

## Healthy Food Retail Strategies

Karen Shore: Hi everyone. I'm glad to be talking with you today about Healthy Food Retail Strategies as part of a webinar series that we are supporting on helping make healthier food and beverage environments in various locations throughout the state of Kansas. I'm Karen Shore and I'm a director at The Food Trust.

The Food Trust is a nonprofit organization working nationally to expand access to healthy and affordable foods, particularly in low-income communities and vulnerable populations. We work to help make sure that healthier foods and beverages are available, regardless of where they are sold or served in communities in need.

Our work really spans across the country including work that we're doing in Kansas currently and largely takes the form of three types of projects. One is advocating for better food policies, which we do really at the national level. But represented here on this map, we are showing our healthy retail programs that we work on, as well as the community food systems projects, projects related to the farmers markets, related to farm to school, for example. We also have initiatives in various states and local jurisdictions to support healthy food financing efforts.

Some of our recent work in Kansas includes some strategies to help support new and existing grocers to better stock healthy foods and to support the business of their store, particularly around healthy food financing strategies to provide funding for new a grocery development, as well as infrastructure upgrades for existing stores. We've also done work on food distribution strategies and are supporting and collaborating with Kansas State University on the Rural Grocery Initiative led by Dave Proctor to do work throughout the state in rural grocery stores to help expand access to healthier foods and better provide strategies for sharing resources and providing training.

At The Food Trust, we advocate for using a comprehensive approach to healthy food access. That means looking at ways to expand access and availability of healthy foods, for example through grocery stores in areas that haven't had a grocery store for a long time, sometimes called a food desert, working with small stores whether they're small rural grocery stores, whether they're urban bodegas or corner stores. We do a lot of work with farmers markets in low-income communities as well as some work with alternative markets. There are a lot of great examples of these that have been launched very recently in the last couple of years in Kansas. And they usually come about to address specific needs of a community often after the community loses its last grocery store when one hasn't been able to be attracted to an area for one reason or another. We also have a robust history working in schools and institutions such as preschools and women shelters. The other pillar of a comprehensive approach is helping to create demand in communities for healthy foods, and that includes nutrition knowledge, food and cooking knowledge, as well as helping engage communities and engage youth in the work of reshaping the food landscape. And of course, when working with low-income populations we pay a particular attention to the affordability of the changes that we put into place. So whether it's working with the emergency food system or working with free and reduced meal programs or working on innovative distribution strategies to help reduce the cost of food that is sold in small stores, for example. A key part of making food more accessible to low-income populations is making sure that it's affordable. That also means helping to advocate for policies to support

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SNAP and WIC enrollment, as well as helping support stores that accept SNAP and accept WIC whenever possible.

So I am at the top left here and this is the team that I am fortunate to work with. We also have an organization of about 130 people here at The Food Trust and we'll be providing technical assistance to any of you who need it. Roughly, we break down on our team internally as to those who are involved with healthy retail efforts and those who are involved more with schools institutions, nutrition, and educational programs. That's not a perfect breakdown, but at a high level that pretty much roughly sums it up. Here is a slide that kind of depicts which experts on our team would be most likely to engage depending on what the technical assistance is that's needed. We also have some folks on the team who've got, in addition to the retail versus nutrition education and school settings, we've got some specific expertise in rural food access issues and health equity in rural communities, as well as local food systems, and how food moves from farm to fork.

For our contact information or a technical assistance request, please do feel free to reach out directly to me. I've put my email address here, and I'll put it again at the end of the slide presentation. I know Katie has provided an email with information on how to submit a technical assistance request, and it will be our pleasure to help support you.

Here is some background and context about the work that we're doing in healthy retail settings. First, it's grounded in what healthy food access means. I talked a little bit about that when I was talking about the comprehensive approach. Really, in plain language we're talking about having a place to buy groceries. It's not just a place nearby, but it's a place that people like and trust. It's a place that sells food that they want to buy, that is culturally appropriate, that's high quality, that's safe to consume, and that sells food in a way that people want to eat it. Sometimes that means whole food, fresh produce, and so on. But sometimes that means grab and go food. It depends on how the store is used and what the community's needs and preferences are. Of course, it means, as I mentioned, convenience - being able to get to the store easily and shop in the store. So not just a location as to where the store is, although obviously, that is extremely important, but how the store is set up to support, for example, elderly shoppers, for example, to support shoppers with disabilities. One thing is to buy healthy food and beverages, and also knowing what to buy when you're in the store. All of these really gets at nutrition knowledge, knowing how to purchase healthier food, what to purchase, how to store it, and how to prepare it once it's back in a home. It's also knowing which food is healthy and even why different foods are consumed. There's a real important piece here about really bringing that information and awareness to shoppers in the stores, as well as out in community settings. Of course, being able to pay your grocery bill and not being called out at the register or called out short. Really wanting to be very clear on pricing strategies, on keeping the cost low, but then having very clear pricing strategies for the healthier items in the store, gathering items together, doing promotions to help make them more accessible to low-income shoppers. Then having a store be able to accept nutrition assistance are really key parts of supporting a healthy retail initiative that is aimed at addressing health disparities. I already mentioned knowing what to do with the food once you've got it.

