



WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project

WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project: Round 1 Subgrants Request for Application

January 23, 2023

Deadline to Apply: March 23, 2023

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I. Background

In September 2022, the Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) entered into a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to:

- Increase awareness, especially among underserved populations, about the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits and services available.
- Identify effective communication and outreach methods for increasing participation among those eligible but not utilizing WIC services.

Funding for this new WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project (WIC CIAO) is part of FNS's broader [WIC Outreach, Innovation, and Program Modernization efforts](#). Through these efforts, FNS seeks to: increase WIC's participation rate through increased enrollment, retention of participants for the full length of their eligibility, and an improved participant experience; increase redemption of benefits; and reduce disparities in program delivery, with a focus on underserved populations.

WIC CIAO is a partnership between FRAC, UnidosUS, the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF), and the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN) (hereafter, all organizations are referred to as the Project Team). WIC CIAO also includes an Advisory Board of individuals that reflects the diversity of communities served by WIC, including current/former WIC participants and nationally recognized experts on WIC innovation and outreach.

WIC CIAO will take place from September 2022–September 2027, during which time the Project Team will solicit, review, award, and evaluate subgrantees' innovative WIC outreach projects. There will be a minimum of two funding opportunities. The information in this Request for Application (RFA) only pertains to the first round of subgrants (WIC CIAO subgrant). A subsequent RFA will be released in advance of the next funding opportunity.

II. WIC CIAO

A. Purpose

WIC is one of the nation's largest federal nutrition programs, providing healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding counseling and support, and healthcare and social service referrals to more than [6 million](#) women and young children in 2022. WIC helps reduce racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. However, despite evidence that WIC contributes to [healthy outcomes](#), only about [50 percent of WIC-eligible women, infants, and children participated in the Program in 2020](#).

The purpose of WIC CIAO is to assist WIC State and local agencies, including Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs), and nonprofit entities and organizations including community-based organizations, and nonprofit organizations chartered under the Tribal law of a state or federally recognized Tribe to develop, implement, and evaluate innovative outreach strategies to increase WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery. WIC CIAO is an exciting opportunity to expand outreach and engagement between the WIC Program and community partners.

To increase WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery, WIC CIAO aims to spur community innovation in designing outreach strategies to address disparities in WIC coverage, health outcomes, and access to nutritious foods. Recognizing that organizations in underserved communities may have limited resources and/or capacity, significant technical assistance will be provided throughout the applicant process and the subgrant period (see Section IV).

Best practices and lessons learned from the innovative outreach efforts implemented through subgrant projects will be synthesized to build a series of National WIC Outreach Toolkits.

Furthermore, the Project Team is committed to centering equity and addressing disparities. These are our definitions and guiding principles:

- Equity exists when everyone has the fair and just opportunity to thrive, regardless of their identity or other social characteristics. Equity is different from equality, where everyone has the same opportunity.¹ In order to achieve equity, resources must be tailored to each person’s (or community’s) specific circumstances.
- A disparity is a difference “that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage. [D]isparities adversely affect groups of people who have *systematically* experienced greater obstacles based on their racial or ethnic group; religion; socioeconomic status; gender; age; mental health; cognitive, sensory, or physical disability; sexual orientation or gender identity; geographic location; or other characteristics [historically and/or currently] linked to discrimination or exclusion.”²
 - People identify in multiple ways and may experience multiple types of disparities that intersect to create uniquely challenging obstacles. For example, grandparents taking care of grandchildren in rural communities may face both ageism and a rural environment with fewer opportunities to work, making it especially difficult to find or maintain employment.
- We recognize that the process of advancing equity requires constant learning and feedback. The Project Team will seek feedback from subgrantees through routine reporting and communication.

B. Overview of the WIC CIAO Subgrant

WIC CIAO subgrant projects will include the following key components (see Section III for complete Project Design information):

1. Community assessment of local needs, disparities, and resources.
2. Overarching project goal(s) to increase WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery.
3. Innovative outreach strategies to work toward two identified priority areas: (1) Expanding partnerships, and (2) conducting outreach based on community-level data.

¹ See figure from the [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) on “equality” compared to “equity”

² [Healthy People 2030](#) definition of a health disparity

For the purpose of this subgrant, innovation is defined as at least one of the following:

- A new strategy that has not yet been evaluated for impact on WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reducing disparities in program delivery.
- A strategy that will substantially improve upon a known outreach strategy or adapt it for diverse communities and circumstances.

USDA defines outreach as a way of conducting businesses to ensure that underserved individuals and groups are made aware of, understand, and have a working knowledge of USDA programs and services. Outreach will ensure that these programs and services are equitable and made accessible to all.³

A number of [strategies](#) have been implemented to increase WIC awareness and participation. Applicants should use the linked report to learn more about promising strategies in WIC outreach and identify areas for further innovation.

Successful project proposals will have the following features:

- Include applicants that serve and/or are from historically and currently marginalized populations with disparities in access to WIC and other maternal and child health resources.
- Propose outreach strategies that are innovative.
- Include at least one innovative outreach strategy from a minimum of one identified priority area:
 - Expand Partnerships: strengthen existing and/or establish new partnerships to connect underserved populations with WIC benefits and services.
 - Conduct Outreach Using Community-level Data: conduct outreach based on community-level data that will increase WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery. “Community-level” data refers to data that is detailed enough to understand characteristics of the local population, especially a project’s identified priority population, and can include local knowledge and perspectives gathered as part of the community assessment (see Section III-B).
- Can be sustained beyond the period of funding and technical assistance. Sustainable projects are those that can carry out their innovative ideas beyond the end of the subgrant period when funding and technical assistance come to an end.
- Result in best practices that are transparent so that successful activities can be scaled or easily adapted to other organizations and/or WIC agencies of varying sizes and resources, and that are dealing with different local context and priority populations.

C. Eligibility

Eligible WIC CIAO applicants include the following:

- WIC agency: Any WIC State or local agency, including Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) that administer the Program.
- Nonprofit entity: An association, cooperative, or other organization with IRS 501(c)(3) status and nonprofit organizations chartered under the Tribal law of a state or federally recognized Tribes may apply. Examples include, *but are not limited to*, community-based organizations,

³ [National Resource Conservation Service \(NRCS\), U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)

community health centers, hospitals, public housing sites, Indian health service facilities, colleges and universities, cooperative extension services, migrant health centers and camps, faith-based organizations, nonprofit advocacy organizations and coalitions.

An organization or agency may apply as a singular applicant or as part of an Applicant Team. All Applicant Teams must have one primary applicant, which should include the project lead, primary contact, and budget manager. Other organizations should be included in the proposal's Applicant Team if staff members will be serving key roles in the project. A WIC State agency is eligible to be an applicant or part of an Applicant Team. The primary applicant will receive the project funds. Given that contracts must be formalized between partners in an Applicant Team, should the proposal be selected for funding, we encourage applicants to consider choosing a primary applicant who has the fewest institutional barriers to developing and approving contracts in a timely manner. For-profit entities are eligible to participate as part of an Applicant Team but are *not* eligible to be the primary applicant.

