



Healthy Food Retail Implementation

A Community Guide to Improve Healthy Food Access in Neighborhood Corner Stores



Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods
at Case Western Reserve University

September 2018

WHO WE ARE

Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods: The Prevention Research Center for Healthy Neighborhoods (PRCHN) at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is a member of the CDC's national network of Prevention Research Centers, each with a distinct focus. The PRCHN at CWRU in Cleveland is focused on fostering 'partnerships with low-resource neighborhoods to develop, test and implement effective and sustainable strategies and interventions to prevent and reduce the burden of chronic disease. The PRCHN was able to leverage its existing focus and partnerships to lead the HEAL subcommittee's REACH work deliverables, necessarily and naturally incorporating HIP-Cuyahoga's collective impact and community engaged key approaches.

Health Improvement Partnership- Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga): HIP-Cuyahoga was formed to ensure that Cuyahoga County is a place where all residents live, work, learn, and play in safe, healthy, sustainable and prosperous communities. HIP-Cuyahoga is over 200 consortium members that are committed to tackling the most pressing health needs of the county through four radically different key approaches: collective impact, community engagement, health and equity in all policies and perspective transformation. The consortium focuses on these key approaches to move the needle in four subcommittee arenas: eliminating structural racism, linking clinic and public health, chronic disease management and healthy eating, active living.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Creating Greater Destinies



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INTRODUCTION

What's The Issue?

Access to fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and other healthy food is essential for eating habits which contribute to the prevention of chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. However, eating this nutritious diet and living a healthy lifestyle extends beyond choice in many communities. In disadvantaged neighborhoods, many residents find it difficult to obtain and purchase healthy foods at local stores due to disinvestment, population decline, and the resulting inequities.

The health of individuals residing in many urban and low-income communities is negatively impacted as a result of living far from a supermarket or full service grocery store. These geographical areas, referred to as 'food deserts', are areas in which healthy, affordable food is inadequate or non-existent and the distance to larger food establishments is beyond the means of many residents. When communities lack these amenities and have limited access to transportation, residents rely on neighborhood corner stores, fast food restaurants, or gas stations with fewer options. Although these businesses may provide shopping convenience, they usually do not carry fresh fruits or vegetables, but instead offer high-calorie, processed items for a quick snack or meal.



In Cuyahoga County, there is a disproportionate burden among the urban core characterized as low-income, resource-poor communities of color. A number of neighborhoods bordering the inner city suffer from food insecurity, as 1 in 2 Cleveland residents live in a food desert. Communities where redlining was a common practice of discriminatory loan refusal based on race and ethnicity has led to decades of systematic denial of financial, social, and health resources including the limitation of healthy food access. Such health inequity has resulted in shorter life expectancies and higher risk of chronic diseases. The *Good Food Here* Healthy Food Retail program in Cleveland is one of a series of initiatives focused exclusively on Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) to alleviate health disparities. By working within existing retail environments in cooperation with Cleveland residents, this initiative offers opportunities for healthier choices in our most vulnerable neighborhoods.

Why Healthy Food Retail in Corner Stores?

A healthy food retail initiative offers a community-based, grassroots approach to increasing access to healthy food in the existing retail environment and promoting the importance of healthy eating habits in neighborhoods where residents suffer from health disparities. Small corner stores can be the only shopping option for residents within these neighborhoods and sell everyday items ranging from food products, tobacco and alcohol to household commodities. Working with corner store owners to make a variety of healthy food options more accessible and marketable within these stores recognizes this unique food environment and a genuine respect for the community. Collaboration between store owners and residents to improve food security can strengthen relationships within the community while reducing health disparities.

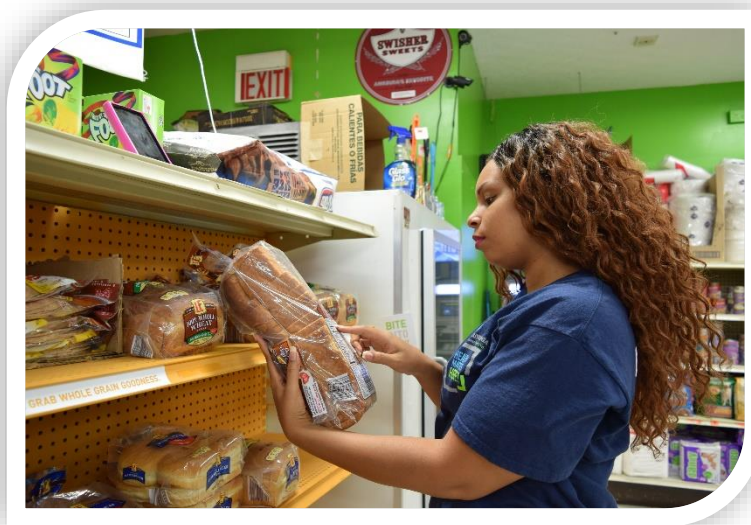
Projects that seek to increase healthy eating through food retail in communities with inadequate access can range from small-scale initiatives in just a few stores to statewide approaches targeting policymakers, grocers, farmers and community networks. These initiatives should be tailored to the specific needs of the community and may offer assistance with education, distribution, marketing, resident engagement, and collaboration. Whatever the scope, a healthy food retail initiative works to increase access to healthy food through a community-based approach within underserved neighborhoods.



The Cleveland Healthy Food Retail Initiative targets small/corner stores in low resource, urban neighborhoods in order to increase accessible and affordable fruits and vegetables and promote healthier lifestyles in the community through outreach and educational events. This initiative is characterized as being community based, resident driven, and community engaged at its core.

Who Should Use This Guide?

This toolkit serves as a framework for healthy corner store projects and can be modified to meet each community's unique identity and needs. The guide has been created to share lessons learned from the *Cleveland Good Food Here* initiative and the unique resident engaged approach that sustains this effort. Individuals and organizations who are passionate about increasing the availability of healthy foods in underserved neighborhoods in order to improve eating habits and reduce health disparities will find descriptions to assist in identifying, recruiting, and working with local retailers and residents. Those who might find the toolkit helpful might include: resident groups, community health workers, corner store owners, local community and economic development departments, nonprofits, service organizations or many others.



How to Use This Guide

This resource guide combines strategies, experiences, and lessons learned while providing available resources and helpful tools when working with owners of corner stores to increase their selection of healthy foods and engaging residents in the process. By incorporating community residents in all phases of a healthy food retail initiative, this guide offers a unique approach to promote healthy eating and increase access to healthy food through small/corner stores in a community.

