

2024 Outreach Grant Projects

NOVEMBER 27, 2024

The Minnesota WIC program provided submitted an operational funding grant proposal to USDA Food and Nutrition Services for \$25,000 to support local agencies with WIC promotion and outreach efforts.

Six local agencies completed projects with this funding, spending a total of \$15,844.17 to fulfill their local agency outreach needs and increase WIC program awareness and participation.

Cass County WIC



Cost: \$2,900.00

Goal: Focus on WIC retention for WIC participants.

Summary:

- Put together WIC outreach bags that included:
 - A re-usable cold pack with an ice cube tray for breastfeeding moms
 - A My Plate and utensils for 1-year olds
 - Lunch bags for 2, 3, and 4-year-olds with re-usable ice pack
- These were given at recertification and mid-certification appointments. Along with the gifts, printable recipe packets highlighting the use of fruits and vegetables for the children's items and information on how to clean your breast pump, plan to return to work and pumping, and hand expression with the bags for breastfeeding moms were given.

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- As of September 2024:
 - 116 bags given to families with 1-year olds.
 - 124 cooler bags for ages 2 through 4 years.
 - 21 breastfeeding women with the blue cooler bags.

The local agency will continue to distribute until gone.

Evaluation: A QR code was provided with each outreach bag for the participant to access a one question survey. They received 26 responses that were all positive. WIC families indicated that they would use the items and be reminded to feed their families in a healthier manner.

Isanti County



Cost: \$3,000.00

Goal:

The Isanti County WIC office recently relocated to a new office complex that also houses other Health and Human Services units. This new centralized location aims to streamline access to critical programs such as Medical Assistance (MA) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). However, the irregular shape of the building, along with multiple parking lots and entrances, made it challenging for WIC families to locate our new office.

The goal of this project was to enhance visibility and create a welcoming environment for participants and visitors at the new location.

Summary:

- Installation of an exterior awning: Provides shelter from the elements and increases visibility of the WIC entrance from the street and parking lot.

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- Addition of an eight-foot bench and planters: Enhances the exterior space, creating a more welcoming and comfortable entrance.

Evaluation:

- Reduced late or missed appointments: Since the installation of the awning, there has been a significant decrease in late or missed appointments, indicating improved access and ease of locating the WIC office.
- Positive participant feedback: Daily comments from participants highlight the increased accessibility, cleanliness, and time saved by not having to navigate through security or the building.
- Staff observations: Staff have noted the aesthetic enhancement of the curb appeal and expressed satisfaction with the new awning and exterior improvements.

Overall, the project has been a tremendous success, with overwhelmingly positive feedback from both staff and the community. The enhancements clearly improved the WIC experience for families.

Lessons learned:

- Budget constraints: The cost of the awning exceeded initial estimates. However, through staff donations and a contribution from the Cambridge Lions Club, they were able to cover the additional expenses.
- Importance of accessibility: The project highlighted the critical need for visible and accessible facilities to ensure participants can easily find and access services.
- Flexibility in budgeting: It is crucial to be flexible and resourceful when managing project budgets to accommodate unforeseen costs.

LeSueur County



Cost: \$3,000.00

- Water bottles
- Frisbees
- Balls
- Magnets
- Books in English and Spanish (staying active)
- Booth rental.

Goal: Promote the WIC program as a means for participant recruitment and retention.

Summary:

Le Sueur County Public Health attended two large scale community events this summer. Promotional items with WIC branding, with an educational component around importance of drinking water and physical activity were purchased with the grant.

- Le Sueur County Fair: Staff were present for two days from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. promoting WIC and Public Health. A breastfeeding tent was present for fair goers to use to promote breastfeeding.
- Back to School Event: This event was held at a local school in collaboration with many county partners, including Public Health, Salvation Army, MN Valley Action Council, Department of Human Services, and local school districts. The event aimed at providing families with resources and back to school supplies for those in need. Over 500 individuals attended. There were four staff who attended, and the event was from 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Evaluation:

Promotion and outreach of WIC was well received at both community events. The items, such as the balls and water bottles, were the priority by attendees to want. This validated that items that promote physical activity were popular among the population.

