NWA 2017 WIC RESEARCH UPDATE

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Overview

• Why is research important to WIC?
• The current WIC research environment
• Your role in WIC research
• Staying connected to research through NWA
Why is research important to WIC?

- Are we accomplishing our mission?
- Identify opportunities and challenges
- Advocacy and Funding
The WIC Story
The Role of NWA in WIC Research

• NWA is not conducting formal research
• Make recommendations for research
• Connect members to new research
• Connect members to opportunities to participate in research
• Help build connections between researchers and the WIC community
The Current WIC Research Environment

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats
Strengths

• Strong and long history of WIC research
• WIC is science based
• Enormous amounts of WIC data are collected routinely
• Active and growing WIC research community
Weaknesses/Opportunities

• Good research takes time!
• Need to build economic research – Return on Investment research.
• Need to build research on the impact of WIC on military families.
• Spectrum of capacity to conduct analysis on WIC data at the state and local level.
More Opportunities

• A number of national organizations undertaking WIC research on a range of topics
• NASEM recommendations for research
• More states moving to EBT – currently 27 states
Threats

• Research is a scientific process to collect and analyze empirical evidence.
• The value of science and evidence is being challenged by some elected officials.
  – March for Science
    https://www.marchforscience.com/
• Health impacts may not be a priority – threat if we don’t diversify our arguments for WIC.
Your Role in WIC Research

- Participating in research
- Shaping the research agenda
- Communicating research
- Connecting researchers with WIC
WIC Research – Don’t Miss an Opportunity!
Research = Knowledge
• NWA Evaluation Committee.

• Highlight areas for focused research.

• Research to further bolster the four pillars of WIC services.

• 2016: women’s health, obesity and data.

• Every other year.

• Research takes time.

https://www.nwica.org/research-activities
Guidance for Planning, Conducting and Communicating a WIC Research Project

Planning a Research Project

For over 40 years WIC has been helping low-income families access healthy food, breastfeeding support, nutrition counseling and referrals to health and social services. Although WIC is one of the most researched Federal nutrition programs, there are always opportunities for meaningful research that could fill a knowledge gap and provide formative lessons for the program and new data that can support advocacy efforts. Additionally, research on WIC occurs across disciplines and topics, including, for example, nutrition, breastfeeding, food policy, public policy and behavioral economics.

If you are looking for topics to research, we recommend consulting the National WIC Association’s Research Needs Assessment, which is a list of high priority research topics for consideration by Interested researchers. The latest version can be found here. In addition, there are many other research topics that are of value to WIC and those who may be valuable to a specific local context.

If you are considering planning a research project that focuses on a specific locale, we encourage you to consider the research needs of the locale you hope to conduct research within. Synergies between researchers and state and local WIC staff, enable WIC research projects to have a meaningful impact on local WIC programs. For example, WIC state administrators and local staff worked collaboratively with researchers at the University of Illinois (UIC) to develop projects to evaluate the revised WIC food packages and identify barriers to WIC child retention. As a result, the research generated from the partnership has helped inform programmatic direction.

Conducting Research within the WIC Community

The type of research you conduct may be determined by a number of factors such as timeframe, funding, and so forth. Some factors that you may want to consider include:

1. Clearly communicate research objectives, both verbally and in writing, when approaching state and/or local agencies with a request for their participation. It is not possible to communicate verbally with every potential participant due to the scale of your project, consider hosting a webinar.
2. Define who the stakeholders will be in your research project. This may be straightforward or it may be more complex depending on whether the research project is being planned and conducted by the same entity or if contractors are undertaking some aspects of the research. Regardless, all stakeholders should be clear on the roles and responsibilities.
3. Agree on the type and level of input participating State and local agencies will be asked to provide throughout the project and what form of input will be requested (interviews, advisory panel, informal phone calls, reviewing reports, etc.).
4. Be aware of local policy issues that could be of concern to states, local WIC staff and WIC participants involved in your research. For example, be aware of sensitive content issues and consider what impact your research could have on policy discussions at a local and national level. If unclear about whether your research could be policy-sensitive, contact NWA or your State WIC Director to discuss.
5. Communicate with WIC staff, what new insights you think your research will contribute to the WIC program or whether the research is being performed to meet federal requirements.
6. Clearly outline what is expected of participating WIC stakeholders involved in your project.
7. Be clear on when there will be opportunities for participating WIC stakeholders to ask questions before, during and after the research takes place.
8. Provide details of the point person WIC should contact if they have questions about your research.
9. Clearly describe how you intend to use feedback provided by participating state and local agencies. For example, if you are proving an opportunity for state and local agencies or advisory panels to review documents, clearly describe how that feedback will influence next steps.
10. If requesting data from WIC state and local agencies, clearly describe the data you would like to obtain, including data fields, timeframe, and expected response time.
11. Mutually agree to how sensitive data will be used for the research. Are there any Internal Review Board or Personal Identifier Information considerations? Is an MOU required? If so, discuss how these will be addressed with all stakeholders.
12. Describe who will have access to data provided for the research, how it will be stored throughout the project lifecycle, and how the data will be handled after the research is complete.
13. Mutually agree to whether and how raw data files and analytic files can be used after the research is complete.
14. If making recommendations, ensure that they are realistic and note limitations relative to their implementation.
15. Discuss with stakeholders how you plan to disseminate study findings.

https://www.nwica.org/guidance-for-planning-conducting-and-communicating-a-wic-research-project
WIC Research to Practice

Quarterly WIC Research newsletter
  – Hot Topic
  – WIC Researcher Spotlight
  – FNS Research Update
  – Links to new publications/abstracts

https://www.nwica.org/research-activities

Check your membership page to make sure you are signed-up to receive WIC Research to Practice!
NWA Evaluation Committee

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- Debi Tipton, MS, RD/LD, Native American Coalition
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- Kathleen Merchant, PhD, MS, MAEd, Local Agency Section
- Vic Oliveira, PhD, USDA-ERS Partner
- Danielle Berman, PhD, USDA-FNS Partner
- Kelley Scanlon, PhD, USDA-FNS Partner
Are you from the Southwest or Southeast Region and interested in research and evaluation?

We are looking for two new Evaluation Committee consultants!

Please get in touch...

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Thank you!