Healthy Eating in Communities
Implementation Guide

STATEWIDE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PARTNERSHIP (SHIP)
Healthy Eating in Communities Implementation Guide

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Updated: July 2018

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Definition of Strategy

The 2014 Report to the State Legislature: Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota (PDF) (www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/healthequity/ahe_leg_report_020114.pdf) found that not all people in Minnesota have the same chance to be healthy. Those with less money, populations of color and American Indians consistently have less opportunity for health and experience worse health outcomes – even after factoring in individual choice.

Healthy eating is largely predicated on the ability or inability to access healthier food choices. The availability of affordable, appealing, healthy food options, coupled with the knowledge needed to make an informed choice, will help Minnesotans eat foods more consistent with the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020 (health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/). These guidelines provide an evidence-based approach to chronic disease prevention and include an adaptable framework in which people can enjoy foods that meet their personal, cultural and traditional preferences. This strategy is designed to make healthy foods accessible to all, especially for those who have the greatest barriers to accessing healthy, safe food.

For this guide, “healthy eating” will focus on increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables while reducing consumption of saturated fats, sodium and added sugars. Note that a major source of added sugars is sugar-sweetened beverages. Reducing consumption of added sugars in beverages is another key strategy for promoting healthy eating. These dietary behavior changes together have the greatest impact toward improving the risk factors most related to the leading causes of death and disability (obesity, hypertension and high cholesterol) (see Appendix A – Studies and reports). By improving these risk factors, we can prevent, delay, or reduce the onset or severity of heart disease/stroke, diabetes, cancer, depression and dementia. The healthy eating in communities strategy focuses on increasing access to and selection of healthier foods.

The Minnesota Food Charter (MFC) is a roadmap designed to guide policymakers and community leaders in providing Minnesotans with equal access to affordable, safe, and healthy food regardless of where they live. The healthy eating in community setting activities prioritized for SHIP fall into the following MFC categories:

**Access:** Comprehensive Plans (p.15 of MFC)

**Availability:** Places and Options (p.13 of MFC)

- Farmers Markets
- Food Retail
- Hunger Relief (Emergency Food Systems/Programs)

**Infrastructure:** Influence and Decisions; Physical and Financial (p.17, 19 of MFC)

- Local/Regional Food Policy Councils
- Food Distribution Systems

If you choose to work on activities outside of those listed above, you will need to apply for a variance. Your proposed work should be grounded in best practices, authentic community
engagement and articulated in the MFC. Please contact your Community Specialist for more information regarding variances.

To request a print copy of the MFC, please contact Rhonda Bauer at Rhonda.bauer@state.mn.us or 651-201-3606. To learn more about the MFC go to the Minnesota Food Charter website (mnfoodcharter.com/).

Goal

Increase access to and selection of healthy foods to improve health and reduce chronic diseases for all. Efforts should be focused on policy, systems and environmental changes that support healthy eating behaviors. Addressing health disparities and inequities that exist in the grantees community is the highest priority for this strategy.

Priority Populations

Priority populations are those who live in communities where there are higher than average rates of heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. Priority populations also include those who live in communities where there are significant barriers to accessing healthy food options due to factors such as low income, scarcity of food outlets or a lack of adequate transportation (see Appendices).

It must be noted that health inequities include, but are not limited to, racial demographics. If race is the only factor considered, it is easy to miss others in the community suffering from equally high rates of chronic disease, hunger or a lack of access to healthier food options. For example, rural communities composed of different racial and economic groups may experience more health inequities than those living in more urban areas. Utilize data specific to your community to identify those with the greatest need.

Scope

Creating a healthier food environment that supports healthy eating behaviors requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach including assessment, community engagement and capacity building, awareness-raising and campaign development, advocacy, systems change and policy development. It is important to build collaborations such as food networks (also sometimes called food policy councils) and/or diverse community work groups to plan and integrate healthy eating activities into existing systems and policies. All efforts must be informed by evidence and focused on policy, systems and environmental changes that are sustainable and have the potential to result in improved eating behaviors. For example, an awareness-raising campaign would be in scope only if it was strategically linked to the establishment of a policy, systems or environmental improvement.
Requirements

Staffing
Grantees must designate SHIP staff to perform activities approved in the work plan. Any SHIP-funded person must work a minimum of .5 full-time equivalent (FTE) on SHIP responsibilities. The cost of this position may be paid by the SHIP grant, as part of the local match, or by a combination of SHIP grant and match funding. Exceptions to this requirement are possible through a variance, but must be approved by your Community Specialist (CS) in advance.

Technical Assistance and Training
Grantees must budget for at least one staff to attend three regional in-person trainings and one two-day statewide meeting per year. Healthy eating strategy topics will be incorporated into these trainings and meeting. Announcements on trainings, meetings and opportunities will be provided in the Making it Better Log and on Basecamp. For specific technical assistance and training requests, contact the healthy eating staff at MDH.

Healthy Eating Assessment and Engagement Training
The training below is recommended. You will learn about various planning and assessment tools and how to integrate engagement into Healthy Eating strategies and work plans. Each module takes about 50 minutes to complete.

You will need to register on the MN Train website (https://mn.train.org/DesktopShell.aspx) to access these trainings.

▪ **Tools to Implement Healthy Eating Strategies – Part 1**
  (https://mn.train.org/DesktopModules/eLearning/CourseDetails/CourseDetailsForm.aspx?courseld=1056219)
▪ **Tools to Implement Healthy Eating Strategies – Part 2**
▪ **Minnesota Food Charter Promo** (www.youtube.com/watch?v=iay2gLznwbM)

Comprehensive Strategy Requirements
Working comprehensively in one or more priority communities to increase impact is encouraged, but not required for this strategy.

Recommended Partners
▪ Community Leadership Team members
▪ Food Policy Councils and other food network members
▪ City and county officials (for example, city planners, food inspectors, zoning officials)
▪ Hunger relief organizations
▪ Local and regional community and economic development organizations
Foundational Practices

Start with these foundational practices steps before beginning to implement this strategy:

- Assess and identify health inequities and disparities to determine which priority populations and communities to work with.
- Engage affected communities.
- Communicate and build capacity of people affected and decision-makers.
- Prioritize needs and identify how to implement PSE changes by selecting activities.
- Sustain partnerships and efforts.

The general steps to implement these foundational practices include:

1. Assemble a team to conduct a community assessment.
2. Review existing data and collect additional data, as needed, related to population demographics and disease and risk factor data disparities and inequities.
3. Determine the existence and location of community stakeholders, organizations and resources.
4. Assess the opportunities and gaps.
5. Summarize and analyze the assessment data to select priority populations and communities to work with on this strategy.

The starting points for these foundational practices will vary, depending upon how much previous assessment work has been done in your communities through SHIP and/or other grants, programs and public health work. Some grantees may have already identified priority populations and communities with health inequities and others may be just beginning the process. Build on existing work wherever possible.

Implementation Steps

Initial steps for all activities within the Healthy Eating in Communities strategy

Take enough time to ensure that you have everything in place by:

- Convening appropriate internal staff to determine roles and responsibilities within your action plan
- Managing expectations of internal decision-makers so there is alignment between their expectations and your activities
- Understanding the goal of the strategy, the importance of community engagement and a realistic timeline
• Learn from people who operate farms, restaurants, groceries, food shelves, school cafeterias or other food service facilities about the food industry and how they sustain a business.

**Step One**

Review the Healthy Eating MN. Train module “Tools to Implement Healthy Eating Strategies” Parts 1 & 2. This will help you identify appropriate assessment tools and community engagement strategies. You want to examine the data as well as the opportunities. One example of a tool to identify the communities’ readiness for change is to conduct a Community Opinion Survey (DOC) (www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/implementation/he/opinion_survey.doc) Get out there and talk to people. This step is critical to help you identify strategy approaches that are best suited for your community. It will also allow you to engage community members in the process and identify potential partners who can assist with implementation.

