



WIC Online Shopping Grant

NOPREN Early Childhood WG Meeting

December 11, 2023

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Overview

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- Summary of Completed Work
 - Outcomes of Phase 1 - Formative Study
- Current & Ongoing Activities
 - Phase 2 - Sub-grant Projects
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 - Additional Research Activities
- Summary

About Us



Connect with us:

- ★ Website: www.centerfornutrition.org
- ★ LinkedIn: Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition
- ★ Twitter: GretchenSwanson

- ★ Founded in 1973, the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition is a national nonprofit research institute providing expertise in measurement and evaluation to help develop, enhance and expand programs focused on healthy eating and active living, improving food security and healthy food access, promoting local food systems and applying a health equity lens across all initiatives. The Gretchen Swanson Center works nationally and internationally, partnering with other nonprofits, academia, government and private foundations to conduct research, evaluation and scientific strategic planning.
- ★ The Center was awarded a Cooperative Agreement from USDA FNS to lead the WIC Online Shopping Grant



Background

Potential of WIC Online Shopping

Potential to reduce well-documented barriers experienced by WIC shoppers such as:



Transportation challenges

Out of stock items



Difficulty identifying WIC items

Stigma at checkout



Prior research shows:

- WIC participants and vendors are interested in WIC online shopping
- State and local agencies successfully tested the feasibility of WIC online shopping

Additional research is needed on:

- Expanding WIC online shopping to a broader range of retailers and in multiple States
- Potential for online transactions

SNAP & WIC Online Shopping Differences

SNAP

- Online ordering and transactions in SNAP began after the 2014 Farm Bill mandate and have continued to evolve
 - ~90% of SNAP users potentially have access to online shopping
- SNAP provides a monthly dollar amount to buy food for the SNAP participant and their family

WIC

- Limited availability of WIC online shopping
- WIC is prescription based providing specific amounts and types of foods based on the WIC participant category and nutritional needs
 - WIC State agencies identify the specific brands, types and forms of foods that are authorized for purchase with WIC benefits (State's Approved Product List (APL))
- Federal WIC requirements related to in-person transactions and food benefit fulfillment

WIC Modernization and Innovation¹

- The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (USDA FNS) to support outreach, innovation, and program modernization efforts for WIC
- Primary objectives: 1) increase WIC participation rate and 2) increase redemption of benefits



**Prioritize
outreach**

**Improve
the
shopping
experience**

**Invest in
and
diversify
workforce**

**Modernize
technology
and service
delivery**

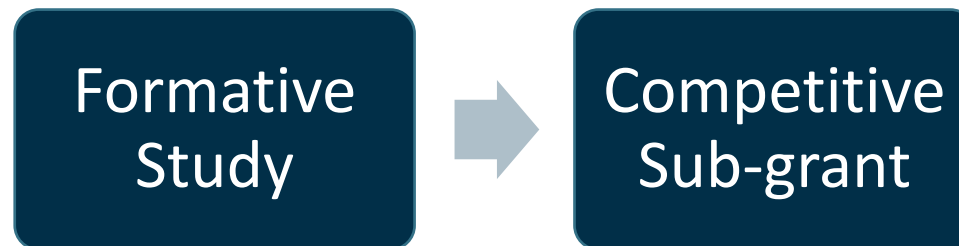


Grant Overview

WIC Online Shopping Grant

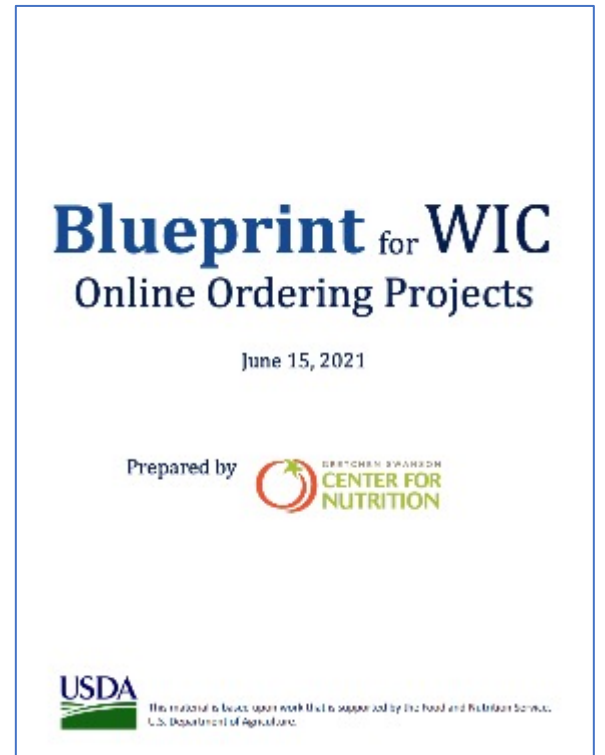
- Administered by Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition (GSCN) through a cooperative agreement with USDA FNS
- Overarching goal of the WIC Online Shopping Grant is to establish a framework and recommendations for the implementation of processes that allow WIC participants to shop for and/or purchase their WIC food benefits online

