



WIC COMMUNITY INNOVATION AND OUTREACH PROJECT

What Is the WIC Community Innovation and Outreach (WIC CIAO) Project?

The WIC CIAO Project is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) broader WIC Outreach, Innovation, and Program Modernization efforts. Through these efforts, FNS seeks to increase WIC participation through increased enrollment and retention of participants for the full length of their eligibility; increase redemption of benefits; and ensure equity in program access.

Through a cooperative agreement with FNS, the Food Research & Action Center and Project Team partners will:

1. provide technical assistance and funding in two rounds over five years to subgrant projects to conduct innovative WIC outreach;
2. apply an implementation science and evaluation framework to identify effective strategies implemented within projects; and
3. use these learnings to inform summary reports and multiple outreach toolkits for WIC agencies and partners.

Why WIC Community Innovation and Outreach?

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is a federal nutrition program that provides nutritious supplemental foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and health care referrals for nutritionally at-risk infants, children up to 5 years old, and pregnant and postpartum individuals from households with low incomes.

WIC has been shown to provide wide-ranging benefits. Impacts include longer, safer pregnancies, with fewer premature births and infant deaths; improved dietary outcomes for infants and children; improved maternal health; and improved performance at school, among others. In addition to health benefits, WIC participants showed significant savings in health care costs when compared to non-participants.



Despite the demonstrated benefits of WIC, too few eligible people participate. [In 2021, only 51.2 percent of eligible women, infants, and children participated in WIC.](#)

A recommended strategy to increase WIC participation is to enhance partnerships between WIC and community-based organizations to conduct outreach that is effective in connecting underserved populations with WIC benefits and services.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WIC CIAO PROJECT.](#)

WIC CIAO Project Goals

The WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project aims to expand partnerships with community-based organizations and use community-level data to develop and test WIC outreach efforts with the goals of:



OUTREACH

Identifying effective communication and outreach methods for increasing participation among those eligible but not utilizing WIC services.



AWARENESS

Increasing awareness, especially among underserved populations, about WIC benefits and services available.



PARTICIPATION

Increasing the number of individuals enrolled and actively participating in WIC.

ABOUT THE PROJECT TEAM



Food Research & Action Center

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) improves the nutrition, health, and well-being of people struggling against poverty-related hunger in the United States through advocacy, partnerships, and by advancing bold and equitable policy solutions. For more information about FRAC, or to [sign up](#) for FRAC's e-newsletters, go to frac.org.



UnidosUS

UnidosUS, formally the National Council of La Raza, is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization. Through its unique combination of expert research, advocacy, programs, and an Affiliate Network of nearly 300 community-based organizations across the United States and Puerto Rico, UnidosUS simultaneously challenges the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos at the national and local levels. For more than 50 years, UnidosUS has united communities and different groups seeking common ground through collaboration, and that share a desire to make our country stronger. For more information on UnidosUS, visit unidosus.org.



Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative

The Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative (IFAI) focuses on putting Tribal sovereignty in food sovereignty, promoting Tribally driven solutions to revitalize and advance traditional food systems and diversified economic development throughout Indian Country. IFAI provides Tribal governments, producers, and food businesses with educational resources, policy research, and strategic legal analysis as a foundation for building robust food economies. Visit indigenousfoodandag.com.



Center for Nutrition and Health Impact

Founded in 1973, the Center for Nutrition and Health Impact (formerly the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition) is a national nonprofit research institute providing expertise in measurement and evaluation to develop, enhance, and expand public health programs. Our research focuses on encouraging healthy eating and active living, improving food security and healthy food access, and promoting local food systems — with a health equity lens across all initiatives. With expertise in public health nutrition, we are dedicated to building measurement strategies to assess the impact of innovative health-related programs. The Center for Nutrition and Health Impact works nationally and internationally, partnering with other nonprofits, academia, government entities, and private foundations to conduct research, evaluation, and scientific strategic planning. Learn more at centerfornutrition.org.