• Summarize the input of the Community Opinion Surveys.

• Host a meeting of community members who provided input on the Community Opinion Surveys and other stakeholders to discuss opportunities and priorities for improving access to healthier foods.

The Healthy Food Access Equity Exercise helps staff and partners “put themselves in the shoes” of community members who have the least access to healthy food:

Healthy Food Access Equity Exercise (DOC) (http://www.health.state.mn.us/healthreform/ship/implementation/he/HF_accessequity_exercise.doc)

The purpose of this exercise is to provide an experience that increases understanding of food access issues and the perspective of someone who faces barriers to healthy food access. It helps to inform which strategy approach(es) are selected in Step Four.

**Step Two**

Based on priorities identified in Step One, choose a priority population(s). This should be the population with the most difficulty accessing healthier food choices and the most to gain from a healthy eating activity. See Appendix for data sources. Determine who in your community would benefit the most from your efforts. Look for groups that:

• Have higher than average chronic disease rates
• Have the lowest incomes
• Have the most difficulty geographically accessing fruits and vegetables
• Live in areas with a concentration of fast food restaurants
• Lack access to transportation to food outlets
• Have not benefited from other public health nutrition interventions

**Step Three**

Based on priorities identified in Step One, identify access barriers to healthier food choices. A number of barriers that limit or prohibit access to healthier food choices are listed below.
Identifying barriers that your priority populations experience will assist to identify your activities. Documenting barriers can be used as your baseline to measure change as you are able to reduce barriers over time. Refer to the Minnesota Food Charter to help you identify the type of challenges that Minnesotans have identified.

- Lack of convenient proximity to full-service grocery outlets that sell a variety of fruits and vegetables, and foods low in sodium, saturated fat and added sugars.
- Convenient proximity to corner stores, fast food chains, vending, concessions, etc. that mostly sell foods high in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugar and do not sell a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Demographics such as age, primary language, education level, etc. that create barriers to accessing healthier food choices.
- Lack of access to transportation to food outlets.

**Step Four**

**Based on steps one through three, select an activity.** Choose those activities with the greatest potential of reaching the largest number of people in your priority population(s).

- Get input from the community so you can choose and tailor your work to be most relevant to the needs and sensitive to the values and beliefs of the priority population(s).
- Find and develop relationships with champions in the community who can help support the activities.
- Contact your U of M Community Nutrition Educator if you need resources to assist with community engagement.
- Get to know other public health partners and colleagues who can influence the local food system (food inspectors, city planners, zoning officials, business licensing staff, Dept. of Ag inspectors and MN Grown).

**Step Five**

**Develop your implementation plan**

**Remember the objective is always to increase access to fruits and vegetables and reduce access to sodium, added sugar and saturated fat.**

- With the community, establish a shared vision. Jointly determining goals, objectives, and success measures will help keep you on course when obstacles cause a shift in plans.
- Identify and engage the stakeholders and form a planning committee, when appropriate.
- Ensure continuous communication among stakeholders. Identify ways you will provide feedback and get feedback.
- Develop an action plan or work plan, timeline, and budget.
- If the activity warrants, establish a sustainable funding model and marketing plan.
- Implement the project. Ensure continuous communication among stakeholders. Identify ways you will provide feedback and get feedback.

**Step Six**

**Evaluation**
Refer to the SHIP Evaluation web page for forms and directions to assist you with evaluation. You may choose to collect additional data to measure impact, inform your future work and communicate back to stakeholders. Develop the necessary internal and external systems to gather this information before implementing activities. Contact your Community Specialist if you need additional assistance.

Communicate the results.

**Step Seven**

*Celebrate accomplishments with the community*

- Significant achievements happen in small increments and it is important to recognize those achievements.
- Celebrating milestones can be re-energizing for the work ahead.
- Recognizing individuals, teams and communities for work well done builds stronger relationships for the future.
- Communication of these successes is critical to the future support of the work and SHIP funding. There are several ways to build ongoing support for healthy eating and recognize accomplishments. For example, create a fact sheet, share a success story with MDH and other key stakeholders and/or write a press release, letter to editor or commentary for the local newspaper. See the SHIP Communications Guide for additional information and resources.

**Step Eight**

*Adjust and Sustain*

- Make adjustments to improve based on community input, outcome measures and opportunities.
- Sustain partnerships and efforts (establish a sustainability plan).

**Locations**

Locations will vary based on community need, community input, readiness and the strategy selected. Locations may include farmers markets, community-based agriculture, corner stores, restaurants, grocery stores, emergency food shelves, vending machines, mobile markets and community dining located in settings most accessible to the priority population. We encourage creativity and emphasis on health equity. Being more focused on one geographical area in multiple food venues may have more impact.
Healthy Eating and Dementia

As people age, interests in eating and mealtime enjoyment can change. Some older adults find their sense of taste and smell decrease, making food seem less appealing than in the past. Others eat less due to difficulty chewing or digesting. Medicines also affect appetite, digestion, and can be a cause of delirium. When a person has Alzheimer's or other dementia, these problems can become more pronounced, and mood, behavioral, and physical functioning problems may affect eating as the disease progresses.

Studies have found that a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains that is low in fat and added sugar can reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes, which increase the risk of developing dementia.

Healthy eating activities with a dementia focus will target both WHAT and HOW community members are fed:

▪ Target interventions to food assistance programs, including Meals on Wheels, EBT, emergency food systems/food shelves that serve low income and/or older Minnesotans in order to increase access to healthy food.
▪ Support transportation plans that locate bus routes near community food sources and coordinate bus schedules with those sources open hours.
▪ Ensure food sources are located in places easily reached by bus, bike, or on foot.
▪ Create healthy food guidelines and establish contracts based on these guidelines that determine what types of healthy foods vendors and food services must provide at work places, medical centers, senior housing, long-term care, and other settings that serve older Minnesotans.

Grantees working on strategies to improve healthy eating with a dementia focus should work to develop and support population-level initiatives to reduce the risk of dementia by making it easier for people to access healthy food options and achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
Local or Regional Food Policy Councils

Food Policy Councils or Food Networks bring together a broad based spectrum of perspectives to positively impact the local or regional food system. In some cases the councils are created by governmental action, in other cases they are created by committed citizens mobilizing change through collective action. Often in communities the food system is fragmented and multiple barriers to positive change in healthy food access exist at varying levels of influence. The Food Policy Council works to address those barriers.

Thinking like a Network

“Resilient networks are built upon redundancy of function and a richness of interconnections, so that if one node goes away, the network can adjust and continue its work.”

Interaction Institute for Social Change, Thinking Like a Network (http://interactioninstitute.org/thinking-like-a-network/)

Activity Definition

Establish or strengthen Food Policy Councils to align resources to increase access to healthy food for all within a community. This may include local or regional policy change, resource allocation or food infrastructure changes that improve access to healthy foods. Remember the objective is always to increase access to fruits and vegetables and reduce access to sodium, added sugar and saturated fat.

Purpose

Food Policy Councils, when effective, can provide the necessary infrastructure to make lasting change with and within a community by mobilizing resources and utilizing policy, systems and environmental strategies to improve healthy food access. These are critical steps for sustainable change.