I apologize, I know that it looks a little bit blurry in the webinar. I'm hoping that in the hard copy slides that you all have access to that this is a little bit clearer to see. But really, at a high level

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what we're looking at here is on the upper left-hand side, all of these characteristics of the food environment. And on the upper right-hand side, characteristics of the home, characteristics of the community, the household, and how keeping in mind and being informed by both of these things really impact downstream both the availability of the food as well as whether or not people are buying it and ultimately, whether you're really able to impact healthy eating.

When there is a disconnect between what people want and what's sold in the store, or what people are able to afford and what's available - and that disconnect is kind of represented up here by the yellow slash mark between the bidirectional arrow - or when there's a change in the environment, such as the store that has been around for a really long time finally closes its doors, or the last grocery store in a community shuts down for good. There is immediate impact, not only on the availability of healthy food, which is just below that in terms of the potential access that's affected, that immediately plummets of course. But what a lot of people don't think about is that there's also an impact here in this bidirectional arrow. Exposure to a healthy food environment helps to create demand for that healthy food. We say, "Helping make the easy choice the healthy choice." That's really important, being exposed to healthy food and beverage environments, seeing that it's normal and just an expected part of the shopping experience. When the environment is completely geared toward a less healthy and a processed food and food that is consumed in restaurants, then it starts to shift what we think of as normal and starts to shift eating patterns [audio cuts out 11:13 - 11:34] impact the availability and the affordability of healthy food options and the convenience of healthy food options. But it also begins to have an impact on what people are expecting and what tastes are considered normal and people are exposed to.

Here's an example of a grocery store that many of you viewing this webinar are familiar with. It's the Dillon's Market that is actually in the town of St. John, a small town in central Kansas. The store closed down. That was the last grocery store in the town of St. John. After it had been in business for many years, it closed its doors. There was quite a lot of press about some of the theories for why this happened. But the end results is this is a town that has lost its grocery store and has lost the jobs associated with the grocery store as well.

Why do stores close? Well, there are reasons related to the store itself and there are reasons related to the larger business and the larger market. Stores, particularly many small stores, may have a degree of debt that makes ongoing operations too challenging or insurmountable. They often will have a lack of access to capital to support infrastructure upgrades, for example. Many stores, again especially a problem in rural grocery stores, have a really degrading infrastructure. You end up seeing situations where you've got a cooler, for example, that's on its last leg and was probably on its last leg 10 years ago. But, it's kind of being cobbled together by someone who knows how to fix it, and you have to call them in and have the cooler service on an almost monthly basis just to keep it working because you can't afford the cost of purchasing a new one. Or you can't access capital in order to support a low-interest loan, for example, to support the purchase of a new cooler. What that means is that the cost of these high utility bills is really crushing many of these stores. Of course, anything that's driving up costs of the operation of the store is impacting the ability of the store owner to make a living, to pay the staff well, hire new staff, expand the store, or invest in the store. And of course, it also means that the prices are likely to be higher because they need to pass on their cost to the customer. So there are a number

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of other reasons that are related to the operations of the store and the business of running a grocery store. If a store is smaller, it might have a lower selection. It might not have the variety or the quantity of foods that people want. That's not always the case, but it can be the case sometimes.

Then, of course, there're reasons related to the owners themselves, like their own capacity to run the store there. Are they a good general manager or are there skills that they need to be successful and to innovate? Is there a plan for who's going to take over after they retire? Many, many stores are owned and operated by families for generations. If there's not a plan in place to turn that business over to a new owner, ultimately, the end result is that the store could close. From a business to a market perspective, of course, there's competition. Competition to small stores took the form of a sort of chain supermarkets many years ago, and that was replaced by supercenters in the not too distant past here. Most recently, dollar stores are a huge source of competition. Dollar stores and smaller format larger chain stores are a big source of competition for many independents, but also for many supermarket chains that are getting competition from dollar stores and small format stores as well. Competition has always been and just continues to be a real threat to remaining open. Business priorities at the headquarters level, different formats of the store that the headquarters is interested in investing in. A store may be making money. It's not always the case that only stores that are losing money close. The store may be making money, but it may just not be the format of the store that the headquarters is really investing in. There may be other regions that investment is really focusing on.

