# HEALTHY RETAIL ACCESS PROGRAM

## Healthy Retail Access Program Evaluation
### June 2022

CITY OF **MADISON**

Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON
COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

# Contents

# Acknowledgments

# Executive Summary

The City of Madison's Healthy Retail Access Program (HRAP) provides small grants to food retailers to improve access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate foods in low food access areas of the city.



The Program has four central goals:

- Increase healthy food access to low-income individuals and families
- Support food enterprise development and entrepreneurship
- Increase healthy food choice and improve health outcomes
- Increase culturally appropriate foods in identified Areas of Focus

This report highlights findings from a program evaluation conducted by a team at the University of Wisconsin - Madison Division of Extension Community Food Systems Program to (1) Understand what specific components of the Healthy Retail Access Program are most effective and why, (2) Understand how to improve the Program to maximize the City's return on investment, and (3) Develop staff evaluation capacity and evaluation tools to easily and consistently gauge the success of HRAP investments in the future. Data collection was comprised of a series of interviews with two recent grant recipients, over 50 customer intercept surveys, and a half dozen supplemental customer interviews.

## Key Findings

**This evaluation found ample evidence that the Healthy Retail Access Program is improving access to fresh, healthy and culturally relevant foods in low food access neighborhoods through capital investments in small-scale neighborhood markets.** Following are key findings from the evaluation project that demonstrate how the

Program is fulfilling its mission, and in some instances, yielding unexpected benefits.

## Application and Implementation Process

The evaluation identified many program strengths in both pre- and post-award phases including a flexible, supportive and participatory application process; informal links to other small business assistance providers; and post-award support and tailored technical assistance. A key theme underlying all aspects of the Program was the relational and needs-based approach to grant-making and implementation. This "high touch" approach and emphasis on individualization offers the following benefits:

- it allows store operators to apply their own skills and interests,
- it makes the program accessible to stores at different stages of development,
- it helps ensure that technical assistance addresses the specific needs of each applicant, and
- it allows for flexibility in response to potential barriers to successful implementation.

## Program Outcomes

We found evidence that the Program achieves all four of its goals through a mix of direct and indirect contributions including improving store infrastructure; ensuring that residents have access to markets with fresh, healthy foods near where they live and work; supporting neighborhood markets that provide wide selections of culturally significant foods; fostering microenterprise development through capacity building; and through indirect benefits such as increasing grant recipients' earned media attention and access to traditional capital.

## Neighborhood & Community Impact

Both customers and store operators indicated that healthy, culturally relevant, accessible food, while important, was not the only benefit neighborhood markets provide. For immigrants, ethnic neighborhood markets appear to not only be a source of culturally important products, but they also serve as trusted and welcoming cultural and linguistic spaces. In addition, these markets' commitment to serving their communities sometimes results in direct investments in resources and activities that benefit residents in their vicinity and contribute to neighborhood vitality more broadly.



**Based on the data we collected, we are confident that Healthy Retail Access Program funding increases access to healthy foods for low-income individuals and families, builds the capacity of retailers to operate successfully, and increases neighborhood access to healthy and culturally appropriate foods.**

## Recommendations & Opportunities

1. Increase percentage of total project award allocated to technical assistance
2. Make peer-to-peer mentorship a requirement for grant recipients
3. Identify the attributes of successful applicants and proposals in the Request for Proposals materials
4. Clarify and formalize the project evaluation process for Program participants
5. Allocate a percentage of each project award to evaluation
6. Improve Program sustainability by documenting and formalizing the program delivery model and role of the current program manager
7. Formalize and expand the Program's technical assistance network
8. Base funding eligibility on "business readiness" and offer both planning and implementation grants to serve a wider range of applicant needs

## Background

The City of Madison's Healthy Retail Access Program was created in 2014 by a workgroup of the Madison Food Policy Council with funding from the Capital Budget. The original intent of the Program was to "fund incentives to increase food access in underserved neighborhoods, with a focus on retail" by providing grants of up to $30,000 to small- and medium-sized, independent grocery retailers for

- **Pre-development funds:** Funds to support costs such as site selection, architectural fees, construction permits, and engaging with the community.
- **Training for small and medium sized retailers:** Funds for consulting on merchandising and marketing.
- **Funding for physical and equipment improvements:** These improvements should enhance the ability of small and medium sized retailers to gain customers and/or offer high quality produce and other healthy foods, such as expanding cooler space.

Anecdotal evidence has suggested that the Healthy Retail Access Program makes a difference for the neighborhood markets it funds and the residents they serve. However, limited in-house evaluation capacity has prevented the Program from conducting robust evaluations of its grant projects. In recent years, grant sizes have increased to better address the needs of Program applicants. This increased investment in individual markets prompted Program leadership to initiate a formal evaluation to un-



derstand the Program's impact at the project scale, inform overall program improvement, and maximize the City's return on investment.
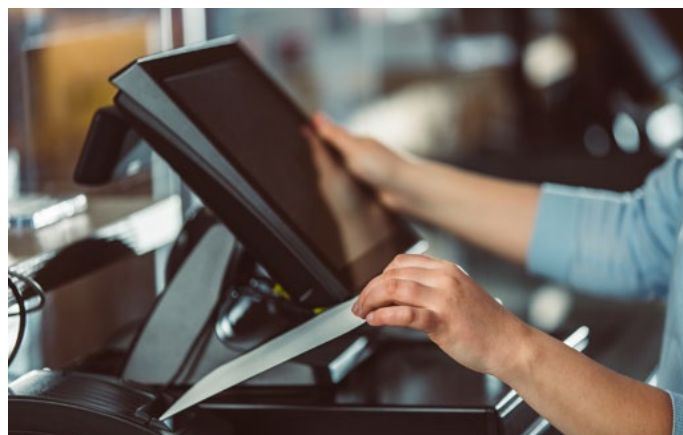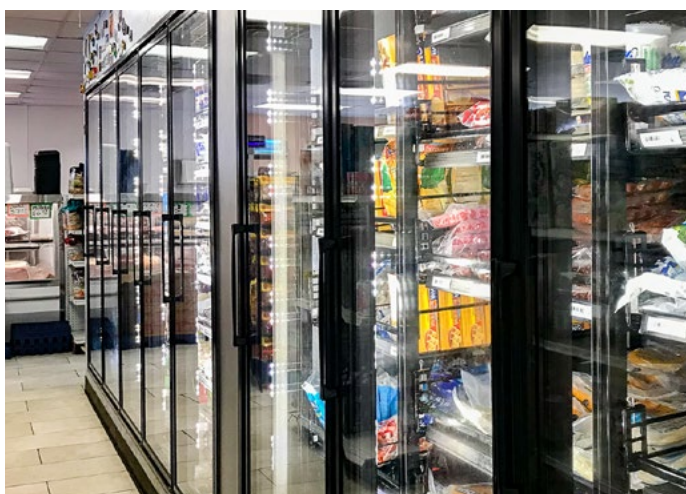
## Evaluation Design

In winter and spring 2021, the Healthy Retail Access Program (HRAP) manager reached out to the University of Wisconsin - Madison Division of Extension to discuss the Program's evaluation needs. With input from HRAP leadership, an evaluation team from the Division of Extension's Community Food Systems Program developed an evaluation plan based on the following questions:

1. What programmatic components, including the application process, staffing model, technical assistance, and other project implementation approaches are meeting the needs of store operators?
2. What program processes could be improved to better meet the needs of operators and other intended program goals?
3. To what extent is HRAP achieving its intended program goals?
   a. Increase healthy food access to low-income individuals and families.
   b. Support food enterprise development and entrepreneurship.
   c. Increase healthy food choice and improve healthy outcomes.
   d. Increase culturally appropriate foods in identified Areas of Focus.
4. How does support to these businesses impact other aspects of the neighborhoods in which they operate?

