

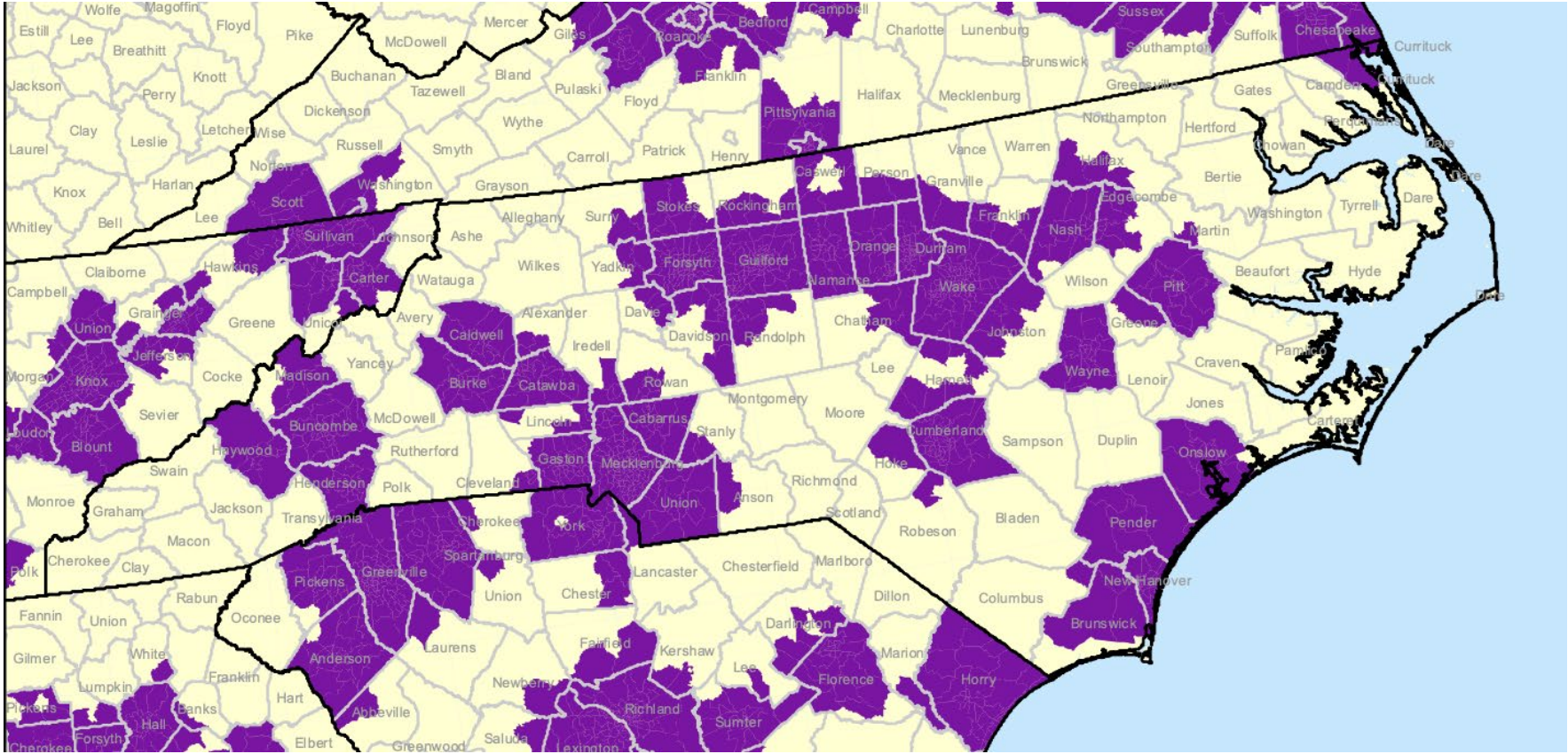
Building Partnerships with Rural Grocery Store Owners: A Case Study on Improving the WIC Shopping Experience

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Defining Rural North Carolina

Rural definition based on Economic Research Service Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA)



https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/DataFiles/53180/25587_NC.pdf?v=0

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Provides federal grants to states for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk.



(<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>)

