

# WIC RESEARCH UPDATE

---

**Kelley S. Scanlon, PhD RD**

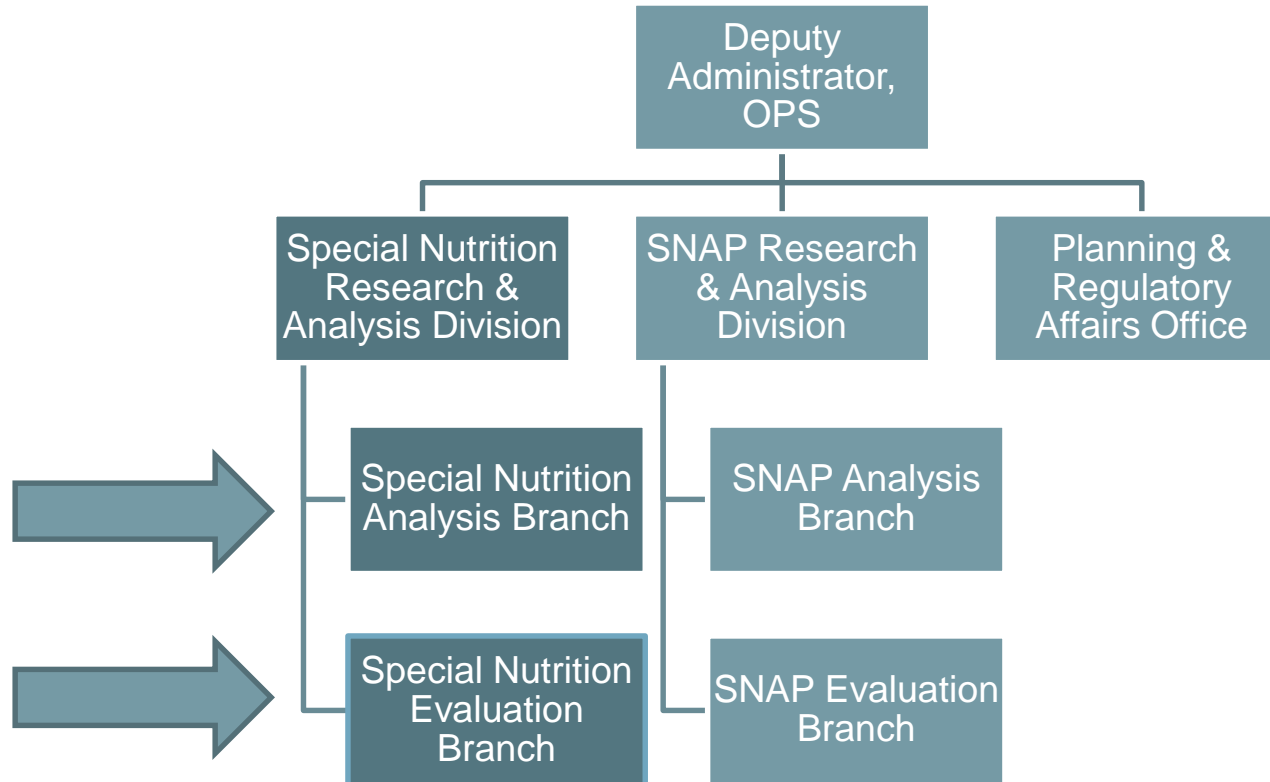
**Director**

**Special Nutrition Research and Analysis Division**

**Office of Policy Support**

**Food and Nutrition Service, USDA**

# Office of Policy Support (OPS)



# Applied Research

Our studies and analyses inform:

- Policy discussions
- Program operations
- Understanding of program effectiveness
- Understanding of program integrity



