

## Launching New Digital Tools for WIC Participants: A Guide for WIC Agencies

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September 2019



## Overview

- Why digital tools for WIC participants
- Creating the toolkit
- Top takeaways
- Where to find the toolkit

# Why digital tools for WIC participants



## WIC participants already use and like digital tools

- Many WIC participants are Millennials and Post-Millennials.
  - Smartphone adoption rates in 2019:
    - 96% for ages 18-29
    - 92% for ages 30-49
  - Already use digital tools for private sector services.
- According to research, participants like
   WIC digital tools and want more!



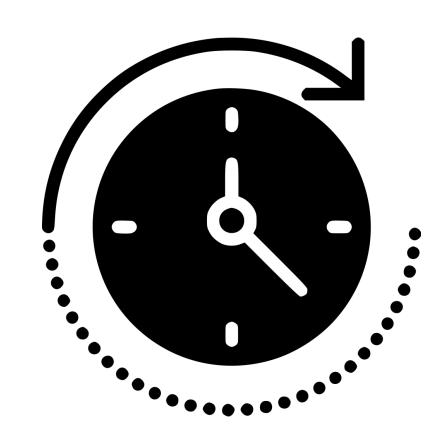
## Digital tools can make WIC even better for participants

- Can increase participation and retention.
  - Tools can help those with time and transportation barriers participate in WIC.
  - Tools can create more ways to communicate, making it easier to stay in touch.
- Can handle certain administrative tasks, freeing up time together for things that benefit from a human touch.
- Digital tools do not need to be high tech. It is about how they are applied!

## Common challenges WIC participants may face and how digital tools can help

## Imagine that you:

- Are working multiple shift-based jobs, do not know what your schedule is more than a few days out, and are busy during regular business hours.
  - What could help:
    - Video calling for certain appointments
    - Online or texting-based nutrition education classes



## Common challenges WIC participants may face and how digital tools can help

## Imagine that you:

- Are trying to grocery shop with your crying toddler, do not know which brand or size of an item is eligible for WIC, and dread what might happen at checkout if you choose wrong.
  - What could help:
    - WIC shopping assistance apps



## Creating the toolkit



## Why the toolkit was created

#### The issue:

 The National WIC Association and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities heard from WIC agencies that they faced barriers to getting digital tools for their participants.

#### The solution:

 Create a practical resource to equip WIC agency staff, no matter a person's role, with information and tips on how to pursue and implement digital tools for participants.



## Creating the toolkit

#### Partnership between:

- Alluma (formerly Social Interest Solutions)
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- The National WIC Association

#### Our approach:

- Listened and learned from those who are deep in the work through extensive literature review and one-on-one interviews with WIC agency staff.
- Created a "toolkit" with busy WIC agency staff in mind.





## Acknowledgments

- Altarum Institute
- Boulder County WIC (CO)
- California Children's National Hospital/Medical Center (D.C.)
- Community Medical Centers, Inc. (CA)
- Davidson County WIN (TN)
- Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
- Greater Baden Medical Services WIC Program (MD)
- Maricopa County DPH WIC Program (AZ)

- Michigan WIC
- Mississippi WIC
- National WIC Association Evaluation Committee
- New York WIC
- Osage Nation WIC (OK)
- USDA's Food & Nutrition Service
- Washington D.C. WIC
- West Virginia WIC

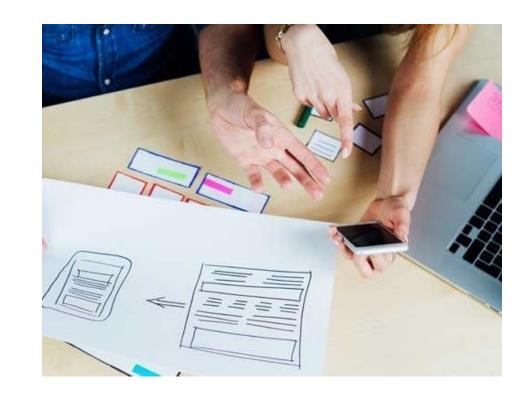


## Top takeaways



## Start off right

- Instead of assuming, ask staff and participants what they think!
  - What problems are participants currently facing?
  - Is a digital tool the right solution?
  - Will this work well with staff workflows?
- Involve staff to get their buy-in.
- Involve staff and participants the whole way.



## Things to consider for procurement

- Where will near-term and long-term funding come from?
- What does the agency need from a vendor?
- Custom or Commercial Off The Shelf (COTS)?
  - Custom is tailored, but potentially more money and effort.
  - COTS is not tailored, but potentially less money and effort.
- How would a tool impact MIS and/or EBT?
  - Will a tool interface with existing IT systems?
  - Will it cost extra money now or later?
- Any benefits to forming a purchasing consortium?



