

**2010 CA WIC Program  
Best Practices Awards  
Nomination Form**

**Excellence in Vendor Partnerships  
(Agency Award)**

**Directions:**

**The best practices awards are for activities during the federal fiscal year 2009 (October 1, 2008-September 30, 2009).** Complete all sections of the form. "Agency" awards recognize the best practices of the organization, and "individual" awards recognize the unique contributions of an individual staff member. The information provided in the nomination form may be included in the Best Practices Awards program. Remember to include your name and contact information as we may contact you for additional information. This form is designed for you to enter information within expandable fields after every question.

**Nomination:**

**Excellence in Vendor Partnerships: [Community Action Partnership of Kern-WIC](#)** (Agency Name)

Describe how the agency established and maintains the Local Vendor Liaison Program Initiative (e.g., staff, activities, etc). [The agency hired a full time LVL/Marketing Specialist in May of '08, in time to attend that year's CWA Conference in San Diego. Community Partnership of Kern-WIC continues to support the LVL with transportation, continued training and access to supplies and printing resources.](#)

[The LVL has access to the fleet of vehicles used by Community Action Partnership of Kern-WIC. The agency has WIC sites throughout the county and support for the LVL includes providing transportation to allow the LVL to cover the large geographic area. Vendors are located as far as 100 miles away.](#)

[Of the two WIC agencies in Kern County, Community Action Partnership of Kern-WIC covers some of the urban-area vendors, but most of the rural or outlying areas. The LVL shares the list of approximately 140 vendors with the other agency and makes regular visits.](#)

[With the new foods roll out complete, the LVL continues to visit vendors and offers guidance as needed, including WIC support materials and the Welcome to WIC-DVDs, which has been very well received as a training tool for vendors.](#)

Describe the barriers your agency faced in implementing any new or innovative activities, strategies and/or projects that enhanced your vendor partnerships?

[Barriers include the large area to cover in Kern County, with some vendors over 100 miles away from the agency's main office. The two military installations, China Lake Naval Air Station Commissary in Ridgecrest and Edwards Air force base Commissary, pose their own challenges in working with strict military policies, security issues and other red-tape.](#)

[Language is a barrier for some vendors, with several ethnicities being represented, including Korean, Spanish and the Middle East countries.](#)

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Please submit completed form by **December 11, 2009** to  
Theresa Searles, Local Agency Support Branch  
Theresa.Searles@cdph.ca.gov  
Phone: (916) 928-8766 Fax: (916) 263-3314

## 2010 CA WIC Program - Best Practices Awards

### Directions:

Computer competency is also an issue. Many of the smaller merchants do not have access to the internet, or can not navigate the internet easliy.

There are also the varied types of vendors in Kern County, from the neighborhood stores, the independents, the chains and the WIC-only's, giving each vendor it's own, unique identy in the community. Some of the vendors, such as the one in Lost Hills, are the only store in the area and therefore extremely important to the community.

Many of the neighborhood vendors were concerned about the availability of new WIC foods in remote areas, or the need and cost for new equipment to stock the new food items.

Many of our low income communities and neighborhoods suffer from high rates of obesity and obesity related illness. These communities and neighborhoods are often the hardest places to find fresh fruits and vegetables. Healthy food access is a necessity in promoting good health and preventing illness. By helping the vendors to understand their importance in the neighborhood, they were more willing to make changes for the good of the community as well as their business.

How did the agency overcome those barriers?

Several steps were taken to overcome the challenges for vendors in Kern County, through the customer-service of the LVL.

The LVL travels to outlying areas, sometimes over a two-hour drive, one way. Advanced planning is needed for the Military Commissaries, in order to arrange for a security pass to get on the bases.

Developing a relationship with the vendors has been essential. The LVL has worked with vendors to assist in contacting the State offices and other resources. The LVL listens to concerns and learns about the vendors as individuals. Many who are not originally from the U.S. are trying to live the "American Dream" of owning a successful, small business. They are truly trying to do the best for their new communities and their own families. There is a great respect for the U.S. and for the WIC program and they will often share that in many other countries, the poor are left to starve in the streets. The LVL maintains friendly interaction with the vendors and in doing so has learned about the capital city of Yemen (San'a'), as well as expressions of greetings and thank you, in Korean. (Ahn yang ha say oh) This has added to the trust and respect given to the vendors and the LVL in return.

