



USDA WIC Workforce Strategy

Speakers:

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**Association of State and Public Health Nutritionists
(ASPHN) WIC Work Group Meeting – May 1, 2024 - 12:00pm EST**



The Answers to Modernizing the WIC Workforce Lie Within WIC

What you shared with us and how
your voice contributed to the
modernization recommendations

UMN Extension Team

Key Personnel



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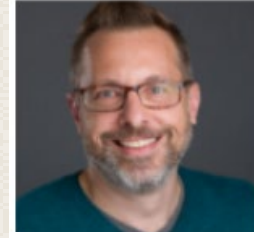


Baiwen
Peng

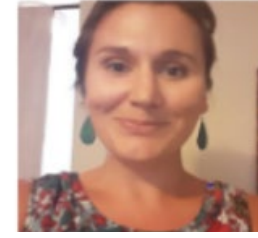


Jiwon
Kang

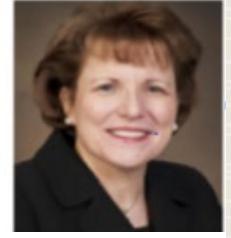
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Culturally Tailored Evaluation



WHO WE ARE

WHO BENEFITS AND WHO WE SERVE

WHY USE EVALUATION?



ACET is a woman - and minority owned - small business since 1998 providing a wide range of evaluation services and solutions to local, regional and national clients.

HOW WE WORK

- CULTURALLY SENSITIVE
- NUMBERS BASED (QUANTITATIVE)
- STORY BASED (QUALITATIVE)
- RESPONSIVE
- MULTICULTURAL
- STRENGTH-FOCUSED
- COLLABORATIVE
- RIGOROUS

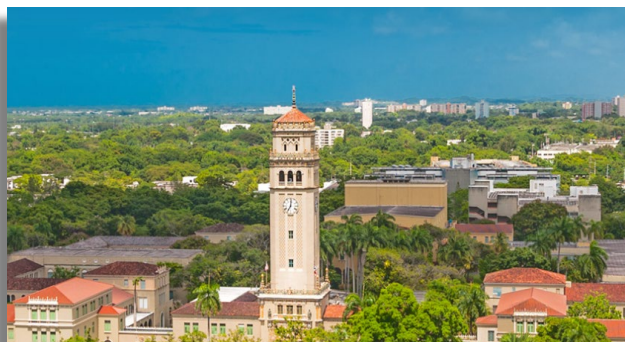
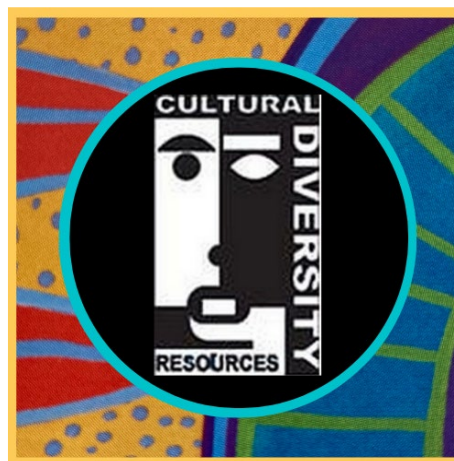
WHAT KINDS OF QUESTIONS HAVE WE ANSWERED



HOW WE DO IT



Cultural Collaborators



University of Puerto Rico



Six month journey to learn and understand

- Gathered WIC experts to help us navigate our formative research
- Interviews with 45 WIC members from across 20 states lead by ACET



Six month journey to learn and understand



- Comprehensive literature review and text analysis
- Site visits to 5 state WIC projects selected based on the following criteria:
 - Multiple individuals representing both local and state levels were interviewed
 - The strategies were validated by front line staff as well as leaders and managers
 - Workforce-affirming strategies are aligned with modernization goals

Six month journey to learn and understand

Cultural collaborators, UMN and USDA partners met in person in December to:

- interpret results through unique institutional and cultural lenses
- begin to establish recommendation buckets
- explore ways cultural collaborators can continue to support interpretation and resource sharing after the in-person meeting



Six month journey to learn and understand



Connections with key knowledge carriers

- UMN REACH Team: coaching and technical assistance model; building learning platforms
- National WIC Association: support understanding of results, connect the team to local workforce members to address gaps, consult on policy issues
- PHWINS: Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey - 2014, 2017, 2021