## Choose user-friendly tools

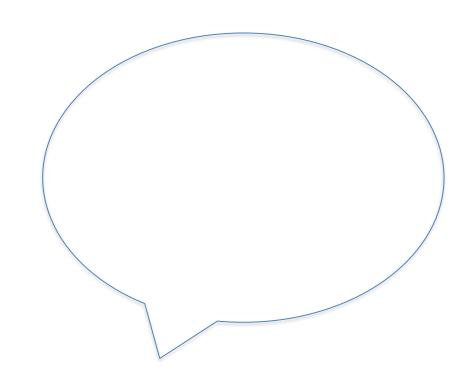
## In general, tools should have:

- Clear and simple design
- Intuitive navigation
- Easy to read text
- Accessible design for those with disabilities
- And more



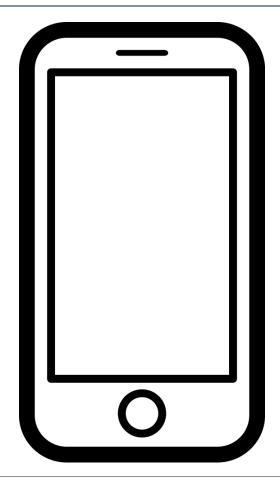
## Choose tools that work for the agency's specific users

- In addition to general usability, determine what else a tool must have for an agency's specific users.
  - For example, does a tool come in the languages participants use?
- And to keep improving tools for users, learn from a tool's usage data!
  - Know what you want to collect and why.
  - Collect a baseline to compare against later.
  - Make adjustments.



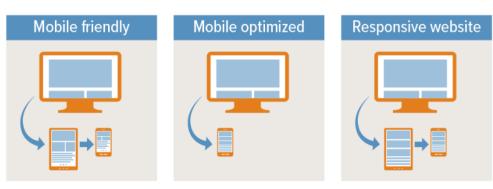
#### Must work well for mobile

- Since some may be "smartphone dependent," it is critical for tools to:
  - Display well on all mobile devices
  - Not take up a lot or any storage space
  - Use as little mobile data as possible



#### Must work well for mobile

- And for websites, know your mobile compatibility terms!
  - Mobile friendly: Designed for computers but displays well enough on mobile.
  - Mobile optimized: Website has two designs, one for computers and one for mobile.
  - Mobile responsive: Website has one design that dynamically adapts to any screen or device.



## Protect privacy and security of participants' data

- Design tools and business processes to limit risks of exposing participants' sensitive data.
- Ask vendors what they do to protect the privacy and security of participants' data.



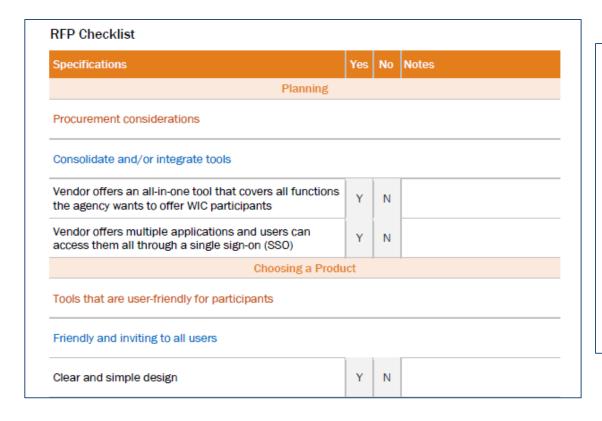
## Plan for implementation

## Prepare local agency staff and participants.

- Train staff on the tool
- Create a promotion plan
- Give staff time in their schedules to share tool with participants
- No one-size-fits-all approach.
  - Ask staff what would work best!



## **RFP Checklist**



Specifications	Yes	No	Notes
Clearly communicates privacy and security considerations reassuring users that personal information will be protected	Υ	N	
Tools that support staff and agency processes			
Allows users to pull data from tool into easy-to-read and easy-to-share reports	Y	N	
Allows users to edit content easily	Y	N	
Allows users to seamlessly work across digital devices	Y	N	
Allows users to modify tool	Y	N	



## In conclusion

- Digital tools can make WIC easier and more effective.
- Consider the whole process: planning, procurement, choosing good tools for users, implementation, and evaluation.
- It can seem daunting but it is doable! The toolkit and your WIC community can help.