Two-phase systems-based approach



Phase 1: Formative Study

- Purpose was to gather expert input on the policy, technical, and programmatic factors important for WIC online shopping implementation
- Used a mixed methods Delphi process guided by a Steering Committee of WIC experts
- Outcome of the formative study was the first version of the Blueprint for WIC Online Shopping Projects (“the Blueprint”) (released June 2021)
- More information in published manuscript available: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19320248.2023.2174827?src=>



Available: <https://www.centerfornutrition.org/wic-online-ordering>



Sub-grant Projects

Sub-grant Project Objectives

1

Develop and implement a WIC online shopping project

2

Establish a WIC online shopping implementation team

3

Participate in the WIC online shopping Learning Collaborative

4

Conduct a robust evaluation of the WIC online shopping project

5

Participate in an overarching evaluation led by GSCN

6

Submit interim and final reports on the WIC online shopping project

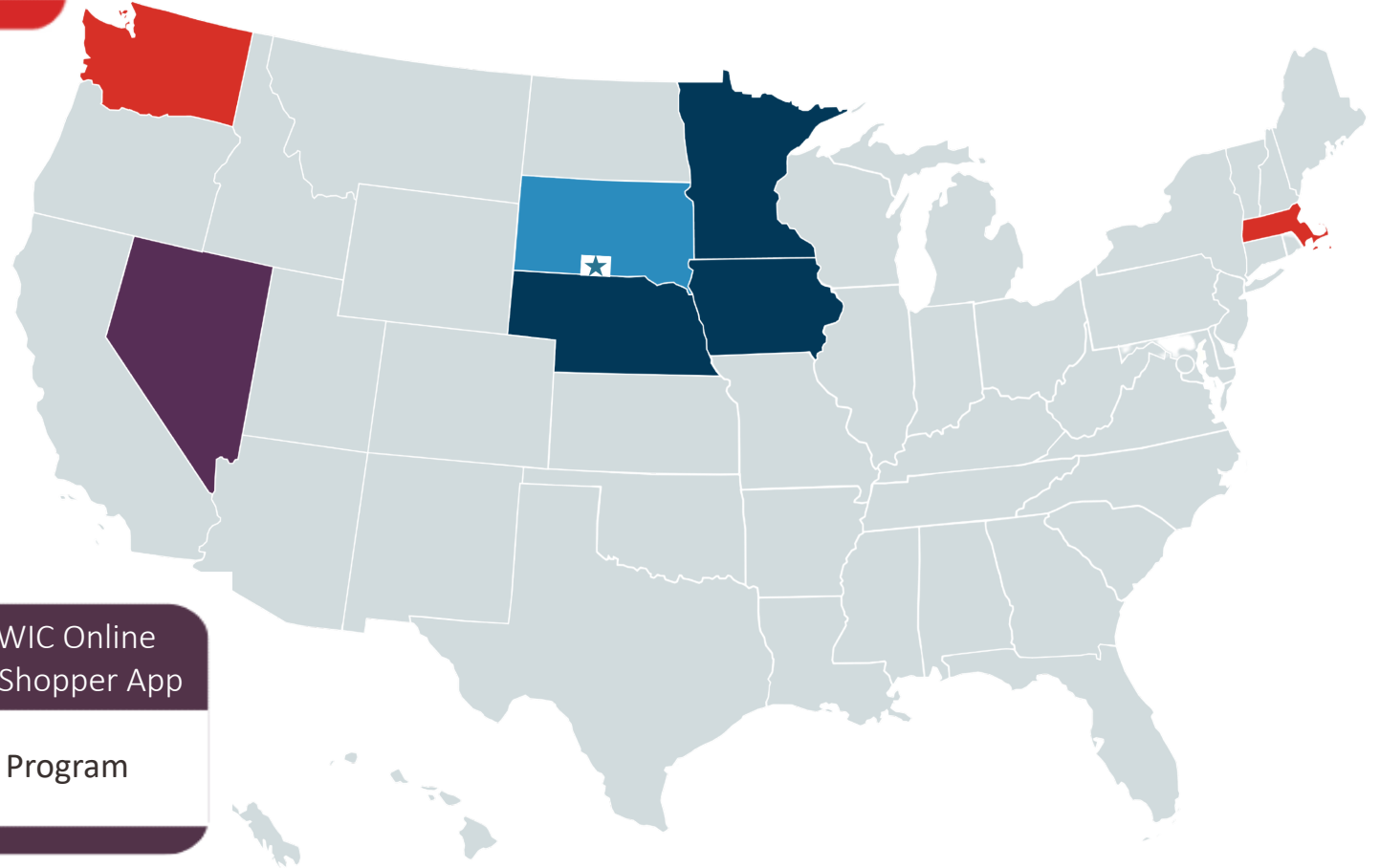
Funded Projects

WIC Remote Shopping Project
Washington (lead) and Massachusetts WIC Programs

South Dakota Online Shopping Project
South Dakota (lead) and Rosebud-Sioux WIC Programs

The Midwest States WIC Online Shopping Project
Minnesota (lead), Iowa, and Nebraska WIC Programs

Integration of WIC Online Shopping & WICShopper App
Nevada WIC Program



The Midwest States WIC Online Shopping Project

- Online shopping and payment option for WIC participants built with the shopper experience in mind
- PIN-less payment solution that is implemented throughout Hy-Vee stores in multiple states, with state-specific WIC food packages and approved product lists
- Purchase experience that allows “mixed basket” payment and the option of curbside pickup or home delivery



WA-MA Remote Shopping Project

- Improve the WIC shopping experience by creating an online shopping option using the Walmart shopping app and website
 - 60 WIC-authorized Walmart stores in WA
 - 30 WIC-authorized Walmart stores in MA



South Dakota-Rosebud Sioux Tribe Online Shopping Project

- Allow customers to purchase all their groceries – WIC and non-WIC – in one “mixed basket” online transaction
- Pilot WIC online shopping at Buche Foods located on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation
- After successful implementation at initial pilot site, expand online shopping to additional Buche Foods, RSA, Walmart and Hy-Vee grocery stores throughout the state

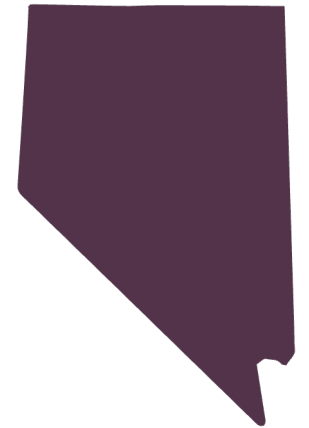


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Integration of WIC Online Shopping and WICShopper App

