



USDA Center for WIC Modernization and Delivery

Request for Information

December 8, 2021

SUBMITTED TO

Ms. Sarah Widor, Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)
Braddock Metro Center II
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314

SUBMITTED BY

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December 8, 2021

Ms. Sarah Widor, Director
Supplemental Food Programs Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)
Braddock Metro Center II
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Ms. Widor:

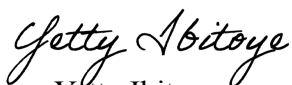
The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is seeking a qualified partner that has the skills and capabilities needed to establish a resource center that supports State and local Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) agencies in improving the WIC application and certification journey. FNS requires an experienced partner that can work alongside its staff and other contractors to rapidly deliver increased participation rates through an improved enrollment and participant experience, and to reduce disparities in WIC's program delivery. Team Fearless, composed of Fearless Solutions (Fearless), Bloom Works, and ITCON is just such a partner. For more than a decade we have demonstrated our delivery of outstanding agile digital services to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the State of Connecticut, Small Business Administration (SBA), United States Air Force (USAF), United States Digital Services (USDS), General Services Administration (GSA), and others.

As a seasoned Government contractor, we understand that FNS consumers (both Government and public end users) are eager to improve the user experience. We are able to give unique solutions to our clients in a flexible and timely way due to our proven utilization of iterative agile methods and powerful DevOps pipelines. We will be able to swiftly provide an updated, more robust user experience for FNS using these methodologies.

Team Fearless is confident that we can provide FNS with the support needed to successfully execute on all information technology integration and modernization services requirements.

If you have any questions or need to talk to me at any time, please do not hesitate to contact me at (516) 503-4144. You may also reach me via my direct email: yibitoye@fearless.tech.

Sincerely,



Yetty Ibitoye
Digital Services Manager, Fearless



Team Fearless



Fearless is an 8(a)-certified non-traditional digital services organization with 12+ years of experience employing agile techniques to accomplish digital transformation in fail-fast / succeed-fast environments. With expertise in design research, user experience (UX) design, product design and management, development, security, testing, data science, DevOps, and agile, we specialize in Design, Engineering, and Delivery. Fearless has a demonstrated track record of working with a wide range of government organizations, and we have a reputation for successful leadership, software development, and software implementation. We believe that when the government operates more efficiently, everyone benefits, and we are proud to have served customers such as the State of New Jersey, the State of Florida, the Small Business Administration (SBA), the United States Air Force (USAF), the United States Digital Services (USDS), the General Services Administration (GSA), the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and others. Our strong track record of collaborating with federal, state, and local organizations ensures that the Library can satisfy all program criteria. We've made it our mission to create software with soul, and we're dedicated to creating a world where excellent software powers the things that matter.



BLOOM WORKS

Bloom Works is a woman-owned digital services consulting business with vast expertise managing user research and implementing efficient procurements at all levels of government. Bloom has a special passion for projects in the child welfare and social benefits space. In addition to overhauling the website and communication strategy for [Connecticut's Office of Early Education](#), Bloom tested solutions to [connect families with affordable childcare](#) and built a [user-friendly data collection tool for childhood education providers](#). In 2020, Bloom partnered with the organization Think of Us to identify technology interventions that could prepare young people more effectively as they [age out of foster care](#). In 2021, Bloom worked with Code for America and Schmidt Futures to conduct extensive user research and identify opportunities to streamline WIC and SNAP delivery in the state of Connecticut.