There are enormous food distribution challenges to many independent stores that don't quite purchase enough food in order to be serviced by a more mainstream or a broad line food distributor. Just accessing healthier food options and a variety of food options in general can be a real challenge. There are numerous policy barriers that can make it very challenging to operate a store. For example, if you are running a store in a low-income community and it is difficult for residents to be enrolled in nutrition assistance, that means there are fewer shoppers who can use those dollars in your store, which certainly has an impact on business. Then demographics, all of the things that many of us are aware of in our day to day work and have thought about and learned about, like small and dwindling populations in some areas and older populations. On the whole, rural populations tend to be older than their urban counterparts, tend to be sicker with higher rates of chronic disease, for example. That's certainly true in low-income areas, urban and rural communities. We're talking about higher rates of disability, lower rates of car ownership, and all of these things that really combine to create special concerns and challenges for ongoing grocery operations.

The impact on people really can't be overstated. Some of the obvious things are so hugely impactful that it takes quite a bit longer to shop for groceries. The round-trip may be a really long time in the car, which of course is tough on people. It means that you have to have a vehicle that is operational. It also means putting a preference on one-stop shopping. It might mean that if you're going to make a really long trip, you're going to go to a supercenter to buy everything that you need in one place, as opposed to making a long trip and then stopping in multiple places. Certainly, it can increase the cost of food and diminish food quality, especially in terms of fresh items. When the food that is around you tends to be more processed, more restaurant type food, and the stores that remain have a hard time getting stocked with high-quality fresh items,

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certainly, the economic impact is really, really tough. It's tough because of the lack or the loss of tax revenue. It's the loss of jobs. It's the loss of what is often the economic engine in many neighborhoods. There are many towns in which a supermarket or a grocery store is really the anchor of the business community. When that last store closes its doors, it just often spells a disaster for the remaining retail operations in town. It's also the loss of a community hub, a loss of community history in a way. It's a loss of a community resource that often serves multiple purposes beyond just getting food. There's something else as well that is a loss. It's something that those of us who work in rural communities, those of us who work in vulnerable urban communities, it's very palpable. It's this loss of a sense that you live in a place that has your back, where your town, your neighborhood, your city is a place that you can meet your needs and meet your family's needs. I think that's something we're just very aware of today.

Really, the frame in which we approach this work is with an equity frame. We're trying to achieve the same outcome for all people regardless of where they live, regardless of how much money they make, regardless of the color of their skin, regardless of the resources that they have available to them. What that means is not necessarily doing the same things in every community, but trying to achieve the same outcome in every community. We often look at tailoring the interventions that we do in order to make sense in the place that we're working. We're going to talk a lot about the different ways we do that.

But first, I want to just frame a little bit. Some of the things that we'll be talking about will be ways that we get to work with grocery stores, the way that we work with the supermarkets. Because Kansas has many, many rural areas, and many of the urban areas also lack supermarket access and so small stores dominate, I want to spend some time talking specifically about small stores. What I mean when I say small stores are convenience stores, corner stores, just small mom and pops. Sometimes they'll have a gas station. Often times they will if it's a fuel retailer with a small food convenience store. Often times, many will have a grill or kind of like a deli sort of a place as well. You'll often see that combination. You can go in and get a pizza, a sandwich, or a hot meal. You can fill up your car gas and you can buy some kind of a very, very limited staple grocery items. You'll also see, of course, general stores or rural grocery stores, and many, many chain convenience stores. The other things that we're seeing quite a lot of are dollar stores. They are almost ubiquitous throughout Kansas. They have really rapidly come in in the last few years, and are really everywhere throughout the state. Then you also have pharmacies.

And fairly new to the game of food sales are stores like CVS and Walgreens and Rite Aid. These are national chain pharmacies that have a lot of food in them. Earlier, I mentioned that the store needs to be convenient for people to shop in. And I talked about how that meant people have to be able to get to it, physically get to it. The distance that they have to drive, or they have to take a bus, or they have to walk to get to the grocery store really matters. But they also have to be stores that people can shop in readily. It's interesting, there's some thinking that pharmacies are really being embraced by older populations and disabled populations because the parking lots aren't huge. You can park right outside, walk in easily. Of course, they are very much a handicap accessible, ADA compliant. If you're there picking up your medicine, in a way they are sort of mini one-stop shopping. You can pick up your medicine, they even provide some health services there, and you can purchase food on your way out. There are often several aisles of food, and even quite a bit of fresh food as well, and at least refrigerated or frozen food in the store. Many

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of them accept SNAP, and they're just becoming more relevant in terms of thinking about the food access landscape.

Just a couple of pictures. This is a typical urban bodega or corner store. It would be a convenience store that you would more likely see in the rural community. Often, there will be kind of a drive-up component to it. They will often sell a beer or liquor as well, but typically have a small food section, and also tend to have a small general store type section, whether it has hunting supplies, fishing tackle, or some light household items. They function as small general stores often in rural communities.

