Preliminary Title: The Economic Impacts of Breastfeeding: A Focus on USDA’s WIC Program

Type of Report (ERR, EIB, EB, TB, SOR,): ERR

Agency: Economic Research Service USDA

Agency Contact: Cindy Nickerson, cnickerson@ers.usda.gov

Subject of Review: In March 2018, Congress directed USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) to report on the economic benefits of breastfeeding, including its potential cost-savings for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and Medicaid programs. This study, a result of that directive, found that if 2016 breastfeeding rates among WIC participants had hypothetically increased to medically-recommended levels, the number of mothers who participated in WIC that year would have increased by an estimated 646 thousand per month, an 8 percent increase in the total number of WIC participants. WIC program costs would have risen by an estimated $7.6 million, or by less than 1 percent (0.13 percent) of WIC’s total cost in 2016. Federal Medicaid costs would have decreased by at least $107.5 million, resulting in an estimated decrease of $99.9 million in combined Federal WIC and Medicaid costs. In addition, health-related cost savings (that accrue to WIC households or their health insurance providers) would have totaled $9.1 billion (excluding the savings that accrue to the Federal portion of Medicaid).

Purpose of Review: The purpose of the review is to ensure the high-quality of the economic analysis, transparent explanation of methods, objective interpretation of results, and effective communication to the intended audience.

Type of Review: [X] Individual Reviewers


Number of Reviewers: [X] 4 to 10

Primary Disciplines/Types of Expertise Needed for Review: Economists

Opportunities for Public Comment? [X] No

If yes, briefly state how and when these opportunities will be provided:
How:
When:

Peer Reviewers Provided with Public Comments? [X] No

Public Nominations Requested for Review Panel? [X] No