ITCON is an expert in USDA FNS processes and procedures based on 9+ years supporting FNS applications and systems. ITCON is CMMI Level III appraised for Development (DEV) and Services (SVC), as well as ISO 9001:2015-, ISO 27001:2013-, and ISO 20000-1:2018-certified. To track stores accepting WIC, ITCON is modernizing the legacy WIC TIP application into a more streamlined, powerful, and user-friendly web-based system using the Salesforce platform called WIC Food Delivery Portal (FDP) to allow FDP Stage agency users to more easily maintain their data and improves related program integrity efforts. Additionally, ITCON has also been providing website support to the WIC Works Resource System (WWRS) and WIC Breastfeeding Support (WBFS) websites since 2019. Key achievements include implementing SOLR search on both websites, interactive quizzes on the WWRS website, recipe module implementation for WWRS, creating new social media pages for



WBFS, improving the WWRS publication ordering address validation, and enhancing the WBFS Check-In Tool. These enhancements increased overall visits to both sites with FY21 Q3 seeing a 10% increase in user visits from the previous quarter; enriched overall user experience; made the sharing of sites one click away via other social media platforms; and increased public awareness of the breastfeeding support resources, which is one of the overarching goals of USDA FNS. We also helped WIC leverage analytics tools like Siteimprove, Google Analytics, and Google.

1. What capabilities should the Center have to effectively support State and local WIC agencies in implementing new technology solutions and process changes?

Team Fearless recognizes that the primary goal is to increase WIC participation rates and overall satisfaction with the WIC program. To achieve this goal Team Fearless will take a service design, product management approach that incorporates human-centered design elements, data science, and data analytics. Second, we will work with stakeholders to develop a product management strategy, vision, and roadmap at the project outset and use design thinking, user research, HCD and iterative development practices to deliver intuitive applications that are secure, compliant, and resilient. Using such a strategy, our team has supported the State of Connecticut in a similar effort to make it faster and easier for its state residents to obtain and keep SNAP and WIC benefits.

Team Fearless was contracted to perform a thorough assessment of the SNAP website. We conducted research and provided an executive briefing to call out the high priority areas to improve the customer experience. The focus was on ensuring that content is easily found, understood, and maintained to yield an increase in SNAP benefit participation and retention. We made recommendations on responsive design and readability. We found that some of SNAP's most mission-critical pages, such as the program eligibility page and the SNAP application process page, would benefit from applying Plain Language best practices to more effectively communicate key information to be inclusive to all users. Additionally, we helped develop an interactive "SNAP Map" which was highly well received and replicated similarly across main FNS and RD websites. This map makes it much easier for users to find their state-specific information for benefits.

Working similarly with users for SBA, Team Fearless was chosen to provide development, modernization, and O&M services for SBA.gov. Our work involved legacy system O&M and updates, the redesign and development of the SBA.gov platform to deliver a consistent experience, new application development, and robust content management system support. As a result of our work, SBA's capacity to rapidly deliver powerful, user-centered applications has increased dramatically. For example, during the current coronavirus pandemic, SBA.gov has been able to maintain site availability through 5-10 times the usual amount of site traffic, and our team was able to deliver a new application for lenders in just two days. Second, our work increased conversion rates by 60% for the SBA.gov Lender Match tool in the first two weeks of launch and reduced SBA's website hosting costs by 90% through updated infrastructure.



In support of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) Blue Button 2.0 requirement, Team Fearless scaled CMS's existing Blue Button 2.0 prototype to production, allowing users to easily and securely access their claims data and connect it to trusted applications, providers, services, and research programs. Similar to WIC's various user types, Blue Button 2.0 supports more than 47 million beneficiaries, as well as some 1,200 developers in its Sandbox environment. The outcomes were a scalable platform, a shortened amount of time to access Medicare claims from months to just days, beneficiary API usage that exceeded the 2018 goal by 400%, and a platform that is accessible to mobile users using the cutting-edge OAuth extension Proof Key for Code Exchange (PCKE). For their outstanding work, our Blue Button team received the CMS Administrator's Achievement Award, the FedHealthIT 2018 Innovation Award, and special recognition at the 2018 Blue Button 2.0 Developer Conference.