This is a larger general store. This is a format you don't typically see in Kansas. This is seen more in the Northeast and also the Pacific Northwest. But there may be some stores in Kansas that look like this or resembles this. This is kind of a larger general store. Even if architecturally it may look a little bit different, this is a larger, still rural, general store that really was the original supercenter 100 years ago. It's really intending to serve as a small department store, in a way, but they also sell food and typically gas as well.

Truck stops, convenience stores, diners, whether they're huge like this one, or whether they're just small-chain convenient stores like this one, they really dominate the landscape. People stop in, they gas up their cars, get a hot breakfast sandwich. Maybe on the way home, you're picking up milk or you're picking up bread. They're really used for purchasing food that is consumed right there, often, or on your way [audio cuts out at 27:26] on your way, on the drive. It's food that is easily consumed. Then there will also be a couple of the emergency food staples in the store as well.

This is a typical rural grocery store. It looks familiar to some folks. Independently owned and operated and/or franchised. These stores are supermarkets, but they may sort of run the gamut between serving as a general store or a small grocery store all the way up to being the small format supermarkets.

Then, I already mentioned dollar stores. This is one in Canada. The only reason I picked one in Canada is because it had a store name that wasn't a chain name that we would've recognized. But they are dominant in the Kansas food retail landscape.

Pop-up markets and farm stands are formats that are very easy to do. They are easy to do outside the school - Oh, they're not actually. I should take that back. There's nothing easy about running a farmers market or a farm stand. But what you don't have to do is put together land use agreements, planning, zoning, or purchase and build a new building in order to have one. From that perspective, they're easy to do. It's an option that's been used outside of schools, for example, hospitals, and community health clinics. Then also, it can be outside of the convenience stores or even something like a dollar store, particularly if the dollar store does not sell, as many of them don't, fresh produce. You're not actually competing in that case with the dollar store. I have to say one thing, putting on my rural hat for a moment. I'm anticipating a question, not because I'm recording this. I'm not actually able to answer any live questions, but I'm anticipating a question, which is, "Should we work in dollars stores?" I'm going to answer it this way, which is, clearly dollars stores are a huge part of the food landscape. We ignore them at our

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peril. There are wonderful opportunities for expanding access to healthy and affordable food by working with them. They are a very popular, very ubiquitous retail format. I will say, however, that dollars stores, in particular, represent a huge threat to many rural grocery stores. It would behoove us to be extremely careful about making sure that working with any supercenter or dollars store or chain doesn't really spell the final nail on the coffin of these rural grocery stores that are really under tremendous pressure and struggling to stay afloat and serve the communities in which they have lived and worked for often many generations. That's my dollars store answered question that wasn't asked. It's important that we think about ways of engaging dollar stores while being very careful and mindful of the impact that it could have, and being careful to avoid any unintended consequences.

This is a CVS Pharmacy. I'll take the guesswork out of it for you. This is actually just one corner of a CVS Pharmacy, now called CVS Health. There's really a wide variety of healthy foods. Certainly, we're looking at some foods here. I don't know if folks have their glasses on, but I can see some foods that may not necessarily be healthy. But in the main, most of what I'm looking at is fairly healthy. Obviously, the fresh produce that we see in the attractive wicker baskets, it's healthy, but there's also whole grain bread that I have seen sold at the kiosk or the shelves behind. There are also fresh eggs, milk, orange juice, yogurt, and things like that, all of which, of course, are important parts of healthy food categories.

Why small stores? Why would we not just completely ignore small stores all together? They tend to, especially convenience stores, they tend to be selling a lot of processed food, a lot of chips, a lot of liquor, a lot of beer, a lot of candy. The reason to consider working in small stores is because they're already there. They were already built. They're already constructed. While efforts should be happening to look at grocery store access and supermarket access in communities in need, the fact of the matter is that there is an important need to have a comprehensive approach to healthy food access. While it is important to be building supermarkets in areas of low food access, it is also important to be working in the small stores in the area because we know that these stores represent a larger portion of the food dollar for lower income shoppers. And also, because there are places, for example, maybe the population is so small or dwindling that it's not going to be possible to attract a new store to that area. So you've got smaller formats stores and rural grocery stores that we need to work with, to help support their businesses, and help enable the stores just to support our culture of health in the community. I already mentioned the important economic impacts and the community impacts, as well.

These half a dozen items really cut across different types of healthy retail programs, whether they are in supermarkets, whether they are just working in one store. Of course, assessing community needs and getting input from community members is a really critical part of doing this work and really listening to the community's voice about what their needs are and what the barriers are for accessing healthy food. Mapping also is an important part of this work where we really help to pinpoint where the areas of greatest need are and build a case for a development in those areas, or for investments in those areas. It is also store selection and recruiting the stores across a variety of different types of stores. So, picking where the stores are and recruiting the stores, engaging the community, doing outreach and communication about what is happening

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and how this is happening, and getting the word out about the program. Lastly, evaluating. Evaluating how effective that intervention is, and the store is, et cetera.