- Will allow WIC participants to order WIC-eligible food on WICShopper app, which will be passed to Save Mart for EBT payment and curbside pickup
- The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) joined the project to test WIC online shopping for military families
- This project will test an option for WIC-authorized vendors that do not have an online presence





Evaluation of WIC Online Shopping Sub-grant Projects

Evaluation

- Robust evaluation activities will occur for individual sub-grantee projects along with an overarching evaluation
- RE-AIM framework will inform both evaluation activities
 - RE-AIM is a program planning and evaluation framework that is useful in real world settings to determine the potential impact of initiatives
- Sub-grantees are working with GSCN on detailed plans for sampling, data collection, and data analysis

Overarching Evaluation Research Questions



What are the system-level factors necessary for successful adoption and implementation of online shopping?



What are the policy and regulatory changes necessary for future adoption, implementation, and sustainability of online shopping processes in the WIC Program?



What are the organizational factors that lead to successful adoption of WIC online shopping?



What are the key characteristics of the WIC online shopping projects that lead to successful implementation?



What core elements of the Blueprint are essential to State agencies for implementation planning? What adaptations are necessary for each State agency?



What are the inputs needed to improve, maintain, and/or scale out online shopping?

Overarching Evaluation Research Questions



What proportion of WIC participants utilize WIC online shopping?



What proportion of redemptions were transacted online?



What is the impact of WIC online shopping on the WIC shopping experience?



What are the estimated costs associated with planning and implementing WIC online shopping (based on retrospective cost analysis) and the estimated full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing needs?



What factors would influence scale out of WIC online shopping within the State agencies?



What are the barriers and facilitators for maintenance and potential for scale out to other WIC agencies and WIC-authorized vendors?



Findings and Lessons Learned from Sub-grantees



Features of a WIC Online Shopping Experience

- Split Tender
- Mixed Baskets
- Substitutions

Split Tender



“When a purchase of a CVB item exceeds the value of the CVB benefits remaining, under the EBT Operating Rules 4.7.3.1, the vendor must allow a WIC participant to pay the difference with another form of payment.”

