



Campaign for a Healthy,  
Active Multnomah County



*Employees  
sampled healthier  
products like these  
dried fruits and  
voted for their  
favorites to be  
included in the  
vending machines.*

## Healthier Vending Initiative: Partnering for better options

Vending machines, even those on public property, commonly sell products high in salt, sugar, and fat. Local governments and other organizations can play a critical role helping to slow rates of nutrition-related chronic disease by positively transforming food environments, including healthy changes to vending machines.

In summer 2013, Multnomah County Health Department launched an internal Healthier Vending Initiative. The initiative, piloted at two county buildings, involved applying nutrition standards to vending machine product offerings and engaging key stakeholders to improve and promote the nutritional quality of snacks and beverages in the machines.

The six-month project demonstrates the feasibility of improving the health of vending products. It also builds the case for making changes countywide that could impact a greater number of Multnomah County employees as well as the public.

### Our Results

Healthy Vending pilot changes were evaluated through sales data, calorie tracking, employee surveys, taste tests, and the Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey for Vending (NEMS-V)<sup>i</sup>.

Total product sales and calories per item sold (based on sales data provided by the vendor) were assessed both before and after vending changes were made. **Overall during the pilot period, total sales in dollars increased while calories per product purchased decreased.**

		Mead Building	Central Library
Total Change in Sales for Pilot Period in Dollars	Food	+ \$44.25	+ \$106.25
	Beverages	n/a	- \$16.50
Change in Calories per Individual Item Purchased	Food	- 20 cal	- 20 cal
	Beverages	n/a	- 23 cal

*Note: Sales information from the beverage machine in the Mead Building was no longer available due to a switch in machine types.*

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### Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Contracts are valuable tools.** Inserting nutrition standards into vending contracts can help institutionalize improvements to vending options.<sup>ii</sup>
- ✓ **Strategic partnerships with vendors are crucial.** Even though your end goals may differ, working *with* vendors is essential to moving forward. Vendor buy-in is necessary to improving the healthfulness of vending machine options. Engage them early in the process.



“For me, healthier vending is a no-brainer. It’s good to know I can count on finding some items that will help provide sustenance without compromising nutrition completely.”

-- Jose Rivas, DCJ staff  
at the Mead Building

- ✓ **Vending sales can remain steady or increase, even when consumers purchase fewer calories.** Preliminary results indicate that sales increased while consumers purchased fewer calories per sale. Employee feedback on the new healthier choices was positive. Ask your vendor if they can provide pre- and post-sales data.
- ✓ **Having staff available to do nutritional analysis was valuable.** A dietetic intern helped expand staff capacity to do the nutritional analysis of vending machine changes. While detailed analysis can be time-consuming, it is essential to understanding the impact of the changes.

### Step-by-Step Process

1. **Get an idea of what you are working with.** Having an initial understanding of the “on-the-ground” vending food environment (using NEMS-V) and baseline sales data was important in measuring the impact of the changes.
2. **Identify and recruit partners.** Vending machines are spread throughout the county, so this project required involvement of multiple stakeholders. Conversations started with the county contract liaison and vendor<sup>iii</sup>, then involved other public health and wellness staff.
3. **Identify sites and a champion at each site.** Our identification of vending machines to target was based on having the support of Healthy Vending Champions. Champions sent out online surveys, took pictures of vending machines, and promoted the project.
4. **Ask the consumer what they want.** Feedback solicited from employees in the form of pre-surveys and taste tests was overwhelmingly positive.
5. **Work with the vendor to make a plan.** The vendor created vending machine plans informed by employee feedback gathered in step four.
6. **Change products in the vending machines.** There was one snack and one beverage machine at each site. Fifty percent of the products were changed to meet the Choice Plus<sup>iv</sup> nutrition standards.
7. **Ask the consumer what they think about the change.** Collecting employee post-surveys one month after changes were made allowed the vendor to use the feedback to address any issues.
8. **Monitor progress and make improvements.** Data collection has been helpful in tracking progress, and ongoing collection will be helpful for quality improvement purposes.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.nems-v.com/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/healthier-vending-municipalities>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/resources/healthy-vending-and-randolph-sheppard-act>

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.canteen.com/Pages/canteen.aspx?ItemID=43>