This chart shows some specific in-store interventions. Then it breaks it down as to whether we're talking about small stores or supermarkets. If you're looking at a grocery store that's somewhere in between, it's either closer to being a convenience store or it's closer to being a supermarket. For many rural grocery stores, there are probably in here, closer to being supermarkets. And you'd look at this list here. I already see about two-thirds of the way down on the right, under in-store nutrition education, I left out what should be a 'yes' under supermarket. That's a big part of working with supermarkets. Just pencil in a 'yes', under that blank box, please. Basically, a huge focus of the work with small store formats is getting those stores to have a healthier food and beverage environment, because you're adding healthy options. You're adding healthy foods. You're adding healthy beverages. You're helping the store to meet, for example, WIC guidelines and the minimum stocking requirements so that the store can accept WIC just as one example. The focus is really on having the foods there, consistently stocked, well priced in order to support healthier food access in a supermarket. Then, the items towards the bottom of the list, things like in-store nutrition education, cooking demos, doing healthy store tours, having a senior groups come and doing a tour about how to shop in your small grocery store, how to shop healthier, cook healthy on a budget, and certainly doing community clinical linkages in a small store, blood pressure screenings, heart health days, diabetes prevention and management education. Those are all really innovative ways of working with small stores, but they are also types or examples of the work that you're doing in higher performing small stores that are part of the program. You don't go into a convenience store that is mostly tobacco, alcohol, candy, chips, and sugar-sweetened beverages, and start doing blood pressure screenings and heart health education. That's something that you do once the food and beverage environment of the store has really been transformed in a significant way.

In a supermarket, conversely, the food is already there. You'd be hard pressed to walk into a supermarket and not see a wide variety of fresh produce, and healthy canned, frozen, and dried items, or fresh meats, and eggs. It's kind of a definition of what a supermarket is. There's almost too much choice in a supermarket, right? The focus of working in a supermarket or a larger grocery store is really around in-store marketing and merchandising, doing incentives like double up bucks, for example, in Price Choppers in Kansas and other places as well. Doing store loyalty cards and really trying to promote what's already there and healthy. Because they have more space and more capacity, they're often a wonderful place to do larger groups in nutrition education, in cooking demonstrations, healthy store tours, and certainly, community clinical linkages as well.

This is just a different way of visualizing a comprehensive approach to working in a healthy retail setting and expanding access to healthy foods. Whether you're looking at policy interventions and evaluation from the policy and research side of things, or whether you're making improvements to the store and adding healthy foods and beverages, or whether you're doing all of this stuff here in the blue around education and wellness, and youth engagement, and in-store marketing, that really helps to create nutrition education, or nutrition knowledge. It helps to create nutrition knowledge and the demands for healthier food in the community.

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One of the first ways that we start working with a store on a healthy retail program is thinking about which food we want to focus on. In a supermarket, you could pretty much pick any number of healthy foods. In a small store, you're going to be focusing on bringing in certain healthy foods. Are you focusing on the whole diet that is a wide variety of healthy food categories that are supportive of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, or the DGAs, that the USDA has just revised? Are you just really focusing on fruits and veggies, or maybe fresh fruits and veggies, or maybe the local fruits and vegetables? FINI, is the food and security nutrition incentive program that many of you are aware of, if not involved with. It really is promoting fruits and vegetables, especially fresh and local fruits and vegetables. That's the idea behind the incentive program. It just creates a way of addressing hunger, supporting healthier eating, but also supports local agriculture. There's often a focus on snack items and maybe water. Say in a gas station convenience store, where you're getting feedback from the community that they're purchasing snacks or purchasing grab and go items in the store, but it's not really a place that people think of to go grocery shopping, per se. It makes sense in a store like that to promote water as a healthy beverage, to promote healthy grab and go items, whether it's hard-boiled eggs, or yogurt, or low fat mozzarella cheese sticks, or even healthy wraps, cut fruit salads. We've all seen these open-air kiosks in many of the convenience stores that we've gone into. The goal is to have them be more ubiquitously available to meet the needs of underserved residents. Those kinds of foods are appropriate sometimes to that use of the store, where, though more of a grocery store, it may accept WIC, or it may be able to accept WIC. If it already accepts WIC, we tend to really prioritize WIC stores for selection just because we know that it's already bringing in shoppers who are really a vulnerable population and where we know that things like nutrition education and early healthy tastes and healthy eating can have a really big impact.