WIC CIAO will fund a given organization or agency through only one subgrant; funding cannot be received through multiple subgrants. However, organizations or agencies may appear as partners on multiple applications.

Applicants will be required to obtain a letter of support from a WIC State agency, including ITOs that administer the Program, demonstrating willingness to support the innovative project. This applies to all applicants except for WIC State agencies themselves. A template for this letter of support is provided in the Appendix. Interested applicants should reach out to their WIC State agencies *as early as possible* to obtain a letter of support, as the process may take a few weeks.

D. Expectations of WIC CIAO Applicants

Center equity and address disparities throughout the project design including in subgrant goals and/or outreach strategies. Centering equity means there is no single checkbox to demonstrate that applicants are prioritizing equity. Instead, applicants will be expected to demonstrate equity-promoting practices throughout their subgrant application. Depending on the proposed project, these practices may include: engaging and obtaining valuable inputs from community organizations and individuals; and ensuring that innovative strategies do not have unintended negative consequences on disparities. Should the project design involve engaging community partners and potential, current, and/or former WIC participants, they should be given an appropriate incentive⁴ for their involvement.

Applications will be scored for *Community Assessment and Addressing Equity*, which includes clearly defining community strengths and resources and how they will be used in the proposed project to improve WIC, how the project impacts disparities, and describing how the applicant/Applicant Team has a history of serving, representing, and/or focusing on underserved communities (see Section VI-D for the full list of Selection Criteria).

⁴ The term "incentive" means any financial inducements that would increase the likelihood of an individual responding to a request to participate in some project-related activity. For purposes of this RFA, small incentives may be used to encourage participants to respond to evaluation-related activities (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups). Examples of allowable financial incentives include coupons or gift cards redeemable for food or general household items.

Participate in evaluation of WIC CIAO. A key goal of WIC CIAO is to generate robust evidence of the impact of innovative outreach strategies on WIC agencies and participants. Findings from this evaluation will help improve services in other communities and at WIC State and local agencies helping to ensure that all eligible families are aware of and using valuable WIC services.

The Project Team will be responsible for the WIC CIAO evaluation, and subgrantees will support the Project Team to develop robust evaluation plans for their subgrants. Subgrantees may choose to conduct their own evaluation activities. The Project Team will be available to assist with evaluation activities for any subgrantee that needs assistance.

E. Key Funding Details and Dates

- Total funding available: up to \$10 million will be available under this RFA.
- Minimum request amount: \$100,000
- Maximum request amount: \$1,000,000
- The amount of funding requested will *not* impact scoring priority; a proposal for a \$200,000 project is just as likely to be chosen as a proposal for \$800,000. Instead, projects will be scored according to the Selection Criteria (see VI-D).
- Subgrant length and dates: 18 months, May 2023–November 2024

Table 1: Key Application and Project Dates

Date	Event
January 23, 2023	RFA released
February 1, 2023	*Webinar: Overview of the WIC CIAO RFA
February 8, 2023	*Webinar: Subgrant Project Design & Work Plan
February 9, 2023	**Letter of Intent due by 11:59 p.m. ET (<i>highly encouraged</i>, but not required to submit full application)
February 15, 2023	*Webinar: Budget & Personnel
March 1, 2023	*Office hours #1
March 8, 2023	*Office hours #2
March 15, 2023	*Office hours #3
March 23, 2023	Applications due by 11:59 p.m. ET
April 28, 2023	Subgrants awarded
May 1, 2023	Project start date
November 1, 2024	Project end date

*All webinars and office hours are optional and will be provided in English and Spanish (see Section IV-A for registration information).

**WIC CIAO subgrant applicants are *highly encouraged*, but not required, to submit a nonbinding Letter of Intent to Submit an Application (LOI) by 11:59 PM ET on February 9, 2023. This document will *not* be considered in the review process but provides useful information to the Project Team in preparing for providing technical assistance to applicants as well as ensuring that the RFA is being adequately disseminated through diverse channels. WIC CIAO applicants who do not submit an LOI by the specified deadline may still submit an application by the application due date of March 23, 2023.

F. Overview of Support for Subgrantees

The Project Team is committed to providing support throughout both the application process and the subgrant period. Technical assistance will be provided at two levels:

- The Project Team will provide assistance during the application period and provide general resources and training throughout the grant period.
- Each selected subgrantee will be assigned a WIC CIAO Mentor Team to provide individualized technical assistance during the subgrant period. The WIC CIAO Mentor Team will include the WIC CIAO Project Manager, one Evaluation lead from GSCN, and one WIC Programmatic lead from FRAC or UnidosUS. For subgrantees from Native communities, the technical assistance team will also include one mentor from NAAF.

If potential applicants have any questions during the application process, they should immediately reach out to the WIC CIAO Project Manager at wic-ciao@frac.org.

More detail about technical assistance is provided in Section IV below.

III. WIC CIAO Subgrant Project Design

In the section below you will find descriptions for each section of the fillable online template. If you have questions during the application process, please refer to this section or reach out to the WIC CIAO Project Manager at wic-ciao@frac.org.

A. Community Assessment

Questions 1–3 in the Application

The specific strategies chosen for each proposal should consider local context. The community assessment section asks applicants to describe the local context (population, barriers, needs, strengths, etc.), including identifying local community resources and challenges that affect different populations and impact the strength and reach of the community's WIC Program.

Applicants will be required to identify:

- The priority population experiencing disparities in (1) access to or use of WIC and/or (2) maternal and child health/nutrition outcomes that the project intends to serve.
- Barriers in their community to WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery and which barriers could feasibly be addressed in the scope of the proposed project (e.g., lack of transportation options, distrust of government programs, populations with limited English proficiency).
- How the community assessment informed the identification of the priority population and project proposal.
- Community strengths and resources that facilitate access to WIC (e.g., trusted community organizations that serve families, pre-existing community coalitions, accessible WIC clinics).
- How the proposal will impact disparities (e.g., reduce barriers to WIC participation, increase community capacity or resources, strengthen community partnerships among organizations serving women, infants, and children, increase opportunities to enroll in WIC).

The information for the community assessment can come from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to, the knowledge and experience of the applicant(s), discussions with eligible families, and/or WIC administrative data. Importantly, community partners who are from and/or serve the priority population should be engaged during the community assessment. Community partners offer key perspectives on resources and barriers and whether proposed outreach strategies will be effective, equitable, innovative, sustainable, and transferable. Data gathered as part of the community assessment may be used in Section III.B to meet the *Conducting Outreach using Community-level Data* priority area. “Community-level” data refers to data that is detailed enough to understand characteristics of the local population, especially a project’s identified priority population.

B. Subgrant Project Goals, Innovative Outreach Strategies, and Priority Areas

Questions 4–9 in the Application & Work Plan

Subgrant Project Goals

After the community assessment, the applicant should develop goals to increase awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery. For this proposal, one to three goals are suggested.

