



# Healthy Corner Store Toolkit



April 2017

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### Authors

Megan Hinchy, MS, MPH  
Linda Gordon  
Lindsey Arenberg, MS, MPH  
Eric Goodwin  
Adam B. Becker, PhD, MPH  
Elizabeth Gonzalez, MPH, CHES

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Food Trust: Healthy Corner Store Initiative Overview, 2014. (Contact 1617 John F. Kennedy Blvd. One Penn Center, Suite 900 Philadelphia, PA 19103 (215) 575-0444 Fax: (215) 575-0466 or visit [www.thefoodtrust.org](http://www.thefoodtrust.org))

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
About this Guide	1
About the Healthy Corner Store Project of the Healthy HotSpot Initiative	1
Healthy HotSpot Corner Stores	2
What is a Corner Store?	4
The Benefits of Working with Corner Stores	5
<b>Working with Corner Stores: What are the Roles?</b>	<b>7</b>
Role of the Community-Based Organization	7
Role of the Corner Store	10
<b>Planning – What to Consider Before Getting Started</b>	<b>11</b>
Create a Plan	11
Engage the Community and Local Partners	14
<b>Assessment and Store Recruitment – How to Identify Corner Stores</b>	<b>16</b>
Conduct a Community Needs Assessment	16
Prioritize Store Location	17
Follow- up Store Assessments	19
Recruiting a Healthy Corner Store Partner	19
<b>Implementation – Working with Corner Store Partners</b>	<b>20</b>
Introducing New Healthy Items	21
Store Layout	22
Equipment and Supplies	24
Supplier Assessment	26
Providing Technical Assistance	27
Promotion and Marketing	28
In-Store Promotion	29
Examples of In-Store Promotional Material	30
Community Promotion	34
<b>Lessons Learned</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Benefits of and How to Become a Healthy HotSpot</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>39</b>
Toolkits and Best Practices	39
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>41</b>

# Introduction

## Toolkit Outline

This toolkit will outline how to successfully:

- Plan
- Assess
- Implement

A healthy corner store project

## About This Guide

In this guide, lessons learned from the Healthy Corner Store project of the Healthy HotSpot initiative in suburban Cook County, IL are shared. It is designed for community organizations interested in identifying, recruiting, and working with local retailers to create a healthy corner store environment. This toolkit will describe how to become a HHS in suburban Cook County, but also serves as a framework for healthy corner store projects everywhere and can be modified to meet each community's unique identity and needs.



*Rudy's Grocery, Cicero, IL*

## About the Healthy Corner Store Project of the Healthy HotSpot Initiative

An in-depth assessment of corner stores in suburban Cook County found that low-income communities often had a high density of corner stores with a low percentage of produce items or other healthy food options. Subsequently, corner stores are one of the many places being strengthened as part of the HHS initiative by increasing the number of healthy options, such as fresh fruits and vegetables available in the stores.

Recent conversions took place in the south and west suburbs of Chicago, including: Calumet Park, Chicago Heights, Blue Island, Broadview, Cicero, Ford Heights, Harvey, Hazel Crest, Maywood and Riverdale.

Corner stores are one of the many places being strengthened as part of the Healthy HotSpot initiative by increasing the number of healthy options, such as fresh fruits and vegetables available in the stores.

## Healthy HotSpot Corner Stores

### Blue Island, IL

Dona's Finer Foods  
Hidalgo's Meat  
Mi Homestead  
Supermercado de Gallo

### Calumet Park, IL

Jordan's Foods

### Chicago Heights, IL

East Side Food Mart  
La Michoacana

### Cicero, IL

Acapulco Grocery  
Felipe's Dollar Plus  
Rudy's Grocery  
Rosie's Food Mart

### Ford Heights, IL

New Way Food

### Harvey, IL

Abuzir Foods  
Ghazi Foods  
Neighborhood Grocery  
One Stop Grocery

### Hazel Crest, IL

Leo's Food Mart

### Maywood, IL

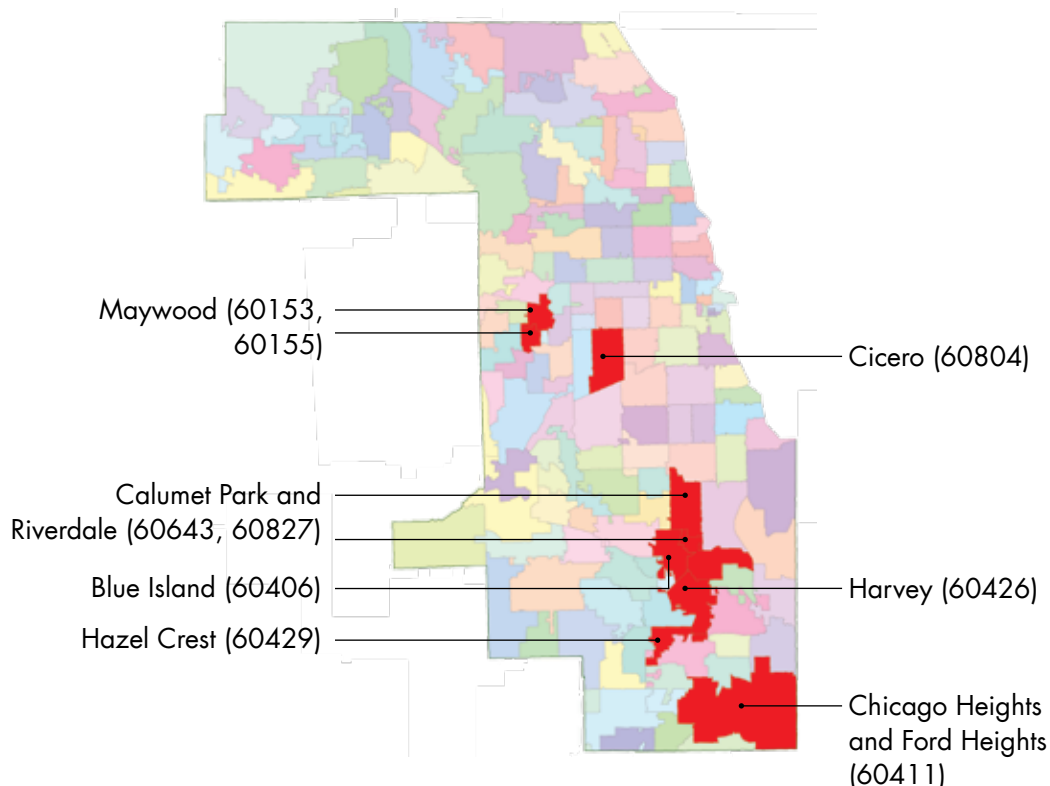
Art's Food and Beverage  
Discoteca Diaz  
LNR Family Store  
Supermercado Oriente  
Maywood Food Center  
Maywood Grocery

### Riverdale, IL

Herman's Food & Deli

\* As of April 1, 2017

## Cook County Healthy HotSpot Corner Store Locations



## Partners supporting Healthy Corner Stores include:

### **Technical Assistance Partner:**

The Food Trust

### **Chicago Healthy Corner Store Network:**

CLOCC, Inner-City Muslim Action Network, and Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion: UIC

### **Community-Based Organizations:**

City of Blue Island, community partner in Blue Island, IL

Corazon Community Services, community partner in Cicero, IL

Ministers Conference of South Cook County, community partner in Harvey, IL

Quinn Community Center, community partner in Maywood, IL

Respond Now, community partner in Chicago Heights, IL

South Suburban Mayors and Managers, community partner in South Suburbs, IL

TCA Health, Inc., community partner in Riverdale, IL

University of Illinois Extension; partner in Chicago, IL

Cooking Matters (EverThrive Illinois), partner in Chicago, IL



### **Healthy HotSpot Example**

A red box provides an example specific to the Healthy HotSpot initiative.