To answer these questions, the evaluation team examined two distinct recent HRAP projects. One was a new neighborhood market in a low-food access area that serves a largely Latinx clientele. The other project was a renovation at a store with an emphasis on HMoob and other Asian food products. Both stores are owned and operated by individuals from the communities they serve.



Methodologically, the evaluation consisted of three components: (1) interviews with store operators, (2) customer intercept surveys, and (3) supplemental customer interviews. Store operator interviews were conducted in two phases. The first interviews focused on operators' experiences and perceptions of the Program's outreach, application, and implementation processes to identify programmatic opportunities and weaknesses. The second interviews focused on program impact. The customer intercept survey component included over 50 surveys total with approximately 25 respondents from each store. The surveys were administered by native English, Spanish and HMoob speakers and customers had the opportunity to respond in their preferred language. Supplemental interviews were conducted with 5 customers at one store to increase the representation of non-English speaking clientele due to under-representation of that population in the intercept survey data. Because of a lack of baseline data collection, the evaluation team did not examine pre- and post- award financial data from the participating stores. As noted in the Recommendations Section, we advise the Program to systematically collect baseline data for future projects so that economic impact can be tracked at the project level. A more detailed description of the evaluation design, methodology, and survey and interview protocols can be found in the Appendices.

This report is comprised of three major sections. Section 1 focuses on the Healthy Retail Access Program's grantmaking and implementation *process*. Section 2 addresses the Program's *outcomes*. And Section 3 discusses indirect Program impacts with an emphasis on neighborhood and community benefits. The appendices include the following: Overview of Evaluation Design; Baseline Documentation Template; Customer Intercept Surveys – English, Spanish, HMoob; Sample Store Operator Interview Protocols 1 *&* 2.

# Findings

# Program Operations

Section 1 draws on in-depth interviews conducted with two neighborhood market operators who received HRAP funding between 2018 and 2020. It largely focuses on what is working well in the Program and closes with a summary of recommendations by program participants, which are expanded upon in the *Opportunities & Recommendations* Section.

The evaluation identified many program strengths in both pre- and post-award phases including supportive application and implementation processes. A key strength underlying all aspects of the Program was the relational and needs-based approach to grant-making and implementation. The evaluation team found evidence of a "high touch" approach, meaning that staff were attentive to the specific needs of different applicants, were flexible in the application deadlines, and tailored support to meet the unique needs of each store.
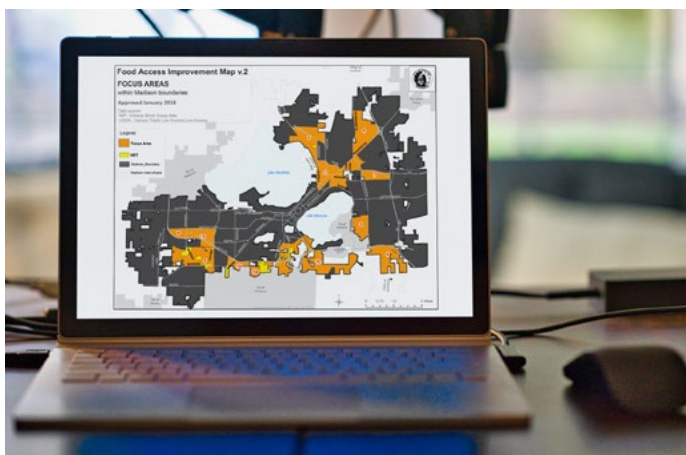


Following is a summary of each of the major program strengths, which include a flexible, supportive and participatory application process; informal links to other small business assistance providers; and post-award support and tailored technical assistance.

## Flexible, supportive & participatory application process

The evaluation team found that the application process was a significant program strength. Both grant recipients interviewed described the process as a positive experience. Strengths of the application process include a rolling

application deadline; access to the program manager throughout the application process; and high levels of direct support, communication, and assistance. Additionally, grant recipients noted that a network of organizational connections (e.g, the Latino Chamber of Commerce and the Northside Planning Council) also provided referrals and assistance.

Store operators described themselves as busy and having many time-sensitive responsibilities. The rolling deadline made it convenient for them to complete the application as their schedules allowed. This was especially helpful for one store operator who had not previously applied for grant funding. As she explained: "the process itself actually was very easy. There was not a big deadline where you had to rush everything. You had a pretty big window, which was really great, especially because it was our first grant application."

> "That human investment, is what makes this program what it is."
>
> – HRAP grant recipient

In both interviews, it was evident that the store operators felt very supported by the program manager throughout the application process. In both cases, application development was iterative and took several months. Ongoing communication between the program manager and the applicants resulted in a clearer shared understanding of HRAP goals and criteria and helped ensure that the applicants' proposals aligned with Program goals.

For example, one grant recipient described the process as follows: "We [would] send [the program manager] the application: 'Look, this is what I have. What do you think?' And he would read it and then tell me, 'Maybe you should on work this'." Grant recipients also noted that the

program manager regularly fielded questions: "If I didn't understand, I would basically just shoot [the program manager] an email or call him and ... say, 'Hey, what does this mean?' And he was very helpful in explaining what I needed and what they were asking for."

> **"[The program manager] helped us out. He answered a lot of questions. He was very patient when trying to get information back from us on filling out the forms."**
>
> – HRAP grant recipient

One grant recipient also shared that the application process helped her articulate her goals for the project while allaying her concerns about the grant funding coming with too many strings attached. As she explained: "My fear was, if I ask for money, are they going to want to tell me what to do with it? So, for me, it was really important



to put down on paper what I wanted, and then see if [my priorities] aligned with the criteria of the program." In short, the interactive application process facilitated alignment between store operators' priorities and those of the Program while building trust between the applicants and the program manager. In this way – by creating space for open communication and cultivating trust between the City and small business owners – the Program may have longer term implications for government, small business, and even community relations.

## Informal links to other small business assistance providers

Interviews indicated that a network of informal organizational connections support the promotion, application, and implementation of the Program. Both of the store op-

erators interviewed for the evaluation were referred to the Program through professional connections. As one grant recipient explained: "We didn't even know that HRAP existed. So it was helpful to know people who knew about it and could pass on info to us."

> **"So I reached out to the Latino chamber. I told [the director] about the [grocery store] idea I wanted to do in the Allied Neighborhood, and she mentioned some funding for grocery stores. And then she said, 'I'm gonna put you in contact with them.'"**
>
> – HRAP grant recipient describing how they learned about the Program.

This word-of-mouth program promotion appears to help the City identify applicants that are a good fit for the Program based on their store locations, product offerings, and customer bases. In at least one case, a store operators' informal collaboration with assistance providers continued beyond the referral phase and resulted in pro bono assistance with the application and implementation process. As such, the interviews demonstrated that HRAP does not act independent from a landscape of existing small business assistance providers and invested community members but instead benefits from an existing network of professional relationships. Moreover, grant recipients seemed to experience this support as seamless and their descriptions of the Program sometimes included references to partners or technical assistance providers who were not formally involved in the Program but played important supportive roles, nonetheless.

> "I know the only reason that we got …
> a large amount for our first grant was that
> we had a lot of people fighting for us.
> We had a lot of people advocating for us.
> We had Martee. We have Abha. We had
> Laurie, Laurie Lee from the Northside
> newspaper. We had George. Just we had
> a lot of people who were on our side."
>
> – HRAP grant recipient

## Post-award support & tailored technical assistance

Interviews with grant recipients and informal conversations with the program manager show that the Program's implementation strengths include the City's investment via funding and staff time, flexibility and individualization through case-specific implementation, and effective collaboration with informal partners.