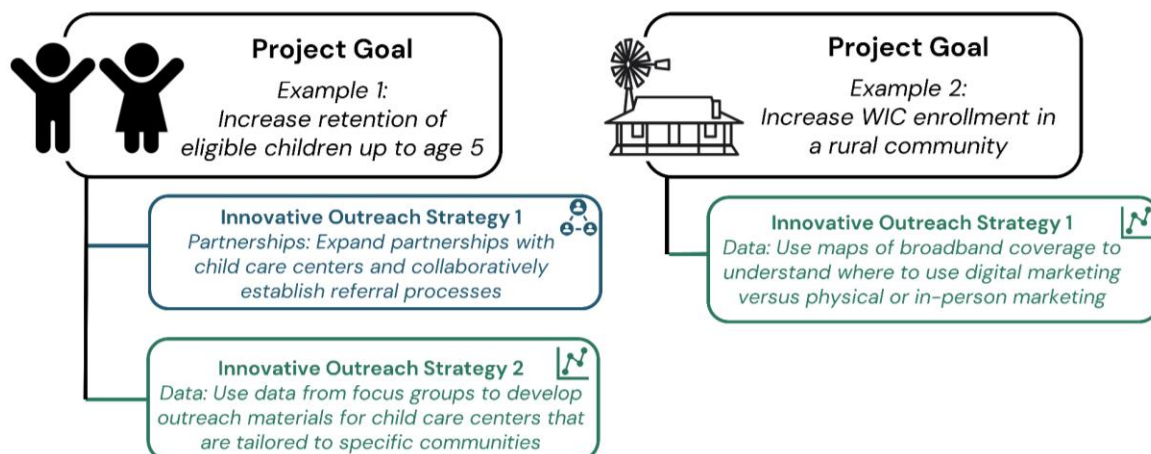
Goals should reflect what the subgrant intends to accomplish. Examples of goals include, but are not limited to:

- Improved awareness of WIC benefits and services among a county’s immigrant population.
- Increased WIC enrollment among those who are eligible in a rural community.
- Increased use of WIC food package benefits among enrolled participants who live in a neighborhood with low access to WIC-authorized vendors.
- Increased retention of children up to age 5 among military families.

Innovative Outreach Strategies

Next, applicants will design innovative outreach strategies (approaches) to work towards their identified project goals. As with goals, innovative outreach strategies should be chosen that best address *local* context and opportunities for improvement in WIC. Multiple outreach strategies can be used to work towards a goal. At least one innovative outreach strategy must fall under a WIC CIAO priority area, although proposals incorporating strategies from *both* priority areas will be given scoring priority (see Section VI-D for the full list of Selection Criteria). The two priority areas are *Expand Partnerships* and *Conduct Outreach Using Community-Level Data*.

Figure 1: Examples of Innovative Outreach Strategies Designed to Meet Project Goals



Note: Sample strategies that **expand partnerships are in dark blue with  icon**. Strategies that **conduct outreach using community-level data are in dark green with  icon**.

Expand Partnerships priority area: Expansion of existing and new partnerships to connect underserved populations with WIC benefits and services.

The purpose of this priority area is to strengthen existing and/or establish new partnerships between community-based organizations serving the priority population, WIC State and local agencies, and/or other nonprofit entities that serve women, infants, and children. Expansion of existing and new partnerships may be between multiple community-based organizations, or WIC agencies and community organizations, or community-based organizations and other nonprofits or for-profit entities.

For example, partnerships may be with entities within or in addition to the Applicant Team, including, but not limited to:

- Community-based organizations, coalitions, and/or leaders.
- Advocacy organizations including anti-hunger advocacy organizations/coalitions, anti-poverty and root causes organizations, maternal and child health organizations (including organizations/coalitions addressing maternal and infant mortality), and early childhood advocacy organizations.
- Child care resource and referral agencies, early childhood coalitions, or institutions serving children under 5, including regional Head Start.
- Community family-serving organizations, including the parks and recreation agencies, YMCA, and Urban League.
- Pediatricians and other healthcare providers* and community health centers.
- Farmworker and migrant organizations.
- Community organizations, educational institutions, coalitions, and legal and other services providers serving underrepresented groups including Native American and immigrant communities.
- Non-WIC State and local governments and agencies*.
- WIC-authorized vendors*.

*These entities are eligible to be engaged as partners, but are *not* eligible to be primary applicants.

Innovative strategy ideas in the Expanding Partnerships priority area include, but are not limited to:

- Expansion of an existing coalition to leverage the coalition’s network for WIC outreach.
- Utilization of community health outreach workers/promotores de salud to expand partnerships with new organizations.
- Collaborations with established community partnerships dedicated to maternal and child health to advertise WIC services and provide enrollment opportunities.
- Collaborations with organizations working to reduce the maternal and infant mortality rate among Black and Indigenous families to increase awareness of WIC services to eligible nonparticipants and facilitate certification.
- Collaborations with community organizations serving immigrant communities to engage with communities and spread information about WIC eligibility and facilitate enrollment.
- Partnerships with child care centers, local Head Start programs, and other organizations serving families with young children to refer children 5 and younger to WIC to streamline program access and provide timely information about WIC.
- Collaborations with local military family support organizations to increase awareness and enrollment in the WIC Program by military personnel.
- Collaborations with Native American food sovereignty organizations/coalitions to improve WIC enrollment and retention in Tribal lands.
- Engagement with organizations that serve seniors who are responsible for their WIC eligible grandchildren.
- Collaborations with community programs serving individuals with disabilities.
- Identification and engagement with trusted community-level spokespersons (e.g., faith leaders, teachers, community health workers, radio DJs, local shop owners, barbers) to communicate the importance of WIC through local media outlets, social media, faith-based venues, community events, and other community-based, culturally appropriate venues.

Note that community organizations and individuals, particularly those from or representing the priority population, should be appropriately incentivized for their time as consultants.

Conduct Outreach Using Community-level Data priority area: Conduct innovative outreach based on community-level data that will increase WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery. Community-level data refers to data that is detailed enough to understand characteristics of the local population, especially a subgrant’s identified priority population.

The purpose of this priority area is to use existing data sources that could inform WIC messaging, communication strategies, and/or the identification of priority populations in underserved areas of the community. Community-level data may include data gathered as part of the community assessment used to identify the priority population and community needs and resources.

Applicants are encouraged to use and improve upon existing sources of community data for the purposes of WIC outreach. If necessary, applicants may also propose measures that require the collection of new data. The Project Team will help subgrantees with any data collection efforts and optional evaluation activities using this data (see Section III-C on evaluation and Section IV on technical assistance).

