

Holistic Grocery Store Tour Pilot Summary Report

NORTH LAWDALE, CHICAGO

MARCH 19, 2026

Good Food Catalyst (lead sponsor), in partnership with the Firehouse Community Arts Center of Chicago (CBO), and Nutrient Innovation (nutrition education partner), piloted a Holistic Grocery Store Tour implemented in North Lawndale to strengthen nutrition literacy, increase food access, and support healthy shopping behaviors among community residents.

The pilot engaged a cohort of twelve North Lawndale residents in a powerful two-part experience that integrated nutrition education, community co-design, and real-world application through an in-store grocery store tour at ALDI's Food Market. Each resident received a \$50 gift card provided by Good Food Catalyst to address food insecurity and to allow for the knowledge gained in the 60-minute pre-tour session at the Firehouse Community Arts Center and 60-minute in-store tour to be applied through individual shopping time. This pilot model was designed to address a critical gap in food access programming: ensuring that residents are equipped with knowledge, confidence, and skills to make informed and healthy food choices.



Program Design & Implementation

The pilot consisted of a 2-hour structured experience:

Pre-Tour Session

Location – Firehouse Community Arts Center of Chicago

Focused on nutrition literacy, label reading, budget strategies, and food selection. This session also incorporated a co-design component, allowing residents to share lived experiences, identify barriers to healthy eating, and shape the learning environment.

Guided Grocery Store Tour

Location – ALDI Cicero

Residents applied learned concepts in real time, gaining hands-on experience navigating in-store, identifying healthier options, and making cost-conscious decisions. The location selected falls slightly outside of the North Lawndale community, in the bordering neighborhood of Cicero, highlighting the absence of grocery store options available to North Lawndale residents.

- ❑ This integrated model ensured that learning was both practical and immediately applicable, increasing the likelihood of sustained behavior.



Key Outcomes

1

Increased Nutrition Knowledge and Application

- Nutrition labeling and food selection
- Budget-conscious healthy shopping
- Practical strategies for navigating grocery environments

2

Enhanced Confidence and Readiness

- Increased confidence in grocery shopping
- Greater readiness to apply nutrition knowledge independently
- Improved decision-making around food purchasing

3

Community Driven Engagement

- Share lived-experiences and cultural food practices
- Inform future program priorities
- Build peer connections and trust

4

Strong Cross-Sector Partnership Model

- Firehouse Community Arts Center (CBO)
- Good Food Catalyst (food system intermediary)
- Nutrient Innovation (nutrition education partner)

The co-design approach ensured the program was responsive, culturally relevant, and non-extractive. This partnership model is replicable and scalable, with strong potential with broader implementation. The CBO partner was super excited about possibilities of this model being integrated in their community feeding program and wants the 12 residents to become ambassadors for a larger health & wellness initiative.



Resident Feedback

Resident feedback was overwhelmingly positive and highlighted strong demand for continued programming:

“
"I wish we had more time."
”

“
"We need to keep doing this as a series."
”

“
"I'm going to stay out of those middle isle's."
”

When prompted with the question, 'what did you like most', participants responded:

"Everything"

"The inter-activeness and doing this in a group. Loved transportation"

"Just how informative it was"

"How it was very detailed and well-paced"

These responses indicate high engagement and a desire for ongoing, deeper learning opportunities.



100%

Overall Satisfaction

Very satisfied

100%

Program Recommendation

Would recommend

100%

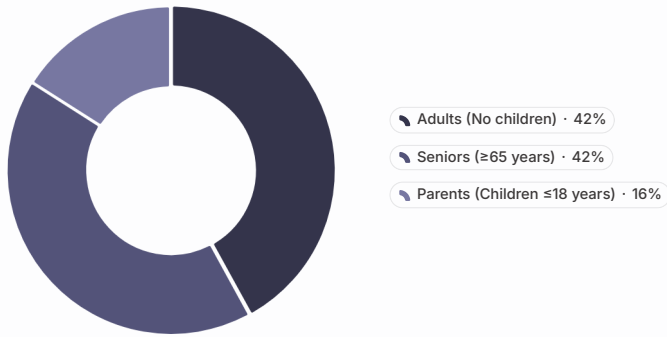
Shopping Confidence

Very confident

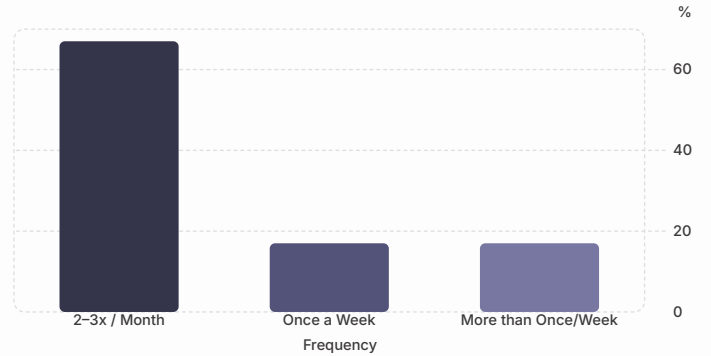
Community Cohort Profile

Descriptive information about the twelve resident cohort from North Lawndale who participated in the pilot; 11 of 12 participants identified as the primary household shopper.

