



DEVELOPING STRONG ADVOCACY MESSAGES

Creating strong messages is a crucial part of advocating for WIC. Effective messages can mean all the difference for securing strong funding for WIC, protecting WIC against threats, and advancing policies that improve WIC.

DEVELOPING STRONG ADVOCACY MESSAGES INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

- » Personalize Your Messages
- » Create Your WIC Value Proposition
- » Tailor Your Messages
- » Use Data and Stories
- » Approach Stakeholders with Value-Based Messaging

PERSONALIZING YOUR MESSAGES

Depending on whether you are a director, nutritionist, staff member, participant, or partner advocate, you will be able to speak better to different key messages based on your experiences. It is also important to tailor messages to your audience's interests and values. It is helpful to understand how to personalize these key messages through something called a value proposition.

WHAT IS A VALUE PROPOSITION?

A value proposition is a business or marketing statement that summarizes why a consumer should buy a product or use a service. This statement should convince potential consumers that one particular product or service will add more value or better solve a problem than other similar offerings.

Understanding the value of WIC in your community will help you target your messaging to particular listeners, including policymakers.

HOW DO I CREATE MY WIC VALUE PROPOSITION?

1. WHAT CAN I SPEAK TO? Think about which key WIC messages you are most familiar with and can provide details about. Once you understand the key WIC messages, depending on your particular role with WIC as a director, a nutritionist, a member of the breastfeeding support staff, vendor management staff, other staff or a WIC partner, you can detail and connect your message to your specific WIC position.

2. DETERMINE WIC'S VALUE FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE. This is where you provide the support for the key messages. Think about the services provided by WIC clinics, and how these services add value. In other words, what are the positive outcomes of WIC? Some important points to consider are that WIC:

- » Achieves Medicaid and healthcare savings

- » Decreases infant mortality
- » Improves birth outcomes and reduces low and very low birth weight infants
- » Improves overall health of women and children
- » Increases breastfeeding rates
- » Contributes to the local economy

It is important to communicate WIC's value through specific supporting examples. Provide examples that you are comfortable speaking about. Explain how:

- » The program prevents unfavorable health outcomes by targeting nutrition health risks.
- » Clients are assessed for specific nutritional needs and given targeted nutrition education.
- » Clients are provided with a food package tailored to them.

Assert that:

- » The program works and has long-term benefits. Provide specific data from your agency such as the number of clients served, as well as the health behaviors and health outcomes.
- » The program contributes to lower healthcare costs while contributing to the local economy.
- » For more key messages and talking points, see our **Key Messages and Talking Points for 2018** section of the toolkit.



OTHER TIPS FOR PERSONALIZING YOUR MESSAGES

1. CREATE USER-FRIENDLY DATA PRESENTATIONS FOR YOUR LOCAL/ STATE DATA. Show WIC's data visually. Identify the areas that are better explained through illustrative data such as a color pie chart to highlight certain information. Bring visuals of your data to share and leave behind. Remember to keep it simple when framing and packaging your information. The font should be large enough to read, and colors should be easy to see. The illustration should also be easily read online. For more information about how to use data in your advocacy, see the **Evidence Based WIC Advocacy: Using Data** section of our toolkit.

2. PREPARE SOME WIC CLIENT STORIES TO SHARE. The importance of client stories cannot be emphasized enough. They are unique, heartfelt experiences of WIC participants and employees, and therefore help illustrate the value of WIC for different members of the community. These stories can highlight specific aspects of WIC such as breastfeeding, preventing childhood obesity, helping mothers feel empowered, or other important programmatic features. Good stories show improvements in health status or positive changes in health behaviors. Client appreciation stories are also good to show how much the program is valued by the policymaker's constituents. Choose stories that you can speak on with authority. For more guidance on storytelling, see the **Telling Your WIC Story: Why and How** section of the toolkit.