### **Example**

A green box provides general helpful tips and definitions.

## What is a Corner Store?

Corner stores—also called convenience stores, bodegas, and “mom-and-pops”—can be key partners in improving food access in underserved communities. It is important to work with the existing stores and infrastructure in communities as a strategy to increase availability of healthy and affordable foods. Access to healthy foods is important for maintaining health and preventing a wide variety of chronic diseases and conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, cancers, and heart disease<sup>1</sup>.

### What is a Healthy Corner Store?

A healthy corner store is a corner store or convenience store that promotes the sales of healthy foods through stocking and marketing items such as fresh produce, low fat dairy, lean proteins, and whole grains.



*Dona's Finer Foods, Blue Island, IL*

Due to their high prevalence in low-income urban settings, corner stores have unique potential to improve health disparities associated with the nutrition environment. Efforts to encourage small store operators to offer a healthier mix of foods and beverages are a viable approach to improving healthy food access, the diet of residents, and ultimately the health of a community. As a result, communities across the country have partnered with corner stores to ensure healthy foods are more available and affordable. Neighborhoods in cities such as Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and San Francisco have seen success in improving access to healthy foods while also increasing the sales revenue and expanding the customer base for participating corner stores.

<sup>1</sup> Bazzano, L. A. (2006). The high cost of not consuming fruits and vegetables. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 106(9), 1364-1368.

*Food deserts are areas where access to a full-service grocer is greater than one square mile.*

## The Benefits of Working with Corner Stores

Studies across the U.S. have shown that low-income, under-resourced neighborhoods have less access to stores that sell a variety of healthy foods and increased access to unhealthy foods through fast food or other convenient retail outlets<sup>2</sup>. Researchers call these geographical areas ‘food deserts’ – areas where healthy, affordable food is difficult to obtain and where access to a full-service grocer is greater than one square mile<sup>3</sup>. When communities lack full-service grocery stores and have limited access to public transportation, residents rely more on local corner stores.



*Dona's Finer Foods, Blue Island, IL*

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<sup>2</sup> Powell LM, Slater S, Mirtcheva D, Bao Y, Chaloupka FJ. Food store availability and neighborhood characteristics in the United States. *Prev Med.* 2007; 44(3):189-95.

<sup>3</sup> Ver Ploeg M, Breneman V, Farrigan T, Hamrick K, Hopkins D, Kaufman P, et al. Access to affordable and nutritious food—measuring and understanding food deserts and their consequences: Report to congress. US Department of Agriculture. 2009.

Healthy Corner Store projects positively transform the atmosphere of a corner store. See below for a few examples of the changes that are possible.

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

Before



After



New Way Food Ford Heights, IL

# Working with Corner Stores: What are the Roles?



## Healthy HotSpot Example

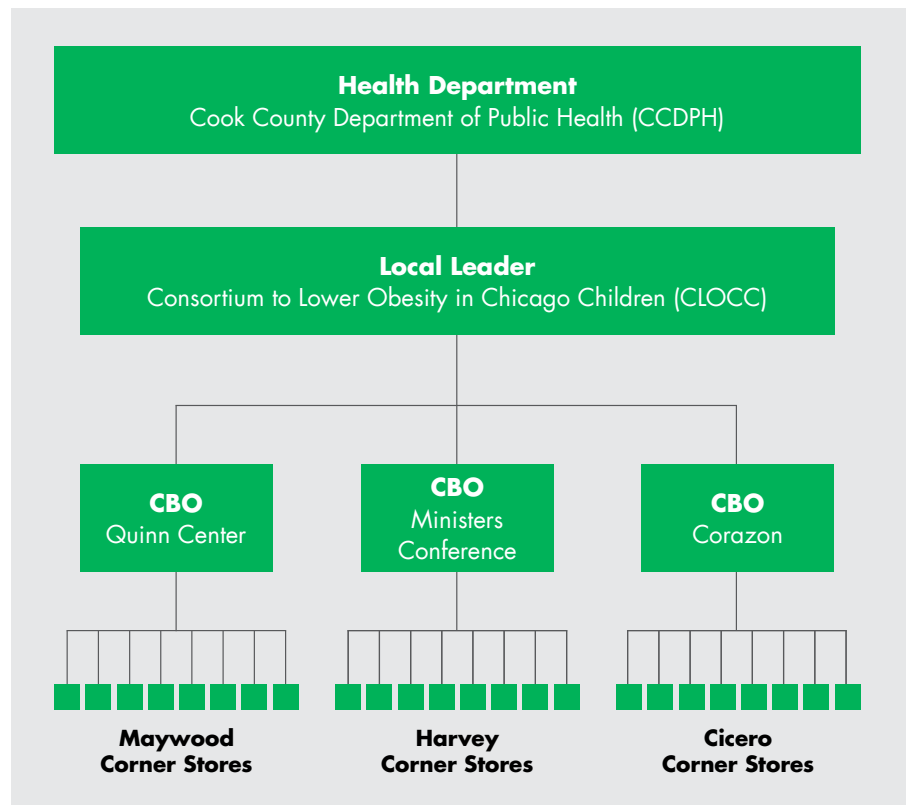
In the Healthy HotSpot initiative, the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC), is the lead organization. CLOCC maintains the relationship with Cook County Department of Public Health and ensures grant deliverables are being met by working with three Community-based organizations throughout Cook County, IL. In turn, each of the CBOs maintain relationships and works directly with the corner stores, and reports to the lead organization, CLOCC.

## Role of the Community-Based Organization

There are two key approaches a community-based organization (CBO) can take when working on a healthy corner store project.

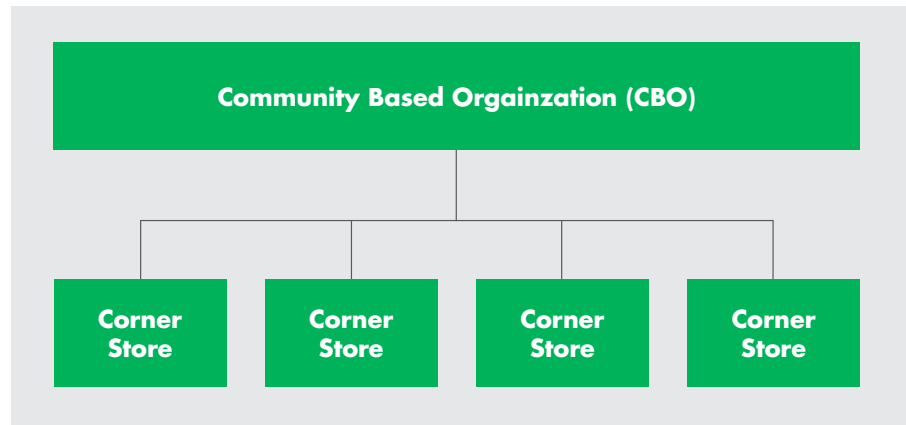
1. The CBO partners with a local leader in healthy corner store work, such as a health department, convening organization, or health coalition. This approach works well if the lead organization is not physically located in or does not have significant relationships in the community where the store(s) are located. In this role a CBO would be working with and reporting to the local leader.

