

Voluntary Pre-Applicant Teleconference
Request for Application 17-01
CalFresh Outreach Plan
Wednesday, March 16, 2016

The answers to the follow-up questions and additional questions raised during the teleconference will be posted no later than March 25, 2016, close of business

General Question	
Q	If CDSS intends to read responses to submitted questions from a chart on the March 16th teleconference, as was done on the CalFresh RFA 15-01 teleconference in 2014, can the chart be made available ahead of time to help avoid confusion and so that participants can follow along?
A	Yes, CDSS will provide the submitted questions during the teleconference.
Attachments Questions	
Q	<p>The following attachments indicate that they must be signed IF they apply to the organization. If the attachment is not relevant to our organization, should we: Attachments: #9—Disclosure of Lobbying Activities #12—FFATA Form #13—Darfur Contracting Certification #14—Iran Contracting Act</p> <p>1) Submit a document with language written over the front stating “[organization] is not required to complete this form because [insert reason]”? 2) Submit blank copies of the form with no information on them? 3) Not submit the form at all?</p> <p>If the latter #3, should we still check the box on the checklist as though we’ve completed the form?</p>
A	From the instructions at the top of the Submission Checklist Attachment 2, "A complete application package must consist of the items identified below. Complete this RFA Submission Checklist to confirm all items are in the application. Place a check mark next to each item that is submitted to CDSS. Applications missing any required item(s) on this RFA Submission Checklist may be deemed non-responsive and the application rejected. "CDSS Contracts and Accounting Bureaus require these documents. Please complete and sign the forms.
Q	Page 9, number 4. Does each subcontractor need to complete and submit attachment 4?
A	No. There is only one attachment 4 submitted with each application. Attachment 4, Section J.4.a-d states: "For each subcontracting agency in the application, include a description with the full legal name of the organization, full legal address, website, and a paragraph that provides a brief description of the agency."

	"Provide a narrative that describes the capability of this subcontractor to participate successfully in the CFO Plan. The narrative should provide the following information and must not exceed one page for each subcontractor: 1) organization description; 2) qualifications and experience; 3) contribution their services and expertise will add to the program; 4) necessity of using the subcontractor."
Q	Please specify the documentation that must be included in the proposal for sub-contractors. For example: Indirect Cost Certification, Proof of Non-Profit Status, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, etc.
A	For RFA's including subcontractors, complete Section J.4.a-d in Attachment 4. Include Attachment 6 a-d and Attachment 7 for all subcontractors. Include one copy of your own MOU or one copy of the included MOU template (Attachment 8).
Q	Applying agencies and subcontractors are instructed to use Attachment 7 to submit program deliverable estimates and narratives. Where should the narratives go in Attachment 7? There does not appear to be a designated space. (p. 12 of 41)
A	Section K.2.a states "provide a one to two page program deliverables narrative that describes how the agency plans to meet and demonstrate completion of program deliverables (Items 1-5). The program deliverables section in the Application Narrative (Attachment 4) must <u>align</u> with Program Deliverables Worksheet (Attachment 7)." Applying Agencies and subcontractors will provide their deliverables in the Program Deliverables Worksheet, Attachment 7. Applying agencies and subcontractors will provide their narrative in the Application Narrative, Attachment 4.
Q	The instructions say responses should be entered into the text boxes and provide page limits. Are the page limits for the text in the text box only, or do they include the text and formatting that is part of Attachment 4? For example, the first question has a two page limit but above the text box a quarter of the page is already taken up – does the quarter of the page used in the heading, title, instructions, subheading, and question count against the two page limit?
A	The page limit for each response should not exceed the stated maximum number of pages within the text box (standard 8.5 x 11 inch sheet). The heading, title, instructions, subheading and questions do not count against the two page limit.
Q	Section J.4.a-d contains a text box for one-page narratives for each applying subcontractor. We anticipate that entering 50 one-page narratives into the text box will be difficult for reviewers to read due to formatting and volume. Will CDSS accept subcontractor narratives as a separate document outside of Attachment 4? (p. 5 of 6)
A	Attachment 4, Section J.4.a-d states: "For each subcontracting agency in the application, include a description with the full legal name of the organization, full legal address, website, and a paragraph that provides a brief description of the agency."

