

BENCHMARKING FOR HEALTHY STORES

Project Newsletter 2 – September 2022

HELLO AGAIN!

Welcome to the second edition of the Benchmarking for Healthy Stores Project Newsletter. Time has flown by since our last newsletter and a lot has happened, so you can catch up on the progress of the project here!

PROJECT PROGRESS

STORE PARTICIPATION

We are very excited that this is the first time we've had a study including both independent stores and stores groups. Of the 51 stores across the NT identified as eligible to take part in the project, 31 consented to participate. Stores have now been randomised with 16 stores allocated to the control arm, and 15 allocated to the strategy arm. A big thank you to our partner organisations who dedicated time to inviting stores to participate and helping get stores on board for the project.

PARTICIPATING STORE DEMOGRAPHICS

Top End	Central Australia	Store Managed Group	Private/Independent
21	10	23	8

Since the commencement of the study, 2 independent stores have unfortunately withdrawn from the project due to limited capacity (one from the strategy arm and one from the control arm).

CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP



In June this year, 34 delegates from across 5 states and territories made a big effort to travel to Darwin and gather on Larrakia country for the first Benchmarking for Healthy Stores Co-Design Workshop. Representatives from remote food retail, the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector, government and academia came together to provide input on the benchmarking tools, reports and process to help make the benchmarking model as feasible and user-friendly as possible.

A packed full-day program of World Café group sessions, guest presentations and discussion forums was successfully delivered, culminating in a group dinner to celebrate at the Darwin Sailing Club.

Delegates at the Benchmarking for Healthy Stores Co-Design Workshop in Darwin

PROJECT BRANDING

We have been very privileged to work with Ngarrindjeri man Jordan Lovegrove of Karko creations, an artist and graphic designer, to develop an artwork to represent the story of Benchmarking for Healthy Stores. The artwork will be used to brand all our project materials, and Jordan will also work on the graphic design of these. Special mention to the project investigators and workshop participants who have provided cultural input and feedback on designs to date.



BENCHMARKING IN ACTION – DATA COLLECTION

All our benchmarking tools were co-designed with input from the Benchmarking Co-Design Committee, Co-Design Task Groups and feedback from participants at the Co-Design workshop. We thank everyone who has played an important part in this process. Results from the Benchmarking Assessment will be presented back to strategy stores in a Benchmarking feedback report later this year so they can see how their store is doing compared to other study stores.

POLICY

The adoption of store nutrition-related policy was assessed using the **Policy Action Progress Audit**. This tool was developed based on the [Healthy Stores 2020 Policy Action Series](#). These Policy Action resources were informed by research evidence and co-designed with input from store owners and retailers to maximise their acceptability and feasibility in remote community stores through a workshop in 2019.

These resources were remodelled into an audit tool, the Policy Action Progress Audit, with the valuable input of the Policy & Practice Task Group and Co-design Workshop participants. The tool was then converted into an e-survey format using Research Electronic Data Capture (REDCap), and distributed to all strategy stores in August 2022. The survey is currently 93% complete.

PURCHASING

To assess healthiness of customer purchasing, store sales data will be linked with nutrient data to report on three key areas as part of the benchmarking assessment:

- **Overall Healthiness** of purchases (based on [The Good Tucker App](#) Thumbs Up ratings)
- **Sugar** purchases (sales of sources of free sugars); and
- **Fruit and Vegetable** purchases.

Twelve months of sales data has been requested from both strategy and control stores, and has now been received from 90% of stores. Data is currently being cleaned and coded in preparation for analysis and reporting.

PRACTICE

Thanks to a huge effort from our wonderful partner Public Health Nutritionists and the Monash research team, the **Store Scout App** was completed on the ground in 30 remote stores across the NT during August and September! It was an incredible achievement to get this data collected over a tight 8-week period across such a vast geographical area, so a big well done to everyone involved and thank you for your amazing work!



Monash team members Amanda & Meaghan in Central Australia, and Emma in the Katherine region, with some amazing NT sunsets!