Sources of community-level data may include, but are not limited to:

- Data updated at least once a year (suitable for both designing strategies *and* testing effectiveness):
 - Data from community-based organizations on the resources and needs of the priority population (e.g., community assessment)
 - Electronic health records data from healthcare organizations
 - WIC redemption data at authorized vendors
 - Focus groups, interviews, listening sessions, Town Hall meetings, surveys, and reports
 - Community eligibility for free and reduced-price school meals
 - WIC State and local agency administrative (MIS) data
- Data updated every few years (suitable for informing outreach strategies but not testing effectiveness):
 - [Community Health Needs Assessments](#) conducted by hospitals as part of the Affordable Care Act
 - WIC coverage estimates
 - Medicaid enrollment
 - Prevalence of broadband or mobile phone use
- Data updated infrequently (suitable for informing outreach strategies but not testing effectiveness):
 - Census tract data on language, poverty, immigration, etc.
 - Aggregate measures and maps, such as the [Food Access Research Atlas](#), [Area Deprivation Index](#), [Child Opportunity Index](#), or the [RWJF County Health Rankings](#)

Community-level data may be used to inform the design of outreach strategies and/or be used to test whether strategies were effective. To the extent possible, the change in the data before and after project implementation will be used by the Project Team to understand the impact of the chosen strategy in conjunction with any WIC administrative data that will be provided to FNS by the subgrantee's WIC State agency. The Project Team can assist with the use of community-level data for this purpose.

Innovative strategy ideas for Conduct Outreach Using Community-Level Data priority area include, but are not limited to:

- Use data to identify underserved populations and target outreach and enrollment efforts.
- Engage enrolled but inactive participants to participate in the WIC Program (e.g., through redeeming benefits).
- Develop outreach and engagement strategies to retain infants, and young children in the WIC Program through their period of eligibility.
- Embed WIC messaging and communications within intake and application materials/processes of relevant social service organizations that are identified as resources in the community assessment, including healthcare setting, child care facilities, Head Start, faith-based organizations, immigrant-serving agencies, and additional institutions and organizations serving each community.
- Encourage word-of-mouth recommendations by existing families participating in WIC in populations identified as having low coverage rates.

- Tailor WIC Program outreach and eligibility information so that it is culturally and linguistically appropriate for populations identified in the community assessment as having limited English proficiency, and distribute the information using social media or other technology channels used by this population.
- Examine previous and current media engagement and tools for new testing opportunities using built-in metrics, added measurements, and statistical modeling capabilities (e.g. using real-time response tracking to choose which marketing campaign message is most effective in generating website engagement or interest in enrollment among a project’s priority population).
- Attend mobile clinics and/or pop-up events to bring services out into the community identified as areas with low access, possibly in partnership with other health and wellness events. Use data collected from events (e.g., number of visits) to help target subsequent outreach events.
- Examine previous and current communications to identify tools that increase accessibility, usability, and engagement of WIC’s information and communication technology by individuals with disabilities as required by Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

C. Participation in Evaluation of WIC CIAO

Questions 10–14 in the Application

Overview

A key goal of the WIC CIAO subgrant project is to generate robust evidence of the impact of innovative outreach projects on WIC agencies and participants. Findings from this evaluation will help improve services in other communities and at WIC State or local agencies, helping to ensure that all eligible families are aware of and using valuable WIC services.

The evaluation of the subgrants will focus on key questions developed by the Project Team with feedback from the subgrantees. The evaluation will include outcome questions (in other words, questions that assess if the project made progress toward its goal(s) — for example, did the project improve participation in WIC?) and process questions (for example, which factors lead to successfully carrying out a given outreach strategy in the applicant’s particular community and context?). The outcome questions for these projects will include, but are not limited to, questions that explore the effect of the project on WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and program delivery disparities. Additional examples of evaluation questions are provided below. The evaluation of the subgrant projects will focus on questions related to each subgrant’s specific project goals as well as some common questions that will be asked of all of the subgrantees.

The Project Team will conduct the majority of the activities for the evaluation, but subgrantees will be expected to assist with the evaluation (e.g., provide feedback on evaluation questions, participate in interviews/surveys, help recruit for WIC participant interviews, and distribute evaluation surveys). Alternatively, if desired, subgrantees can conduct their own evaluation activities using their internal staff or preferred subgrantee evaluation partner (e.g., evaluation/research firm, university, etc.), while receiving guidance and technical assistance (e.g., evaluation development, implementation, and analysis) from the Project Team. The Project Team anticipates working closely with any subgrantee evaluation partners to reduce duplication of efforts by co-planning, collaborating on data collection efforts, and data-sharing where it makes sense and is agreed upon by all parties. *Subgrantees are*

strongly encouraged to anticipate time spent on evaluation support activities while developing their staffing plans and budgets for their projects.

The evaluation conducted by the Project Team will include questions related to the effect of the subgrantee's projects on WIC awareness, participation, enrollment, retention, and engagement. Subgrants should be designed to create impact in one of those areas; however, we recognize that it is unlikely that subgrant projects will be designed to address all of these areas. Proposed outcome evaluation questions include, but are not limited to:

1. Did this project affect WIC awareness?
2. Did this project affect WIC participation?
3. Did this project affect WIC enrollment?
4. Did this project affect WIC retention?
5. Did this project affect WIC engagement?

The evaluation will also include process questions about how the subgrant projects are implemented and carried out. Proposed evaluation questions on process include:

1. Who was actually reached by this project? Were all priority populations equitably reached by the intervention?
2. What were the key characteristics of the project that were delivered successfully? Were the intervention components delivered equitably across settings?
3. What factors within the organization/context allowed for successful adoption of the intervention? What are the barriers and facilitators to adoption of the intervention at lower-resource sites?
4. Were the effects of this project on WIC awareness, participation, enrollment, retention, or engagement experienced equitably across all groups?

Data Collection

The Project Team will use a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to collect data and answer the research questions. Subgrantees will be expected to collaborate with the Project Team to support evaluation efforts. Specifically, the Project Team anticipates using the following ways to collect data from subgrantees to help answer the evaluation questions:

- Staff/partner key informant interviews, focus groups, or surveys: The Project Team will collect information through interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys with subgrantee staff involved in the implementation of each subgrant to identify challenges and opportunities for WIC outreach, and perceptions of the subgrant project. Information collected from staff and other partners may also explore things such as the potential for scale up and transferability to other settings.
- Priority population interviews, focus groups, or surveys: The Project Team will collect information from the priority population of the project (i.e., WIC participants or other relevant project recipients). Data collection can include things like interviews, focus groups, or surveys with people served and/or people likely eligible for WIC on their awareness of WIC and experiences participating in WIC or in the subgrantee's project. The Project Team will ask the subgrantees to help establish a procedure for identifying and recruiting these individuals.

- Project implementation data: Knowing information about how a project was implemented can help identify key components that helped a project succeed. This data can be collected from subgrantees in a variety of ways to minimize burden.
- Select aggregate data collected routinely by the subgrantee, and/or collected as part of the subgrantees' individual evaluations (for those subgrantees who opt to do their own evaluation): For example, this could include data on WIC participation, enrollment, or retention that is collected by the WIC local agency, or summary reports of townhall meetings regularly held by community-based organizations. These data will assist with answering questions about each subgrant and shared findings across subgrants. The Project Team will work with the subgrantees to make sharing this data safe, secure, and minimally burdensome to the subgrantee.

