

USDA FNS Western Region WIC Electronic Technology (ET) Project

Background

The initiation for this project is based on a shared awareness that the millennium generation is communicating online and texting. We wanted to know if these trends include WIC participants.

Key Partners and Stakeholders

USDA Western Region WIC Programs include Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Inter Tribal Counsel of Arizona, Inter-Tribal Counsel of Nevada, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Navajo Nation, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. Consultants are Altarum Institute, Amanda Hovis & Company, Limetree Research, Tim Hoerl, and Western Michigan University.

Goal

The research goal was to discover new ways to serve WIC participants and guide us towards online options.

Objectives

1. Conduct research of online tools used by WIC participants and their interest in online WIC services.
2. Evaluate the research, identify WIC participants preferred tools and WIC services.
3. Conduct strategic planning research and recommend an implementation plan.

Methods

In October, November and December 2011, the consultants conducted a total of 17 focus groups throughout the Western Region: 4 early adopters focus groups in California (1 Spanish and 3 English); 9 WIC participants focus groups: Washington (1 Spanish and 2 English), Oregon (2 English), Guam (1 English online), in Hawaii (2 English), Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (1 English), Arizona (1 Spanish), and Alaska (1 English online); and 2 future WIC families focus groups in Arizona.

From November to December 9, 2011, WIC participants throughout the Western Region completed the online survey.

Focus Group Results

The results of the early adopter focus groups confirmed that WIC participants are online and texting and are also interested in online WIC services. Later on the WIC participant focus groups confirmed that most WIC participants are online and texting and part of the millennium generation trend.

Survey Results

A total of 8,144 WIC participants completed the survey and 640 of the surveys were completed in Spanish. 366 (4.6%) of the participants in the survey are 15-19 years of age; 5029 (63.9%) are 20-31 years of age or in the millennial generation, and 2476 (31.5%) are 32 or more years of age.

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Survey Results (Continued)

WIC participants expect WIC to offer online services in the following areas:

Shopping experience*

Balance of WIC foods **96%**
Guide of authorized foods **94%**
Scan bar code to WIC foods **89%**
Locate authorized store **89%**

Communication with WIC local agency*

Schedule WIC appointments online **88%**
Receive appointment reminders via text message **88%**
Receive appointment reminders via email message **87%**

Nutrition education resources*

Read answers to questions **91%**
Access recipes & cooking demo videos **91%**
Receive nutrition education via email **89%**
Receive nutritional education via text message **88%**
Text questions to nutritionist or breastfeeding counselor **81%**
Access breastfeeding videos **71%**

Social networking and support

Attend a WIC class with live instructor **77%***
Attend a video chat with nutritionist **77%***
Attend a video chat with other WIC staff **75%***
Attend a video chat with a breastfeeding educator **61%***
WIC Social media site to communicate with other WIC parents **46% ****
WIC Facebook to communicate with other WIC parents **38% ****

Summary

The research confirmed WIC participant's activities online and interested in connecting with WIC services online. Our next steps are strategic planning and implementation.

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* Combined very useful & somewhat useful from questions in online survey

** The percentages are from the following question: What type of social media would you like to use to communicate with other WIC parents...?