As with the application process, the program manager's approach to implementation was high-touch and characterized by high levels of communication between the program manager and grant recipients with support from other partners and small business assistance providers as needed. In one case, this ongoing involvement by the program manager led to the identification of some store management issues that surfaced only after the store received HRAP funds. With additional assistance from the Program, the store operator gained access to training and software that led to crucial improvements to the store's inventory and accounting systems.

> "[HRAP staff], they just don't invest like the money. They also invest themself in every project. So, if something goes wrong, they get worried. And that's amazing. Because it helps when people care."
>
> – HRAP grant recipient

The evaluation team noted several outcomes that resulted from the individualized assistance provided by City staff and partners, all of which suggest that HRAP's approach is effective at achieving its intended goal of supporting food enterprise development and entrepreneurship. For example, project individualization …

- allows store operators to apply their own skills and interests
- makes the program accessible to stores at different stages of development
- helps ensure that technical assistance addresses the specific needs of each applicant
- allows for flexibility in response to potential barriers to successful implementation.

The *Opportunities & Recommendations* section of the report identifies ways that the Program could build on these strengths.

## Opportunities for Program Improvement

Overall, the grant recipients described HRAP as a supportive and well-operated City resource that significantly helped them improve or initiate their business operations[*]. Despite their positive assessments of the Program, they did offer several suggestions for Program improvement based on their experiences. These recommendations, which are discussed at length in the Opportunities *&* Recommendations section of this report, include:

- Increasing percentage of total award allocated to technical assistance
- Requiring grant recipients to serve as peer mentors for future Program participants
- Clarifying and formalizing the project evaluation process
- Identifying the attributes of a successful applicant *&* proposal in the RFP materials

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[*] The store operators' lack of criticism about the program may also result from being direct beneficiaries of the Program. However, the grant recipients who participated in this evaluation were not contractually obligated to participate, and the interviews were conducted with independent evaluators and not in the presence of program staff. These factors increase the likelihood of authentic feedback.

    Program Operations

# Program Outcomes

This section draws on data from in-depth interviews with store operators, over 50 customer intercept surveys (collected in English, Spanish, and HMoob), and a half dozen supplemental customer interviews to highlight key programmatic outcomes. In short, the evidence indicates that the Program is advancing all four of its goals:

- Increase healthy food access to low-income individuals and families
- Support food enterprise development and entrepreneurship
- Increase healthy food choice and improving health outcomes
- Increase culturally appropriate foods in identified Areas of Focus

The Program achieves these goals in both direct and indirect ways including by improving store infrastructure; ensuring that residents have access to markets with fresh, healthy foods near where they live and work; supporting neighborhood markets that provide wide selections of culturally significant foods; fostering microenterprise development through capacity building; and through indirect benefits such as increasing grant recipients' earned media attention and access to traditional capital.

## Improving store infrastructure

The Program gives participating retailers access to capital and technical assistance that helps these businesses acquire the cold storage they need to offer affordable healthy food choices in neighborhoods with limited food access. As one of the grant recipients explained: "HRAP funding is directly responsible for all our daily produce and vegetables. Let me tell you why. With some of the funding that I got from them I was able to purchase the walk-in cooler and the produce refrigerator … having a walk-in cooler [means] that I can hold food for at least two weeks at a time. It has definitely impacted the quality and the availability of the produce [at my store]."

> "[With HRAP funding], I was able to purchase the walk-in cooler and the produce refrigerator … having a walk-in cooler [means] that I can hold food for at least two weeks at a time. It has definitely impacted the quality and the availability of the produce [at my store]."
>
> – HRAP grant recipient

The Program's direct capital investment in store infrastructure also contributes to the Program's small business development objectives by making it possible for these enterprises to finance upgrades that have a positive impact on customers. For example, another grant recipient used funding for critical improvements such as an improved ceiling, new lighting, new shelving, new coolers and freezers, a new kitchen allowing for sale of hot ready-made foods, and improvements and additions to the bathroom facilities.

> "[The store] is a lot more airy and a lot more bright. These things are important to me because it makes it feel like I am supporting a business that supports the community and you're able to build relationships with the people who work here, just from seeing them on a weekly basis or so. And the renovations have made it seem much more welcoming and not so dark."
>
> – Neighborhood market customer

The importance of these improvements can't be overstated. Customer survey and interview responses underscore the impact of the renovation on customers' perception of the store's cleanliness, organization, and overall appearance. The following quote captures a common sentiment: "It looks cleaner, fresh, more welcoming and easier to access stuff." Other customers noted that they enjoy the new hot bar that sells freshly made HMoob foods: "I love that there is a hot deli that sells many food items I am familiar with. It's nice to be able to do a quick drop by and be able to purchase a hot meal."

## Ensuring that residents have access to markets with fresh, healthy foods near where they live and work

Frequency of individual shopping trips can serve as an indicator of ease of access to a given market. According to our survey results, nearly 70% of respondents said they shopped at an HRAP-funded location daily (18.2%) or weekly (50.9%). In fact, respondents indicated that store proximity to their home (76%) or work (16.4%) was a primary reason for frequenting these stores. Additionally, nearly 50% of the survey respondents at the south side store noted that they are FoodShare recipients.[*] Together, these findings show that these markets are indeed serving individuals who live and/or work in Madison's low food access areas, including low-income households.

> "I wanted [a store] that has … a healthy impact in the neighborhood. So even if it's small, we have vegetables and fruits, meat, things that people can prepare meals with."
>
> – HRAP grant recipient

Customers were also asked to identify what products they most commonly purchased at the market. Across the two markets, the top four product categories in descending order were meats (54%) such as pork, fish, sardines, HMoob sausage, chicken, shrimp, lamb, and frozen meats; vegetables (42%) such as beans, yams, canned/frozen vegetables, and other fresh vegetables; fruits (35%) such as plantains, Asian fruits, and papaya; and grain products (35%) such as noodles, rice, rice noodles, bakery goods, tortillas, and tostadas. While items such as beverages

and candy were also listed on the survey, the demand for these products was much lower.

> "[Before this store opened], sometimes I wanted to buy something but had to wait until the weekend."
>
> – Neighborhood market customer

## HRAP-Supported businesses are important sources of culturally significant foods

As evidenced by some of the products listed above, both stores offer a variety of culturally relevant foods ranging from specific fruits and vegetables to spices and dry goods. Nearly 90% of respondents reported that they bought "ingredients important to their culture" at these stores, and over 70% of survey respondents stated that they shop at these stores expressly because they carry culturally important products. In explaining why these stores are important to them, customers named a myriad of specific products they carry that are difficult to find elsewhere. Several customers also made remarks about the importance of these stores to specific immigrant populations in Madison, such as "[It's] good for the Hispanic community to have Hispanic products" and "It's very helpful, very helpful to minority groups, and it almost kinda takes you back home."

> Both stores were able to increase their culturally relevant food offerings as a direct result of receiving Program funding.

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[*] FoodShare participation was lower at the North Side store.

Although the two stores featured in this evaluation focus on HMoob/Asian and Latin American products, respectively, both store operators noted demand for other ethnic foods as well, notably West African and South Asian. Interviews with store operators revealed that both stores were able to increase their culturally relevant food offerings as a direct result of receiving Program funding. Increased cooler space was particularly significant in this regard. As one store operator explained: "The biggest impact that HRAP has had is on our fresh produce offerings. And those produce are customized to my customer base."

