Guidance to Consider in Developing Full Proposals for *THIS-WIC* Phase II

Below is guidance for applicants who have been invited to submit full proposals to *THIS-WIC*. This guidance comes from the *THIS-WIC* review of the brief proposals, as well as feedback provided by USDA Food and Nutrition Service, and is intended to help applicants craft the strongest possible proposals. Applicants should be sure to carefully read the RFP and use it as the primary guide for developing proposals, as well as following the instructions in the Full Proposal Template; the guidance provided here is intended to supplement the full RFP.
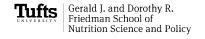
Telehealth Solution

Does the proposal clearly describe the telehealth intervention in relation to Priority Area 1 or 2 and how it will build on participant assessment information to provide nutrition education and/or breastfeeding support and how the solution will be used to deliver only allowable WIC services by qualified professionals?

> **For priority area 1**, does the proposal clearly describe an existing telehealth solution to ensure timely access to nutritional or breastfeeding support by qualified professionals? Does the proposal describe how the telehealth solution aims to facilitate:

- SAs reaching and better serving WIC participants who have historically faced barriers to access, including those in rural locations
- Integration with and supplementation (not duplication) of WIC services by addressing challenges identified through the participants' nutrition and/or breastfeeding assessment (i.e., high-risk) or barriers to access
- Use of assessments and referrals from a WIC Competent Professional Authority to connect participants with appropriate follow-up counseling on complex nutrition and/or breastfeeding problems with qualified professionals

> **For priority area 2**, does the proposal clearly describe how the online, mobile-friendly resources or tools provide nutritional and/or breastfeeding support to WIC participants by qualified professionals? Does the proposal describe how the telehealth strategies and tools help to facilitate:

- Productive and meaningful interactions with participants with tailored, up-to-date information (i.e., nutrition and/or breastfeeding talking points, actionable take-away messages, etc.)
- Delivery of nutrition education content relevant to identified nutrition risk(s) and common participant concerns
- Use of evidence-based strategies to maximize participant engagement or impact on participant nutrition behaviors
- Use of evidence-based best practices for the delivery and reinforcement of nutrition messages
- Inclusion of features to analyze assessments and monitor its impact on participant dietary habits and/or health to support continual improvement

Does the proposal make clear how the proposed solution supplements nutrition education and/or breastfeeding contacts to WIC participants for identified complex nutrition and/or breastfeeding problems with qualified professionals? Is the use of qualified professionals well specified and addressed?

- Does the proposed solution allow counseling contacts to be documented and information provided in a timely manner to WIC staff to enable follow-up?
- Does the solution provide delivery of nutrition education content relevant to identified nutrition risk(s) and common participant concerns?

Is there clarity around telehealth solution providers and any prior collaboration?

Does the proposal describe how the proposed solution is innovative for the local WIC agencies?

Does the proposal include discussion of potential barriers and proposed solutions to overcome those barriers including how privacy and safety of WIC clients will be maintained when interacting via the proposed technology?

- Is the proposed solution easily accessible to WIC participants? How will participants be trained to use the solution?
- Is the proposed solution easy to use for staff? Will training and/or support be provided?
- Will the solution undergo usability testing?

Does the proposal demonstrate compliance with Federal Program Regulations for all proposed strategies/solutions? Does the solution meet WIC Federal requirements and policies?
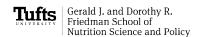
Problem Statement

Does the proposal clearly describe the population served by the WIC SA (or SAs, if a consortium) and the specific populations targeted in the interventions? Does the proposal clearly describe how the intervention will target high risk WIC participants and/or complex issues and the needed support by a qualified professional?

Note: Qualified professionals include Registered Dietitians (RD) and/or breastfeeding experts (i.e., IBCLC) who meet State staffing requirements and can provide expertise in complex nutrition and breastfeeding topics that are in accordance with WIC guidance and with program scope.

- Is the target population for the intervention clearly defined, including additional details beyond just 'high risk'?

Does the proposal provide clear indication of whether rural or other populations with decreased access to WIC are included and to what extent?

To what degree does the proposed intervention address barriers to access and reflect the social and cultural environment relevant to the populations served?

Does the proposal clearly describe the main issues/problems among WIC participants that limit their access or use of WIC services and/or require qualified professionals at the SA level?
- Are the benefits of the telehealth solution for the target population clearly described?

Evaluation

Does the proposal clearly articulate whether the WIC SA is able to implement the intervention in a randomized fashion or with comparison and treatment groups?
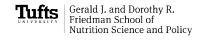- Does the proposal describe a strong research design with a plausible comparison group?

  o For example, where feasible, a strong research design may randomly assign individual participants to receive or not receive the WIC telehealth intervention. Or, the research design may rely on group assignment (random or non-random, by site or local agency) to a WIC telehealth group and a comparison group, with a sound approach to making sure the groups are comparable.

- Does the proposal describe important outcomes for the implementation process, intermediate outcomes, impact outcomes, and/or cost as indicated in Table 1 of the RFP? Does the proposal describe administrative, survey, and cost data sources with sufficient information to measure these outcomes?
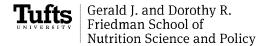
Does the proposal demonstrate the SAs capacity and commitment to collaborate with the THIS-WIC team on all aspects of the evaluation including ability to collect and share data and/or capacity-building activities to allow the grantee to build capacity to collect and share data?

- Does the proposal show ability and willingness to undertake the WIC state agency tasks as indicated in Table 2 of the RFP?
- Does the proposal confirm the applicant's ability and willingness to provide information and cooperation needed for the THIS-WIC team's evaluation tasks as indicated in Table 2 of the RFP?

Does the proposal provide documentation of the procedures used to maintain the quality and integrity of all data and analyses?

- For data access, does the proposal demonstrate ability to acquire the necessary permissions for data sharing, or ability to process data internally to produce de-identified files that are permissible to use in further analysis?
- Does the proposal clearly explain how data analysis is currently handled within the Agency? Is it done in-house or by an outside contractor?
- When anticipating potential problems with research design, data access, or necessary permissions, does the proposal describe realistic contingency plans giving confidence in successful completion of the project?

Staffing

Does the proposal outline the qualifications of the team to effectively carry out the project including data management and a clear description of any key partner engagement that will contribute to success, including letters of commitment from all committed partners?

Note: If a consortium of WIC SAs, the applicants must designate a primary SA with administrative and fiscal responsibilities, and describe the communication plans, process for making decisions on project direction, and procedures for resolving conflicts

- Are the roles of project team members described clearly?
- Does the proposal explain how each member will work collaboratively to ensure successful implementation?
- Does the proposal explain how the project team will work with solution providers to implement the intervention successfully?
- Are letters of commitment provided from all committed partners?

Budget

Are the proposed the budget, budget justification and timeline(s) appropriate with respect to the scope of the proposed project? Applicants may refer to budget templates for guidance.

- Does the budget provide detailed explanations of proposed costs in budget justification to ensure alignment with activities associated with the proposed intervention?

Sustainability and Transferability

Does the proposal clearly lay out a plan to sustain the telehealth solution after the project period and how the project may be generalizable to other WIC SAs?

- Is the telehealth solution sustainable after grant funding ends?
- Does the proposal state that intends to use open source software and technology?
- Is there a plan to develop systems that can be easily tailored and adopted by other SAs at little or no cost?