Roles

Food Policy Councils include stakeholders from public, private and non-profit sectors and represent a wide array of interests, including nutrition, health, agriculture, education, policy, community design and economic development. Working together, council members and the public can identify the most pressing food needs for their community and make recommendations, or take action. Some councils work directly with government in an advisory capacity. Other councils focus on networking and use their influence to unify their efforts and activate key stakeholders. In addition councils may build community support for action through education, strategic events and campaigns. Consider including local farmers, gardeners, consumers, producers, health professionals, retail authorities, public health staff, city and county staff, grassroots organization representatives, hunger related non-profit representatives, business experts and underserved citizens.
Implementation Steps

Determine if a current Food Policy Council or similar group exists in your community. If you are uncertain, connect with the Minnesota Food Charter Network to help you identify food system leaders in your area. For a listing of most but not all of Minnesota’s networks, go to the University of Minnesota Extension’s Food Networks in Minnesota webpage (extension.umn.edu/food-networks/food-networks-minnesota). Building strong and trusting relationships is the first priority for successful Food Policy Councils. It is important to allow substantial time for this to occur. Assessing the needs of the community is one of the first activities for many food councils. If an assessment has been conducted, this can serve as the cornerstone for prioritizing and planning the work of the council. Many food councils address such issues as increasing healthy food access through food hubs to build infrastructure for the aggregation and distribution of local foods, as well as creating and strengthening farmers’ markets and connecting public transit to grocery retailers. They also can make recommendations to local government officials to address outdated ordinances, food regulations and improve zoning and city planning to support a healthy foods system.

Locations

Food Policy Councils work at various levels, such as city, countywide or multi-county region.

Success Stories

Cass Clay Food Commission. The Cass Clay Food Systems Advisory Commission is the first food policy council in the Red River Valley in Minnesota. This group works on issues around food infrastructure, food access, urban agriculture and economic development across two states.

Homegrown Minneapolis (http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/homegrown/index.htm). A citywide initiative that works to increase access to quality food, address hunger and food insecurity, connect sectors of the food system, influence policy and decision making, and ensure an environmentally sustainable and socially just food system. In 2014 the Staple Foods Ordinance Task Force was instrumental in strengthening a staple foods ordinance to increase healthy food options in licensed Minneapolis stores.


Resources to help you get started

- University of Minnesota Extension Food Network Research and Reports (extension.umn.edu/food-networks/research-and-reports) This page describes various research and reports about food networks and how policy affects local foods and provides links to additional resources.
▪ **CDC Food Policy Councils**
  (www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/healthtopics/healthyfood/foodpolicy.htm) This web page provides references for further information.

▪ **Public Health Law Center** (publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/food-policy-council) This website provides a variety of resources for Food Policy Councils.

▪ **Local Food Policy Council Guide: A Guide for Michigan’s Communities (PDF)**

▪ **Good Laws, Good Food: Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities (PDF)**
  (www.chlpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/FINAL-LOCAL-TOOLKIT2.pdf) This guide provides excellent background about the food system and regulatory considerations for local food councils.

▪ **Johns Hopkins Food Policy Networks** (www.foodpolicynetworks.org/) Johns Hopkins provides timely updates on work being done with Food Policy Councils across the nation.

▪ **Public Health Law Center Drafting Effective Policies (PDF)**
  (www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Drafting%20Effective%20Policies.pdf)
Farmers Markets

A farmers market is where farmers sell their products directly to the consumer. Products can include fresh produce, pastured meat and eggs, artisan cheeses, hand-harvested honey, breads, candles, soaps and handmade clothing. Typically, the products are grown or made within 100 miles. While markets are known for providing access to highly nutritious fresh local produce, some allow the sale of other healthy, non-local products purchased from wholesalers which may include things like bananas, oranges and pineapples. Farmers markets are a place where people connect and they provide a community with economic opportunities. They can also be a centerpiece in an overall effort to creating a healthy food environment.

A farmers market is a food business. Most markets have a board and by laws, or some other method of governance. They also need to ensure health and safety for patrons, vendors and staff.

Activity Definition

Increase access to and availability of farmers markets in communities with the greatest need, for example, where access to affordable fruits and vegetables is challenging and chronic disease rates are high and or where there are people most impacted by structural racism, bias and inequity. Ensure the market is easily accessible for those without motorized transportation. Engage and collaborate with farmers and markets to enhance or develop supporting infrastructure and increase market demand to ensure economic viability. Remember the objective is always to increase access to fruits and vegetables and reduce access to sodium, added sugar and saturated fat.

Purpose

The creation and expansion of a farmers market and inclusion of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) can increase access to fruits and vegetables. If the increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables is significant, then it can displace less healthy processed food items that contain high amounts of sodium, saturated fat or added sugar. Farmers markets can also:

- Give growers an opportunity to bring valuable resources for health and well-being to the community.
- Provide the community venue for community engagement, networking, and policy, systems and environmental change.
- Advance health equity and reduce health disparities.

Roles

Public health’s role in farmers market varies greatly and evolves over time. In some cases, depending on the community assessment, grantee staff may be highly involved in starting up a market, sustaining a market, or helping a market to increase access for people in the community who have the least access to healthy food or have high rates of diet-related disease.
Good practices are to demonstrate the value of the market and to help the community to assume stewardship of the market.

**Implementation Steps**

When developing your implementation plan for this activity, begin by referring to Step 5 of the overall implementation steps on page 12. Key considerations for this activity include:

- Engage priority populations in your planning process. Consider hours and location for the market, and EBT access when feasible.

**Locations**

Finding the right location for a farmers market is like finding the right location for other food businesses. Market research is always one of the first steps after robust community engagement and assessing community readiness. Sustaining a farmers market in a food environment with few fresh options can be the most challenging, because the market for fresh, local produce has not been developed yet. Grantees may need technical assistance from a farmer’s market coach, or other experts to help with feasibility, business planning and marketing.

**Success Stories**

**SHIP Story, Connecting the Dots for Seniors** ([www.health.state.mn.us/ship/stories/wadenastory.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/ship/stories/wadenastory.html)) Public Health, Meals on Wheels and local growers team up to provide fresh, nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables to homebound seniors.

**SHIP Stories, Business Booming in Baudette (PDF)** ([www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/stories/pdf/businessbaudette.pdf](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/stories/pdf/businessbaudette.pdf)) The market gained its footing when they received funding from SHIP and has since become a weekly community event providing the public with locally harvested goods such as honey, grains, fresh eggs and so much more.

**Amherst Wilder Foundation Twin Cities Mobile Market** ([www.wilder.org/Programs-Services/tcmm/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.wilder.org/Programs-Services/tcmm/Pages/default.aspx)) The Twin Cities Mobile Market is a grocery store on wheels that brings affordable, healthy food directly into under resourced neighborhoods. We believe everyone deserves access to healthy food. However, many of our neighborhoods do not have grocery stores, and many residents struggle to afford fresh food prices.

**Resources to help you get started**

- **Minnesota Farmers Market Association (MFMA)** ([mfma.org](http://mfma.org)) This organization provides services, programs and leadership that support and promote farmers markets across Minnesota.
- **Farmers Market Coalition** ([farmersmarketcoalition.org/](http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/)) This organization works nationally to strengthen farmers markets.
▪ **Minnesota Grown Directory** ([www.mda.state.mn.us/food/minnesotagrown/minnesotafarmersmarkets.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/minnesotagrown/minnesotafarmersmarkets.aspx)) This guide is available online and in print to help consumers find farmers markets near them.

▪ **USDA Local Food Compass Map** ([www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-sector/compass-map](http://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-sector/compass-map)) Shows locations of farmer’s markets, and food hubs across the country, in addition to federal investments in local and regional food systems.

▪ **Selling or Serving Locally Grown Produce in Food Facilities** ([www.mda.state.mn.us/food/safety/~/media/Files/food/foodsafety/fs-produce.ashx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/safety/~/media/Files/food/foodsafety/fs-produce.ashx)) Discover how food facilities like restaurants, grocery stores and school lunch programs can legally buy or accept donated food from farmers markets and serve it to their customers.

▪ **University of Minnesota Extension, Supporting Farmers Markets in Accepting SNAP Benefits** ([extension.umn.edu/local-foods/supporting-farmers-markets-accepting-snap-benefits](http://extension.umn.edu/local-foods/supporting-farmers-markets-accepting-snap-benefits)) This guide details the steps necessary to accept SNAP benefits at farmers markets in MN.

