**Project Year End Debrief: 2017**

**Name of Program:**  Prevention First Healthy Retail PS 1.2 (Grocery Stores)

**Goal:** To strengthen healthier food access and sales in retail venues such as grocery stores through increased availability, improved pricing, placement, and promotion.

**PS 1.2** Strengthen healthier food access and sales in retail venues (such as grocery stores, supermarkets, chain restaurants, etc.) through increased availability, improved pricing, placement, and promotion.

*(Julie Bongard will be covering increasing healthier food access in community venues such as meal sites through promoting food rescue.)*

**SMART Objectives (S**pecific (include target population) **M**easurement **A**chievable **R**elevant **T**ime-oriented**):**

1. Establish criteria and tracking system for three product categories: 1) fresh, seasonal produce, 2) healthy snacks and 3) bottled water at Wellpinit Trading Post by December 2017.
2. Increase promotion of fresh produce, bottled water and healthy snacks at Wellpinit Trading Post by using strategic placement of coolers, shelf displays and signage by September 2018.
3. Decrease annual sales of carbonated nonalcoholic beverages and beer by 2% of total store sales each by increasing prices, decreasing product visibility and minimizing promotional signage between September 2015 and September 2018.
4. Increase the annual sales of fresh produce at the Wellpinit Trading Post by 5% between September 2015 and September 2018.

**Best or promising practices used (cite):**

1. Customer Engagement- surveys, interviews, conversations.
2. Staff training for Trading Post employees-produce management, customer service, displays, inventory management
3. Research/Best Practices
   1. [Food Trust-National Healthy Corner Stores Network](http://thefoodtrust.org/what-we-do/administrative/healthy-corner-stores-network)
   2. Healthy Corner Store Toolkits (Community Food Lab, Chicago Cook County, etc.)
   3. Persuasion in Advertising by John and Nicholas O’Shaughnessy Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004 (The 4 “P”s of marketing)
   4. The Produce Clerk’s Handbook: A Guide to Retailing and Handling Produce
   5. [Am. J. Clin Nutr 2014 Jun: 99(6): 1359-68](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24695894) Placement and promotion strategies to increase sales of healthier products in supermarkets in low-income, ethnically diverse neighborhoods; a randomized controlled trial.

**Major Strategies:**

1. Needs assessment: Identify Trading Post customer needs
2. Engage community and retail staff in program planning
3. Work with community and staff to define healthy and which products meet the criteria:
   1. Create Trading Post “Fresh to Go” healthy categories based on customer demand and store capacity to track (POS software and store capacity-time, staff, training)
4. Engage stakeholders to create campaign messages
5. Engage store staff community partners to promote campaign
6. Identify successes and barriers with employees and strategies to address barriers
7. Identify resources and opportunities to provide training for employees as needed
8. Collect monthly sales data on “Fresh To Go” categories
9. Evaluate strategies, sales and customer satisfaction
10. Communicate results to stakeholders

**Evaluation of each objective (**include outputs and outcomes and data**):**

* Outputs (Interview notes, meeting minutes, observations)
* Outcome (Sales data, photographs)

1. **Establish criteria and tracking system for three product categories: 1) fresh, seasonal produce, 2) healthy snacks and 3) bottled water at Wellpinit Trading Post by December 2017.**

* Two of the three categories were defined (produce and water) but the water category was not established until October 2017 due to changes in POS system, lack of training on the new system and lack of a dedicated staff person to scan new product and keep inventory up-to-date. Currently, data is too limited to assess sale trends. Seasonal fluctuation in sales are anticipated based on anecdotal observations of water sales.
* Availability of produce improved by increasing the variety of produce (dragon fruit, different melons, berries), preparing fresh fruit cups, and providing product sampling opportunities. During the summer, the total volume and freshness of produce increased as produce deliveries were doubled from 2 deliveries per week to 4 deliveries per week.
* The store manager added three new brands of water increasing the bottled water inventory to eight varieties. Sales have not been tracked due to lack of capacity to maintain inventory category. (Turnover in scan coordinator position) In November, a new scan coordinator was hired. She is energetic, motivated and interested in supporting healthy options for herself, her children and the community.

