



Madison Healthy Retail Access Program Evaluation 2021-2022

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COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

Evaluation goals



HEALTHY RETAIL
ACCESS PROGRAM

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

Evaluation Guiding 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?
 1. *Increase healthy food access to low-income individuals and families.*
 2. *Support food enterprise development and entrepreneurship.*
 3. *Increase healthy food choice and improve health outcomes.*
 4. *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?

Overview of evaluation process



Two distinct recent HRAP projects were examined:

- (1) a new neighborhood market in a low-food access area that serves a largely Latinx clientele
- (2) a renovation at a store with an emphasis on HMoob and other Asian food products.

The evaluation consisted of three components:

- (1) Two interviews with each store operators

Interview 1 - experiences and perceptions of the Program's outreach, application, and implementation

Interview 2 - program impact

- (2) Customer intercept surveys

administered by native English, Spanish and HMoob speakers

Over 50 surveys in total

- (3) Supplemental customer interviews

**We advise the Program to systematically collect baseline data for future projects so that economic impact can be tracked at the project level.*

Key findings



Application and Implementation Process

- Key theme: relational and needs-based approach
- flexible, supportive and participatory application process
- informal links to other small business assistance providers
- post-award support and tailored technical assistance

Program Outcomes

- 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
- indirect benefits such as increasing grant recipients' earned media attention and access to traditional capital

Key findings (cont.)

Neighborhood and Community Impact

- The stores serve as trusted and welcoming cultural and linguistic spaces. (e.g. COVID vaccination sites)
- The stores pursue direct investments in resources and activities that benefit residents in their vicinity and contribute to neighborhood vitality more broadly.



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

Recommendations

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

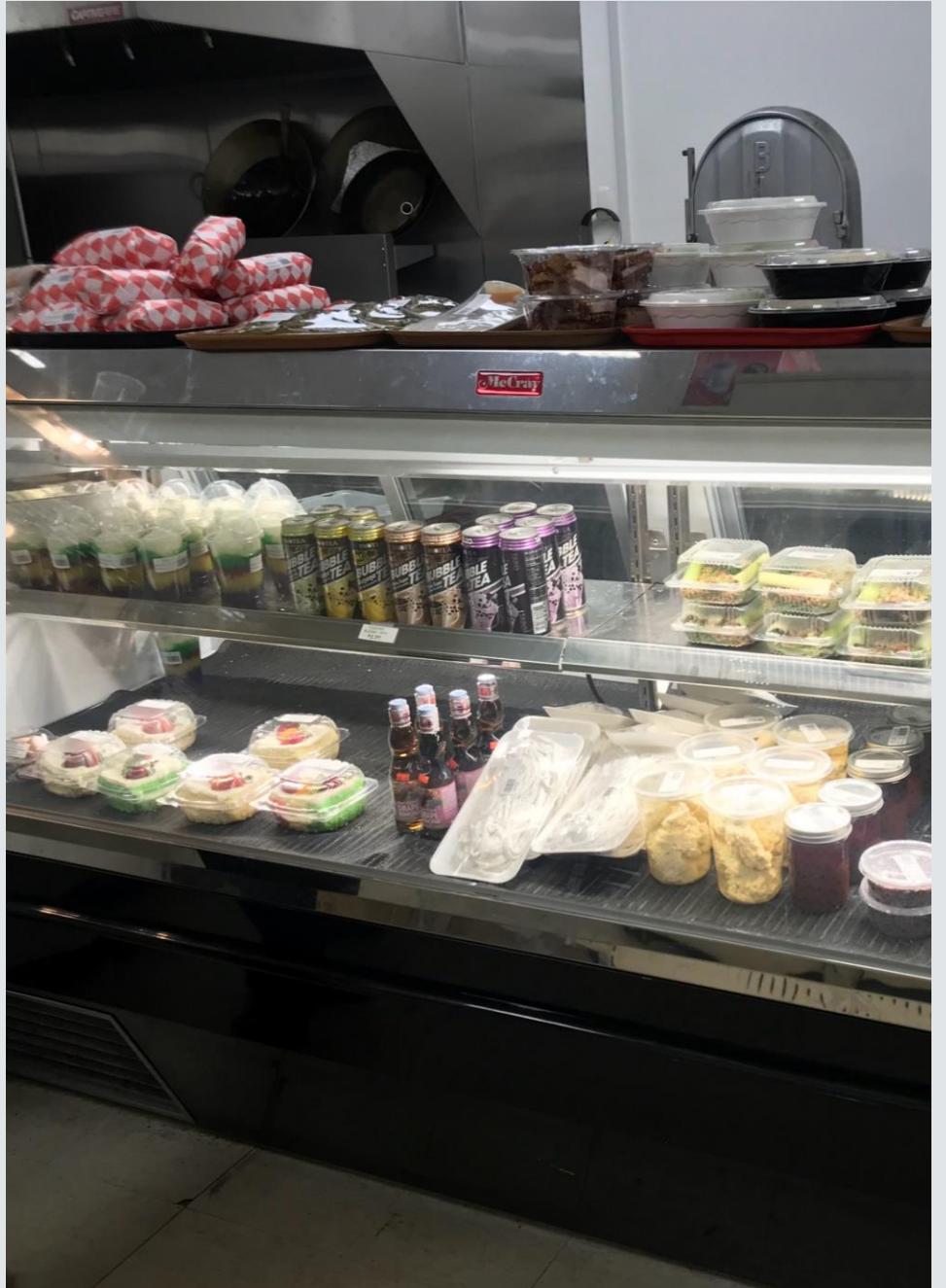
"The first grant just snowballed into something that was a little too big for us to handle our current knowledge. So we needed more."

