

## I (A). FOOD DELIVERY

**GOAL:** To investigate a minimum 5% of the Program's authorized vendors for compliance with federal regulations during the federal fiscal year.

**METHODOLOGY:** The compliance liaison, under the direction of the unit supervisor, manually selects vendors for investigation based upon participant and local WIC office complaints and high-risk reports generated from the Food Delivery Portal, Store Tracking and Redemption System (STARS), and/or Crossroads Management Information System. Investigation priority is determined according to the severity of the possible infractions to the program.

The State Agency (SA) will also develop policy and procedure as well as tools to institute inventory audits as a method of compliance investigations. Technical assistance will be sought from other states as recommended by the regional office through technical assistance site visits and/or review of approved procedures and tools.

**EVALUATION:** Regional office approval of the inventory audit policies, procedures and tools will be secured to initiate use of inventory audits for compliance investigations. The number of compliance investigation letters will be recorded to track the most common state violations or customer service issues. This information will inform quarterly newsletter items as well as state standards.

**STATUS:** The 5% minimum requirement will be completed by 9/30/24; 10 compliance investigations have been completed with 13 vendors and within the 4th quarter of FFY2024 all 13 investigations will be completed. The SA continues to utilize Policy 8.09 as well as the Compliance Buy Investigation Standard Operating Procedures, with revised reporting form and notification template letter. Written notification was mailed following every investigation regardless of result.

The development of 8.12 inventory audit policy, procedure and standard operating procedure were drafted and approved in January 2024. Inventory audits have begun as of May 2024 with 2 investigations. Unfortunately, vendors have not been forthcoming in producing requested records so to date no audit has been successful. **Hence implementation of inventory audits is ongoing for FY 2025. Inventory audits will be utilized for all vendors designated high risk because of volume and redemption risk indicators. Compliance buys will be utilized for all vendors designated high risk for participant risk indicators and new vendors.**

## **I (B). FOOD DELIVERY**

**GOAL:** To begin using an electronic signature platform for vendor agreements and applications.

**METHODOLOGY:** The Vendor Manager will research external platforms as well as continue to work with the Crossroads contractor to assess the best method to distribute documents, have vendors sign electronically, and receive and store documents without the need for paper mailings.

**EVALUATION:** Once the electronic platform has been decided upon, the Vendor Management Unit will assess the timeliness and ease of distributing and receiving documents and will poll vendors for feedback.

**STATUS:** DocuSign was chosen as the electronic platform. The pilot was successfully conducted in January 2023, and the rollout is continuing as each region renews its agreements. Currently, the vendor unit is working to complete two additional regions in FY 2024. At the beginning of FY 2025, seven of eight agencies will be converted, with the last agency scheduled for conversion in June 2025.

**This goal is ongoing for FY 2025.**

## **I (C). FOOD DELIVERY**

**GOAL:** To modernize the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) so that participants can purchase fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers via electronic benefit transfer (EBT) through CDP's Farm Market Direct program.

**METHODOLOGY:** The Vendor Management Unit, the WIC Program Specialist (now the Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coordinator), and the Food Insecurity Partnership Liaison will work with CDP to implement the Farm Market Direct program with all WIC participants and farmers' markets participating in the WIC FMNP. This will be a fully mobile and electronic solution for transacting FMNP benefits, eliminating the need for a banking contract and paper vouchers.

**EVALUATION:** Successful implementation of the electronic solution will be assessed by review of four indicators: number of families, number of farmer users, benefit dollars issued, and benefit dollars redeemed.

**STATUS:** The electronic solution was fully implemented in the 2023 growing season by printed QR codes. During the FY2024 FMNP season which started on June 1 Farm Market Direct is accessed via QR code hosted on the WICShopper mobile app. This eliminated printing and mailing costs of QR codes. During FFY2023 the number of families receiving FMNP benefits via QR code was 13,563, the number of authorized farmers was 122, the benefit dollars issued was \$564,842.00, and the benefit dollars redeemed was \$127,935.10. Thus far for FFY2024, the number of families issued FMNP benefits was 19,031, the number of authorized farmers was 165, the benefit dollars issued was \$782,280.00 and the benefit dollars redeemed as of July 31, 2024 was \$140,333.40.

**This goal is complete, and part of ongoing operations.**

## **I (D). FOOD DELIVERY**

**GOAL:** To authorize farmers as WIC vendors and allow participants to purchase fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables with their regular monthly CVB through CDP's Farm Market Direct program.

**METHODOLOGY:** The Vendor Management Unit will work with CDP to add CVB functionality for all WIC participants at authorized farmers' markets to the existing QR code solution within the Farm Market Direct program.

**EVALUATION:** Successful implementation of the electronic solution will be assessed by review of three indicators: number of families, number of farmer users, and benefit dollars redeemed.

**STATUS:** Training sessions were conducted statewide in April 2024 for farmers and local agency FMNP liaisons on processing CVB transactions utilizing participants' QR codes available on either WICShopper app or new QR Code EBT Cards (pending printing), consistent with FMNP benefits. Effective June 1st, 2024, both FMNP benefits and CVB are accepted methods of payment at West Virginia farmers' markets and stands.

Thus far for FFY2024, the number of families who have redeemed CVB at a farmers market is 431, the number of authorized farmers conducting CVB transactions is 49 of 165 total authorized farmers, and the CVB benefit dollars redeemed as of July 31, 2024 was 6088.05.

