

**MEETING MINUTES**

<b>Meeting Name:</b>	<b>Vendor Advisory Council Meeting</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	10/3/2022	<b>Time:</b>	2:30 PM
<b>Minutes Prepared By:</b>	Shawn Gompa	<b>Location:</b>	Virtual
<b>1. Meeting Objective</b>			
<b>2. Attendees</b>			
<b><u>Steering Committee:</u></b>			
<p>Katherine Groble (VAC co-chair)  Bill Dokianos (senior analyst with WIC)  Katrina Foster (new WIC secretary)  Karen Batterham  Harold Stratton  Renee Verbeke (Vendor Relations)</p>			
<b><u>VAC Members:</u></b>			
<p>Lisa Banks Coordinator with Oakland  Eman Hussain with Dearborn Fresh Supermarket  Patrick McCulloch (Meijer Stores)  Mohammad Osman (Papaya Fruit Market)  Sharon Pitt (Wal-Mart corporate office)</p>			
<b><u>Management:</u></b>			
<p>Myra Lee-Fowler (VAC co-chair, social determinants of health policy)  Kimberly Keiland (Vendor Management)  Julie Gurley Johnson (manager of Program Integrity Unit)</p>			
<b><u>Other:</u></b>			
<b>3. Agenda and Discussion</b>			
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Discussion</b>		
Agenda	Review Vendor Conference FY22 Recap Goals and Objectives for FY23		
Welcome to New Members	Patrick McCulloch is the new compliance lead for Meijer stores		
Vendor Conference Discussion	Vendor Conference Recaps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vendor Advisory Panel</li> <li>- Guest Speakers to address plans to make online WIC shopping available</li> <li>- Recapped Vendor Survey</li> </ul> <p>Mohammed Osman: mentioned that he attended the conference with representatives of Papaya Fruit Market. He especially enjoyed the WIC Vendor Panel with Eman Hussain. He also appreciated Harold C. Stratton provided an overview of rules and regulations. He also mentioned appreciating Diala’s presentation.</p> <p>Patrick McCulloch: Relayed positive impressions from Meijer representatives</p> <p>Sharon Pitt: Relayed positive impressions from Wal-mart representatitves.</p> <p>Katherine Groble: Asked for feedback as to how to make it better in the future.</p>		

	<p>Eman Hussain: She mentioned that the primary thing that attracted her attention is the possibility for shopping online. She stated that the stores need to be prepared for this. They want to know how is it doable? She mentioned that without a physical card they are currently unable to do transactions. She stated that if this were to happen, they would need to know how to do it while also protecting the clients.</p> <p>Katherine Groble: Mentioned that there will need to be policy changes to accompany online shopping projects. These are being worked on by pilots.</p> <p>Patrick McCulloch: Asked if there is a method of making Vendors aware of changes to food authorization criteria.</p> <p>Shawn Gompa: Mentioned avenues for communication, including Vendor newsletter and blast emails.</p> <p>Patrick McCulloch: Discussed that he was focused on how best to prompt stores to take action such as adjusting labels, monitoring stock, and prepared to communicate with customers about different items.</p> <p>Myra-Lee Fowler: Mentioned that the State of Michigan wants to build momentum from the WIC Vendor Conference. We wish to share best practices and have conversations with Vendors about important issues throughout the state. Her first question was if people would be more willing to go to smaller conferences in their region.</p> <p>Eman Hussain: Mentioned that the conference was very important and rich. She said that a full day conference was suitable – because she wanted to meet with FIS, listen to the guest speakers, and learn as much as possible. Having a smaller conference would be difficult to get as much out of it.</p> <p>Mohammed Osman: Agreed with Eman that the full day conference was very appreciated. He said he is okay with the 7 or 8 hour day and stated he would be willing to even go to Lansing or somewhere 2 hours away. He said that further away is more of a challenge because he would need to get approval from the family.</p> <p>Katherine Groble and Myra Lee Fowler: Asked if there are any other concerns and reminded that even the big conference would continue to be in different locations and that the difference is that the smaller conferences would be much shorter.</p> <p>Myra Lee Fowler: Recognized that the silence among VAC members indicates no concerns.</p>
<p>Questions/Concerns</p>	<p>Eman Hussain: Also mentioned that there are items in the store that are not yet approved but they could be approved if they can share them with the State of Michigan. She said that their stores still need to go through and submit some frozen and canned fruits and vegetables</p> <p>Katherine Groble: Mentioned there is a UPC submission using a form on the wicvendor website.</p> <p>Eman Hussain: Asked if the State of Michigan is aware of significant price increases for eggs</p>