Throughout this guide, you will find steps for planning, implementation, and sustainability of your resident guided initiative. We provide tools/resources that are necessary building blocks of your initiative and our personal experiences during the *Good Food Here* initiative in Cleveland. Every community may not be ready to utilize or implement everything in each section, but the toolkit offers helpful suggestions and guidance to create your own strategies and steps.

TOOLBOX

An orange box provides links to resources and tools we recommend for your use.

EXAMPLE

A green box provides an example or lesson learned from our healthy food retail program here in Cleveland.

PLANNING

Before getting started with your healthy food retail initiative, it is critical to understand the unique needs and characteristics of the community that you will serve and to establish a strategy that fits. In order to do this, helpful steps are conducting formative research, identifying a community network, and determining the priority stores in your community.

Formative Research

Helps to gather information about the retail environment and the needs of residents and store owners. What to use for your project depends on what you want to know, your resources, and how the information will be used.

Types of research could involve:



Retail Audits

Retail audits may have been a part of your formative research plan to become familiar with the retail environment in your geographical area and establish a needs assessment based on the gaps in healthy food access. These audits may be available through partners such as a health department or research institution. For example, a food retail audit is conducted annually in Cleveland, Ohio as part of the Neighborhood Environmental Assessment Project (NEAP). This audit has been an important resource for the *Good Food Here* initiative in determining need and identification of stores.

TOOLBOX

[NEAP Food Retail Inventory](#)

[Resident Focus Group Guide](#)

Resident Focus Groups

A few **example** questions are:

- “What does healthy eating mean to you?”
- “What would it take for you and your friends to buy more of your groceries at your neighborhood stores?”
- “Who are some of the leaders/small businesses/organizations in your community who could contribute to/support the healthy retail efforts in your neighborhood?”



These focus groups can be informal or formal. The responses from your participants will help inform the development of your initiative. It is critical to understand historical views, events, and community resources to help shape the program. Also, you may find residents who want to be a community champion for healthy food retail!

A key takeaway from conducting resident focus groups was the discovery of a sense of distrust felt toward store owners by residents. By uncovering this issue early in the process, relationship building and joint priorities were identified as essential for the success of the project.

“The owners in this area and some of our other areas, obviously they don’t care, so we need an organization, somebody to push to make them do it and to monitor them, ‘cause then once you leave that tracking system, they gonna’ go back to what they been doing. Putting old meats in the stores and they own family don’t shop there for food, but they want us to eat it.”

- Resident at a Union Miles Focus Group

Identify Community and Capacity

Developing strong partnerships can build trust for the initiative, inform community members, generate financial support and resources, increase impact, and ensure sustainability. Once your program is underway, this community network can promote your stores through local media, outreach activities, and educational events. Partners and stakeholders come from a diverse group of **community** members:



Your organization's **capacity** for the work necessary to make your initiative a success will depend on the partnerships formed in the planning phase. The intensity and scope of your program involves addressing the needed resources and staffing before you begin.

Individuals from your partnerships may serve varying roles in the implementation of the initiative and may be full-time staff, college interns, or resident leaders. Residents are the most powerful staffing option for your healthy retail initiative. Residents offer experience and expertise in the needs of their communities. They are the catalyst of conversation and engagement with store owners. Their key role is leading and sustaining the initiative and spreading the word to other residents and community members in their neighborhood.



An example of resident leaders are the Community Health Ambassadors CHA's that have informed the HIP-Cuyahoga REACH strategies over the past 4 years. These are residents from priority neighborhoods that provided input regarding safety, accessibility and community buy-in of potential healthy corner stores. Built into a 10-week health equity and leadership workshop, CHAs had the opportunity to work together and brainstorm around the opportunities, assets and challenges of their communities that could inform healthy retail. To learn more about the role of Community Health Ambassadors, please visit [here](#):

“Our futures, all of our wants, desires, our successes in life depends mostly on us being healthy enough to achieve or enjoy. It is the launching pad... We must connect the dots between health and some not always so obvious results of our unhealthy condition. It's our destinies we really want to change...”
~ Mark McClain, Community Health Ambassador

Identify and Recruit Stores

Identifying stores and their readiness are essential primary steps in your healthy food retail initiative. Proper screening of corner stores is crucial as these retailers provide the foundation for a successful project. The screening and recruitment process can be overwhelming, but with the proper tools and support, it can be achievable. Stores can be prioritized using formative research, but resident nominations and “ground-truthing” offer valuable perspective.

Resident Nominations

Nominations from residents and other community members provide the necessary first wave of identifying corner stores. Customers of small retailers are familiar with available



products and the store atmosphere. Some have developed strong ties with store owners through their own personal shopping habits. Including residents in this process is essential because they have a wealth of information to share and it builds on the value they already hold in their community. Nominations can come from formative research surveys and focus groups or from targeted community events or neighborhood meetings. For an example of the store nomination form, visit [here](#).

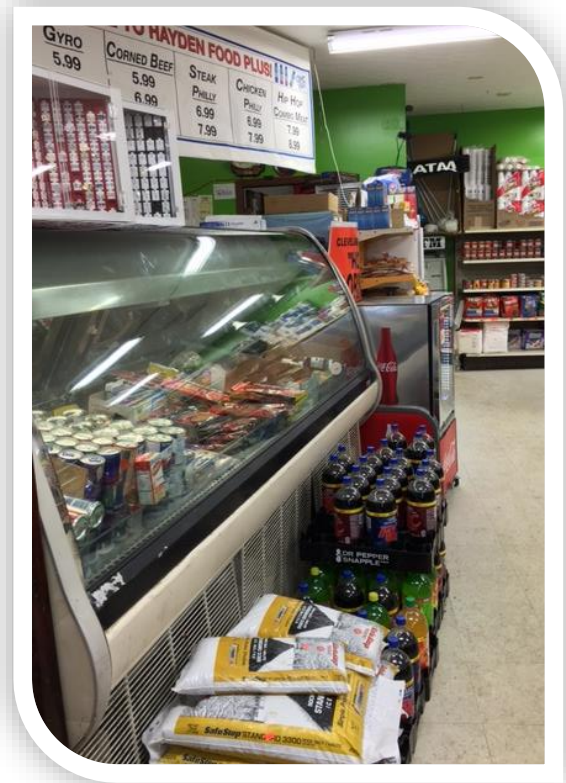
Retail Audits and Store Assessment

In order to prioritize stores for recruitment, “ground-truthing” can enrich your understanding of the food landscape. By travelling through neighborhoods to verify the location and existence of documented corner stores, this physical scan offers additional information about the stores that you would like to approach for your initiative. Important features may include the condition of the store, safety, and accessibility to other popular community locations.

