



# MOVING FORWARD

## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

# STRENGTH PERSEVERANCE FORWARD-LOOKING



These themes emerged in 2021 as the pandemic continued and we confronted another twelve months of challenges. Oregon WIC staff repeatedly demonstrated the ability to recover from setbacks. Staff performed their WIC duties while also being called upon to help address pandemic surges and climate disasters. WIC clinics across the state built on innovations implemented in 2020, to continue to provide WIC services remotely. WIC operational changes have been so successful that the WIC program, at the state and national level, are looking for ways to make them permanent.

WIC is dedicated to providing exemplary services, modernizing the program, and reducing barriers to meet our participants' needs.

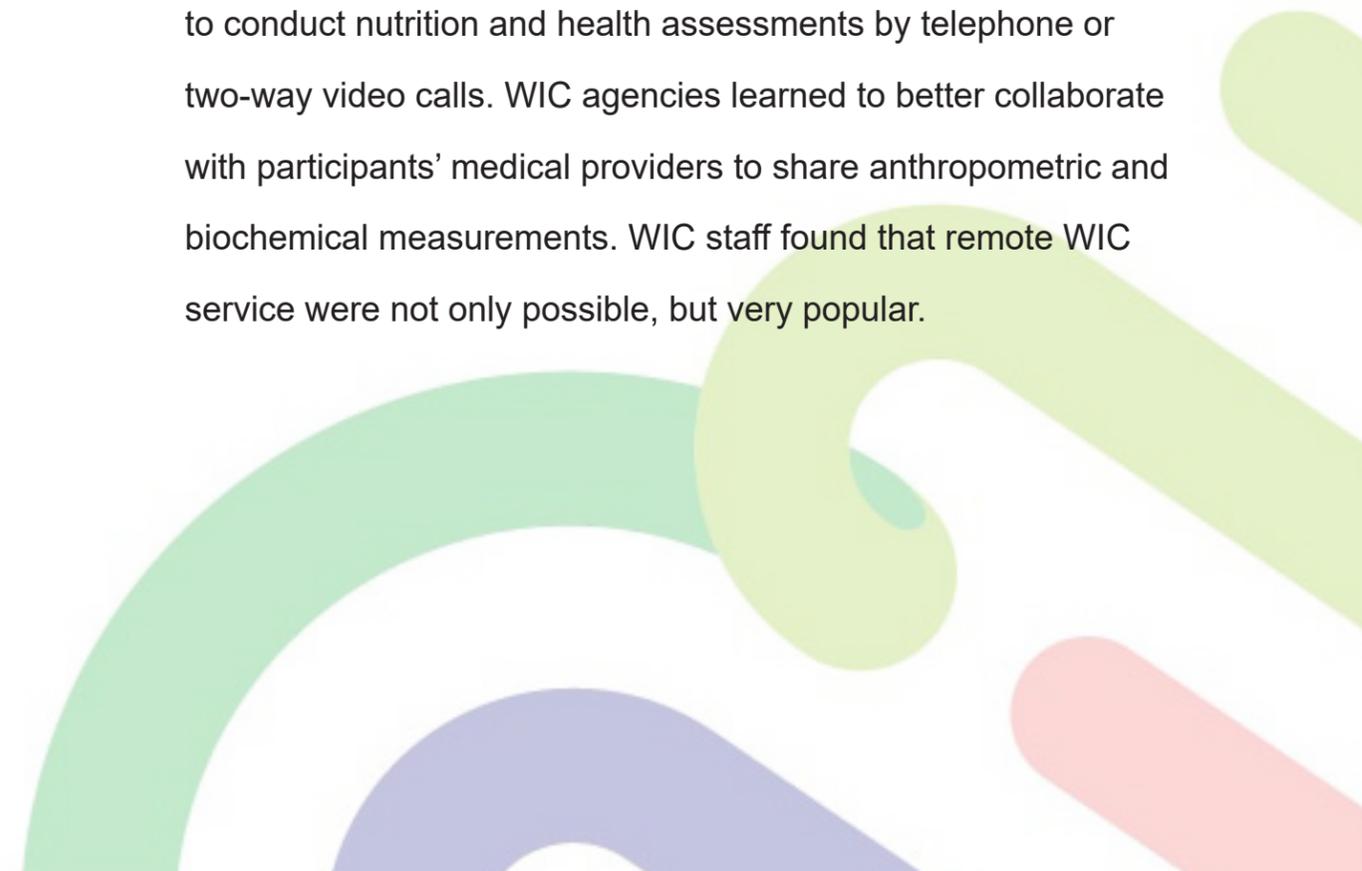
**As a program, we stayed focused on the work and the outcomes that will last beyond the pandemic.**

