

## Welcome to the LA WIC Vendor Newsletter!

We would like to welcome the 22 newly authorized vendors to LA WIC! Vendor Views provides Vendors with useful program information and highlights the new and exciting things happening in WIC, from the recent grant funding we have received to the innovative ways of modernizing WIC online shopping. LA WIC is committed to supporting Vendors and improving the shopping experience for WIC participants.



## A Message from the Vendor Operations Manager

*Thank you for your participation in the Louisiana WIC Program (LA WIC). As an Authorized WIC Vendor, you are a critical partner in ensuring WIC Participants receive nutritious foods that improve the health of our participating families. With your help, WIC Participants benefit from long-lasting positive impacts such as reduced infant mortality, increased access to primary and preventive health care, and improved academic achievement. As we plan for the new Federal Fiscal Year 24, LA WIC will continue to focus on ways we can improve customer service to our Participants and Vendors. Check out the rest of the newsletter to hear about our work to do just that through the WIC Shopping Experience Improvement Grant, the development of Vendor resources, and updates to our process of adding produce UPCs to the APL!*

*I also want to recognize and thank all of our Vendors for their essential role in providing support and services to our Participants and communities in the face of unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 public health emergency and the infant formula recall. We appreciate the work of you and your staff and cannot thank you enough for going above and beyond to support to our Participants throughout these challenges.*

Thanks!  
Natalie

*We  
thank  
you!*

## What's Inside This Issue:

**A Message from the Vendor Operations Manager**.....Page 1

**WIC Modernization Grant - Shopping Experience Grant** .....Page 2

**Raydiant Kiosk** .....Page 3

**To Be A Successful Vendor**.....Page 4

**Modernizing WIC to Meet the Needs of Participants**.....Page 4

**UPC for Pre-Packaged or Bagged Fresh Fruits & Veggies**.....Page 5

**LA WIC Conferences**.....Page 6

**Things to Remember**.....Page 7

**Join the Vendor Advisory Committee**.....Page 7

**Staffing Updates**.....Page 7

**Upcoming Dates**.....Page 7

**Contact Info**.....Page 7

## The Benefits of Shelf Talker Usage

Shelf Talkers provide advantages for both Vendors and WIC Participants, including assisting WIC participants during their shopping, identifying problem items, improving the shopping experience, and increasing WIC sales. Additionally, Shelf Talkers are the most commonly requested in-store shopping resource from WIC participants. LA WIC has updated its policies and procedures to promote and encourage the use of Shelf Talkers. Policy states " Vendors may indicate an item is WIC Approved (with or without the shelf talker image(s) provided by LA WIC) on a WIC Approved Food Item's printed shelf price label." We recently used funding from the Shopping Experience Grant to print Shelf Talkers, which we will mail free of charge to LA WIC Vendors.

WIC Approved Logo Shelf Talker



## WIC Modernization Grant- Shopping Experience Grant

LA WIC was awarded funds for the Shopping Experience Improvement Grant and the WIC Modernization Grant by the USDA. LA WIC will use grant funding to improve the participant shopping experience by designing, developing, and implementing targeted training and resources for WIC participants, Vendors, and WIC program staff. Successful implementation of grants initiatives will lead to increased Participant satisfaction with the WIC shopping experience and an increase in the percentage of benefits redeemed by WIC Participants, including the highly popular cash value benefit.

LA WIC will utilize grant funds to provide Vendors with the materials and resources they need to be successful when assisting WIC Participants. [LA WIC will launch a Vendor Materials Request Form in the next few weeks.](#) This form will allow Vendors to order Shelf Talkers, Window Clings, Food List Brochures, Transaction Procedures (WIC-33), Minimum Stock Requirements (WIC-23), and Vendor Training Cards.

[VISIT OUR VENDOR HUB FOR LA WIC UPDATES](#)



## Raydiant Kiosks

To enhance the WIC shopping experience for both WIC Participants and Vendors, LA WIC is pleased to introduce the innovative Raydiant kiosk. This state-of-the-art solution aims to streamline the shopping process while increasing awareness of the WIC program and its benefits. The Raydiant kiosk will modernize the way WIC shoppers utilize their benefits in your store.

