

RIDGE PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

Knowledge Translation and WIC Food Package Regulation Change



The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) made major program revisions in 2009 to better align WIC food packages with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and current infant feeding practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Changes included adding a cash value voucher for fruits and vegetables, reducing certain food items, and adding more food category options. [Naisi Zhao](#), a 2017 grantee of the Tufts/UConn RIDGE Program, analyzed the WIC regulation change process through the lens of Knowledge Translation, assessing the exchange, synthesis, and application of knowledge through semi-structured interviews with key informants from WIC state agencies.

Zhao and colleagues developed a framework of Organizational Readiness for Knowledge Translation in WIC based on 1) innovation readiness, 2) personal readiness, and 3) institutional readiness. Using this framework, they found that the WIC state agency's leadership and staff teams welcomed the 2009 regulation changes with much enthusiasm for implementation. Interviewees viewed these WIC regulation changes as key to allowing the WIC program to deliver more consistent nutrition messaging. However, throughout the implementation process, WIC state agencies experienced factors hindering their organizational-level readiness to participate in Knowledge Translation activities. Interviewee-identified "impractical" regulation changes had low degrees of innovation readiness, personal readiness, and institutional readiness. In the future, researchers and policymakers could use the constructs

synthesized in this study as evaluation measures for future WIC program changes to ensure a higher degree of organizational readiness for change, more successful regulation change implementation, and a more pleasant program experience for WIC participants.

RIDGE grantee Naisi Zhao stated: "With RIDGE funding, we studied the WIC program through the lens of Knowledge Translation. The lessons we learned about innovation readiness, personal readiness, and institutional readiness could be useful for future WIC regulation change and other government food assistance programs."

Zhao, N., Chung, M., Lischko, A., & Koch-Weser, S. (2020). Knowledge Translation and WIC Food Package Regulation Change. *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*, 1-10. doi: [10.1080/07315724.2020.1810170](https://doi.org/10.1080/07315724.2020.1810170)

Zhao, N., Koch-Weser, S., Lischko, A., & Chung, M. (2020). Knowledge Translation Strategies Designed for Public Health Decision-Making Settings: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Public Health*, 1-10. doi: [10.1007/s00038-020-01506-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-020-01506-z)

A Knowledge Translation readiness checklist for WIC regulation changes

Innovation Readiness

- Change fits with existing program system/process?
- Change fits with existing program practices and food manufacturing practices?

Personal Readiness

- Change considers participants' needs?
- Participants perceive change as positive?
- Stakeholders perceive change as positive?
- Stakeholders motivated to implement change?

Institutional Readiness

- Change fits with state agency's understanding of program mission?
- Change considers varied state characteristics and circumstances?
- State agencies promptly receive information about and provide feedbacks for the proposed change?

Abridged from: Zhao et al. (2020).



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