## Healthy HotSpot Example



2. The CBO is the sole project lead and only non-store partner. This approach works well in communities where there is limited existing infrastructure for healthy corner store work. The CBO becomes the local leader.

## CBO Example



Local leaders in corner store work can be identified by:

- Doing a quick internet search for projects in your geographic area
- Contacting your local health department
- Participating in healthy living committees, groups, and consortiums such as CLOCC to stay abreast of current public health and wellness programs
- Reaching out to corner stores to learn if they have been approached by other organizations



*Happy Customer at Felipe's Grocery, Cicero, IL*

## Win-Win-Win

Working with corner stores is a win-win-win approach to improving community health.

- Participating stores get free promotion, community support, and increased revenue from healthy food sales
- Community members gain access to healthier food choices and information about nutrition
- The community organization supporting the initiative creates positive relationships with local businesses and other community partners

In both approaches the CBO works directly with participating corner stores to help increase their market sales and to expand their customer base through the sale of healthy food and beverage items.

One of the benefits of working with a lead organization is that they can assist the CBO in providing marketing, technical, and educational assistance as well as resources including, but not limited to, the following:

- Planning and coordination of the healthy corner store project
- Assistance in improving store layout and design
- In-store promotional materials (shelf signs, posters, flyers, etc.)
- Healthy item marketing to current and new customers living and working near the store
- Technical assistance and trainings on how to purchase, price, stock, and market healthy food and beverages
- Connections to small business development resources and/or other opportunities to improve store business practices, product selection, and marketing



Photo provided by The Food Trust

## What to Stock

In general, healthy foods to stock include:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains (breads, cereals, brown rice, pasta, crackers, etc.)
- Foods low in sodium (salt)
- Foods low in sugar
- Foods low in fat (low in saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol)
- Lean meats and poultry

## Role of the Corner Store

To become a healthy corner store, each store commits to a set of minimum expectations. These requirements will be clearly defined when the CBO develops a tailored plan, as outlined in the Planning section.



Photo provided by The Food Trust

### Why Store Owners Participate

- Relationship building with the community
- Increased sales and marketing
- Improving the health of the community and/or personal health
- Incentives such as equipment, stipends, and technical assistance

The general expectations for corner stores are as follows:

- Increase the amount of healthy items being stocked at the store
- Promote the healthy products with signage/advertising in a prominent location, preferably at the front of the store
- Display signage and shelf talkers near the product placement that indicates pricing and identify the product as a healthy option
- Maintain fresh and clean displays for the products in a prominent location in the store
- Participate in technical assistance trainings and educational opportunities
- Allow nutrition education and events at the store to promote healthy eating

# Planning – What to Consider Before Getting Started



## Healthy HotSpot Example

### DEFINE THE PROJECT

The Healthy Hotspot initiative will expand corner store conversions to increase environments with healthy food and beverage options by September 2017.

This project leverages community-based organizations as partners because of their local knowledge and presence. These CBOs support the recruitment of stores and maintain regular interaction with store owners. Efforts will take place in priority communities (census tracts Harvey (60426), Calumet Park (60643, 60827), Cicero (60804), Maywood (60153, 60155).

A key to ensuring project sustainability is the prioritization of project goals and creation of a detailed plan. This prioritization will impact project planning, recruitment, and partnership development. It is important to have a clear plan to measure the effectiveness of the project.



*Community Trainings: Planning Meeting at the Quinn Center, Maywood, IL*

## Create a Plan

### 1. Define the project

Decide the who, what, where, when, and why of the project.

### 2. Set long-term and short term-goals

Goals reflect large aspirations for sustainable, positive change, based on well-documented needs.

Well-written goals are SMART—**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-Bound. See Appendix 1. SMART Goal Setting

Align the healthy corner store project with the mission and goals of

- Your organization
- Current funders and potential future funders
- The corner stores
- The community residents



### Healthy HotSpot Example

#### SET GOALS

Long Term: The Healthy HotSpot initiative will address health inequities by increasing availability of healthful foods in communities with primarily lower-income under served populations.

Short Term: Increase the number of convenience stores with expanded healthy food and beverage options by September 2017.

### 3. Define objectives

Objectives are created using the SMART criteria and reflect outcome measures that support the attainment of a goal. It often requires more than one objective to meet a goal.

#### Tips:

- Objectives should be stated in quantifiable terms
- Objectives should be expressed as outcomes, not processes
- Objectives should specify the result of an activity
- Objectives should identify the target audience or community
- Objectives need to be realistic and something that can be accomplished within a specific time or grant period

### 4. Define strategies

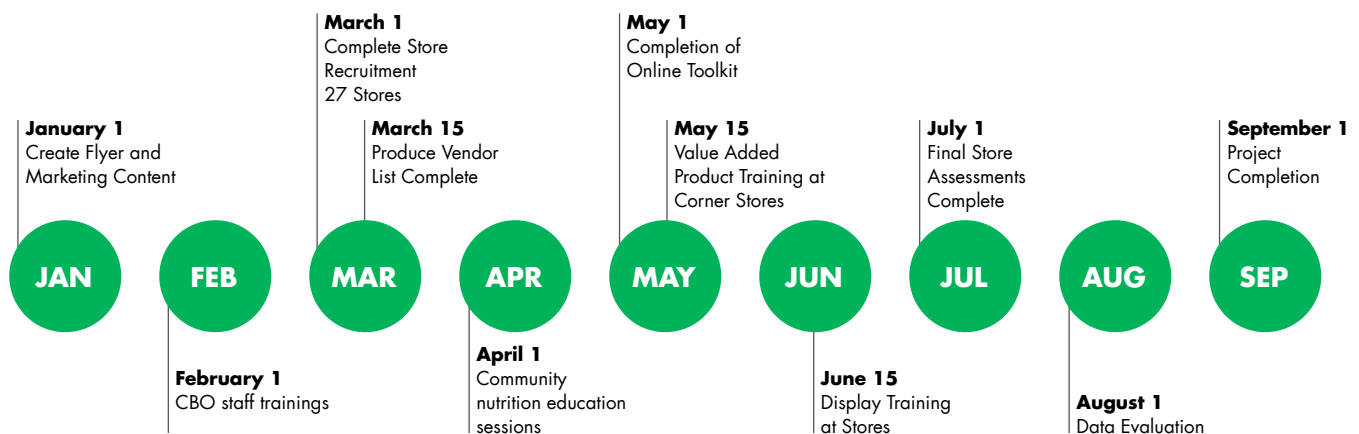
Strategies are the specific activities that are put in place to meet objectives. Strategies are action items that will help achieve the objectives and goals.

### 5. Develop an implementation plan

#### Create a Project Timeline

A timeline is a schedule that lists the project's major activities, and deliverables, with intended start and finish dates.

## Sample Timeline





### Healthy HotSpot Example

#### DEFINE OBJECTIVES

By September 29, 2017, healthy corner store conversions will take place in a total of 27 corner stores, primarily in the south and west suburbs of Cook County, IL, positively impacting 228,000 residents.



*Happy Customers at Felipe's Grocery, Cicero, IL*



### Healthy HotSpot Example

#### DEFINE STRATEGIES

Healthy Corner Store Wholesale and Distribution List – Create a list or information sheet on local wholesale produce and healthy food options for participating corner stores to use for sourcing more affordable healthy options

Output/Measure: Final wholesaler list available by June 30, 2017

#### *Define Roles and Responsibilities*

Roles are the positions team members assume or the parts that they play in a particular operation or process.

