

Purpose

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is partnering with The Council of State Governments (CSG) to administer and support grant awards to WIC State and local agencies.

The purpose of the WIC Special Project Innovation Grant (WSPI) is to fund projects led by State and/or local agencies that administer the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Projects will develop, implement, and evaluate interventions that aim to improve customer service in WIC clinics, and enhance the WIC certification process.

How does WSPI differ from past Special Project Grant opportunities?

- Funds will be disbursed to awardees directly from The Council of State Governments (CSG).
- The Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN) has been contracted by CSG to lead evaluation efforts for the project.
- Technical Assistance (TA) will be provided by CSG and GSCN to applicants and grantees during all phases of this funding opportunity including proposal development, project implementation, and project evaluation. The application window provided by CSG gives WIC State agencies ample time to access this TA during proposal development.

Funding

- Up to \$6 million is available for Special Project Innovation Grant projects.
- WSPI applicants may request a maximum of \$2 million per project. There is no minimum award amount.
- WSPI will fund multiple projects.

Eligible Applicants

WSPI applicants must be either a WIC State agency, WIC local agency, or a consortium of WIC agencies. (Note: Consortia of agencies applying for this funding opportunity will need to include written agreements between all consortium members. In addition, interested local WIC agencies should acquire a letter of support from their WIC State agency)

Certification Enhancement Opportunities

To be eligible for WSPI funding, projects should improve the WIC certification process by addressing one or more of the following certification enhancement opportunities:

1. Adopt policies, practices, and/or technologies that enable participants to initiate and complete allowable portions of certification procedures online.
2. Enhance capacity to utilize digital technology for appointment reminders and notifications of incomplete certifications.
3. Develop and implement an online WIC referral portal for programs that establish adjunctive income eligibility for WIC.
4. WIC agency led innovative strategies to improve the WIC certification process that are not captured by Enhancement Opportunities 1-3.

Application Requirements

Complete and submit this fillable application form, including:

- Propose a project with one or more of the certification enhancement opportunities outlined above, or one that tests other innovative ideas to improve the certification process.
- Propose a project that has measurable results and fully transparent program operations so that successful projects could be scaled or transferred to other WIC agencies.
- Articulate the project's goals, activities, and implementation strategy.
- Demonstrate compliance with [Federal Program regulations](#) for all proposed strategies and/or solutions.
- Agree to share project related data and work collaboratively with CSG and GSCN on an evaluation plan.
- Propose a plan for how the project will be properly managed and staffed.
- Include a budget and budget narrative.

Submit required attachments:

- Project work plan
- Budget form
- Key staff resumes
- A letter of support from the relevant WIC State agency (if submitted by a local agency) Current written agreements, if applicable, to the proposed project
- A letter of support between applicant consortium members, if applicable
- A letter of support between applicant and key project partners

Select Deadlines/Milestones

- **Letter of Intent deadline:** November 30, 2020 (5:00 p.m.ET)
- **Application deadline:** January 31, 2021 (5:00 p.m. ET)
- **Grant awards announced:** March 1, 2021
- **End of project period:** June 31, 2022

For questions or requests for assistance regarding the RFA instructions, application criteria, and deadlines, please contact WIC@csq.org or (859) 244-8224. Responses to questions sent before the application deadline will be posted on the project website at web.csq.org/WIC.

Section 1: Application Summary

Project Idea Selection (check all that apply):

Enhancement Opportunity 1: Adopt policies, practices, and/or technologies that enable participants to initiate and complete allowable portions of certification procedures online.

Enhancement Opportunity 2: Enhance capacity to utilize digital technology for appointment reminders and notifications of incomplete certifications

Enhancement Opportunity 3: Develop and implement an online WIC referral portal for programs that establish adjunctive income eligibility for WIC

WIC agency led innovative strategies to improve the WIC certification process that are not captured by Enhancement Opportunities 1-3.

See RFA Section 5: WSPI Certification Enhancement Opportunities for full descriptions of each Enhancement Opportunity.

Requested Budget:

Applicant Type (check one):

WIC State Agency

WIC Local Agency

WIC State Agency Consortium

If applying as a state agency consortium, please list all consortium members

500 Character Limit

Agency Contact Information

Please provide contact information for primary staff liaison in regard to this application. For those applying as a consortium, please designate one staff member from your respective agencies to serve as a liaison between your consortium and CSG.

See RFA Section 9: Application Instructions for more information on applying as a consortium.

