

**Request for Proposals to Provide Outreach Services to Corner Stores for the
Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program
Questions and Answers**

Q - Do we need to pre-select the corner stores or locations we will work with in the proposal?

A - No. Pre-identifying stores is not mandatory but you will have a stronger proposal if you can demonstrate that store owners have already indicated their interest and willingness to participate in the program. In addition, for a store to be eligible to participate, the store needs to be in compliance with the City's licensing and environmental health codes. Because it is possible that a store designated in your proposal might be in violation of licensing requirements, any contact with a store should be done without a promise or guarantee of a commitment.

Q - Who pays for the owner incentives?

A - Owner incentives, and other incentives, should be included in your budget.

Q - How much of the grant funds can be used for incentives?

A - The RFP does not specify how much of the budget should be dedicated to specific program expenses; however, the budget form on Attachment B outlines allowable expenses.

Q - Could you please comment on “store owner and participant incentives”; such as the “providing incentives for store owners to collect sales data” listed under Evaluation? or under the Implementing store enhancement plans where it says “providing incentives for youth and/or community members to participate in store enhancement process”?

A – During the pilot of the Healthy Corner Store Program, the health department tried to collect sales data from owners and learned that it's not readily available. Many did not have systems in place collect the data or keep accurate data. Though we asked them to complete weekly logs of produce sales, many did not do it accurately, or at all. An incentive for turning in weekly sales data could encourage owners to collect and report correct data that will be used for evaluation purposes. Incentives could also be used to recruit youth to participate in the corner store program or for customers to complete surveys, etc.

Q - Can you provide examples of allowed incentives?

A - The health department does not allow cash to be used as incentive. If organizations want to pay cash to store owners, the stores would have to be listed as sub-contractors. We encourage organizations to use gift cards as incentives because they are less administratively-burdensome and you can track their distribution, which is useful in case we are audited.

Q - Who is responsible for collecting the required data? How will evaluation of stores be done?

A - Selected organizations will be responsible for collecting required evaluation data from the stores. The health department will provide the tools and protocol for conducting the evaluation activities. The health department expects selected organizations to serve as “foot soldiers” for collecting evaluation data from participating stores.

Q - Are there any logos or visual acknowledgement of participation that can be provided to the stores?

A- The health department provides signage promoting fresh produce but it has not created a “designation” for stores indicating that they are participating in the Minneapolis Healthy Corner Store Program. Applicants can certainly include a designation-type program in their proposal if they think it would be meaningful to the store owners and their customers.

Q - What are the things that the corner stores have to do?

A - Corner store owners must be willing experiment with various store modifications so they can consistently provide affordable, fresh produce in visible areas that are marked with attractive signage. They must be willing to increase their variety of produce and their knowledge about handling and marketing it. They must also provide accurate sales data of fresh produce. In return, stores receive produce training in produce handling, attractive signage, store action plans outlining strategies for increasing produce variety and increasing its visibility and attractiveness within the store, assistance implementing the plan; regular troubleshooting and assistance in attracting customers.

Q - What is the definition of affordable? Would lowering the cost of produce and healthy food in a store count as an eligible activity?

A - The health department does not have a definition of affordable, and the lower prices is not the primary goal of this program. The goals of the program are increases in the varieties available and produce sales. If lowering the price is strategy to affect sales, the health department will help selected organizations and store owners identify price reduction strategies. A large percentage of customers at the corner stores are WIC eligible; so for an authorized WIC vendor store, price may not be as important as the quality of the produce. Because of the dynamics of produce availability, affordable may also be what customers pay at the corner stores compared to other stores. Do the store’s customers feel they are receiving value in the healthy foods they purchase?

Q - Is there any focus on locally generated or grown products?

A - The main focus is on improving residents’ access to healthy foods. If increased access to fresh produce can be accomplished with local products, it would be beneficial for customers and local growers. But, it’s not necessary. The goal is to increase sales and consumption of healthy foods regardless of source or origin.

Q - Could you review the grant time lime?

A - Here is the Proposed Timeline (please see section F, bottom of page 6 of the RFP):
April 2, 4:00 pm: Proposal due; electronic or faxed copies will not be accepted.
Mid April Anticipated notification of awards
End April Anticipated start date of contracts.

Q - And the timeline for reporting expenditures?

A - The timeline for the project is from April 2012 to June 30, 2013. The health department will require selected agencies to submit evaluation data (store participation, variety of produce items, type and reach of community engagement activities and sales data) periodically and in mid-October 2012 and June 2013.

Q - Why 8 stores? Are 8 stores the minimum?

A - Selected agencies must work with a minimum of eight stores, as the goal of the RFP is to extend the reach of the corner store program throughout the city. While eight may seem like a lot, the healthy corner store process (i.e, store makeovers) is well-developed and fairly easy to implement. And, selected agencies will have access to the health department's grocery store consultant. Once selected agencies have helped stores through the make-over process, their role will be to conduct routine check-ins, customer engagement activities and evaluation.

Q - If my group is interested in both RFPs, can we apply for both?

A - The intent of both RFPs is to extend the reach and impact of Healthy Living strategies such as the corner store program and other health department initiatives. Because the Healthy Living RFP can include corner store activities, the health department is not likely to award two separate (but related) contracts to one organization. Though the RFPs one can complement the other, they have different selection processes.

Q - Is there a specific focus area for selection of the corner stores? Do they all have to be in one area? Do they have to be spread out?

A - The stores can be concentrated or spread out. Selected organizations do not have to be within the health department's designated priority areas; however, the stores must be located within the priority areas.