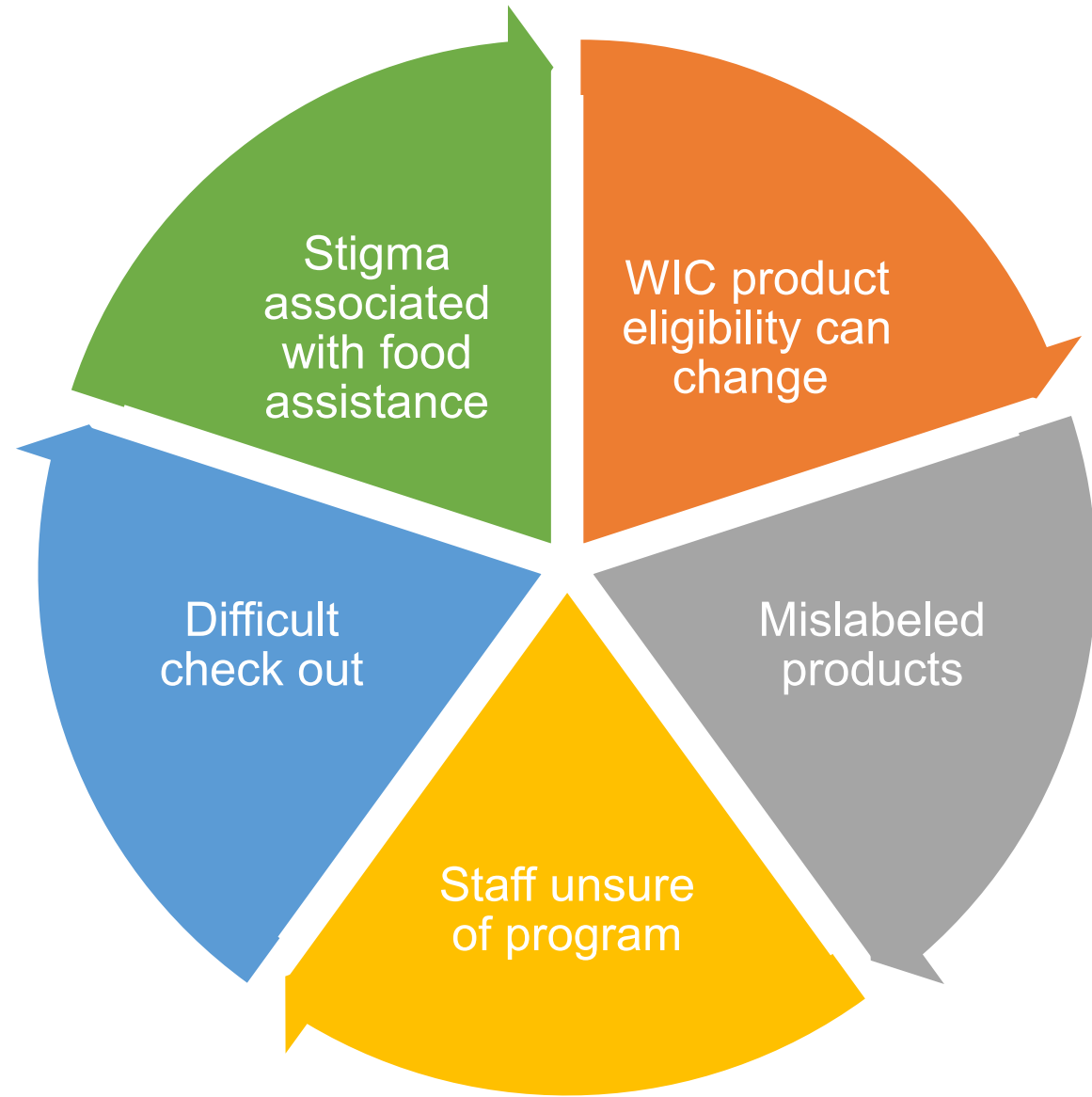
Challenges of Being a WIC Vendor

Implementing and updating POS

Brand and size requirements

Product eligibility

Individual Challenges



Study Purpose



We wanted to see if bundling products with a recipe would help participants and store owners find WIC eligible products and promote sales



Definition of bundling products - market strategy designed to increase sales by co-locating items that can be purchased together - Ex: meal delivery box (HelloFresh, Blue Apron)



Improves the shopper experience by making it easier for people to find ingredients to make a WIC-friendly recipe

Benefits of Working With a Small, Independent Grocery Store

- Independent stores don't have the same legal barriers
- Same geographic location as community members shopping at the store



Timeline of Communication for Initiating Partnership



Communication Preferences



Text, phone, email



Days and times

Ongoing Communication and Feedback

Focus group of WIC moms for input on recipes/what kind of recipes are kid-friendly

Asked moms about WIC items that were difficult for them to use

Store gave input on feasibility of co-locating recipe items



KID-FRIENDLY MEAL

Pick up a recipe card or scan the QR code
below for this week's recipe!



**NC STATE
UNIVERSITY**



Peanut Butter Yogurt Dip makes a tasty but simple snack for kids & adults!
For those with peanut allergies, try substituting almond butter or another type of nut butter.

PEANUT BUTTER YOGURT DIP

Makes 4 servings

Serving Size: 3 tablespoons

Ingredients:

- ½ cup non-fat plain yogurt
- ¼ cup peanut butter
- ¾ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
- Sliced fruit for dipping (apples, grapes, berries, etc.)

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, mix together yogurt & peanut butter. Add cinnamon if desired.
2. Serve with slices of fruit or vegetables.
3. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Study Timeline

Recruitment

- December 2020 - began contacting stores
- January 2021 - initiated contact with study store
- February 2021 - visited study store in person

Preparation

- February 2021- Signed MOU, began set up
- March 2021 - study set up with store collaboration
- March 2021 - recruitment

Intervention

- May-October 2021
- Continuous conversations, updates, and feedback between NCSU and study store

Interviews

- February 2022 - interviewed study store owner and manger

Take Aways

- Open communication- offering continuous opportunities for grocery store retailers to give feedback
- Importance of authenticity by research team
- Sharing findings with the store on an ongoing basis
- Store benefits
 - Reexamined what is WIC eligible and updated shelf labels
 - Promotional study activities led to increased store marketing
- Asked them to attend the conference - they couldn't make it but send their regards and say “hello!” It’s a looong way from Pine Level, NC!

Thank You!

- Support for this research was provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Foundation.
- Contact information for questions: salalone@ncsu.edu