

# WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Program

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

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 Program, 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.

Learn more about the [WIC CIAO Program](#).

## 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 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 improves participants' health, dietary intake, and birth and health outcomes. The WIC program also supports learning and development, reduces food insecurity, and helps to alleviate poverty. In addition, WIC supports economic stability and improves the availability of healthy foods in low-income communities through participating stores.



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 human-centered outreach that is effective in connecting underserved populations with WIC benefits and services.

Learn more about [recent WIC participation data during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

## WIC CIAO Program Goals

The WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Program 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.

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM 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](http://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](http://unidosus.org).



### Native American Agriculture Fund

The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) provides grants to eligible organizations for business assistance, agricultural education, technical support, and advocacy services to support Native farmers and ranchers. The charitable trust was created by the settlement of the landmark *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* class-action lawsuit. NAAF is the largest philanthropic organization devoted solely to serving the Native American farming and ranching community. For more information about NAAF, visit [nativeamericanagriculturefund.org](http://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org).



### Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition

The Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN) is a nonprofit research institute providing expertise in measurement and evaluation to help develop, enhance, and expand programs focused on healthy eating and active living, improving food security and healthy food access, and promoting local food systems. GSCN is a remote team geographically dispersed throughout the U.S., with strong roots in Omaha, Nebraska. For more information on GSCN, visit [centerfornutrition.org](http://centerfornutrition.org).