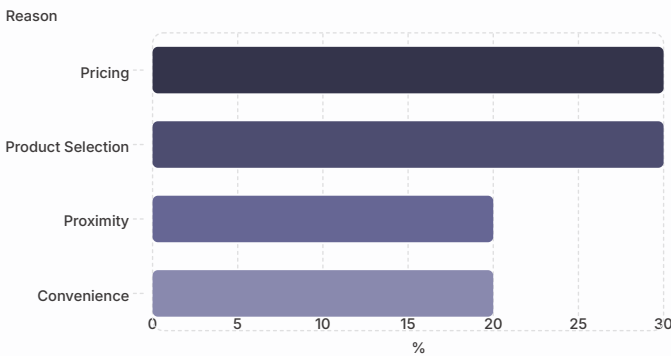
Community Segment



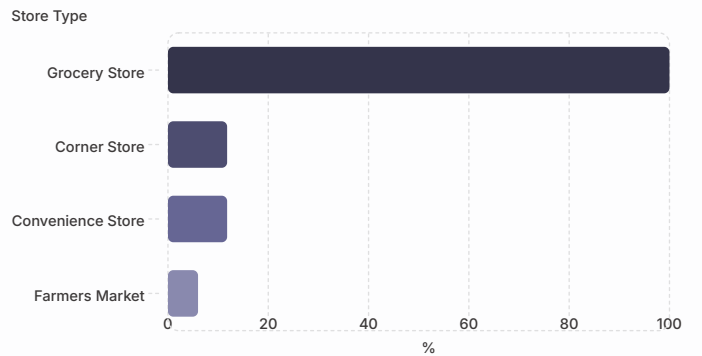
Grocery Shopping Practices



Reason for Store Selection



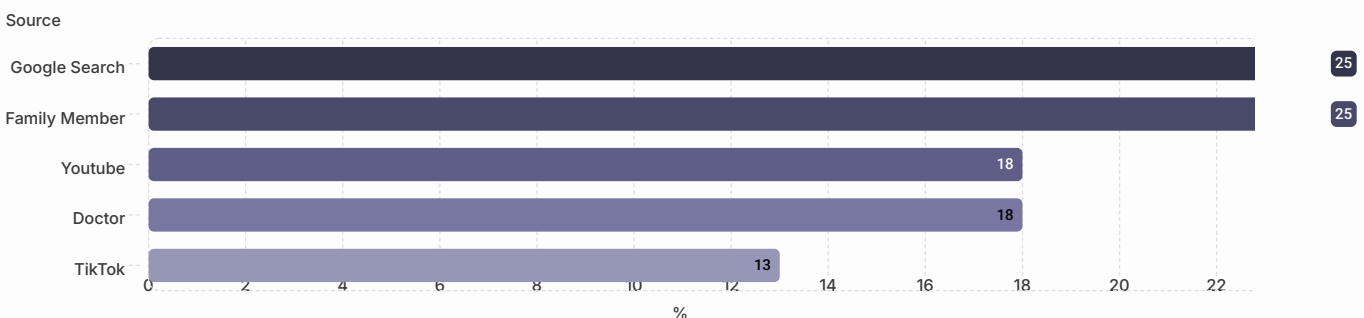
Store Selection



Nutrition Facts Literacy

<p>Label Reading</p> <p>5 of 12 people were able to express some understanding of label reading.</p>	<p>Previous Instruction</p> <p>4 reported previous instruction, but only 1 could accurately describe.</p>	<p>Healthy Eating Importance</p> <p>8 of 11 reported healthy eating as very important and 1 reported not that important.</p>
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Information Preferences for Health, Nutrition, and Cooking



Key Learnings & Next Steps

A central takeaway from this pilot is that nutrition literacy is a critical component of food access strategies. While access to healthy food is essential, residents benefit most when paired with:

- **Practical Nutrition Education + Community Fidelity**
Coupled with community fidelity to create an upstream approach to public health impact.
- **Hands-On Grocery Store Experience**
Led by a nutrition scientist who teaches nutrition from a metabolic perspective while understanding that shared lived-experience is critical to behavior changes (community-informed learning environments).
- **Food System Intermediary**
Having a food system intermediary like Good Food Catalyst who believes that food access strategies should be community-led, and nutrition literacy should be at the forefront of any initiative that involves food system implementation.
- **Community-Based Organization (CBO)**
CBO work is centered on community residents' health & wellbeing that infuses a community organizing approach to sustain long-term and consistent engagement with a strong community reputation.

Next Steps

Based on pilot success, the following opportunities are recommended:

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | 02 | 03 |
| Expand into a Multi-Session Workshop Series | Integrate Cooking Demonstrations and Meal Preparation Education | Increase Size of Healthy Workshops and Frequency of Tours |
| 04 | 05 | |
| Continued Co-Design Engagement with Residents | Replication of the Model in Additional Communities | |

The Holistic Grocery Store Tour pilot successfully demonstrated a community-centered, practical approach to advancing food access, food insecurity, and nutrition literacy. By integrating education, application, and co-design, this model provides a strong foundation for scaling-equitable, community-driven food access intervention.