

Food Frontiers Discussion Guide

Each discussion prompt is followed by one or more possible responses.

Who are some of the players who can be involved in increasing a community's access to healthy food?

- Politicians, like Rep. Dwight Evans in Philadelphia, who made food access a priority in the state of Pennsylvania's budget.
- Food-focused non-profits, such as The Food Trust, which collaborated with Rep. Evans in creating the Fresh Food Financing Initiative; Harvest Home Farmer's Market, which develops markets in needy neighborhoods; and the Sustainable Food Trust, which runs the cooking education program in the Austin, Tex., area.
- High school students, like the ones in Cody, Neb., who helped build and are managing a local grocery store.
- Doctors, such as pediatrician Dr. Nimali Fernando ("Dr. Yum"), who encourages her patients and their parents to learn how to cook more healthy foods.
- Food service directors (e.g., Rodney Taylor), who make decisions about what kind of food is served in school cafeterias and other institutional settings.
- Farmers (e.g., Bob Knight), who can seek to market their produce in local school districts or other settings where people often have poor access to fresh produce.

Before the community built its own grocery store, why might Cody, Neb., have been described as a rural food desert?

There was a long distance between the community and a full-service grocery store. If someone didn't own a vehicle, it might have been difficult for them to buy a lot of basic goods on a regular basis.

How was the lack of a grocery store affecting Cody, Neb.?

The community was having a hard time recruiting teachers to work in their school system.

People had to make a long drive just to buy staple food items.

What are some of the unique characteristics of the Cody, Neb., grocery store?

It was built by the community, and is managed mostly by high school students.

It is run as a non-profit "social enterprise" – the primary purposes are to serve the community and educate students.

Allison Karpyn says that the public money put toward Pennsylvania's Fresh Food Financing Initiative was leveraged to acquire more money. What does the word "leveraged" mean in this context? Is this a good use of public money?

By putting public money into the project, the state of Pennsylvania made the project look more attractive to private-sector investors. Initially, the Reinvestment Fund matched the \$30 million in public money 3-to-1, meaning they put in \$90 million.

What incentives are offered to low-income shoppers at Harvest Home's farmers' markets to encourage them to buy more fresh produce? Is this a good use of public money?

The New York Department of Health provides an incentive whereby for every \$5 that shoppers who receive food subsidies spend at the market, they get a \$2 coupon.

What is unique about the educators in the cooking program in Austin, Tex.?

They don't have formal training in cooking. Instead, they are community members who wanted to cook and eat healthy themselves, and want to share what they've learned with their local community.

How does cooking education fit into the goal of increasing access to healthy food?

If people have easy access to fresh produce (through local supermarkets, farmers' markets, etc.) but don't know how to cook it, they are not likely to buy it.

What does Dr. Fernando ("Dr. Yum") say is one of the most common reasons for abdominal pain among her patients? What would she say is the cause of this problem? How does her response to the problem differ from how she used to practice medicine?

Dr. Yum says constipation is "one of the most common reasons for abdominal pain in a young child." She blames it on a "kid-friendly, average American diet which is very refined, very much [a] fiberless sort of a diet." Instead of only prescribing a laxative, Dr. Fernando tries to encourage parents to add more fiber to their children's diet.

How does the cafeteria food depicted in Riverside and Claremont, Calif., compare to the food served in your school's cafeteria? Are there things you would like to change about the food service in your school?