

Healthy Bodegas (HB) **A Program of the New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)**

CEO INTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEW SUMMARY

This overview of the New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) Healthy Bodega is based on an internal program review conducted by the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO). The data were collected between August and October 2008 through interviews with DOHMH staff, and a review of program documents, monthly reports and management reports from DOHMH.

Sponsoring Agency: New York City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)

Provider Agency: Not applicable.

Start Date: July 2007

CEO Budget: \$180,000 FY09

Target Population: Bodegas and residents in high-poverty District Public Health Office¹ areas (East/Central Harlem, the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn).

Statement of Need: DOHMH studies have shown that low-income NYC communities have greater difficulty accessing healthy food due to more limited availability of nutritious foods carried in local stores. In the targeted neighborhoods, bodegas represent more than 80% of food sources, but healthy food options are much less available in bodegas in comparison to supermarkets. Only 33% of bodegas sell reduced-fat milk, compared with 90% of supermarkets. About 28% of bodegas carry apples, oranges, and bananas, compared with 91% of supermarkets. Similarly, leafy green vegetables are only found in roughly 10% of all bodegas.

Goals and Services: The goal of the Healthy Bodegas Initiative is to promote healthy eating by increasing the availability, quality, and variety of healthy foods in bodegas in the target neighborhoods. The program works with bodega owners to improve provision of low-fat milk and fresh fruits and vegetables, and works with community groups to increase consumer demand for these products.

Eligibility Criteria: Bodegas that serve milk and fruits and vegetables in the target communities are eligible to participate. Community groups in target areas are partners in the effort to promote nutrition education.

Targets/Outcomes: This initiative has two major campaigns- one focused on increasing the amount of low-fat milk carried in bodegas, and one focused on increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables carried in bodegas. The program's target is to work with 1,000 bodegas in the milk campaign, and of these 516 to also participate in the produce campaign.

¹ According to DOHMH, the mission of the District Public Health Offices (DPHOs) is to reduce health inequalities across New York City by targeting resources, programs, and attention to high-need neighborhoods in the South Bronx, East and Central Harlem, and North and Central Brooklyn. They further this mission by administering programs on priority health issues; focusing and coordinating the work of central DOHMH programs; informing, developing, and advocating for policy change; conducting research and disseminating public health information; and supporting and assisting community residents and organizations.

Selected Key Findings

Fidelity to Model. As no existing models matched the scope and scale of this initiative, DOHMH piloted two interventions to determine the feasibility of the Healthy Bodegas (HB) intervention and to learn best practices. Throughout, HB maintained fidelity to its articulated strategy, implementing all aspects of the program design. The program utilized lessons learned for the full program launch. While an intervention with bodegas of this scale has never previously been done, HB maintained fidelity to its articulated strategy, implementing all aspects of the program. HB is in line with CEO's mission, and staff effectively reached its target population of bodegas in three key high poverty neighborhoods that also had high levels of diet-related health problems.

Service Delivery. 1,002 bodegas were successfully recruited to participate in the milk initiative, and 520 of those were also recruited for the fresh fruits and vegetables campaign, exceeding both targets. The HB Initiative also conducted 211 workshops in the community with over 145 Community Based Organizations and business partners including non-profits, schools, Women, Infant and Children (WIC) centers, WIC vendor management organizations, youth groups, beauty parlors, health centers and churches.

Agency Management. Staff were hired in mid-July 2007 to start developing an outreach and evaluation plan for the project. CEO funds support a Program Coordinator, an Evaluator, and three Outreach staff (one based out of each District Public Health Office) to engage bodegas and the communities. Each of the outreach team members is bilingual and works only in their assigned target borough. The 5-member team working on the HB campaign appears to be very invested in the program, and provides strong oversight of service delivery. The DOHMH effectively uses staff resources to reach a large number of bodegas. By conducting small pilot versions of the initiatives before bringing them to scale, they were able to learn important lessons and avoid potential pitfalls, which has led to a relatively smooth implementation of the program. Strong monitoring and evaluation strategies are in place by the agency.

Early Outcomes.

- Bodega owners reported both an increased demand for and sales of 1% milk. Forty-five percent (332 out of 742) of bodega managers reported an increase in low-fat milk sales during the campaign period, and after the intervention 21% (88) of those bodegas who previously sold no low-fat milk had begun stocking low-fat milk.² Seventy percent of bodegas reported that their customers had started asking for low-fat milk.³
- Bodega owners demonstrated greater knowledge of the health benefits of switching to 1% milk. At follow-up, bodega managers were more likely to say that low-fat milk is the healthiest compared with other milk types (52%, 365 at baseline, and 80%, 554 at follow-up).⁴ Forty-five percent of bodega staff also reported an increase in low fat milk sales during the campaign period.⁵
- Bodega owners reported an increase in produce sales: 32% of bodegas reported an increase in fruit sales, 26% reported an increase in vegetable sales.
- Fifty-three percent of bodega owners increased the variety of fruits and/or vegetables offered in their stores and 46% increased their quantity of fruit and/or vegetables they carried.

² A total of 828 bodegas had both baseline and follow up information on quantity of low-fat milk stocked. Of the 828, 428 had no low-fat milk at baseline.

³ "Healthy Bodegas Initiative: Project Summary and Proposal," DOHMH Report, Sept. 2008

⁴ This response is limited to people who answered the question at both baseline and follow up (696). Overall, numbers are 433 out of 870 (50%) at baseline and 634 out of 800 (79%) at follow up.

⁵ "Healthy Bodegas Initiative: Project Summary and Proposal," DOHMH Report, Sept. 2008

Conclusions and Recommendations

This review suggests that the Healthy Bodegas initiative is in alignment with the CEO mission of serving residents of high poverty community districts. HB has successfully met recruitment targets for its first two major initiatives. Data suggest that it is making good progress toward meeting its overall goal of promoting access to and demand for healthy foods, specifically low-fat milk and fresh fruits and vegetables in targeted bodegas. Program staff have effectively developed linkages with a wide array of diverse community organizations, businesses and schools in order to promote healthy eating. Overall, bodegas have shown a high level of willingness to engage with the DOHMH staff, as evidenced by the high percentage of bodegas that agreed to participate. The HB initiative is also currently serving as a national example to others working to improve offerings in corner stores, and HB staff serve on a variety of committees and coalitions and have offered assistance to organizations and agencies across the country. Review of lessons learned from earlier campaigns and consultation with DOHMH staff suggest that working more intensively with fewer bodegas would allow HB to tailor interventions to the specific needs of each bodega, providing an increased number of sessions with bodega staff, and promoting sustainable long-term measurable change.