**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.

**WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project**

Despite the demonstrated benefits of WIC, too few eligible people participate. In 2019, only 57 percent of all eligible individuals and 45 percent of eligible children participated in WIC, equating to a shortfall of almost 5 million additional individuals. 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.

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

The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provided the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA FNS) with funding to carry out WIC outreach, innovation, and program modernization efforts to increase WIC participation and retention, and reduce disparities in WIC program delivery.

As part of the outreach, innovation, and modernization strategy and initiatives, FNS is supporting the WIC CIAO Project, which, through a cooperative agreement with the program partners, will:

1. provide technical assistance and funding in two rounds to a minimum of 25 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 a summary report and multiple national resources, including an outreach framework for WIC operators and partners.

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Learn more about the WIC CIAO Project.

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Learn more about recent WIC participation data during the COVID-19 pandemic.
The WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project aims to expand partnerships with community-based organizations and use of 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.

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