To kick start this exciting initiative, LA WIC is planning a pilot program involving approximately 20 stores statewide. We extend an invitation to your store to participate in this opportunity and be among the first to provide your WIC shoppers with this innovative technology.

If you are interested in participating in the pilot program or would like more information about the Raydiant kiosk, please contact Natalie Istre via email at [Natalie.Istre@la.gov](mailto:Natalie.Istre@la.gov) or via phone 225- 342-3814. We are available to answer any questions you may have and provide further details on this exciting initiative.

### Key points for vendors regarding the kiosk installation:

- There is no cost to have a Raydiant Kiosk installed in your store and store personnel will not be required to provide any support or assistance during installation.
- The installation of LA WIC Raydiant kiosks is expected to take place in August/September 2023.
- Raydiant will offer 24/7 customer service support via email and phone for any kiosk-related issues. Most problems can be resolved remotely. If on-site support is necessary, Raydiant will manage it.



"Your Child Has You, and You Have WIC"

## To Be A Successful Vendor

"Do the right thing even when you think no one is looking. It's called integrity" - unknown

Vendors serve a valuable role in supporting the health of women, infants, and children in Louisiana by ensuring that WIC participants have access to nutritious food items approved by WIC. Successful partnership and collaboration between and our Authorized WIC Vendors serves to improve the accessibility and ease of shopping for WIC approved food items.

Obtaining accurate vendor information during onboarding (authorization) and monitoring processes can significantly impact your success as a Vendor. If there are any changes to your store, it is important to inform LA WIC promptly via [email](#). Vendors are indispensable in achieving the overall success of the Louisiana WIC Program. Further information can be found in the [LA WIC Vendor Guide](#).

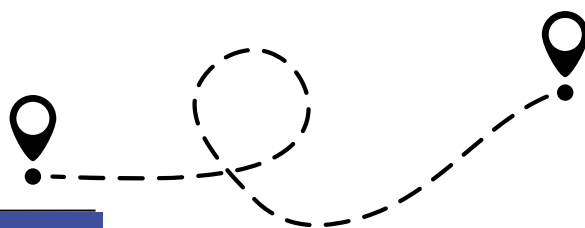
## Modernizing WIC to Meet the Needs of Participants

Over the past five decades, the WIC program has made progress in its mission to enhance the well-being of pregnant and postpartum women, infants, and children under 5 years old. This program has had a positive impact on communities and health outcomes by providing nutritious foods to supplement the dietary needs of participants. The effectiveness of the WIC program is evident in its service to 6.2 million individuals, with approximately 95k participants in Louisiana.

On February 23, 2023, the USDA and Food and Nutrition Service introduced a Proposed Rule called "WIC Online Ordering and Transactions and Food Delivery Revisions to Meet the Needs of a Modern, Data-Driven Program." The purpose of this rule is to increase WIC's participation rate. Under this proposed rule, LA WIC vendors will be allowed to facilitate online shopping for WIC-approved foods. The aim is to improve the WIC shopping experience and ensure that WIC participants have equal access to nutritious foods. LA WIC Authorized Vendors will benefit from this proposed rule as it also grants state agencies the authority to approve new types of online vendors.

Presently, the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition, located in Omaha, Nebraska, is working on a safe and secure model for online ordering in WIC to assist state agencies in future online shopping projects. Their goal is to provide technical support and documentation in an effort to improve the redemption process for WIC participants and enhance their overall experience.

For more information and updates, visit the [Food and Nutrition Service](#) website.



[VISIT OUR VENDOR HUB FOR LA WIC UPDATES](#)



## UPC for Pre-Packaged or Bagged Fresh Fruits & Veggies

To enhance the shopping experience for LA WIC participants, LA WIC is implementing a new process for Vendors to add UPCs (Universal Product Codes) for pre-packaged or bagged fresh fruits and vegetables to the LA WIC Approved Product List (APL). Vendors are asked to submit these requests using the [LA WIC UPC Request Form](#), available on the [LA WIC Vendor Hub website](#).