# Key Focus Areas



Nutrition &  
Breastfeeding

Program  
Management  
& Costs

Health Impacts

Program  
Integrity

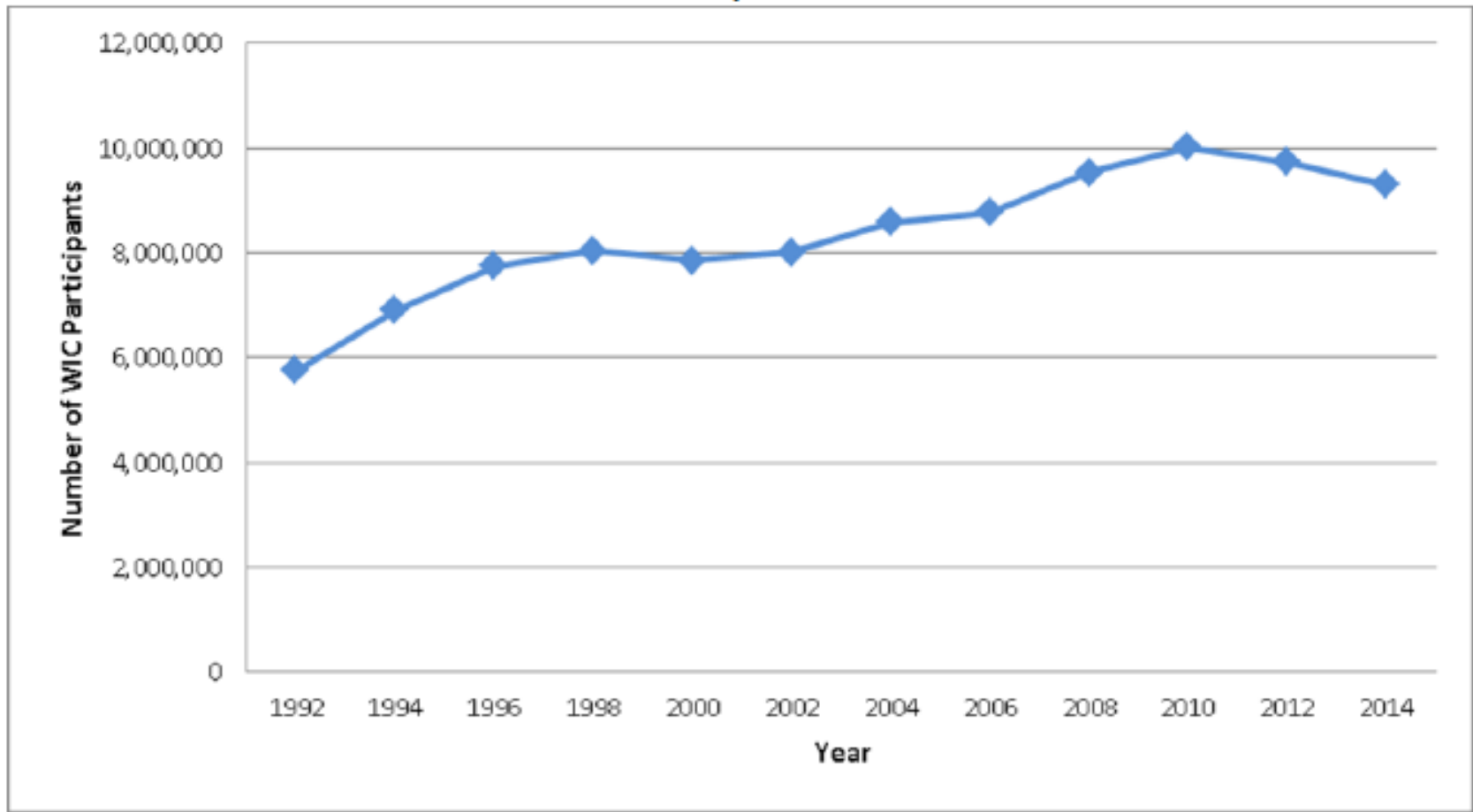
# RECURRING STUDIES

---

- WIC Participant and Program Characteristics
- National and State-Level Estimates of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Eligible Population and Program Reach