Responsibilities, on the other hand, are the specific tasks or duties that members are expected to complete as a function of their roles. They are the specific activities or obligations for which they are held accountable when they assume or are assigned to a role on a project or team. Include who will be accountable for determining if responsibilities are being completed.

#### *Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is a formal agreement between two or more parties. Companies and organizations can use MOUs to establish official partnerships. MOUs help to solidify expectations and obligations from all partners and ensure that all parties understand and agree to these terms.

Once the goals, objectives, and strategies have been set MOUs are useful in defining the roles of each of the partners in their achievement. MOUs can be developed between Community-Based Organizations and Corner Stores or between any partners working on the project.



## Healthy HotSpot Example

### EVALUATION

The Healthy HotSpot initiative tracked progress by

- Signing MOUs with 27 corner stores and 3 CBOs
- Tracking number of people reached in each community
- Comparing initial in-store assessments to monthly store assessments at each of the stores
- Authoring monthly reports focused on marketing, communication, and technical assistance to the corner stores

Community engagement, and outreach is vital to the success of any corner store project

## 6. Evaluation

Also consider how evaluation of this project will take place and include any evaluation responsibilities in the MOUs with store owners and partners.

Knowing how the organizations will evaluate the changes made will allow for tracking of those changes. Think about both the desired changes within the store and how to increase customer demand for healthy products to ensure the store continues to be profitable. Organizational capacity and grant deliverables will influence how evaluation takes place.

## 7. Budget

Be mindful of any grant guidelines or requirements

Consider:

- Job positions and salary
- Marketing and promotional materials
- Equipment for the stores
- Training and events
- Indirect costs

## Engage the Community and Local Partners

Think creatively about organizations that share goals for healthy communities and engage them in dialogue about Healthy Corner Stores. Community partners will bring more people to the table to help reach more community members and create sustainable change. Be clear what role each partner will play in the project and how it will benefit their own stakeholders.

### Strong community partnerships will:

- Build trust within the community and with corner stores
- Provide information specific to each community
- Increase available resources – financial, in-kind, personnel, and other support
- Increase impact through program expansion
- Ensure sustainability

## Community engagement and outreach is vital to the success of any corner store project

Community engagement and outreach is vital to the success of any corner store project. Changing purchasing patterns and choices will require engaging the community to raise awareness of the project and educating the community on why eating healthy is important.

It is also important to have a positive relationship with the store owners involved in the project. Owners that trust the organization and feel like their best interest is in mind will be more willing to make changes, stock new products, and listen to ideas.



*Planning meeting at Ministers Conference of South Cook County, Harvey, IL*

### **Helpful Tip:** **Community Healthy Corner Store Committee**

We recommend creating a community healthy corner store committee that includes concerned community residents, youth, and representatives from other local organizations/businesses. We recommend convening the committee before the initiative begins and at least once per month throughout the project. The committee's role should include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Assistance with selecting stores
- Surveying and assessing the community to gauge the types of changes residents would like to see in the stores
- Promoting the corner stores and their changes throughout the community
- Planning and implementing community nutrition education activities
- Carrying out action plan items
- Store visits

# Assessment and Store Recruitment – How to Identify Corner Stores

## Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is a systematic process for determining and addressing needs, or “gaps” between current conditions and desired conditions or “wants.”

Once a plan is in place, assessment of the corner store environment will begin.

## Conduct a Community Needs Assessment

Identifying community needs and assets will help with successful implementation of the corner store plan.

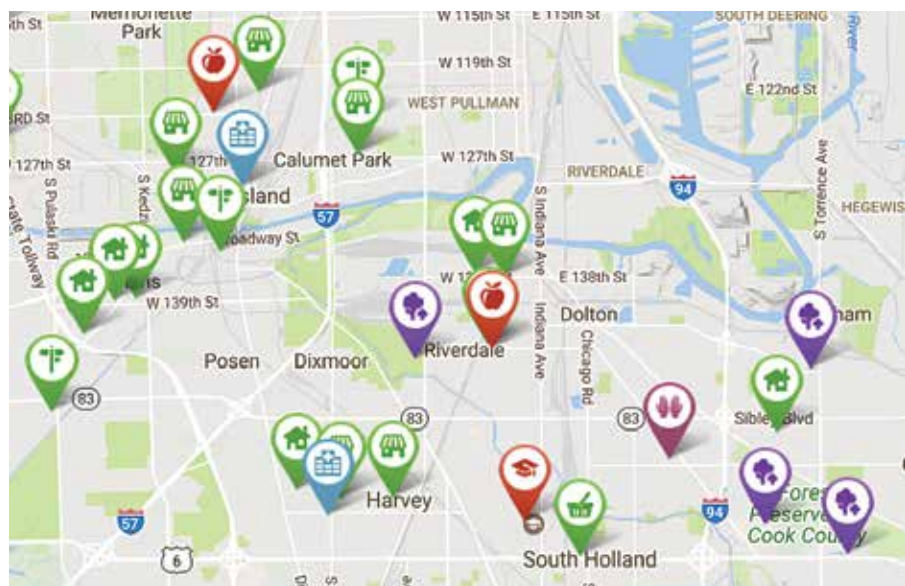
A **needs assessment** is a systematic process for determining and addressing **needs**, or “gaps” between current conditions and desired conditions or “wants.”

## Community Toolkit

A community toolkit can be a great resource when assessing the needs of a community. Check out Community Tool Box at [www.ctb.ku.edu](http://www.ctb.ku.edu)

## Healthy HotSpot Resource Map

- Healthy Schools 🍎
- Healthy House of Worship 🏛️
- Smoke-Free Hospitals 🏥
- Smoke-Free Housing 🏠
- Smoke-Free College 🎓
- Farmer’s Market 🥬
- Healthy Corner Stores 🏪
- Complete Streets 🚶
- Forest Preserves 🌲



[www.healthyhotspot.org](http://www.healthyhotspot.org)

### Corner Stores

Corner stores typically have the following characteristics:

- Small size (often only 2-3 aisles)
- One register, or one register counter
- Limited selection
- Also called Mom & Pop shops, bodegas, and convenience stores



### Healthy HotSpot Example

The Healthy HotSpot initiative prioritized mom and pop shops with 1 - 2 registers, that had an existing relationship with the community and a passion or interest in the project.

Take an environmental scan of the food stores in the community. Assessment can be done by using GIS mapping, a Google search, or traveling around the community and making a list of all the different retail food stores. Document all the store names and locations, and determine how many are full-service grocery stores compared to smaller corner stores.

## Prioritize Store Locations

Prioritize stores in alignment with goals and objectives of the project plan. The type of corner store program the organization wants to implement will determine higher priority stores. Consider which stores might have the most impact on the project.

### Store Impact

Consider:

- Location
  - Proximity to popular community locations (schools, senior buildings, parks)
  - Easily accessible to public transportation
  - Visibility, located in a popular area or intersection
- Relationships
  - An existing relationship with the owner
  - Store history and reputation in the community
  - A store owner or staff member that is excited about the project
  - Store that is popular with community residents
- Partners
  - Store that has existing relationships with partners
  - Partner feedback on the store

## Conduct Baseline In-Store Assessments

The purpose of an in-store assessment is to:

- Evaluate the current availability, accessibility, and quality of healthy food products
- Determine what types of products the store is currently offering
- Assess the store's capacity to stock new products and space for new equipment
- Consider the interior and exterior environment of the store
- Determine what changes to focus on during the project



### Healthy HotSpot Example

The Healthy Hotspot initiative used option two. CLOCC identified corner stores in the community and approached them with a recruitment packet and explanation of the project. Once the store owners agreed to participate an initial assessment was done and MOU was signed by the store owner and CLOCC.