The LVL has facilitated conversations between Sacramento and vendors who are confused, by making phone calls on the vendors behalf and even calling tech-support from the store to help a new vendor figure out how to sign on to Wicworks.

Several small-store vendors worried about the cost of carrying perishable produce, but by helping them evaluate their current equipment and store space solutions were found, they have been able to meet the minimum stocking requirements. One vendor put small wicker baskets at the end of his merchandise isles and a few others have purchased small-under-counter refridgerators. Often, there are bananas at the registers or rearranged the beverages in the cold case to allow room for some fruit and vegetables. These are examples of simple solutions that the LVL can suggest to vendors for marketing and merchandise display. The vendors are discovering that what is good for the community can also be very good for business.

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Has the agency established any partnerships with other WIC agencies, or community groups such as the Network for a Healthy California? The agency has developed partnerships with several local and statewide groups. They include the Kern County Network for Children, the Los Angeles Breastfeeding Taskforce, the Kern County Breastfeeding Coalition, attendance at the California Breastfeeding Roundtable and the California Breastfeeding Coalition, the Network for a Healthy California and CCROPP. The LVL made a presentation of the WIC program on the base at China Lake NAS and a presentation for Small Store owners and Farmers in cooperation with CCROPP on June 25, 2009. (If so, describe efforts, outcomes, etc). Through the candid dialogue between small store owners and local farmers, it was revealed that there are major obstacles for vendors wanting to purchase produce directly from the farmer's however they could purchase them at farmer's markets. This is only an issue now, with the new food package, since previously vendors did not have to buy fruits and vegetables.

Kern County suffers from very low breastfeeding rates and high rates of obesity. Through these partnerships, the big picture of a Healthy Community is easier to understand and to communicate to the vendors. By understanding the efforts of groups on state and local levels to promote breastfeeding and reduce obesity rates, the LVL can share with the vendors those goals and the importance of the WIC vendor in the community. This helps the vendors understand that they are valued as WIC community partners. The LVL can then relate to the vendor from a business point of view, for example, that they will likely sell less whole milk and less formula, but more baby foods. The vendors will likely show an improvement in business overall by carrying more of what their customers want.

In order to reinforce the message of Healthy Habits for Life, the agency produced a series of Public Service Announcements, in English and Spanish. They were distributed to local media as well as posted on YouTube. (Youtube: infokern)

How many vendor contacts did the LVL establish? The LVL visits the over 70 vendors regularly and has built a rapport with the owners and managers. Each visit includes a delivery of WIC support materials that may include shelf talkers or posters and decals. Since October 1, visits have included the Welcome to WIC-DVD to assist the vendors in training their staff. What activities were completed by the LVL? Beginning in May of 2008, the LVL developed a vendor-packet that included a background on the new foods, a list of WIC offices, and other printed materials in easy to read form that summarized the coming changes. Describe the activities. By communicating openly with the vendors the LVL has developed a rapport with them. Therefore the vendors are comfortable in contacting the LVL for a variety of questions.

Describe how your efforts were successful in preparing the community partners and vendors for the implementation of the new food package? The vendor visits began May of '08, to prepare for the October 1, 2009 new foods packages. The visits included printed materials and an explanation of what to expect. The first phase of vendors was the neighborhood stores and those vendors had the biggest concerns. For example a vendor whose store is 800 square feet was typical in his angst about carrying the fruits and vegetables along with a huge concern about having to buy new equipment or even if he had the floor space to carry the new foods. Due to the LVL's encouragement this vendor began stocking lettuce prior to the October 1 deadline and found that he sold out in days. This reassured him that his customers would really buy produce and likely even more once WIC provided the customer. Other vendors found the same to be true, with many adding small amounts of produce before it was required.

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Another vendor worried that since his store was near a large chain, he would lose business. However, the LVL pointed out that the customers that walk would need to travel 4 more blocks and cross a 4-lane street to get to the chain store, likely with small children and strollers in tow. The vendor is more aware of his connection to the neighborhood and community. The vendor has successfully implemented the new minimum stocking requirements to carry fruits and vegetables and has found that his customers appreciate his improved variety of foods.

