
315.70**Program Incentive Items****Overview**

Introduction Program incentive items are allowable expenses if they are reasonable and necessary costs that promote the specific program purposes of outreach, nutrition education, or breastfeeding promotion.

Reasonable costs Incentive items will be considered reasonable costs if they:

- Provide the program with a benefit generally commensurate with the costs incurred,
- Are consistent with the costs of similar items from other vendors,
- Are in proportion to other program costs for the function that the costs serve,
- Are a priority expenditure relative to other demands on available administrative resources, and
- Have a proven or intuitive positive outreach or nutrition education impact.

Necessary costs Incentive items will be considered necessary costs if they:

- Are incurred to carry out essential program functions, and
- Cannot be avoided without adversely impacting program operations.

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Guidelines for Incentive Items

Format

Incentive items must:

- Present a WIC outreach or nutrition education message, not just an agency logo, and
 - Have a reasonable opportunity for public display by the general population or the target population.
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Unallowable items

Unallowable items include:

- Celebratory items, or items designed primarily as staff morale boosters, generally for the personal use of the staff, with minimal public display;
 - Items of nominal value which have no outreach, breastfeeding, or nutrition education message;
 - Any program incentive item intended for persons who are not participants, potential participants or their parents/guardians, or for persons with no connection to the WIC Program, such as staff and cooperating agency representatives; and
 - Items not of nominal value, such as diaper bags, infant slings, or ponchos (regardless of any nutrition education, outreach, or breastfeeding promotion messages). These items would not meet the “reasonable and necessary” test.
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State office approval

If there is uncertainty about the appropriateness of a particular item, call the state WIC office before making a decision regarding the expenditure. Even though an item may meet the guidelines set forth in this policy, it may not be reasonable or necessary to spend limited administrative funds on such items, when other more pressing needs such as staffing go unaddressed.

Books as incentive items

The Mountain Plains USDA office has stated that books purchased with WIC funds must have a clear nutrition education or health promotion message targeted to early childhood health. They must also meet the above guidelines related to reasonable cost

Books donated from local organizations for *WIC: Healthy Children Ready to Read* should not conflict with health and nutrition education messages WIC promotes, but do not have to include them.

Reference: MPSF: WC-03-11-P

Target Audience

**Participants
are primary
recipients**

Program incentive items are primarily intended for use by program participants or potential participants, to bring the WIC message back to their community. Therefore, most program incentive items should be directed at WIC program participants.

Exceptions

Since local agency staff travel throughout the general community and participate in various cooperative functions with the WIC target population or agencies that also serve the WIC target population, it may occasionally be appropriate to distribute some types of program incentive items to program staff.

Incentive Items for Outreach

Introduction Program incentive items for outreach encourage and increase participation in the WIC Program. Outreach efforts and incentive items may be directed at increasing the number of participants at a local agency, or reaching a group of potential participants who are unaware of the WIC Program or unsure how to access it.

Format Outreach incentive items should:

- Contain a WIC-specific message that targets the potentially eligible population;
- Normally be seen in public;
- Contain an approved non-discrimination statement (for publications or other printed materials that include program information);
- Have value as outreach devices that equals or outweighs other uses;
- Include WIC contact information such as the state or local agency name, address, and telephone number; and
- Constitute (or show promise of) an innovative or proven way of encouraging WIC participation.

Examples Examples of allowable items include t-shirts, buttons, diapers, bibs, toothbrushes, pens, cups or other items of nominal value with reasonable opportunity for public display that contain a WIC promotional message.

Incentive Items for Nutrition Education

Introduction Program incentive items for nutrition education include “other teaching aids” for nutrition education.

Format Nutrition education incentive items should:

- Be targeted to participants,
- Contain an approved non-discrimination statement (for publications or other printed materials that also include any program information),
- Have a clear and direct connection to particular WIC nutrition education messages,
- Either convey enough information to be considered educational or be used by participants to reinforce nutrition education contacts,
- Have value as nutrition education aids that equals or outweighs other uses, and
- Be distributed to the audience for which the items were designed (e.g., cups distributed to mothers of infants who are learning or will be learning to drink from a cup during a relevant nutrition education contact).

Examples Examples of allowable items include calendars that contain important nutrition education messages, refrigerator magnets picturing the food pyramid, and cups (if used as described above).

Incentive Items for Breastfeeding Promotion and Support

Introduction Program incentive items for breastfeeding promotion and support include “other teaching aids.” Breast pumps, breast shells, nursing supplementer systems, nursing pads, and nursing bras are considered breastfeeding aids and, as such, are allowable costs and not considered to be incentive items.

Format Breastfeeding promotion and support incentive items should:

- Contain an approved non-discrimination statement (for publications or other printed materials that also include any program information),
- Have a clear and direct connection to promoting and supporting breastfeeding among current WIC participants,
- Have value as breastfeeding promotion and support items that equals or outweighs other uses,
- Be distributed to the audience for which the items were designed, and
- Convey information that:
 - Encourages and supports breastfeeding in general,
 - Informs participants about the benefits of breastfeeding, or
 - Offers support and encouragement to women to initiate and continue breastfeeding.

Examples Examples of allowable items include t-shirts, buttons or other items of nominal value with a breastfeeding promotion or support message (e.g., “Breastfed is best fed”).