In addition to the WIC CIAO evaluation, the Project Team will work with FNS to obtain administrative data for one or more of the outcome questions related to each subgrantee project (e.g., information on changes in WIC enrollment, participation, and retention). Subgrantees must participate in any data collection activities related to the FNS evaluation.

If the subgrantee's organization requires that evaluation activities be reviewed by an Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Project Team can help with this process as soon as the funding award is accepted. The Project Team can provide support and IRB access if the subgrantee does not have their own IRB process. If subgrantees are required to submit their project and evaluation protocols through their own state agency IRB/review processes, the Project Team will work with the grantee to complete the review and approval process according to those specific protocols.

IV. Technical Assistance and Project Responsibilities

Questions 15–21 in the Application

A. Project Implementation and Evaluation Technical Assistance

Each subgrantee will be assigned a WIC CIAO Mentor Team, which is designed to be a regularly used resource for subgrantees. The WIC CIAO Mentor Team will be a subset of the Project Team tailored to each subgrantee to maximize developing trusting relationships between the WIC CIAO Mentor Team and subgrantee project staff. The WIC CIAO Mentor Team assigned to each subgrantee will include the WIC CIAO Project Manager, one Evaluation lead from GSCN, and one WIC Programmatic lead from FRAC or UnidosUS. For subgrantees from and/or serving Native communities, the technical assistance team will also include one mentor from NAAF.

Subgrantees will have regular meetings with their WIC CIAO Mentor Team who will tailor the technical assistance provided to subgrantees' specific goals and desires. Technical assistance efforts will be collaborative and will ensure interventions can be sustained beyond the grant period and can be adapted by other organizations and WIC agencies.

B. Table: Responsibilities for the WIC CIAO Mentor Team and Subgrantees

This table summarizes the responsibilities of the WIC CIAO Mentor Team and Project Team compared to the responsibilities of the subgrantees. It is meant to provide subgrantees with a full picture of the range of technical assistance that will be provided. It is also meant to help subgrantees plan for required staff time and project management activities in order to answer questions 16–22 in the Application.

Technical Support	WIC CIAO Mentor Team and Project Team	Subgrantee
Project Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with subgrantee to refine intervention strategies, develop evaluation design, and troubleshoot challenges. ● If needed, establish safe data-sharing procedures or agreements among project partners. ● If needed, obtain IRB approval for subgrant activities. ● Create shared evaluation questions to measure across all subgrantee projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with WIC CIAO Mentor Team to finalize intervention strategy and data collection safety plans. ● Hire additional staff or contractors needed to support the project consistent with their proposal.
Preparation and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide support, guidance, and training to subgrantees to carry out outreach strategies (e.g., effective use of social media or other outreach strategies). ● Provide support, guidance, and training to subgrantees to support data collection activities. ● Establish data reporting requirements and timing for all subgrantees. ● Organize and facilitate a virtual closeout meeting at the end of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support key staff attendance at monthly webinars and active engagement with other technical assistance and training opportunities. ● Provide feedback and input on data collection methods and tools developed by the WIC CIAO Mentor Team, support data collection efforts as needed. ● Attend a virtual closeout meeting at the end of the project. One person from each project is required to attend. If a project is organized by an Applicant Team, then one member of the Applicant Team is invited to attend. ● Note: this may require a time commitment of one hour per month for Community of Practice webinars and up to one hour per month with the WIC CIAO Mentor Team (can be adjusted as needed).
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide expertise on WIC that may impact project design, including information and updates on federal WIC rules, regulations, waivers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dedicate sufficient staff time to project management and implementing intervention following agreed upon timeline. ● Responsible for on-the-ground completion of tasks and engagement of partners and potential WIC participants.

Technical Support	WIC CIAO Mentor Team and Project Team	Subgrantee
Data Collection and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work with subgrantees to select a sample of staff/partners to participate in surveys and/or interviews. ● Conduct surveys or interviews with subgrant implementation team members, WIC participants, and other WIC community members, as applicable. ● Provide technical assistance to subgrantees who opt to conduct additional evaluations. ● Design and conduct an evaluation of the subgrant project and individual subgrantee evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide feedback on evaluation plans developed by the WIC CIAO Mentor Team. ● Support the WIC CIAO Mentor Team in evaluation efforts as needed. ● Assist in the recruitment of WIC participants and others to participate in interviews/surveys. ● Along with the implementation team partners, participate in interviews and/or surveys. ● Note: Data collection is required to support the Project Team’s evaluation efforts, and any optional subgrantee evaluation efforts, should be factored into staff time.
Data Management & Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct analyses of all data collected for the evaluations. ● Provide assistance in the analysis of any additional data that the subgrantee opted to collect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct analyses on any data that the team opted to collect and/or ask the WIC CIAO Mentor Team for analysis assistance. ● Collect and share all agreed-upon, de-identified data.
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide guidance for dissemination materials. ● Develop quarterly and overall reports to submit to FNS. ● Provide templates for subgrantee quarterly and final reports. ● Prepare abstracts for scientific and WIC-oriented meetings; publish peer-reviewed manuscripts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Submit all required quarterly and final reports to FRAC. ● Collaborate with the Project Team to create dissemination materials summarizing key elements of the project and notable results. ● Collaborate with the Project Team to develop presentations and manuscripts (optional). ● Note: This will require adequate time for completion of quarterly reports.
Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define payment schedule based on milestones and dispersing payments. ● Guidance on financial management, auditing, and pacing how funds are spent by the end of the grant period. ● Conduct grant close out activities at the end of the grant period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Providing information necessary to disperse funding. ● Tracking expenses as part of quarterly reporting.

C. Resources and Trainings

In addition to technical assistance, other capacity-building opportunities will be provided to funded subgrantees during the grant period by the Project Team, including:

- *Peer Learning Community of Practice*: An online portal will be accessible only to subgrantees and include forums where subgrantees can regularly share project updates, document lessons learned, and describe challenges or ask questions for peer and Project Team input.
- *Monthly webinars*: Regular training will be held on topics applicable across subgrantee projects. Subgrantees will be invited to participate and share their own experiences. These will be recorded and available through the Community of Practice.
- *Resource library*: Resources about WIC and best practices for outreach will be included in the Community Practice web portal.
- *Project closeout meeting*: This meeting will be held at the end of the subgrant period. The Project Team will organize and facilitate a virtual meeting that include presentations of project findings, limitations, and sustainability considerations from subgrantees.

V. Additional Requirements

Question 22 in the Application

A. Monitoring and Reporting

Subgrant recipients must submit quarterly reports to reflect efforts to date on their subgrants. These interim updates will include a brief narrative report (no more than five pages) reflecting on the previous quarter's activities. Quarterly financial reports will also be required for disbursement of subgrant funding. All reports will be sent to the subgrantee's Mentor Team.

