

Western Region WIC Electronic Technology (ET) Project

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Western Region WIC Electronic Technology Project

Background

Recognizing our shared awareness that the millennium generation is engaged with the new wireless technology, especially social media, such as Facebook, YouTube, instant messaging and texting, the Western Region (WR) WIC Nutritionists contracted with Western Michigan University to determine if these trends include WIC participants. WIC programs are rethinking how to reach WIC participants and how to design online programs and services that speak to the WIC moms of today.

Key Partners and Stakeholders

USDA Western Region WIC Programs include Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Navajo Nation, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. Consultants are Altarum Institute, Amanda Hovis & Company, Limetree Research, and Western Michigan University.

Goal

The goal of the WR Electronic Technology (WR Tech) project is to discover innovative ways to serve the ever-growing, tech-savvy population and guide us towards new online approaches to communicate with WIC participants.

The WR Tech Project has three major objectives:

- 1) Identify the types of online communication tools available to deliver services and identify best practices in WIC programs similar programs throughout the United States
- 2) Identify the online communication tools used by WIC participants and future WIC families
- 3) Prioritize these technologies for strategic planning

Methods

In October, November and December 2011, the consultants conducted a total of 17 focus groups throughout the Western Region: 4 early adopters focus groups in California (1 Spanish and 3 English); 9 WIC participants focus groups: Washington (1 Spanish and 2 English), Oregon (2 English), Guam (1 English online), in Hawaii (2 English), Inter Tribal Council of Arizona (1 English), Arizona (1 Spanish), and Alaska (1 English online); and 2 future WIC families focus groups in Arizona. The early adopter focus groups were conducted in early October with the final report completed on December 13, 2011.

From November to December 9, 2011, every state and territory in the Western Region participated in the online survey.

Results

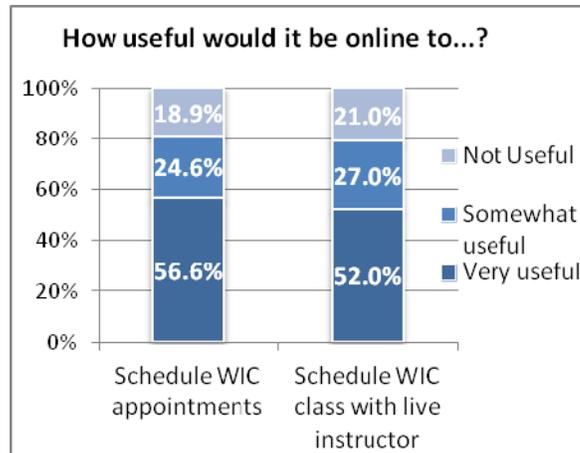
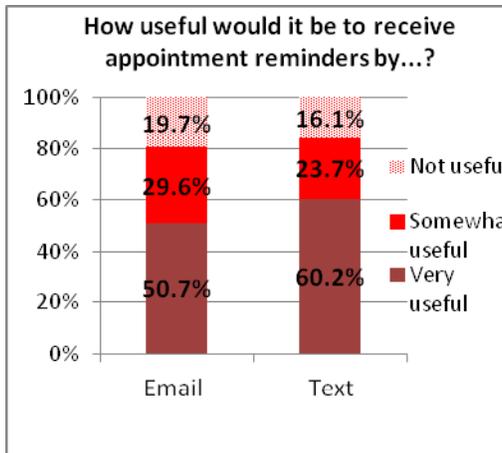
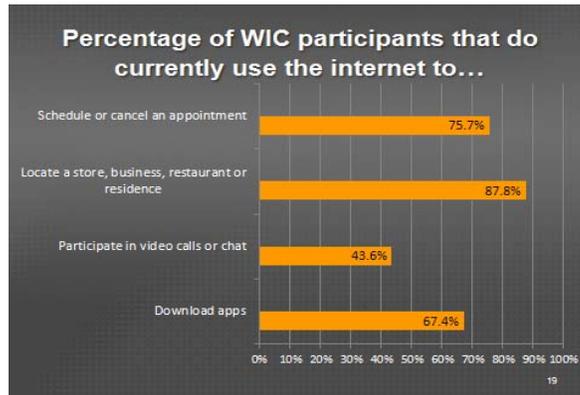
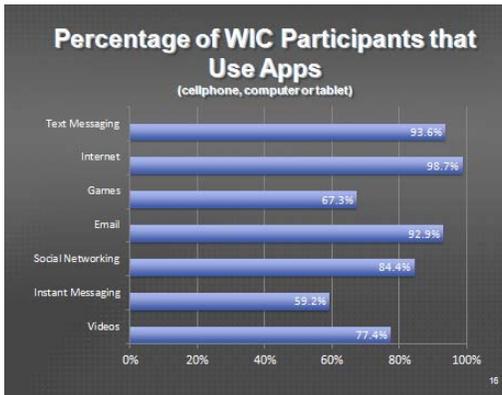
The results of the early adopter focus groups confirmed that WIC participants are engaged with the new wireless technology, especially social media and texting and are interested in online WIC services. Later on the WIC participant focus groups confirmed that most WIC participants are engaged with the new technology and part of the millennium generation trend.

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A total of 8,144 WIC participants completed the survey and 640 of the surveys were completed in Spanish. 366 (4.6%) of the participants in the survey are 15-19 years of age; 5029 (63.9%) are 20-31 years of age or in the millennial generation, and 2476 (31.5%) are 32 or more years of age.

Survey results

- 92.5% (7518) own a cell phone.
- 79% (5918) have unlimited texting
- 54.6% (4088) have unlimited data plans
- 26.9% (2021) own a basic cell phone without a data plan



Summary

We confirmed WIC participant's use of online technology and applications and interested in connecting with WIC services online. Our next steps are strategic planning and implementation.

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