Here are some examples. This is a program that we have in San Jose, California, really focusing on local and fresh food. We even have a gleaned program where fresh local fruits and vegetables are gleaned and sourced extremely inexpensively. We've got 10 limes here for a dollar. Just looking at recouping the operational cost of doing that, which is really very minimal in California. It would be quite a bit more, I have no doubt, in Kansas, but it's certainly an example of a direction of innovation for a sourcing healthier items.

Healthy groceries and WIC foods are really, really important. I can't underscore enough the importance of really supporting WIC stores and prioritizing enrollment of a WIC store first in an intervention, and thinking about ways to help the store help the WIC customers. For some smaller stores, accepting the full WIC package can be challenging. It can be anxiety-provoking thinking about what's going to happen when the inspector comes and I'm short on one item and I could get kicked out of the WIC program. These are real concerns of many store owners. Whatever can be done from a programmatic perspective or a policy perspective to help fit in with what was already happening, what are the existing assets in a community, and of a WIC authorized store, of course, it's one of those. Whatever we can do to help the stores that accept WIC be better stores and have healthier food and beverage environments is really, really important.

Healthy snacks and grab-and-go. On the left, this is a sample of lunch I had. Most of the pictures come from various trips. On the left, grab-and-go and healthy snack items are really becoming very popular in some national chains as well as the regional chains of stores that are really just

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making a move to both support better health as well as to get on trend and really support this national trend toward healthier eating. There are some interesting pilot programs, piloting grab-and-go dinners in stores that are more convenience stores, like the fuel retailers I mentioned.

In-store marketing. Regardless of whether you're working in a small store or whether you're working in a supermarket, it's a really, really important part of creating demand for healthier foods and also promoting a program. Whether you're looking at shelf toppers or certain displays and end caps, tags on the shelf to help guide healthier decisions. We did talk about incentives and I'll talk about those again in a minute. Things like NuVal, which is a shelf tagging system that's a nutrition rating system that prints that nutrition scores on the price tags that go on the shelf edge to help guide customers towards healthier options. All of these things get at helping guide healthier choices at the point of purchase.

Recipe cards are one of the most popular types of marketing collateral that we have really used in many of our programs at The Food Trust. And they can be easy – well, not that easily, but we go through a pretty good process to tailor the cards to a local community. We've done that in a number of different communities already. It's a fun process, I have to say, because it involves doing things that our nutrition educators love to do, which is recipe research, cooking, and taste tests. By doing these different things we sort of come up with a set of recipes, all of which are intended to be used by the low-income shopper and are intended to be easily cooked without very much at all in a way of kitchen equipment or cooking knowledge and can be purchased affordably for \$5.00 or less.

Here is an example of some recipes that we created for a project in rural New England. The process was looking on church websites and food bank websites for recipes that were popular in the area, and then reformulating them as needed to fit products that we knew would be ubiquitously available. And in this case, these are rural general stores. But you could do this for corner stores. Of course, if you're talking about creating recipes in a supermarket, the chances are really good that the food will already be there.

Marketing and signage. These are examples of some signs both inside and outside of the store. Whether it's on a menu board, which is on the upper left, or on a big banner, as soon as you walk in across the entire...Your eye goes directly to the back of the store and there's a huge banner with the logo of the healthy retail program, the name of the store, and our catch phrase, which is, "You Deserve Food This Good". Then fun, fast, fresh, which is a subtitle. Or whether it's a window wrap on the outside of a store. You can see that First Street Market on the bottom left hand photo, there are beautiful window wraps. These are actually the things that go on busses. It's completely transparent from the inside, but on the outside it's a beautiful picture that replaces tobacco and alcohol advertising on the exterior of the store.

Inside are attractive displays with tilted produce displays showing the produce attractively. We often will do different types of things. We have loose produce in the store. In some stores, we have bagged produce that is already pre-bagged and available for a dollar or two dollars a bag, which is really popular. That's also a tactic as a subtext that we will use sometimes at pharmacy markets in low-income communities to help make it less daunting and take the guess work out of how much the food costs.

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Again, here's an example of a small version of the window wraps. These are usable in areas that have a higher crime. It doesn't obstruct in any way the view into the store. If I were standing in front, these would probably come up to about my hips or so, or around my waist. It's not something that interferes with police or the community's ability to see what's going on inside the store. Again, these are pictures of fresh fruits, colorful fruits, and vegetables, the slogan. It says that the store accepts SNAP, EBT, the name of the store, and it identifies the store as participating in a healthy retail program.

Here are some examples of exterior refreshments. Here is kind of a before and after of awnings, change of awnings, change of the door, and reduction of tobacco advertising.

Here's another example. This is actually top and bottom. It looks like it is all one picture, but it's a new awning outside of the store, and a new sign for the store, as well as a produce display at the corner and it looks alike also here on the side. This is a store that's on a corner, but it's actually in a shopping center. The idea was that regardless of which direction cars are coming from they can see a pretty awning and they can see produce out on display in front of the store. Then inside, real attention was given to having a very robust fruit and vegetable section, which is a good thing if you're going to have an apple in your logo and you're going to say fruits and vegetables on your banner. You better make sure that the inside of the store backs that up. A lot of attention was given to the produce department.

