

**Arkansas eWIC Vendor Team Meeting Minutes**  
**July 18, 2013**

**Members in Attendance:** Curtis Wiggins, Brookshire Grocery; Jason Cooper, Brookshire Grocery; Mike Scott, Total Retail Solutions; Perry Young, Young's Thriftway

**Members via Conference Call:** Norman Williams, Walmart; Pauline Lasister, Walmart; Carol, Walmart #144; Debbie and Tina, Walmart; Jennifer Simpson, Kroger; Chaz, Kroger; Jamie Slaton, Harp's Foods

**Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) Staff in Attendance:** Susan Handford, WIC Director; Teresa McManus, MIS Section Manager; Pamela Woodard George, Food Delivery Section Manager; Michael Kincaid, Chief Information Officer; Bert Wells, Information Technology; Alison Whitten, MIS Section; Teresa Guerrero, MIS Section; Doris Allen, Food Delivery Section; Sheba Anderson, Food Delivery Section; Albert Brown, Food Delivery Section

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**1. Welcome and Introductions**

- The eWIC team welcomed new member, Teresa Guerrero, who recently joined the WIC MIS Section staff.
  - Teresa previously served as the Central Region Food Delivery Liaison for the Arkansas WIC Program. In her new role, she will continue to work closely with the WIC Food Delivery and Financial Management Sections, develop and maintain the EBT Project Document Library as well as the eWIC web page on the ADH website, and maintain communications and dissemination of EBT information with the retailer community. She will also participate in smartcard WIC EBT task forces and work groups.

**2. Timeline Projections for EBT Transaction**

- Alison shared that our timelines have been approved by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and that we will pilot from January to April 2015 in Miller County with statewide expansion following in July 2015 through December 2016. While the pilot dates may be impacted by system development, no major delays are anticipated.
  - Jason asked if Bowie County, Texas would be included in the pilot. Alison confirmed that the pilot area will also include the two stores in Bowie County which accept Arkansas WIC.
- Alison stated that the WIC Program is still working on phasing dates for statewide expansion and more information will be forthcoming.
  - Jennifer questioned if expansion may any faster. Teresa M. clarified that the full 18 months is not anticipated, but that December 2016 is the internal deadline to be statewide. She advised that we are looking at 12 months or less to be statewide after the pilot is completed.
  - Jason asked if retailers who have stores located in both the pilot area and across the state will go live during the pilot phase. Teresa M. informed that only the stores within the pilot area will go live. She advised that eWIC will rollout statewide by region after FNS approves the post-pilot cost analysis study. She stated that we do have a

preliminary phasing schedule, but as phasing becomes finalized, we will map where the stores are in location to the clinics and also consider which areas will need more assistance and preparation time.

- Pam suggested that, at this time, we concentrate more on the counties that are going to roll out first and firm those dates rather than assign dates to each region because we may otherwise roll out faster than stores in those regions are expecting. She further stated that we are conducting additional data analysis of where people shop to ensure logical pairings of counties. She advised that as many as 7 to 8 rural counties may go live within a week whereas it may take longer for more densely populated areas.

### **3. Status of Ongoing EBT Planning and Preparation Activities**

- Alison shared that the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Implementation Contractor will be completed in WIC by the next week and that the RFPs for the Smartcard EBT Module Development and the EBT Claims Processor will be completed within the next month for submission to ADH Procurement.
  - Jason asked about the timeframe for the selection process for the Implementation Contractor. Teresa M. responded that it generally takes the procurement process three months and then it will be advertised for 60 days. She advised that we do not anticipate anyone being selected before the end of the year but rather early 2014.
- Alison stated that we are working on vendor enablement plans, retailer checklists and ready dates to distribute once the roll out schedule has been established. This information, sent via traditional mail, will also include an overview of the eWIC project and provide guidance on how to best prepare for WIC EBT.
  - Curtis inquired as to when this information will be distributed. Teresa M. commented that we would first like to confirm our equipment surveys. She stated that as Teresa G. has been compiling data from the previous surveys, we have discovered that there are approximately 88 stores which have either come onto the program or have not responded to the surveys. She stated that Teresa G. will be contacting these vendors and that we will have the required data within a month to go forward with the phasing plan. Teresa M. estimates that within the next 2-3 months we can start conforming our phasing and distributing our checklists.
  - Pam shared that for the checklist, we will develop a vendor profile for each vendor location. She requested that each vendor provide one or more points of contact. She asked that vendors with more than one store provide a contact at the corporate level and also at the store level. She requested name, title, phone, fax, and email for each contact. She advised that Teresa G. will be collecting this information and asked that each vendor think about who your key people are.
- Alison stated that we are looking at policy changes that will need to be implemented prior to EBT expansion, some of which may be reflected in future vendor handbook and agreements.
  - Pam pointed out that the end date of our current vendor contract is August 31, 2015 which may complicate training for both WIC EBT and also the required reauthorization training. She assured that we will, however, streamline the process as much as possible.
- Alison advised that FNS will also establish WIC EBT regulations. Teresa M. stated that FNS published proposed regulations for which the comment period has closed. She

recommended that anyone interested view it online. [Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/regspublished/EBTproposedrule.htm>]

- Alison shared that the WIC Program is working with our Center's Special Projects Manager to have comprehensive WIC EBT information/documentation posted on the [www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov) website. WIC Staff will send an email once new EBT information is posted. We are also working with Polly Martin to see how she can help us get the information out. The Arkansas WIC EBT web page is located at <http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programsServices/WIC/Pages/EBTSystem.aspx>.