▪ **SNAP and Farmers Markets** ([www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ebt/fm.htm)) This website provides guidance on the steps to get licensed and get equipment to accept SNAP benefits.

▪ **A Guide to SNAP/EBT at Farmers’ Markets in North Carolina (PDF)** ([www.mecknc.gov/HealthDepartment/MCFA/Documents/SNAP_EBT_AccessNC.pdf](http://www.mecknc.gov/HealthDepartment/MCFA/Documents/SNAP_EBT_AccessNC.pdf)) This page provides a guide to SNAP/EBT at Farmer’s Markets in North Carolina but includes steps that could be used generally as well.


▪ **University of Minnesota Extension, Safe Food Sampling for Farmers Markets Vendors** ([extension.umn.edu/food-safety/food-entrepreneurs](http://extension.umn.edu/food-safety/food-entrepreneurs))

▪ **Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association, Farmers’ Market Manual** ([www.mfma.org/page-18065](http://www.mfma.org/page-18065)) The 2015 Minnesota Farmers’ Market Manual is full of the latest information regarding operating and participating in today’s vibrant Minnesota farmers markets. There is a charge for the manual.

Community-Based Agriculture

Community-based agriculture can be a single piece of land cultivated and tended collectively by a group of people, or it can be a series of individual/plots that members of a community use to grow produce. Some community-based agriculture plots grow fruits, vegetables and herbs and dedicate a portion to be sold at farmers markets to provide a revenue stream to purchase seeds, tools, insurance, mulch or water. Many donate produce to food shelves and other emergency food programs.

Community-based agriculture is a pathway to changing food policy, systems and environments and can be at the core of a healthy food environment in a community. Community food systems are complex and require creative problem solving efforts that engage multiple community members with multiple perspectives and experiences. Community-based agriculture builds the capacity of community members — grass roots citizens, informal community leaders, and positional decision makers at all levels — to develop solutions together to create and sustain health and advance health equity.

Activity Definition

Increase the access of priority populations to locally grown foods by increasing the number of community-based agriculture projects and the number of people participating in community-based agriculture. Especially reach out to community members who have limited or no access to land for gardening.

Through community-based agriculture, identify healthy eating and food environment improvement champions and supporters. Build upon agricultural activities of community members and connect to larger networks or Food Policy Councils.

Purpose

Community-based agriculture can have several significant benefits for a community including:

▪ Providing a catalyst for neighborhood and community development
▪ Stimulating social interaction
▪ Reducing family food budgets
▪ Creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy and education
▪ Reducing crime
▪ Preserving green space
▪ Creating income opportunities and economic development

From a healthy eating perspective, community-based agriculture increases access to fruits and vegetables and if consumption is significant it will displace food choices that are high in sodium, saturated fat and added sugars.

Research also demonstrates that community-based agriculture can be a powerful prevention activity, creating positive long-term diet and activity changes. Community-based agriculture has repeatedly been shown to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables among participants.
Roles

The grantee’s role varies greatly and evolves over time. In some cases, depending on the community assessment, grantee staff may be highly involved in community-based agriculture with the goal of developing leadership within the community.

For the community-based agriculture to make a lasting change to the community food environment it needs support and assistance from funders, volunteers, experts, citizens, and decision makers such as community leaders, farmers, businesses, faith-based organizations, community agencies, elected parties, and zoning, planning, licensing, food safety and public safety officials. Anyone in the community can have a role or be a champion, sometimes the least expected person. Seeking out partners who are not the “usual suspects” may be very fruitful. Especially reach out to non-native English speakers and other groups that have a harder time being a voice in community decision making.

Implementation Steps

When developing your implementation plan for this activity, begin by referring to Step 5 of the overall implementation steps on page 12. Key considerations for this activity include:

▪ Consider zoning and access when identifying locations for a community garden
▪ Be sure to contact landholder and work out legal arrangements
▪ Establish guidelines for the garden, including a membership application if desired.

Locations

Working with city officials, determine locations where growing produce is allowed in the community. Locations with access to water that are within walking distance of your primary audience are ideal. Consider schools, after-school program sites, worksites, faith-based organizations and other locations where key partners may be able to assist with sustainability. Many groups that grow produce donate some or all of the produce to food emergency programs. If water access is a barrier, reach out to the local water board or utility.

Success Stories

SHIP Stories, Bringing Food to Those Who Need it Most (PDF)
(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/stories/pdf/bringnighealthyinbemidji2.pdf) Discover how the Bemidji Food Shelf integrated community-based agriculture into their work to increase access to fresh vegetables.

SHIP Stories, Bringing More Fruits and Vegetable to Grand Portage (PDF)
(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/stories/pdf/BringingmorefruitsandvegetablestoGrandPortage.pdf) With the help of SHIP, Grand Portage Reservation has been able to make real, sustainable improvements in access to healthy foods through the development of a community garden.
Resources to help you get started

- **American Community Garden Association, 10 Steps to Starting a Community Garden (PDF)** ([communitygarden.org/docs/10stepsstart.pdf](http://communitygarden.org/docs/10stepsstart.pdf)) Steps adapted from the American Community Garden Association for launching a successful community garden.

- **Gardening Matters, Starting a Community Garden Community Garden** ([www.gardeningmatters.org/coordinate-garden/starting-community-garden](http://www.gardeningmatters.org/coordinate-garden/starting-community-garden))


- **University of Minnesota Extension, Master Gardener** ([www.extension.umn.edu/garden/master-gardener/](http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/master-gardener/)) This website will help you connect with your local master gardener. This is an invaluable resource for the success and sustainability of your local efforts to increase access to fruits and vegetables and build community capacity.

- **The Public Health Law Center, Community Garden Resources** ([publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/gardens](http://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/gardens))


- **Garden Gleaning: A Toolkit for Growers and Food Shelves (PDF)** ([gardengleaning.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/the-garden-gleaning-toolkit_final.pdf](http://gardengleaning.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/the-garden-gleaning-toolkit_final.pdf)) Includes a chapter on developing a food donation system within your community garden.

- **The American Community Gardening Association Website** ([https://communitygarden.org/](https://communitygarden.org/)) Builds community by increasing and enhancing community gardening and greening across the United States and Canada.
Emergency Food Systems/Programs

Emergency food programs are generally delivered by community-based, advocacy organizations and religious organizations around Minnesota. There are a growing number of institutions such as schools, hospitals and colleges that are delivering some type of emergency food relief. Some of these food programs receive funding from the U.S. Department Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State of Minnesota. Some are operated independent of any public funding and almost all rely heavily on volunteers for their operation.

Activity Definition

Increase access, availability and selection of healthier foods provided through emergency food programs by implementing strategies that educate decision-makers, donors, suppliers, staff and volunteers; by helping hunger relief organizations create guidelines for and promotion of healthier food options; and by facilitating conversations that lead to policies or agreements that support the gleaning, transport, light processing or storage of healthier food choices. Remember the objective is always to increase access to fruits and vegetables and reduce access to sodium, added sugar and saturated fat. Additionally, offering of culturally desirable foods is a priority.

Purpose

Those with limited incomes often find it difficult or impossible to purchase healthy foods due to cost, limited availability and limited access. Food shelves can provide such individuals with healthy choices they may not otherwise have, resulting in improved eating habits and improved health. SHIP efforts can have a positive influence on available foods in emergency food programs. This is a priority population for SHIP because there is an inextricable link between hunger, poor health and chronic disease.

Roles

Grantees should begin by building relationships with key stakeholders. Work to establish partnerships with local hunger relief organizations serving your community to identify needs and assess the current offerings reaching at risk populations. Consider food shelves, on-site meal programs and Fair for All sites etc. Grantees can help convene additional stakeholders or serve on established committees to increase the impact of health-promoting hunger relief efforts.