We use agile methodologies to create tightly-knit teams that balance structure with flexibility, and we will work with FNS to find the best agile method to achieve the desired outcomes of increased WIC reach and elevated participant satisfaction. On every project, we employ lean startup practices and principles like minimum viable products and tight feedback loops. We use methods like Planning Poker to estimate story points, working with Product Owners to prioritize the backlog and iteratively deliver. This approach minimizes risk by enabling us to pivot every sprint and work with customer's evolving needs.

Team Fearless is energized by the opportunity to support the WIC digital transformation, and we understand that actually implementing new solutions is only half the battle. Ensuring that the modernized WIC platform is adopted will be just as critical, and this will be impossible without getting buy-in from the people who will be using it. We have deep experience building trust with stakeholders and other contractor groups to establish truly badgeless agile cultures, having done so on our CMS Blue Button 2.0 contract. We understand that many stakeholders are unfamiliar with methods like agile and human-centered design (HCD), and shifting to modern digital services practices can be daunting. On our Blue Button 2.0 contract, we focused on building trust with our stakeholders to make them as comfortable as possible as we introduced new practices. Teaching them about the value of iterative delivery and constantly communicating with them to align on goals, we were able to unite stakeholders with the team around a series of quick wins early in the process. This allowed us to show — rather than tell — CMS about the value of iterative agile delivery. We then maintained this engagement by giving regular demos that celebrated successes and hosting feedback sessions so we could adjust priorities to support changing stakeholder needs. Thanks to this strategy, we were able to build strong relationships across the agency and gain full support from the CMS leadership chain. We will apply the same proven techniques to the WIC modernization project to promote the highest level of user adoption by the states and the individual participants.

Our human-centered Design (HCD) is founded on design thinking, a solution and outcome focused approach that makes systems usable and helpful by concentrating on human needs. We will expand on the research our team has done to date and review any previously conducted research and user feedback from USDA to understand the current state of user engagement and satisfaction for both the states and the individual user groups. From there we will conduct discovery activities such as interviews, focus groups, surveys, and shadowing, to gain an understanding of the current interactions of WIC users with the systems and uncover likes,



dislikes, and pain points. From this research we will develop user stories and journey maps to arrive at the highest value elements to improve the user experience and yield the desired outcome of increased program participation. Additionally, we will meet with state and local agencies involved in administering these programs to better understand technological, operational, and cultural challenges they face in delivering WIC services.

Effective data science will be critical to this project to enable WIC to take raw data and put context behind it. Through the discovery phase, we will gather data sources that should be considered as we begin to decide what would bring the most value to WIC administrators. We will hold discussions with the WIC Program Office to ensure that the correct metrics are being tracked and measured to best position the government to use the information for decision making. Additionally, Team Fearless will review the specific information gathering mediums to ensure the data is inclusive of all geographic and demographic segments. For example, we will investigate how to appropriately capture data for program participants who are non-registered immigrants to ensure that they have access to the full scope of program benefits.

By leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as machine learning (ML), WIC can transform the way the organization interacts with information. Large-scale data systems that have deployed ML have paved the way for intelligent decision support, providing real-time outcomes for decision-makers while serving as a feedback loop to measure success. Additionally, this intelligence can be built into applications over time in order to make appropriate recommendations to decision-makers and measure the efficacy of decisions, thus increasing successful outcomes. Machine learning techniques can also determine where and when users experience success and frustration when using the WIC system. For example, if users tend to get stuck on a certain page of an on-line form, a timed chat bot could be used to pop up and offer assistance to help the user through the form. This will also provide valuable information to make changes and adjustments to the page to improve the user experience.

The [USDA WIC program](#) serves all 50 states, 34 First Nations, American Samoa, District of Columbia, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. With [6.2 million participants](#), that is a lot of data to collect, analyze, and report on to determine participation, effectiveness, trends, and overall reach. Team Fearless has been successful in building powerful platforms capable of integrating, processing, and visualizing multi-source data for a variety of customers (see **Table 1**) including SBA.gov's Development Services project, which has the capacity to scale to support upwards of 20 million users.