- Document the baseline environment of the store so the project impact can be tracked. See Appendix 2. Initial Store Assessment

### Conducting a Baseline Assessment

There are two approaches to conducting a baseline assessment:

1. Assess all the stores. This will help to target which stores to spend time and effort recruiting based on the project's emphasis identified.
2. Assess the stores that have already agreed to participate in the project. This will allow for focus on a smaller amount of stores if time or staff is limited



*Baseline Assessment: Mi Homestead, Blue Island, IL*



*Follow Up Assessment: Mi Homestead, Blue Island, IL*



### Healthy HotSpot Example

CLOCC Healthy Corner Store Coordinators performed follow up store assessments monthly to track changes within the stores and assess the need for technical assistance.

## Follow-Up Store Assessments

Follow-up assessments will need to be completed on a regular basis in order to track changes within the stores. The follow-up assessment will collect similar information to the initial store assessment. It can also be modified to include new questions regarding technical assistance, equipment needs, etc.

## Recruiting a Healthy Corner Store Partner

Now that an assessment of the corner store environment has been completed, it is time to recruit stores to participate. The number of stores will depend on the project plan, organizational capacity, and funding.

### Recruiting Tips

- **Create a recruitment packet.** This will help explain the purpose of the project, highlight the benefits of the program, and the benefits of participating. [See Appendix 3. Store Recruitment Flyer](#)
- **Be enthusiastic.** Remember first impressions count and the organizers are selling the project to the store owners.
- **Be knowledgeable.** Know the ins and outs of the project, and be able to answer any questions a store owner might have
- **Build a relationship.** Talk with the store owners and take interest in their store. Building strong connections and partnerships are key to any successful project.
- **Be persistent.** Visiting multiple stores will be necessary. Not every store will be willing to participate, and that's ok.
- **Be flexible.** Some store owners work in their stores all day long, while others hire staff to run the store because they may own multiple stores or have other obligations. Multiple trips to the same store may be necessary.
- **Collect information.** Contact information, level of engagement, and who can make decisions about the store are all important questions to ask.

# Implementation – Working with the Corner Store Partner

*Stocking a greater quantity and variety of healthy food items is essential to improving the food environment for the community.*

The corner store plan has been developed and key community partners and corner stores have been identified. Now it is time to put the plan into action. This section outlines some of the key strategies that can be used to implement a healthy corner store project including:

- Introducing New Healthy Items
- Store Layout
- Equipment and Supplies
- Supplier Assessment
- Technical Assistance
- Promotion and Marketing



Rudy's Grocery Store, Cicero, IL



### Healthy HotSpot Example

The Healthy HotSpot Initiative required store owners to introduce new healthy food and beverage items. A pre-set menu of food categories was created and a list of suggested foods that would fit the criteria was provided to store owners. [See Appendix 5. Menu of Healthy Food Options](#)

Partial Conversion – the corner store agreed to stock 2 new healthy items, better for stores that already had a good variety of healthy items

Full Conversion – the corner store agreed to stock 6 new healthy items, an ideal option for stores that are not currently stocking many healthy items

## Introducing New Healthy Food Items

### Model Healthy Food Choice Standards

Model healthy food choice standards are based on the 2015 - 2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which can be found at <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/dietary-guidelines>

Stocking a greater quantity and variety of healthy food items is essential to improving the food environment for the community.

Key Steps:

1. Determine parameters for a “healthy food item”
2. Increase the amount of healthy foods being stocked
3. Ensure the healthy items remain well stocked and high quality

The store owner must commit to introducing new healthy food items in the store to participate. Some projects specify the number of new food items to introduce, while other projects also prescribe the type of healthy food to introduce. [See Appendix 4. Adding Healthy Products](#)

Deciding which healthy foods and beverages from the list of eligible items to introduce should be a conversation with the store owner. Things to consider

- Customers: age, culture, food preferences
- Current sales: what types of items are already selling well?
- Purchasing: what types of healthy items are available at a reasonable price?

## Remember...

- Keep produce organized and well-stocked.
- Label items and show prices.
- Use baskets to organize and protect produce.
- Tilt baskets forward to make them look more full.
- Remove spoiled items daily.
- Catch customers' attention with different colored foods in a row.
- Never sell produce out of cardboard boxes.
- Use good lighting to attract customers.

## Store Layout

Improving the store layout to highlight the healthy items can increase their sales. Store layout and display are important, especially when corner stores have limited space and an abundance of unhealthy choices. Always be sure to discuss ideas with the store owner before making any changes.

### Location

**Front of the Store:** Bring healthy items to the front of the store where visibility is high and customers are guaranteed to see them. See Appendix 6. Produce Displays

**Create a Healthy Section:** Group healthy items together in a healthy section. By grouping products and drawing attention to the section, it is easier for customers to quickly identify healthy items.

**Eye Level:** Display healthy items at eye level on the shelf to increase visibility. Products on the top and bottom shelves are harder to access and don't typically sell as well as items at eye level.

**Equipment:** Store may benefit from new equipment to display their healthy items. See the Equipment section below for more info

Place produce, like bananas, at register to sell faster.

Keep produce fresh and baskets full.

Push produce to the front of the baskets and pile it high.



Display prices for customers. This can help increase sales.

Items that do not last long should be just below eye-level to sell fast.

Items that last longer, like citrus fruits, should go at the bottom.

Photo provided by The Food Trust

## Proper Storage

Fresh produce is perishable and has a limited shelf life which means it needs to be displayed attractively and sold quickly. [See Appendix 7 and 7.1 for Tips on Buying and Handling Fresh Produce](#)

Fresh produce often has varying storage requirements for safety and maximum shelf life. Some items may need to be refrigerated, while others may be displayed at room temperature. It is important to store all foods safely and proper storage should always be taken into consideration when planning store layout.



Photo provided by The Food Trust

*New equipment can be a great investment and incentive for store owners to participate.*

## Equipment and Supplies

The type and amount of equipment provided to the store will be dependent on the budget created in the corner store plan. While providing equipment is not a requirement of a high-quality corner store project, it can be a great investment and incentive for store owners to participate. [See Appendix 8. Store Equipment for examples](#)

Things to consider when purchasing equipment:

- **Safety:** Be sure the equipment selected meets health and safety standards.
- **Store needs:** Determine the needs of the store by doing a visual assessment and talking with the store owner.
- **Store layout:** Create a plan with the store owner mapping where the equipment will be used.
- **Use of equipment:** Discuss with store owners that healthy items should only be displayed on the new equipment. These requirements will be detailed in the MOU.

### Display Tips

- **PRODUCE:** small baskets, bushel baskets, bins, scales, produce bags and rollers
- **HEALTHY SNACKS:** display rack and shelving
- **FROZEN FRUIT AND VEGETABLES:** small reach-in freezer
- **LOW-FAT DAIRY:** refrigerator
- **PRODUCE SALES:** reusable bags



*One Stop Food, Harvey, IL*

# Supplier Assessment

Connecting corner stores with healthy suppliers that have reasonable prices and varied selection is another important step to ensuring that healthy items remain available.

Many small grocery retailers face challenges in supplying their stores, especially with healthy items. Many store owners report using local wholesalers like Sam's Club, Costco, and Restaurant Depot to stock their products. Although barriers exist it is possible to overcome these issues.

