

Quick Tips for Applicants

Tips for increasing energy efficiency:

- If installing a new remote condensing unit, place the condenser outside the site, such as in a shaded area at ground level (with good airflow), or on the roof, so less heat is generated inside the building that may have to be removed.
- Select refrigerated cases with doors to save energy, but if an open unit is necessary (such as for fresh/wet produce, or lack of sliding door options and lack of space for hinged doors), request additional funds for energy saving solutions such as night curtains
- If you are replacing your current refrigeration system/unit with a new system/unit, ensure that the system/unit is properly decommissioned (i.e. no pipes are cut before being pumped down by a technician) and the refrigerant gas properly recovered and sent for reclamation, recycling, or destruction to ensure that refrigerant gas emissions are not released, which are harmful to the environment
- Consider whether products stocked in the refrigerated cases can still be safely preserved if the units are set to turn off when not in use, to lower energy usage. Otherwise the products will have to be placed in another refrigerated space, or the unit left running whenever it has products stocked in it

Tips for selecting a refrigeration system/unit:

- Past grantees recommend choosing a refrigeration unit with bright lighting to draw customers to it (all new refrigerated display cases should have LED lights)
- Think of the products you want to stock in the new refrigerated cases and keep their measurements in mind when selecting a unit to ensure the shelves are long/deep enough to fit the products
- When considering where to put equipment inside a building, measure not just the unit dimensions, but also how any unit doors will open (hinged or sliding) and be sure there's sufficient space for doors to fully open and it will be convenient to view and get items in and out of the refrigerated display case
- Refrigerated case with doors are easier for customers to open compared to sliding doors, but require an appropriate amount of space for people to pass with the door(s) open
- If a refrigerated display case is placed near a fire escape route, hinged doors should close in the direction of the escape route
- Use CDFA's shortened list of eligible refrigeration equipment as a starting point when selecting a refrigeration case, unit/system to make the process less overwhelming
- Understand the electrical needs of the equipment and your site as soon as possible and get a quote from an electrician so those costs can be included as part of the grant budget
 - o Even for stand-alone units that should work when plugged into a regular outlet – a few stores in the pilot program needed some light electrical work done, such as installing a new outlet/receptacle in the right place, to accommodate the new equipment

Tips for the refrigeration installation process:

- Anticipate delays between selecting your refrigeration system/unit and it being delivered
- Utilize grant funding to help cover any retrofitting that's necessary to accommodate the system/unit as well as any potential maintenance and electrical costs that arise in the future
- Determine and plan in advance whether building doors will need to be removed in order to move new equipment in, and ramps and/or specialist equipment may be needed to navigate uneven ground, curbs, doorways, or changes in level or steps and stairs.
- Find out what will be needed and plan for any additional staff or contractor needs for unloading and placing your refrigeration system/unit in advance and include those costs in the grant application
- Find out whether unloading and installing new equipment in its place is part of the purchase – and try to use a turnkey solution that includes everything part of the process including recycling the old refrigerator and disposing of the old refrigerant properly
 - o During the pilot program, there were cases when units were unloaded outside a store and there were unexpected costs to get equipment placed

Suggestions of where to place refrigeration system/unit in store:

- Place the refrigerated display case next to the cash registers so customers can make last minute purchases while checking out
- Creating a produce section by placing refrigerated produce next to unrefrigerated produce has helped some stores to feel more like a market rather than a convenience store
- Place the refrigerated case towards the front of their store so it is the first thing customers see when they walk in
- Place the refrigerated case where customers can not miss it
- Decide where to install your refrigerated case based on usual customer foot traffic as well as increasing their access to the refrigerator
- Consider the location of the electrical outlets in your store and what physical space is available

Tips to sell more fruits and vegetables:

- Have the produce displayed nicely in the refrigerated case – for example, place produce in baskets and/or organize it by type of fruit/vegetable
- Create signage that lets customers know you sell locally grown produce in your store
- Stock one type of fruit/vegetable per refrigerated shelf so it's easier for customers to find what they're looking for
- Stocking grab-and-go foods like bananas, apples, pre-made salads, and pre-cut veggies encourages customers to buy produce vs purchasing snacks such as candy and chips
- Customers enjoy seeing their produce stored properly in the correct temperature
- Customers tend to buy more produce when you keep a wide variety in stock

- The most important characteristics past grantees said their customers look for when purchasing fruits and vegetables are freshness, quality, and affordability
- Knowing where your fruits and vegetables come from can make customers more confident in the quality of your produce
- Many past grantees said customers appreciated the fact they could help support local farmers by purchasing California-grown produce at their store

When stocking the refrigerated cases, past grantees recommended:

- Learn what items are most popular by listening to requests from customers or looking at your stores' sales trends
- Experiment with new items to see what's most popular - use a process of trial and error to see what sells the most and then stock more of that item
- Place fruits and vegetables in the refrigerated display case based on what would go bad the fastest to avoid waste and spoilage
- Stock items that are in season because they may be cheaper to buy and taste fresher
- Stock produce that is culturally relevant to the dishes your customers might be cooking
- If your customer base mostly stops in to buy items that go with their lunches for work or school, consider stocking more grab-and-go items such as salads, pre-cut vegetables, and pressed juices
- When starting out, only stock a small quantity of produce because you can buy more produce as needed rather than stocking too much that doesn't sell
- Procure produce direct from farmers and then buy any necessary produce not grown in California from wholesalers or other larger grocery stores
- Identify whether the produce you're buying is California-grown by looking at a sticker or label directly on the item or on the box it's sent in or by talking directly to your vendor
- Be sure to not over stock the refrigerated case and never block the airflow in the case.
- Keep the case clean and free of dust and debris

Other recommendations from past grantees:

- Take full advantage of the grant opportunity by asking questions about what technical assistance is available
- Understand what products are available to store in the refrigerated cases to maximize its usage
- Create simple shelf tags, posters, and other marketing materials to promote new items and store changes to your customers
- Hand out flyers to people in the neighborhood promoting the store's new refrigerated case(s) and other changes
- Teach your customers how to cook with different fruits and vegetables sold in your store and share recipes for the items customers are purchasing
- Increase your social media presence to help market your store and share what produce is currently in stock
- Work with other healthy retail initiatives in your area to get assistance updating your store to better display produce and improve the overall atmosphere for customers