

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2026, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and summary notes

Agenda items:

- General program updates - Kate
- Participation – Tami
- WIC and peer breastfeeding support grant – Rebecca
- WIC training update – Carole
- Participant advisory group – Tina
- 2025 breastfeeding projects – Rosie

National updates- Kate

General program updates – Kate

Letter from USDA Secretary to Minnesota and Minneapolis

On January 9, 2026, USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins sent a letter to Governor Tim Walz and Mayor Jacob Frey notifying that effective immediately, USDA was suspending payments on all active awards and any future awards from USDA to the State of Minnesota and the City of Minneapolis, currently totaling over \$129.18 million. Over that weekend we were able to receive clarification from the USDA regional office in Chicago that WIC would not be affected by this action. We have requested additional clarification from USDA on this matter but have not yet received any additional information or guidance. MDH was able to successfully draw down federal WIC funding last week for routine reimbursement of program expenses.

MDH WIC sent a notice to local agencies last week regarding whether we believe that the WIC Program will be impacted. We will keep local agencies updated if we receive any additional information or guidance from USDA. At this time, we continue to believe that WIC Program funding in Minnesota will not be affected by this action. We continue to administer and operate the WIC Program as usual.

Current continuing resolution ending January 30 does not impact WIC

We wanted to remind local agencies that the Continuing Resolution for federal programs that ends on January 30 does not impact the WIC Program. The Department of Agriculture was included in the few federal agencies that did receive an annual appropriation for federal fiscal year 2026 when the federal government shutdown ended in November. It means that with the concern as January 30 approaches about some federal agencies getting caught up in another federal government shutdown, WIC Services will not be impacted this round.

FFY 2025 WIC grant closeout activities

State staff are busy working on the WIC grant closeout activities for FFY 2025. Final closeout must be completed by early February to meet the USDA deadline. Thus far in the process, preliminarily it looks like we may have just under \$1 million total to allocate to local agencies for final payments. We anticipate using the same approach to allocating these funds as we have in prior years. This is a smaller

final payment amount when compared to some other years, however we did anticipate this since we provided \$2.5 million in supplemental funding to LAs last year, and we had to dip into our WIC carryforward during the prolonged federal government shutdown. Final grant payment letters should go out to agencies the end of January or early February.

WIC services and Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) – Kate

We have received reports about the heavy ICE presence in some Minnesota communities over the last few weeks and how that is impacting the safety of both participants and staff. It is really helpful for us to hear from agencies that are dealing with these struggles so that we can monitor WIC services around the state and understand how WIC is being impacted. Please reach out to your WIC Consultant if you have questions and concerns about continued WIC operations under these circumstances.

We sent out information last week to WIC Coordinators with reminders about the existing ARPA physical presence waivers that could allow for some flexibility in serving participants remotely, as needed. We also included in that message some links to other resources we have previously shared regarding managing during heavy ICE presence in communities and immigrant rights and resources.

We received a request from one local agency in the metro area to send a mobile management text message out to their participants. It would remind families that WIC is still open, and services are available and if they have concerns about in-person WIC appointments, they should reach out to their WIC clinic. In response to this, we have drafted a message that could be sent out to all WIC participants registered in the mobile app. We are working on translations for this message and would like some feedback from you all about recommended timing to send this message.

Here is the app message sent on Thursday, Jan. 22.

Subject: WIC is here to help.

Message: The Minnesota WIC Program services are available. Keep your appointments and use your WIC benefits to shop for foods. If you need other options for your in-person appointments, please call your local WIC clinic. Please share with your family and friends. [Minnesota WIC App Messages \(Español/Somali/English\)](#)

We also added a message to our [Welcome to WIC!](#) webpage.

Updated 2025 – 2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans provides recommendations for eating patterns of Americans and sets a standard for the country's food and nutrition programs to follow. The National WIC Association and the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics both provided public response statements to the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans. There were many similarities with the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans to previous versions including high-level recommendations for pregnancy, lactation, and infancy and early childhood. However, there were some differences from past guidelines including recommending full-fat dairy, butter and other foods high in saturated fat, which conflict with the recommendation to limit saturated fat to 10% of total calories.