Once you have confirmed your list of stores are operational, conduct “**gut checks**” which are instinctual evaluations of a potential corner store. Through this process, it is often possible to quickly assess whether a store is functioning and maintained at a level that would make it a good fit for a healthy retail initiative. For example, if you walk into a store that is poorly lit, only has one shelf with chips and candy, it may not be an appropriate store to recruit.

Engage with the Owner

When first approaching a store owner, provide the owner with a resource guide to inform them of local healthy food access issues, assistance available to them if they participate, and guidance/suggestions for moving forward. Be prepared with a survey or interview to gather information about the store, product offerings, and program expectations that will be useful to tailor specific needs and goals and to determine whether the owner has the potential to commit to the initiative. Developing a relationship of mutual trust is essential for the success of your initiative. Making key priorities to provide store owners with nutrition education, establish appropriate measures of success, and maintain clear communication will increase the chances of developing a healthier and well-informed neighborhood.



TOOLBOX

[Eat Right Ohio Store Owner Guide](#)

[GFH Store Owner Intake Form](#)

[Memorandum of Understanding](#)

After establishing interest and the potential for successful participation by a store owner, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) builds a strong partnership between corner stores and stakeholders and also holds everyone accountable. The MOU is a written shared agreement between corner stores and the partner organization to outline expected activities and responsibilities of both parties in a healthy food retail initiative.


An MOU should cover the following items for **stores to commit** to the well-being of neighborhoods by agreeing to:

- Stock produce and healthier options
- Display Good Food Here marketing materials
- Label and promote healthy items
- Maintain cleanliness of store

Additionally, the MOU should include language about how **your organization will support** corner stores by:

- Providing resources such as the *Good Food Here* posters, signs, and shelf talkers to help the store owner make improvements to inventory, merchandising, and layout
- Helping the store owner build stronger relationships with current and new customers
- Helping the store meet the project goals
- Promoting nutrition education classes

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)



HIP CUYAHOGA
Health Improvement Partnership

HEALTH MATTERS HERE!

This MOU outlines the activities that will be provided by the **Health Improvement Partnership-Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga)** in a supporting role to implement the **Good Food Here** program at _____ [STORE ADDRESS]. This MOU will be effective from _____ [Start Date].

HIP-Cuyahoga will work with [Store Name] to increase access to nutritious foods by offering more healthful options to consumers. This project will also engage [Store Name] customers, community residents, community-based organizations and local businesses in a set of strategies to increase healthy, affordable foods in [Neighborhood name].

_____ is committed to the well-being of _____ (neighborhood name) in which the store is located, and pledges to do the following with support from HIP-Cuyahoga:

- ✓ **Stock 6 new healthy products**
Fresh, canned and frozen fruits and vegetables; whole grain products; and low-fat/skim dairy options. Keep food fresh and food displays clean.
- ✓ **Display Good Food Here marketing materials and other materials provided by the HIP-Cuyahoga Network**
Create a shelf space for healthy options near the front of the store and hang posters and other materials promoting healthy eating
- ✓ **Label and promote healthy items**
Clearly display prices on products and use Good Food Here posters, signs and shelf talkers to encourage healthier eating
- ✓ **Adhere to high business standards**
Maintain food quality and offer competitive food prices; maintain store cleanliness; and adhere to laws regarding sales of tobacco and alcohol to minors
- ✓ **Participate in surveys, evaluations and interviews**
Allow program staff to do a quick walkthrough of the store, noting basic information about the store size, inventory and equipment; and an interview with the store owner

HIP-Cuyahoga will support _____ and community-wide efforts to increase access to healthy foods by:

- ✓ Providing resources such as the Good Food Here: store owner guide, posters, signs and shelf talkers to support sale of healthy foods in a profitable way
- ✓ Helping the store owner build stronger relationships with current and new customers by supporting in-store healthy food demonstrations, food tastings and nutrition education
- ✓ Store owner trainings and technical support
- ✓ Store publicity within local clinics and other community resources

The following parties pledge to uphold the standards listed above and will continue to collaborate with community members to make the neighborhood a healthier place to live.

The HIP-Cuyahoga team and the corner store owner each have the right to end this agreement. If the agreement is ended, the HIP-Cuyahoga team will discontinue engagement and/or repossess any materials provided.

[Store Owner's Name] [Date]

[HIP-Cuyahoga Coordinator's name] [Date]

ACTION

Now that you have planned for who will take part in your initiative, it's time to **take action!** As you work to increase healthy food access in your stores, you will need to collect baseline data, provide assistance with marketing and community outreach while retaining communication with store owners, and conduct regular store assessments. Store participation and progress must be continually evaluated in order to measure your success and disseminate findings to stakeholders and partners.

Getting Started

In order to measure the progress of your healthy food retail program, identify indicators based on your specific objectives and timeline.

These measures of success should have quantifiable outcomes such as:

- Number of stores participating
- Number of healthy items stocked
 - (i.e. fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, etc.)
- Types of marketing items in store
- Number of aisles or shelves
- Sale of Tobacco or Alcohol products
- Sales information

Gather Baseline Data

Once a store has agreed to participate, an in-store intake assessment and inventory should be conducted to record details prior to program implementation. By assessing the corner store's capacity to stock new products and by conducting an inventory of the current availability, accessibility, and quality of healthy food products, it's possible to determine what changes to focus on in each store. The action phase focuses on working towards change by tracking progress.

TOOLBOX

[Cleveland GFH Intake Assessment](#)

[Eat Right Ohio GFH Store Assessment](#)

[Cleveland GFH Healthy Food Inventory](#)



Develop an Implementation Strategy

Baseline data gives you information to tailor the project to your specific stores and community. Having a thorough understanding of food items that are offered at corner stores can guide the selection and introduction of new healthy options. Your strategy should include specific goals and expectations for each phase of your project with a specific timeline.