I already talked about incentives, but there are a lot of examples of them. Double up bucks is certainly the most popular in Kansas that are used to really add value and stretch the food dollar for low-income shoppers. They have long been used at farmers markets and are wonderful to increase sales, and also increase dollars going to the farmers market vendors, also known as farmers and ranchers. In a supermarket setting, you can use them in three ways. One, there's nothing stopping a supermarket from running any kind of promotion on a healthy food item. They might run a promotion on sugar-sweetened beverages or a certain snack item or a dessert item. A promotion certainly could be done for a healthier food item, really at any time, should a particular company like Birds Eye, for example, want to support that. But if you're talking about an incentive directed at shoppers, if you're going to direct it at SNAP participants, then it needs to be part of a FINI grant program. Otherwise, you'll need a waiver from USDA due to preferential treatment regulations to prevent different treatment of SNAP shoppers from shoppers who do not participate in SNAP. There's nothing that would prevent it, other than not having the funding to do this, which is a serious concern. But something what we often say is, if you're not going to be targeting SNAP participants and you're just working in a store in a very low-income area, you can pretty much expect that most of the shoppers in that store are going to be SNAP eligible. If you have funding to do a coupon or an incentive strategy program, then just forget that the shoppers of the store needs to be SNAP participants and make the incentives available to all shoppers. But the chances are probably very low, if you're very careful about store selection, that you will be offering an incentive to shoppers that don't meet those income thresholds. You'll be alleviating yourself of the burden of needing to check and monitor that and create a system to do that, which is extremely challenging. Again, that's only if you know that the area you're working in is almost predominantly SNAP eligible and very, very, very low-income across the board. Otherwise, using the funding that is limited to target the most

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vulnerable population not only makes the most sense in terms of having an impact, but it's also the most ethical.

Infrastructure investments. I've talked about this already. I'll just quickly go over this. Whether you're talking about simple baskets, purchasing a new refrigerator, or purchasing a whole new cooler, there are many, many ways that funding can be used to support the upgrade of existing infrastructure. Often times in a healthy retail program, we suggest building in some funding to support doing that or getting private dollars or foundation dollars to augment public funds, which often are to prevent the use of funding to support the purchase of equipment, for example. Just depending on what the specific grant requirements are, you can look for other ways to access funds for infrastructure investments.

Here is just some before and after. This is looking at the same section of the store from a slightly different angle, but it's the same part of the store where an isle had a bakery end cap was opened up and replaced by a whole produce display that was actually created by a community organization.

Here is an example of a really attractive end cap that's used in a program in Columbus, Ohio, where they're really highlighting that the kids from a local community garden and a local youth garden are growing the green beans, I think it was. Everything is all brought together and attractively displayed and you're highlighting the various community connections.

Store murals are another example of an exterior improvement to a store. They're always tailored, not just tailored to the community, but created by the community and with community input and participation.

There are a lot of challenges to doing this work. They basically center around the store, the owner, and the program. I'll just really quick touch on a couple of these things. Picking the right stores and knowing the store that's being selected for the intervention is being used, is trusted, is liked by the people in the community, and is really important. Paying attention to the fact that the store may be used for so many different things. If you're working with a store that primarily sells alcohol and cigarettes and trying to get that store to sell healthier food, is that a good use of resources? We would say that in general, it's a good idea to work with stores that are selling food. In other words, stores with at least 50 percent of the revenue of that store is from the sale of food. That's a good place to start. There are often real challenges with how small some of the stores are that we work in with community perceptions of the store that can be tough to turn around, but certainly possible. Then working with any kind of chain or franchise, you're often dealing with corporate control and also corporate distribution.

Some challenge with the store owner, I haven't really figured out a nicer way to frame this. This doesn't in any way mean that there's a store owner that people don't like, although that certainly happens. This is more like just challenges and interpersonal relationship issues, which is that the owners are often just really, really busy. They may be absent from a store. That can be a real problem if its store owner owns multiple stores or owns a business but isn't present in the store. That can present real challenges for trying to have that decision maker in the store. It can take a lot of time to build trust, which is really the cornerstone of this program or any program that

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you're doing in the store. And it should. You're asking people to take a business risk essentially. There are a lot of things that we do to help minimize that business risk from providing technical assistance to the store owner, providing a lot of support, especially at the beginning with distribution and sourcing, and pricing strategies, and all that. But at the end of the day, you're asking someone to try something different and that appears very risky, and it is very risky. Building that trust is really key. Then often times there are perception barriers. There are barriers in terms of the store owner's perception of what customers want and need versus what folks really want and need in the community.