## http://bit.ly/WICToolkit

## Contact us!

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Our website: www.alluma.org





## Mobile App for WIC Families

Pamela Hull PhD: Vanderbilt University Medical Center (PI)

Summer Weber PhD, RD: Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Elyse Shearer PhD, RD: Tennessee State University (Co-PI)







#### **Vanderbilt University Medical Center**

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Summer Weber, PhD, RD

Doug Schmidt, PhD

Shelagh Mulvaney, PhD

Heidi Silver, PhD, RD

Tatsuki Koyama, PhD

Jessica Jones, MA

Ethan Huang, MS

#### **Tennessee State University**

Elyse Shearer, PhD, RD (Co-PI)

Veronica Oates, PhD

Prabodh Illukpitiya, PhD

Calvin Harris

#### 233 Analytics

Chris Thompson







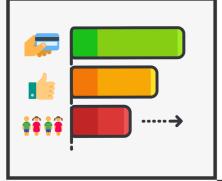
# Development of CHEW App for WIC Program



#### **Mobile App for WIC Families**

- Supported by USDA AFRI Grant
- Developed and user-tested the CHEW app for WIC families
  - Apple (iOS) and Android platforms
  - English and Spanish
- Provides easy, practical ways to shop for WIC plus nutrition education

## Intended Outcomes:

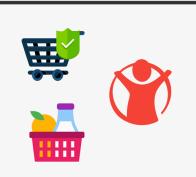


#### Increased:

- Redemption
- Satisfaction
- Retention

#### Improved:

- Dietary Intake
- Child feeding
- Home food environment



## **CHEW App Development & Deployment**



## **Version 1 Prototype**

- Needs assessment
- Input from WIC participants & program
- Grad student built prototype
- Iterative feedback from committee
- Tested w/ 80 users
- Post survey feedback



## Version 2 Development

- WIC partnership
- Contract developer and userX designer
- Iterative user testing
- User interface design
- Agreement with State
- Connection with WIC server
- Data security & privacy



## Version 2 Deployment

- Field testing
- Debugging
- Pilot county
- Matched counties delayed control design
- Analytics on all
- Survey sample
- Dietary intake on subsample
- Sustainability plan

## User experience (UX) testing for CHEW

#### Qualitative Interviews

- Participants: WIC caregivers of 2-4 year old children
- Baseline testing: 22 participants
- 3 follow-up rounds of iterative testing (3-4 per round)
- 32 total interviews



- WIC experience
- Using smartphone technology
- Mental models: recipes, lists, WIC shopping
- Feedback on draft screens

#### Desirable app features

- Cart sorting activity
- Prioritization of features
- Natural groupings

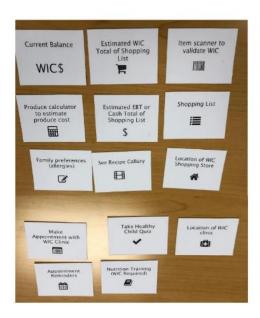














## **UX testing for CHEW**

## **Qualitative Analysis**

- Interview transcripts coded
- Constant comparative analysis







**English - Spanish** 



### **EMERGING THEMES**

- Desire for efficiency in WIC
- Desire to maximize WIC benefits

"Trying to get it done, trying again, trying to make it efficient, trying to maximize the benefit and do it all quickly in the store- I'll try to make it as quick as possible. Plus you know you still got to get home and do homework and get ready for school the next day and you know you don't want to spend a whole lot of time in the store." (WIC Caregiver; parent of 2 children)

## **USER PRIORITIES**

- Balance checking
- Bar-code scanning
- Appointments
- Recipes



"I think the 'scan items to validate that it is WIC', that's a good [app feature]. I think that's like the biggest one. Just to make sure. I have come across that a lot with just making sure that it is a WIC item. That's like the biggest thing." (WIC Caregiver; parent of 1 child)

## Overview: Mobile App for WIC Families







Users can check WIC balance, view benefit expiration, and scan barcodes to confirm eligible foods at the store

Recipes, meal planning, and nutrition education features are embedded in the app







Notifications:
Nutrition tips & reminders



# Implementation in WIC Program

## IMPLEMENTATION IN WIC CLINICS

- Train-the-Trainer Approach
  - Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension Program
  - Teaches individuals (WIC staff) who will then teach the end user (WIC clients)











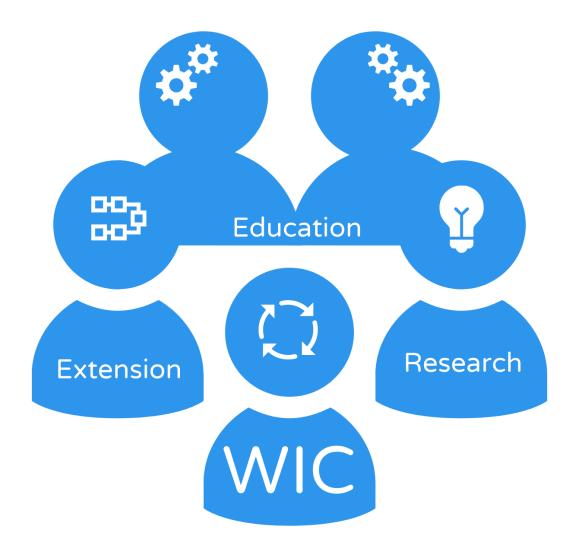












# PARTNERS:



233 Analytics, Inc.









HealthMade Design, Inc.