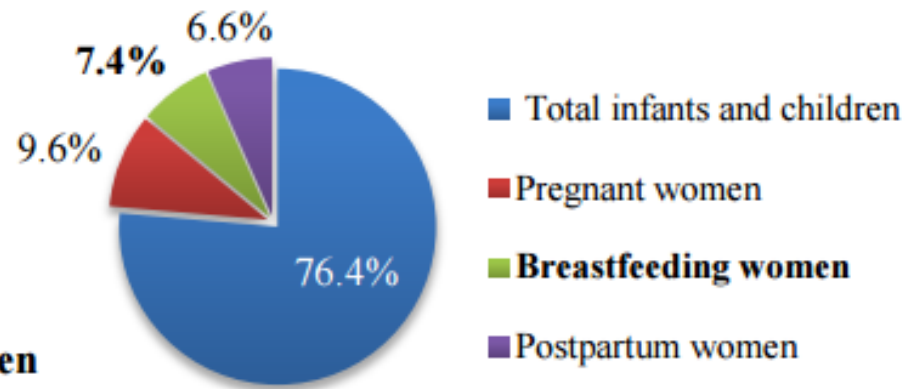
# Participant Characteristics 2014

Total WIC Participants: 1992–2014

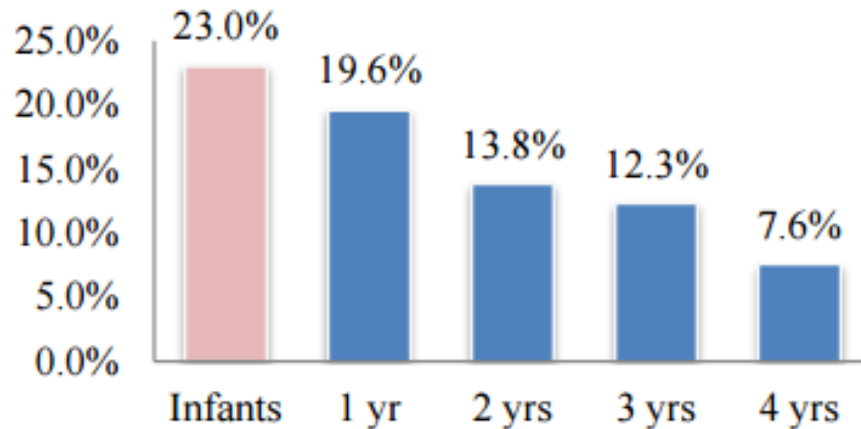


# Participant Characteristics 2014

**Figure 2 – Percent of WIC Participants by Category**



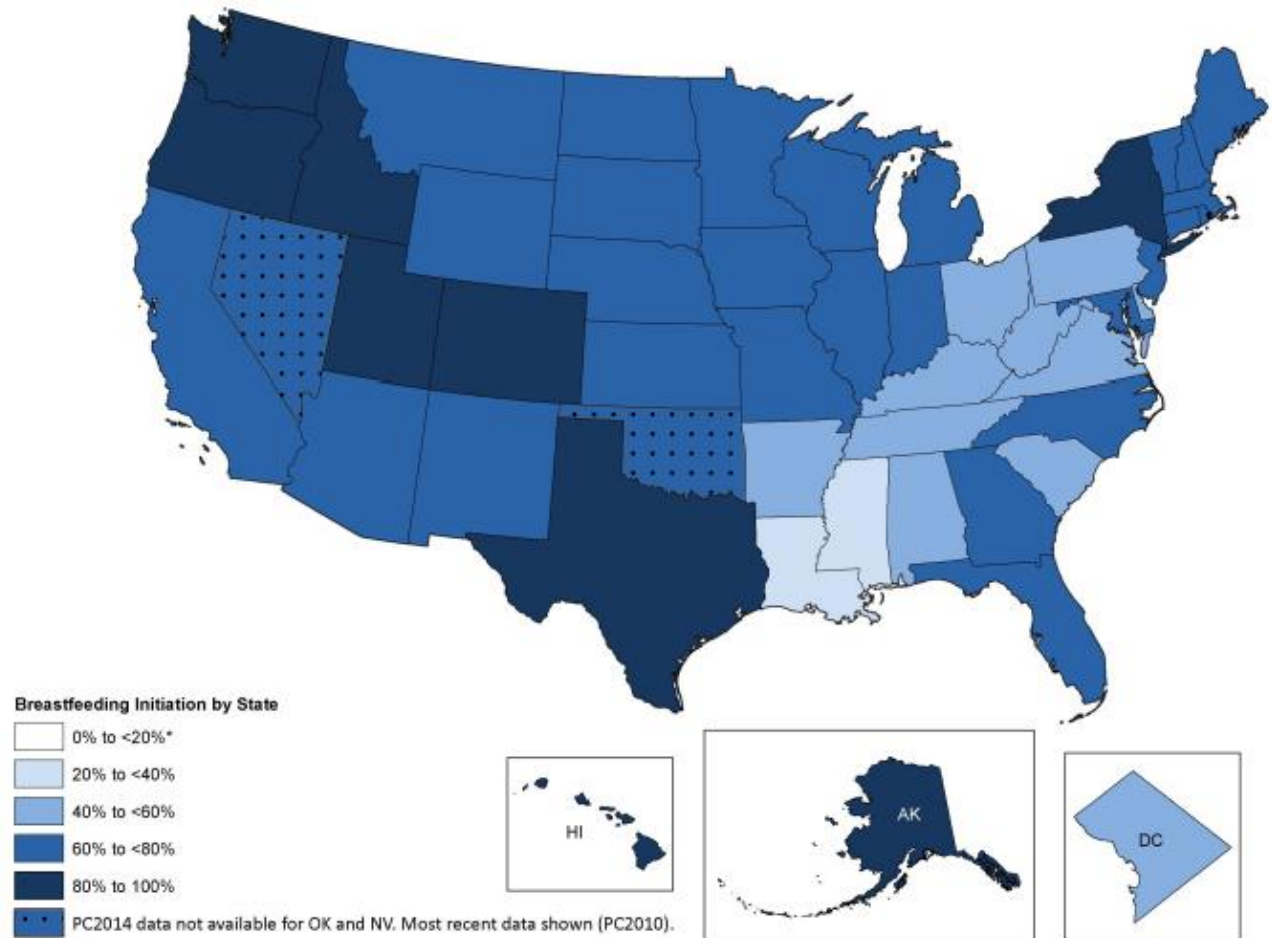