**Contact Person:**

Contact Name: Beth Tolley, Program Manager  
Phone Number: 661.327.3074  
Fax Number: 661.327.2883  
Email Address: [etolley@capk.org](mailto:etolley@capk.org)

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**Nomination:**

**Excellence in Vendor Partnerships:** **Monterey County WIC** (Agency Name)

Describe how the agency established and maintains the Local Vendor Liaison Program Initiative (e.g., staff, activities, etc). **Our LVL is a degreed nutritionist in our program. She maintains contact with vendors by appointments, cold calls and e-mails. During the countdown to the new food package rollout she sent out customized post-cards. In July she produced a vendor address data base for labels and envelopes for all future mailings. The Monterey County WIC Program covers a seventy-five mile long valley. Our LVL has scheduled vendor visits to coincide with travel to and from an outside clinic where she works once a week. This saves time, gas and milage. This is in addition to her designated LVL day.**

Describe the barriers your agency faced in implementing any new or innovative activities, strategies and/or projects that enhanced your vendor partnerships? **In her visits, our LVL noticed the disparity in the quality of produce between the chain stores and the mom and pop stores in WIC neighborhoods. Monterey County WIC Program has had an on-site farmers' market for ten years with tremendous sucesss and popularity. With this in mind, our LVL thought all families should have the same access to fresh produce. How did the agency overcome those barriers? We started by inviting the neighborhood vendors to meetings with the small farmers who have been coming to the on-site farmers market for the last ten years. We scheduled one meeting with a few vendors and farmers. Attendance was low at first, however, word got our about the meetings and attendance increased. We served some coffee and bagels. During the summer meetings our farmers brought produce and vendors had a chance to try the produce. Several stores are working out agreements to purchase their seasonal, local produce from these farmers. During one of these meetings the owner of the WIC-only stores in our County agreed to purchase produce from our farmers' market farmers. When one of the farmers asked how many stores he had the owner replied " about a hundred"!**

**This answer changed the tone of the meeting and the conversation became on of how our farmers could sell entire crops to WIC-only stores. This is a positive win-win situation for all concerned; our small family farmers will be able to expand their business, our vendors can offer a wide variety of produce at a more reasonable price because they can buy directly from local farmers, and most importantly our WIC families will benefit. Farm-fresh, local produce will now be available at small neighborhood stores.**

Has the agency established any partnerships with other WIC agencies, or community groups such as the

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Network for a Healthy California? **YES** (If so, describe efforts, outcomes, etc). In May, our LVL met with the Retail Specialist (RS) from The Network for a Healthy California at their conference in Sacramento. In April we began collaboration with the RS to coordinate introductions to our vendors. The RS can then merchandise a store using the Network tool-kit and then setting up food demonstrations. In May the "Veggie Fest" was held at a local vendor, Arteaga's Super Save Food Center. The event included dance groups, a Zumba demonstration and other physical activities. Health agencies were on hand to do health screenings and a food demonstration was held inside the store's produce department. Since the initial introduction, the Retail Specialist and our LVL have collaborated on six cooking demonstrations. These stores are also WIC vendors and we have had the opportunity to highlight new WIC foods in the demonstrations.

How many vendor contacts did the LVL establish? **64**

What activities were completed by the LVL? **All activities prescribed by the State were completed. Describe the activities. This included providing stores with WIC materials such as shopping guides, decals, posters and calenders. All food availability surveys were completed. All vendor contact surveys were completed during Phase I, Phase II and Phase III.**

Describe how your efforts were successful in preparing the community partners and vendors for the implementation of the new food package? **Our LVL approached the vendors with an open mind and offered tools to help with the transition to the new WIC food package. Before the State put out the DVD about the new food package, our LVL offered to train vendor staff. One of the smaller independent chains arranged to have staff come to one of the stores and our LVL facilitated a "Lets Go Shopping" class for employees. The training was well attended with fifteen employees. As a result, they were all positive and gained a lot of knowledge about WIC foods..**

**Contact Person:**

Contact Name: Charmaine Kaplan

Phone Number: 831 ) 796-2863

Fax Number: 831)7573286

Email Address: kaplanc@co.monterey.ca.us