> "The biggest impact that HRAP has had is on our fresh produce offerings. And those produce are customized to my customer base."
>
> – HRAP grant recipient

For the other store, HRAP funding enabled the manager to offer a wider range of international products: "I have been able to expand on my Asian [food products]. I've been working my way into Filipino [products] and expanding on my Japanese and my Korean [offerings]. I did



finally manage to bring in some Indian and some Mexican items. African, I've managed to expand on that also." Customer surveys indicated that the expanded inventory was appreciated. As one customer explained: "It's made it more welcoming to the community as a whole, not just one specific ethnicity."

In addition to expanding its international food product offerings, one of the stores added a deli and hot bar during its Program-funded renovation. Many customers described this as a valued source of prepared HMoob foods. In sum, these community markets serve a key role in ensuring access to culturally important foods for local residents.

## HRAP funding and implementation support helps foster entrepreneurship and overall business sustainability

The Program provides direct and indirect small business development support, such as funding and technical assistance, to participating market operators through its Office of Business Resources and through formal and informal arrangements with contractors and partners. For example, in the case of the new neighborhood market, the City provided a feasibility study that enabled an HRAP grant recipient to right size her store, understand the needs of the neighborhood, and adjust the branding of her store to meet neighborhood expectations.

In another instance, Program funding contributed to store expansion, which led to an increase in sales on the one hand, but strained preexisting bookkeeping and inventory systems on the other. In this case, the Program issued a subsequent grant to provide both accounting and management training for the store operator as well as an upgrade to the point of sale (POS) system, which allowed for improved inventory tracking. This assistance proved to be critical in helping the store navigate growing pains and likely contributed to the store's success by equipping store management with the software and skills necessary to make data-based decisions about inventory.

## Earned media attention and improved access to other sources of capital

Grant recipients noted that Program funding stimulated positive earned media attention and increased their access to other funding sources. For example, as one grant recipient explained, "We had our grand reopening, we had local news, we had newspapers, lots of people came and interviewed us on how we evolved and developed and redid our remodel and everything." She later noted that as a result of the media attention, they were contacted by Dane Buy Local, a local association of independent businesses that wanted to support the store because they "liked the idea [of] a small grocery store … [that's] trying to bring all these ethnic people together." As these quotes illustrate, earned media can be a major benefit to businesses that cannot afford much paid media because it raises their profile and can serve as an informal way to build credibility.

# Neighborhood and Community Impacts

While neighborhood and community impacts were a tertiary focus of this evaluation, we included this component with the aim of identifying some of the indirect benefits associated with neighborhood markets. Customer survey and interview data revealed that these businesses are an important community resource for a variety of reasons. These exploratory findings have the potential to inform future program refinement and evaluation by highlighting some of the Program's "non-food" impacts.

First, customer surveys indicated that food was not the only factor driving customers to these stores. As one customer noted, their neighborhood market mattered because it was "good for feeding the Latino community [and] good that they speak Spanish." In fact, due to the high percentage of Spanish-speaking clientele, the evaluation team hired a native Spanish speaker part way through the project to conduct customer intercept surveys in Spanish so that customers could participate in the evaluation in their preferred language. Ultimately, 90% of the survey respondents at the South Side store chose to complete the survey in Spanish. It was also clear that it mattered to customers that the store was staffed and operated by native Spanish speakers. Specifically, customers reported that this made the store feel like a familiar and welcoming place. In other words, the provision of culturally relevant products alone would not create the same draw.

Second, interviews with store operators demonstrated



that the community benefits that they provide are far from accidental. As one grant recipient explained, "So it's things that we notice that we need at [our store], and then we reach out to people in the community that are doing those services. And usually, they respond very positively to it." Such efforts have resulted in the creation of a bike repair station at the store, a workspace with free internet and charging outlets, a Christmas toy drive, voter registration, and a summer block party.



Finally, both stores served as pop-up Covid-19 vaccination sites. One grant recipient explained why some customers might feel more comfortable getting vaccinated at the store than through a more traditional clinical site: "We're a HMoob store, like [HMoob customers] will be more comfortable coming to us because they know my parents, they can come in and they might find a familiar face in the store that will make them feel calmer … to come and get a vaccine." Customers agreed that having vaccinations at community stores was important. As one customer explained: "There are some people who aren't here legally and some who aren't comfortable going to a clinic or other setting that would prefer to come here."

In summary, both customers and store operators signaled that healthy, culturally relevant, accessible food, while important, was not the only benefit neighborhood markets provide. For immigrants, ethnic neighborhood markets appear to not only be a source of culturally important products, but they also serve as trusted and welcoming cultural and linguistic spaces. In addition, these markets' commitment to serving their communities sometimes results in direct investments in resources and activities that benefit residents in their vicinity and contribute to neighborhood vitality more broadly.

# Opportunities & Recommendations

This evaluation found ample evidence that the Healthy Retail Access Program is improving access to fresh, healthy and culturally relevant foods in low food access neighborhoods through capital investments in small-scale neighborhood markets.

Nevertheless, we have identified several opportunities for program improvement based on the strengths and challenges that were identified over the course of the evaluation. The first four recommendations described below were made by past Program participants while the others were identified by the evaluation team with input from the program manager.

## 1. Increase percentage of total project award allocated to technical assistance

As noted throughout this report, technical assistance makes a significant difference for Program participants. For example, the operator of a new grocery store mentioned that a City-funded grocery feasibility study was particularly helpful in developing her business plan. She



noted that having experts conduct the study likely resulted in a better quality study than a small business owner could produce on their own. As an investor in the project, the City also arguably benefits from a project based on a sound feasibility study. Whether in the form of a market feasibility study, assistance developing a pro forma,



or expertise selecting the right size and type of kitchen equipment, technical assistance can play a huge role in the success of a project.

Conversely, the absence of timely technical assistance can result in missteps. Both store operators offered a few examples of mistakes they might have avoided e.g., purchasing the wrong ratio of freezers to refrigerated coolers, with some additional consultation or training. In addition, the evaluation team found that HRAP investments in store expansion can have unintended effects on other aspects of store operations. Each project's technical assistance budget could be used for grant recipients to meet with technical assistance providers to ensure that store operations are set up for success as the grant moves into the implementation phase. As such, we recommend that a percentage of each project award be allocated to technical assistance so that grant recipients can consult with experts or receive training prior to store build outs, renovations, and/or software and equipment purchases.

## 2. Make peer-to-peer mentorship a requirement for grant recipients

One of the grant recipients suggested making participation in a "mentorship program as a required component" of the Program. Specifically, she suggested that grant recipients be required to provide 10 hours of time to mentoring future grant recipients. Given the success of peer-to-peer mentoring in other fields, this may be a fruitful way to build a network of store operators in addition to facilitating mentoring and information sharing between program participants.

### 3. Identify the attributes of successful applicants and proposals in the RFP materials

Many grocery operators have little experience applying for grant funding, which contributes to the Program's lengthy application process. One grant recipient thought that it would be useful for the Program to provide a rubric or short handout summarizing what makes a strong applicant with regard to location/neighborhood characteristics, demonstrated need, current financials, and other factors. In her perception, this could reduce some of the guess work involved in developing a competitive application.

### 4. Clarify and formalize the project evaluation process for Program participants

Program participants also recommended that the Program develop a formal evaluation process so that grant recipients know what to expect regarding data collection. Towards this end, contracts between the City and grant recipients could clarify the Program's expectations about what types of data (e.g., sales, revenues) would be collected from program participants and at what intervals. If evaluation is written into the contract, it may be worthwhile to allocate a fixed percentage of each project budget to evaluation to ensure baseline and summative evaluation data are collected for each project, see Recommendation #5.