Additionally, identify incentives that corner store owners will receive when they participate in your initiative. Benefits are contingent on the amount of program funding and the size of your community network. Examples of incentives include: marketing materials, online exposure, community outreach, training and technical support, cash incentives, and equipment.

Here is our example of the Cleveland Good Food Here Implementation Phases:

Phase	Store Commitment	Incentives/Benefits	Timeline
1	Introduce 4 new healthy items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choose 2 new from fruits and vegetables category - Choose 2 new from any other category (dairy, wholegrains, meat/fish/poultry, packaged beans/nuts/fish, healthy snacks or beverages) 	Free marketing: Good Food Here in-store branding based on store program plan received at the completion of the first phase.	First month
2	Introduce 2 new healthy items <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain store availability of above 4 healthy items - Choose 2 new from above listed categories 	Free marketing: Additional Good Food Here materials for store interior Community outreach: Store promotion through neighborhood newsletters or similar channels	Second month
3	Healthy food identification campaign Guide customers towards making healthier food choices at point-of-purchase	Community outreach: In-store healthy food demonstrations, nutrition education and health screening organized by partners Robust social marketing: Active involvement by residents and local entities (church, schools, etc.) as well county-wide partners, listing on HIP-Cuyahoga website, United Way 211, neighboring clinics	After completion of phase 2
4	Store improvements	Through grant funds, potential items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cooler for perishable grab n go items ▪ Exterior signage 	After completion of phase 3

Remember that your implementation phase and timeline may differ for your healthy retail program as you incorporate local resources and priorities.

Integrate Residents

Integration of residents into your healthy retail initiative is crucial to the success and integrity of the project at every phase of implementation. These neighborhood leaders will drive your action steps! Store owners rely on local residents as customers: their presence as ambassadors is the most persuasive and powerful incentive possible.



Store Engagement

Store owners are responsible for maintaining inventory, displaying marketing materials, and adhering to high business standards while participating in the program. Regular communication between the program staff/resident partners and the store owners is crucial for developing the trust and cooperation necessary for success. Assessing progress and challenges can also minimize store owner burden.

Store Check-Ins

Interactions with the owners should be viewed as an ongoing conversation rather than as required inventory status checks.

Check-ins are an opportunity for:

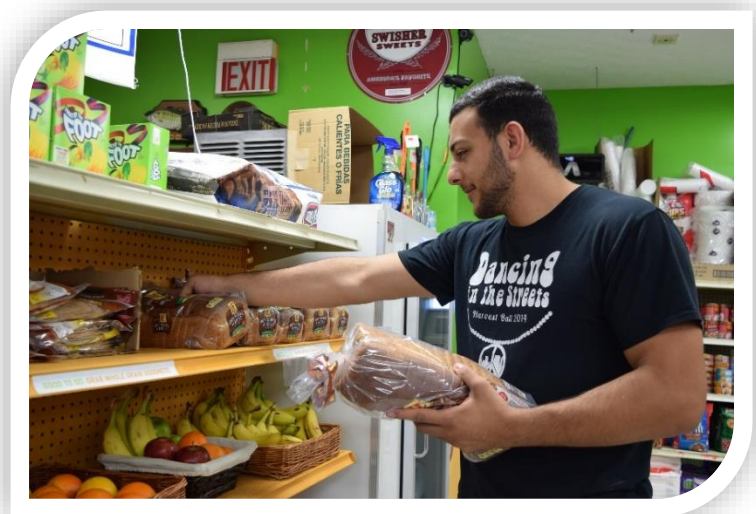
- Discuss owner preferences for which healthy products to carry and suggest new products
- Review information gathered from customer input
- Collect data with store assessment tool and determine phase progression
- Provide assistance with marketing materials
- Walk-through to make observations about improvements and monitor inventory
- Discuss outreach events to promote their new inventory to residents
- Refer owners back to the [Store Owner Guide](#) for any additional questions or support



Promotion and Marketing

Store owners may rely on your support and resources to promote their healthy retail options. Residents, other key staff and partners can provide assistance through marketing, and community outreach.

Rather than lengthy explanations and stock images, feature photos and messages from resident leaders and your local store owners that have the power to influence others within their community to improve their shopping and eating habits.



Marketing your initiative may involve a campaign outside of the stores and in the surrounding neighborhoods. A strong social media or radio presence can reach populations (i.e., partners and stakeholders) who are not directly impacted by limited food accessibility in the corner stores in order to bring attention and resources to the prevalent food access issues occurring around them.

In Cleveland, community health ambassadors were featured in posters to promote the Good Food Here initiative in local health care facilities, recreation centers, barber shops, salons, housing facilities, and offices. Additionally, signs were posted outside of the corner stores themselves.

We hosted a one-day photo shoot in a local store where multiple ambassadors and customers were included. Images were sent to the contracted marketing company and they created the design. It was very important that Cleveland stores, the owners, and residents were prioritized for this ad campaign over traditional stock images and models. For more information about our initiative and campaign strategies, please visit [here](#).



Additionally, stores that sign an MOU can receive a door-sticker to indicate that they are a part of your program. This helps the community recognize that the store is making healthy changes and the store owners to know they are part of a network.

You can also provide store owners with materials to promote items in the store. Place these signs at eye-level on coolers and shelves with healthy food items.



Here are some examples:



Community Outreach Events

Planning and hosting outreach events at the store engages the surrounding community and creates a space for resource sharing.

Planning for Your Event:

- Recruit resident leaders and Community Health Workers
- Coordinate time (date, number of hours) and space (table, tents, location) for your event with the store owner
- Visit the store prior to the event to assure healthy items are stocked and fresh
- Promote the event at the store and neighboring facilities (libraries, rec centers, health clinics)
- Suggest items to store owner that can be stocked for the event

Day of Event:

- Provide nutritional educational materials to promote healthy eating
 - Cookbooks
 - Handouts about specific topics such as low sodium or seasonal produce
 - Activities and games based on nutrition education
- Provide food demonstrations
 - Prepare and serve healthy dish using only store ingredients
 - Distribute recipe cards for residents to recreate dish
 - Offer coupons for healthy items
- Provide health screenings by Community Health Workers
 - Blood pressure and blood glucose readings
 - Connect residents to local health resources
- Conduct a [customer survey](#) and provide results back to store owner to help shape their store (see Appendix for example of the store owner report)

TOOLBOX

[Store Outreach Event Protocol & Checklist](#)

[Customer Survey](#)

[Example of Radio Station Partnership](#)



At Cleveland State University, a **Community Health Worker Certification Program** offers residents the opportunity to receive coursework and training to make a difference in the health of their community. Certified CHWs have assisted at *Good Food Here* outreach events in Cleveland neighborhoods by providing health screenings and nutrition education. This collaborative partnership has expanded the reach of the Good Food Here Initiative, as CHWs offer valuable expertise and provide health services to residents with limited care.