Primary Staff Contact Name

First Name Last Name

Primary Staff Contact Title

Agency Name

Address

Street Address

Street Address Line 2

City

State / Province

Postal / Zip Code

Phone Number

Area Code Phone Number

Email

example@example.com

Section 2: Project Plan

Statement of Need

1. Please provide a brief statement of need. This section should include descriptions of:

- Populations served by your agency
- Certification appointment processes at your agency, including duration of certification process from initiation to completion and wait times at certification appointments
- The WIC certification and customer service barriers and/or opportunities for improvement your project will target

See RFA Section 4: Background for information on barriers to WIC participation and certification.

4000 Character Limit

Project Design

2. Describe your proposed project including how it will effectively implement the opportunities for improvement you described in the statement of need.

4000 Character Limit

3. Define the specific goals of your project, and describe how the goals support improving WIC certification in your local context.

Goal: What does your project intend to accomplish?

2000 Character Limit

4. Clearly state specific activities you will perform to accomplish the project goals.

Activity: What steps will you take to achieve the project goals?

2000 Character Limit

5. Describe the plan for project implementation including the strategy for project rollout and ongoing delivery.

2000 Character Limit

Considerations for New Technologies

6. If you are considering a project involving new uses of technology, such as WIC apps, digital appointment reminders, or other digital interventions, please list your current tools and systems already in use and describe how they will work with the new project. If you are not considering a project that involved new uses of technology, please note N/A.

2000 Character Limit

External Coordination and Partnerships

7. List any intended partners for the proposed project and describe the plan for coordinating these partnerships. Describe any existing relationships with these partners and detail what will need to occur to prepare them to assist in project design and implementation.

Examples may include other state and local WIC agencies, local community organizations, hospitals, other government assistance programs, universities, and/or non-profits.

Note: WSPI applicants may include any current Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or letters of support as a supplementary attachment to this application.

See RFA Section 12: Letters of Support for details on submitting MOUs and letters of support.

2000 Character Limit

Description of Innovation

8. Describe how the proposed project fits the definition of innovation, meaning the project is:

- A project that is new to the WIC State agency or a project that has never been funded by FNS;
- An existing project that has not yet been evaluated for impact on WIC certification and customer service measures; or
- A project that will substantially improve upon an existing strategy or adapt it for a WIC agency of differing size, demographic context, and clientele.

See RFA Section 2: Introduction for more details on innovative projects for this grant opportunity.

2000 Character Limit

9. Please confirm that your proposed project meets the definition of innovative outlined in question 8, and in the RFA Section 2: Introduction.

YES

NO

Project Transferability

10. What steps will you take to ensure the project includes transparent program operations so that successful project activities could be scaled or transferred to other WIC agencies (of differing size, demographic context, clientele, or technological capabilities)?

2000 Character Limit

Project Compliance

11. I confirm that my project is compliant with WIC regulations and certification policies

YES

NO

Note: If you have questions or are unsure if your project idea is compliant with WIC policies and regulations, please contact wic@csg.org to request technical assistance.

Section 3: Evaluation Requirements

Data Collection and Analysis Capacity

CSG and GSCN are providing technical assistance for WSPI applicants' evaluation plans (see Section 7: Technical Assistance of the RFA for details). All grantees will be working with CSG and GSCN to collaboratively develop and execute a comprehensive project evaluation. As part of evaluation activities, grantees may be asked to collect data (e.g., administer surveys, conduct short interviews, retrieve administrative/MIS data, etc.).

See RFA Section 6: Evaluation Requirements for full details on grantee requirements for evaluation activities and RFA Section 7: Technical Assistance for information on the technical assistance available for project evaluation.

1. As it relates to your proposed project, briefly describe your agency's data collection capacity (e.g., past/current experience, expertise/education, resources/infrastructure, etc.). Also, if your agency has evaluators on staff and/or currently works with external evaluators that will be assisting with this evaluation, please indicate this and include those staff's resume(s) in the submission.

2000 Character Limit

2. My agency(s) commits to:

Participating in the overall project evaluation (including sharing necessary data).

YES

NO

Collaborating with CSG and GSCN to develop an individualized evaluation plan.

YES

NO

Note: Grantees will be included in discussions of the overall project evaluation and the data that will be needed to conduct the evaluation.

Outcome Measures

This section should include details on how you plan to measure progress towards the objectives listed in Section 2: Project Plan. Include a brief description of variables and/or measures and proposed methods for data collection. Please consider if there are any existing data collection efforts in your agency that can be leveraged (e.g., your agency's WIC Management Information System (MIS) or other administrative data).

3. Please provide a brief description of process and short-term outcomes:

- These may include, but are not limited to, assessing training of staff on the innovation; measuring acceptability and feasibility of use in the clinic or agency setting; counting the number of sites selected for testing; participant feedback on the innovation.

