



City of Madison

2015 Healthy Retail Access Program Overview

The City of Madison is excited to offer the 2015 Healthy Retail Access Program to promote healthy food retail, improve access to food retailers in underserved neighborhoods, and assist the development of our existing retailers.

The 2015 Healthy Retail Access Program should be viewed as a pilot for a larger program that aims to address areas of focus as displayed in the Food Access Improvement Map (attached). This year's program, as approved in the 2015 Capital Budget, sets up to \$100,000 for healthy retail projects that aim to improve access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate retail within underserved areas.

The Healthy Retail Work Group of the Madison Food Policy Council, over the past year, developed the structure behind the Healthy Retail Access Program. The work group identified the following areas of priority for the 2015 program:

- Increasing the availability of healthy food through physical improvements of retail space;
- Assistance for the marketing of healthy food options within an existing retailer;
- Providing new affordable grocery distribution options;
- Improving access to existing grocery retailers;
- Increasing the availability of healthy food options through the planning for new food retail;
- Other physical improvements to retail environments that increase access to healthy food.

Additionally, one of the most common components of successful healthy retail access programs in other communities is the availability of adequate technical assistance for retailers to ensure the success of infrastructure improvements. The program aims to additionally fund organizations that are in a position to provide services to retail business accepting program funds. Some examples of technical assistance:

- Business plans
- Marketing plans
- Financial planning
- Other grant writing assistance
- Market research
- Sustainability planning
- Bookkeeping
- Project management

The goal of the 2015 program is to set aside at least 25% of program funds for the purposes of funding technical assistance. The city is seeking applications for the available funds in 2015 and the proposals will be evaluated by the work group and approved by the Madison Food Policy Council. Any unused funds will be left in the program for future use.

For proposals that may show particular promise, but may not be ripe for funding, city staff seeks to work with the applicants to improve their standing for future funding. This aspect of the program is especially important for small, neighborhood based retail access projects that may need assistance in developing technical components of the project. City staff assistance could be utilized to prepare a retailer and/or organization for the 2016 funding cycle.

This is not the type of program that will attract many proposals simply by way of releasing information about the availability of funds. The target of the program is smaller, neighborhood-based retailers, or organizations working directly with such retailers. This is not a group of businesses that are familiar with city funding processes; thus, targeted outreach, especially within the areas of focus, is necessary for a successful program.

City staff is currently in the process of targeted outreach with the goal of finding both retailers that are interested and able to execute projects that are eligible for funding and the appropriate agencies/organizations that are able to support those businesses.

Eligible Projects and Examples

Who is eligible to apply?

- Food retailers (e.g. grocery stores, large convenience stores, cooperatives, etc.).
 - Retail operation must be located within or directly serve residents within the areas identified in the City of Madison Food Access Improvement Map—Areas of Focus.
 - Retail applicants must currently offer SNAP (FoodShare Wisconsin) and WIC (Women, Infant, Children) redemption unless funds requested will be used to become an approved SNAP/WIC vendor (documentation may be required).
- Organizations directly partnering with food retailers to coordinate a food access related project or technical assistance to eligible retailers (e.g. chambers of commerce, retailer groups, 501(c)(3), other non-profits, etc.).

Eligible Project Examples

Projects devoted to the one-time purchase of physical items, such as:

- The purchase of equipment to offer SNAP/WIC redemption;
- The purchase of small refrigeration units to expand healthy retail space;
- Other one-time purchases to improve access to existing retailers.

EXAMPLE: Funding for equipment and stock improvements for SNAP certification

Funds could be used by a retailer to purchase equipment to accept SNAP (FoodShare Wisconsin) and to make purchases to increase the depth of stock to adhere to program requirements. Proposal may include a portion devoted to technical assistance by city staff, but is not required.

Projects devoted to the one-time purchase of physical items, such as:

- Marketing materials, such as signage, advertising, etc.;
- The establishment of a grocery distribution system;
- Other one-time purchases to improve access to existing retailer.

EXAMPLE: Funding for grocery store shuttle program.

Funds could be used by a full-service supermarket or organization partnering with a full-service supermarket to provide low or no-cost transportation between established grocery retailers and priority neighborhoods. Project could include a general community outreach plan that would be supported by city staff through contacting community leaders in priority neighborhoods and assisting with details of frequency and timing of service.

Projects devoted to the one-time purchase of physical items, such as:

- Physical improvements of the retail space, such as a renovation;
- The purchase of refrigeration equipment to expand fresh produce offerings;
- Other one-time purchases to improve access to existing retailers.

EXAMPLE: Funding for physical and equipment improvements for existing food retailers

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 the purchase of a refrigeration unit for produce at the front of the store. A portion of funding should go to an outside marketing firm to assist with the planning for the new retail and customers.

EXAMPLE: Funding to support non-traditional grocery distribution

Funds could be used to cover equipment or initial operations costs for bulk buying clubs, mobile grocers, or other non-traditional grocery vendors serving priority neighborhoods. A portion of funding should go to an organization with expertise in business planning for non-profits and/or cooperatives to assist in project execution.

Connections to other initiatives, expanded program

While the focus of this resolution and funding is concentrated on the 2015 program, the Food Policy Council and city staff view this as the framework for a larger, better coordinated effort to improve food access through healthy retail improvements. The initiative within the Allied Drive neighborhood, the study of the retail environment on South Park Street, and the Healthy Retail Access Program are all a part of improving healthy retail access.

The Healthy Retail Access Program in 2015 is limited to grants and technical assistance. However, the program, once established, is intended to be scalable to larger, more complex projects.

Also, the Public Engagement work group of the Madison Food Policy Council is exploring ways to work directly with leaders and community groups within areas of focus to plan food access improvements that meet the needs of individual neighborhoods. This is important and related to the future of the Healthy Retail Access Program because the success of any investment in retail based projects depends on the degree in which the project meets the needs of the immediate neighborhood.

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