

Appendix B2
Case Study Interview Guide for WIC Local Agency

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WIC Nutrition Services and Administration (NSA) Cost Study A National Study

USDA Food and Nutrition Service Office of Research and Analysis

Case Study Interview Guide for WIC Local Agency

State:

Local Agency Name:

Respondent/Title/Organization:

Phone:

E-mail:

Interviewer:

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 120 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the case study of local WIC agencies for the WIC Nutrition Services and Administration (NSA) Cost Study. As part of this effort, we are also interviewing staff members at your WIC State Agency and in one or two other local agencies in your state.

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has contracted with Altarum Institute and RTI International to conduct a comprehensive study of WIC NSA costs at the state and local level. Altarum is a health and nutrition policy research and consulting institute. Our work focuses on helping to improve the health and nutrition status of children, families, and adults.

The last NSA cost study was conducted in 2000 and since then numerous program changes have occurred. FNS is interested in understanding the various ways in which NSA funds are utilized, the range of operations covered by NSA funds, and the impact of program changes on NSA grant funds.

The funding for and accounting of WIC NSA costs are complex. As you know, WIC State Agencies receive an annual base grant with allocations for food and nutrition services and administrative support; these WIC grants must support a range of required activities at the State Agency level as well as provide for direct service delivery to WIC participants. For purposes of this study, we are defining NSA funds as those funds received by the WIC State Agency from the federal funding formula, Regional Office Operational Adjustment funding, and reallocations received during the year. They exclude funds for WIC Special Projects (for which applications are competitive and funded separately from formula funds), Breastfeeding Peer Support Funds, MIS and EBT Special Funding, and Infrastructure funds. While you may not know the source of your funds prior to this interview, we will talk about the particular funds that you receive that should be included in the discussion.

The WIC NSA cost study design involves data collection from FNS 798 and 798-A reports and supporting documentation, a Web-based survey of state and local agencies, and this case study interview. We are conducting this interview to examine the 'how and why' factors that contribute to the costs associated with operating your WIC program. As such, our focus here will be more on understanding the dynamics of various program components and policies and their influence on costs, rather than on specific numbers.

INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

This interview will consist of a series of questions organized by various topics. These topic areas may be best addressed by various staff members who may have expertise in the respective topics. We hope that by receiving this case study guide four weeks prior to this interview, you and your staff have had some time to gather information as necessary to respond to questions so that the actual interview time is spent directly on the question and answer dialogue.

The entire interview will likely take one hour to complete. Your answers will be considered private. Nothing said today will be able to be identified as coming from you in any reports prepared for this study.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Let's get started!

I. Local Agency Organization and Administrative Structure

Purpose: To understand the organizational structure of the sponsoring agency and the WIC Program within that agency. This includes: 1) how the WIC program functions and, 2) the extent to which the sponsoring agency provides services other than WIC.

First, we would like to become more familiar with how your local agency is organized and how services are provided.

Thank you for providing a copy of your agency's organization chart. We have just a few questions about how your agency operates.

[IF ORGANIZATION HAS A SPONSORING AGENCY, ASK THE FIRST TWO QUESTIONS. IF WIC ONLY AGENCY, SKIP TO QUESTION 3]

1. According to the Web survey, your organizational structure consists of a sponsoring agency.
 - a) Please briefly describe the nature of the sponsoring agency.
 - b) How does WIC fit into the organizational structure?
2. You also indicated that your sponsoring agency provides the following services other than WIC [list].
 - a) Are WIC services coordinated in any way with these other services provided by your sponsoring agency?

[IF YES:] Please describe these arrangements (e.g., joint appointments, shared staff, common receptionist, shared space)

3. Please provide a brief description of your WIC local agency, such as how long you have been providing WIC services and how service delivery is structured (e.g., local sites, satellite site, mobile sites)
4. Does your local WIC agency have an administrative or management structure that oversees the program but is not involved in the direct provision of services?

[IF YES:] Please describe the functions performed.

II. Program Budgeting

Purpose: To examine ways in which budget policies may affect cost.