TAILORING WIC MESSAGES

Remember to tailor your messages to each specific audience you are approaching. For example, if your audience is the office of the Senator of Nirvana, you will want to address issues and topics specific to Nirvana's WIC programs. If she is a Democrat or a Republican, you will want to tailor your messages accordingly. Don't forget to check out your policymaker's website to learn more about her interests and values.

There are particular messages that are bound to gain the attention and possibly support from a Republican office versus a Democratic office and vice versa. This applies not only to the message, but also to how you frame it. It is important to tailor your messages to each policymaker, talking about WIC in a way that matters to them rather than uniformly. Thankfully, WIC is a wonderful program for so many reasons and WIC key messages can be tailored to appeal to policymakers from both parties.

Both parties favor lowering healthcare costs. WIC saves money in lowering the amount of costly medical care for high-risk births and improving the health of our nation's women and children. Preparing healthy children to enter schools ready-to-learn will also likely resonate with both parties.

No matter your political views, it is important to tailor your intended messages to respect the policymakers you meet. You don't want to risk unnecessary argument with your policymakers or their staff by ignoring their interests. You want to form good relationships with policymakers and staffers to build support for WIC.

TAILORING WIC MESSAGES TO DEMOCRATS

CORE VALUES:

- » Communitarian: Greater together than on our own
- » Everyone gets a fair shot, plays by the same rules
- » Scientific research plays a big and necessary role in education and knowledge

GOALS:

- » Ending loopholes for the rich, cutting taxes for less wealthy individuals
- » Making healthcare available to all Americans, expanding health insurance coverage, making it affordable

With these values and goals you can frame key WIC messages and your personalized messages accordingly. You may emphasize that WIC is grounded in science, empathy and compassion. Use examples from your community.

TAILORING WIC MESSAGES TO REPUBLICANS

CORE VALUES:

- » Limited Government (against imposing federal intervention and control)
- » Maximizing individual freedom

GOALS:

- » Promoting healthcare competition and choice, lowering the cost, and focusing on personal responsibility
- » Reducing government regulations and increasing state and local control and flexibility in program implementation.

Thinking about these values and goals, you can tailor WIC messages and your value proposition accordingly. You may emphasize how historically WIC has strong bipartisan support and strengthens families, communities and America.

APPROACH STAKEHOLDERS WITH VALUE-BASED MESSAGING¹

- » Approach audiences with relatable values, and then as needed win them with relatable facts.
- » Common values shared by majority of audiences:
 - Babies are innocent
 - Babies need nutrition if they are going to have any chance for a healthy childhood
 - America should not withhold nutrition from innocent babies

AN APPROACH LED WITH FACTS WILL BACKFIRE

- » Facts showing WIC's importance or impact are off-putting as a conversation opener; more apt to confirm viewpoint (whatever that may be) as opposed to changing someone's mind.
 - Facts, "experts," or statistics backed by research are easily construed as elitist, biased, or trying to trick.
- » Skeptical audiences will question data accuracy instead of focusing on what it says.
 - Audiences skeptical of WIC will not be placated by providing more or different facts; they first have to be convinced by appealing to their strongly held beliefs.
- » Data can provide a secondary (or even tertiary) support point as needed for specific stakeholders.

- Business leaders may need facts about WIC's low administrative costs to understand its effectiveness.
- Policymakers may need information about health outcomes.
- We should still begin the conversation with each by talking about our responsibility to the baby.

WIC IS ABOUT THE BABY

- » Audiences fundamentally believe that WIC's primary role is to serve the baby.
- » Talking about the baby provides opening with audiences who are:
 - Health, business, or religious leaders
 - Most apt to express frustration with public assistance programs, including illegal immigration
 - Eligible for WIC
- » This framework is the key emotional approach to the benefit of WIC. Audiences understand and sympathize with this goal.

¹ Porter Novelli (2017) Focus Group and Stakeholder Interview Report on Public Perceptions of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).