Background on Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Cash Value Vouchers (CVV):

In 2005, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) published a report with recommendations for improving the nutritional value of WIC packages. Following the IOM’s recommendations, the USDA introduced the WIC CVV to the WIC community. A WIC CVV is a voucher separate from the traditional WIC food package that can only be used to purchase fruits and vegetables at authorized grocery stores. WIC CVVs may also be redeemed at registered farmers markets in 18 states plus D.C, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

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WIC CVVs provide WIC recipients with $72 to $120 over the course of a year to spend on fruits and vegetables.

Why Louisiana Needs WIC CVVs at Farmers Markets:

- Despite the number of farmers markets across the state, Louisiana does not permit WIC recipients to use WIC CVVs at farmers markets.

- 145,346 residents participated in the WIC program during 2012.

- In a 2012 national survey, Louisiana had the 5th highest WIC CVV redemption rate (93%) among survey respondents. Redemption rates could increase further by expanding to farmers markets and giving WIC recipients more options for where to use their benefits.

- 83% of Louisiana adults consume fruits and vegetables less than 5 times per day.

- 10% of Louisiana residents are low-income and do not have nearby access to a grocery store.

Louisiana’s Overall Health Rank, based on America’s Health Rankings: 48th

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Indicator</th>
<th>Louisiana’s Rank</th>
<th>Prevalence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>50th</td>
<td>35% of adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Birthweight</td>
<td>49th</td>
<td>11% of infants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>48th</td>
<td>12% of adults</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example of a State-Level Law:

In 2009, South Carolina began authorizing farmers markets accept WIC CVVs. The South Carolina WIC Program worked closely with the Department of Agriculture, grassroots organizations and farmers to carry out this process. Farmers are required to attend in person trainings to become registered WIC providers.

Projected Costs:

The Louisiana WIC Program will incur costs for time and money spent on registering farmers markets as WIC providers, conducting trainings for farmers and ensuring that farmers markets continue to meet WIC standards. Costs will vary depending on need and capacity.

Next Steps for Louisiana:

It is recommended that Louisiana farmers markets are allowed to accept WIC CVVs.

Photo courtesy of Grace Peterson/LSU AgCenter
- The Impact -

**Strengths**

- WIC CVVs at farmers markets expand access to a steady source of fruits and vegetables for low-income women, infants and children. A healthy diet is critical to child development, both during pregnancy and in childhood.
- WIC CVVs support the consumption of fruits and vegetables, a behavior that is linked to decreased rates of heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, stroke and some cancers.\(^9\)
- Higher quality food environments have been shown to decrease the risk of overweight and obesity.\(^10\)
- Boosts in produce sales at farmers markets benefit the Louisiana economy.

**Barriers**

- Farmers markets may need assistance with WIC CVV implementation and promotion.
- Seasonal availability of produce may limit the availability of WIC CVV-eligible foods at farmers markets.
- Transportation and childcare needs may limit WIC participants from visiting farmers markets.

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**Additional research briefs on Louisiana Public Health Strategies can be found at prc.tulane.edu/publications**

**Project Staff:**  
Mary Kathryn Poole, poolemarykathryn@gmail.com, 985-502-7294  
Naomi King Englar, nking2@tulane.edu, 504-988-7410

The Prevention Research Center at Tulane University  
1440 Canal St., Ste. 2301 New Orleans, LA 70112  
@TulanePRC  facebook.com/TulanePRC

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**References**