**We are growing healthy futures.**



## EVOLVING WIC SERVICES

Looking forward, we will embrace lessons learned during COVID-19 to continue to improve the WIC program and better serve Oregon families. Completing thorough nutrition and health assessments to provide tailored nutrition education is a key component of WIC. These assessments have historically been required to be done in person. In-person attendance allows WIC staff to obtain accurate health measurements, but families have long identified barriers to meeting this requirement, such as transportation issues, childcare, and missing work. Thanks to the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the physical presence requirement was temporarily waived, allowing WIC providers to conduct nutrition and health assessments by telephone or two-way video calls. WIC agencies learned to better collaborate with participants' medical providers to share anthropometric and biochemical measurements. WIC staff found that remote WIC service were not only possible, but very popular.





*“I just wanted to mention how grateful we are with this change, even if it’s only temporary. My son was very happy when I told him he’ll be able to eat all the broccoli he wants – And we’re also excited to be able to try new and different fruits and vegetables this season.”*

**Marion County Participant**

*“We love being able to buy fruit and vegetable all month long – we were spending the \$9 in the first week of the month!”*

**Multnomah County Participant**

*“I am very pleased with the increase. I wish they could substitute some cereal or milk benefits and keep the increase on fruit and vegetables. Even if is not \$35, 20 will do wonders for my family”*

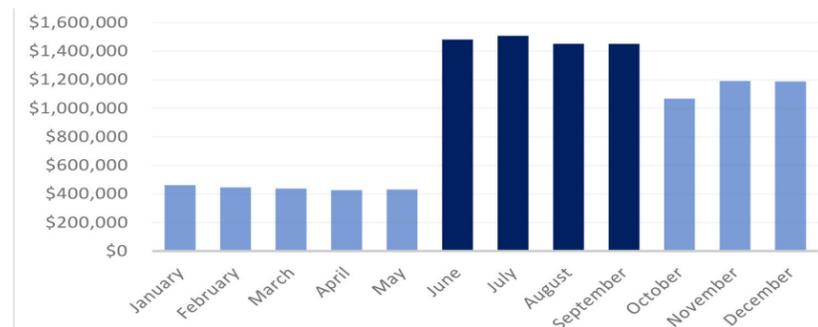
**Washington County Participant**

# WIC'S BENEFIT BUMP: INVESTING IN HEALTHY FAMILIES

The Cash Value Benefit (CVB) for purchasing fruit and vegetables is popular and well redeemed by WIC participants, but the CVB amounts have not increased significantly in nearly a decade.<sup>1</sup> WIC staff regularly hear from participants how quickly these \$9 and \$11 benefits are used up during the month, often stating they would give up other WIC foods if it meant being able to get more fruits and vegetables. Thanks to bipartisan efforts, the CVB received an unprecedented bump in the summer of 2021. From June through September, WIC families were able to nearly triple their fruit and vegetable access as per-participant amounts increased to \$35 per month. The temporary increase was meaningful for WIC families and local stores, as \$4 million dollars of additional fruit and vegetable benefits were redeemed.