#### **Cooking Matters**

Share Our Strength Food & Drink

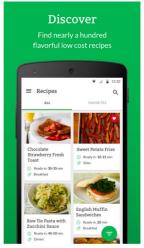
\*\*\*\* 81 2

**E** Everyone

A You don't have any devices.

Add to Wishlist

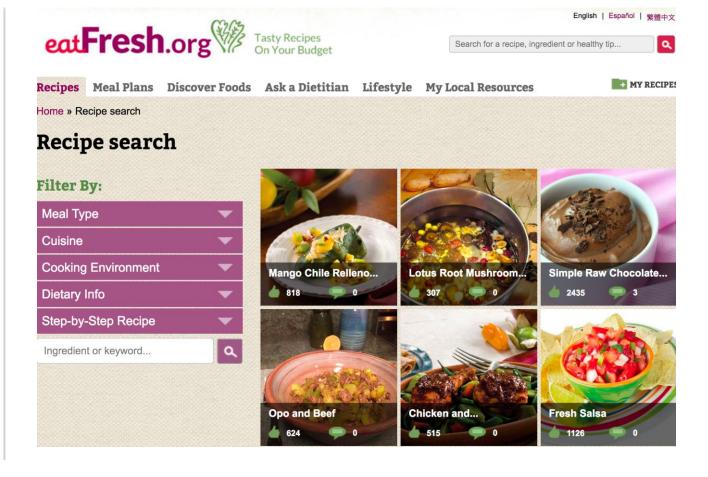
Install











## Recipes and Meal Planning

#### Townsend Lab: Self-Assessment Quizzes



Family food & activity



Family meal time



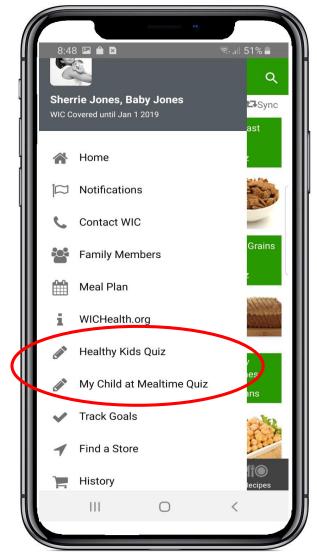
Target: Low-income parents / caregivers of pre-school age children

Validated assessment tools for print and web



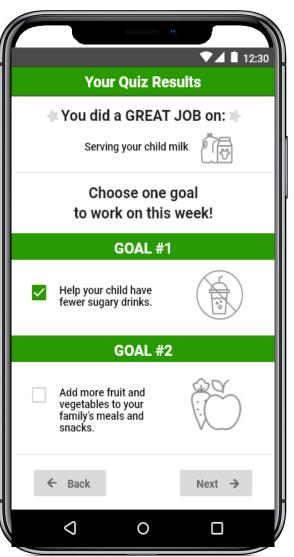


# Platform to Integrate Existing Tools: Healthy Kids & My Child at Mealtime Quizzes









# Partnering with City

Developed and testedfor target population

Low income, diverse families

Parents of children birth to age 5

Feasible to adapt to mobile phone



Institutional

agreement and approval by WIC

Funding for software developer

User testing and iterative development

Funding for implementation costs



Pilot and implement

Innovative WIC research

Built-in app analytics

In-app pop-up questions

Separate surveys

Co-author publications







Mutually-Beneficial Partnerships with Non-Profit Organizations and Universities

# OSAGE NATION WIC: TECHNOLOGIES THAT WORK

Manon Taylor, M.Ed.