Barriers	Potential Solutions
<b>Limited knowledge:</b> Corner store owners may not be aware of all the options available to stock and supply their store, or where to find them.	<b>New Suppliers:</b> Reach out to new suppliers who can offer to distribute smaller quantities at competitive prices. Create a list to share with store owners. <b>Resource Sharing:</b> Ask the store owners about their current vendors when conducting the baseline assessment. Some of the stores might already be working with fantastic vendors and this information can be shared amongst the store owners. <b>Buy Local:</b> Connect with local farms, community gardens and farmers markets.
<b>Higher prices:</b> Small stores cannot order items in bulk to receive discounted pricing.	<b>Collective Purchasing:</b> Stores in the same area may be able to combine purchasing orders to get lower prices from distributors.
<b>Limited capacity:</b> Corner stores often lack the time and personnel to connect with new healthy vendors or to make trips to purchase items for resale.	<b>Staff:</b> Consider finding a staff member or volunteer that can focus on connecting the corner stores with suppliers. This position could provide technical assistance in implementing the aforementioned suggestions.

*Connecting corner stores with healthy suppliers that have reasonable prices and varied selection is another important step to ensuring that healthy items remain available.*

## Common Technical Assistance Topics

Common technical assistance topics, include:

- Why Selling Healthy Makes Sense
- Pricing Strategies See [Appendix 9- 9.1](#)
- Promotion Strategies See [Appendix 10. – 10.1](#)
- Food Safety, Spoilage, & Temperature Guide See [Appendix 11. – 11.1](#)
- Seasonal Produce See [Appendix 12.](#)
- Value Added Products See [Appendix 13 – 13.1](#)
- Store Layout See [Appendix 14 – 14.1](#)
- Applying for WIC & SNAP

## Providing Technical Assistance to the Store Owner

Technical assistance provides advice, guidance, or trainings, either in a group setting or one-on-one. Providing continued technical assistance is one way to support store owners and partners throughout the project.

Technical assistance may have a positive impact on sustainability. During the project it is essential to assist the store owners, but what happens when the project ends? When staff or residents are trained on the basics of healthy corner store project implementation, the knowledge they gain can be transferred and utilized long after project completion.

Please see the appendix for technical-assistance tip sheets to help identify technical-assistance opportunities and guide conversations.

Evaluate the technical assistance with the store owners and encourage feedback to identify additional support needed to ensure the healthy changes made in the store remain successful.



*The CBO will supply technical assistance to the store owner.*



## Healthy HotSpot Example

During the month of December 2016, a Food Access Workshop was held with the focus of Healthy Corner Store food procurement and supply. Community-based organizations, corner store owners, and other leaders in Healthy Corner Store work attended the training session to learn about healthy food suppliers in Cook County, IL. Those that attended were able to share ideas and resources. The goal was to develop new distribution channels.

## Promotion and Marketing

Marketing is critical for letting customers know healthy food options are available in the selected stores. It also raises awareness about the importance of nutrition and can drive customers to buy the new healthy items. Think of it in terms of supply and demand: store owners are increasing their supply and now we must help increase demand from the community to sustain the work.



*In-store promotion, Mi Homestead, Blue Island, IL*

### Promotion Types

There are two types of promotion:

1. **In-Store Promotion:**

Draws attention to the healthy products while people are shopping

2. **Community Promotion:**

Raises awareness around the project, educates the community on the importance of healthy eating, and drives customers to the store



*Community Promotion: 5-4-3-2-1 Go!® Training at Corazon Cicero, IL*

*Use in-store promotional materials to better market healthy items.*

## In-Store Promotion

The overall environment, attractiveness, and safety level of the corner store can positively or negatively impact the community residents' desire to shop there. A store that appears friendly, safe, and clean is more likely to attract customers.

### **In-Store**

Things to consider:

- Consolidate posters covering windows so customers can see into the store
- Replace alcohol, cigarette, sugary beverage, and unhealthy-snack posters with healthy corner store marketing materials
- Display "We Accept WIC" and "We Accept EBT" on outside wall (if applicable)
- Have signage in languages customers speak
- Regularly pick up garbage and sweep sidewalks around store
- Remove graffiti on exterior walls
- Install outdoor lighting at the store's entrance and in the parking lot
- Create a friendly and welcoming community space. For example, place tables and chairs, potted plants, water bowl for dogs, a trash can, or a bike rack in front of the store. Help storeowners find funding for such items or provide them as an incentive
- Engage neighborhood youth to paint a mural on exterior walls with images that are neighborhood-based and consistent with the healthy corner store mission

After considering the store environment, the next step is to use in-store promotional materials to better market the healthy items. Marketing materials like shelf-tags draw attention to individual products, while signs or banners promoting healthy eating draw attention to the changes being made in the store.

# Examples of In-Store Promotional Materials

## Banners

- Outdoors to identify the store as a “Healthy Corner Store”
- Indoors to identify healthy sections



## Posters

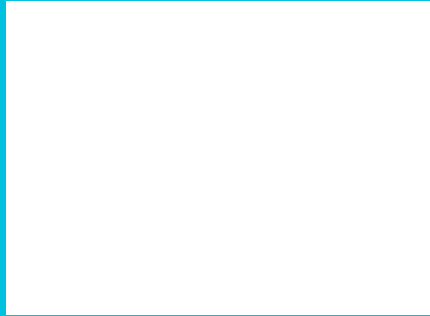
- On the front door or near the register
- Identify healthy sections



### Window Clings

- On the front door or window
- On coolers or freezers where healthy items are being stored

## Healthy Options Sold Here

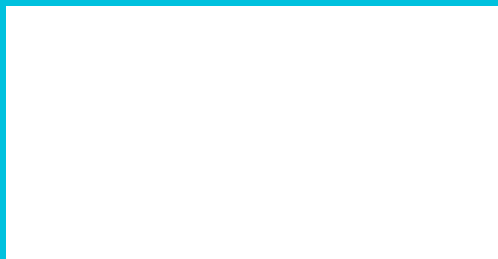


### Shelf Talkers

- Near the healthy items – shelf signs may say “This is an item high in calcium” or “This is a healthy choice”



## This is a Healthy Option



Shelf Talkers: Mi Homestead Blue Island, IL

## Pricing Tags

- Near the healthy items so customers are aware of the prices

## This is a Healthy Option



Pricing Tags: Dona's Finer Foods in Blue Island, IL

## Recipes

- Near food items that are contained in the recipe



### Sandwich Board

- Outside to notify customers of sales and other specials



*Sandwich Board at Hidalgo's, Blue Island, IL*

### Floor Decals

- On the floor near the health item section

# Look for the Healthy Options



Healthy  
HotSpot

*Connect to places  
for healthy living.*



## Healthy HotSpot Example



Promotional Flyer



Community Trainings:  
Free Food Tasting  
provided by University  
of Illinois Extension  
at Rudy's Grocery in  
Cicero, IL

# Community Promotion

The purpose of community promotion is to raise awareness around participating stores choosing to sell new healthy items, to educate the community on the importance of healthy eating, and to drive customers to the store.

## Engage the Community

Community-based organizations and government agencies interested in promoting health and wellness may have events in your community to teach nutrition, to serve healthy food, or to share information with residents. These can be an excellent opportunity to share the importance of healthy eating and to present the good news about a local store improving its merchandise. Engage the community by leveraging upcoming events or partnerships to promote the project.

