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Attachment D-2 Retail Vendor – Store Managers Individual Interview Guide

Individual Interview Guide Retail Vendor – Store Manager

Final 8/1/2024

Target Time ≈ 45-60 minutes of discussion

I. Introduction (5 minutes)

- A. Interviewer introduction
- B. Remind respondents to be in a quiet place
- C. If you need to step away, please do so briefly and come back as soon as possible
- D. Anonymity
- E. Recording interview for notetaking
- F. Introduction – Share your first name, where you live, your title, your company, and how long you've worked in the retail grocery industry

II. Role (5 minutes)

- A. To start, I'd like to spend a little time talking about your role at your store.
 - i. How long have you been with [INSERT COMPANY NOTED IN INTRODUCTION], and how long have you been in your current position?
 - ii. Can you tell me about the community you serve? (E.g., urban/suburban/rural, % higher vs lower income? Best estimate is fine.)
 - iii. What are your primary responsibilities in your current role?
[PROBE: operations, purchasing, employee training, other]
 - iv. What do you like most about your current position?
 - v. What is the most challenging part of your job? What makes you say that?

III. WIC Awareness, Perceptions, and the Shopper Experience (25 minutes)

- i. Thank you for that information. I'd like to transition a bit and talk to you about the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, often called WIC. How familiar are you with the WIC program?
 - ii. What do you know about the WIC program and what it provides for its participants? **[PROBE: How it works, participant eligibility, food lists]**
 - iii. If you recall, from where did you first learn about WIC? **[NOTE: Keep this conversation brief. A section, below, focuses on training/sharing information]**
- A. Next, I'd like to get your thoughts, impressions, or perceptions of the WIC program as it relates to your store.
- i. **Overall**, what word or phrase would you use to describe your store's relationship with WIC? By that, I mean program implementation, interactions with State and local WIC agencies, training, etc. We will dig into the specifics in a moment.
 - a. Why that word/phrase? What specific aspect of your store's relationship with WIC predominantly drives that response?
 - b. If you focus on the past 18 months, what about the WIC program has worked well for your store? **[NOTE: Moderator first listen for vendor-specific topics not mentioned in diaries. If necessary, probe for more shopper-focused areas, such as EBT card, increased cash value benefits for fruits and vegetables, WIC app, store app]**
 - c. Again, focusing on the past 18 months, what aspects of WIC have been most challenging? **[PROBE: Stocking the correct items? Training cashiers? Maintaining adequate supply of WIC items]** **[PROBE: If several challenges, which one is the most challenging and why?]** **[NOTE: If not mentioned ask about formula crisis and if the store has experienced any lingering effects]**
 1. What, if anything, have you done to address those challenges?
 2. How often, if at all, do you talk with your state or local WIC agency about any WIC issues? **[PROBE: What topics do you discuss?]**
 3. From your perspective, what makes these issues difficult to solve?
 4. **[IF TIME]** To what extent, if at all, do any of these problems increase (i.e., become more complicated) if the number of WIC shoppers at your store increases significantly?
 - ii. Let's spend a moment or two talking about the WIC **shopping experience**.
 - a. What, if anything, tends to make the shopping experience difficult for WIC shoppers?
 - b. What steps does your store take to try to make the shopping experience for WIC shoppers a bit easier?
 - c. Does your store have a way of identifying shoppers who may be using WIC for the first time (i.e., are unfamiliar with WIC processes and procedures)?
 1. If so, how, if at all, do you provide support/information to those shoppers on their first trip to your store? **[PROBE: Explain signage/labels, help them find WIC approved items?]**

- d. **[FOR CO-OPS/INDEPENDENTS:]** How do you choose which WIC approved items to stock? **[PROBE:** What brands? What sizes? What forms (e.g. Cheese: slices, shredded, blocks)?]
- e. Do you let WIC shoppers know what items are WIC-approved?
 - 1. **[IF YES:]** How do you let shoppers know what products are WIC-approved? **[PROBE:** WIC labels? Do you label produce bins?]
 - a. What problems, if any, do WIC shoppers encounter with your store's approach to identifying WIC-approved products? **[PROBE:** Items not aligned with shelf label?]
 - b. How do you typically learn about any issues shoppers may have with identifying WIC-approved items?
 - 2. **[IF NO:]** What are some reasons why your store does not mark which items are WIC-approved?
- f. What one or two WIC products are the most problematic? **[PROBE:** Bread, baby formula, fruits and vegetables?]
- g. Earlier, we talked about the impact of WIC on your store for the past 18 months. Is there anything you would add that has made the **shopping experience better or easier** for WIC shoppers during that timeframe? How do you know?

iii. Now I'd like to focus on the **checkout experience** for WIC shoppers.

- a. What are the most frequent questions and/or issues that occur once the WIC shopper gets to the cashier (i.e., at checkout)? **[PROBE:** EBT card doesn't work? Wrong sized item? WIC-approved item but not for shopper's benefit package? Not a WIC-approved item?]
 - 1. What is the standard procedure if such issues occur?
 - 2. Who does the WIC shopper speak to in these situations? **[PROBE:** head cashier, customer service, store manager?]
 - 3. **[IF TIME, AND IF EBT MENTIONED, ABOVE:]** Are EBT issues predominantly due to the point-of-sale system or user error/issues?
 - 4. In general, how are these problems resolved? **[PROBE:** Shopper gets a different item? Pays out of pocket? Leaves item behind?]
 - 5. Who fixes the issue if there is a scanning error?
 - 6. How do you deal with/resolve issues that WIC shoppers face when they come to your attention?
 - a. Please share an example.
 - b. Is there a specific type of issue that gets escalated to you more than others? If so, what issue?
 - c. What do you do if you are unable to resolve an issue?
- b. Now, I have a few questions regarding what is available to your WIC shoppers:
 - 1. Does your store offer self-checkout for shoppers? **[IF YES...]**
 - a. Can WIC shoppers use self-checkout?