Prior to this all happening, the Store Scout App was successfully updated to Version 2, with plenty of decision-making support from the Policy & Practice Task Group. The latest version of the App is more user friendly, with a dashboard to help the user navigate between new and existing surveys. Other enhancements include: Additional questions to capture the product, promotion, price and placement of a wider range of foods; Modified tooltips that provide comprehensive guidance on how to answer each question; and a revised scoring system including weightings for high impact items that provides a more complete assessment of a store's healthiness in consideration of both unhealthy and healthy practices.

ENVIRONMENT SCAN

Our amazing research assistants, Emma van Burgel and Molly Fairweather, with input from the Environment Scan Task Group and Co-design Workshop participants, finalised the **Environment Scan Survey** tool to capture a snapshot of the environmental factors impacting upon remote stores' ability to implement healthy in-store operations.

The final survey encompassed 20 questions on perceived degree of impact of environmental factors as well as 6 questions on frequency of impact. The survey has been developed into an e-survey format using REDCap, and was distributed to all strategy stores in August 2022. The survey is currently 93% complete, and a summary of results will be presented back to strategy stores together with their benchmarking report.

A draft manuscript on the development of the survey is also currently in progress - big thanks to all CIs and Task Group members who have contributed to this so far.

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

We are very excited to be working with Deakin Health Economics to complete an economic analysis of the Benchmarking for Healthy Stores strategy. This analysis will assess the resources required to implement the benchmarking model (including human resources, financial resources and physical resources), together with the outcomes from the trial of the benchmarking model. This will allow us to determine the value-for-money of the benchmarking approach – does it provide a significant benefit for the cost required to implement it? The information from this analysis will also be considered as part of the third aim of the project in determining the pathway to policy and scale-up to other states and territories, in terms of workforce requirements and funding/budgets.

Our research team and project partners have been collecting data on time, cost and resource use during the different phases of the project to use for this analysis. This data has been collected through e-surveys and informal interviews. Thanks to everyone for contributing this valuable data to the process.

STORE SALES DATA SYSTEMS ANALYSIS INTERVIEWS

There is rich information coming from the Store Sales Data Systems Analysis interviews and surveys, and we thank all participants for their time in contributing to this part of the project. This analysis is aimed to investigate stores' point of sale systems and how stores use their sales data for making business or other related decisions.

To date, 11 surveys have been completed, 7 via semi-structured phone/zoom interview and 4 being completed via e-survey. Quantitative data and qualitative summaries from interviews have been entered into REDCap with e-survey data, and interview transcripts are currently being finalised for qualitative analysis. This data will be valuable to identify areas of strength as well as gaps in capacity with accessing and using sales data. We will provide a summary report to participating stores, and aim to draft a publication as well as discuss findings at the workshop at the end of the project.

WHAT'S NEXT?

FEEDBACK, ACTION PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION

Benchmarking feedback reports will soon be provided to store owners and/or managers of strategy stores, and then our amazing crew of Public Health Nutritionists from our partner organisations will work with stores to co-design an action plan for continuous quality improvement in their store's health practices.

Implementation of the store's chosen actions will take place over the following months prior to next year's data collection period with the support of the Public Health Nutritionists.

FEASIBILITY INTERVIEWS

Following the initial feedback and action planning period this year, we plan to conduct our first round of Feasibility Interviews with key players who have been involved in the Benchmarking process in early 2023. Representatives from partner organisations, remote food retailers, and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander food retail store owners will be invited to participate in these interviews to share their experiences and perceptions of the benchmarking process, its impact on their practice, factors that enabled and/or impeded implementation and whether it was perceived to be of benefit to their store and/or organisation.