Implementation Steps

When developing your implementation plan for this activity, begin by referring to Step 5 of the overall implementation steps on page 10.
Locations

Hunger relief sites including food shelves, on-site meal programs, mobile food shelf sites, subsidized housing buildings and Fare for All sites throughout Minnesota.

Success Stories

**MPR News, Food Shelves Strive to Provide Healthier Groceries**
(www.mprnews.org/story/2013/04/29/health/food-shelf-options)

**SHIP Stories, Bringing Food to Those Who Need it Most (PDF)**
(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/oshii/ship/stories/pdf/bringninghealthyinbemidji2.pdf) Discover how the Bemidji Food Shelf integrated community-based agriculture into their work to increase access to fresh vegetables.

Resources to help you get started

- **Minnesota Food Charter, Hunger Relief Mini-Guide (PDF)**
  (mnfoodcharter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/MFC_HUNGERRELIEF_MiniGuide_d2_FINAL.pdf) This guide identifies strategies and actions to increase the availability and quality of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy options in food relief programs.

- **University of Minnesota Extension, Building Better Food Shelves**
  (extension.umn.edu/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/building-better-food-shelves) Provides a variety of resources to improve healthy food access through food shelves.

- **The Food Group**
  (thefoodgroupmn.org/) The Food Group is an innovative food bank dedicated to serving the hunger needs of our changing communities.

- **Garden Gleaning: A Toolkit for Growers and Food Shelves (PDF)**
  (gardengleaning.files.wordpress.com/2013/03/the-garden-gleaning-toolkit_final.pdf) Includes a chapter on developing a food donation system within your community garden.

- **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)**
  (www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/emergency-food-assistance-program-tefap) This Federal USDA program helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans, including elderly people.

- **Minnesota Department of Health-Minnesota Department of Agriculture Food Safety Guidelines for Food Shelves and Food Banks (PDF)**
  http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fs/foodbanksafety.pdf
Food Retail – Convenience Stores

*Potential layered strategy: see Tobacco Point of Sale*

A convenience store is also called a small store, corner shop or bodega. It is a small store that stocks and sells everyday items such as groceries, soft drinks and tobacco products. It may be part of a gas station and can be located in urban or rural areas. Many times it is the only food outlet for several miles. The food business is highly competitive and profit margins can be small. Understanding and listening to the needs and challenges of the business owner is a good first step to building a partnership. Community wide inclusive efforts can help increase participation among businesses serving the community.

**Activity Definition**

Increase access to, selection of, and demand for healthier options in convenience stores, especially in areas with limited access to these options. Remember the objective is always to increase access to fruits and vegetables and reduce access to sodium, added sugar and saturated fat.

**Purpose**

Many rural communities and some city neighborhoods do not have nearby food sources or stores offering healthy, affordable options. Sometimes convenience stores are the only option those without reliable transportation can access. Most convenience stores offer convenient ready-to-eat foods that are high in saturated fat, sodium and added sugar and offer few if any fruits and vegetables. Increasing access to healthier food options at convenience stores will meet SHIP outcome requirements for this strategy. Additionally, some grantees may wish to work with larger grocers to support the expansion of their healthy products, to maintain the grocers’ viability in the community to ensure ongoing food access in the community.

**Roles**

Grantees are encouraged to bring key stakeholders together to build relationships and work toward a shared vision. Stakeholders may include small stores and their representatives (corner stores, bodegas, ethnic markets, corporate offices of convenience stores, gas stations and other small store chains), city and county stakeholders (economic development, inspectors, etc.), cooperative extension agencies, hunger-relief organizations, community organizations, schools, hospitals and health care organizations. Local public health agencies can provide ongoing technical assistance and training to help stores successfully increase the availability and sale of healthier options. For example, local public health can assist to ensure stores can serve SNAP and WIC customers, address transportation barriers and work with Food Policy Councils on Fresh Food Financing Initiatives to improve or establish stores in underserved areas.
Implementation Steps

When developing your implementation plan for this activity, begin by referring to Step 5 of the overall implementation steps on page 12. Key considerations for this activity include:

▪ Involve food retail experts, retailers, and community throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation process.
▪ Conduct environmental assessments (e.g. Minnesota Environmental Assessment Tools (MN EATs) customer needs, retailer needs). Minnesota Environmental Assessment Tool for Convenience Stores (MN EAT-C) is the recommended assessment tool for this work and available in the Counter Tools Store Audit Center. Contact your healthy eating content specialist for access to this and additional assessment tools.
▪ Recruit retail sites and make the business case for healthy food retail. It is important to understand the business needs of the retail site.

Locations

Small independent or chain stores are typically less than 5,000 square feet with three or less cash registers, and many stock cigarettes and snack foods rather than produce and other healthy foods and beverages. Highest need is in rural and other low-income areas that lack supermarket access. Locations may include corner stores, convenience stores, bodegas, drug stores or pharmacies, general stores, dollar stores, small markets and gas stations.

Resources to help you get started

▪ CDC Healthier Food Retail Resources:
  ▪ Healthier Food Retail: An Action Guide for Public Health Practitioners (www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/healthier-food-retail.html) This document provides information on how to develop, implement and partner around food retail to improve access, availability and affordability of healthier foods and beverages.
  ▪ Healthier Food Retail: Beginning the Assessment Process in Your State or Community (PDF) (www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/HFRassessment.pdf) This document provides public health practitioners with an overview of how to develop an assessment of their state’s or community’s food retail environment.
  ▪ ChangeLab Solutions, Health on the Shelf (www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/health-on-the-shelf) A Guide to Healthy Small Food Retailer Certification Programs. This toolkit provides standards for retailers, guidance on marketing and a step-by-step process for developing a certification program.
▪ **Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program Making Produce More Visible, Affordable and Attractive (PDF)**
  (www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@health/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-095276.pdf) This document provides guidance on the process of developing, implementing and evaluating a corner store initiative.

▪ **The Food Trust, What We Do: In Corner Stores** (thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/corner-store) This website provides examples and resources to implement a corner stores initiative.

▪ **Healthier Corner Stores Network** (www.healthycornerstores.org/) This network provides support and resources for small-scale store initiatives designed to increase the availability and sale so healthy, affordable foods in underserved communities.

▪ **Minnesota Grown Members & Retailers Database** (minnesotagrown.com/members-retailers/) This database will help you begin to understand the access points for local foods in your area.

▪ **USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Is My Store Eligible?**
  (www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retail-store-eligibility-usda-supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program) This page details eligibility criteria for stores to participate in SNAP.

  (healthyeatingresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/her_minimum_stocking_final.pdf) Provides stocking standards for small stores and describes the need for carrying and marketing healthy foods and beverages.

▪ **The Food Trust, Why Sell Healthy Foods**
  (thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/phcsn-sell-healthy-guide.original.pdf) Includes tips and information for retailers to assist with stocking healthier foods.

▪ **ChangeLab Solutions, Providing Fresh Produce in Small Food Stores (PDF)**
  (www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Fresh-Produce-Distribution-Small-Food-Stores_FINAL_20140131.pdf) This guide discusses possible challenges and solutions to fresh produce distribution in small food stores.

▪ **Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships Rural Grocery Store Projects and Resources**
  (extension.umn.edu/community-development/rural-grocery-stores) Includes Fresh Produce Toolkit with tips on storing and handling fresh produce, produce merchandising techniques and more.

▪ **NACS, 8 Ways to Grow Healthy Sales (PDF)**
  (www.convenience.org/YourBusiness/Refresh/Documents/8-Evidence-Based-Ideas-for-Growth.pdf) Aimed at convenience store owners, and provides strategies for convenience retailers to expand their selection of healthier items.

▪ **ChangeLab Solutions, Tracking Healthy Food Sales**
  (www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/tracking-healthy-food-sales) Identifies the pros and cons of various approaches to tracking the impact of the corner store initiative.
Food Retail – Other: Vending

The very first vending machine was designed by a mathematician in the first century to dispense holy water. Today vending machines can dispense everything from gum, candy, and soda to French fries, beer and ice cream. Prime vending locations include college campuses, shopping malls, worksite cafeterias, bowling alleys, hotels and laundromats. Every machine has the capability of dispensing healthier food options with help from the vendor.