### 5. Allocate a percentage of each project award to evaluation

Evaluation is crucial for showing Program and project-level impacts and informing continuous improvement. Due to limited staff capacity, HRAP has historically prioritized implementation over evaluation. However, as the Pro-

gram's average grant sizes have grown, it has become more important to understand and demonstrate impact. Minimally, we recommend that the Program collects baseline sales and revenue data, conducts photo documentation of store interiors and exteriors, as well as customer perception surveys. Allocating a percentage of each project award to evaluation will enable the Program to outsource evaluation if it does not have the in-house capacity necessary to conduct it.



### 6. Improve Program sustainability by documenting and formalizing the program delivery model and role of the current program manager

As noted throughout this report, a major strength of the Program is the existing program manager's "high-touch," relationship-driven approach to supporting store operators through the entire grant process. While such an approach is regarded as highly effective by store operators, it is presently an informal aspect of the Program and raises program sustainability concerns. Future staff changes could compromise program quality if these aspects of the Program are not codified. The evaluation team recommends that the HRAP work group and program manager document the program delivery model and the roles of program staff and partners. Such descriptions may include a summary of the core professional competencies necessary for future program staff. Relatedly, given the time-intensive nature of program management, we recommend that the program manager focus on participant recruitment, grant readiness assessment, partnership development with technical assistance providers, and

**Opportunities & Recommendations**

assisting applicants in navigating the substantive and contractual aspects of the application and implementation process while limiting their role in providing direct technical assistance. Please see Recommendation #7.

## 7. Formalize and expand the Program's technical assistance network

As discussed above, one of the Program's strengths is its informal relationships with local chambers of commerce and various technical assistance providers. These reciprocal relationships result in referrals for prospective Program participants and formal and informal support for grant recipients throughout the application and implementation process. Given that the program manager devotes the majority of his time to helping grant recipients navigate administrative and contractual aspects of the application and implementation process, he has limited capacity to provide business development assistance. Moreover, he (by his own admission) lacks expertise in many of the topics in which program participants need the most technical assistance, such as pro forma development, POS system technology, bookkeeping, loan financing, and grocery



store design and merchandising. As such, the Program would benefit from investing more intentionally in its network by formalizing partnerships with organizations such as the Latino Chamber of Commerce. The Program would also benefit from forging stronger relationships with industry associations such as the Wisconsin Grocers Association to enhance Program participants' access to industry specific expertise, which is typically difficult for small grocers to access but could strategically inform Program investments.

In addition, formalizing partnerships with other small business assistance providers to provide technical assistance for Program participants could improve Program sustainability and reduce the Program's dependence on the informal relationships maintained by the present program manager. Finally, to the extent that the City offers other programs that may benefit Program applicants, such as a facade improvement program, it should improve communication and alignment of such programs within the Department of Planning, Community and Economic Development.

## 8. Base funding eligibility on "business readiness" and offer both planning and implementation grants to serve a wider range of applicant needs

Because market operators vary widely in their expertise and management practices, they come to the Program from a range of starting points. Although the program manager works closely with applicants to finetune their applications and support the implementation process, this assistance focuses primarily on helping applicants navigate the grants program and only secondarily on addressing business readiness. Moreover, while most applicants can readily identify infrastructural needs in their stores, they are not necessarily as aware of the strengths and limitations of their management practices.

Based on the two projects examined in-depth in this evaluation study as well as anecdotal reflections on other HRAP projects, we recommend offering both planning and implementation grants so that the award structure aligns with a wider range of applicant needs. The Program may even benefit from developing a checklist of prerequisites for implementation grants based on evidence of sound financial management, such as the requirement of two to three years of financial projections and a market analysis for new stores.

Applicants that lack this type of documentation would still be eligible for assistance in the form of a planning grant through which they would receive training or technical assistance to meet the eligibility requirements for an implementation grant. This approach would have the benefit of building the capacity of program participants while reducing the risk borne by the City when investing in infrastructural improvements to neighborhood markets.
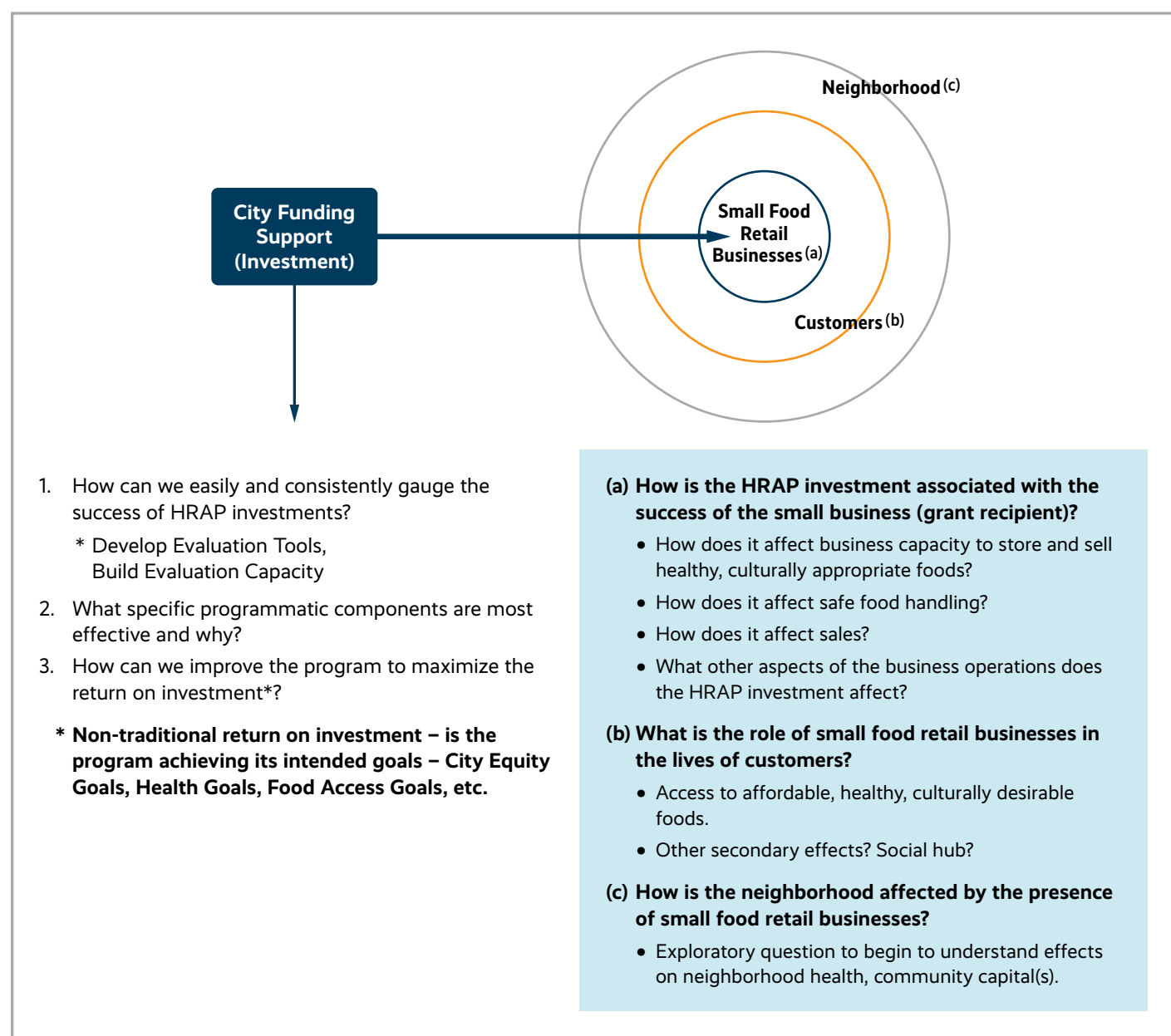
# Appendices

# Evaluation Design

Program evaluations typically fall into distinct categories, those that focus on learning about effective program processes, and those that focus on outcomes and impacts. The proposed HRAP evaluation focuses on understanding both process and impact, and how the two are correlated. The purpose of this design is to provide the HRAP program with recommendations for program improvement, inform the design of standard evaluation tools that can be used by HRAP to monitor effectiveness over time, and to document the intentional and unintentional impacts of the program – not just on grant recipients, but on their customers and the neighborhoods where they operate. As such, this evaluation will help improve the HRAP program, and contribute to the research base about issues such as effective interventions to promote healthy economies, health equity, and vibrant food systems.