Director, Osage Nation WIC

## Osage Nation WIC

- ITO located in Northeast Oklahoma.
- Serve 3100 clients/month.
- 8 clinic locations

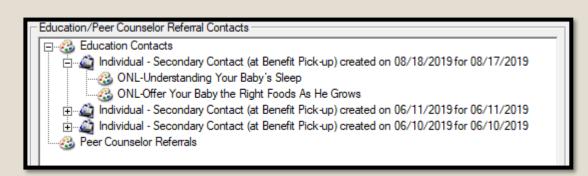


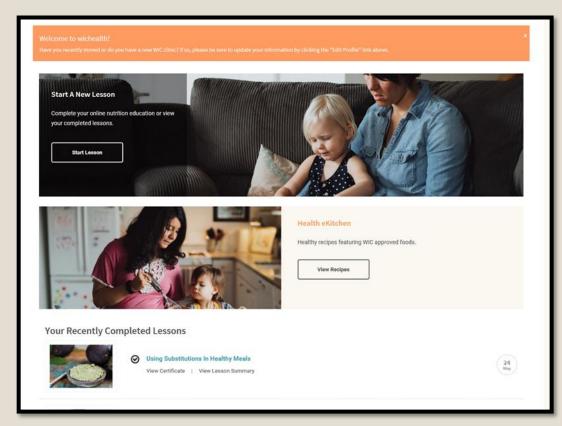


Tulsa clinic

#### Online Nutrition Education

- Partnered with WICHealth.org in FY 2019
- First SPIRIT partner to use Quick Connect feature.
  - Collaborated with WICHealth and DXC to customize.
  - Completed lessons are automatically uploaded to client files.
  - Recognizes participant category.



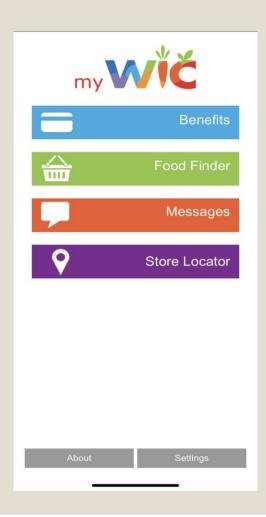


# Looking to the Near Future: Online Nutrition Education

- We want to offer our clients the option to complete a lesson online and be able to phone in to receive their benefits. (max 2x/cert year)
- 86% of clientele interested.



#### Mobile App-my Oklahoma WIC



- Developed by WCD WIC and DXC for use by eight ITO's in Oklahoma.
- Can be used on both Apple and Android devices.
- Registration requires Spirit Household and State WIC ID (youngest member).
- No password required.
- Can be downloaded on multiple devices in the same household.

#### Mobile App-Report

**Osage Nation** 

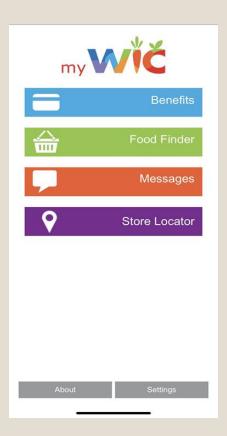
SPIRIT\_M&O\_0270: Households Using Mobile App -

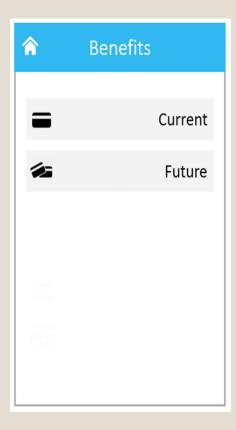
Summary

9/1/2019 6:05:11 AM

Registered		Not Registered	
	1636		475

#### Mobile App-Benefits

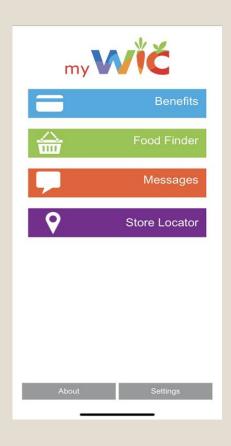


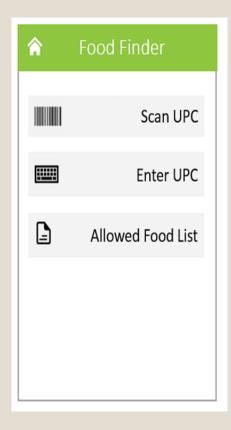


 Displays the available quantity and description of the current and future household benefits.