“The residents get health care without the barriers of money, insurance, or transportation at a familiar place they're used to going to. We bring quality health care to them at the corner store.” - Eileen Salters, CHW

Evaluating Progress

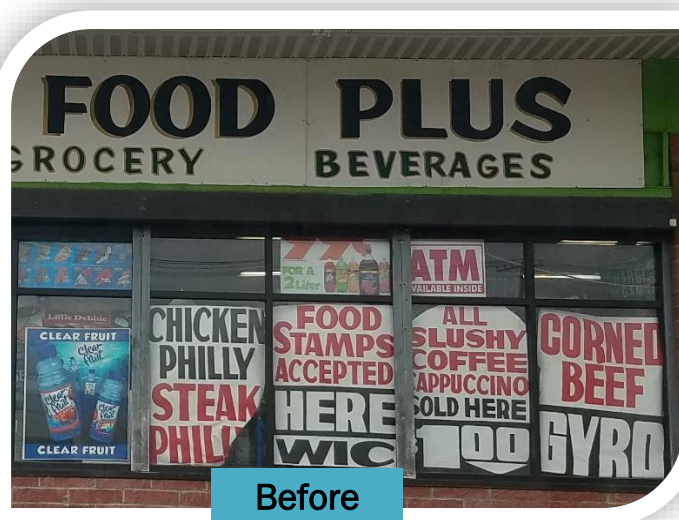
By comparing baseline data to information collected throughout implementation, it is possible to track change and report back to store owners. Systemizing data collection can improve the quality of feedback given to store owners. Barriers to success can be identified and store owners can be offered assistance to address these challenges. In addition to store owners, disseminate your findings to partners and stakeholders to move forward and work toward a sustainable future.

Store visits at regular intervals are necessary to evaluate progress by completing repeated **inventories and assessments**. The frequency of visits should be determined based on how often your stores bring in new stock and your staff capacity to collect data. Assessment of cleanliness, appearance, and marketing materials can be as important as analyzing data about inventory, sales and distribution.



Distribution of a **customer survey** to corner store patrons or passersby at outreach events is another way to collect feedback and evaluate progress. Survey items may pertain to the types of items purchased, the quantity and quality of healthy foods in a corner store, and the environment surrounding the store. Additional indicators may include the number of resident attendees or health assessments at **outreach events**.

Stores that do well in making inventory changes, may also want to change the outside of their store. There are store-front renovation grants available for large-scale changes, but also something simple like changing the store window displays can be an easy task for your organization and the owner.



Before



After

SUSTAINABILITY

The impact and reach of your healthy food retail initiative will depend on its sustainability in the neighborhood stores you have offered assistance during the course of your project and the potential of expansion into new stores.

Rely on resident leaders to sustain the initiative's progress and to continue offering support well after your program's funding ends. Provide resident leaders the resources, tools, and knowledge that will prepare and empower them to continue helping their community practice healthier eating.

What are the next steps for resident leaders?

- **Maintain contact** with corner store owners to cultivate strong relationships and offer ongoing support. Store owners may need to be reminded of their role as a partner in the health of their community and the importance of upholding changes after the official program comes to an end.
- **Create new contacts** to expand your community network. Seek out opportunities to form new connections with corner stores and between partners, stakeholders, and residents. (See Identify Community and Capacity in PLANNING for additional ideas)
- Connections among your community network will **engage additional support and resources** toward your common goal of sustaining healthy communities through access to healthy food. Recruit new stores to carry healthier items by connecting them to your network.
- **Continue to promote** store partners within your neighborhoods as locations to find healthy food options and **to provide education** to neighbors about the benefits of healthier eating choices.
- **Establish a resource list** of local produce distributors who can increase the quantity and improve the quality of fresh fruits and vegetables in the stores. This list may include local food businesses, urban farms, or other novel approaches.

Cleveland's own local food business **Fruitalicious** sells healthy fruit cups and yogurt parfaits at many small stores who are part of the *Good Food Here* initiative. Customers love the fresh fruit in an easy grab-and-go way! Store owners have reported that these fruit cups fly off the shelves, especially in the warmer months! Connecting local food entrepreneurs with corner store owners helps boost local economy and creates mutually beneficial relationships for all involved parties.



LESSONS LEARNED

Key takeaways from the Cleveland *Good Food Here* Healthy Food Retail Initiative:

Program needs are ever-changing

Project goals and indicators for success may evolve based on funding, resources, and circumstances.

Resident leaders and Community Health Workers amplify the voice of the neighborhood.

Community members view their neighborhood leaders as culturally relatable and advocates for their needs and interests. For example, they are instrumental in communicating resident demands for healthier food alternatives to corner store owners.

Store owner motivation is central to success.

When individuals are committed to building a healthier, happier community, they are more likely to introduce fresh produce and low-caloric items on their shelves, encourage patrons to shop healthier, and participate in other healthy food programs/events.

Establishing collaborations and partnerships is important for long-term sustainability.

Although time consuming, engaging a community network will allow your initiative to continue beyond its funding and time period.

Be creative with healthy food distribution in corner stores.

Involve local businesses and connect them with store owners so that both parties can gain popularity within the community and experience financial success. Creating ways for local businesses to work together is a crucial aspect of sustaining a healthy food retail initiative as a community driven partnership.

Have fun!

Remember that your program has the potential to bring healthy food into the community and improve the quality of life for large populations. However, attaining that goal requires patience, flexibility, and positivity.



