

Appendix U.3

Third public comment

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WIC & FMNP Outreach, Innovation, and Modernization Evaluation

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General Comment

Dear USDA Representatives,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the WIC & FMNP Outreach, Innovation, and Modernization Evaluation. I believe that emphasizing non-traditional community partnerships and innovative solutions can drive meaningful change in participation, retention, and satisfaction within the WIC and FMNP programs.

1. Strengthen Non-Traditional Community Partnerships to Enhance Outreach and Access

Recommendation:

Foster partnerships with unconventional community groups and networks to amplify outreach and improve access for underserved populations. These collaborations can introduce fresh perspectives, extend program reach, and engage eligible participants in creative ways.

Partnerships with Arts Organizations: Collaborate to host "Healthy Food, Healthy Families" events at cultural festivals, featuring interactive exhibits about WIC and FMNP benefits alongside art and music.

Workplace Engagement: Partner with local businesses and corporate wellness programs to inform employees about WIC eligibility for their families and promote FMNP benefits through workplace campaigns.

Youth-Led Outreach Initiatives: Work with local schools and youth organizations to train high school

students as ambassadors who educate families about WIC and FMNP opportunities.

Why This Matters: Non-traditional partnerships leverage the trust and influence of diverse community networks, breaking down barriers to access and participation for hard-to-reach populations.

2. Use Innovative Outreach and Technology to Modernize Engagement

Recommendation:

Adopt cutting-edge technology and creative outreach strategies to improve visibility and usability for WIC and FMNP programs. By integrating digital tools and modern marketing techniques, these programs can meet participants where they are.

Virtual Engagement Platforms: Develop a user-friendly mobile app that integrates WIC benefit tracking, FMNP redemption guides, and geolocation services for nearby farmers markets and roadside stands.

Gamification of Benefits: Use gamification elements, such as rewards for redeeming FMNP benefits or participating in nutrition workshops, to encourage engagement and retention.

Social Media Challenges: Launch social media campaigns like a “WIC Recipe Challenge” where participants share creative meals made with WIC-approved foods to inspire others and spread awareness.

Why This Matters: Innovative tools and creative outreach engage younger generations of participants and modernize program delivery, making WIC and FMNP benefits more relevant and accessible.

3. Focus on Culturally Relevant and Community-Driven Solutions

Recommendation:

Engage participants and local partners in co-creating culturally tailored solutions that resonate with the unique needs of diverse communities. This approach improves satisfaction, retention, and community ownership of the programs.

Culturally Inclusive Farmers Markets: Partner with FMNP vendors to ensure access to culturally significant produce, such as okra, collard greens, or eggplant, reflecting local culinary traditions.

Multilingual Support Networks: Work with immigrant and refugee organizations to offer materials, workshops, and outreach in multiple languages, ensuring inclusivity.

Cultural Festivals with Food Demonstrations: Incorporate WIC and FMNP outreach into local cultural events, offering cooking demonstrations featuring traditional recipes that use eligible foods.

Why This Matters: Culturally relevant solutions not only enhance program accessibility but also foster stronger connections between participants, their heritage, and local food systems.

4. Innovate Data Collection and Community-Driven Insights

Recommendation:

Use innovative data collection methods and community-led approaches to inform continuous improvement of WIC and FMNP modernization efforts.

Crowdsourced Data Insights: Work with local volunteers to collect feedback from WIC and FMNP participants through quick surveys at farmers markets and community events.

Participant-Led Advisory Committees: Establish community advisory boards composed of WIC participants and FMNP vendors to provide real-time insights into barriers and opportunities.

Geo-Targeted Solutions: Partner with local GIS experts to identify participation gaps and develop hyper-localized outreach efforts tailored to underserved neighborhoods.

Why This Matters: Community-driven data ensures that modernization efforts are grounded in participant realities, enabling solutions that are practical, impactful, and scalable.

Conclusion

By prioritizing non-traditional community partnerships and innovative solutions, these programs can better serve eligible populations, foster meaningful connections, and address persistent barriers to participation and retention. We encourage the USDA to leverage the creativity and expertise of local partners to ensure these modernization efforts create lasting impact.

Attachments

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