2000 Character Limit

4. Please provide a brief description of implementation/intermediate outcomes:

- These may include, but are not limited to, counting the number of staff that promote the innovation; assessing uptake of the innovation (e.g., the number of downloads of an app), or time spent processing new applications.

2000 Character Limit

5. Please provide a brief description of impacts/long-term outcomes

- These may include, but are not limited to, reduction of temporary certifications, reduction in wait times, measures of participant satisfaction, or others indicators specific to the innovation being tested.

2000 Character Limit

Potential Challenges:

6. Specific to your proposed project, please describe any anticipated or potential challenges for the evaluation of outcomes described in questions 3-5, above. Also, describe how those challenges may be overcome and how CSG and GSCN can be helpful to your agency in navigating those challenges.

2000 Character Limit

Institutional Review Board

As outlined in RFA Section 6: Evaluation Requirements, any evaluation activities for your project that involve human subjects (e.g., WIC participants and WIC staff), must adhere to regulations and policies that govern human subject research. For the protection of human subjects, all research and evaluation involving human subjects must be reviewed, approved, and overseen by an Institutional Review Board (IRB).

GSCN will facilitate the IRB approval process and will submit all relevant protocols to GSCN's IRB at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. If grantees have their own required IRBs and/or review processes, please share these details with GSCN and CSG below so that GSCN can work within these processes to ensure all review and approval processes are completed prior to the commencement of any evaluation activities.

7. Does your project involve collecting data on human subjects? (e.g. WIC participants, WIC staff)

YES

NO

8. In addition to the IRB oversight provided through the University of Nebraska Medical Center, does your state have its own IRB/approval process that your agency is subject to?

YES

NO

9. If yes, please describe your process for obtaining any required State or local approval

2000 Character Limit

Note: If your state does not currently have its own IRB research review process that your agency is subject to, you must agree to utilize GSCN's IRB approval process.

See Section 6: Evaluation Requirements of the RFA for more information.

Section 4: Project Management Plan

Program Management

1. Provide a description of the activities to be undertaken to manage the project to ensure that project activities are completed on time, within budget, and with desired outcomes.

See RFA Section 8: Other Required Grantee Activities for a list of required project management activities for grantees and a schedule for required reporting for this WSPI grant opportunity.

2000 Character Limit

Staffing Needs

2. List the key staff/positions that will be involved in the project. For each, include:

- Title and key responsibilities
- FTE commitment planned
- Relevant expertise and experience (for current employees or qualifications for employees to be hired)
- An explanation of how they will contribute to the success of the project

2000 Character Limit

3. My agency(s) will need to hire additional staff to assist with this project.

YES

NO

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2000 Character Limit

Assurances

5. Check all assurances that apply. Applicants should meet all assurances to receive funding. Applicants meeting most but not all assurances may be considered if Technical Assistance from CSG and GSCN can address the assurances not met. See Section 7: Technical Assistance of the RFA for details on Technical Assistance available to applicants.

Check all that apply

The responsible financial officer at my agency is authorized to enter into a contractual relationship with CSG and will sign the contract provided by CSG.

My agency has accounting staff that can send quarterly financial reports to CSG

My agency can hire new staff for this project in a timely fashion, if there is funding for that position (s) through the award or if agency has fiscal capacity for additional staff outside of this award.

My agency has the capacity to rectify any problems related to contracting and wiring funds.

My agency will protect participant confidentiality and privacy for project activities conducted under this award.

My agency will collaborate with CSG and GSCN to identify and generate the data needed to carry out the proposed project.

My agency is authorized to send two key personnel to attend the project kickoff meeting at CSG's Washington, DC offices in March 2021 and the closeout session at FNS headquarters in Alexandria, VA in September 2022.

Section 5: Budget Narrative

The purpose of the budget narrative is to clearly explain expenses required to achieve project goals and objectives. Provide a detailed explanation for each budget category to complete your project scope of work.

Key Considerations for Allowability of Costs

- Funds may not be used to fund existing WIC agency activities outside of the scope of this grant project.
- Funds may not be used to pay current WIC agency staff to perform duties outside of the scope of this grant project.
- State staff may offer in-kind support to this project.
- Funds may be included to provide State agencies with funding to support any MIS contractor fees; these funds should be noted in the “consultant cost” budget category.

Personnel

1. Total amount for Personnel:

List all persons who will be directly paid by these project funds. This does not include individuals covered by indirect costs.

- **Title** – Enter the role/job title for each person/position.
- **Name** – Enter the name(s) of the individuals (existing staff) who will work on this project.
- **Percentage of Time Devoted to the Project** – Identify the percentage of time devoted to the project for each person/position
- **Institutional Base Salary** – Enter the total annual salary compensation paid by the employer for each person/position
- **Salary Requested** – Enter the salary being requested to perform grant activities

Note: As described in Section 7, Item 5, please include attachment with professional resumes of each key staff member.