**This goal is complete, and part of ongoing operations.**

**I (E). FOOD DELIVERY**

**GOAL:** With the transition to the Maintenance and Enhancement (M&E) phase of the State Agency Model (Crossroads) as of February 1, 2017, the State Agency (SA) will continue to be involved with changes and updates to the system affecting Food Delivery during FY2024.

**METHODOLOGY:** The SA will continue to work closely with Voyatek (formerly Gainwell, CSC and DXC Technology) and the Crossroads User Group (Alabama WIC, West Virginia WIC, Virginia WIC, and Rhode Island WIC) as change requests are completed. As these updates take place, SA staff will educate Local Agency (LA) staff on the changes to the system as they occur, through additional training sessions and updated training materials.

**EVALUATION:** The effectiveness of the training content and materials will be determined through evaluation forms completed by attendees of subsequent training sessions.

**STATUS:** The SA continued requesting that trainees complete training evaluations via Survey Monkey regarding the Crossroads training during FY2024. The “Extended” Crossroads training which incorporates new updates to the MIS as they occur and addresses any issues that seem to come up frequently as Help Desk questions and calls will continue during years when a state training conference is not hosted by the SA or as needed. Although this training normally takes place during LA staff meetings twice per year and is facilitated by the SA trainer, in FFY2024 SA vacancies inhibited virtual or in person training sessions. Instead job aides and a Tips and Tricks Newsletter was released quarterly.

The new employee Crossroads training content was condensed to three full workdays, and a ½ day contributed solely to Nutrition Services. The SA transitioned the training back to in person. **This goal is complete. Training curriculum will continue to be addressed as quality improvement; reference Nutrition Services II.(C) goals and objectives.**

**I (F). FOOD DELIVERY**

**GOAL:** Update the WIC food packages and Food Delivery business processes including Information System revisions, required to implement the Final Food Package Rule.

**METHODOLOGY:** The SA will work to implement the changes to the WIC food packages that are required with the Final Food Package Rule through collaboration with Voyatek and the Crossroads User Group, to facilitate revisions as soon as possible. The SA will develop participant education materials and provide training to Competent Professional Authorities/Nutritionists regarding prescription tailoring guidelines for participant preference, supporting health status, and addressing special medical needs.

**EVALUATION:** The implementation of all required updates to the WIC food packages that are required by the Final Food Package Rule.

**STATUS:** The majority of the updates to the WIC food packages required by the Final Food Package Rule have been implemented. The last update to be made in the Crossroads system is the functionality to prescribe and issue food package VII to a new pregnant woman who is breastfeeding to allow the substitution of 3.5 lbs of cheese. Currently, there is no functionality to allow for issuing food package VII to newly certified pregnant women who are breastfeeding; however, this functionality will be developed as time and money allows for the Crossroads project.

West Virginia implemented the increased Cash Value Benefit authorized through the Congressional appropriations.

Secondly, with USDA announcing intention to review WIC food packages beginning in fall 2023, the SA will ensure processes occur to implement per regulation timelines.

**This will be an ongoing goal for FY 2025.**

## **I (G). FOOD DELIVERY**

**GOAL:** To implement an online ordering system for WIC participants, enabling them to order and purchase WIC-eligible food items through approved online vendors.

**METHODOLOGY:** The WIC state office will participate in a multi-state consortium with Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont through a Center for Nutrition and Health Impact online ordering planning grant. The SA will collaborate with Umoja and JPMA to integrate WIC benefits into WICShopper and an online shopping add-on. This involves developing a secure authentication system for participants, adapting the online shopping interfaces to include WIC-approved products, and ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations. Training sessions for both clinic staff and participants will be conducted to facilitate a smooth transition to the online ordering system.

**EVALUATION:** The success of the WIC Online Ordering initiative will be assessed through the following indicators:

- Number of WIC participants utilizing the online ordering system.
- Volume of WIC transactions processed through online vendors.
- Participant satisfaction rates measured through surveys.
- Reduction in physical store visits by WIC participants.

**STATUS:** **This is a new goal for FY 2025.**

## **I (H). Food Delivery**

**GOAL:** Knowledge and visibility about WIC will be expanded through WIC vendors and farmers to increase redemption of food benefits. The goal is to enhance awareness and understanding of the WIC program among WIC vendors and farmers aiming to boost the utilization of food benefits.

**METHODOLOGY:** Allocate resources to increase the presence of Local Agency Vendor and Farmers Market Nutrition Program Liaisons with WIC authorized providers (virtual or in person) to re-establish connections and deliver educational sessions on optimal practices. Improve comprehension of obstacles to retailer and farmer participation as well as participant redemption through an examination of the requirements and difficulties encountered by WIC vendors and farmers.

**EVALUATION:** The evaluation methods for Vendor and FMNP annual plan include conducting pre- and post-surveys with both vendors/farmers and participants to gather insights into their shopping experiences. This feedback will help gauge any changes or improvements throughout the implementation of the initiative. Additionally, tracking the frequency and nature of interactions with vendors/farmers will be crucial in assessing the effectiveness of increased engagement efforts. By monitoring these interactions, we aim to understand how well vendors/farmers are integrating new practices and support from Local Agency Vendor and FMNP Liaisons.

Furthermore, a comparison of the dollar amounts redeemed in food benefits at the outset versus the conclusion of the planning period will provide a quantitative measure of impact. This contrast will help determine whether the initiative has successfully enhanced participation and usage of WIC benefits among vendors/farmers and participants alike. These evaluation methods are designed to provide comprehensive insights into the outcomes and effectiveness of the annual plan activities.

**STATUS:** **This is a new goal for FY 2025.**