#### **4. POS System and WIC EBT Lab**

- Alison stated that we are looking into which 2-3 POS systems for the WIC EBT lab which will not duplicate the Texas lab but that will support as many retailers and smartcard states (i.e., Texas, Missouri, Wyoming, New Mexico) as possible. Teresa M. advised that we will decide on the POS systems quickly as we gather more information.

#### **5. eWIC Contact Person**

- Alison stated that we will soon be collecting current eWIC contacts in order to update our present eWIC contact list. She requested that everyone begin thinking about whom you would like to submit. More than one person is encouraged. Consider perhaps your POS system provider, IT person, and/or store manager.
  - Curtis suggested that everyone submit an operations contact and a technical contact.

#### **6. Next Steps to Transition to WIC EBT in Arkansas**

- We will be contacting retailers in order to collect updated retailer equipment information. Teresa G will be doing this by phone and in person visits.
- We will also collect the Value Added Reseller and your eWIC contact person (s) information.
  - Jason asked if the State will send out a flash letting retailers know that if they plan to purchase equipment within the next 24 months, to ensure that it is smartcard certified. Teresa M. affirmed that the State will as well as post information on the webpage such as a list of certified systems. She advised that we will also get this information on the Arkansas Grocers & Retail Merchants Association website, if they will allow us. Teresa M. further explained that this information will be included when we send out the vendor checklist.
  - Curtis informed that often credit card processors will offer free terminals to retailers if they switch processors. He expressed concern that smaller retailers, in particular, may get locked into a contract of which they cannot get out. He noted that often these processors will claim to be EBT certified, but it may actually be only certified for SNAP. Teresa M. stated that we will look into this as we update retailer equipment information and that one of our main concerns at the moment is to educate retailers on WIC EBT. Pam added that as she authorizes new vendors on the Arkansas WIC Program, she routinely checks the retailer's system and discusses WIC EBT requirements. She also encourages them to participate in on the eWIC Team. Pam shared that she has only had one vendor out of 17-18 this fiscal year that operates a stand beside system for SNAP.

- Teresa M. requested that anyone who knows of a conference or other venue that may attract smaller independent retailers, to please let us know so that we can get information out.

## **7. Schedule Next eWIC Vendor Team Meetings/Conference Calls**

- Teresa M. stated that we are committed to getting the eWIC Team meetings back up and running. She acknowledged that we had a moratorium during which the State was revising the project plan and obtaining FNS approval. She advised that the project will begin to roll faster now and especially when we get the Implementation Contractor on board. She encouraged everyone's continued involvement. Teresa M. asked that everyone let us know what information you would like to see posted online as we update our webpage as well as any suggestions you may have to help the entire retailer community.
- Alison recommended that the team meet monthly via conference call and quarterly via face-to-face meetings during the third week of every month. She suggested that our next meeting be via conference call on Wednesday, August 21, 2013.
  - There were no objections to the proposed meeting schedule. Jason suggested that we consider meeting face-to-face more often as the pilot project gets closer.
  - Curtis requested that at future team meetings we begin discussing the certification process to include preliminary certification scheduling and technical requirements distribution. He mentioned that this would be helpful as he brings in change management and training teams.

## **8. Other Business/Questions/Comments**

- Mike asked if there will be a non-integrated solution. Teresa M. confirmed that a stand beside system will be an option as long as it is a certified system. She stated that we will know within a month how many stores will require this option.
- Perry asked about Bowie County, Texas accepting Arkansas WIC and participating in the pilot. Teresa M. replied that there are two stores in Bowie County that accept both Arkansas and Texas WIC. She stated that there are stores in Arkadelphia that accept Texas WIC smartcards and stores in Siloam Springs that accept Cherokee Nation WIC smartcards. Pam noted that she is currently investigating cross border store agreements and guidance.
- It was asked whether Arkansas will continue to allow stores to accept border state WIC smartcards once we roll out statewide. Pam advised that Arkansas has no objections. She mentioned that issues to consider include sharing enrollment information, separate state APL files, structured relationships, and protocol agreements.
  - Jennifer provided Nevada and Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada (ITCN) WIC programs as an example of where dual authorized stores work successfully now. She suggested that these two programs may be able to provide insights to Arkansas.
  - Norman also mentioned that New Mexico and Texas is another example in the El Paso area.
- Teresa M. reminded everyone to expect increased communication from the staff over the next three months as we update and compile information. She thanked everyone for their continued support. She also expressed the staff's excitement about WIC EBT and that we are looking forward to working with everyone.

## **9. Tour of the WIC EBT Lab**

- Bert provided those physically present with a tour of the WIC EBT Lab.

**Action Items:** Please provide the State WIC office with your corporate and store level eWIC contacts. Consider submitting an operations and a technical contact, perhaps your POS system provider, IT person, and/or store manager. Please provide the name, title, phone, fax, and email for each contact to Teresa Guerrero by email at [Teresa.Guerrero@arkansas.gov](mailto:Teresa.Guerrero@arkansas.gov) or by phone at (501) 661-2087.

**Next Meeting:** Conference Call at 1:30 on Wednesday, August 21, 2013  
We will send the conference call phone number and access code with next month's agenda.