	<p>"Provide a narrative that describes the capability of this subcontractor to participate successfully in the CFO Plan. The narrative should provide the following information and must not exceed one page for each subcontractor: 1) organization description; 2) qualifications and experience; 3) contribution their services and expertise will add to the program; 4) necessity of using the subcontractor."</p> <p>In keeping with Attachment 4 instructions, please provide a narrative as described and not to exceed one page for each subcontractor. Set each subcontractor apart in whatever way you think will make the separation apparent for the reviewer.</p>
Q	The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 Form appears only to apply to county welfare departments. Please clarify whether nonprofit applicants are required to complete the form. If the form is required of nonprofit applicants, please provide guidance on how to fill it out.
A	CDSS Accounting requires an FFATA form to identify an organization's DUNS number. The current FFATA form posted with the RFA is incorrect. Please refer to the revised FFATA form as mentioned in the upcoming addendum on the CalFresh Outreach website. The updates will be posted no later March 25, 2016.
Exhibits Questions	
Q	What is the penalty if we do not reach our projected approved number?
A	There is no penalty language other than possible contractual default.
Q	Exhibit B, pg. 5: Please provide the CDSS definition for "Line Item Shift".
A	<p>Exhibit B, Attachment 3 defines budget categories as Personnel Expenses, Fringe Benefits, Operating Expenses, Travel, Equipment, Subcontracts, Other Costs and Indirect Costs.</p> <p>In Exhibit B, Attachment 1 and 2, the table below each budget category is to be completed by the contractor or subcontractor. Each row in the table below the budget category represents a line item.</p> <p>Line Item Shifts are allowed between each row in the table.</p>
Q	Exhibit E: Do insurance requirements apply to subcontractors, or only Prime Contractors?
A	The insurance requirement applies to the Applying Agency for the CalFresh Outreach RFA 17-01.
Q	There is currently Trailer Bill language that, if passed, would allow CDSS to issue Cooperative Agreements instead of contracts. If that language passes, will organizations funded through this RFA be under Cooperative Agreements? If the answer is yes, what, if anything, does CDSS anticipate will change (e.g., greater flexibility in budget and scope of work adjustments)?
A	A Trailer Bill is in process. However, CDSS cannot comment on pending legislation. Approval is

	not guaranteed.
Q	Please clarify what are considered “confidential CDSS data files,” as it is unclear what confidential CDSS data files contractors and subcontractors may be accessing. We agree that keeping clients’ personal data confidential and secure is of the utmost importance. As such, this information is not currently provided to CDSS by contractors, nor does CDSS request it from contractors. (p. 2 of 9)
A	<p>Exhibit E, Attachment 1 is required by CDSS for subvention contracts where any client information may be shared with a contractor, such as when a CalFresh application assist takes place.</p> <p>Confidential data is defined in Exhibit E, Attachment 1 as "information, the disclosure of which is restricted or prohibited by any provision of law. Some examples of “confidential information” include, but are not limited to, public social services client information described in California Welfare and Institutions Code section 10850, and “personal information” about individuals as defined in California Civil Code section 1798.3 of the Information Practices Act (IPA) if the disclosure of the “personal information” is not otherwise allowed by the IPA. Confidential data include personal identifiers."</p>
Funding Questions	
Q	Can “County” CalFresh outreach dollars be used for match?
A	<p>RFA Definitions Section Z defines State Share as "The contractor’s qualifying CFO contribution, derived from non-Federal funds. The contractor’s State Share contribution cannot be used as match or reimbursement under any other Federal program. State Share contributions are funded by the Applying Agency during the contract term."</p> <p>County CalFresh administration funding cannot be used to match County dollars because County funding is already used to fully leverage Federal funding.</p>
Q	Page 21, number 6 letter b. Does percent of total program costs include both the state and federal share?
A	Yes. Subcontractor budgets are combined (State and Federal Share). Subcontractor Federal Share is the percentage a prime contractor agrees to reimburse subcontractors for total program dollars spent on CalFresh Outreach program deliverables.
Q	Can a prime contractor reimburse a subcontractor a mutually agreed upon percentage of total programs costs after invoices have been approved by CDSS?
A	Yes. A subcontractor operates under an MOU with a prime contractor. The MOU specifies the reimbursement amount agreed upon between a prime and subcontractor. Prime contractors approve invoices submitted by subcontractors for allowable program costs incurred producing program deliverables. CDSS approves invoices submitted by prime contractors. Prime contractors reimburse subcontractors federal share dollars for each subcontractor as documented in invoice documentation and approved by CDSS.