Activity Definition

Increase the number of healthier food options in vending machines in community settings, especially those frequented by priority populations. Utilize healthy food guidelines that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and include guidance on added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium. The GSA/HHS Guidelines, NANA Standards, or AHA Standards referenced below are recommended.

Purpose

Most vending machine snack foods and beverages are high in sodium, added sugar and saturated fat. Very few offer fruits and vegetables. Increasing the percentage of healthy choices to 50 percent or more can help make the healthy choice easier.

Roles

Local public health grantees can work with their Food Policy Councils, Community Leadership Teams or other work teams to identify locations that will serve the greatest need and recruit decision makers at those sites. This may include parks, community centers and other public spaces. Staff from local public health or partner organizations will be needed to assist with or conduct environmental assessments, such as the NEMS-V survey, communicate with vendors and engage community stakeholders in identifying the preferred healthier options. Development and implementation of a social marketing campaign and evaluation of the initiative are key roles that will likely be led by local public health. However, utilizing community skills and assets is encouraged to build their capacity to sustain this work.

Implementation Steps

When developing your implementation plan for this activity, begin by referring to Step 5 of the overall implementation steps on page 12. Key considerations for this activity include:

- Conduct assessments of existing policies, vending options and current sales (i.e. biggest sellers). The NEMS-V is the recommended assessment tool for this work, and can be found in the resources below.
- Establish a healthy vending policy that sets a minimum percentage of healthy foods available (for example, 50 percent or more), criteria for what constitutes a healthy foods
and beverage (for example, Health and Sustainability Guidelines (HHS) for Federal Concessions and Vending Operation (2012)), and pricing considerations for healthy foods (for example, healthy foods cost less).

- Develop contract language that specifies percentage of healthy foods required, a definition of “healthy foods” based on national standards, and articulates how the contractor will be held accountable. Consider policy language that eliminates promotion/marketing of less healthy options.
- Partner with vendors to provide opportunities for customers to taste test a variety of healthier options. Gather feedback with simple survey cards and tally the votes. Work with vendors to stock the healthier items that are likely to be most popular at that site.
- Market healthier options. Utilize pricing, placement and promotion strategies. For example, price healthier items lower than less healthy options, place healthier products at eye-level and utilize point-of-purchase signage and other promotional strategies.

**Locations**

This activity is intended to improve access to healthier options in vending machines on public property in municipal, state and federal government sites, such as community centers, public housing sites and parks. Healthier vending options also benefit employees, customers, students and visitors at other locations such as hospitals, schools and private workplaces.

**Resources to help you get started**

- **NEMS Vending Assessment Tool (NEMS-V)** ([nems-v.com/Index.html](http://nems-v.com/Index.html)) This tool was developed to assess the worksite vending machine environment and is recommended for initial assessments.
- **HHS and GSA Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities (PDF)** ([www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/guidelines_for_federal_concessions_and_vending_operations.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/guidelines_for_federal_concessions_and_vending_operations.pdf)) Provides “specific standards for food, nutrition, facility efficiency, environmental support, community development, food safety, and behavioral design for use in food service concession and vending operations at federal facilities.”
- **NationaSnack, Entrée, and Beverage Options that Meet NANA, AHA, and GSA/HHS Vending Standards (PDF)** ([cspinet.org/new/pdf/snack-entree-bev-options-2016.pdf](http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/snack-entree-bev-options-2016.pdf)) Examples of snacks, entrées, and beverages that meet a variety of nutrition standards.
▪ **Eat Well Work Well, Vending** ([www.eatwellworkwell.org/education-tools.htm#vending](http://www.eatwellworkwell.org/education-tools.htm#vending)) A wide array of resources and tools specific to vending, including: vending machine assessment tools, sample vending policies and sample letters to vendors.

▪ **Healthier Vending Campaign at Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (PDF)** ([health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/obesity/pdf/HealthyVendingCampaignReport.pdf](http://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/obesity/pdf/HealthyVendingCampaignReport.pdf)) This report describes how profits increased with up to 60 percent healthier vending options.

▪ **FDA Vending Machine Federal Labeling Requirements** ([www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm515022.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm515022.htm)) Operators who own or operate 20 or more vending machines are required display calorie information as of Dec. 1, 2016.
Food Retail – Other: Menus in Non-Chain Restaurants, Cafeterias and Catering

As of May 7, 2018, chain restaurants and similar retail food establishments with 20 or more outlets are required by Federal law to list calories and other nutrition information on menus and menu boards. These Menu Labeling Requirements can be found at the USDA Menu Labeling Requirements page (www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm515020.htm) Though not covered by that mandate, some smaller independent restaurants are nevertheless joining the movement to provide calorie counts and other nutrition information for all of their standard menu items. In addition, there is growing demand by businesses and others catering meals to have improved healthy options to align with consumer needs and demand.

**Activity Definition**

Increase the number of non-chain restaurants displaying nutrition information on their menus or the number of healthy options available. This improvement should be focused in locations frequented by priority populations. Remember the objective is always to increase access to fruits and vegetables and reduce access to sodium, added sugar and saturated fat.

**Purpose**

Local restaurants and small caterers dot the landscape of Minnesota and often satisfy the same desire for fast and convenient food especially where there is a scarcity of the bigger fast food chains. For this reason it is important to help willing owners evaluate what they are serving to their customer base. Increasing access to healthier food and beverage options by improving menus at non-chain restaurants, cafeterias and caterers will meet SHIP outcome requirements for this strategy.

**Roles**

Success for this initiative will require strong relationships with restaurant, cafeteria and catering owners and managers. Local public health staff should work to understand the restaurant, cafeteria and caterers’ business needs and challenges and build a mutually beneficial initiative that provides healthier choices to restaurant customers. Local public health’s role is to convene and facilitate the overall initiative in collaboration with key stakeholders. In some cases, an existing initiative may exist and local public health can identify the needs and support the success and expansion of the initiative. Often, this will involve public recognition for the efforts of restaurants to serve healthier options.
Implementation Steps

When developing your implementation plan for this activity, begin by referring to Step 5 of the overall implementation steps on page 12. Key considerations for this activity include:

- Key stakeholders to engage may be restaurant experts, food inspectors, chamber of commerce, elected officials, restaurant owners, community members, etc. Contact your content specialist for sample discussion/survey tools to assess their needs.
- Determine where you will conduct assessments. This will vary for each community. Contact your content specialist for help with this.
  - Conduct environmental assessments at chosen restaurants, cafeterias and caterers. The Minnesota Environmental Assessment Tool for Restaurants (MN EAT-R), or Minnesota Environmental Assessment Tool for Kids Menus (MN EAT-R-K) are the recommended assessment tools for this work. Contact your content specialist to access these tools, which are available in the Counter Tools Store Audit Center.
  - Communicate the assessment results to key audiences. Recognition for food providers is important to success and can build consumer awareness and demand for healthier choices.

Locations

Select locations and venues that are identified through the needs assessment process.

Success Story

CSPI, South Los Angeles Neighborhood Mercado Pioneers Smart Menu Labeling among Non-Chain Restaurants (cspinet.org/resource/south-los-angeles-neighborhood-mercado-pioneers-smart-menu-labeling-among-non-chain) Diverse restaurants implement healthier menus in collaboration with community health leaders

New York City Sodium Initiatives, Sodium Warning Labels for Chain Restaurants (www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/national-salt-reduction-initiative.page). New York City now requires restaurants with 15 or more locations nationwide to post sodium warning labels.