Activities:

- Flyers - Create a flyer and pass it out at community events, include the project at a health fair booth, or talk to a senior center about their dietary needs.
- Association meetings – Work with neighborhood associations, city councils, economic development groups, community development groups.
- Local non-profits – Work with local non-profits to spread the awareness through their networks, newsletters, or employees.
- Schools - Collaborate with service projects, field trips, after-school programs.
- Churches- Share information at church events, or through bulletins and newsletters.



Community Trainings: Free Healthy Food Tasting provided by University of Illinois Extension at Mi Homestead Blue Island, IL



### Healthy HotSpot Example

- In partnership with Cooking Matters, Healthy HotSpot offered six community cooking classes and educational workshops in target communities
- In partnership with University of Illinois Extension, a Free Healthy Food Tasting occurred in the majority 27 participating stores
- CLOCC and University of Illinois Extension distributed recipe cards
- CLOCC provided yearly training sessions promoting 5-4-3-2-1 Go!® healthy lifestyle messaging in each target community

## Hold Community Events and Trainings

Hosting a community event or educational training on the importance of good nutrition, will not only increase awareness of the project, but also increase the demand for healthy products within the community.

### Activities

- Host a cooking class or educational workshop at a local non-profit or community center.
- Bring people into the store for taste tests so they can try new foods that may be new to them.
- Create recipe cards that can be made with the newly introduced food
- Some communities use specific healthy lifestyle messages to educate residents. For example, many in Chicago use CLOCC's 5-4-3-2-1 Go!® message. For more information visit <http://www.clocc.net/our-focus-areas/health-promotion-and-public-education/5-4-3-2-1-go/>. Talk with community partners to see if similar messages are in use in your community.

## Advertise Locally

Raise awareness about the project through local media outlets. Make sure to announce who the participating stores are and their locations on all marketing materials (posters, flyers, etc.).

### Activities

- Purchase an ad in the local newspaper, include an article in the town or organizational newsletter.
- Create and distribute flyers at churches, social services, and other community meetings and events.
- Display posters at local community gathering places and businesses, libraries, food banks, community centers, parks, bus stops, etcetera.
- Announce the project and post updates on local blogs, websites and newspapers.
- Send out press releases to the local media and public officials.
- Consider a media campaign using mobile ads.

These promotion and engagement activities can help to the demand for healthy items within the community.

# Lessons Learned



## Healthy HotSpot Example

The Healthy HotSpot Corner Store initiative was successful because of the strong partnerships that were built throughout suburban Cook County. CCDPH spearheaded the grant with CLOCC as a lead organization. CLOCC was able to partner with several CBOs, community groups, and coalitions that helped advanced the Healthy Corner Store work. The Healthy HotSpot network was a valuable tool in building these relationships.

The sustainability of the Healthy Corner Store project rests on finding the right balance between supply of and demand for healthy foods and beverages. Store owners will continue to stock healthier items if they sell well and add to the business' profits. Consumers will continue to shop at a store if it consistently stocks the healthier things they want in prominent locations in an attractive way and if prices are affordable. For these reasons, ongoing support of nutrition education and business strategies is critical to engaging store owners and community members to not only participate, but also to understand that this project is good for their business and for their community at large over the long-term.

The activities outlined in this toolkit are an excellent template for any successful healthy corner store project. There are a few key lessons to remember when planning a healthy corner store initiative.



*Photo provided by The Food Trust*

*The activities outlined in this toolkit are an excellent template for any successful healthy corner store project.*

### **Keys to Success**

Many store owners find value in increasing the health of the community and offering a complete selection of foods for their customers. Some keys to successfully supporting store owners in achieving this enhanced level of healthy change.

- Work with committed store owners. Store owners who are committed to healthy change and have already had success selling healthy products are more open to new ideas for improving their businesses.
- Develop a variety of attractive incentives. Each store has unique needs and business goals. In order to incentivize owners to participate, a variety of customizable incentives should be available to ensure that owners find one that would benefit their businesses.
- Give store owners options. Owners prefer having flexibility to decide which and how many promotional options would be profitable and sustainable for their stores.
- Keep changes simple and gradual. Break down the program into smaller pieces and support the owner in making the changes.



*Happy Customer at Felipe's Grocery, Cicero, IL*

# Benefits of and How to Become a Healthy HotSpot

*Healthy HotSpots help people eat better, move more and live tobacco-free.*

The Healthy Corner Store project is part of the Healthy HotSpot initiative that aims to build healthy places, called Healthy HotSpots, in suburban Cook County through community partnerships. Healthy HotSpots help people eat better, move more, and live tobacco-free.

Healthy HotSpot partners are working together to support or advance policy, systems and environmental improvements to make healthy living easier in places where people live, work, learn, worship, play or receive health care in suburban Cook County. A partner can be an agency or a coalition.



*Healthy HotSpot Corner Store Display at One Stop Food, Harvey, IL*

*Healthy HotSpot partners are working together to support or advance policy, systems and environmental improvements to make healthy living easier in places where people live, work, learn, worship, play or receive health care in suburban Cook County.*

Agencies include:

- Local governments, including: one or more municipalities or townships; a regional government body serving suburban Cook County communities; and park districts
- Community organizations, including: non-profit agencies; faith-based institutions; community-based organizations; child care providers; businesses; and corner stores
- School systems, including: regional offices of education; public school districts and schools; private schools; and institutions of higher learning
- Healthcare systems, including hospitals and providers

Healthy HotSpots currently include:

- Healthy Corner Stores
- Community Gardens
- Complete Streets
- Medical Reserve Corps
- Smoke-Free Housing
- Fit Friendly Worksites
- Smoke-Free Work Places
- Healthy Schools
- Smoke-Free Colleges/Universities
- Forest Preserves
- Smoke-Free Hospitals
- Healthy Houses of Worship

### **Healthy HotSpot**

Become a Healthy HotSpot or find a **Healthy HotSpot** near you!

Visit [www.healthyhotspot.org](http://www.healthyhotspot.org).

# Resources

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

## Toolkits and Best Practices

### Audience: Community-Based Organizations

#### **Adopt a Shop – A Shop Healthy Guide:**

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/pan/adopt-a-shop-guide.pdf>

For organizations looking to support a local food retailer in stocking and promoting healthy foods and beverages.

#### **Getting to Grocery:**

<http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/getting-grocery>

Designed to help advocates and public health agencies coordinate and leverage the tools available through local government and other organizations to bring grocery stores into low-income communities.

#### **Healthy Food Options Should be Just Around the Corner:**

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Advocate/VoicesforHealthyKids/Healthy-Food-Options-Should-Be-Just-Around-the-Corner\\_UCM\\_467164\\_SubHomePage.jsp](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Advocate/VoicesforHealthyKids/Healthy-Food-Options-Should-Be-Just-Around-the-Corner_UCM_467164_SubHomePage.jsp)

Toolkit designed by the American Heart Association to recruit, engage, mobilize, and evaluate healthy corner store work.

## Audience: Store Owners

### **Grocery Store Merchandising Tips:**

<http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/datastore/234-2083.pdf>

10 merchandising tips to help you sell healthy foods.

### **Retail Fruit & Vegetable Marketing Guide:**

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Pages/RetailFruitandVegMarketingGuide.aspx>

This guide is written for store owners and is full of helpful ideas, tips, and resources that will make a fresh produce marketing plan more successful.

### **Why Sell Healthy Food? Stocking more healthy foods could mean better business for you:**

[http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media\\_items/phcsn-sell-healthy-guide.original.pdf](http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/phcsn-sell-healthy-guide.original.pdf)

This guide offers tips on healthy product selection, pricing and display, promotion and marketing, and equipment and refrigeration.