1. **Increase promotion of fresh produce, bottled water and healthy snacks at Wellpinit Trading Post by using strategic placement by September 2018.**

* Produce was promoted through providing taste tests and convenient grab and go packaging of fruit bowls, fruit parfait as well as purchasing more salads to go during the summer months. Store manager also reduced the price of produce by 20% in summer. Taste tests and precut fruit and vegetables were not continued in fall and winter due to staffing shortages and building infrastructure problems that monopolized TP managers time. Winter produce is not as popular as summer options. Will meet with stakeholders to identify how to promote produce in winter to minimize drop in sales.
* Produce and water promotional placement included strategic placements of two additional produce coolers in the produce area of the store. Store manager marked down the price of water by 20% to promote sales.
* Water was promoted by removing competing beverages (such as sodas) placement near the water; making sure coolers were well stocked with water and dedicated two coolers to water as well as prominent shelf space for water promotion. Also created water “towers”
* Healthy snacks have a new cooler in addition to the large, open cooler for multiple refrigerated products from string cheese to fresh cut meats.
* The Trading Post Manager increased the price of candy by 40% and increased the price of soda by 30-40%.

1. **Decrease sales of carbonated nonalcoholic beverages and beer as a percent of total sales by 2% each by increasing prices and minimizing promotional signage by September 2018.**

* Sales of carbonated beverages (soda, energy drinks, nonalcoholic) decreased by an average of 2.7% total sales between April, June and July 2017 compared to the same months in 2015. Contributing factors included: removing the promotional signage inside and outside the store, decrease in soda inventory in coolers and number of displays and increase in price by 20%.
* Beer sales decreased by an average of 2.5% between April 2017 and April 2015; 0.4% between June 2017 and June 2015; and 0.9% between July 2017 and July 2015.

1. **Increase the sale of fresh produce at the Wellpinit Trading Post by 5% by September 2017.**

* Produce sales increased by $1,729 in July 2017 compared to 2016 and by $1,819 compared to July 2015. Net change in produce sales between July 2017 and July 2015 is 25%. However, produce sales as percent of total sales between July 2017 and July 2016 only increased by 0.68.
* Challenges with increase % produce sales overall relate to the Trading Post staff turnover and the absence of a trained produce manager to extend produce life, maintain attractive produce displays, and manage produce orders to prevent lack of inventory and fresh inventory.
* In October and December 2017, Spokane Produce merchandising manager has provided two produce trainings to staff.

**Lessons learned:**

*What worked well in getting to your objectives?*

1. Working closely with store manager to assess customer requests and needs.
2. Supporting store manager in developing a consultant contract to create a customized produce management and staff training guide.
3. Simplifying the food and beverage categories to make tracking more manageable and sustainable.

*List 1-3 problems in the processes you used.*

1. Not approaching this work from a systems level.

*Describe the current state of these problems (what do you see, what are the facts?)*

The Spokane Tribe of Indian Trading Post grocery store in Wellpinit is owned and managed by Spokane Tribal Enterprises and is one of ten enterprises. The two biggest challenges of running the store is lack of qualified candidates to employ, inequitable benefits for Trading Post positions and deteriorating store infrastructure. In 2018 will work with Tribal Enterprises and the health clinics to identify and opportunities to increase community support for the store.

1. Need to continue to engage and work with trading post staff to identify barriers to healthy product promotions and strategies to address the barriers.

*What do you want to have happen instead?*

I would like to understand Tribal Enterprises’ goals for the Trading Post and what they are willing to invest to have a quality grocery store as a resource for tribal members who live and work in Wellpinit.

I would like to see Tribal Enterprises invest financially in the Trading Post grocery store, the manager and the employees to create a quality grocery store and community hub for tribal members.

I would like to see Indian Health Services more engaged in promoting healthy options at the Trading Post.