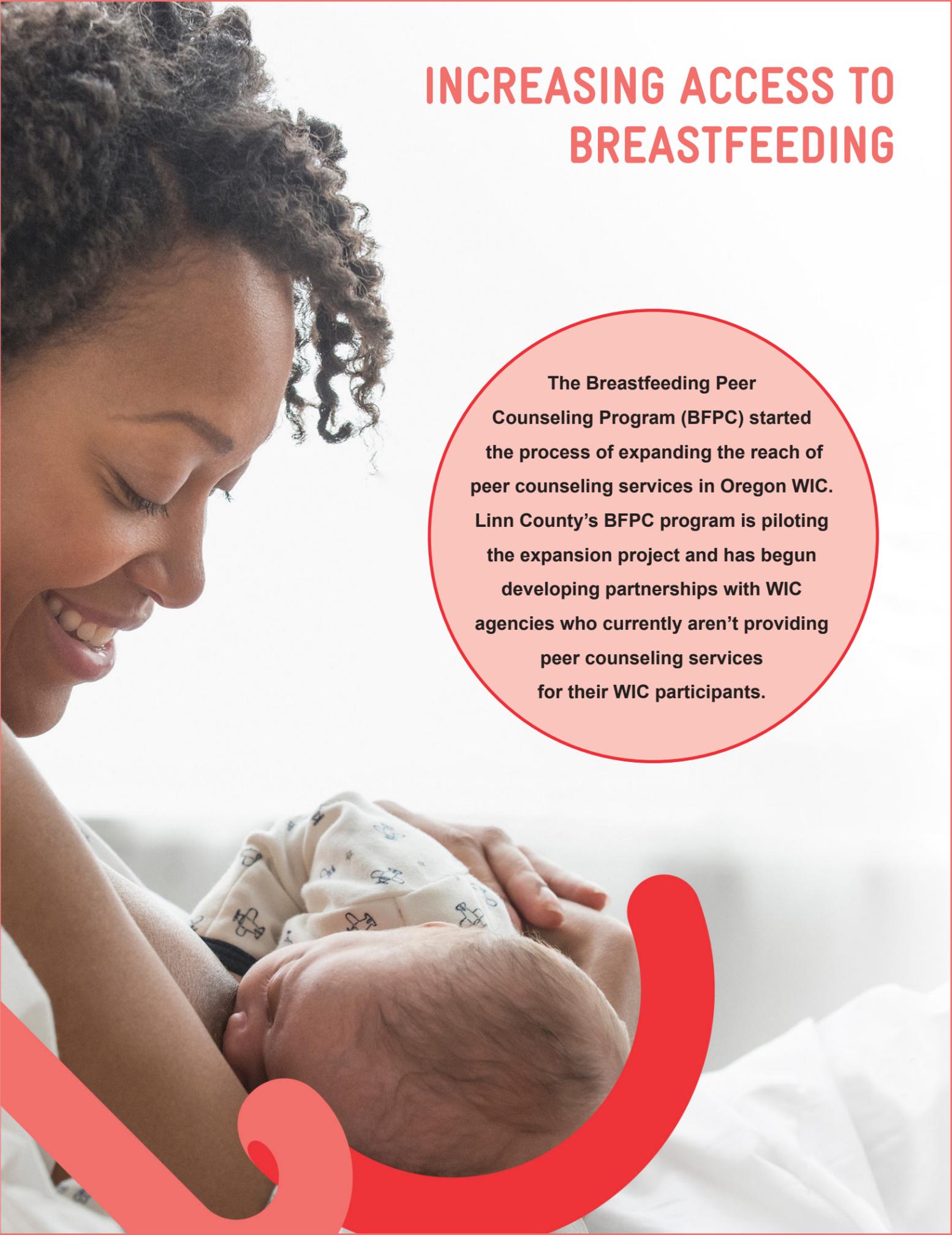
The CVB increase allowed more flexibility in which healthy foods participants chose to purchase. WIC families expressed their enthusiasm with the increased variety by purchasing over 500 additional types of fruit and veggies! The WIC benefit bump empowers families to experiment with new choices, an important step as dietary variety during early childhood shapes lifelong taste preferences.<sup>2</sup>

**The 2021 Fruit and Vegetable Benefit bump tripled the amount of fruit and vegetables WIC participants purchased**



<sup>1</sup> Congress used recommendations from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) to align the WIC food package with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans to develop the new CVB amounts in Oct. 2021, set to expire March 31, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> USDA & HHS (2020) Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025, 9th Edition. <https://dietaryguidelines.gov>.



## INCREASING ACCESS TO BREASTFEEDING

**The Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program (BFPC) started the process of expanding the reach of peer counseling services in Oregon WIC. Linn County's BFPC program is piloting the expansion project and has begun developing partnerships with WIC agencies who currently aren't providing peer counseling services for their WIC participants.**



## ADAPTING TO CHALLENGES

Prior to becoming a WIC Authorized Vendor, State WIC staff perform onsite visits to a vendor's location to ensure compliance with federal and state regulations. During the pandemic, Congress provided a waiver to State WIC programs allowing these visits to be conducted virtually. Oregon WIC staff successfully transitioned from onsite, in-person visits to using FaceTime and Google Duo for store walkthroughs. Changing to a virtual model during the pandemic helps to protect the safety of WIC compliance specialists and store staff and helps to increase access for rural stores throughout the state.

State vendor trainers also pivoted to virtual delivery of their mandatory checker training, using platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, which saved travel time and expenses for the 371 stores trained in 2021.