APPENDIX

- Good Food Here Store Owner Interview
- Cleveland GFH Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- Cleveland GFH Healthy Food Inventory Form
- Store Outreach Event Protocol and Checklist
- Cleveland GFH Customer Survey
- Example of Customer Survey Feedback for Store Owners



Good Food Here Store Owner Interview

Date:	Interviewer:
Store Name:	Store Owner:

Basic Information

- Are you a resident of the community? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- How long have you owned or managed this store? _____ years _____ months
- How many employees do you have, not including yourself? _____
- Do you own or manage other stores? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, name/location: _____
- Do you accept SNAP/food stamps? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do you accept WIC? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have you ever had problems with either of these programs (SNAP or WIC)?
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

8. What is the makeup of your customer base? (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Speaks/understands limited English	<input type="checkbox"/> Families
<input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood residents	<input type="checkbox"/> Local workers/employees
<input type="checkbox"/> Seniors	<input type="checkbox"/> Commuters
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth/students	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe):

- Who shops at the store most frequently from the list above? _____
- About how many customers do you have on an average day? _____

Product Offerings

11. How do you decide what to sell in your store? _____

12. Who are your vendors? _____

13. What are the top three selling items in your store (food or non-food)?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

14. What are the top three selling **food** items in your store?

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

15. Have you tried to sell fresh produce items in the past? ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. Have your customers ever asked you to carry healthier foods? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which foods? _____

17. What, if any, challenges have you had carrying fresh produce? (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pricing	<input type="checkbox"/> Distributor does not offer produce
<input type="checkbox"/> Sourcing affordable produce	<input type="checkbox"/> Having adequate shelving/refrigeration
<input type="checkbox"/> Spoilage before it sells	<input type="checkbox"/> Distributor does not offer small enough quantities
<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

18. What makes it hard to carry more healthy foods in your store? _____

19. What healthier items are you interested in selling? _____

20. How can we help you to offer and sell healthier foods?

Assistance Opportunity	Comments (limitations, specific needs, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/> Signage	
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/infrastructure	
<input type="checkbox"/> Training opportunities	
<input type="checkbox"/> Working with community organizations	
<input type="checkbox"/> Store layout	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tracking/monitoring sales	
<input type="checkbox"/> Identifying produce vendors	

Program Expectations

21. What are you hoping to gain by participating in the program? _____

22. Would you be willing to reduce current in-store advertising on the items below?

a. Unhealthy snacks/candy/sugary drinks ☐ Yes ☐ No

b. Tobacco ☐ Yes ☐ No

c. Alcohol ☐ Yes ☐ No

23. Would you be willing to move unhealthy products to less visible locations in the store?

☐ Yes ☐ No

24. Do you have any additional comments or questions? _____

Thank you for your time!

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)



This MOU outlines the activities that will be provided by the **Health Improvement Partnership- Cuyahoga (HIP-Cuyahoga)** in a supporting role to implement the **Good Food Here program** at _____, _____ [STORE ADDRESS]. This MOU will be effective from _____ [Start Date].

HIP-Cuyahoga will work with [Store Name] to increase access to nutritious foods by offering more healthful options to consumers. This project will also engage [Store Name] customers, community residents, community-based organizations and local businesses in a set of strategies to increase healthy, affordable foods in [Neighborhood name].

_____ is committed to the well-being of _____ (neighborhood name) in which the store is located, and pledges to do the following with support from HIP-Cuyahoga:

✓ ***Stock 6 new healthy products***

Fresh, canned and frozen fruits and vegetables; whole grain products; and low-fat/skim dairy options. Keep food fresh and food displays clean.

✓ ***Display Good Food Here marketing materials and other materials provided by the HIP-Cuyahoga Network***

Create a shelf space for healthy options near the front of the store and hang posters and other materials promoting healthy eating

✓ ***Label and promote healthy items***

Clearly display prices on products and use Good Food Here posters, signs and shelf talkers to encourage healthier eating

✓ ***Adhere to high business standards***

Maintain food quality and offer competitive food prices; maintain store cleanliness; and adhere to laws regarding sales of tobacco and alcohol to minors

✓ ***Participate in surveys, evaluations and interviews***

Allow program staff to do a quick walkthrough of the store, noting basic information about the store size, inventory and equipment; and an interview with the store owner

HIP-Cuyahoga will support _____ and community-wide efforts to increase access to healthy foods by:

- ✓ Providing resources such as the Good Food Here: store owner guide, posters, signs and shelf talkers to support sale of healthy foods in a profitable way
- ✓ Helping the store owner build stronger relationships with current and new customers by supporting in-store healthy food demonstrations, food tastings and nutrition education
- ✓ Store owner trainings and technical support
- ✓ Store publicity within local clinics and other community resources

The following parties pledge to uphold the standards listed above and will continue to collaborate with community members to make the neighborhood a healthier place to live.

The HIP-Cuyahoga team and the corner store owner each have the right to end this agreement. If the agreement is ended, the HIP-Cuyahoga team will discontinue engagement and/or repossess any materials provided.

[Store Owner's Name] [Date]

[HIP-Cuyahoga Coordinator's name] [Date]

HEALTHY FOOD INVENTORY FORM

Evaluation (circle):	Baseline	Post phase 1	Post phase 2	Post phase 3
Store Name/Address:	Date of Inventory: Time (start-end):		Reviewer:	
Store phone number: ()	Community Ambassador contact name/phone:			
# aisles food/bev:	# aisles gen merch:			
Deli section: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – functional <input type="checkbox"/> Yes – non-functional <input type="checkbox"/> No	# exterior tobacco ads: # interior tobacco ads: # next to candy: # ads located below 3 feet:		Has ‘no tobacco to minor’ sign: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Fresh fruit varieties : ☐ apples ☐ bananas ☐ oranges ☐ other _____ ☐ other _____ ☐ other _____

Fresh veg varieties: ☐ lettuce ☐ potatoes ☐ onions ☐ tomatoes ☐ other _____ ☐ other _____

	Observed varieties (#)	In last 7 days (#)	Quantity (#)		New item added : specify NOT APPLICABLE AT BASELINE
Fresh Fruit			<10	≥ 10	
Fresh Vegetables			<10	≥ 10	
Canned Fruit (light syrup or 100% natural juice)			<10	≥ 10	
Canned vegetables (≤ 290mg sodium)			<10	≥ 10	
Frozen fruits or vegetables (fruits cannot have sugar and veg cannot be in sauce)			<10	≥ 10	
Fruit cups (no sugar added/ 100% juice/ light syrup)			<10	≥ 10	
Vegetable salad boxes			<10	≥ 10	

What, if any, fruit and veg items planning to add (list)?