The graphic below illustrates the overall evaluation design and highlights key research questions.



1. How can we easily and consistently gauge the success of HRAP investments?

   \* Develop Evaluation Tools, Build Evaluation Capacity

2. What specific programmatic components are most effective and why?

3. How can we improve the program to maximize the return on investment\*?

   **\* Non-traditional return on investment – is the program achieving its intended goals – City Equity Goals, Health Goals, Food Access Goals, etc.**

**(a) How is the HRAP investment associated with the success of the small business (grant recipient)?**
- How does it affect business capacity to store and sell healthy, culturally appropriate foods?
- How does it affect safe food handling?
- How does it affect sales?
- What other aspects of the business operations does the HRAP investment affect?

**(b) What is the role of small food retail businesses in the lives of customers?**
- Access to affordable, healthy, culturally desirable foods.
- Other secondary effects? Social hub?

**(c) How is the neighborhood affected by the presence of small food retail businesses?**
- Exploratory question to begin to understand effects on neighborhood health, community capital(s).

## Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation aims to understand the intended and unintended effects of the HRAP program with four specific impacts in mind:

- City Equity Goals
  - In what ways does HRAP achieve city equity goals?
    - Nurturing BIPOC-owned small business development
    - Promoting access to healthy, affordable, culturally relevant food

- Healthy Food Access (and access to culturally appropriate foods)
  - Access to affordable, healthy, culturally desirable foods
  - Secondary effects, e.g. the function of stores as social hubs

- Retailer Success (including outcomes related to sourcing/distribution strategies)
  - How does HRAP funding contribute to the success of participating businesses?
    - How does it affect business capacity to store and sell healthy, culturally appropriate foods?
    - How does it affect safe food handling?
    - How does it affect sales?
    - What other aspects of business operations does the HRAP investment influence?

- Vibrant Neighborhoods
  - How is the neighborhood affected by the presence of small food retailers?
  - Do community food retailers serve other nontraditional functions, such as community gathering spaces?

## Process Evaluation

One purpose of this evaluation is to identify effective programmatic elements. The outcome related evaluation questions, highlighted above, will illuminate:

1. To what extent is the HRAP program achieving its intended objectives?
2. What specific programmatic components are most effective and why?

# Baseline Documentation Template

The purpose of this baseline documentation tool is to help Healthy Retail Access Program management and/or partners collect pre-project data to assess an applicant's grant readiness, identify technical assistance needs, and better evaluate the impact of a neighborhood grocery improvement project. This tool will be less applicable to stores that are launched with the assistance of HRAP funds, but baseline data should still be collected within a month of the store opening so that changes can be tracked over time.

Questions 1–5 should be answered during a store visit and with little or no assistance from the HRAP applicant. Questions 6–10 require applicant responses.

## 1. SNAP/WIC Accessibility & Usage

**Yes** | **No**　　Does store accept SNAP/WIC?

**Yes** | **No** | **NA**　I can tell from the outside of the store that SNAP/WIC is accepted here.

**Yes** | **No**　　Is SNAP/WIC sales data available? If so, please provide.

## 2. Inventory Checklist

**Yes** | **No**　　Fruits (includes fresh, canned, frozen)
　　　　　　　Notes:

**Yes** | **No**　　Vegetables (includes fresh, canned, frozen)
　　　　　　　Notes:

**Yes** | **No**　　Meat, poultry, or fish
　　　　　　　Notes:

**Yes** | **No**　　Culturally important foods/ingredients
　　　　　　　Notes:

**Yes** | **No**　　Dairy products
　　　　　　　Notes:

**Yes** | **No**　　Bread, rice, or other grains
　　　　　　　Notes:

Yes | **No**      Hot/cold bar, deli, or other prepared food
Notes:

Yes | **No**      Alcohol/tobacco products
Notes:

Yes | **No**      Non-food products: toilet paper, diapers, cookware/utensils, health *&* wellness products, novelty items
Notes:

## 3. Baseline Inventory Summary

In the space below, please provide observations regarding product quality, pricing, and proportionality of total inventory. Photo document wherever possible with particular attention to the spatial allocation of fresh, frozen, and culturally important product offerings.

For example: "The produce section is sparse, contains only basics, like potatoes and onions, and the product does not look fresh" or "Fresh and frozen food cases line the perimeter of the store interior and are well-stocked with a wide range of products, including produce and other items from southeast Asia."

## 4. Store appearance
Please score the following on a 1–5 scale. 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

### a. Exterior

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      The store looks safe and inviting.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      The store looks well maintained.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      I can tell from the outside that healthy and/or culturally important food products are available here.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      The signage is multi-lingual or in a language other than English.

### b. Interior

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      The store is clean.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      The store is well lit.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      The store feels safe.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      SNAP/WIC vendor status is clearly visible.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      The store accepts cash and credit card/EBT.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5      There is a seating area for customers.

## 5. Baseline Infrastructure Summary

In the space below, please provide observations regarding the store appearance including the lighting, condition of floors, walls, shelving and refrigerated storage.

For example, "The chest freezers are full of freezer frost, the floor tiles are clean but broken, and the lighting is poor in the back of the store. The store is well-stocked and well-organized." Photo document wherever possible.

## 6. Onsite Storage & food preparation

Please indicate the applicant's response to each question below.

How much cold storage does the store have? (Fresh and frozen)

How much dry storage does the store have?

Does the store have food processing space? If so, what food processing equipment does it have?

Yes | No    Does the store sell hot or cold prepared foods?
             If yes, please describe below:

## 7. How many employees does the store have?

Please indicate the applicant's response to each question.

Total:              Full-time:         Part-time:

If involved in operations, are owners compensated for their time?

## 8. Inventory and accounting systems

Please circle the applicant's response to each question.

Yes | No     a. The store operator uses an accounting program or external accountant?
                If yes, what software program/accounting business do they use?

Yes | No     b. The store owner/operator uses a Point of Sale (POS) system?
                If yes, what POS system do they use?

Yes | No     c. The store owner/operator uses a different type of inventory system?
                If yes, what system do they use?

## 9. Financials

Please circle the applicant's response to each question.

For existing stores, does the operator have

**Yes** | **No**     a.  A Profit and Loss Statement?

**Yes** | **No**     b.  A Balance Sheet?

**Yes** | **No**     c.  A Cash Flow Statement?

**Yes** | **No**     d.  A Budget?

**Yes** | **No**     e.  Forward looking projections for the next one to three years?

**Yes** | **No**     f.  Sales by product category?

                g.  If yes to any item a–f, request documentation.