**Figure 1 – Percent of Infant and Children Participants by Age**



# Participant Characteristics 2014

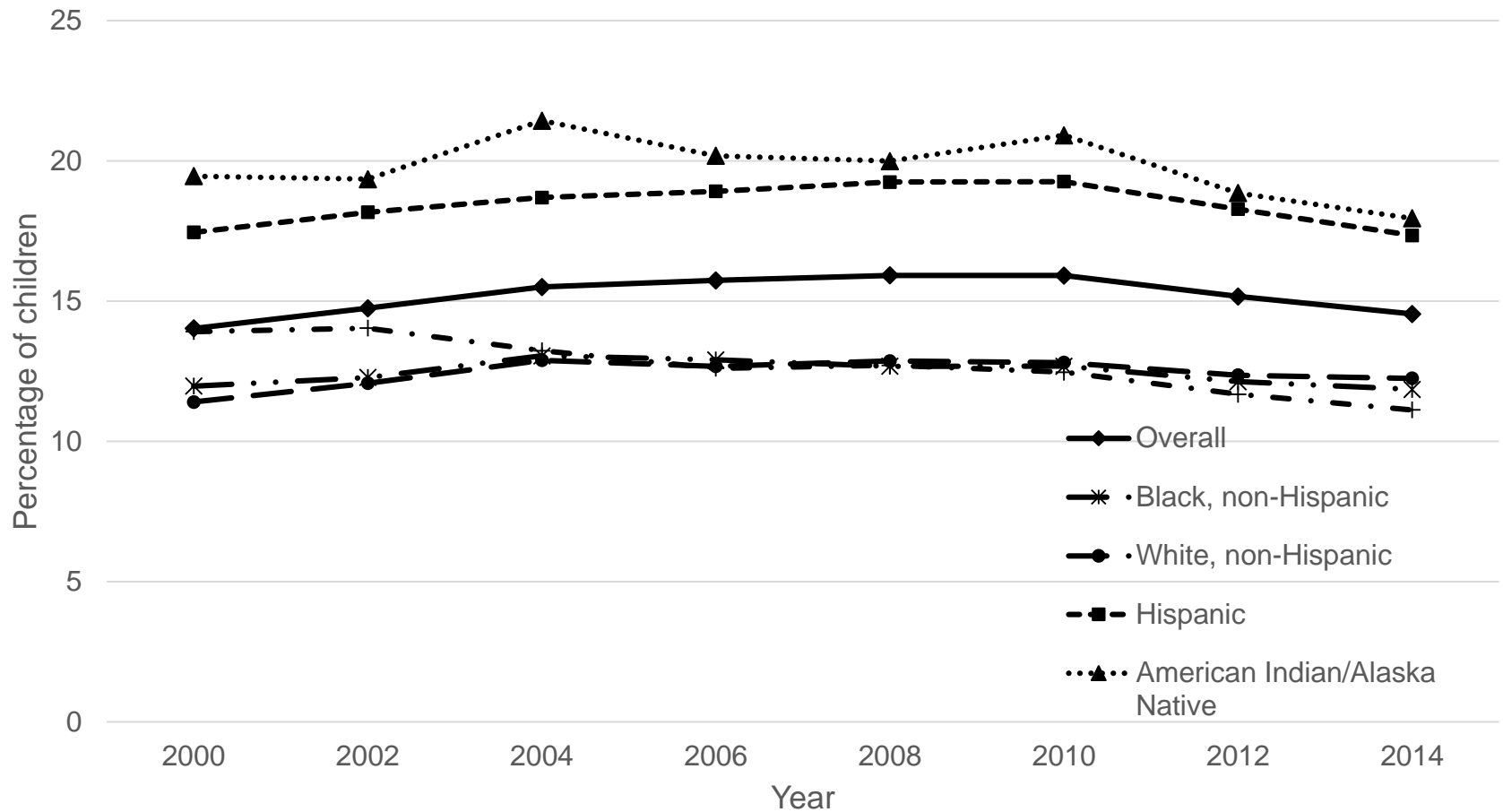
The proportion of breastfeeding women exceeded that of non-breastfeeding postpartum women, continuing the trend exhibited for the first time in 2012.

