

Tracking Healthy Food Sales

Nationwide, public health practitioners are working with small food retailers to improve access to healthy foods in underserved neighborhoods. It's important to evaluate whether these small food retailer programs are working effectively and leading to more healthy food purchases. One way to measure success is by tracking sales data.

Small stores can track sales data in several ways. Through a review of healthy food retailer program reports and interviews with program staff and experts in the field, we have assembled a list of sales data tracking methods.


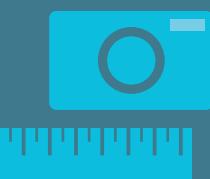




While reviewing these methods, keep in mind that sales data collection in small food stores is an emerging practice. This list is not exhaustive, and these methods have not been systematically evaluated. Use this infographic to learn about potential sales data tracking options and to help you select a method that will work best for the store(s) in your healthy food retailer program.

Contact *ChangeLab Solutions* for more information on these tracking methods.

Choosing a System that Works for Your Program

The table below rates the accuracy, cost, burden on store staff, and burden on program staff of each sales data tracking method. The ratings are based on experiences and observations of program staff across the country, and may not predict your program's experience with these methods. For example, a program with several staff members may find methods that require a high level of staff commitment, such as customer surveys, less burdensome than programs with fewer staff members. Similarly, if store staff are already using a tracking method, such as a POS system, WIC vouchers, or ledgers, the burden on store staff will be lower and accuracy is likely to be higher than in stores where staff are not using any sales tracking method.

Although these ratings have not been validated through empirical research, we provide them as a way to present the general strengths and weaknesses of each method for program staff who are just starting to work with stores. More detailed information about each method can be found on the back of this infographic.

	 Customer Surveys	 Measuring Inventory	 Point-of-Sale (POS) System*	 Sales Ledgers, Receipts, Tallies	 Sales Recall	 WIC Vouchers
ACCURACY: how closely the data reflect actual purchases made in the store	Low accuracy	Moderate accuracy	High accuracy	Moderate accuracy	Low accuracy	Moderate accuracy
COST: amount of money the program may spend to implement the method	Moderate cost	Moderate cost	High cost	Low cost	Low cost	Moderate cost
BURDEN ON STORE OWNER AND STAFF: level of commitment from store owner and staff	Low burden on store	Low burden on store	High burden on store	High burden on store	Moderate burden on store	High burden on store
BURDEN ON PROGRAM STAFF: level of commitment from program staff	High burden on program	High burden on program	High burden on program	Low burden on program	High burden on program	Moderate burden on program

*The ratings for the Point-of-Sale (POS) System assume that the store does not currently have a POS system in place.

Sales Data Tracking Methods: Strengths & Weaknesses

Customer Intercept Surveys or Interviews



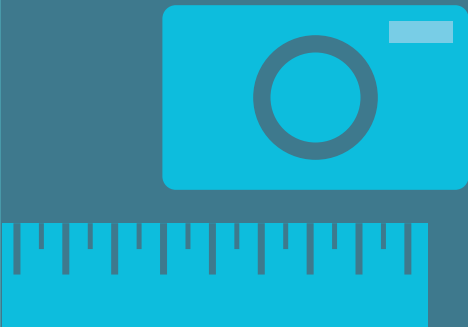
THE METHOD

A survey or interview, distributed or conducted by program staff outside of the store, that asks customers about the purchases they make at the store

USING IT IN A SMALL STORE

With the permission of the store owner, program staff ask customers questions like “Did you notice fresh produce for sale today in this store?” and “How frequently do you buy fresh produce at this store?” This method can be burdensome for program staff, but requires no extra work by the store owner and store staff.

Measuring Inventory



THE METHOD

An assessment of the inventory in the store at specific points in time to determine what products, and how many of them, are being sold over time

USING IT IN A SMALL STORE

Program staff can find out how much inventory is in the store by measuring square footage, taking photographs, or reviewing receipts from the distributor. The accuracy and burden of this method depend on how program staff choose to measure inventory. For example, taking photographs is less accurate, but also less burdensome for program staff, than reviewing receipts from the distributor. This method requires no extra work by the store owner and store staff.

Point-of-Sale (POS) System



THE METHOD

A computerized tracking system that uses touch screens or keypads, and may include scanners and scales to collect transaction data

USING IT IN A SMALL STORE

Many small stores use a simple cash register that tracks sales, but does not differentiate between the types of products purchased. These simple cash registers can sometimes be re-programmed to allow the cashier to document healthy food purchases. If the store upgrades to a more sophisticated system, similar to what a larger grocery store or supermarket might use, store staff can document healthy food sales at a more granular level without adding work for the cashier. However, these systems are expensive and complicated to set up, and may require more support from program staff.

Sales Ledgers, Receipts, and Tallies



THE METHOD

A process of tracking healthy food sales with pen and paper

USING IT IN A SMALL STORE

Program staff review store ledgers, receipts, or sales tallies to determine which, and how many, healthy food items have been sold. If the store does not maintain these records, or does not document healthy food sales specifically, program staff can work with the store owner to develop a simple system for store staff to tally healthy food sales.

Sales Recall



THE METHOD

An interview, conducted by program staff, with the store owner or store staff about sales over a recent, defined period of time

USING IT IN A SMALL STORE

Program staff should interview the person who is familiar with stocking the food and ask questions like “Was a certain food in stock over the last week?” and “How much of a certain food was sold over the last week?” This method is not precise because it relies on the memory of the person being interviewed, but it may be useful when store owners and staff struggle to document healthy food sales in a more systematic way.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Vouchers



THE METHOD

A process of tracking healthy food sales by reviewing food purchases made with WIC vouchers

USING IT IN A SMALL STORE

WIC vendors are required to record purchases of WIC-approved foods by listing food items and total cost on the vouchers. They then submit WIC vouchers to the state in order to receive reimbursement. This method will capture sales data only from WIC participants for WIC-approved foods and for the amount of WIC money spent.