Based on our findings during Discovery for the WIC project, our team will leverage custom scripts or Extract-Transform-Load (ETL) tools to integrate data into a data warehouse as needed and in accordance with data privacy regulations and State-Federal data sharing agreements. We will provide a robust reporting portal to link up data from all participating WIC entities to allow the USDA Program Office to have visibility into program operations. Data must also be visually interpreted and presented to users in a way that allows them to take the data and transform it into action. A real-time dashboard feed will deliver powerful data visualizations to allow the Program Office to make informed decisions to increase, retain, and assist WIC participants. One area to



explore would be how to integrate data from retail grocery establishments to determine use of WIC benefits to gather even more granular details about program participation.

Table 1: Team Fearless’ successful experience with data management and analytics.

Capabilities	Where we have done it
Data Governance & Data Catalog	Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Intelligence Mission Data Management, Analysis and Reporting System (IMARS) and USCIS BDSO
Data Architect and Data Modeling	DIA Modernizing Intelligence Analysis & Decision Making Through Disruptive Data Analytics & Unclassified Intelligence (MIA) and DIA Pivot to Unclassified Intelligence and Rapid-Prototyping Environment (Pivot), National Archives and Records Administration National Archives Catalog Minimum Viable Product (MVP)
Master Data Management	DIA IMARS, USCIS BDSO
Cloud Database and Data Management	DIA MIA, DIA Pivot, DIA IMARS, USCIS BDSO
ETL and Data Integration and Migration	DIA IMARS, USAF Enterprise-Wide Modernization, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Cloud Operations and Migration Services (COMS)
Data Privacy and Security	USCIS BDSO, CMS Blue Button 2.0, CMS Beneficiary Claims Data API, USAF JOCAS
Data Virtualization	USAF ARMS Jump Module (JUMP)
Data Analytics and Visualization	USCIS BDSO, Small Business Administration (SBA) HUBZone, DIA MIA, DIA Pivot
Data Access and Sharing	DIA IMARS, USCIS BDSO, JOCAS, USAF ARMS, USAF JUMP

We strongly suggest establishing a Center of Excellence (CoE) to provide a shared resource for leadership, best practices, research, support and/or training for the WIC modernization efforts. Through the CoE, the states will be able to share valuable best practices and provide support and direction on organizational change management, standardized approaches/processes, tools, methodologies and knowledge centers. The CoE will provide a centralized collaboration hub for all participating WIC entities. States that have undergone the modernization first - the “trail blazers” — will be able to share what worked, what needed improvement, and the outcomes they realized from the digital transformation of the WIC platform in their state. Team Fearless will establish secure Confluence and GitHub sites to store and provide easy access to documents, policies, training resources, templates, and code repositories available for reuse. The CoE will promote the standardization of program elements across the entire WIC ecosystem while at the same time allowing the flexibility to customize program elements to meet the unique variables of each state based on participant needs. The CoE will provide FNS insight into and governance of the WIC program as it is being promoted across each state and analyze program data collectively and by state.



2. How should the Center evaluate WIC State agency needs and prioritize projects?

Team Fearless has extensive experience in utilizing existing and conducting additional research to understand user needs and pain points. To support the WIC modernization effort, we will begin with a “desk review” of the existing WIC research followed by a discovery sprint to uncover any remaining gaps. We will engage users through interviews, focus groups, webinars, and surveys to pinpoint program areas that will realize the greatest impact from enhanced functionality. Our team will meet with WIC customer service representatives, nutritionists, administrators, vendor committees, WIC participants, translators, grocery store administrators & staff, educators, recipe developers, and help desk personnel to uncover trends in the WIC participants' experience. For example, feedback on the program forms will be beneficial to determine if participants are able to complete them without frustration and delay. Also, learning more about the current notification options will be helpful to disseminate critical updates to WIC participants in their preferred communication method. From this data, WIC participant experience score cards will be produced to show the ease of use and level of satisfaction with the program benefits.