In terms of the program itself, the goals are myriad, like having adequate funding, thinking about the staffing requirements, making sure that the program even has the right goals. The program should absolutely align with other initiatives and priorities. But it's also hard to find the right balance sometimes. We, The Food Trust and many other partners we work with, are looking at striking a balance between depth and breadth. Instead of having every single store have a light touch in changes, you really want to go deeper into very strategically selected stores to have a bigger impact. That really tends to be the direction that many of these programs are heading in.

In terms of industry trends, I did mention earlier that this is healthier food, fresh, and local. These are trends that are national trends. We often frame it when we're working with small business owners that we're really bringing in business skills and equipment that helps them align their business with national trends, which of course they're interested in. I also think that there's something really important about the way millennials are shopping and the advent of new technologies such as online shopping and grocery delivery. You order your groceries from an app, you pick up at the store, and you don't even get out of your car. You just pull up and someone loads your car up. All of these things are really innovative. I think there's a big question that remains as to what degree they represent potential to meet the needs of underserved residents. There's no question that Amazon Prime will deliver canned food to you if you live in certain areas. But to what extent did these new services and innovations represent real change for a community in need. I think there are some good questions there that many of us are working to figure out.

None of this work would be possible without many, many partners who are not only involved in executing the work, but are really behind the design of the work, the funding of the work, and really how the work is taking shape and taking hold.

I just talked to you about the areas in the red font bubbles here. But all of these other pieces of healthy food access really represent the policy and system approaches to healthy food access. We've talked a lot so far today about many of the environmental changes within a store and a little bit about some of the policy issues, as well, and certainly health care linkages, which is a systems change. But whether you're looking at the healthcare system, or you're talking about housing or transportation access, these are all important ways that food access can really fit in with the work of other systems that are taking aim at health disparities.

Healthy Food Financing provides grants and loans for a new grocery store development in low food access areas.

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Community and Youth Engagement helps to create this knowledge and education in our youth and also helps to elevate youths as change agents in the community and in their schools.

WIC, I mentioned already, has been a really important partner, whether in Richmond, Virginia where there's real intentional focus on increasing the number of WIC stores and improving the food and beverage environment of existing WIC stores. Or in Kansas, where WIC serves as advisors to K-State, doing a feasibility study, looking at ways to better support WIC participants in retail settings, and also at helping us understand what the barriers are that are faced by WIC stores. What are the challenges faced by WIC stores so that when designing policy initiatives and funding initiatives like Healthy Food Financing, we can make sure that we have a good understanding of those so that we can come up with appropriate solutions and recommendations.

Community clinical linkages or food access and healthcare certainly involves things happening in the store to better support health, whether that is having an in-store nutritionist or doing a healthy store tour, doing screenings and health education in the store. But it also means tying into the healthcare system as a whole, whether that is training that can happen with residents or medical students about the importance of... We've all heard how little nutrition education medical students receive, but thinking about ways to include screenings for hunger and food access education and how the food landscape really helps the social determinants of health. It really helps determine what impacts there are that affect health and help promote health. Those are really important ways to engage the medical community. Fruits and vegetables prescriptions health bucks, which are an incentive just like a double up bucks or Philly food bucks in our area, where the coupon can be used for heart healthy items.

We did a pilot in Philadelphia called The Heart Smarts pilot, where we partnered with the community health workers and hospitals to do this in-store nutrition education focused on a heart health message. For example, why fiber was important for heart health and low sodium diets are important. We also had in-store screenings, health screenings, BMI screenings, and blood pressure screenings. It's done by medical professionals in these small stores that had much refreshed and updated healthful food and beverage environments.

As I mentioned, a part of this was nutrition education. It's a really important part. Each lesson had a specific nutrition message and a recipe that went along with it. Then there was always, at the end of each lesson, a small but meaningful giveaway for the participants to help promote cooking in the home.

In summary, strong healthy store programs, whether they're in rural areas or urban areas, frontier areas, whether they are in small stores or supermarkets, are always very sensitive to place and shaped by the community and the needs of the community. They certainly fit within existing programs and help to lift up the efforts of others as well, working synergistically, in other words, with what is already in place and the existing assets in a community. Not only are they focused on meeting the needs of that community, but they're also tied into larger things that are happening, tied into larger trends, tied into bigger evaluation efforts, resources that will often go beyond the target community, and to help to tie into making efficient changes. It's very important to both bolster the capacity of the store itself as well as the store owner to sell healthier food and understand the intervention. But it's also important to do things to engage the

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community in a real and meaningful way and help create demand for healthier food in the community.

With that, I'll conclude today's webinar. Thank you everyone very much for joining me today. If there are any additional questions or anyone would like some technical assistance or support around healthy... [end of audio]