2022-2023 UPCOMING PROJECT DATES

Activity	Date	Location
Benchmarking Feedback & Action Planning Training	October 25, 2022	Zoom
Benchmarking Feedback / commence Action Planning (strategy stores)	October 31 - December 16, 2022	Remote NT
Economic Analysis Resource Surveys	October 31 - December 16, 2022	e-survey
Benchmarking Co-Design Committee Meeting	November 24, 2022	Zoom
Benchmarking Action Plan implementation period (strategy stores)	December 2022 – June 2023	Remote NT
Economic Analysis Resource Surveys	December 2022 – June 2023	e-survey
Feasibility Interviews (Timepoint 1)	January-February 2023	Phone/ Zoom

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to our:

Partner organisations: Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation, Katherine West Health Board Aboriginal Corporation, Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation, NT Health - Central Australia & Top End regions, and Outback Stores.

Chief Investigators: Assoc Prof Julie Brimblecombe (Monash University), Dr Emma McMahon (Menziess School of Health Research), Dr Leisa McCarthy (Menziess School of Health Research), Dr Megan Ferguson (The University of Queensland), Prof Bronwyn Fredericks (The University of Queensland), Ms. Nicole Turner (NSW Rural Doctors Network), Prof Amanda Lee (The University of Queensland), Prof Joanna Batstone (Monash University), Assoc Prof Christina Pollard (Curtin University), Prof Louise Maple-Brown (Menziess School of Health Research).

Associate Investigators: Ms. Khia De Silva (Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation), Ms. Simone Nalatu (Health and Wellbeing Queensland), Mr. Adam Barnes (NT Department of Health), Ms. Clare Brown (Apunipima Cape York Health Council), Mr. Eddie Miles (Menziess School of Health Research), Prof Ross Bailie (University of Sydney), Prof Marjory Moodie (Deakin University), Prof Anna Peeters (Deakin University), Assoc Prof Gary Sacks (Deakin University).

INTRODUCING...

Each edition of this newsletter, we'd like you to get to know some of the people involved in the project. This time, we're introducing some of our Associate Investigators!

ASSOCIATE INVESTIGATOR – GARY SACKS

A/Prof Gary Sacks is a NHMRC Emerging Leadership Fellow and Director of the Global Obesity Centre at Deakin University, Melbourne. Gary's research focuses on policies for improving population diets. Gary has co-authored several international reports on obesity prevention, including the Lancet Commission on Obesity and several publications for the World Health Organization. Gary led the first-ever studies to benchmark progress on obesity prevention by Australian governments. As part of the global INFORMAS network, Gary leads a program of work to benchmark the nutrition-related policies and actions of food companies.



What's your hidden talent? I like taking photos of birds. On most weekends I take my 7-year-old twin boys around Melbourne looking for raptors.

What's your career highlight? A food company once sent me a letter from their lawyers threatening to sue me for damages as a result of a research report I wrote. While there was no substance to their claim, it definitely made me feel as though my work was having an impact.

What's your most memorable meal? I have particularly fond memories of a traditional South African meal I had at a luxury lodge in the Kruger National Park, while watching elephants drinking at the waterhole as the sun set.

ASSOCIATE INVESTIGATOR – ADAM BARNES

Adam has worked in the Northern Territory for 17 years in a number of roles, including Health and Nutrition Manager for the Arnhem Progress Aboriginal Corporation, Project Manager at Menziess School of Health Research, an Urban and Remote Public Health Dietitian with the NT Department of Health and is currently a Principal Policy Officer with the NT Department of Health. He has developed an expertise in remote Indigenous Food Security. I currently hold an honorary position with Charles Darwin University as an Adjunct Senior Lecturer for the Masters of Dietetics and am an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

What's your hidden talent? Dad jokes, definitely dad jokes. I have a joke about a pig with a wooden leg that my kids love...

What's your career highlight? Retirement (*boom boom* see? I told you I was good at dad jokes!). Negotiating with manufacturers for the voluntary addition of iodine to bread

What's your most memorable meal? Bee larvae or live shrimp in Northern Thailand I would consider as the worst two, though I can appreciate they might both be an acquired taste... Therefore, the most memorable meal occurred whilst travelling through Portugal and eating unbelievable food. We stopped at a small restaurant that did Thai and Japanese. The Thai all used one sauce which was a gummy mix of turmeric, salt and soy sauce... this was the satay sauce, this was the Massaman curry...