What did we learn? Overarching learnings

- Little to no research or systematic ways to understand the WIC workforce
- The frontline workforce, often hired from the community, understand what it takes to serve diverse WIC audiences
- A need to better align WIC policies and procedures with rapidly shifting realities for WIC families and the WIC workforce
- Successes and challenges to supporting the workforce can offer a roadmap for modernizing the WIC workforce



When it works - WIC's workforce affirming practices that promote employee engagement and staff to thrive



- Invest in the workforce by encouraging growth potential from day 1
- Front-line staff have a voice in how WIC services are delivered



- Maximize flexibility - support staff in the determination of what is in the best interest of the families
- Mobility pathways are clearly explained to staff - supervisors intentionally encourage growth opportunities



- WIC staff working directly with families are hired from the community with lived experiences



- Mental health care is normalized and encouraged up and down the system
- Strong communication and connection between state and local agencies and all WIC staff across the state

When it doesn't work - practices that are threats to retention, job satisfaction



- Low wages, lack of mobility opportunities throughout WIC
- Aging workforce, low retention of new staff, unfilled positions, creating understaffing, large caseloads, and morale concerns

- People of color are being hired as frontline staff, often in lowest paid positions, with management that does not reflect their cultural background
- Inconsistent supervision, often with lack of clear accountability in terms of how WIC staff are faring under supervisors and managers





- Community and cultural knowledge, language fluency, and lived-experience knowledge are seen as important in hiring, and should also be recognized when considering pay and mobility opportunities
- State agencies can play a key role in advancing development of the workforce through aligning collective actions and systemwide communication and connections

Set of Recommendations

High level view of the recommendations





Creating long-term learning environments

- National WIC Technical Assistance (TA) and Peer Coaching model
- Identify key regional and local cultural guides and collaborators as a network
- Develop a training platform that is scaffolded, linked to competencies and career growth (e.g. mobility opportunities, measured pay increases) to support WIC's evolving workforce



Formalized job study and market analysis

Job study: Clear specializations, roles, and job titles

- Determine levels for job specialties based on work that must be performed
- Gather current job titles across the system for those who spend majority of time performing the specialist work - explore consistent job titles
- Clarify specific WIC criteria for when the job specialty is needed

Compensation Analysis: What WIC specialization areas are worth in the marketplace

- Conduct a robust real time market analysis for market-based salary ranges for each job specializations
- Explore ways to value soft skills
- Conduct a study to understand how the proposed salary ranges will affect WIC programs nationally



Understanding and reducing pain points of policies and procedures that may no longer serve today's WIC families

Review existing policies and procedures directly affecting WIC services

- Where did it originate from? What was the original intent? Does it still meet the needs of current WIC context?
- How do they get interpreted statewide and locally?
- What are the impacts of policies in providing care for WIC families? In staff retention?



Understanding and increasing opportunities to replicate successful strategies for serving today's WIC families

- Review existing policies and procedures directly affecting WIC services in promoting family-centered care and care for the workforce
- Incentivize states/territories/ITOs to replicate these workforce affirming practices





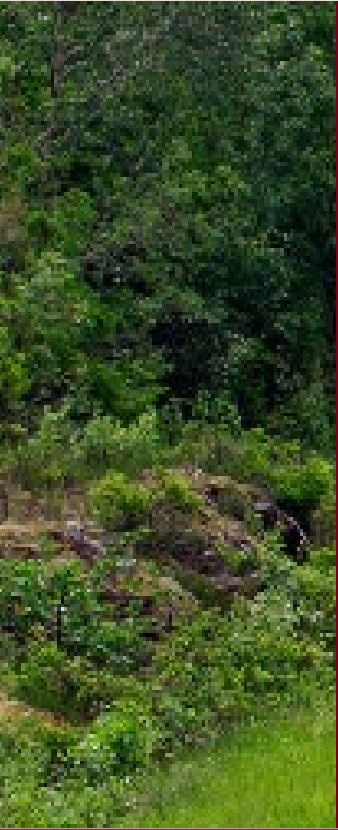
Develop ongoing and systematic ways to understand how the WIC workforce is faring

Gather ongoing, systematic data on:

- Workforce engagement
- Workforce tenure, turnover, and trends
- Job satisfaction
- Work climate
- Policies that promote use of ethic of care when serving WIC families
- Policies that hinder use of ethic of care when serving WIC families
- Support and training needed/received



Where do we go from here?

- 
- The work ahead needs all of you!
 - Change must happen with involvement of WIC staff most directly affected by the outcome
 - Changes will be long term - there are no quick fixes
 - Be involved, say yes to scary things, make sure you have a say



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