DAIRY	Observed varieties (#)	In last 7 days (#)	Quantity (#)		New item added : specify NOT APPLICABLE AT BASELINE
Skim/Low-fat Milk (1% or 2%)			<10	≥ 10	
Yogurt			<10	≥ 10	
Cheese			<10	≥ 10	

What, if any, dairy items planning to add?

WHOLE GRAINS	Observed varieties (#)	In last 7 days (#)	Quantity (#)		New item added : specify NOT APPLICABLE AT BASELINE
Whole grain bread			<10	≥ 10	
Brown Rice			<10	≥ 10	
Whole grain pasta (≥ 2g fiber)			<10	≥ 10	
Oats			<10	≥ 10	
Cereal (≥2g fiber)			<10	≥ 10	
Other whole grain (eg.tortilla)			<10	≥ 10	

What, if any, whole grain items planning to add?

Packaged beans, nuts, fish	Observed varieties (#)	In last 7 days (#)	Quantity (#)	New item added : specify NOT APPLICABLE AT BASELINE
Lean cuts of beef or pork			<10 ≥ 10	
Poultry			<10 ≥ 10	
Fish (canned) (make a note if fresh)			<10 ≥ 10	
Eggs			<10 ≥ 10	
Dry beans or Peas			<10 ≥ 10	
Canned beans			<10 ≥ 10	
Canned meat (low sodium)			<10 ≥ 10	
What, if any, healthy proteins planning to add?				
Healthy Snacks	Observed varieties (#)	In last 7 days (#)	Quantity (#)	New item added : specify NOT APPLICABLE AT BASELINE
Dried fruit (no sugar added)			<10 ≥ 10	
Nuts and seeds (low sodium)			<10 ≥ 10	
Trail mix (low sodium)			<10 ≥ 10	
Granola bars (≤ 250 kcal)			<10 ≥ 10	
Baked chips			<10 ≥ 10	
What, if any, healthy snacks planning to add?				
Healthy beverages	Currently stock	Quantity (#)		
100% juice	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<10 ≥ 10		
Non-sugar sweetened beverage	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<10 ≥ 10		
Water (incl. calorie free flavored water)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<10 ≥ 10		
What, if any, healthy beverages planning to add?				
Cooking basics	Currently stock	Quantity (#)		
Spices (salt, pepper, clove, cinnamon, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<10 ≥ 10		
Oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<10 ≥ 10		
Broth	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<10 ≥ 10		

Were any healthy products you observed not on the inventory form or were there products you were unsure how to classify? If yes, list item and the observed varieties.

Describe the Good Food Here materials posted and incentives provided at this visit.

What, if any, extenuating circumstances are important to consider when interpreting this inventory? (eg., a cooler was broken):

Additional notes:

Tool instructions and definitions:

The coordinators use the tool to conduct store inventories based on the calendar. Count the varieties of healthful foods. Ensure that the foods meet the Healthful Inventory Guidelines. In case of complete absence of any item, ask store owner “In the last 7 days how many varieties of ___ did you stock”.

***Make comments on this form to note items and observations that are currently not listed on this tool.**

aisles food/bev & gen merch: 1 side of the store walkway shelving = 1 aisle. When walking down center of aisle, shelving on the right counts as a complete aisle, shelving on the left is another complete aisle.

Food/beverage aisles have only consumable items. General merchandise is other goods that can be bought, such as shampoos, soaps, school supplies, toilet paper, clothing, electronics etc.

Variety – Varieties give customers the choice of flavor, size, brand, etc.

Quantity – The number of units for sale across all varieties of a product type.

Example: A store has 6 bananas, 5 apples, 3 cans of peaches (no sugar added), & 11 loaves of wheat bread of 2 different brands:

Type	# varieties	quantity
1. Fresh Fruits	2	<10 <u>>=10</u>
2. Frozen Fruits or Vegetables (fruits cannot have sugar and vegetables cannot be in sauce)	0	<u><10</u> >=10
3. Canned Fruits	1	<u><10</u> >=10
4. Whole wheat bread	2	<10 <u>>=10</u>

Food categories:

Categories	Definitions
Fresh Fruits and Vegetables	“Fresh” refers to fruits and vegetables that are whole or cut, have not been processed and are in good condition (no spoilage)
Fruits and vegetables (frozen, canned, dried)	Canned or frozen fruits in 100% juice or light syrup, and vegetables with less than 230mg of sodium* (*USDA guideline for school snack 2010)
Dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Non-fat, skim or 1% low-fat milk foods such as milk, yogurt and cheese (except cream cheese)- Do not count processed items, such as American Cheese or any sweetened milk product
Whole grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Any food made from whole grain with whole grain listed as the first ingredient, and fiber >=2g- Wheat flour, enriched flour, and de-germinated cornmeal are not whole grains
Meat, fish, poultry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lean cuts of beef and pork and low-fat products such as fish, poultry and eggs
Packaged beans, nuts and fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No sodium added dry beans, canned fish, unsalted nuts & seeds- Low-sodium (less than 290mg) canned beans, canned fish, nuts, seeds
Healthy Snacks (require snacks meet any of the following criteria, per package)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ≤ 250kcal- “low sugar”: < 10g sugar<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fruit and vegetable products with no added sugar are exempt• Yogurt: no more than 30 grams sugar per 8 ounces- “low fat”: < 7g<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nuts, seeds, nut butters and cheese are exempt• Products containing nuts or nut butters are exempt- Saturated fat: < 2g<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nuts, seeds, nut butters and cheese are exempt- Trans-fat: 0 gram trans-fat- “low sodium”: < 200 mg<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cottage cheese: no more than 400mg- Fiber: >=2g fiber, if product is grain/potato-based (e.g. granola bars, crackers, pretzels, cookies, chips)
Beverages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No sugar added water, fat free or 1% low-fat milk

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% juice, vegetable juice (low sodium) diet drinks, low-fat flavored milk - Unsweetened teas
Spice vs. Condiment	A condiment involves some preparation on its own before using, like ketchup, relish, mustard or a special sauce. A spice is usually a single unprepared ingredient (e.g., nutmeg, cinnamon, clove, salt, pepper), but spices can also be made ahead as a mixture, like curry powder or chili powder.