"We asked for help with accounting and inventory management. Those stuff has always been on the back of our mind since we took over the store. But we found out after we got the first grant, and we did the remodel and everything got busier, our inventory went up, we got new items, we carried more items, and we went through more items. That definitely, classes would definitely help us figure out how to take care of such a bigger store."

Recommendations

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

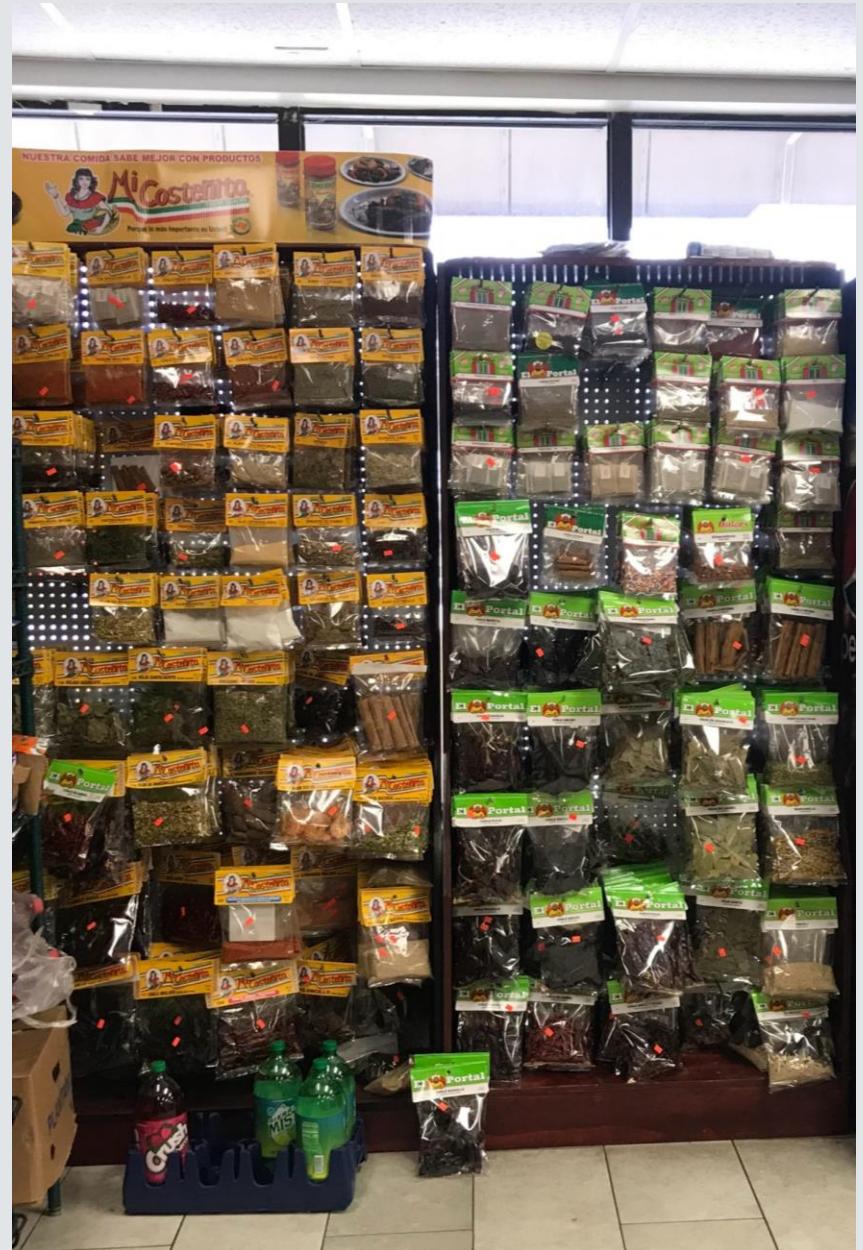
"We definitely have an idea of where we want to go. And right now we are kind of just slowly working our way towards it. We get a little bit of help. Especially when we toss ideas around."



Recommendations

3. Identify the attributes of successful applicants and proposals in the Request for Proposals materials

"It would have been great if we have like, some more like details... So maybe like a rubric that people can have like, a vision of what they need to put in order to qualify.... What is that you need in order to make this happen."



Recommendations

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



Recommendations

5. Allocate a percentage of each project award to evaluation



Recommendations

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

"That human investment, I think is what makes this program what it is."

"[George] has always been very open about his answers when we ask him certain questions on whether this will work for the store, or if anything is allowed, or just if we have general questions about the HRAP program."

"[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."

Recommendations

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

"[George] has actually suggested certain certain projects and certain grants and loans and stuff to us. Which has definitely helped us after we got grant, because then we could always look into all these other areas where we could get help with."

"I think right now, the next step up that we are trying to work on is website development... Unfortunately, just don't have the funds, proper training and for me time. Um, so it's something that is kind of in the future right now that we want to do, just slowly working our way up towards it. And hopefully we can get there."

Recommendations

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

“I was lucky because I had a business plan and a vision of what I want. So I have like, all the things that I needed. I just have to put it in the application. So if somebody was not there. I don't know how their application would look like.”

“Marty was a very big help. I think she actually helped fill out most of the stuff. All she really just asked from me was just numbers or personal information and stuff. So she was very helpful.”

Evaluation Tools

APPENDIX B
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:

APPENDIX C
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?

Key Take-aways

- HRAP is improving access to fresh, healthy and culturally relevant foods in low food access neighborhoods through capital investments in small scale neighborhood markets.
- The program achieves its four central goals.
- Future actions related to report recommendations:
 - *Technical assistance support*
 - *On-going evaluation capacity*
 - *Creation of Planning v. Implementation Grants*
 - *Future projects/recruitment tactics + FAIM Update*



Questions?