For new stores, does the prospective operator have

**Yes** | **No**     a.  A market analysis

**Yes** | **No**     b.  2–3 years of financial projections

                c.  If yes to a and/or b, request documentation.

## 10. What are the top 1-3 improvements the store operator would like to make to the store in the next three years? Why?

# Customer Surveys – English, Spanish, HMoob

## English

Today's Date _____  Store name _____

The goal of this survey is to understand how the Healthy Retail Access Program benefits stores and access to healthy food for customers who shop at participating retailers.

### Access & Frequency

1. How often do you shop at this store? (Check one.)

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

### Store offerings & Product preferences

2. Why do you shop at this store? (Check all that apply.)

   ☐ It is close to where I live.        ☐ It has good quality.        ☐ It has credit.

   ☐ It is close to my work.        ☐ It has a good selection.        ☐ I know the owner.

   ☐ I meet my friends here.        ☐ It has food items that are important to my culture.

   ☐ It has good service.        ☐ It accepts FoodShare/Quest Card.

   ☐ It has good prices.        ☐ Other: _____

3. What products can you get here that are difficult to get somewhere else? _____

   _____

   _____

4. What do you buy most from this store? Please be specific (examples: fruit, juice, nonfood items, prepared foods).

   _____

   _____

   _____

5a. For established stores:

   Yes | No        Have the store renovations affected your perception of the store?

   If yes, please explain: _____

   _____

5b. For new stores:

   Where did you buy these products before the store was developed? _____

   _____

**Fresh, culturally significant, and SNAP-accessible products**

6.  Please circle your response for each of the following:

    **Yes** | **No**     Do you buy fruits (includes fresh, canned, frozen) here?

    **Yes** | **No**     Do you buy vegetables (includes fresh, canned, frozen) here?

    **Yes** | **No**     Do you buy meat, poultry or fish here?

    **Yes** | **No**     Do you buy foods/ingredients that are important to your culture here?

    **Yes** | **No**     Do you buy dairy products here?

    **Yes** | **No**     Do you buy bread, rice, or other grains here?

    **Yes** | **No**     Do you receive FoodShare (also known as SNAP, EBT, Quest Card)?

**Customer & Neighborhood Impact**

7.  How, if at all, has the development or remodeling of this store benefited customers? Please explain:

    _____

    _____

    _____

8.  How, if at all, has the development or remodeling of this store benefited the neighborhood? Please explain:

    _____

    _____

    _____

**Recommendations**

9.  What would make this store better? _____

    _____

    _____

## Spanish

Fecha de hoy _____  Nombre de la tienda _____

El objetivo de esta encuesta es entender cómo el Programa de Acceso a Puntos de Venta Minorista de Alimentos Saludables beneficia a las tiendas y al acceso a alimentos saludables para los clientes que hacen sus compras en puntos de venta minorista participantes.

### Acceso y frecuencia

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia viene de compras a esta tienda? (Marque una.)

   ☐ Diariamente    ☐ Cada semana    ☐ Cada mes    ☐ Algunas veces al año    ☐ Nunca

### Ofertas de la tienda y preferencias de productos

2. ¿Por qué viene de compras a esta tienda? (Marque todas las que correspondan.)

   ☐ Está cerca de donde vivo.    ☐ Tiene alimentos que son importantes para mi cultura.

   ☐ Tiene buena calidad.    ☐ Tiene buen servicio.

   ☐ Tiene crédito.    ☐ Acepta FoodShare/la tarjeta Quest.

   ☐ Está cerca de mi trabajo.    ☐ Tiene buenos precios.

   ☐ Tiene una buena selección.    ☐ Otra: _____

   ☐ Conozco al propietario.

   ☐ Aquí me encuentro con mis amigos.

3. ¿Qué productos consigue aquí que son difíciles de conseguir en otros lugares? _____

   _____

   _____

4. ¿Qué compra más de esta tienda? Sea específico (ejemplos: fruta, jugo, artículos no alimenticios, alimentos preparados).

   _____

   _____

   _____

5a. Para tiendas establecidas:

   **Sí** | **No**    ¿Han afectado las renovaciones de la tienda su percepción de la tienda?

   Si responde que sí, explique: _____

   _____

5b. Para nuevas tiendas:

   ¿Dónde compraba estos productos antes de que se desarrollara la tienda? _____

   _____

**Productos frescos, significativos culturalmente y accesibles para SNAP**

6. Encierre en un círculo su respuesta para cada una de las siguientes:

Sí | **No**   ¿Compra aquí frutas (incluye frescas, enlatadas, congeladas)?

Sí | **No**   ¿Compra aquí verduras (incluye frescas, enlatadas, congeladas)?

Sí | **No**   ¿Compra aquí carne de res, aves o pescados?

Sí | **No**   ¿Compra aquí alimentos/ingredientes que son importantes para su cultura?

Sí | **No**   ¿Compra aquí productos lácteos?

Sí | **No**   ¿Compra aquí pan, arroz u otros granos?

Sí | **No**   ¿Recibe FoodShare (conocido también como SNAP, EBT, tarjeta Quest)?

7. ¿Cuál ha sido el beneficio para los clientes, si acaso lo hubo, por desarrollar o remodelar esta tienda? Explique:

_____

_____

_____

8. ¿Cuál ha sido el beneficio para el vecindario, si acaso lo hubo, por desarrollar o remodelar esta tienda? Explique:

_____

_____

_____

**Recomendaciones**

9. ¿Qué mejoraría esta tienda? _____

_____

_____

## HMoob

Hnub Tim _____ Lub npe ntawm lub khw _____

Lub hom phiaj ntawm txoj kev luj no yog kom muaj kev to taub seb txoj kev pab los ntawm Healthy Retail Access Program muaj txiaj ntsim li cas rau cov khw thiab mus nrhiav tau cov zaub mov zoo rau cov neeg tuaj yuav khoom ntawm cov khw uas muaj kev koom tes.

### Mus rhiav tau & Heev npaum li cas

1.  Koj mus yuav khoom hauv lub khw no heev npaum li cas? (Khij ib qho.)

    ☐ Txhua hnub   ☐ Txhua lub lim tiam   ☐ Txhua lub hli   ☐ Ob peb zaug ntawm ib xyoos twg   ☐ Tsis mus li

### Cov khw muaj hom khoom no & Cov khoom xav tau

2.  Vim li cas koj mus yuav khoom hauv lub khw no? (Khij txhua yam uas muaj feem cuam.)

    ☐ Nws nyob ze rau kuv lub tsev.

    ☐ Nws muaj khoom zoo.

    ☐ Nws muaj qhov qiv nyiaj (credit) yuav khoom.

    ☐ Nws nyob ze rau kuv qhov chaw ua hauj lwm.

    ☐ Nws muaj ntau yam rau kuv xaiv.

    ☐ Kuv paub tus tswv.

    ☐ Kuv ntsib kuv cov phooj ywm ntawm no.

    ☐ Lub khw no muaj cov khoom noj uas tseem ceeb rau kuv cov kab lim kev cai.

    ☐ Lub khw no muaj kev pab zoo.

    ☐ Lub khw no txais nyiaj yuav noj-FoodShare/Quest Card.

    ☐ Lub khw no cov nqi pheej yig.

    ☐ Lwm yam: _____

3.  Koj yuav tau dab tsi ntwm nov tab sis lwm qhov tsis muaj? _____

    _____

    _____

4.  Yam khoom uas koj yuav heev tshaj ntawm lub khw no yog dab tsi? (txiv ntoo, kua txiv, cov khoom uas tsis yog khoom noj, cov zaub mov siav lawm)

    _____

    _____

    _____

5a. Hais txog cov khw uas tsim tau ntev los lawm:

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Txoj kev rov kho lub khw no puas ua rau koj xav li cas txawv rau lub khw no?

