however, start from scratch. Health department grantees were asked to use the *Delridge Healthy Corner Store Toolkit for Community Organizers and Storeowners*, previously created by the Delridge Neighborhoods Development Association and the Department of Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington, to plan, implement, and evaluate projects. WA DOH engaged experts from the Delridge project to provide technical assistance to the grantees' County Health Specialists, who were responsible for direct implementation.

During Phase One of the project, WA DOH asked grantees to develop project plans and meet specific milestones, including creating an advisory committee, conducting local assessments on customer preferences, and preparing a list of potential store partners. County Health Specialists then invited storeowners to participate in the HCSI. Most storeowners were enthusiastic about participating in the initiative, and one owner even temporarily closed his store for total refurbishing. Only one storeowner thought the community would not be interested in healthier food options. In this case, the County Health Specialist conducted a community survey and presented results to the storeowner showing that the community was indeed interested.

Because some participating store owners expressed an interest in acquiring certification for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the WA DOH connected the County Health Specialists to the state WIC office so that the grantees could become familiar with the process and the paperwork required for the application process. Specialists then went on to help storeowners prepare their applications. The WA DOH also connected the County Health Specialists with regional WIC retail managers in the state to provide ongoing technical assistance to County Health Specialists and eventually store owners.

During Phase Two, grantees conducted store inventories, prepared project plans for work with the stores, and developed Memoranda of Understanding with storeowners. During Phase Three, County Health Specialists helped storeowners to prepare signage and other marketing materials.

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One of the larger grantees (the Spokane Regional Health District) leveraged funding to help develop marketing materials. WA DOH connected smaller grantees to the Spokane Regional Health District staff, who then allowed the smaller counties to utilize the materials they created. Since the health department grantees provided assistance to store owners in securing funding, store improvements were made to the stores (such as displays, shelving, and produce prepping areas) and store owners began to stock fresh fruits and vegetables.

During implementation and evaluation of the initiative, WA DOH was active in networking and providing training and technical assistance to grantees. Specifically, they:

- ▶ Engaged partners that included: the University of Washington’s Center for Public Health Nutrition, Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network; Washington WIC Program; King County Healthy Eating Active Living Program; and the Washington Department of Social and Health Services.
- ▶ Provided technical assistance by hosting quarterly networking calls.
- ▶ Connected grantees with staff from the Washington Department of Economic Development regarding micro-loans for small storeowners.
- ▶ Created fact sheets about several healthy corner store projects in the communities.
  - » Grocery Business Invests in a Healthier Neighborhood, Kittitas County: <http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/2011-success-story-kittitas-county>
  - » A Healthy Corner Store Opens in an Urban Food Desert, Spokane County: <http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/2011-success-story-spokane-county>; more about the Spokane Healthy Corner Stores Program available at <http://www.srhd.org/services/shcs.asp>
  - » Local Farm Produce: Making Healthy Choices More Convenient, Thurston County: <http://here.doh.wa.gov/materials/2011-success-story-thurston-county>

Some of the corner stores involved in the project still offer healthier items even though the *CPPW* funding ended. Next steps include expanding the healthier food retail work in the state through CDC’s *State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health* funding and obesity prevention funding, and exploring state and local systemic approaches to healthier food retail. This would include activities such as incorporating healthy retail into community plans and working with state associations and large chains to increase promotion and availability of healthy foods.

# Small Stores Resources

## Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The video, *Making the Business Case for Prevention: Healthy Corner Stores*, profiles two corner store owners in Louisville, Kentucky, and discusses how bringing healthier items into the stores is both improving the health of the community and increasing store profits. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_VkvizRZyg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_VkvizRZyg)

The *Baltimore Healthy Stores* and the *Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program* practice-tested intervention summaries include evidence summaries, 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>

## Healthy Corner Stores Network (HCSN)

This Web site connects professionals and other stakeholders and provides resources for improving access to healthier foods. Multiple resources and networking opportunities are available including: a *Healthy Corner Stores Q&A* that provides basic and advanced information on corner stores and healthier foods; a *Tools* section with information on how to implement small store initiatives, such as toolkits, manuals, and tip sheets; a *Reports* section on recent studies, evaluations, and other reports; a list of project consultants; and a listserv. <http://healthycornerstores.org>

The *How to Work with Chains* Web page offers an example from Oregon of working with a regional chain of convenience stores, which may be particularly helpful when working at a state or regional level. They provide a tip sheet on *Why Work with Chains* and a starter kit with a sample presentation as well as many facts and figures to use when meeting with chain management. <http://www.healthycornerstores.org/how-to-work-with-chains>

*Delridge Healthy Corner Store Project: A Toolkit for Community Organizers and Storeowners* is a toolkit coming from work in the Delridge neighborhood of Seattle, Washington. It identifies best practices from various small store initiatives around the country and includes: 1) a manual for community organizers who are coordinating a healthier corner store project; 2) a separate toolkit for storeowners who are taking steps to offer healthier food options; and 3) an appendix with tools and templates that can be used by multiple stakeholders for implementation and evaluation of small store improvement initiatives. <http://www.healthycornerstores.org/a-toolkit-for-community-organizers-and-storeowners>

*Healthy Corner Stores for Healthy New Orleans Neighborhoods: A Toolkit for Neighborhood Groups That Want to Take Action to Improve Their Food Environment* discusses food access in New Orleans, obesity in Louisiana, results from a New Orleans food purchase and preference study, challenges for small stores in offering healthier foods, and strategies for neighborhood advocates to improve access to healthier food through corner stores. The tools include a store survey, a store agreement, leaflets, and recipe cards. [http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/NOLA\\_Healthy\\_Corner\\_Stores\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.healthycornerstores.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/NOLA_Healthy_Corner_Stores_Toolkit.pdf)

## **ChangeLab Solutions**

*Incentives for Change: Rewarding Healthy Improvements to Small Food Stores* gives an overview of how communities can support small food retailers who want to make healthy changes to their businesses. A variety of incentives are discussed, including administrative, physical renovation, technical assistance, and customer outreach. <http://changelabsolutions.org/small-food-stores-incentives>

*Toward a Sustainable Model for Small-Scale Healthy Food Retail: Findings from NPLAN's Healthy Corner Stores Symposium* summarizes current important issues facing supporters of healthy corner store programs, discusses the strengths and weaknesses of current efforts, identifies additional research needs, and makes recommendations for supporting current promising practices. <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/Corner-Stores-Symposium>

## **The Food Trust and Get Healthy Philly**

The *Sell Healthy Guide* (available in English and Spanish) is geared towards store owners and program managers and assists them in learning how to sell healthier foods, increase sales, and attract more customers. It describes healthy products and displays, pricing and promotion strategies, and strategies to improve store appearance. <http://foodfitphilly.org/eat-healthy/healthy-corner-stores/>

## **Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Center for a Livable Future, Healthy Stores Web Site**

The Healthy Stores program began in 2000 with the Marshall Islands Healthy Stores program and now includes projects in five communities. Research and intervention materials for the Marshall Island programs, as well as the Apache Healthy Stores program and the Baltimore Healthy Stores program, are available on the Web page. The program Web site offers a variety of resources for nutrition and food access and provides several progress reports that detail project implementation and evaluation efforts. <http://www.healthystores.org>