

# The WIC Participant Journey:

## Enhancing Equity Throughout the WIC Participant Journey

### Project Background:

Through the *Advancing Health Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion in WIC (AHEAD) 3.0: Enhancing Equity throughout the WIC Participant Journey* project, the National WIC Association (NWA) aims to identify and address barriers to WIC participation, particularly for Black, Brown, and Indigenous families. In partnership with Urban Metrics Consultants (UMC), the project team conducted a literature review, facilitated WIC participant focus groups across racial and ethnic groups, and incorporated stakeholder feedback and findings from a national participant survey to better understand what works well in WIC and where challenges persist. This work culminated in the creation of a comprehensive journey map to understand participant experiences and areas for improvement in enrollment, participation, service delivery, and retention. To explore the full findings, please refer to the [Journey Map Report](#).

### Key Insights:

1. WIC performs best when services are relationship-centered and culturally responsive. Tribal WIC models and bilingual staffing demonstrate how intentional cultural and linguistic integration makes enrollment and education significantly more accessible.
2. Persistent barriers like paperwork, limited hours and locations, and inconsistent language access deprive WIC participants of dignity and limit benefit use.
3. Digital tools (i.e., the WIC app, eWIC card, and remote appointments) reduce burden, but only when features like document upload, product clarity, and reminders are reliable and consistent across the program.
4. The shopping environment is a vital touchpoint where clear signage, staff training, and store compatibility can directly reduce stigma and support full redemption of benefits.
5. Because families may enter, exit, and re-enter WIC at different life stages, every touchpoint must be welcoming, consistent, and accessible no matter when a family engages.

### Legend

- Facilitator
- Barrier

### Equity Lens Key

- Asian American/Pacific Islander
- White/Caucasian American
- African/African American
- Native American
- Latinx/Hispanic American