Here are a few important points to keep in mind:

- The USDA still requires Vendors to map UPCs for pre-packaged or bagged WIC approved produce that does not register as WIC eligible at the register.
- LA WIC will NOT accept UPC requests for type 2 UPCs, which are store-specific UPC numbers beginning with 2, 4, or 9. Vendors are responsible for mapping these UPCs individually.
- It is essential that your store staff be trained to report any instances where pre-packaged or bagged fresh fruits and vegetables do not scan as WIC approved at the register. Please notify the appropriate corporate/store contact for mapping purposes.

Additionally, we would like to gather information on your store's utilization of Global Trade Item Numbers (GTIN) codes for fresh produce. GTIN (GTINs) are a worldwide standard for identifying produce and can be used by WIC vendors for fresh produce as well. If your store employs GTIN codes, please inform us, and LA WIC will work towards adding those items to the APL.



## 2023 LA WIC Conference: "Educate, Engage, and Empower"

This year's Louisiana WIC Conference was held in Lafayette from April 18–20. This was the first time in five years that LA WIC was able to host the conference in person. Several of Vendor Operation staff was in attendance and presented at this year's conference.

## 2023 National WIC Conference: Riding the WIC Wave!

The 2023 NWA Annual Education and Training Conference and Exhibits was hosted by the National WIC Association (NWA) in San Diego, California, from May 1–4, 2023. LA WIC staff had the opportunity to connect with WIC members from other states. Many of our state staff presented at the conference and served on panels.



## Things to Remember

### LA WIC Infant Formula Substitutions Waivers

**All USDA waivers have expired.** Previously implemented by LA WIC in response to shortages due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the Abbott formula recall, the USDA granted several waivers to the Louisiana WIC Program (LA WIC) in an effort to allow the program increased flexibility to respond to the recall. Please refer to the LA WIC Vendor Hub for more information.

### Reauthorization

Authorized Vendors in Trade Area 1 must reapply for LA WIC Vendor authorization. Trade Area 1 includes all Vendors in Regions 2,4, & 5. **Reauthorization applications must be submitted between July 1-July 31.** All Vendors in Trade Area 1 were sent an email with instructions for reauthorization on June 30, 2023.

### Temporary Minimum Stock Requirements

The Temporary Minimum Stock Requirements will expire on September 30, 2023. Effective October 1, 2023, LA WIC will use the Minimum Stock Requirements effective December 7, 2022.

## JOIN THE VENDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Looking to get the inside scoop on all things WIC? Join the Vendor Advisory Committee!

The committee is looking for fresh ideas and ways to improve WIC for Vendors. The VAC is a safe space for Vendors to express concern, discuss problem areas for them, and provide WIC staff with helpful feedback and insight.

If you are interested in joining, you can sign up here [VAC Application](#) or contact Whitney Johnson via email, Whitney.Johnson@la.gov

## Join Our Mailing List

This newsletter will automatically be sent to the official corporate email address your store has on file with LA WIC, but you can [click here](#) to register additional email addresses to receive this newsletter directly.



## Staffing Updates

*Jillian Gibbs- Vendor Compliance Auditor*

*Walt McCall- Data Specialist*

*Hope McCorkle - Program Monitor Regions 1, 5,& 7.*

## Upcoming Dates

September 4th - Labor Day Office Closure

November 10th - Veterans Day Office Closure

November 23rd -Thanksgiving Day - Office Closure

December 25th- Christmas Day Office Closure

## Contact Information



Phone: (225) 342-0725

Fax: (225) 376-4674

Email: [LAWICvendor@la.gov](mailto:LAWICvendor@la.gov)

LA WIC Authorized Vendor Hub:

<http://ldh.la.gov/wicvendor>