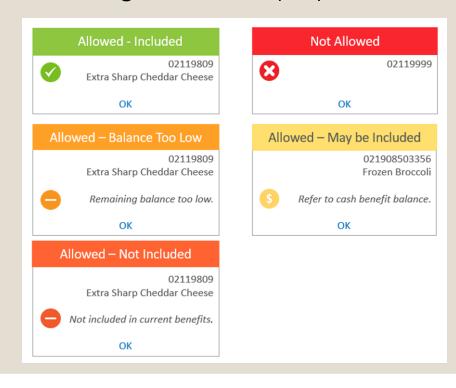
<b>←</b>	Benefits		
Mar 16 2017 – Apr 15 2017			
Cheese	– All Authorized	2 LB	
Breakfa	st Cereal	7 OZ	
Whole (	Grain – Authorized	32 OZ	
Fruits a	nd Vegetables	19 \$\$\$	
Low-fat,	/Fat Free Milk	4 GAL	

#### Mobile App-Food Finder



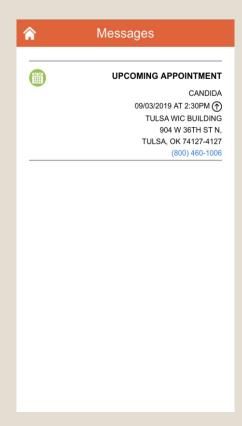


- Helps participants find WIC allowed foods at the store.
- Once the UPC/PLU is scanned or manually entered, one of the following 5 messages will be displayed:



#### Mobile App-Messages





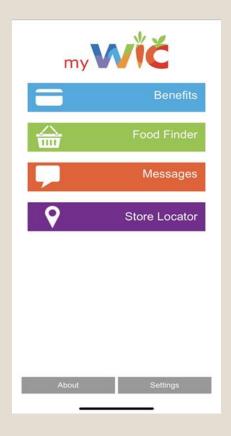
#### Four types of messages are available:

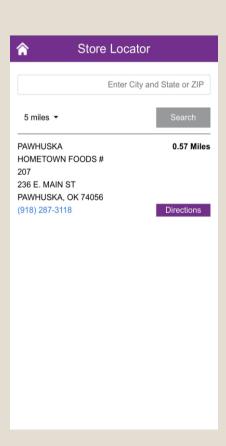
- Upcoming appointments
- Missed appointments
- We Miss You (schedule appointment)
- Benefit Balance

#### Push notifications

- Appointment reminders sent two days before and day of appointment.
- Reminders sent seven and two days before any remaining benefits will expire.