Team Fearless will aggregate existing and new research into a single repository and use data science tools such as artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) to identify trends, key words, and sentiments. This provides a statistical snapshot into the overall program satisfaction, as well as calling out areas where improvements are most highly needed. Using Team Fearless' AI/ML based BRaiND (e.g. Brand), both negative and positive online WIC social media mentions can be flagged. BRaiND saves time and effort when addressing and resolving customer service trends, allowing WIC to proactively make program adjustments to continually meet participant needs. From this we will determine a path forward to increase program participation, reduce participant attrition, streamline the delivery of services, and reduce disparities that may exist in participant demographics.

From our experience in working with the State of Connecticut on a similar requirement, Team Fearless suggests that the focus of the modernization be on reducing burden for the WIC participants and increasing program participation.

1) Reduce participant burden: The WIC program is designed to provide easy access to those in need of sustenance support by streamlining entry for participants through user-friendly on-line applications. Ways to measure reduced burden include:

- Opt-in uptake: We will track and report on the number of participants in the program who complete application fields in their entirety, providing WIC with the greatest amount of information possible. Percentage of individuals who opt-in to sharing information with WIC, calculated out of those who are shown the question. A larger percentage indicates higher value, but this number will never be 100% because some participants will already be enrolled in WIC and some participants will determine they are not eligible for WIC.
- Conversion from referrals: The percentage of those who opt-in to having their data shared with WIC who are ultimately certified for WIC. FNS may choose to measure multiple steps in this process, including the percent of individuals WIC can reach, the percent who successfully make a certification appointment, the percent who attend the appointment,



and the total percent ultimately certified. For comparison, Colorado utilizes a centralized benefits application.

- Proportion of applications coming in via this channel: The percent of new families interested in WIC that enter WIC via other avenues rather than by directly contacting WIC (or via the online WIC interest form in discussion).

(2) Increased WIC participation: Overall the government would like to see higher enrollment in WIC, particularly among pregnant individuals and children ages 1-4. The modernization initiative is intended to increase WIC enrollment by reaching more eligible people and offering them an option to enroll in WIC. [In fiscal year 2019](#), children 1-4 years of age made up 51 percent of all participants, while infants constituted 25 percent and women constituted 24 percent. Drawing upon our user research, we will develop a path to educate and encourage continued program participation for children through age 5. Engagement efforts at both the WIC administrator level and at the program participant level will be explored to retain participants for the maximum allowed benefit period.

3. How should the Center work with State and local WIC agencies to help them modernize their WIC programs and improve the participant journey through WIC?

We have found that state and local WIC agencies need to make it easy and welcoming to applicants to obtain benefits, especially with the forms that users need to fill out and/or the notifications received from their WIC agency. The process should be inclusive and accessible for all those who seek benefits (i.e., simplified and streamlined).

We highly recommend a Service Design approach that state and local agencies could implement, where the entire user journey is consistent end-to-end, from each touch point of the process for participants. We envision the Center developing a universal model that could be adopted by all state and local agencies, achieved through a CoE approach. The Center would form one designated body (the CoE) that is responsible for developing the overall service design concept. The CoE would create the model for expanded roll out, identify which states stand to benefit most from digital transformation of the WIC engagement and then reach out to these states to implement the model. The ultimate goals of the CoE model would be to 1) make the process of obtaining benefits easier for those who need them, and 2) make it easier to combine state information into one single repository, so the Center can track how and where WIC benefits are being used.

