

Making Good Nutrition More Accessible



HEALTHY FOODS HERE OF SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, CREATED A CORNER STORE PROJECT TO BRING HEALTHIER FOODS TO NEIGHBORHOODS EXPERIENCING POOR HEALTH OUTCOMES. THE PROJECT INCLUDED:

Community Mapping: Consultants at partner organization **Urban Food Link** used multiple sets of data to identify small grocery stores located in neighborhoods with poor health outcomes and far from large supermarkets. This information—in combination with referrals from community-based organizations—was used to target 61 stores for the program.

Technical Assistance to Promote Healthy Food Retail Sales: The initiative worked with stores to: increase the inventory of healthy foods and beverages, including culturally-preferred items; increase consumer demand for healthy foods; increase the number of stores authorized to accept WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program) payments; and develop new relationships between store owners and distributors to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Capacity Building for Small Grocery Stores: Assisted stores to update existing infrastructure, improve produce-handling practices, merchandize healthy foods, and increase their ability to obtain loans for equipment purchases and expansion.

MAJOR OUTCOMES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Provided technical assistance to 61 stores, 47 of which implemented store plans to improve methods of food handling and become authorized to accept WIC (Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program) checks for eligible purchases.

Of the 11 stores that sought out community-based lenders to expand their business, 8 secured loans totaling \$166,000. The ability of the lenders to provide no-interest loans compliant with Islamic Sharia law was vital for this portion of the program.

Three-quarters of participating stores adopted new health products, and increased the variety, affordability, and freshness of produce. Positive results also occurred with respect to increased consumer demand for healthy foods, increased authorizations for WIC, and improved relationships between store owners and distributors.

INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

“I think one of the things that really was a big learning for us in this project, and this is where I advocate that government, like a Public Health Department or Office of Economic Development, needs to help is that a lot of these people had never run businesses. They had done bookkeeping, but weren’t savvy on how to run a business. When we put them in touch with CDFIs (Community Development Financial Institutions) they didn’t have enough documentation for a loan. Through our business training, we helped bring them to the level to be eligible to apply for a loan, even if it was high-risk.”

—Dennis Worsham, Regional Health Officer, Public Health Seattle and King County

KEY PARTNERS

Community Development: Seattle Office of Economic Development; Rainier Valley Community Development Fund, Jump Start, Community Capital Development

Health: Public Health—Seattle and King County, Urban Food Link, Charlie’s Produce

POPULATIONS SERVED

The targeted geographic areas in southeast Seattle and south King County have large immigrant and refugee populations. Rates of poverty and obesity are higher among residents in the targeted areas than in King County as a whole.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/nutrition.aspx>