Breastfeeding Initiation Rates by State for WIC Infant Participants Aged 6–13 Months, April 2014





# Prevalence of obesity\* among WIC participants aged 2-4 years, overall and by race/ethnicity — United States,† 2000–2014



Abbreviation: WIC = Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children

\*Defined as sex-specific body mass index-for-age  $\geq 95$ th percentile based on 2000 CDC growth charts. Includes data from all the WIC State Agencies in 50 states (except for Hawaii data in 2002 and 2004), DC, and 5 U.S. territories.

Source: Pan et al. MMWR 2016

# WIC Eligibles & Program Reach

**Exhibit ES.1: WIC National-Level Eligibles and Coverage Rates by Participant Group in an Average Month: CY 2013**

*NOTE: This table includes estimates for the territories*

<b>Participant Group</b>	<b>Number Eligible</b>	<b>Percent of Total Eligible</b>	<b>Number Participating</b>	<b>Coverage Rate</b>
Infants	2,387,223	16.8%	2,015,732	84.4%
Total Children Ages 1-4	9,053,165	63.8%	4,508,236	49.8%
Children Age 1 <sup>a</sup>	2,285,482	16.1%	1,571,481	68.8%
Children Age 2 <sup>a</sup>	2,280,827	16.1%	1,141,082	50.0%
Children Age 3 <sup>a</sup>	2,224,943	15.7%	1,051,357	47.3%
Children Age 4 <sup>a</sup>	2,261,914	15.9%	744,315	32.9%
Pregnant Women	1,228,252	8.7%	839,820	68.4%
Postpartum Women	1,520,267	10.7%	1,183,228	77.8%
Breastfeeding Women	826,003	5.8%	593,611	71.9%
Non-Breastfeeding Women	694,264	4.9%	589,617	84.9%
<b>All Participant Groups</b>	<b>14,188,907</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>8,547,016</b>	<b>60.2%</b>

Source: 2014 CPS-ASEC for U.S. estimate, PRCS and Census for territories, WIC Administrative Data

Notes:

<sup>a</sup> WIC participant figures for children by single year of age are not available. The figures in this table are derived from the total number of children participating using the ratio of child enrollees by single year of age to the total number of children enrolled as reported in Johnson et al. (2013), Figure E.1.

Nutrition &  
Breastfeeding

Program  
Management  
& Costs

Health Impacts

Program  
Integrity

# SPECIAL STUDIES RECENTLY RELEASED

---

- WIC Nutrition Education Phase I
- WIC Infant and Toddler Feeding Study-2 Infant Report