#### Mobile App-Store Locator



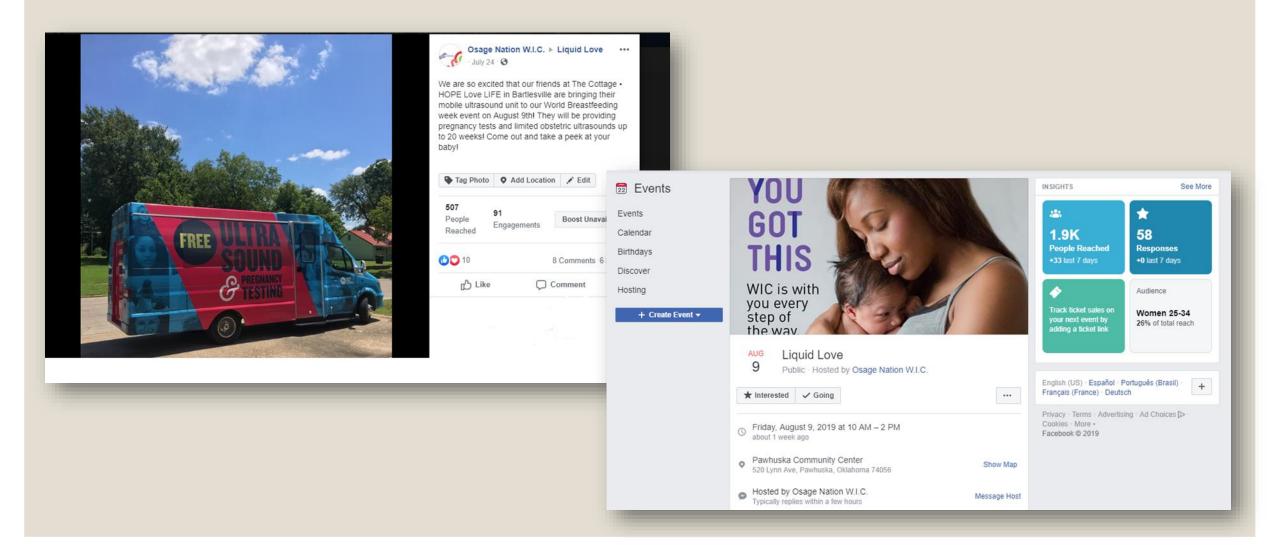


## Facebook-Osage Nation W.I.C





## Facebook-Osage Nation W.I.C



# Facebook-Osage Co. Breastfeeding Support



Facebook-Osage Co. Breastfeeding

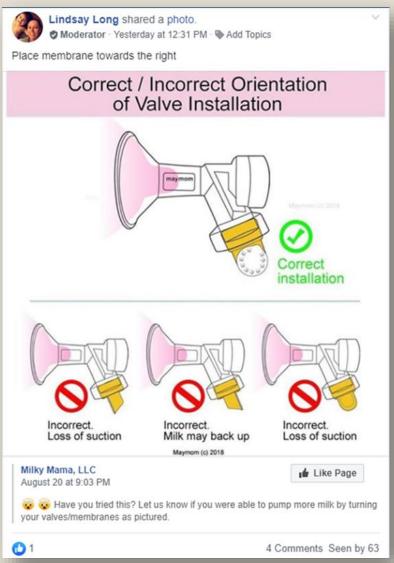
Support

Lindsay Long shared a photo.

Moderator · Yesterday at 12:31 PM · N Add Topics

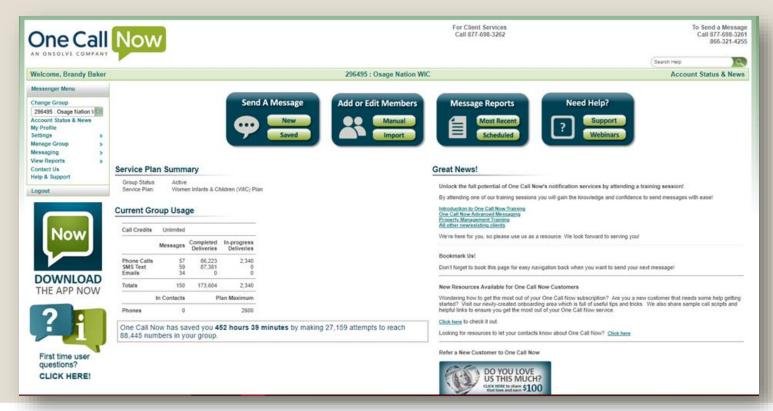
Place membrane towards the right

Holly Kaheetah Patterson-Pernell shared a post Moderator · Yesterday at 8:41 AM Nursing is about so much more than just food of I Need to Nurse Because ... I'm Tired I'm Hungry I'm Thirsty I Need comfort I Hurt I'm Growing I'm Overstimulated I Need Mommy Dairy Queens Breastfeeding Support Breast is Best without Fear August 17 at 7:00 PM So many reasons Rachael (1) Gina Kelley-Stephens, Nicki Gossage Ingram and 4 others Seen by 39

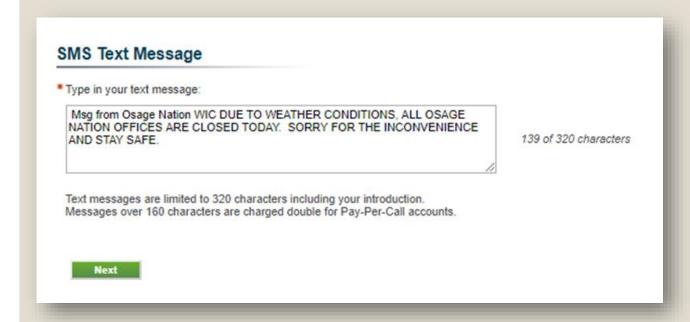


## Text Messaging

- Contract with One Call Now.
- We utilize to send appointment reminders, closure notifications, and special events.
- Based on data entered in MIS system (Spirit) messages are sent to the primary number and/or email address within file.



## Text Messaging



- Based on annual survey results, 79% prefer text messages to receive their appointment reminders vs. appointment cards and App.
- Can be customized to send only to certain clinics and participant categories.
- Reports are sent after each message attempt to show delivery information and statistics as well as overall lifetime usage statistics.