Store Outreach protocol

3-4 weeks before:

1. Reach out to store owner to confirm participation and set a date
 - a. Is store owner willing to promote healthy items in their store?
 - i. Make a display?
 - ii. Offer coupons?
 - iii. Connect store owner to Fruitalicious
2. Reach out to Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Community Health Ambassadors (CHAs) to confirm participation for *any or all* of the following:
 - a. Health screening(s): blood draw, BP checks, glucose checks. BMI calculation
 - b. Good Food Here customer survey
 - c. Food demonstration
 - i. Make sure store will carry the items in the demo
 - d. Nutrition education materials/game
 - e. General health resource tabling/outreach
3. Create event flyer
 - a. Distro flyer to store/neighborhood
 - b. Distro e-flyer through web/social media/email networks

Day of event:

1. Locate, gather together and determine who will transport:
 - a. Table (PRC conference room closet)
 - b. Tent (PRC conference closet)
 - c. Chairs (PRC conference closet)
 - d. GFH surveys: clipboard, envelope to store surveys
 - e. Marketing materials (Good Food Here banner/ shelf labels for fresh foods/price tags + markers): in case some need to be replaced within the store
 - f. Sandwich board to advertise health screenings
 - g. Resources: flyers, hot cards (promoting HIP-Cuyahoga, CDSMP) cookbooks
 - h. Sign-up sheets/ participant tracking sheet
 - i. Food demo materials (if necessary)
2. Refer to checklist to make sure you have everything!
3. Set up 15/30 mins before appointed time
4. Tear down at appointed time and return everything to the PRCHN

Within the following week:

1. Fill out the 'Outreach event results' spreadsheet with details of the event
2. Enter GFH surveys into database
3. Create and deliver store owner event/GFH report to store owner

Set-up:

- ☐ 1 Tent
- ☐ 3 Tables + table cloths/covers
- ☐ 4 Chairs
- ☐ A-sign display + balloons
- ☐ Power extension cord (if needed)

Stationary:

- ☐ Name tag stickers
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Pens (for surveys)
- ☐ Plastic flyer table top with good food here sign

Information Material:

- ☐ HIP-Cuyahoga hot card
- ☐ CDSMP hot card
- ☐ Recipe for food demonstration
- ☐ Recipe books
- ☐ Good Food Here bags (1 box = 100 bags)

Marketing Materials:

- ☐ Good Food Here Banner
- ☐ Shelf talkers and labels and price tags in case they need to be replaced

Forms:

- ☐ Participant tally sheets for Nutrition Ed.
- ☐ Participant tally sheet for Health Screen
- ☐ Photo release form + clip board + pen
- ☐ Store owner vendor form
- ☐ 50 printed coupons*

Data collection tools:

- ☐ GFH surveys + clip board + pens

GOOD FOOD HERE CUSTOMER SURVEY

Date: _____ Store name: _____

1. How often do you or your family shop at this store?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ A few times a year
- ☐ Never

2. What do you buy most often from this store? _____

3. Have you bought fruits or vegetables from this store? YES____ NO____

4. Do you feel this store...

- a) Is safe? YES____ NO____
- b) Is clean? YES____ NO____
- c) Sells healthy food? YES____ NO____
- d) Sells affordable food? YES____ NO____

5. Would you like to see other healthy food options in this store?

YES____ NO____

If yes, what? (be specific brand/type)

6. Have you seen signage or materials with the *Good Food Here** logo in the store?

YES____ NO____

Please circle the response that best describes the food environment in your neighborhood. By neighborhood we mean the area within about a 20 minute walk or 1 mile distance from your home.

7. There is a large selection of fresh fruits and vegetables in my neighborhood.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

8. The fresh fruits and vegetables in my neighborhood are of high quality.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

9. Other healthy foods, such as low-fat milk, lean meats and whole grains are available in my neighborhood.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

10. Lack of access to food shopping is a problem in my neighborhood.

strongly agree agree neutral disagree strongly disagree

**Working with a local partnership Good Food Here stores voluntarily commit to stocking certain healthy food items (like fruits and vegetables) for purchase in order to make good food more available in the community.*

GOOD FOOD HERE CUSTOMER SURVEY

Demographics (optional)

Age: _____

Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Zip code: _____

Do you receive any of the following?

- ☐ WIC
- ☐ SNAP/Food stamps
- ☐ Produce Prescription vouchers from your doctor
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Which best describes you?

- ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black/African American
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Multi-racial
- ☐ White/Caucasian
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Thank you!



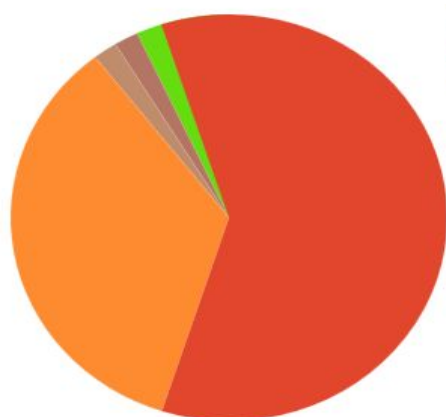
Event Feedback:

PARKWOOD DRIVE-THRU

Number of coupons redeemed: 37

Number of surveys: 59

How often do you or your family shop here?



■ Daily
■ Weekly
■ Monthly
■ A few times a year
■ Never

What Customers Want to See More of

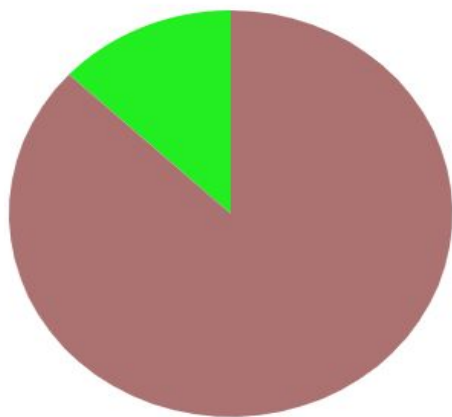
Fruits

Vegetables

Gluten-Free Items

85% of customers have seen the Good Food Here logo!

Would you like to see other healthy food options?



■ Yes
■ No

Summary of Event

Most attendees were daily shoppers at Parkwood who frequently bought junk food. Customers have purchased fruit and vegetable options, but believes there can be more healthy options, such as whole grains, lean meats, low-fat milk.

Suggestions

- Increase the quantity and variety of fruits and vegetables in the store (e.g., bringing in fruit and veggie cups)
- Advertise healthy options by strategically placing them on shelves closer to the front (e.g., register) and placing stickers on the fridge doors to raise customer awareness of food nutrition