Resources to help you get started

- Annual Culinary Forecast (www.restaurant.org/News-Research/Research/What-s-Hot) This National Restaurant Association identifies menu trends, such as healthful kids’ meals, each year.
- ChangeLab Solutions, Putting Health on the Menu: A Toolkit for Creating Healthy Restaurant Programs (www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthy-menus) Developed by Change Lab Solutions, this comprehensive kit provides a roadmap for how local public health agencies work with local restaurants. It includes a Model Healthy Restaurant Program Agreement.
Corporation held a conference in 2012 with 40 experts to establish guidelines for healthier restaurant meals.


- **USDA Menu Labeling Regulations** ([www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm515020.htm](http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm515020.htm)) These regulations apply to chain restaurants and similar retail food establishments with 20 or more locations.


- **The National Network of Public Health Institutes Sodium Reduction Videos** ([vimeo.com/nnphi](http://vimeo.com/nnphi)) Presents videos with tips on how to reduce sodium in cafeteria and large scale cooking.
Comprehensive Plans

*Potential layered strategy – See Active Living in Communities*

Comprehensive plans, municipal plans or development guides all contain the promotion or protection of the public’s health as part of their statute at the local, county or regional level. Healthy food access is a burgeoning concern and the recognition that these plans create positive or negative consequences to this have become better known. The planning process provides an opportunity to create new or update existing planning or policy documents that influence healthy food access. We suggest that you begin by reviewing the existing community planning documents to become familiar with the current status. In addition, you want to begin to form a relationship with those responsible for planning to better understand their perspective and needs.

**Activity Definition**

Work with key stakeholders to include healthy food access as a component of local governments overall planning. This could include land use, zoning and transportation plans. Remember the objective is always to increase access to fruits and vegetables and reduce access to sodium, added sugar and saturated fat.

**Purpose**

Planning lays the foundation for many things that touch healthy food access, including the transportation system, regulatory system, zoning, business development as well as land access and farmland preservation. By working to ensure healthy food access is considered in decisions around these issues, you lay the foundation for a plethora of possibilities to improve access to healthy foods within a community for at least a decade.

**Roles**

Recommended partners for this strategy include identifying existing efforts that align with proposed work and may include:

- Local officials: Planning, community development, zoning, housing, environmental, business licensing, etc.
- Minnesota State Agencies: Departments of Transportation and Public Safety
- Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
- Regional and municipal planners and engineers
- Elected officials
- Chambers of Commerce and Visitor Bureaus
- AARP or the Area Agency on Aging
- Service organizations and local non-profits serving impacted populations
- Related advocacy groups
Implementation Steps

When developing your implementation plan for this activity, begin by referring to Step 5 of the overall implementation steps on page 12. Key considerations for this activity include:

- This activity provides an opportunity for layering with active living efforts. Refer to the Active Living Implementation Guide for further details.
- The timeline of Comprehensive planning is an important consideration.
- Work with your community to identify gaps related to food access that can be impacted by comprehensive plans.
- All identified efforts should be tied back to development and/or implementation of a plan or policy change.

Locations

This activity may occur at the neighborhood, municipal, county or multi-county level.

Resources to help you get started

- **Checklist: Comprehensive Planning for a Healthy Community (PDF)** (mnfoodcharter.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/COMMUNITY-HEALTH-IN-COMPREHENSIVE-PLANNING-CHECKLIST.pdf) This checklist can be used to assess where and to what degree health-supporting policies are present in your local comprehensive plans.
- **Rural Communities Health-in-All-Policies Comprehensive Planning Checklist (XLSX)** (http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwi6hPHLsZXcAhVE9YMKHUtWCi8QFggoMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fardc.org%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2017%2F05%2FRural-Communities-Health-In-All-Policies.final_.xlsx&usg=AOvVaw28uvz5J9cl-xRgaqxGwN8h) This checklist can be used to define where and in to what degree health-supporting policies are present in rural community comprehensive plans.
- **American Planning Association, Healthy Communities Policy Guide** (www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/healthycommunities/) This guide identifies policy ideas to improve community health and quality of living through planning.
- **Growing Local Food Systems: A Study Series on the Role of Local Governments (PDF)** (foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/files/15-454_Local_Food_Systems_Case_Studies_Series_FINAL.pdf) Provides information collected through a national scan and evaluation of local comprehensive and sustainability plans.
- **American Planning Association, Planning for Food Access: A National Scan and Evaluation of Local Comprehensive and Sustainable plans** (https://www.planning.org/research/foodaccess/) Provides information collected through a national scan and evaluation of local comprehensive and sustainability plans.
- **Supporting a Resilient Region: A Best Practice Toolkit for Central Minnesota Sustainable Development Plan (PDF)** (resilientregion.org/cms/files/Sustainability_Toolkit.pdf)
- **Fargo Comprehensive Plan** ([go2030.net/](go2030.net/))
- **Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG)** ([www.flaginc.org/](www.flaginc.org/)) A nonprofit law center dedicated to providing legal services and support to family farmers and their communities in order to help keep family farmers on the land.
- **Minnesota Department of Health, Health Impact Assessment (HIA)** ([www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hia/](www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hia/)) HIA is a systematic process used by organizations and community groups to provide decision-makers with information about how any policy, program or project may affect the health of people.
Minimum Commitments for Optional Strategies

Grantees who do not select this optional community strategy are asked to meet some minimum commitments for staying engaged in this important work. We ask that you participate in a local or regional healthy food network in your community and if possible attend the Minnesota Food Access Summit listed below. Grantees who do select this strategy should also include these minimum commitments in their work plans and budgets.

The Minnesota Food Access Summit is an MDH-sponsored event that all grantees are asked to budget for and attend. You can find more information at the Minnesota Food Access Summit Website (www.foodaccesssummit.com/).

If you do not have a contact for a local or regional network in your area, please contact one of the MDH healthy eating staff for assistance. You can also contact the co-leads of the engagement work group of the Minnesota Food Charter Network, Jamie Bain: jbain@umn.edu or Maria Regan Gonzalez: Maria.ReganGonzalez@bluecrossmn.com.
Appendices and Resources

Appendix A: Key Resources

**Minnesota Food Charter Website** ([mnfoodcharter.com/](http://mnfoodcharter.com/)) The Minnesota Food Charter is a roadmap designed to guide policymakers and community leaders in providing Minnesotans with equal access to affordable, safe and healthy food regardless of where they live.


The Schools Leader Guide is a companion piece to the Minnesota Food Charter. It offers a clear, detailed roadmap for the diverse types of decision-makers who influence campus and school food environments as well as food skills development of young Minnesotans. The Schools Leader Guide offers concrete, lasting solutions for how to improve food skills and increase access to healthy food for students who attend K-12 schools, participate in out of school activities, or attend colleges and universities in Minnesota. It’s a recipe for a prosperous future.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture Farmers’ Market Resources** ([www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/sustainable/mfo/mfo-diversification/farmersmarkets.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/sustainable/mfo/mfo-diversification/farmersmarkets.aspx))

In order to start a farmers market, it is necessary to secure a site, recruit farmers willing to participate, as well as obtain permits, licensing and contracts. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) assists in starting a market for direct marketing purposes. Moreover, MDA helps organize structure, oversees food safety issues, and holds conferences and seminars to share strategies.

MDA’s goal is to benefit both farmers and consumers by bridging the gap between consumers' demand for locally grown produce and farmers' need for better prices and new marketing outlets.

- **Food Safety Information & Resources** ([www.mda.state.mn.us/food/safety/food-safety-resources.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/safety/food-safety-resources.aspx))
- **Minnesota Grown** ([minnesotagrown.com/](http://minnesotagrown.com/))
- **Farmers’ Market Coalition** ([farmersmarketcoalition.org/](http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/))
- **Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMSNP)** ([www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/fmnp/fmnp.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/fmnp/fmnp.aspx))

**University of Minnesota Extension Food, Health and Nutrition** ([extension.umn.edu/food-health-and-nutrition](http://extension.umn.edu/food-health-and-nutrition))

University of Minnesota Extension Regional Health and Nutrition Educators and SNAP Educators work in the community to improve healthy food access and are a good resource for work in the
areas of farmers markets, food retail, emergency food systems, Farm to School and food infrastructure/policy councils.

**Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture Website (www.misa.umn.edu/)**

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is a unique partnership between the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota Extension, and the Sustainers' Coalition, a group of individuals and community-based nonprofit organizations.

**Public Health Law Center**

The Public Health Law Center can support aspects of Comprehensive Planning and other areas of community healthy eating work that intersects with policies and regulations.

- Information on Liability ([publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/liability](http://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/liability))
- Kansas Farmers' Markets Resources ([publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/kansas-farmers-market-resources](http://publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/kansas-farmers-market-resources))

**Food System Partners**

**Food Safety**

Food safety inspectors and other officials involved with regulating food businesses from farm to table are important partners, collaborators and stakeholders. Most of the healthy eating strategies involve a solution that involves a food business or food operation. Food inspectors have built relationships with the food industry and can be key liaisons and collaborators. Regulators are partners in creating solutions that achieve increased access to healthy, safe food.

Reach out to your inspector. Invite him or her for a cup of coffee or tea and get to know each other. They are connected to other colleagues involved in community planning, public health and safety, and regulatory issues.

Please see appendix F for an overview of the food regulatory system in Minnesota and how to locate the agencies and inspectors for your area of the state.

**Minnesota Local Foods Advisory Committee (LFAC)**

The intent of this advisory committee is to provide a non-adversarial setting where issues relating to local meat and food can be raised and discussed, information can be shared and problem-solving between Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Health, and the local food community can take place.

[Local Foods Advisor Committee webpage (www.misa.umn.edu/resources/local-food-advisory-committee)](http://www.misa.umn.edu/resources/local-food-advisory-committee)
University of Minnesota Extension (Community Development, Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships)

Local and regional partners in nutrition, food access, community vitality, sustainable development, policy, systems, and environmental change efforts in communities across Minnesota.

- Community Development page (extension.umn.edu/community/about/)
- Regional and Sustainable Development Partnerships (www.extension.umn.edu/rsdp/)

Studies and reports

- Salt Intake, Stroke, and Cardiovascular Disease: Meta-analysis of Prospective Studies (http://www.bmj.com/content/339/bmj.b4567)
- Effective Population-wide Public Health Interventions to Promote Sodium Reduction (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2764755/)
- The Importance of Population-Wide Sodium Reduction as a Means to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke (http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/123/10/1138.full)
- Sugar, Uric Acid, and the Etiology of Diabetes and Obesity (http://diabetes.diabetesjournals.org/content/62/10/3307.short)
- Sweeteners and the Risk of Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes: The Role of Sugar-sweetened Beverages (http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11892-012-0259-6)
- Competing Views on Public Health Strategies (PDF) (http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/law/SugarLabelingRegulation_AJPH_5.12.pdf)
- Trans-Fats and Coronary Heart Disease (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3024842/)
- Trans-fatty Acids Intake and Risk of Myocardial Infarction (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8281700)
- Reduced or Modified Dietary Fat for Preventing Cardiovascular Disease (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11687015)
- Dietary Fat and Risk of Coronary Heart Disease in Men: Cohort Follow-up Study in the United States (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8688759?dopt=Citation)
- Effect of Reducing Total Fat Intake on Body Weight: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials and Cohort Studies (http://www.bmj.com/content/345/bmj.e7666)
- Health Benefits of Fruits and Vegetables (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3649719/)
Appendix B: Minnesota Counties Health Rankings

County Health Rankings and Roadmaps (http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/opi/pm/rankings/)

What Works for Health provides information on health indicators to implement evidence-informed policies, programs, and system changes.
Appendix C: Hunger Prevalence by County
Appendix D: Minnesota New Cancer Diagnosis by County

All Ages, New Cancer Diagnosis by County: 2007 - 2011

Source: Minnesota Public Health Data Access, Minnesota Environmental Tracking Program
https://apps.health.state.mn.us/mndata/et
Appendix E: Minnesota Diabetes Prevalence by County

Quick Facts: Diabetes in Minnesota
(http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/healthimprovement/data/quick-facts/diabetes.html)

Information on the demographics of diabetes incidence and prevalence, current interventions and costs.
Appendix F: Minnesota Food Regulations Overview

Public Health Law Center Food Regulatory System Resources

Efforts to promote access to healthy food can be complicated by safety concerns surrounding how food is grown, handled, and prepared. By understanding the legal framework and government authority to prevent foodborne illness, food producers, those selling and serving food, public health officials, and community members will have the tools they need to support efforts to increase consumption of safe and healthy food.

Preventing Foodborne Illness in Minnesota (PDF)
(publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/phlc-fs-Preventing-Foodborne-Illness-MN-2016.pdf)

Understanding the legal framework and government authority to prevent foodborne illness can support efforts to increase consumption of safe and healthy food. This resource identifies the system of laws created to prevent foodborne illness, the role of different government bodies that enforce these laws, and why these legal requirements exist.

Government Response to Foodborne Illness in Minnesota (PDF)
(publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/phlc-fs-Govt-Response-Foodborne-Illness-MN-2016.pdf)

Federal, state and local governments protect public health by working to reduce the risk of foodborne illness through their efforts in preventing and responding to outbreaks. This fact sheet discusses the legal basis and procedures for government agencies to respond to foodborne illness outbreaks in Minnesota.

Determining Legal Responsibility for Foodborne Illness & Injury (PDF)
(publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/phlc-fs-Det-Legal-Resp-Foodborne-Illness-2016.pdf)

In the United States, a person who is injured as a result of a foodborne illness may bring a civil cause of action against another by claiming that the other individual is legally liable for the harm caused by the foodborne illness. This fact sheet discusses civil liability for harm caused by foodborne illness.

Food Safety Standards in Child Care Settings (PDF)
(publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/MN%20Food%20Safety%20Standards%20Child%20Care%20Settings.pdf)

This fact sheet outlines how food safety standards intersect with the child care setting.

Policy Options for Local Governments in Kansas: Increasing Access to Healthy Food (PDF)
(www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Policy%20Options_Access%20toHealthy%20Food%201%202015.pdf)

Local governments play a pivotal role in ensuring that community members have access to healthy food through local policies. For example, local governments can change zoning and taxing laws to make it easier to create new grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and community...
gardens. This resource describes the different types of policies that local governments can use to increase access to healthy food within their communities.

**Food Safety Resources**

- Minnesota Food Code Fact Sheets ([www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fs/#foodcode](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/food/fs/#foodcode))
- FIGHT BAC! Partnership for Food Safety Education. Supporting consumers to prevent food poisoning ([www.fightbac.org/](http://www.fightbac.org/))
- University of Minnesota Extension Food Safety Team ([www.extension.umn.edu/food/food-safety/](http://www.extension.umn.edu/food/food-safety/))
- Produce Safety Alliance ([producessaftyalliance.cornell.edu/](http://producessaftyalliance.cornell.edu/))
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture Food Safety ([www.mda.state.mn.us/food/safety.aspx](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/food/safety.aspx))
- CDC Food Safety ([www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/](http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/))
- University of California Davis Food Safety ([ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/](http://ucfoodsafety.ucdavis.edu/))
- Agricultural Utilization Research Institute ([www.auri.org/](http://www.auri.org/))
- Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) – Local Food Advisory Committee ([www.misa.umn.edu/resources/local-food-advisory-committee](http://www.misa.umn.edu/resources/local-food-advisory-committee))
- Twin Cities Metro Advanced Practice Center ([www.health.state.mn.us/apc/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/apc/))
- Mitchell Hamline Public Health Law Center Healthy Eating and Food Safety ([publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/food-safety](http://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/food-safety))