Subgrant recipients must also submit a final report on their project. The final report must include a narrative of the implementation process, evaluation results, key challenges and risks faced and how they were overcome and mitigation efforts, successes, lessons learned, and recommendations for the development of a National WIC Outreach Toolkit, including information on how the subgrant project was adapted to meet community needs and context.

Subgrantees will also submit any materials (e.g., educational, promotional, interview guides, data codebooks) developed as a part of this project with their final reports.

The Project Team will provide a specific format and template for all reports. Subgrantees must consent to allow these reports to be shared with FNS for purposes of evaluating WIC Outreach, Innovation, and Program Modernization efforts.

B. Acknowledgement of Funding Source

As outlined in 2 CFR 415.2,⁵ subgrantees should include acknowledgement of USDA FNS support on any publications written or published with grant support, and if feasible, on any publication reporting the results of, or describing, a grant-supported activity. Recipients shall include acknowledgement of USDA FNS support on any audiovisual, which is produced with grant support and which has a direct production cost of over \$5,000.

When acknowledging USDA support, use the following language: "This material is based upon work that is supported by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture." Subgrantees should follow the USDA Visual Standards Guide when using the USDA logo.

Guidelines for written and visual acknowledgment of the Project Team will be provided at the time of the award.

C. Ensuring Confidentiality of Participants

All applicants must commit to document procedures used to maintain the quality and integrity of all data, particularly in protecting data privacy if data is shared between partners. No personally identifiable information should be saved to public websites (e.g., Google files) or shared with the Project Team. Personally identifiable information or a combination of information that individually identifies an applicant or participant and/or family members, regardless of the source.

Each subgrantee's WIC CIAO Mentor Team will provide technical assistance to develop:

- Protocols for storing and using confidential data.
- Data-sharing agreements or protocols between organizations/agencies that wish to share confidential data to facilitate outreach efforts.

For examples of how to generate secure data-sharing strategies in WIC for the purposes of outreach, see [this recent toolkit](#) from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

D. Use of Grant Funds

Budgets may include expenses related to personnel, contractors, and approved meeting, conference, and training travel expenses (whether in-person or virtual). All funding requests should be in whole dollars.

Examples of allowable program expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Salary (personnel, contractors) and fringe benefits
- Incentives for participation of community partners and/or WIC participants
- Software (e.g., upgrades to Electronic Medical Records systems to incorporate referral processes)
- Meeting expenses (e.g., zoom accounts, travel to and from meetings, etc)

⁵ 2 CFR 415.2 refers to the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 2 (Grants and Agreements), Chapter IV (Department of Agriculture), Part 415 (General Program Administrative Regulations), Section 415.2 "Acknowledgement of USDA Support on Publications and Audiovisuals." Available at: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-IV/part-415>. Please refer to this regulation's webpage for definitions of publications, audiovisuals, and their production. Please direct questions to the WIC CIAO Project Manager at wic-ciao@frac.org.

- Outreach expenses (e.g., table fees to participate in community outreach events, flyers, travel for training purposes, such as to and from outreach events)
- Communication tool development (e.g., tools to track social media metrics)

Budgets may not include:

- Equipment (e.g., laptops, cell phones, medical equipment)
- Supplies (e.g., office supplies for general use, although these may be covered under the 10 percent allowable overhead)
- Travel expenses not related to training activities
- Funds for clinical care except to develop referral processes
- Reimbursement for pre-award costs
- Lobbying or advocacy
 - Publicity or propaganda purposes, for the preparation, distribution, or use of any material designed to support or defeat the enactment of legislation, appropriations, regulation, administrative action, or Executive Order before any legislative body.
 - The salary or expenses of any grant or contract recipient, or an agent acting for such recipient, related to any activity designed to influence the enactment of the legislation, appropriations, regulation, administrative action, or Executive Order proposed or pending before any legislative body.
 - Supporting events where elected officials will be present.

The budget will be scored on whether items are appropriate for the description of the proposed subgrant project, meaning that applicants should not request funds for items that are beyond the scope of the subgrant, but should also allocate sufficient staff time and funds for the proposed work.

All applicants will be limited to no more than 10 percent allowed indirect costs applied on personnel and direct costs, unless applicants have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a federal agency, in which case a copy of the agreement must be included in the application materials. A detailed explanation on how to calculate indirect costs for your budget request is included in the budget template.

The WIC CIAO Mentor Team will work with subgrantees to ensure that funding is spent down over the course of their subgrants. Any funds that the subgrantee does not spend by the end of the approved project period shall be returned to FRAC.

VI. Submitting an Application

A. Application Checklist

At least five weeks prior to submission, you should:

- Seek a letter of support from your WIC State agency. This applies to all applicants except for WIC State agencies, including ITOs that administer the Program. A template for this letter of support

is included in this Request for Application Appendix. A formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) is *not* required, but obtaining a Letter of Support can still take a few weeks.

- Reach out to other potential project partners. Your application will be stronger if the collaboration involves organizations that have established, trusting relationships with the population you wish to serve and/or organizations that have experience working with community-level data.

At least four weeks prior to submission, you should:

- Create an account through the online submission portal for the WIC Community Innovation and Outreach Project. (https://webportalapp.com/sp/frac_wic-ciao)
- Submit [Letter of Intent](#) to apply (*highly encouraged*, but not required to submit full application).
- Attend at least one informational webinar and/or office hours hosted by the Project Team (*highly encouraged*, but not required to submit full application. See Section VI-G below).
- Use the work plan template to guide the development of the goals, strategies, activities, and evaluation components of your project.

When preparing your budget and budget narrative, ensure the following information is included:

- All key staff who are paid by this grant.
- Percentage of time the project director and project staff will devote to the project as a percentage of their time.
- Your organization's/agency's fringe benefit amount.
- Itemized travel expenses, travel justifications, and basis for estimates.
- Detailed information and justification for all contracts, consultants, and subgrants.
- Detailed information and justification for all other direct expenses.
- Your organization's/agency's indirect cost rate, which is capped at 10 percent of total modified indirect costs, unless your organization/agency has an indirect cost rate agreement from a federal agency (if so, please provide).
- Double-check that the staff and other resources needed to accomplish your work plan are reflected in your project budget, and vice versa.

When submitting your application, ensure you have submitted the following:

- Application narrative, which will include project innovation and design, priority population, and a plan of how the applicant will implement the selected intervention (available through the application portal at https://webportalapp.com/sp/frac_wic-ciao; application questions provided in RFA Appendix).
- Work plan (template provided in RFA Appendix).
- Budget (template provided in RFA Appendix).
- Budget narrative (template provided in RFA Appendix).
- Two-page maximum resume or biosketch for each key project staff member.
- Letter of support from a WIC State agency, including ITOs that administer the Program (required for all applicants except WIC State agencies, template provided in RFA Appendix).
- Letters of support from project partners (required if multiple partners are applying as part of a team) and other organizations (not required) (template provided in RFA Appendix).