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**512 STORES ACROSS OREGON**  
Including independent stores, local, regional and national chains, and pharmacies

**ACCOUNTED FOR**  
**\$47 MILLION**

in total dollars spent by WIC participants at local stores

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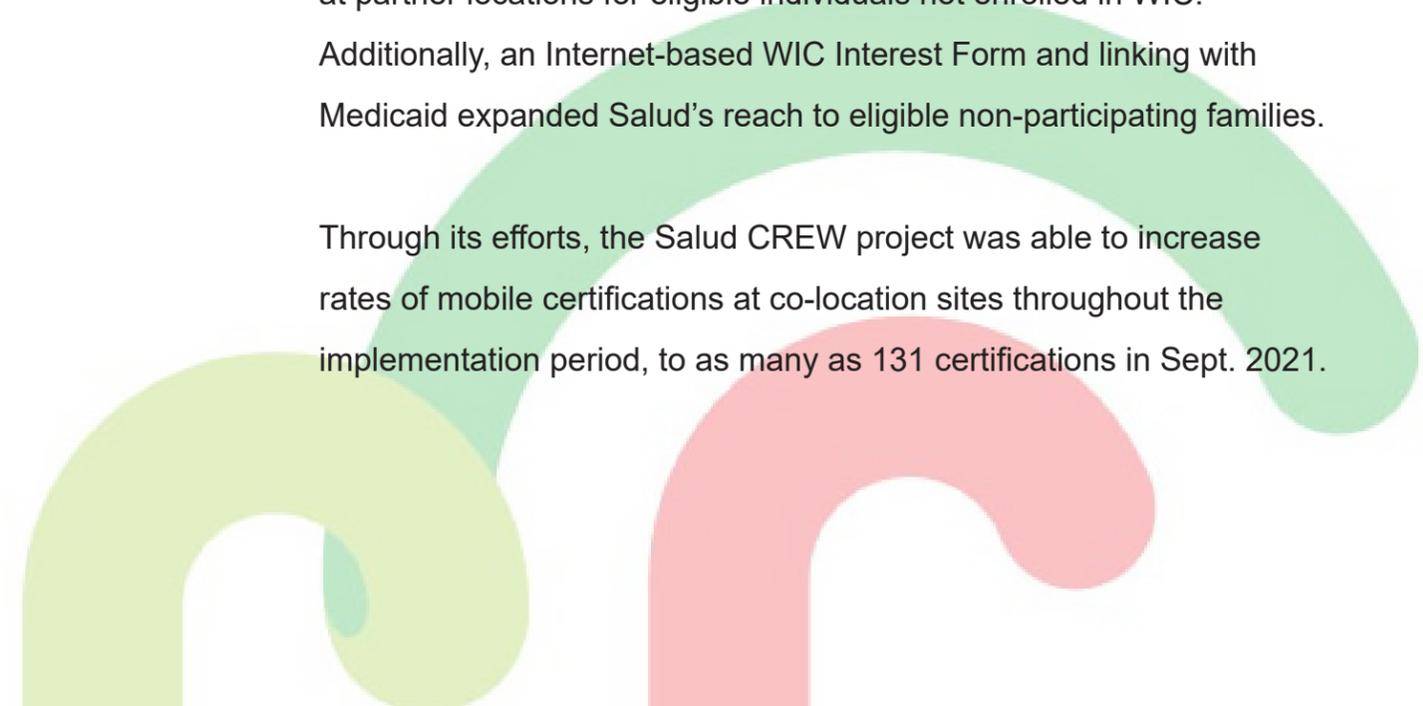


## CREATING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

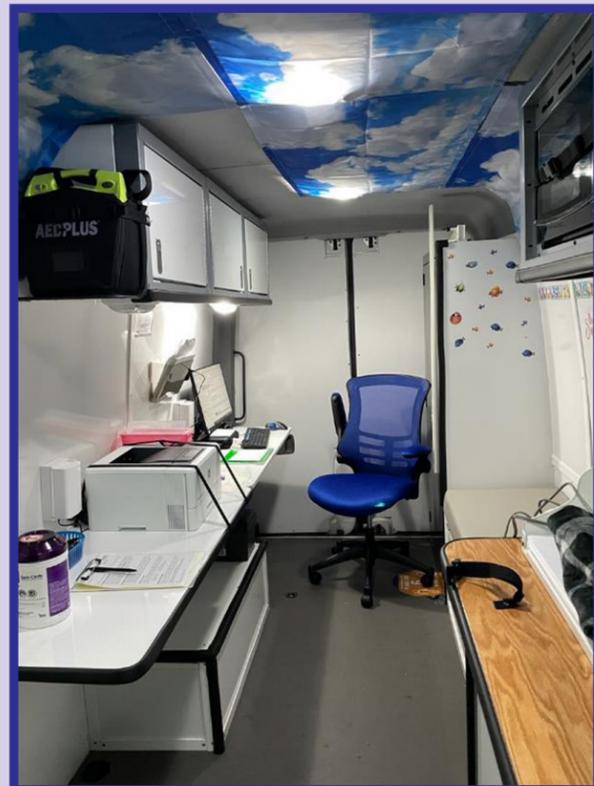
Oregon's Salud clinics were awarded a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant administered through the National WIC Association to increase their outreach efforts. The grant, Catalyzing Retention Efforts in WIC (CREW), resulted in outreach to underserved areas and expanded monthly WIC services to new areas in Dayton and Sheridan.