One immediate modernization solution that the CoE could implement is to supply more usable forms and notifications for beneficiaries. In our work for the redesign of Connecticut's Office of Early Education's website and communication approach, Team Fearless found immense success in simply redesigning the notification letters that beneficiaries receive, as illustrated in Figure 1. Some user feedback metrics gathered include:

- Faster due date recognition with 100% accuracy
- Clarity increased from 50% to 83.5%
- Beneficiaries felt more confident taking on action items
- Increase in urgency and agency from beneficiaries



Figure 1: Easy to read notices for the State of Connecticut WIC and SNAP beneficiaries.
Notice of Missed Interview: Old (L) and New (R)

DSS Scanning Center
PO Box 1320
Manchester, CT 06045-9968

State of Connecticut
Department of Social Services

W-0108N (Rev. 03/15)

Notice of Missed Interview

Case ID: [REDACTED]
Client ID: [REDACTED]
06/21/2021

Dear [REDACTED]:

This is a reminder that you need to have an interview so we can decide if you are eligible for the following program(s):

Program(s)	Initial Interview Due Date	Denial Date(s)
SNAP	06/19/2021	07/07/2021

We asked you to contact us by the interview due date to have the interview, but our records show that the interview was not done.

If you still want to apply for benefits, you must call the Benefit Center at 1-855-626-6632 and have your interview by the denial date to complete your application.

Your application will be denied if you do not have your interview and send us all of the required proofs we asked for by the denial date(s).

If you already had your interview, please check your application status by using your MyAccount at www.connect.ct.gov or by calling the Benefit Center at 1-855-626-6632 and following the directions. If you have any questions, you may call the Benefit Center at 1-855-626-6632.

Sincerely,
Connecticut Department of Social Services

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and have a TTD/TTY device can contact DSS at 1-800-842-4524. Persons who are blind or visually impaired, can contact DSS at 1-800-424-5040.

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DSS Scanning Center
PO Box 1320
Manchester, CT 06045-9968

John Doe
123 Hartford Street
Apartment 2
Our Town, CT 06045-9968

Notice of Missed Interview

Full Legal Name: **Jane Doe**

You missed your interview that was due by: 00/00/2021

Your application for SNAP will be denied on: 00/00/2021

Here's what you need to do:

- Call the Benefit Center** at 1-855-626-6632 to complete your interview
Benefit Center hours: MTTTF 7:30am-4:00pm. Wait time varies.
Use our call back feature to manage your time.
- Gather required proofs (if needed)**
Find and make copies of documents.
- Submit required proofs (if needed) before 00/00/21. Don't wait!**
Submit online at connect.ct.gov
Mail it in in the envelope we sent you.
Turn in physical copies at your local DSS office.

If you've already had your interview, please ignore this notice and check your case status by using your MyAccount at www.connect.ct.gov or by calling the Benefit Center at 1-855-626-6632 and following the directions.

Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and have a TTD/TTY device can contact DSS at 1-800-842-4524. Persons who are blind or visually impaired, can contact DSS at 1-800-424-5040.

State of Connecticut Department of Social Services
55 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT 06105-3725

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4. How should the Center share and promote the reuse of best practices, solutions, code, reference implementations, and other resources among WIC State agencies to help them address common operational issues that impact the customer experience?

Team Fearless has successfully established Communities of Practice (CoPs) to support change management, promote a high rate of user adoption, and share best practice.

In support of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Office of Information Technology (CMS OIT), Team Fearless assisted in establishing a change management process to allow human-centered design (HCD) principles to be integrated into the Infrastructure User Services Group. We provided a variety of training to introduce HCD concepts to Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services (CMCS) users. We established open, college professor style office hours to provide support to CMS stakeholders and focused, 30-minute sessions with an HCD subject matter expert to provide immersion HCD training. On-going, as needed, assistance is provided within two hours to address HCD help desk questions. Feedback from the sessions indicated that the CMCS project teams would like more targeted training for their specific requirements which requires more capacity and SMEs. CMCS project teams indicated that they would like additional SME support to address the challenges they are experiencing with fully embracing HCD concepts. Similarly, at New America, we experienced a positive response to the CoP concept through convening a cohort of State leaders to share successes and workshop challenges being experienced in the Foster Care system.