We don't anticipate any immediate impacts to the WIC Program, USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) may begin making updates to WIC nutrition education materials based on the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans. We will keep local agencies updated on changes that come forward from USDA FNS that may impact WIC nutrition education.

Other program updates

Current WIC participation trends – Tami

We are seeing a gradual drop in participation. Tami shared graphs showing this trend.

Seeing this trend, it reinforces that a text message about WIC services could be helpful.

WIC and peer grant applications – Rebecca

MDH WIC will be posting the 2027-2031 WIC Grant Request for Proposals (RFP) and the Peer Breastfeeding Support Program (PBSP) RFP on **Monday, March 2, 2026**. The WIC and peer grant information will be available on our MDH WIC website.

New this grant application cycle! MDH is using the MDH online grant portal (Foundant) for the WIC and peer breastfeeding grant applications. We are excited to be using an electronic option this round. Applications will only be accepted using this electronic option. Grant timeline:

- WIC Grant RFP Posted: **March 2, 2026**
- Letter of Intent Due: **March 17, 2026**
- WIC Grant Application Due: **April 17, 2026**

Watch for upcoming weekly updates with more information and links for details.

WIC training update – Carole

Carole reviewed training opportunities offered last year and those upcoming this year. Registration details for future trainings are found on the [WIC Nutrition Continuing Education](#) webpage under **MDH live registrations**, on the local agency [Important Dates Calendar](#), and announced in the weekly update. Recorded trainings are found on the [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\) Learning Center](#). For a review of training resources, read the [WIC Staff Training - Topic of the Month](#).

Participant advisory group update – Tina

In 2023 MDH WIC applied for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, to start a participant advisory group. We have seen benefits for participants in that they are learning more about WIC, meeting and interacting with other participants across the state. For MDH WIC, the group offers input and suggestions about WIC services. Participant advisory group members are offered a meeting stipend for their time. We greatly appreciate their input and perspectives.

We recruited July – Sept. 2024 at local agencies and picked nine participants through an interview process. We were able to secure six members. Some learned lessons are we can't give gift cards. We had to complete a contract with each person as a "vendor." Technology can be challenging and getting everyone secured on a call with our platform takes time and lots of reminders. There is a lot of follow up. Members are from these counties, Marshall, Beltrami, Steele, Mille Lacs, Ramsey, and Dakota. The group met monthly in 2025, and we will continue group meetings every other month in 2026 for one hour. The group members will participate for two years and then we hope to recruit a new group this spring so the new group can begin fall/winter 2026. We will again recruit in clinics with flyers.

Breastfeeding projects – Rosie

Rosie reviewed 2025 lactation projects that address disparities in areas across Minnesota. Ten agencies were funded:

- Becker – breastfeeding comfort station, outreach table at events.
- Hennepin - purchased cooler "Bridge Bags" for collaboration with the MN Milk Bank.

WIC LOCAL AGENCY CONFERENCE CALL

- Houston – completed a breastfeeding recognition program, improved lactation space and support tools.
- Kanabec - provided breastfeeding education and postpartum support to their community.
- Martin – had a library partnership to promote WIC and peer program trying to normalize lactation.
- McLeod – provided essential lactation supplies kits to expand access to breastfeeding support and the peer program.
- Pine - lactation outreach and education to increase awareness of WIC breastfeeding support through postcards highlighting lactation staff, breastfeeding support backpack, lactation station
- Polk - breastfeeding promotion banners, breastfeeding outreach and resource kits, and breastfeeding children's books to normalize lactation in the community.
- St. Louis - had breastfeeding events to promote WIC and breastfeeding in efforts to strengthen connections in the community.
- Todd - Established a breastfeeding class in Spanish to meet community needs.

Check out more images and information on our website [2025 Equity in Lactation Grant Projects \(PDF\)](#)

Thank you to agencies that participated!