- Governmental information letter from IRS (for WIC State and local agencies) or 501c3 letter of determination from IRS (for nonprofit organizations).
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a federal agency, if applicable. If an organization/agency does not have a NICRA, the indirect cost rate is capped at 10 percent.
- A copy of your organization’s most recent audited financial statements and IRS Form 990.
- A copy of your organization’s overall line-item budget for 2021 and 2022.

B. Letter of Intent (optional but highly encouraged)

WIC CIAO subgrant applicants are *highly encouraged*, but not required, to submit a non-binding [Letter of Intent to Submit an Application](#) (LOI) by 11:59 PM ET on February 9, 2023. This document will *not* be considered in the review process but provides useful information to the Project Team in preparing for providing technical assistance to applicants as well as ensuring that the RFA is being adequately disseminated through diverse channels.

The Project Team will not provide feedback on LOIs beyond confirmation of receipt of the LOI. WIC CIAO applicants who do not submit a LOI by the specified deadline may still submit an application by the application due date of March 23, 2023.

The Letter of Intent is a brief survey, which can be [accessed here](#).

C. How to Submit a Full Application

Applicants must submit the full proposal via the FRAC online portal. Visit the [website](#) and use the “Apply Online” link. If you have not already done so, you will be required to register on the [website](#) before you begin the application process. All applicants should log in to the system and familiarize themselves with online application requirements.

If more than one organization is signing on to the project, then a letter of support is required from each partner listed on the application, but only one application package is required and should be submitted by the primary applicant (see Section I-C).

Additional letters of support are encouraged, but not required. These letters may come from organizations or individuals that demonstrate the applicant organization’s commitment to improving their community’s health and well-being, experience, and knowledge of WIC, ability to work collaboratively, experience conducting community outreach, and/or other relevant characteristics.

Applications must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. ET on March 23, 2023. Late submissions will *not* be reviewed. Note that submissions will be reviewed on a rolling basis prior to the deadline for required materials and applicants may be provided with the opportunity to supply supporting documents if the Project Team finds that an incorrect or outdated document was submitted.

Please email wic-ciao@frac.org with any questions, including technical difficulties with the submission.

D. Application Sections

See Section VI-A for a link to the fillable Application, which includes all sections and questions.

1. Summary Information

Applicants will be required to provide a brief description of the applicant’s organization, including relevant special interest in outreach and the geographic area(s) (counties and zip codes) in which they plan to carry out the outreach services, a description of the priority population(s) served by the subgrant applicant including demographics of current WIC participation and/or retention data, and a brief summary of their proposed project.

2. Community Assessment

Proposals should be tailored to local context. Applicants will be required to complete a brief community assessment, including the project’s priority population and a description of local resources and barriers as they relate to WIC participation. Applicants must explain how their proposed intervention will impact disparities and how their project will engage community members who are eligible for WIC.

3. Project Design and Innovation

Applicants will be required to explain why their outreach strategy is innovative, which may include the design of a novel strategy or the implementation of a previously used strategy in a new context with innovative adaptations. Applicants should explain how proposed innovative outreach strategies fit into one or both of the priority areas and will improve WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery. In this section, applicants will also describe any collaborative efforts and how each organization’s strengths contribute to the project’s innovation.

4. Data Collection and Evaluation

Applicants will be asked to identify evaluation questions that they think are relevant to their project, what role(s) they prefer in their evaluation, and to describe potential resources and challenges that they have in relation to the evaluation process.

E. Selection Criteria

Project Team staff and select external reviewers will conduct a review of all applications that have not been disqualified. Disqualifications may occur due to one of two reasons: (1) failure to prove eligible entity status or (2) failure to submit by the closing deadline.

All applications cleared for review will be reviewed using the same criteria regardless of project focus. Criteria are as follows:

Total Possible Point Value	Section Heading	Subsection Headings and Scoring Criteria
5 points	Section 1: Application Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Key Project Partners● Primary Contact● Budget Manager Contact● Identification of priority population and geographic area● Summary

Total Possible Point Value	Section Heading	Subsection Headings and Scoring Criteria
20 Points	<p>Section 2: Project Plan</p> <p>Community Assessment and Addressing Equity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Needs and Barriers to WIC, Q1 (8 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the applicant clearly define the priority population and the disparities they face? ○ Does the applicant clearly define barriers to WIC in the community, and which will be addressed in the proposed project? ○ Does the community assessment and collection of data and/or applicant knowledge support the need for the proposed project? ● Community Resources and Impact on Disparities, Q2 (10 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the applicant clearly define community strengths and resources and how they will be used in the proposed project to improve WIC? ○ Does the Applicant Team have a history of serving, representing, and/or focusing on underserved communities? ○ Does the proposed project impact disparities? ● Community Engagement, Q3 (2 points): Will the proposal engage potential WIC participants in the project and incorporate their input?
37 Points	<p>Section 2: Project Plan</p> <p>Project Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Work Plan (6 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is a complete work plan submitted for <u>each</u> project goal? ○ Do the strategies included with each work plan align with the goal? Are appropriate measures proposed? Are realistic timelines proposed? ● Project Goals, Q4 (4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How well do the project goals support increased WIC awareness, participation, redemption of benefits, and reduce disparities in program delivery? ○ Are underserved populations prioritized and geographic areas clearly defined?

Total Possible Point Value	Section Heading	Subsection Headings and Scoring Criteria
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Strategies, Q5 (14 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the project address both priority areas? (If yes, 2 points.) ○ Priority area to expand partnerships: Are plans for coordinating partnerships and the role of each partner clearly defined? How will the partnership increase engagement of underserved communities? ○ Priority area to use community-level data: To what extent does the project design utilize community-level data to target WIC messaging and communication? What kind of data will be collected? How or through whom? ● Project Implementation, Q6-7 (5 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the project implementation plan allow enough time, staff, and resources to successfully carry out each step? ○ Have potential challenges been anticipated? ● Innovation, Q8 (4 points): How is the project innovative for WIC? What new knowledge will be gained from this project? Does the project include a new strategy to WIC or newly adapted specifically for WIC? Has the idea been tried, but never formally evaluated for impact on WIC awareness, participation, enrollment, retention, and/or engagement? Or is the proposal taking a known outreach strategy and applying it to a diverse priority population or circumstances? Or is the partnership unique or uniquely valuable? ● Sustainability, Q9 (2 points): How well does the proposal plan to build the capacity of the community (e.g., financial resources, knowledge, skills, relationships, networks) so that the solution can be sustained beyond the period of the subgrant? How well does the proposal leverage and/or influence the work of other community stakeholders (e.g., other nonprofits, policymakers, coalitions, businesses)?

