



# BYLAWS REVISIONS: SETTING THE STAGE FOR NWA'S NEXT CHAPTER

## NWA'S MISSION

The National WIC Association (NWA) provides its members with tools and leadership to expand and sustain effective nutrition services for mothers and young children.

For more than three decades, the National WIC Association (NWA) has been the leading voice in support of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and its mission of building a healthier nation for women, children, and families. Over the years, NWA has grown to a team of twenty professional staff, working in tandem with NWA's membership to drive forward essential WIC priorities.

In this period of transition for NWA and WIC services, NWA's Board of Directors took steps to evaluate the organizational foundation for NWA's ongoing work. On May 17, NWA's voting membership approved a package of Bylaws reforms that set the stage for NWA to have more representative decision-making processes, better preparing NWA to address the next generation of innovations and challenges needed to move WIC into a modern service-delivery model.

NWA's strength rests in its engaged and passionate membership. NWA's structural changes, paired with new programming and a growing team of professional staff, seeks to lift up the voices of all WIC providers at this exciting time for the program.



## BRINGING MORE VOICES TO THE TABLE

For more than a decade, NWA was the National Association of WIC Directors. In 2002, NWA added two new sections to complement the viewpoints of State WIC Directors: the Local Agency and the Nutrition Services Sections. These steps ensured that NWA activities were informed by a broader slice of the WIC workforce, offering substantial input to key NWA successes, including the 2009 food package review and the transition to e-WIC.

This year, NWA will establish two new Sections to elevate the voices of key program mission areas: Breastfeeding and Vendor Management. The Bylaws will vest voting privileges in Breastfeeding Coordinators and Vendor Managers and provide dedicated Board seats for each new Section.

NWA also has taken the historic step of creating parity throughout the Bylaws between State and Local Agencies. Especially during COVID-19, the crucial partnership between State agencies and local providers has proven to be the backbone of WIC service delivery. This step builds on and fully realizes the 2002 reforms to NWA's structure.

Alongside the structural reforms, the Bylaws will now enshrine NWA's organizational commitment to advancing health equity and equitable service delivery in WIC. To support these efforts, the Bylaws prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion in the selection of members of NWA's Board of Directors. Especially as NWA works to advance diversity in the professions that comprise the WIC workforce, NWA's leadership must reflect the values of our voice and mission.



Based on input from the National Indian and Native American WIC Coalition, NWA will also expand the definition of Indigenous Agencies to include local agencies that serve Indigenous populations and agencies that serve Indigenous populations beyond tribes, including Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.

## STREAMLINING NWA PROCESSES

NWA's Board of Directors, currently at 27 members, is larger than most other non-profits. With the addition of new Sections, that number would grow to over 40 members. To efficiently channel input from NWA's diverse membership, the Bylaws reforms will establish Section-based Standing Committees to present input from each USDA Region for each Section and lead initiatives in their program areas. This will allow for a smaller, more nimble Board that can focus on strategic priorities.

The 13-member Board will now consist of four officers, four representatives from each State Agency Section (Directors, Nutrition Services, Breastfeeding, and Vendor Management), four representatives from the Local Agency Section, and one representative from Indigenous Agencies. Board members will chair the Standing Committees, ensuring clear lines of communication that will inform Board deliberations.

To build institutional knowledge, Board terms are extended from two to three years. The Board Chair will now be a four-year commitment, with two years serving as Chair. This means that a Board will either have a Chair-Elect or a Chair Emeritus, depending on the election cycle.

The Bylaws also take a strategic view on policy committees and task forces, assigning each entity to a Standing Committee that will oversee its objectives and assume

responsibility for ongoing work when a committee or task force sunsets. Committee and task force chairs will ideally come from Standing Committees, eliminating the need for Board liaisons and strengthening communication up to the Board of Directors. NWA will honor the commitments of Board members and volunteers on policy committees and task forces, and the changes to these institutional structures will be phased in through 2024.

The Bylaws take additional steps to streamline processes, recognizing the increased capacity of NWA's larger professional staff and the benefits of virtual technologies. Consistent provisions that allow for electronic meeting and votes are added to permit NWA to conduct business remotely, ideally bringing more voices to the table from smaller and remote agencies that previously were challenged. As these changes are phased in, NWA welcomes ongoing input as we work together as a community to build a modern WIC.

# New Governance Model