- i. How has this feature helped or hurt from your store's perspective?
 - 2. **[BRIEF]** Do WIC shoppers typically pay for their purchase by first using their WIC card and then pay for remaining items? If so, what issues, if any, typically arise during this process?
 - c. Again focusing on checkout, what would make the WIC shopping experience in your stores even easier?
- iv. Now, I want to focus on your store's shopping app for a moment.
 - a. Do you have a sense as to whether WIC shoppers utilize your store's app more or less than average? Why do you think that is the case?
 - b. Would it be helpful to have access to your state's WIC app to see if items are approved? What makes you say that?

IV. WIC Information / Training (20 minutes)

- A. I want to get your perspective on WIC training. First, have you, personally, received any training about WIC policies or procedures for your store? From whom did you receive the training – WIC Staff or your store (i.e., corporate level or another store employee)?
 - a. **[IF YES WIC Agency Training:]** What was your training like with WIC Agency staff? What worked well with the training? What could be improved?
 - b. **[IF YES FROM CORPORATE/STORE EMPLOYEE:]** What was your training like?
 - i. How did they present the store's policies and procedures regarding WIC to you?
 - ii. How does this sharing of information typically take place?
 - c. **[IF NO WIC TRAINING:]** Do you know if your colleagues received WIC training?
 - i. Do you expect to receive WIC training? Why/why not?
 - ii. Would you like to receive training about the WIC program? Why/why not?
 - iii. What specific WIC-related topics would you like to know more about?
 - d. Now, let's focus on the store level. Do you or another member of your team conduct WIC training for the staff in your store?
 - i. **[IF YES:]** In your own words, please describe how WIC training happens at your store. What's it like? **[PROBE:** Do you have a special staff meeting for WIC training? Does it take place in the breakroom or are you standing around the store/checkout lane? What materials, if any, are shared?]
 - 1. Who, at your store, is responsible for training your staff about WIC policies and procedures?
 - 2. What type of WIC training does your store provide to your employees - cashiers, customer service, stockers?
 - 3. **[IF TIME:]** How, if at all, does the training you receive as a store manager differ from the WIC training other employees receive?

4. How do you typically share information with your staff about changes to WIC policies and procedures?
 5. When do you share WIC information with staff? How does staff turnover affect the training process? If you have a new hire, when do they receive training about WIC?
 6. How do you know if this training is effective? [**PROBE:** What types of training tools are most/least effective?]
- ii. [**IF NO:**] How, if at all, do your employees learn about your store's WIC policies and procedures?
- e. Now let's talk about information you may get from WIC.
 - i. How frequently do you get WIC information/updates (e.g. product recalls), if at all?
 - ii. From where do you get them (e.g. WIC state agency)?
 - f. Do you ever interact directly with WIC state or local agencies?
 - i. [**IF YES:**] What are the interactions like?
 1. What works well?
 2. What could be improved?
 - ii. [**IF NO:**] Why do you think that is the case?
 1. Do you think you would benefit from such interactions? How so?
 2. What would you like to learn?
 - g. Do you feel you receive too much WIC information, the right amount of information, or would you like more? [**IF MORE:**] What information/ topic areas would you like to learn more about that would be helpful to you/your store?
 - h. [**IF TIME, AND IF NOT MENTIONED ABOVE:**] Are there types of WIC education tools that would be helpful? For instance, are there tools your corporate teams use to train individual stores (on non-WIC topics) that might be helpful if there was a version or way to apply it to WIC training?
- B. To this point, we have talked about WIC sharing information with your store. What do you do if **you** have issues/concerns/questions about how to implement a WIC program update?
- a. With whom do you share these concerns? [**IF CHAIN STORE, PROBE:**] Do you share these concerns with corporate?
 - b. Have you shared concerns in the past? If so, were they addressed/resolved? How do you know?

V. WIC Revenue Targets (3 minutes – IF TIME)

- A. When you think about your store's goals or targets, to what extent does WIC—or do WIC shoppers—play a role in your store's ability to meet these goals/targets? What makes you say that?
- [IF NECESSARY:]** Let's break this question down a bit. When you answered this question, were you thinking about it primarily from a financial perspective? **[IF RESPONSE TOO FOCUSED ON FINANCIALS, PIVOT TO NEXT QUESTION]**
 - How do WIC shoppers contribute to store revenue beyond WIC items?
 - What about other goals/targets your store may have, such as customer satisfaction? What role do WIC shoppers play in helping you to meet customer satisfaction targets? What makes you say that?
- B. What benefits or positives does your store enjoy, if any, as a result of its involvement with WIC? **[PROBE: Supporting neighborhood community]**

VI. Wrap-up/False Close (2 minutes)

Thank you for all of the information you have provided.

- If by snapping your fingers you could solve one WIC challenge that your store faces, what would that be?
- Last question, what do you see as the #1 opportunity for WIC shoppers and/or the WIC program in your store?

Thank you again for your time.