Total Possible Point Value	Section Heading	Subsection Headings and Scoring Criteria
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transferability, Q10 (2 points): How applicable is the proposal’s intervention to other WIC agencies and/or communities? Does the proposal include transparent project operations so they can be scaled or easily adapted to other organizations and/or WIC agencies of varying sizes and resources, and that are dealing with different local context and priority populations?
8 Points	Section 3: Data Collection and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outcome Evaluation Questions, Q11-12 (4 points): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the proposal appropriately identify one or more outcome evaluation questions related to the project? ○ Are other relevant evaluation questions identified? ● Evaluation Support and Potential Challenges, Q13-14 (3 points): Does the proposal describe any potential challenges and mitigation strategies regarding evaluation activities? If no challenges are present, the proposal provides a justification for such. ● Evaluation Role Preferences, Q15 (1 point): Does the proposal identify a preferred evaluation role? No preference will be given for which choice is selected.
20 Points	Section 4: Project Management Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Management, Q17-19 (7 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How well does the proposal articulate a clear and reasonable plan to ensure high-quality products and other outcomes and to keep the project on time and within budget? ○ Are key roles identified for carrying out these activities? ○ How will the applicant(s) reach out proactively with updates and/or concerns and be responsive to the WIC CIAO Mentor Team?

Total Possible Point Value	Section Heading	Subsection Headings and Scoring Criteria
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staffing Needs, Q20-22 (13 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the applicant clearly describe the core responsibilities of key personnel and other partners and staff involved in the proposed project? ○ Are community partners provided leadership roles? ○ Is sufficient staff time allotted? (e.g., Full Time Equivalent, or FTEs) ○ Does the project team have relevant experience? Specifically, are there team members with experience engaging community partners and program beneficiaries, outreach, and project management? ○ Does the applicant have a clear plan for managing personnel associated with the project? ○ Does the applicant have a clear plan for hiring and/or contracting personnel associated with the project? ○ Are key personnel resumes included in the application?
10 Points	Budget and Budget Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the applicant propose costs that are reasonable, necessary, and allocable to carry out the project’s goals and objectives? ● Does the proposal include a line-item description for every allowable cost and shows how it supports the project goals? ● Are community partners appropriately compensated? ● Does the proposal provide complete budget calculations and documentation to show clearly how the budget components were developed and costs estimated? ● If applicable, does the proposal clearly identify a bona fide need to justify the cost for any subcontractor or consultant expenses? ● How well does the proposal demonstrate effective internal controls of funds to ensure funds are used only for project purposes, with an accounting record and audit trail? Does the Applicant Team have prior experience managing grants?

F. Selection Process

Following an initial screening process for confirmation of the applicant organization's eligibility (see "disqualifications" above in Section VI-D), members of the Project Team and select external experts will review and determine the technical merits of each application. Each grant will be assigned one primary reviewer and at least two other reviewers, including an external reviewer with subject matter expertise. Reviewers will independently score each proposal based on the criteria outlined in Section VI-F. Reviewer scores will be averaged and discussed among the reviewing team. This process will generate a list of fundable, competitive proposals for consideration.

The Project Team will require all reviewers to sign a conflict of interest and confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the application review and evaluation process. Names of applicants applying will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

Lastly, FNS will review the recommendations and approve final subgrantee award decisions. FNS reserves the right to accept the review panel's recommendations or to select an application for funding out of order to meet agency priorities, program balance, geographical representation, project diversity, and variety of applicant organizations.

A note on debriefing: Upon request, the Project Team will provide a brief written response of proposals that are not accepted for funding.

G. Technical Assistance During the Application Process

The Project Team will hold a series of optional webinars in English and in Spanish to provide additional details about the application process, best practices for approaching a WIC agency, how proposals will be evaluated and prioritized, and how the subgrants will be carried out. The webinars will include time for potential applicants to ask questions, and the webinar will be recorded and posted to FRAC's YouTube webpage and the WIC CIAO website.

- [February 1, 2023: Overview of the WIC CIAO Subgrant RFA \(English & Spanish\) Registration](#)
- [February 8, 2023: Project Design & Work Plan \(English & Spanish\) Registration](#)
- [February 15, 2023: Budget & Personnel \(English & Spanish\) Registration](#)

In addition to the webinar, the Project Team will host a series of three optional office hours for interested applicants. Office hours will have breakout rooms with Project Team members who will answer questions related to (1) project design and innovation, (2) data collection, (3) specific considerations for applicants from Native communities, and (4) other application requirements. There will be a breakout room available in Spanish.

Optional office hours will be available on the following days (you may attend more than one):

- [March 1, 2023: Office Hours \(English & Spanish\) Registration](#)

- [March 8, 2023: Office Hours \(English & Spanish\) Registration](#)
- [March 15, 2023: Office Hours \(English & Spanish\) Registration](#)

Any questions related to the application process can also be directed to the WIC CIAO Project Manager at wic-ciao@frac.org. We encourage applicants to reach out early in their process to ensure they have enough time to discuss questions and take appropriate steps to complete their proposals.

To ensure that all technical assistance provided to applicants is uniformly available to all, the questions submitted through outreach and dissemination presentations, webinars, office hours, or email will be collected, summarized, and answered in a regularly updated FAQ list on the [WIC CIAO webpage](#). No identifying information will be shared.

VII. Project Direction

Funding for this opportunity is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. Direction and technical support for this opportunity are provided by FRAC, the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, UnidosUS, and the Native American Agriculture Fund. Please direct all inquiries to:

Sally Mancini
 WIC CIAO Project Manager
 Food Research & Action Center
 Website: www.frac.org/wic-ciao
 Email: wic-ciao@frac.org

Key staff members at the Food Research & Action Center are:

- Geraldine Henchy, MPH, RD, Director of Nutrition Policy and Early Childhood Programs
- Katherine Jacobs, MPH, RD, Program Manager, Early Childhood Nutrition Programs and Food Systems
- Allison Lacko, PhD, Research Scientist
- Olu Adeniran, MPH, MBChB, Research and Policy Analyst
- TBD, Grants Manager

Key staff members at the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition are:

- Betsy Anderson Steeves, PhD, RD, Senior Research Scientist
- Jennie Hill, PhD, Senior Research Scientist
- Allison Nitto, PhD, RD, Research Scientist
- Eric Calloway, PhD, RD, Senior Research Scientist
- Chelsea Hollowell, MS, RDN, CLC, Project Coordinator
- Francesca Papa, Senior Research Associate
- Maddy Wierenga, MPH, Research Associate

Key staff members at UnidosUS are:

- Rita Carreón, Vice President, Health
- Ana Gabriela Power, Senior Director

- Sonia Ruiz-Bolanos, PhD, Consultant

Key staff member at the Native American Agricultural Fund are:

- Sandy Martini, MS, Associate CEO

Please visit the WIC CIAO website at <https://frac.org/wic-ciao> for background information and resources related to WIC certification, frequently asked questions related to this RFA, and general updates on the project.

VIII. Appendix A: Templates

- [Work Plan Template](#)
- [Budget Template](#)
- [Budget Narrative Template](#)
- [Letters of Support Template](#)