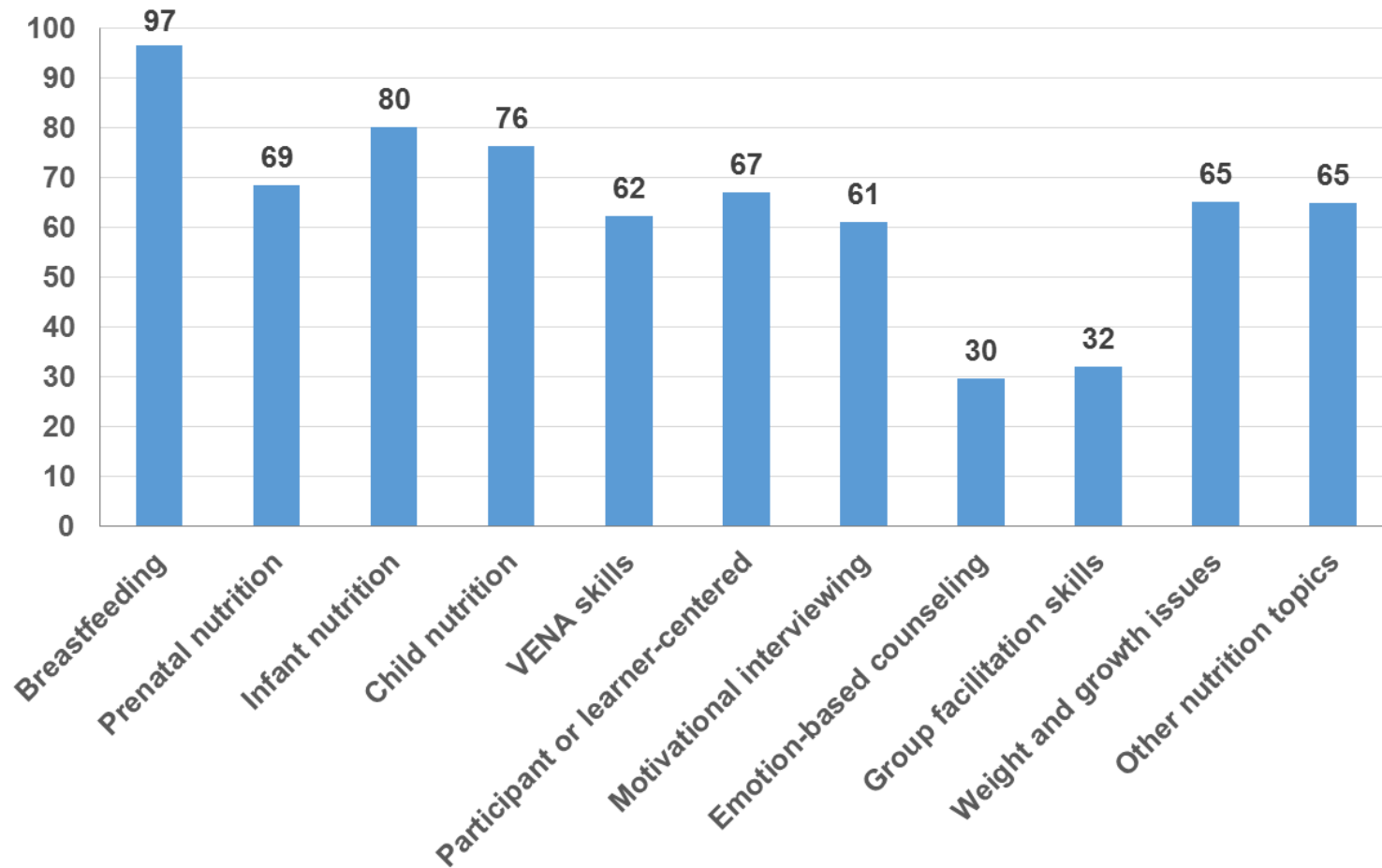
# WIC Nutrition Education Study: Phase 1

- Education is **tailored based on nutritional needs, interest, and level of motivation** for adopting healthy behaviors.

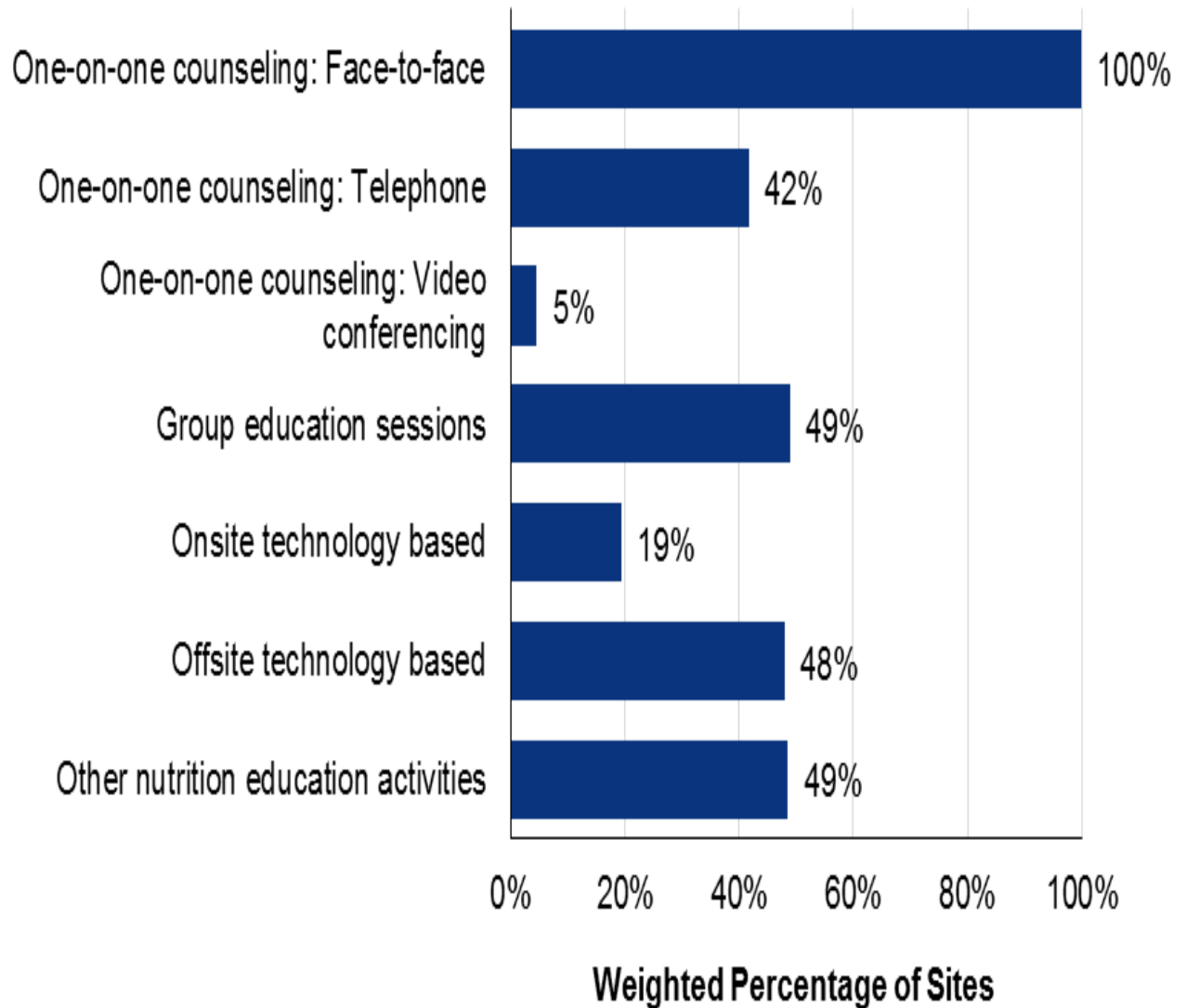
*“I came from the old school of here I am, Miss Nutritionist here, and I’m going to help you by telling you what you need to change ... we know that doesn’t work. It really doesn’t. We need to sit back in our chairs and listen more and talk less.”*