Mixed Baskets

Online shopping platforms could allow for participants to purchase additional grocery items in addition to their WIC items, ultimately reducing the need for two separate grocery orders.



Online shopping platforms need to adhere to the EBT Operating Rules requirement 4.7.3 “the order of payment for WIC foods eligible for redemption should be WIC, SNAP, TANF, followed by other forms of payments.”

Substitutions



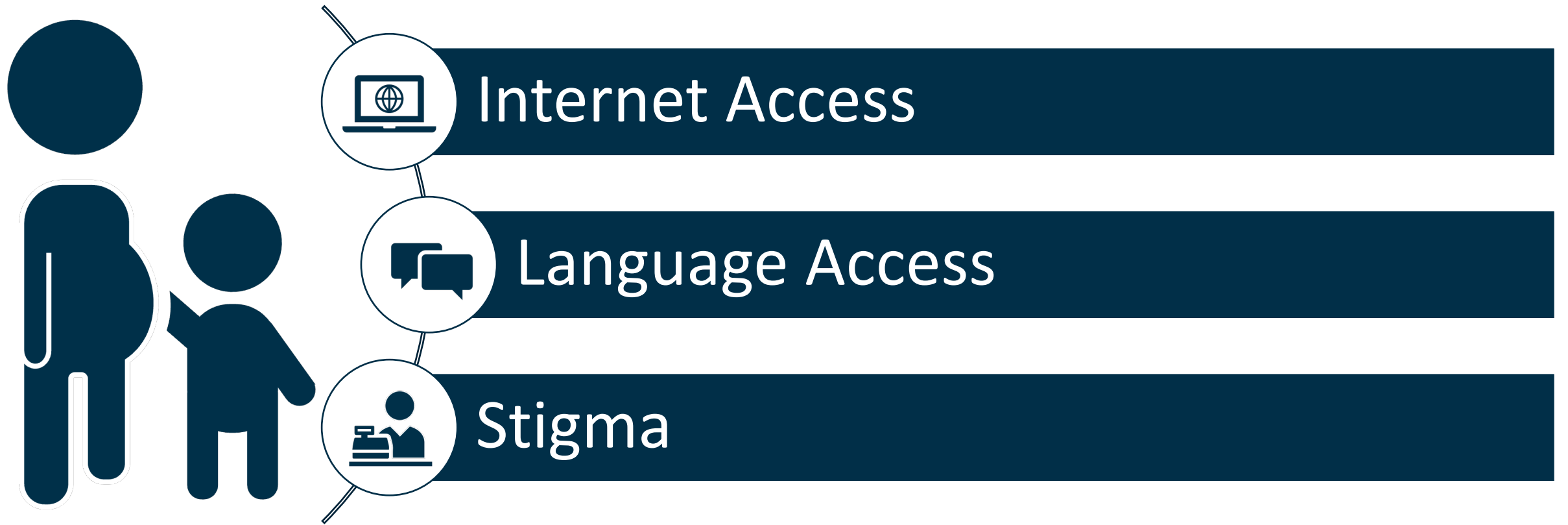
When a WIC item is reported to have a low inventory, the WIC shopper will be prompted to select an option for substitution. If the WIC item cannot be fulfilled, the order will be processed, and the unfulfilled benefit will be returned to the WIC participant's account.





