

WIC Local Agency Conference Call

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2025, 8:30-9:30 AM

Agenda and Summary Notes

Agenda Items:

- National Updates
- Mobile App Changes and Timeline – Tobi
- MNbenefits Expansion – Joni
- 2024 Infrastructure Grant Info – Tina

National Updates- Kate

President's Budget and House Bill

The President's FFY 2026 budget was released at the end of May and proposed deep cuts to the WIC CVB levels for women and children, which would revert to pre-pandemic levels, along with a \$300 million cut to WIC funding.

The House of Representatives has been working on a 2026 agriculture funding bill that includes flat funding for WIC and a 10% cut to CVB for fruits and vegetables. The House Appropriations Committee did not yet vote on their bill and will return to the topic later this month.

Both the White House budget and the House bill include several policy "riders" that would interfere with implementation of the 2024 final WIC Food Package Rule.

MDH Layoffs Rescinded – Update from Court Case and MDH Actions

- On April 5, a temporary restraining order was issued to restore federal grants that were cancelled.
- On May 16, a judge granted a preliminary injunction. This is the next step in legal proceedings and is a longer-term version of the temporary restraining order.
- This means the federal administration must continue giving us access to the grants that were originally cancelled.
- While this is a positive step, there is a possibility that the preliminary injunction order will be appealed, so we must continue to monitor the situation (deadline to appeal is July 15).
- On a positive note, as of June 6, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) was able to cancel the layoff notices issued to some staff in early April following the sudden and unprecedented federal funding cuts.

- We were able to cancel these remaining layoff notices thanks to the ongoing success of the federal court case allowing continued access to these funds. We also have more clarity on our state funding for the next two years thanks to the legislature not making significant cuts to our budget proposal given a difficult year.
- We celebrate this positive step while also recognizing the disruption and chaos that our staff and partners have had to endure given the reckless actions of the federal government.
- The department is closely watching and taking steps to plan for possible future federal funding cuts.

Other Program Updates

Mobile App Changes and Timeline – Tobí

The next phase of the WIC mobile app modernization includes several participant-focused enhancements. Updates will translate the app into Somali, allow users to view redemption data (items purchased), add WIC appointments to their device calendars, and adjust the date format on the benefits page for Spanish and Somali users to dd-mm-yy. Gainwell testing begins Monday, June 23, with state testing scheduled for August 4–22. Updates should be available to participants in the fall.

MNbenefits Expansion – Joni

Joni shared some data on the MNbenefits pilot project. This project aimed to help connect more eligible families to WIC. Prompts were added directing MNbenefits applicants to the WIC online application or website at the end of the application. It also sends text messages as follow ups promoting WIC.

The pilot project began with several counties in October 2024, to enhance connections with WIC and [MNbenefits](#). Those counties are modestly receiving more applications than counties not participating in the pilot. During November 2024 through May 2025, a time when participation historically declines, counties not in the pilot had nearly three and a half times the drop in WIC applications (-27%) compared to counties participating in the pilot (-8%).

The following strategies were turned on in pilot communities:

- Application prompts are integrated in the MNbenefits application flow for applicants to consider other programs and resources like WIC.
- Recommended follow-ups – After the MNbenefits application completion, text messages will prompt applicants to consider WIC program participation.
- Specific applicants will be targeted by using existing questions in the MNbenefits flow to identify and display WIC messaging to households that have:
 - A household member who is pregnant.
 - A child under the age of 5 (including newborns).
- More WIC eligible families will be directed to the WIC online application in your county.

We plan to expand this project statewide in August 2025.

2024 Infrastructure Grant Info – Tina

In 2024, we applied for and received some infrastructure funds for various projects, one of which is an educational and outreach project. This proposal is using funding for a variety of items to further promote WIC program retention and recruitment. We received a limited amount of funding, so we will have a limited supply of items. It is enough for each local agency to order a specific amount based on their caseload. We were able to work with an existing contract with Brush Art for the items and we hope that later this fall they will be available to order. For infants – 50,000 sippy cups will be available. The cups will help strengthen the nutrition education messages of cup transition. Using a cup educational card will come prepackaged with the cups and is two-sided with English/Spanish. This card is not replacing any of our current education cards. 80,000 small water bottles for children to help encourage water intake and hydration. 50,000 larger water bottles for breastfeeding participants and 50,000 milestone stickers. The breastfeeding stickers provide encouragement/celebration messages that can be put on the water bottles to reward and acknowledge postpartum breastfeeding parents in their breastfeeding journey and encourage hydration for breastfeeding success. 100,000 temporary tattoos to be given out during lab assessments or anywhere local agencies and partners see fit.

More instructions will follow as we get closer to making them available for ordering as agencies will only receive a limited quantity of items.

Questions & Answers

Will there be any app updates on translations for how the benefits are translated? It appears the actual benefits themselves are not changing languages.

At this time, the actual descriptions are not translated but the link to the part of the shopping guide is translated.

On the Spanish side, when will the foods be in Spanish? Right now, they are in English even though everything else is in Spanish.

As of right now, they are not translated, however, we will bring this back to our team and discuss. As Tami mentioned, the shopping guide in benefits page are all in Spanish. So, if they click on each food item the food will be listed in that language.

Will the educational items be available for purchase after we run out?

This is yet to be determined. We're not sure about funding and will need to evaluate further after the initial items are depleted.

Are the new "how to use a cup" cards meant to replace the current "baby's first cup" NE card?

The 'How to Use a Cup' will accompany the sippy cup. The Baby's first cup will continue to be available.

Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

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[MNbenefits \(https://mnbenefits.mn.gov/\)](https://mnbenefits.mn.gov/)

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.

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