Questions & Answers

To clarify, for end-of-year payments, there are funds to distribute, but they are expected to be less than last year, is that correct?

Yes, that is correct.

Has there been any thought to putting a message about WIC services on the MDH WIC website with the same type of message as the text message?

Yes, we can do this.

Are there any changes with the grant cycle? Last time the grant changed to annual funding from quarterly. Wondering if any sort of thing like that is happening this time.

One change in the grant language is that MDH WIC will no longer provide computers/hardware for LAs and that was previously mentioned on another call. We can highlight any changes in the communications in the next months.

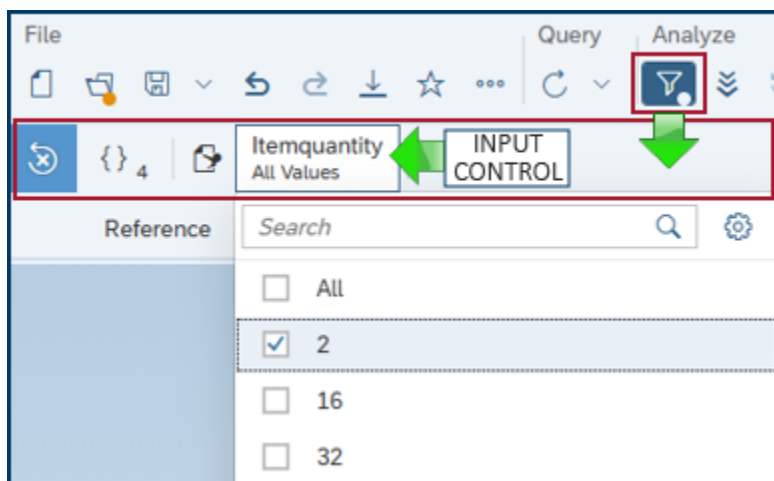
Where do you plan on holding the 2027 MN WIC conference?

It is uncertain. We must go through a request for proposal (RFP) process to assure we get the best price.

How do you filter to get the whole grains that need to be updated?

You can use the FOOD & FORMULA ITEMS ISSUED BY PFDTU template found in the INFOVIEW TEMPLATES >> Food & Formula folder to identify participants who were issued an incorrect quantity for whole grains. We updated the current template with an optional input control that allows you to filter by quantity. This update was made Monday, Jan. 12, but since the template **wasn't** reposted to the folder, it is still dated June 1, 2016. **If you have not saved the template to your Personal Folders since this change was made, you will not see the input control.**

To access the *Itemquantity* input control, click the filter icon under Analyze. This will expand the filter bar that contains the input control button.



All quantities that display in the output after running the report will be included in the input control. You can de-select correct quantities so that only participants with an amount of 1 and/or 2 display in the report output.

The food item ID for whole grains is 58. Enter this into the appropriate prompt when running the report.

References – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

Minnesota WIC App Messages (Español/Somali/English) (<https://links-2.govdelivery.com/CL0/https:%2F%2Fwww.health.state.mn.us%2Fpeople%2Fwic%2Fappcomm.html/1/0101019be75ce811-27d35e5f-9cf9-4774-ba2b-36522d26732d-000000/2G-AMj-w8iAjLtYSQAS5I44VdMslaGJuByleDgutxrg=441>)

Welcome to WIC! (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/ppthome.html>)

WIC Nutrition Continuing Education
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/conted.html#NaN>)

Important Dates Calendar
(<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0/embed?src=500k4ns9eqb26v51529qg1fpuo@group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Chicago>)

Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Learning Center
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/about/tools/learningcenter.html>)

WIC Staff Training - Topic of the Month
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/topicmonth/stafftraining.pdf>)

2025 Equity in Lactation Grant Projects
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/bf/25equity.pdf>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program, 625 Robert St N, PO BOX 64975, ST PAUL MN 55164-0975; 1-800-657-3942, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us; to obtain this information in a different format, call: 1-800-657-3942.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.