1000 Character Limit

Fringe Benefits

2. Total amount for Fringe Benefits:

Provide a description of the requested fringe benefit amount. Please include your agency's fringe benefit budget for this project, along with the basis for the computation.

1000 Character Limit

Travel

3. Total amount for Travel:

Provide a list of itemized costs that includes:

- Descriptions and estimates for domestic travel, including
 - Destinations
 - Purpose of travel

Please follow the US General Service Administration guidelines for calculating travel costs. See following link: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

Note: Include costs for two staff to attend a one-day (two nights) grant project kickoff meeting in Washington, D.C. as well as a one-day (two nights) grant closeout meeting in Alexandria, VA at FNS' offices. These meetings and related travel are subject to change due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

1000 Character Limit

Equipment

4. Total amount for Equipment:

Provide an itemized list of equipment costs and describe the requested equipment and why it is necessary for the project.

Note: The Federal definition for equipment is an article of tangible nonexpendable personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. All requested equipment over \$5,000 will require USDA/FNS sponsored approval prior to awards. Purchase of equipment would need to be justified; we recommend that if you intend to request equipment that you discuss this with CSG prior to submission.

1000 Character Limit

Supplies

5. Total amount of Supplies:

Provide a list of itemized costs and justification of each. General office supplies such as pens, computer paper, computer ink, etc. are not required to be itemized if amount is less than \$750.

1000 Character Limit

Contractual

6. Total amount for Contractual:

List itemized costs and include a description of contractual services and a justification for each contractor. Reasonable funds may be included to provide State agencies with funding to support any MIS or telecommunications vendor fees; these expenses should be included in this category.

1000 Character Limit

Other

7. Total amount for Other:

Enter the total requested for other expenses not previously captured by a budget category above. Provide an itemized list of costs along with a description of each expense.

1000 Character Limit

Indirect Costs

8. Total amount for Indirect Costs:

If your agency has an indirect cost description, please provide this as an attachment.

If you intend to claim indirect costs using the 10 percent de minimis rate, please confirm that your agency meets the requirements as described in 2 CFR 200.414(f). Clearly state that your agency has never received a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), and your agency is not one described in Appendix VII of 2 CFR 200, paragraph (D)(1)(b).

1000 Character Limit

Section 6: Attachments

1. Project Work Plan

List each of the goals and activities proposed in Section 2: Project Plan. List the individual/entity responsible and the anticipated end date for completing each activity.

Note: Project activities are expected to begin within 30 calendar days of award date

Workplan should include:

- Timing of technical and financial reporting as well as all major program milestones and project deliverables including:
 - Project kickoff meeting with CSG, GSCN, and FNS
 - Quarterly progress reports (see Section 8: Other Required Grantee Activities of the RFA for complete reporting schedule)
 - Final report no later than 2 months after June 31, 2022, the end of the project period
 - Quarterly conference calls, to be scheduled following the submission of the quarterly reports

CSG has provided a workplan template which can be accessed [here](#).

2. Budget Form

WSPI applicants are required to submit a budget form to detail all costs associated with the proposed project. Expenses in the budget form should align to the expenses outlined in Section 6: Budget Narrative. A fillable budget form can be accessed [here](#).

3. State Agency Letter of Support

For applicants other than state WIC agencies, a letter of support from the appropriate state WIC Agency stating their support for the submitted application is required for the proposal to be considered. The letter must also include, when applicable, the state agency's agreement to provide any data needed for program implementation and/or evaluation. A sample state agency letter of support can be found [here](#).

4. State Agency Consortium Letter of Support

Applicants applying jointly as a state agency consortium should obtain a letter of support from each agency participating in the consortium. The state agency consortium letter of support should outline each agency's role in the project plan and state commitment to collaborate with CSG and GSCN as well as the other members of the consortium. A sample state agency consortium letter of support can be found [here](#).

5. Key Project Partners' Letter of Support

If your project team includes external partners that are integral to the project's success, please obtain a letter of support from those respective organizations. The key project partner letter of support should detail the external organization's role in the project and state commitment to work with applicant to achieve the WIC agency's project objectives. A sample letter of support can be found [here](#).

6. Key Staff Resumes

Attach the professional resumes of all key project staff, or a job description for any anticipated external hiring.

7. Current Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

If applicable, please attach any current Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) or written agreements that are critical to the success of your project. If you intend to secure those later, please provide your plan for obtaining those agreements.

Agency Authorized Signature

By signing below, I am verifying that I was involved in the development of this project, have read and approve the final proposal, and agree to the terms of the RFA.

Signature

Name

First Name

Last Name

Title