We believe in communicating early, often, and through a variety of channels to meet all communication style preferences. Team Fearless uses Confluence to house program documentation and implementation details in an on-line library and GitHub to provide permission-based access to project code repositories for State use. Our team has developed and maintained a dashboard for Foster Care innovation and compliance and will use a similar approach to provide WIC with at-a-glance insight into over program statistics and data by each State. An easy to use dashboard will allow WIC to quickly review program participation by State and identify areas where goals are being met and where they are falling short.

5. How would you define and measure success for the Center?

Team Fearless understands that the ultimate measure of success is the sustained increase of WIC participation and FNS digital service maturity. Our agile and DevOps processes are well-suited to rapid feature development; we have delivered MVPs to Government customers in as little as 8 weeks and continuously built upon them to add functionality and value. To offer additional capability, we will regularly work with WIC to get a clear understanding of the short- and mid-term product needs. We will continuously explore recommendations for measuring increased WIC participation, retention, and reducing disparity as we iteratively build our solution. We will also work with WIC stakeholders to scope out the long-term product needs and maintain a living product roadmap, as well as product backlogs, success criteria, and user stories. After establishing this initial scope, we will continue testing functionality with users, adding more depth and polish as we validate functionality and usability.

For new features, our product team will also work closely with WIC to scope out the most basic version of the end-to-end functionality required for the feature. We will also conduct user research and discovery with application users to keep up with their expectations, particular needs, and pain points. To properly test new features for acceptance, Team Fearless will work with WIC to write acceptance criteria for each story or feature. In alignment with the Government's requirements, we will update the product roadmap for scaling the MVP through continuous design and agile processes.

6. What risks do you foresee in establishing a Center to support WIC State agencies? How would you mitigate those risks?

The success of a centralized CoE or a Community of Practice (CoP) will be highly dependent upon the level of user engagement across all states - nationwide - and at the individual state level. As some states' WIC programs are more mature than others, we recommend beginning with tailored support to meet each state "where they are". Over time as states progress in their use of the CoE and CoP resources and their programs expand through leveraging the best practices used by the more mature states, Team Fearless will update their specific sites to ensure the resources remain current.

The risks associated with establishing CoE and CoP resources are easily mitigated through planning and engagement initiatives such as:



Risk	Resolution
Lack of engagement	Establishing regular meetings and collaborative group events to encourage information sharing and communication. Create a culture where the CoE or CoP is embedded in daily interactions through messages, updates, and notifications.
Low user adoption	Hold user onboarding and training sessions to demonstrate the value of the CoE, CoP, and digital transformation enhancements. Provide a clear training and engagement plan supported by hard copy, video, audio materials to meet all learning styles. Demonstrate the outcomes that will result from the digital transformation such as improved workflow and increased WIC program reach and participation.
Application Best Practices	Sharing “what works and what doesn’t” through a CoE or CoP will save the WIC program time and money. States will be able to see the outcomes from engagement efforts and outreach initiatives and leverage this information to replicate similar outcomes for their WIC participants.
Prioritization of State Onboarding	Through an understanding of the current maturity of each state and the research Team Fearless conducts, a plan for onboarding states will be developed based on criteria collectively determined by Team Fearless and FNS. We anticipate priority will be given to those states that will gain the highest increase in WIC participation based on research findings. Selecting a state to show an “early win” will demonstrate the value of digital transformation for the WIC program and promote buy-in from the other states.

7. Do you have any other feedback or suggestions on this Center-based approach? Please describe in detail.

We would like to reiterate the CoE concept. Because it would be created at the Center-based level, it would comprise WIC experts who would discover and fully understand what state and local agencies need in order to improve the WIC benefits process. The CoE model would centralize and streamline the modernization process, and ultimately establish consistency across all agencies. Having implemented the CoE strategy in multiple projects, we know the CoE model works well for large, cross-agency modernization efforts.