Q	CDSS will be retaining 23 percent of federal share dollars. Aside from staffing, what does CDSS intend to spend the federal share on and will any of it be spent on items that will go to contractors and subcontractors (e.g., brochures, CalFresh tablecloths, toolkits, laptops/tablets). Having a better idea of what CDSS will be able to furnish will help ensure we allocate funds appropriately in our budget.
A	FNS only authorizes state agencies to conduct Outreach. California has chosen to subcontract Outreach through prime contractors and their subcontractors. The intent of CDSS is to use the dollars to improve the program for all contractors at a statewide level. CDSS will reimburse contractors up to a total of 77 percent of the State Share expenditures contributed by the agency. The remaining monies (23 percent) will be used by CDSS for program oversight, training and program improvement. These activities include but are not limited to: staffing, CalFresh outreach materials for contractors, travel to provide technical assistance to contractors, geo-coding, focus groups, statewide phone line, training and conferences for the contractors and subcontractors.
Personnel Question	
Q	Can you please clarify the duty statement requirement? Do you have sample?
A	The Applying Agency is required to include a duty statement for each position type being proposed in the CalFresh Outreach RFA 17-01. Examples of what the state uses as duty statements can be found at the CalHR website (https://www.jobs.ca.gov/).
Program Deliverables Questions	
Q	Can more than one subcontractor focus on Item 5 while others focus on Items 1-4 as long as the rest of the statement is held true? If yes to the above question, can the Applying Agency/Prime develop deliverables for the subcontractor(s) that are different than the examples included in the RFA under Section K.1.e as long as they support the deliverable definition of “partnering with counties and CBOs to address barriers to participation and meet the overall goals of the CFO Plan”?
A	Yes. All subcontract agencies can support all program deliverables. However, if a prime contractor wants one subcontractor to focus on program deliverable Item 5 and another subcontractor to focus on program deliverables Items 1-4, this is allowable as long as the overall program deliverables fit within budget parameters . All program deliverables must be allowable activities based on Section K of the RFA and USDA State Outreach Plan Guidance. Creating strong partnerships with CWDs is noted in the RFA Section K.1.e.4 as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Understand the county’s preferred method of application submission" • "Understand the minimum requirements necessary to submit a complete application" • "Explore collaboration efforts to provide better client application experiences and results"
Q	Please define what is meant by “It is beyond the scope of this RFA for contractors to obtain

	application status on each paper or electronic application from their CWD.”
A	Time spent contacting CWDs to obtain application status diverts prime and subcontractor time away from allowable program deliverable activities. It is not the intent of this RFA that contractors use their time pursuing application status.
Q	Under program deliverable Item 5, the RFA includes creating “strong relationships with local CWDs to...understand the minimum requirements necessary to submit a complete application.” This implies that what constitutes a complete application may vary across counties, which should not be the case. Please clarify. (p. 11 of 41)
A	Program Deliverable Item 5 recommends for the CBO to work with their CWDs to determine what is needed to be submitted when completing a CalFresh application on behalf of the client. However, each county has its own business process. Determining what assists each county most should yield best results for clients and good working relationships between CBOs and counties. One objective of the CFO program is to encourage a synergistic relationship between counties and CBOs. Creating strong partnerships with CWDs is noted in the RFA Section K.1.e.4 as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Understand the county’s preferred method of application submission" • "Understand the minimum requirements necessary to submit a complete application" • "Explore collaboration efforts to provide better client application experiences and results"
Q	One of the population groups identified on p. 21 of 41 is “mixed-status households.” Is CDSS referring to mixed-immigration status households (versus employed/unemployed, senior/non-senior, etc.)?
A	RFA Definition Section Z defines mixed-status households as a household whose members include people with different citizenship or immigration statuses.
Q	CDSS has identified seven target groups. It is possible that one household may fall into many, if not all, of the groups. Current CalFresh outreach contractors were told to “choose the group you think the client identifies the most with” for reporting under the FFY 2015-2016 contract, resulting in inaccurate numbers that do not truly reflect the people being reached. Will CDSS be modifying its approach for FFYs 2017 and 2018? (p. 5 of 5)
A	Yes. Contractors will select all applicable target populations that apply and the CalFresh applicant identifies with.
Q	If we keep our own application approval records in partnership with counties, can we use that report for our electronic and paper application approved deliverable instead of the CDSS report?
A	It is the intent of CDSS to free up contractors from the time and burden of reporting program deliverable items 1 and 2. CDSS will provide reports of the number of electronic application approved, denied and pending. It is beyond the scope of this RFA for contractors to obtain application status on each paper application from their CWD.