## Audience: Both

### **Creating Healthy Corner Stores**

<http://goodfoodla.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Creating-Healthy-Corner-Stores-Issue-Briefer.pdf>

Understand the motivations and arguments for implementing corner store conversion projects, how they are designed to meet their goals, and how best to ensure produce sales can be sustained over the long-term.

### **Health On the Shelf:**

[http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Health\\_on\\_the\\_Shelf\\_FINAL\\_20130322-web.pdf](http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Health_on_the_Shelf_FINAL_20130322-web.pdf)

This toolkit describes how to create a strong and healthy small food retailer certification program that requires participating stores to increase the variety of healthy foods they sell, reduce the offerings of unhealthy foods, and proactively market healthy options with help from a sponsoring agency or organization. It provides step-by-step instructions for developing a certification program, with ideas and examples from existing programs.

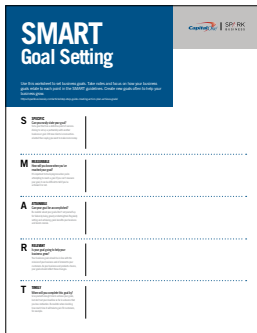
### **Shop Healthy Implementation Guide:**

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/pan/shop-healthy-implementation-guide.pdf>

A comprehensive resource for starting a healthy corner store program, based on the experiences and lessons learned from Shop Healthy in New York City.

# Appendices

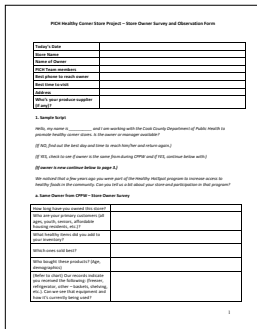
Click [this link](#) to download the complete full-sized Appendix (49 pages).



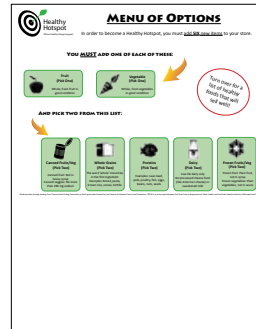
## Appendix 1: SMART Goal Setting



## Appendix 4: Adding Healthy Products



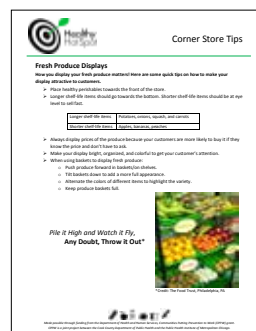
## Appendix 2: Initial Store Assessment Form



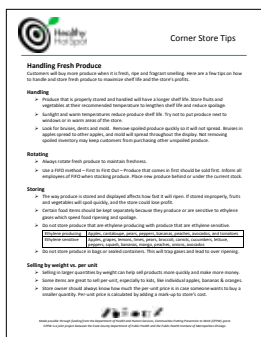
## Appendix 5: Menu of Healthy Food Options



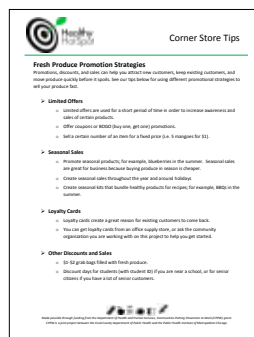
## Appendix 3: Store Recruitment Flyer



## Appendix 6: Produce Displays



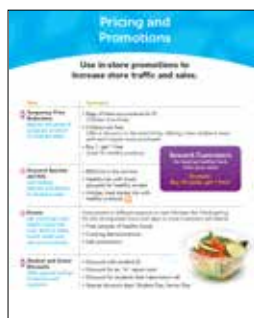
## Appendix 7: Handling Fresh Produce



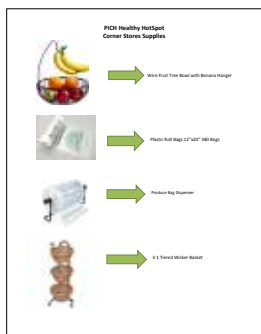
## Appendix 10: Promotion Strategies



## Appendix 7.1: Food Trust Buying and Handling Produce



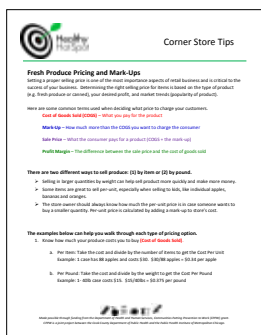
## Appendix 10.1: Food Trust Promotions



## Appendix 8: Store Equipment



## Appendix 11: Food Trust Ethylene Guide



## Appendix 9: Pricing Strategies



## Appendix 11.1: Food Trust Temperature Guide

**Healthy HotSpot** Seasonal Produce Guide

Use this list as a guide to buying fresh produce when it's most available and has higher quality.

Season	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Asparagus	Asparagus	Asparagus	Asparagus	Asparagus
Artichokes	Artichokes	Artichokes	Artichokes	Artichokes
Avocados	Avocados	Avocados	Avocados	Avocados
Bananas	Bananas	Bananas	Bananas	Bananas
Beets	Beets	Beets	Beets	Beets
Broccoli	Broccoli	Broccoli	Broccoli	Broccoli
Brussels Sprouts	Brussels Sprouts	Brussels Sprouts	Brussels Sprouts	Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage	Cabbage	Cabbage	Cabbage	Cabbage
Cauliflower	Cauliflower	Cauliflower	Cauliflower	Cauliflower
Chard	Chard	Chard	Chard	Chard
Cherry Tomatoes	Cherry Tomatoes	Cherry Tomatoes	Cherry Tomatoes	Cherry Tomatoes
Cilantro	Cilantro	Cilantro	Cilantro	Cilantro
Corn	Corn	Corn	Corn	Corn
Cucumbers	Cucumbers	Cucumbers	Cucumbers	Cucumbers
Eggplant	Eggplant	Eggplant	Eggplant	Eggplant
Fennel	Fennel	Fennel	Fennel	Fennel
Garlic	Garlic	Garlic	Garlic	Garlic
Green Beans	Green Beans	Green Beans	Green Beans	Green Beans
Green Peas	Green Peas	Green Peas	Green Peas	Green Peas
Kale	Kale	Kale	Kale	Kale
Leeks	Leeks	Leeks	Leeks	Leeks
Lentils	Lentils	Lentils	Lentils	Lentils
Mushrooms	Mushrooms	Mushrooms	Mushrooms	Mushrooms
Onions	Onions	Onions	Onions	Onions
Parsnips	Parsnips	Parsnips	Parsnips	Parsnips
Potatoes	Potatoes	Potatoes	Potatoes	Potatoes
Radishes	Radishes	Radishes	Radishes	Radishes
Spinach	Spinach	Spinach	Spinach	Spinach
Sweet Potatoes	Sweet Potatoes	Sweet Potatoes	Sweet Potatoes	Sweet Potatoes
Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Tomatoes	Tomatoes
Turnips	Turnips	Turnips	Turnips	Turnips
Winter Squash	Winter Squash	Winter Squash	Winter Squash	Winter Squash
Zucchini	Zucchini	Zucchini	Zucchini	Zucchini

## Appendix 12: Seasonal Produce Guide



## Appendix 14: Food Trust Indoor Environment



## Appendix 13: Food Trust Value Added Product Ideas



## Appendix 14.1: Food Trust Outside Environment



## Appendix 13.1: Food Trust Value Added Products