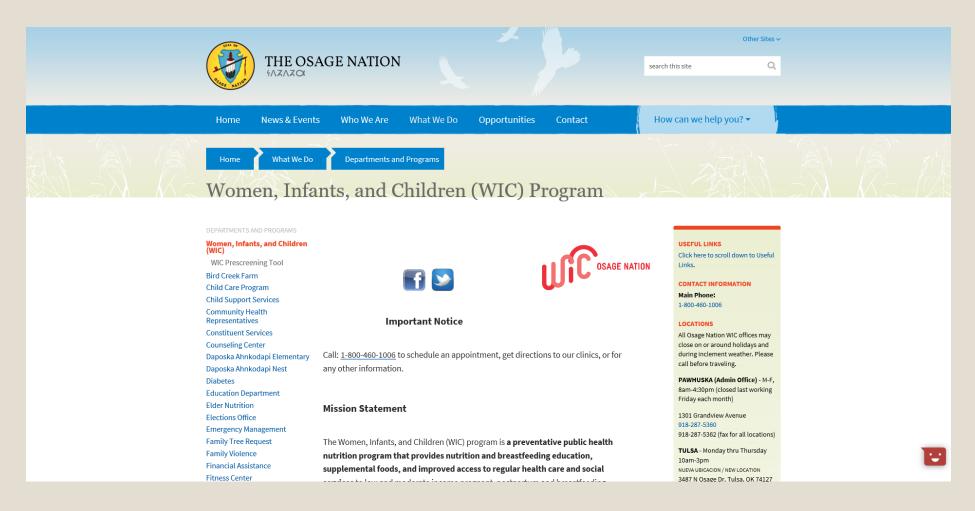
#### Surveys

- We utilize Survey Gizmo to compile our yearly Participant Satisfaction Survey and Farmers' Market Survey.
- Survey is loaded onto iPads.
- The offline version has English and Spanish translations.
- A Report with results is instantly generated after survey is closed.





#### Website



https://www.osagenation-nsn.gov/what-we-do/women-infants-children-program

## Challenges

#### Deciding which company to use:

- Key features
- Flexibility (changes)
- Cost/renewal
- Will it enhance our service/program
- Will it help our clients
- Training for staff/clients
- Recommended by other States that use it
- Implementation process
- Company offers tutorial/demonstration
- Reporting capabilities
- Ease of use
- Personalization-custom messages etc.



#### Challenges

#### **Cost of Technology**

- Customization
  - Working with MIS
- Yearly renewals
  - o Can you sustain?
- Set up
- Consortium
  - Help get cost lower
- Upgrades/additional lessons etc. at no cost

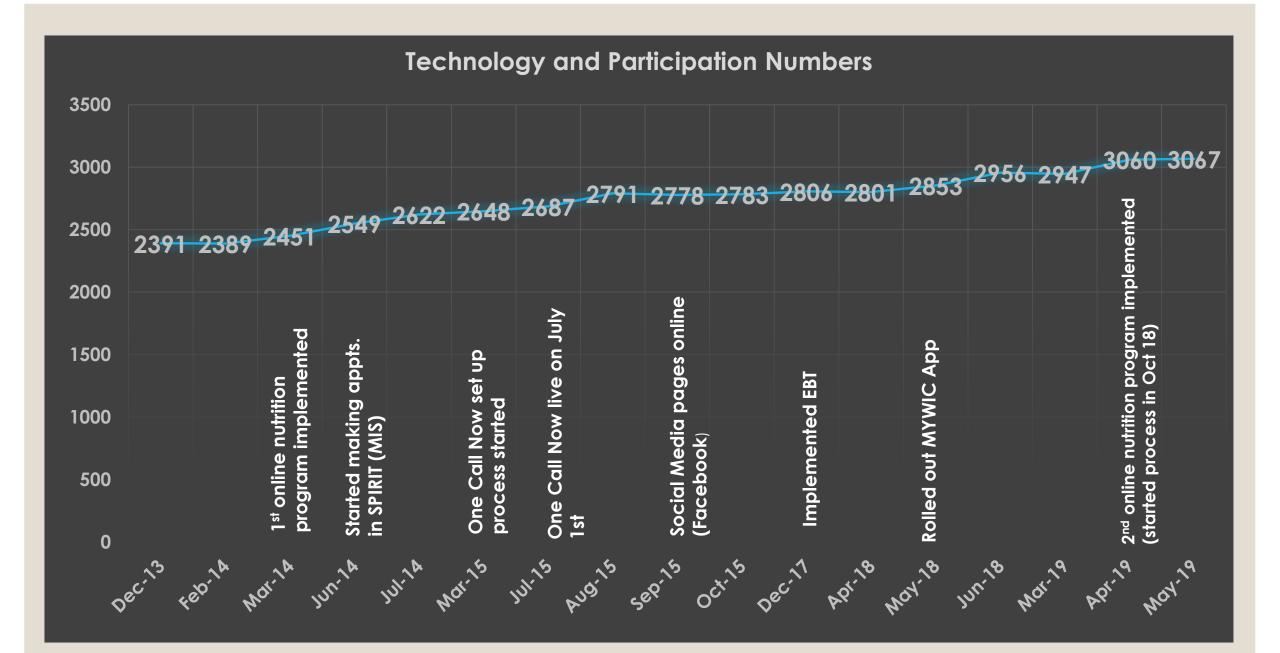


#### Challenges

#### Navigating both Tribal policies/laws and Federal Regulations

- Procurement
- Contracts
  - AG's office
  - Sovereignty language
- Multiple layers of signatures





#### Thank You