Next, we want to discuss how you developed your FFY 2013 budget and the factors that contributed to decision-making regarding how to allocate funds to various program functions.

5. Please describe for us the budget development process used for creating your local agency's FFY 2013 budget. In particular:
 - a) When did you receive information from the State Agency and how were final budget amounts agreed to? Are you able to negotiate with the State Agency on a final budget number?

[IF YES:] Did you do so in FFY 2013? What were the results of those negotiations?
 - b) How did you decide on how funds would be allocated across program functions (e.g., historical, formula, estimates)? Were there any difficult decisions that were made or adjustments that needed to happen to balance your budget?

[IF YES:] Please describe these issues and how they were resolved.
 - c) What internal review and approval (if any) is required within your agency before your budget is submitted to the State WIC Office? If you have such a process, were there any internal issues with which you were required to respond to an approval authority?

[IF YES:] What were these issues and how were they resolved?
6. According to your response to the Web survey, you had an indirect cost rate of [XX %] in your FFY 2013 budget. How was this percentage determined? Has this percentage changed over the past three years or remained about the same?
7. [IF IN-KIND WAS REPORTED] According to the Web survey, you also received in-kind contributions for WIC services. How did these in-kind contributions impact your budget development? Were these contributions similar to those in past years, or were they different? How so?
8. [IF LOCAL FUNDS WERE REPORTED] According to the Web survey, you also received local funds for your WIC program. How does the availability of local funds impact your budget development? How do you decide what the local funds will be used for? Was the amount available in FFY 2013 similar to prior years, or different? If different, how so?
9. Do you receive any special funding for features that may be special to your local agency, such as funding for bi-lingual staff or interpreters, extra money for travel, or other special features of your agency? If so, please describe.

III. Expenditures and Program Costs

Purpose: To identify the factors which contribute to the costs of operating the local WIC agency and providing WIC services.

Now we would like to discuss your program expenditures and costs for FFY 2013. We are interested in factors that impact your ability to use all of the funds available to you or have an impact on the cost of providing WIC services.

10. Were you able to spend all of your WIC NSA funds in FFY 2013?

[IF NO:] What were the primary reasons for not expending all of your funds?

[IF YES:] Did you overspend your budget? If yes, what factors contributed to your overspending? How was this over-expenditure handled?

11. During FFY 2013 was your WIC program affected by any layoffs or furloughs?

[IF YES:] How did this affect your ability to expend all of your WIC funds?

12. Did you experience any expenditure or budget problems during the first part of FFY 2013 that you were concerned about with regard to under-expenditure or over-expenditure of your WIC funds?

[IF YES:] What adjustments were made to your budget and expenditures during FFY 2013 based on those expenditure trends?

13. [IF PROGRAM COST SHARE WAS REPORTED] According to the Web survey, you shared costs with other programs during FFY 2013. Please describe what costs were shared and how the WIC Program's share of costs was determined?

14. When thinking about how services are delivered, are there factors that you believe have contributed to increases or decreases in cost (e.g., MIS systems, staffing shortages, increase in use of bilingual staff, added requirements)?

[IF YES:] What service delivery factors do you think most affected WIC program costs in FY 2013?

15. Are there particular state policies or regulations that you believe contributed to increases in program costs during FFY 2013? If so, what are these?

16. [IF APPLICABLE] We understand from the State Office that there were major changes made in FFY 2013 with regard to [A NEW MIS SYSTEMS, EBT IMPLEMENTATION, STATE POLICY CHANGES] that may have had an impact on your program costs or were designed to create more program efficiency in FFY 2013. Please describe how these changes impacted your costs.

17. [IF APPLICABLE] If local funds were allocated in your budget, do you have any policies related to whether or not state funds must be expended first before local funds are used?

[IF YES:] Please describe.

[IF NO:] How do you determine which costs are reported to the state and which are local costs?

That ends my formal interview questions. Is there anything that we haven't discussed about WIC NSA costs that you think is relevant and would like to share?

Thank you so much for spending the time with us to explain the factors and influences on your agency's budgeting processes.