Yog tias xav, thov piav kom meej: _____

_____

5b. Hais txog cov khw tshiab:

Koj mus yuav cov khoom siv qhov twg ua ntej tsim tau lub khw no? _____

_____

## Cov khoom tshiab, haum kab lim kev cai, thiab siv tau SNAP-muaj cov khoom

6.   Thov khij lub voj voom rau cov khoom hauv qab no:

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Koj puas yuav cov txiv hmab txiv ntoo (nrog rau cov de tshiab tshiab, ntim kos poom, tso khov txias lawm) ntawm no?

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Koj puas yuav zaub (nrog rau cov de tshiab tshiab, ntim kos poom, tso khov txias lawm) ntawm no?

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Koj puas yuav nqaij, nqaij qaib, los yog nqaij ntses ntawm no?

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Koj puas yuav zaub mov/khoom uas zaub mov noj uas tseem ceeb rau koj cov kab lim kev cai?

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Koj puas yuav cov khoom siv mis nyuj los ua ntawm no?

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Koj puas yuav qhuab cij, mov, los yog lwm hom txhuv ntawm no?

**Tsis xav** | **Xav**   Koj puas tau txais FoodShare (kuj hu ua SNAP, EBT, Quest Card)?

7.   Yog tias, tau txhim kho tshiab thiab rov kho cov khw no yuav pab tau cov neeg tuaj yuav khoom tau li cas?

Thov piav kom meej: _____

_____

_____

8.   Yog tias, tau txhim kho tshiab thiab rov kho cov khw no yuav pab tau cov neeg nyob ib ncig ntawv tau li cas?

Thov piav kom meej: _____

_____

_____

## Cov kev pom zoo

9.   Muaj dab tsi thiaj li ua rau lub khw no zoo tshaj no? _____

_____

_____

# Sample Store Operator Interview Protocols 1 & 2

## Retail Access Program Business Operator Interview Protocol

This interview protocol is designed as a 2-part interview process. The first interview is intended to take place at the time that consent forms are signed with a second interview occurring once initial data are analyzed. The first interview will focus on Healthy Retail Access Program (HRAP) implementation while the second interview will focus on project impacts and provide an opportunity to explore and validate emerging themes from the evaluation. Both interviews will take place at participating stores.

### Interview 1

**Topic: Healthy Retail Access Program (HRAP) Implementation**

This topic area focuses on the operations of the HRAP program. The goal is to learn which aspects of the program business owners find easy to navigate, most useful, as well as program components that they find challenging.

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

1. Tell me how you learned about HRAP?
   - What did you think about the program at the time?
   - Why did you decide to apply to HRAP?
     - Are there other funding sources that could have helped you [insert reason for applying]?
       - If so, what are they? Did you pursue them? Why or why not?

2. Tell me about the application process.
   - When you were first applying, what questions did you have?
   - Who helped you answer those questions?
   - What kind of support did you receive to complete the application? Please explain.

3. What kinds of support have you received from the HRAP Program?
   - Please provide examples of the types of funding or technical assistance you received.

     (For example: funding for store equipment, remodeling, or training on accounting, inventory systems, business plan development, marketing and advertising, merchandising, applying for a traditional loan)

4. What HRAP support has been most helpful for your business? Why?

5. When you were given a grant, what were your expectations?
   - Has the Program met your expectations? Why or why not?

6. What would make the HRAP program better?

7. What kinds of support (including technical, financial) does your business currently need?

## Interview 2

**Topic: Changes to store operations that promote business success & community impact**

This topic area focuses on what HRAP funding enabled grant recipients to achieve that may not have otherwise happened and to further explore procurement challenges/opportunities that were identified in The Food Trust evaluation. This section is also designed to uncover community impacts resulting from opening or improving the store.

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

- How has it helped operators professional development?
- What connections with other businesses and people have occurred because of the HRAP grant?

### Impact of HRAP grant funds

1. Tell me about something that changed at your store since receiving HRAP support.

   Probes could include:

   - In what ways is the inside of your store different because of HRAP? Examples?
   - Did HRAP funds help you access other capital? [If so] Please tell me more about that? Examples?
   - Show me some of the changes through a tour of the store.

2. What kinds of products are you able to carry/offer/sell NOW, that you were not able to carry/offer/sell PRIOR to HRAP support?

3. How have your sales / profits changed since receiving your HRAP grant?

4. Has your staffing changed since receiving HRAP funding?

   Probes could include:

   - Have you increased employees' hours?
   - Have you added new employees?

### Inventory and Procurement

5. What, if any, products have you been able to add as a result of the HRAP funding?

6. Which of the following products did you carry before and after receiving the HRAP grant? Did you increase your offerings in any of these categories?

### Post/Pre Inventory Question for Existing Stores

| Product Category | We carried this product **before** receiving HRAP funds | We carried this product **after** receiving HRAP funds | We increased our offerings/ amount of this product **after** receiving HRAP funds |
|---|---|---|---|
| Vegetables (ex. fresh, canned, frozen) | Yes \| No | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Meat, poultry or fish | Yes \| No | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Food/ingredients that are important to your customers' culture | Yes \| No | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Dairy products (ex. cheese, milk, yogurt) | Yes \| No | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Bread, rice, or grains | Yes \| No | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |

*Note for interviewer: Based on responses to above table, probe for elaboration on products that were introduced or increased after receipt of the HRAP grant

**Inventory Question for New Stores**

| Product Category | We would have carried this product anyway | HRAP support influenced our decision or ability to carry this product |
|---|---|---|
| Vegetables (ex. fresh, canned, frozen) | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Meat, poultry or fish | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Food/ingredients that are important to your customers' culture | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Dairy products (ex. cheese, milk, yogurt) | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |
| Bread, rice, or grains | Yes \| No | Yes \| No |

*Note for interviewer: Based on responses to above table, probe for elaboration on products that were influenced by receipt of the HRAP grant

7. Have there been any changes in your customer base since making changes to your store? Please describe.

   Probes could include:

   ○ Has there been a wider range of customers?

   ○ Have there been more customers?

   ○ Do customers spend more time in the store?

   ○ Are customers buying more or different products?

8. Where do you purchase your produce from?

9. What would make your procurement system...

   ○ more convenient?

   ○ more efficient?

   ○ less costly?

10. How often, if at all, do you or other employees have to drive to another City to pick up product for your store? [If so]

    ○ Where do you go?

    ○ What product do you pick up?

    ○ Where do you buy it?

## Overall reflections & looking forward

1. What worked well for your project? (Think about community engagement, marketing, project implementation, etc.)

2. Was there anything unexpected that resulted from creating/upgrading your store?

   Probes could include:

   • Can you give me an example?

   • Why do you think <insert operator observation> didn't happen?

   • What would have helped make <insert operator observation>?

3. Is there anything that you expected would change as a result of creating/upgrading your store that didn't?

   Probes could include:

   - Can you give me an example?

   - Why do you think <insert operator observation> didn't happen?

   - What would have helped make <insert operator observation>? Do you have any plans to implement additional healthy food access programming in the future? If so, please describe.

4. Do you have any plans to implement additional healthy food access programming in the future? If so, please describe.

5. Do you have any regular customers who you think we should chat with to understand how the store has made a difference for them? If so, would you be willing to make an introduction for us to arrange a short interview?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share?

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