Technical Features to Optimize the User Experience

Overarching Considerations



Technical Features



Easy filtering
and identifying
eligible WIC
items



Real-time
balance
tracking



Control of WIC
benefit
allocation



Auto-
populating past
WIC items



Timely
Reminders

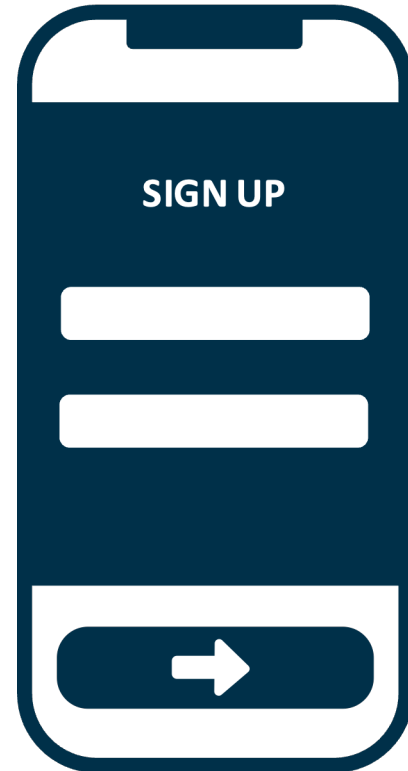


Example WIC Online Shopping Experience

Creating a WIC OS Order

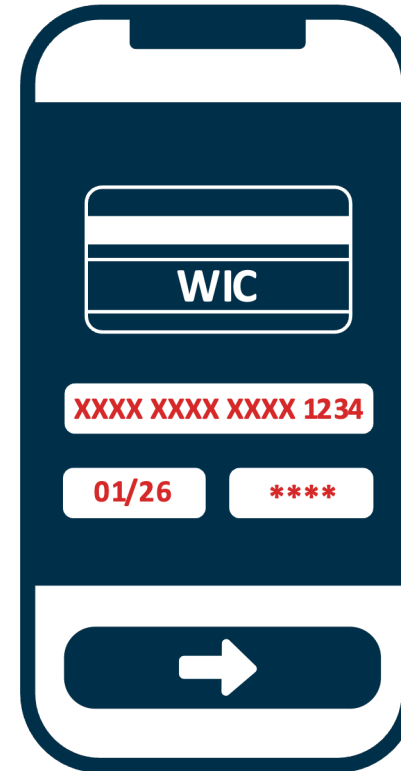
1

Create an account or login to the online shopping platform (i.e., app or website)



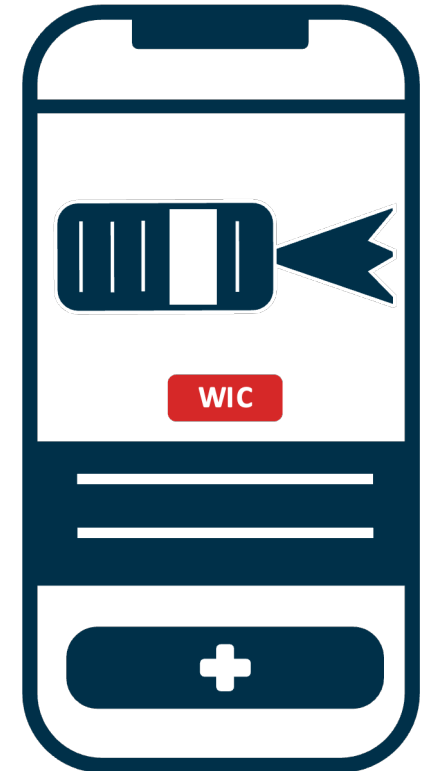
2

Add WIC benefits to the account



3

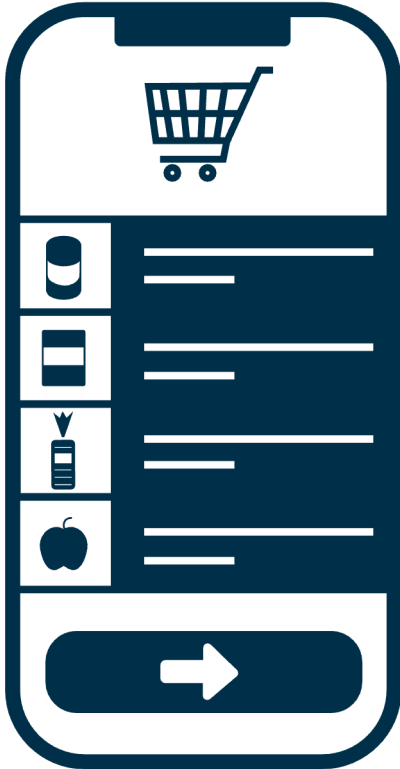
Find WIC-eligible items and add to cart



Checkout

4

Choose items to use WIC benefits for



6

Choose pickup or delivery time and submit order



5

Enter PIN (if applicable)



7

Review remaining benefit balance





On the Horizon

Expanding WIC Online Shopping

Additional Funding Opportunities

GSCN will announce additional funding opportunities for WIC online shopping projects over the next few years

Blueprint

GSCN will release an updated version of the Blueprint in early 2024 and will continue updating, incorporating, and sharing out lessons learned with the WIC community

WIC Online Shopping Website

GSCN will develop a WIC Online Shopping website to provide a central location for WIC State agencies and their partners to find up to date resources, technical assistance, and webinars to support the implementation of WIC online shopping

Stakeholder Specific Resources

GSCN will release topical and targeted resources for various entities involved in WIC online shopping based on lessons learned from sub-grant projects and guidance established by WIC online shopping working groups



Questions



*For more information, please visit:
<https://www.centerfornutrition.org/wic-online-ordering>*