- **Highly Qualified Educators**
  - Over half of WIC nutrition educators have worked for WIC for at least 7 years
  - 51% have a bachelor’s degree and 10% have a graduate degree or higher

# Training Provided in Past 12 Months



**One-on-one nutrition counseling was the primary delivery method for WIC nutrition education.**



# WIC Infant Toddler Feeding Practices Study 2 – Infant Year Report

WIC ITFPS-2 (“*Feeding My Baby*”):

- Longitudinal study of women and infants enrolled in WIC
- Receipt of WIC services
- Breastfeeding
- Dietary practices
- Child growth and health



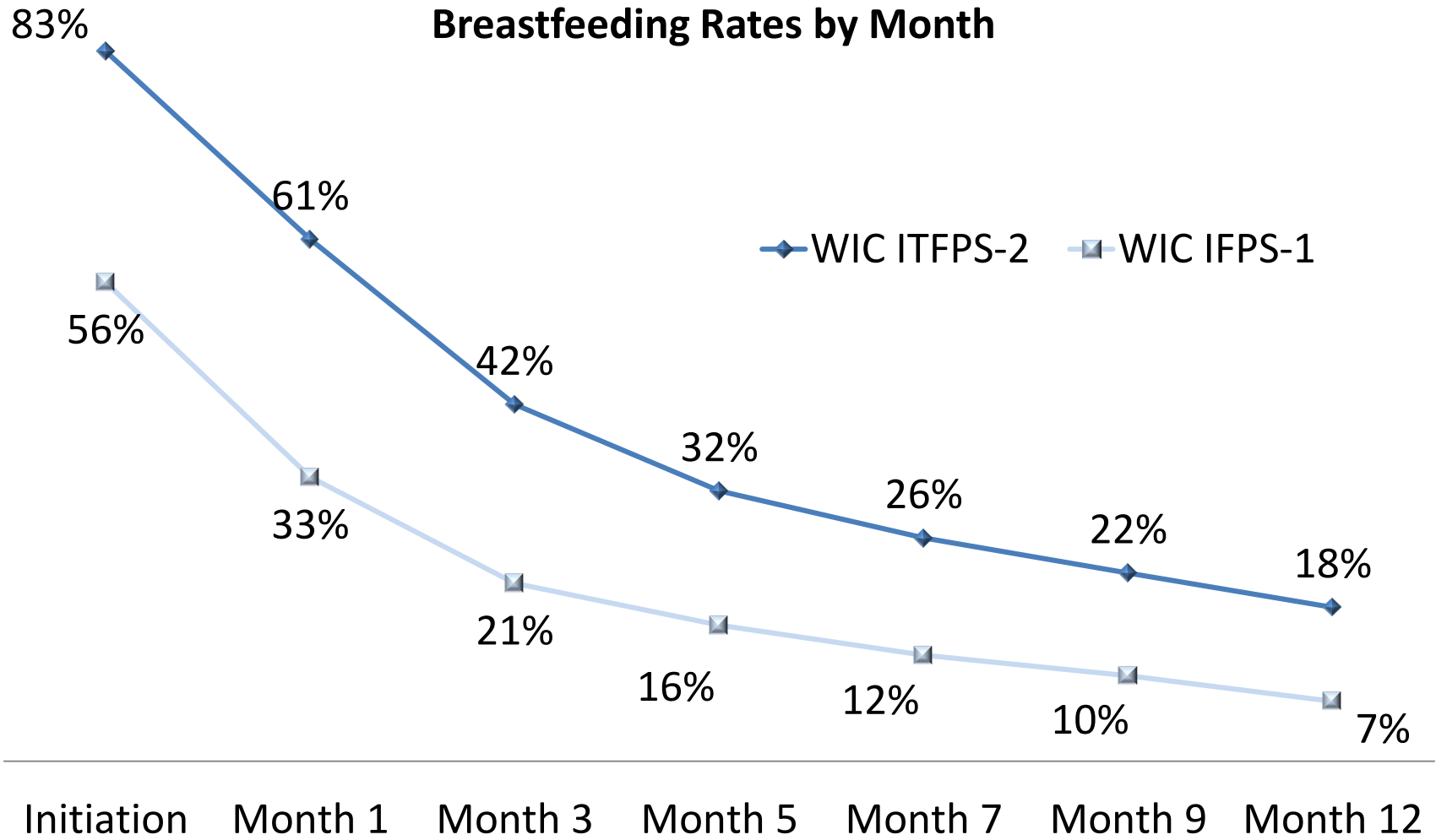
The Infant Year Report focuses on:

- Breastfeeding initiation and duration
- Introduction of complementary foods.

The report also compares findings to the WIC Infant Feeding Practices Study–1 (WIC IFPS-1) (published in 1997).

# Percent of any breastfeeding by age of child, ITFPS-2 and

Breastfeeding Rates by Month

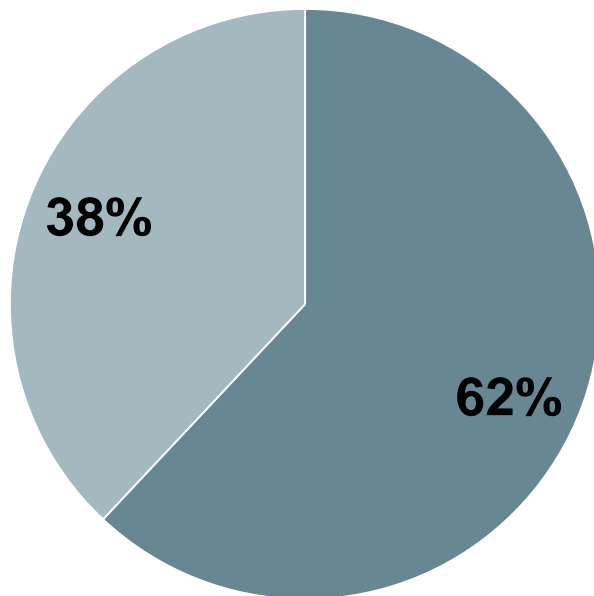


**NOTE: 70% of women reported not breastfeeding as long as they intended.**

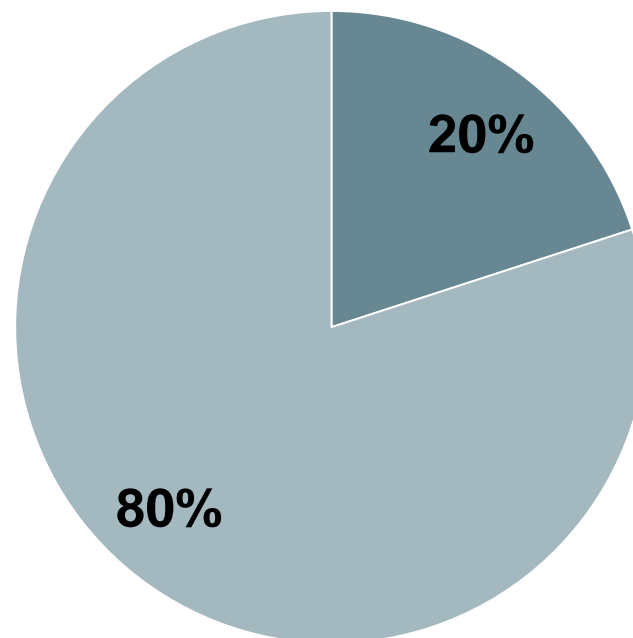


# Early Introduction of Complementary Foods is Less Prevalent

WIC IFPS-1



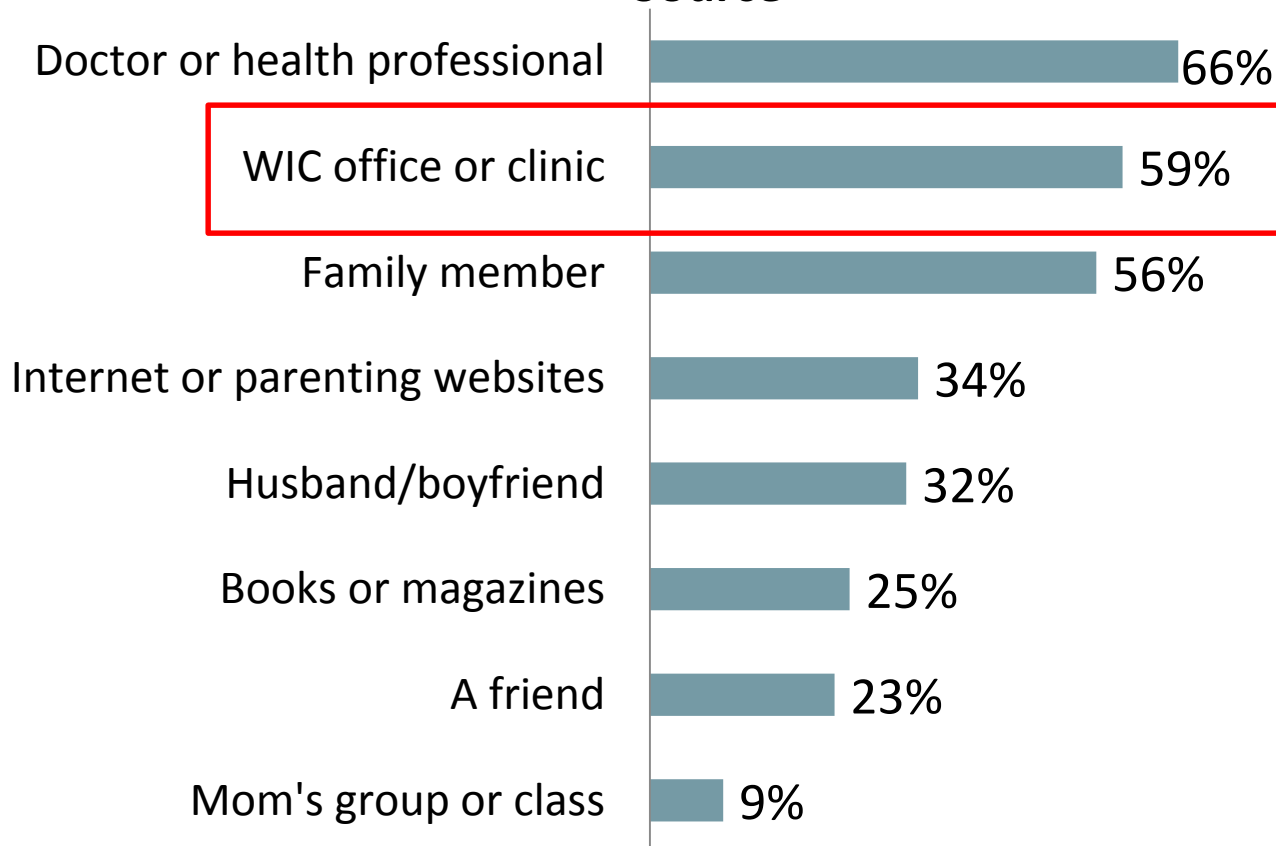
WIC ITFPS-2



- Introduced Complementary Foods Before 4 Months
- No Introduction of Complementary Foods Before 4 Months

# WIC is a Trusted Source of Information on Infant Feeding

Percentage of Caregivers that Received Feeding Information by Source



Nutrition &  
Breastfeeding

Program  
Management  
& Costs

Health Impacts

Program  
Integrity

# SPECIAL STUDIES

## SOON TO BE RELEASED

---

- WIC Vendor Peer Group Study
- WIC Nutrition Services and Administration Cost Study
- WIC Data Collection Study

# Research Grant Programs

- Baylor Center for Collaborative Research on WIC Nutrition Education Innovations
- Research on Obesity and the Periconceptional Period, UCLA
- Duke-UNC USDA Center for Behavioral Economics and Health Food Choice Research (BECR)

# FY17 Research & Evaluation Plan

- Estimates of WIC Eligible Population and Program Reach
- Understanding Reasons for Discontinuing WIC Benefits
- Farmers Market Nutrition Program National Study Review
- Process and Use of the Nutrition Risk Assessment
- Support for NHANES data collection
- Unified WIC Data Collection Strategy (includes WIC-PC)
- WIC Food Package Cost Report
- Quick Response Studies
- Communication of WIC Studies

# THANK YOU

---

For additional information:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ops/research-and-analysis>

# EXTRA SLIDES

---

Nutrition &  
Breastfeeding

Program  
Management  
& Costs

Health Impacts

Program  
Integrity

# SPECIAL STUDIES IN PROGRESS

---

- WIC Nutrition Education Phase II
- National Survey of WIC Participants III
- WIC Food Cost Study
- Aligning Food Package Prescriptions to Breastfeeding Practices
- Support for NHANES iron status measures



# Top Reasons for Breastfeeding Cessation, ITFPS-2

At 3 months, top reasons why mothers stopped breastfeeding:

1. Breastmilk alone did not satisfy baby (57%)
2. I didn't produce enough breastmilk (56%)
3. Baby lost interest in nursing (34%)

## Innovations in Nutrition Education

USDA Center for  
Collaborative  
Research on WIC  
Nutrition Education  
Innovations at Baylor

- Online nutrition education compared with clinic-based modes. (*UC Berkeley, Dr. Lorrene Ritchie & Dr. Shannon Whaley*)
- Using web-based two-way texting intervention to improve exclusive breastfeeding rates among WIC mothers. (*Yale University, Dr. Rafael Perez-Escamilla*)
- Online WIC Nutrition Education to Promote Farmer Markets Fruit and Vegetable Purchases and Consumption. (*William Paterson University, Dr. Jennifer Di Noia*)
- Supporting Baby Behavior Through Pediatric Offices (*UC Davis, Dr. M. Jane Heinig*)

## Supporting Behavior Change

**The Role of WIC in  
Improving Peri-  
conceptional Nutrition:  
A Small Grants  
Program**

- Personalized weight management via smartphone (LSU)
- Bilingual kiosk to assist providers in clinical care with women in post-, inter- and pre-partum phases. (UC-Denver)
- Pilot preventions strategies for excessive gestational weight gain (Pepperdine Univ. & PHFE)
- Automated telephone system for nutrition and health behaviors (UCSF)

# BECR Center WIC Grants

- Improving the WIC shopping experience using behavioral economics-based approaches. Proposals due 8/12.
- Fund innovative research based on behavioral economic theory to develop and test strategies for improving the WIC shopping experience, with the objective of improving program effectiveness and efficiency by improving WIC food redemptions, increasing participant satisfaction and/or program retention while responsibly managing food costs.