	<p>Katherine and Shawn: recognized that the price for eggs is being monitored and that feedback from Vendors is welcome and appreciated to help us take action quicker.</p>
<p>Ideas for Improving Vendor Resources</p>	<p>Myra Lee Fowler: Do you have any ideas to improve the WIC client shopping experience?</p> <p>Katherine Groble: Recognized that we already heard ideas about troubleshooting at the register and the use of the WIC app – and stated that we will be having funds to improve the WIC program and would not wish to use time and money to build resources that Vendors may not find useful.</p> <p>Myra Lee Fowler: Asked if stores had any resources that prompt cashiers to how they may treat customers from different cultural backgrounds or to be sensitive to customers that are pregrant/post-partum/breastfeeding.</p> <p>Eman Hussain: Mentioned that naming the items properly from the beginning is helpful to get the cashiers used to it.</p> <p>Katherine Groble: Confirmed that Eman is discussing the “wording on the shopping list.”</p> <p>Eman Hussain: Discussed how each store can benefit from having a “translation” for the WIC client’s shopping list. It can be overwhelming for the client to</p> <p>Myra Lee-Fowler: Recapped that the online Vendor training was made public in June 2022 and was made possible by the feedback and beta testing by Vendor Advisory Council members.</p> <p>Eman Hussain: Asked whether she should have the cashiers train as well</p> <p>Katherine Groble: Mentioned that the training is designed to be accessible to cashiers as well as store management and that it can be useful to be familiar with the workings of the program.</p> <p>Myra Lee-Fowler: Mentioned that the State of Michigan provides certain Vendor Materials and asked if participants could comment on what they found useful and what changes they may wish to see.</p> <p>Renee Verbeke and Harold C. Stratton: Provided a quick overview of materials that are provided to Vendors, included the food guides, Vendor handbooks, register quick guides, and promotional/marketing signage.</p> <p>Mohammed Osman: He remarked the materials do help. He said that the food guides at registers are helpful. He says placing the WIC shelf tags on the shelves near the WIC items also help.</p> <p>Sharon Pitt: Mentioned that materials are helpful with cashiers. She says the thing that helps the most is the WIC mobile application. She says that it helps with locating the proper item and is the most helpful thing that she has seen.</p> <p>Julie Gurley-Johnson: Mentioned that often complaints received by the state pertain to complaints and requested assistance with issues transacting.</p>

	<p>Sharon Pitt: Offered that troubleshooting videos could be helpful, for instance, for differentiating skim milk vs. whole milk.</p> <p>Katherine Groble: Stated there is a mini-game in the online training that prompts the trainee to identify methods for troubleshooting different error messages with transacting.</p> <p>Eman Hussain: Mentioned that there are differences in beans that can be purchased with fruits and vegetables and beans that can be purchased with the legume benefit shared with peanut butter.</p> <p>Katherine Groble and Shawn Gompa: Provided a distinction between mature and immature beans to be used.</p> <p>Lisa Banks: Shared videos on youtube that can be used for WIC clients to shop at the store for the correct WIC items</p>
Online Shopping	<p>Myra Lee Fowler: Asked how shopping online would affect their stores.</p> <p>Eman Hussain: Stated that Dearborn Fresh is definitely in favor for shopping online. She said that it is helpful for the client but also could be done in a way to make sure that the items go through perfectly without issue.</p> <p>Patrick McCulloch: Meijer would be excited about online shopping. He said that it would be a huge IT lift to host on their side (not at the store level, as the stores already support online shopping with other tender). He stated that this would be a big move for ensuring WIC clients have the same privileges of any other customer.</p> <p>Mohammed Osman: He said he does not know if there would be a concern...if the the customer purchased something and the store would be responsible for selling them things that could be alleged to be expired, damaged, etc.</p> <p>He mentioned two primary concerns: the first is with liability and uncertainty that comes from provided items for customers without the normal in-store troubleshooting.</p> <p>The second concern comes from the uncertainty with how to logistically make online shopping possible for their store.</p> <p>Shawn Gompa: Mentioned that we are in the beginning stages for online shopping. It is still in development, and we will be sure to address these concerns as we learn more.</p>
Project Announcements and Ad-hoc Meetings	<p>Katherine Groble: Mentioned 3 projects on the horizon. She stated that we will be having 3 ad-hoc meetings in the future:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How we can spotlight Vendors</li> <li>2) Reviewing Feedback regarding participant shopping</li> <li>3) Creating and revising promotion &amp; training materials</li> </ol> <p>Katherine Groble and Myra Lee Fowler: Disclaimed that participation in these upcoming projects is not a requirement and stated they may submit a survey for group interest. They asked if the stores had any input regarding these groups.</p>

	Patrick McCulloch and Mohammed Osman: mentioned the ad-hoc meetings are a reasonable ask and they would be willing to help.
Announcements	<p>Katherine Groble</p> <p><u>Oct 11 WIC Formula Conversion</u> We are telling WIC families to avoid transacting benefits between 7 PM on the October 11<sup>th</sup> and 8 AM on October 12<sup>th</sup></p> <p>Mentioned that the alternative formulas other than Similac contract formula are authorized for a limited time, at least through November. We have no guarantee they will continue be available for purchase with WIC after November.</p> <p><u>October 17 – Next Quarterly Call</u></p> <p><u>December 14 – Southeast OAP Application Due</u></p> <p>Eman Hussain – mentioned concerns with what they would do if they still had Enfamil products after November.</p> <p>Katherine Groble – mentioned that our formula contractor and the federal government will not allow us to continue allowing purchase of non-similac formula.</p> <p>Eman Hussain – stated a concern that another change to formula benefits will result in an inability to purchase formula, recalling that was the case with the previous formula conversion from Mead Johnson to Abbott Laboratories.</p>
<b>4. Next Steps:</b>	Dates will be set for ad-hoc project meetings and notice will be sent to VAC members for voluntary participation. Next Vendor Advisory Council Meeting will be announced for some time in March/April of next year.