Lessons learned:

It would be helpful to have a more interactive type of activity at the fair that would promote more visiting with public health staff and encouragement to ask questions. Tracking record for attendance of how many individuals stopped by our vendor table at the fair would help evaluate success.

Polk Norman-Mahnomen County



Cost: \$ 2,400.00

- Two retractable banners
- Two outdoor sail signs
- 600 promotional sunglasses for community events.

Goal: Promote WIC services

Summary:

- Two retractable banners, each described what the WIC program is, who qualifies for WIC, their clinic locations, and agency specific contact information.
 - Used the banners at community events to promote the Polk Norman-Mahnomen WIC program.
- Two outdoor sail signs to help increase awareness WIC program at community events and to help locate WIC offices on clinics days.
- WIC promotional kids' sunglasses given out at community events, such as county fairs or family fun nights, to help promote and raise awareness of the WIC program.

Evaluation:

- Total WIC participants for April 2024, prior to initiation of the WIC promotional grant intervention was 1,080.
- Total WIC participants for July 2024, after initiation of WIC promotional grant intervention was 1,134 participants.

Lessons learned:

A challenge for this project was the tight timeline to design and order materials. Funding was received funding on May 31, and it was not possible to design, order and receive promotional items by the local fair in June. This limited the extent of outreach events. Sunglasses were very popular with our participants and within the community.

Saint Paul-Ramsey County



Cost: \$ 2,872.91

- Prime line jump ropes
- WIC apparel for new WIC staff

Goal: Increase engagements at outreach events and promote physical activity.

Summary:

- WIC branded clothing was purchased for new staff to wear inside clinics and at public events for outreach. In Ramsey County WIC clinics are all in non-county owned facilities. The WIC wear increases staffs' visibility for both WIC participants as well as for those coming to the building for other services.
- Outreach incentives such as the jump rope can help leverage the interest of WIC participants and non-WIC participants at events, and they promote healthy activities such as getting in daily physical activity needs.

Evaluation:

No formal evaluation was conducted for this project. Jump ropes were popular in the past as reported by parents. In the past both apparel and incentives have been well received by staff and participants.

Lessons learned:

They will consider a different incentive that promotes physical activity. While jump ropes are fun and helpful, it isn't feasible for 0–2-year-olds.

Waseca County



Cost: \$1,671.26

- WIC and eating local t-shirts
- Haakas
- Water bottles for mom
- Cooler bags for milk storage
- Social media advertising.

Goal: Increase awareness and enrollment in WIC program in Waseca County.

Summary:

- Marketed the program at the Waseca County fair, the Waseca farmers market, the Neighborhood Service Center, and public schools.
- Utilized social media platforms to get the word out about breastfeeding month. Highlighted the numerous benefits that come along with being a WIC participant. Stressed the importance of healthy pregnancies, chest/breastfeeding, good nutrition, and enough physical activity.
- All Waseca County WIC staff received two t-shirts to wear when out in the community promoting programming.
- Promoted county fair breastfeeding space at the Waseca County fair on their Facebook page.
 - Haakas and water bottles that were purchased with grant funding were in the rooms.
- Cooler bags were distributed to WIC clients who were participating in the Power of Produce Club at the Waseca Farmer's Market. This allowed families to carry their produce home. They were also given out at the WIC clinic, encouraging parents to use them as breastmilk cooler bags.
- In addition, breastfeeding outreach materials that included pens, bracelets, ChapStick, magnets, and informational flyers were given.

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- Breastfeeding mothers were encouraged to stop in the office during the month of August to pick up their breastfeeding care packages (which included all the items mentioned, plus some additional from Family Health).

Evaluation:

Participant numbers slowly increased over summer. They had 22 new certification appointments from June-August. Most materials were taken from the fair. Although the Power of Produce club didn't take a formal count of participants saying they heard about their program through WIC, staff mentioned they heard about it at appointments (and some even brought their cooler bags along). Around 15 goodie bags were given to breastfeeding mothers that stopped in for appointments or that saw the Facebook post advertising them.