The primary objective of the Salud CREW project was to conduct WIC certifications and reinstatements at partner locations to increase agency caseload. This project leveraged the strategy of pairing a new service (WIC) with a known and trusted activity such as going to the library or pediatrician. Salud CREW collaborated with existing and new partners, including local Head Start programs, pediatricians, libraries, community centers, and low-income housing complexes. Using dedicated staff members and mobile certification equipment the Salud CREW project was able to provide certification opportunities at partner locations for eligible individuals not enrolled in WIC. Additionally, an Internet-based WIC Interest Form and linking with Medicaid expanded Salud's reach to eligible non-participating families.

Through its efforts, the Salud CREW project was able to increase rates of mobile certifications at co-location sites throughout the implementation period, to as many as 131 certifications in Sept. 2021.



# NATIONAL [AHEAD] GRANT AWARDED TO JOSEPHINE COUNTY WIC



“It puts a smile on my face when participants are happy! Since launching the van, we’ve had many instances where new participants have walked up to us to inquire about the program and join.”

**- Christine Shepherd, BS, IBCLC,  
Josephine County WIC Coordinator**

## HONORING EQUITY AND ACCESS

### Participants in Josephine and Curry Counties have increased access to WIC services

As part of their work to advance racial equity, the National WIC Association (NWA) received funding from the Walmart Foundation for the Advancing Health Equity to Achieve Diversity and Inclusion (AHEAD) in WIC project. The project is guided by the promising practices that integrate a racial equity lens in WIC and seeks to systematically build capacity within the larger WIC community to incorporate a health equity framework into WIC research, policy, and practice.

Josephine County WIC was selected as one of the NWA’s seven local agency awardees nationwide. Christine Shepherd, BS, IBCLC, Josephine County WIC Coordinator, oversees WIC services in both Josephine and Curry Counties - both largely rural areas. Shepard’s grant application goal was to increase equitable access to WIC services for active and potential participants in both counties. The project award allowed the Josephine County WIC program to purchase and build a full WIC mobile unit, increasing access to WIC services throughout both counties. This unit allows services to extend throughout both rural and urban areas and bolsters partnerships with other providers. Josephine County WIC is keeping an eye on what’s to come and they have already received and continue to pursue letters of support for partnership from interested parties.

# OREGON WIC NUMBERS

WIC served

# 110,890

Oregon women, infants and children

• 29,525 women • 81,365 infants and children

# \$47 MILLION

in WIC benefits were spent at authorized grocery stores and pharmacies in Oregon during the federal fiscal year

# 1 out of 3

women living in rural and frontier areas used WIC during pregnancy (32%)

# \$621,600

in WIC Farm Direct Nutrition Program benefits were spent at authorized farm stands and farmers markets

*The Farm Direct program provides fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables and education on selecting and preparing fresh produce while supporting local farmers markets and farmers. Oregon Farm Direct includes 687 authorized farmers*

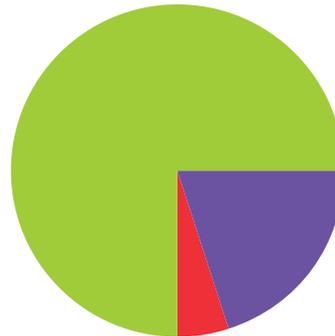
# 70%

 of WIC families are working families

# OREGON WIC FUNDING

## WIC FUNDING SOURCES

- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- State and federal funds for the Farm Direct Program
- Local government funds
- Provider agency and community contributions
- Competitive bidding savings



**75%** Healthy food

**20%** Nutrition and breastfeeding services

**5%** Administration

## VISION

Every Oregon family achieves optimal nutrition and lifelong health for their children.

## MISSION

Provide leadership, guidance, and resources to local WIC programs, vendors, and partners to ensure quality WIC services that support collective public health efforts.



PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION  
Nutrition & Health Screening  
Program for Women, Infants & Children

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact the Oregon WIC Program at 971-673-0040. We accept all relay calls or you can dial 711.