

## Office of Nutrition Services

### PURPOSE

The Office of Nutrition Services works to create opportunities for people with limited resources to make healthy nutrition choices. We improve the health of individuals and families through nutrition education, physical activity and related services. We support healthy eating, breastfeeding/chestfeeding, access to healthy foods, and physical activity through contracts with local health jurisdictions, community agencies, tribal government organizations, and food retailers. The U.S. Department of Agriculture funds most of our services.

### POPULATION OF FOCUS

Low-Income Residents of Washington State.

- The Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) each serve pregnant people, new and breastfeeding/chestfeeding participants, infants, and children to age five. People qualify for the programs based on income and nutritional risk.
- The SNAP-Ed program serves individuals eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- The Seniors FMNP provides seniors with vouchers for fresh fruits, vegetables, and honey.

### MAJOR FUNCTION

#### WIC Nutrition Program

- Provide WIC nutrition services through contracts with local health jurisdictions, community agencies, and tribal organizations including monthly benefits for healthy food, health screenings and referrals, breastfeeding/chestfeeding support, and nutrition education.
- Establish and maintain a list of foods approved for purchase with Washington WIC cards.
- Contract with food vendors and growers to sell WIC-approved foods.
- Prevent and monitor for program abuse and fraud.

#### Breastfeeding Peer Counseling Program

- Provide one-to-one peer support to new breastfeeding/chestfeeding WIC participants through contracts with local agencies.
- Assist local agencies in recruitment, training, and support of current and former WIC clients to become breastfeeding/chestfeeding peer counselors.

#### Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

- Promote consumption of fresh and local produce.
- Recruit, contract, train, and monitor authorized growers and markets.
- Distribute FMNP checks to eligible WIC participants.
- Assist in processing Senior FMNP vouchers.

#### SNAP-Ed

- Improve policy, systems, and environments to support healthy eating and active living and prevent obesity and diet-related disease.
- Improve food resource management among participants.
- Provide nutrition and physical activity education classes and health promotion via various methods.

### MAJOR ISSUES

Under federal waivers during COVID-19, WIC can operate remotely and conduct WIC appointments over the phone or via video - keeping staff and participants safe. We hope this practice will continue as an option for participants in the future.

Since the pandemic began, participation in the WIC Program has steadily risen due to the increased need and the success of remote services. This may soon put pressure on our ability to provide the full benefit to all eligible participants. WIC benefit redemption has risen over the past two years. Unlike SNAP partners, WIC requires in-person shopping. Washington WIC is piloting online shopping to help USDA design online WIC shopping nationwide.

Washington converted to an electronic system to issue Farmers Market benefits starting in 2023. WIC participants may now use the fruits and vegetables portion of their WIC benefit at eligible Farmers Markets in addition to the Farmers Market benefit that many WIC participants receive.

Due to COVID-19, in-person service delivery and participation in SNAP-Ed decreased dramatically for safety reasons. SNAP-Ed paused, altered, or ended service delivery to two key partnership sectors: emergency food (food banks/food pantries) and K-12 schools. During COVID-19, SNAP-Ed has largely had an online presence for education and health promotion and found it difficult to recruit and engage the audience of focus and maintain engagement and momentum in partnerships online.

**BUDGET**

For the 2020–22 biennium\*, the Office of Nutrition Services budget is \$274.7 million with interagency reimbursements (IARs) included. This consists of General Fund State (less than 1%); Federal (86%); General Fund Local from federally mandated infant formula rebate contracts to purchase WIC foods (9%); and 3% from interagency funding for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education.

The office has 106 FTEs consisting of full time and project staff, plus IT support, communications, and fiscal staff. Staff are located in Tumwater.

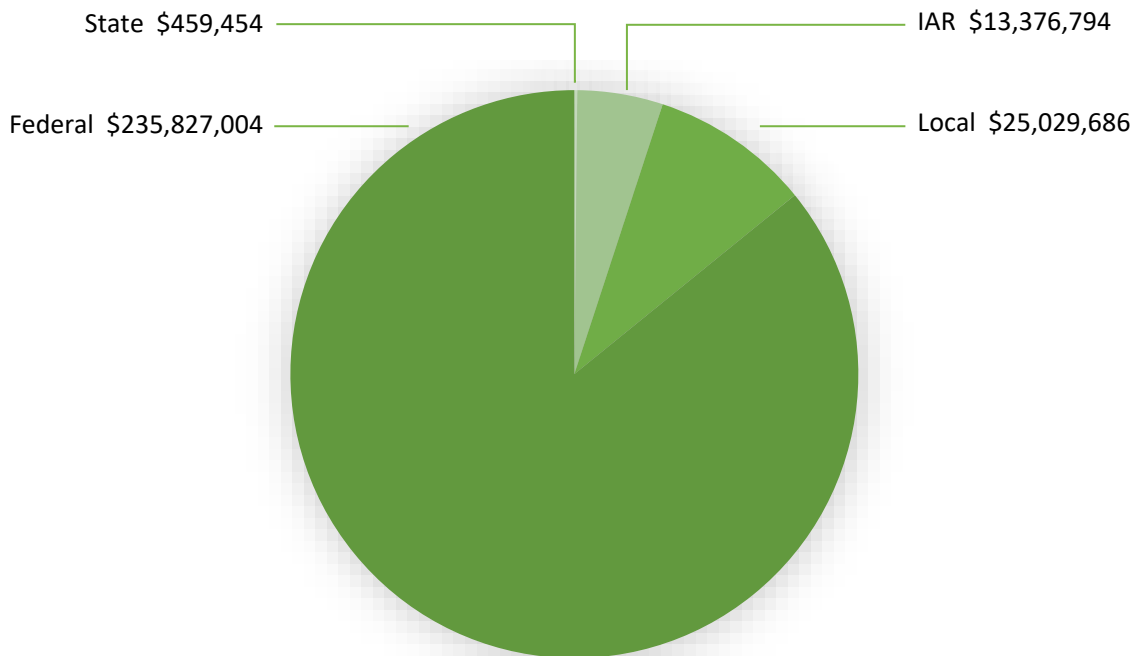
**TOTAL ALLOTMENTS BY FUND TYPE**

Division of Prevention and Community Health – Office of Nutrition Services

2020–22 Biennium\*

Total (with IARs) = \$ 274,692,938  
 Total (without IARs) = \$ 261,316,144

**TOTAL (with IARs)**



\*Due to the federal grant funding allocation, the fact sheet will reflect the previous biennium.