



BUILDING SUPPORT FOR WIC IN YOUR COMMUNITY

ENGAGING PARTNERS AND FORGING COALITIONS

WIC is a popular program that serves a critical need, but it takes hard work to communicate the value of WIC to the public and policymakers. Partners and coalitions play a large role in elevating and amplifying WIC's achievements, defending WIC when it is under attack, and building consensus for projects and initiatives that could expand the reach of WIC. Sometimes, you may find yourself in a position where you are unable to lobby on a particular issue, but nonprofit partners in your state or region *are* able to lobby. In these instances, it is important to have a network of WIC advocates that you can call on to assist you.

WHO IS A POTENTIAL PARTNER OF WIC?

Anyone can be a partner to WIC! At the end of the day, a partner is someone who is willing to advocate for WIC and support the program's goal of improving nutrition and health outcomes. There is broad support for the goals of WIC across all communities and there should be many willing partners in your state and locality. However, outreach to potential partners should be targeted at relationships that can both have impact and sustain over time.

Partners can take the form of champions in state or local government – either elected officials, staffers, or department administrators – who herald the achievements of WIC and support WIC staff with initiatives and projects. Partners can also be members of the local press, who spotlight WIC's role in helping

the community. Partners could also be anti-hunger advocates at food banks who work every day to address food insecurity, medical professionals who work with WIC families and see firsthand the program's beneficial impact, or former WIC participants who can testify to the long-term value of WIC.

STARTING THE CONVERSATION WITH PARTNERS

Partners can sometimes reach out to WIC, eager to find ways to support the program. However, most of the time, you will need to conduct outreach to establish contact with a potential partner, educate that partner on WIC and any current projects, and talk through how you can work together to enhance nutrition and health outcomes in your community.

Outreach is easy – it can be as simple as a phone call or an email! You can reach out to partners that you have met at conferences or other professional settings. Sometimes, you may choose to cold-call a potential partner. Most of the time, people will be receptive to learning more about WIC and how they can help this program.

WHEN TO CONVENE A COALITION

Coalitions are when a number of partners are brought together to achieve a common purpose. There are two types of coalitions: a targeted coalition or an evergreen coalition. Targeted coalitions have a specific, attainable goal; for example, a coalition to pass paid family leave in your state. Evergreen coalitions address systemic issues and may handle a wide portfolio—for example, a coalition to promote and enhance breastfeeding in your county.

WIC sits at the nexus of many different fields – public health, nutrition, anti-hunger, early childhood, etc. WIC staff can play a large role in instigating and sustaining coalitions on a wide range of topics. Coalitions can hold regular meetings or phone calls to connect stakeholders. From those meetings, coalitions can have specific goals (such as: passing a bill, reducing the maternal mortality rate in your state, ensuring every new mom has access to a breast pump, etc.) and then work through advocacy, press engagement, or substantive policy work to achieve those goals.