Q	If we use a computer to complete a PDF application and submit that via email to the county, is that considered electronic?
A	No, a PDF CalFresh application is not the same as an electronic application submitted through the consortia containing a valid electronic signature. The definition of an electronic application will be provided in the addendum.
Q	<p>It is encouraging that CDSS intends to provide reports on the status of CalFresh applications submitted electronically. That being said, partners regularly report that the data in the consortia’s CBO portals undercount their application submissions by 15-20 percent and there are concerns about the accuracy of the data reports. While the RFA mentions the option to compare application confirmation numbers to CDSS reports, that is not a feasible solution with subcontractors submitting more than 29,000 applications annually.</p> <p>A. What can contractors expect in regard to the validity and accuracy of the reports? (p. 10 of 41)</p> <p>B. Will pending applications be followed through the process (across months) until each determination is made?</p> <p>It is exciting that this RFA’s goals include utilizing available technologies to support CalFresh, including mobile tools. Many CBOs have been and/or will be eager to adopt electronic application submissions through mobile tools, via secured servers, and utilizing other methods and technologies outside of the consortia’s online applications as they are often more client-friendly.</p> <p>C. Does CDSS anticipate application assistors will need to work with their counties to code or identify these electronic applications so they are captured in CDSS’ reports?</p>
A	<p>A. CDSS expects to provide valid and accurate reports to the contractors. CDSS' reports are different from the canned reports contained in the C4Y, YBN and MBCW CBO portals. CDSS is aware of the limitations of the canned reports in the CBO portals.</p> <p>CDSS is in the final stages of validating the reports. Current contractors can be involved in these validation efforts by providing confirmation numbers to CDSS. When complete, contractors can have confidence in the accuracy of the reports.</p> <p>B. Consortia reports will show pending applications by age (length of days pending). CDSS will address counties showing applications pending for more than 45 days.</p> <p>C. CDSS will provide all technical assistance necessary to ensure electronic applications are trackable. Successfully submitting an application through the CBO portals results in a trackable confirmation number. Retaining confirmation numbers is more effective than keeping a database of names and phone numbers.</p>
Q	CDSS’ methodology for calculating approved paper applications appears to assume that

	organizations submitting paper applications do not have access to their success rates. While in most counties this is true, some CBOs have strong partnerships with their counties and are able to get the data. In some cases, the approval rates for paper applications are much higher than the rates for applications submitted through online SAWS applications. In cases like these, CDSS' methodology would undercount approvals. Although it is outside of the scope of the RFA to require counties to provide application outcome data, will exceptions to this methodology be considered to take into account accurate, county-generated data when agreements already exist? (p. 10 of 41)
A	Exceptions were not considered when creating the CalFresh Outreach RFA 17-01. Please refer to Section K.1.b, Program Deliverables, which states the following: "If contractors submit paper applications, CDSS will calculate each prime contractor's approved paper applications based upon CDSS report totals for the prime contractor and all its subcontractors, if applicable. To determine the number of paper applications approved, CDSS will use the approved and denied numbers from the CDSS report to calculate an approval rate. Approved paper applications submitted each invoice period will be calculated by dividing the number of approved electronic applications by the sum of approved and denied electronic applications for the invoicing period."
Q	Some organizations have partnered with their counties to develop collaborative application submission and processing systems that require paper applications. These same systems, although not required through this RFA, allow organizations to receive outcome data from the county. CDSS' new reimbursement system will financially disincentivize application submission through these paper based, community/county collaborations to the tune of at least \$400,000 in just one county. In cases where the county has expressed a preference for paper applications through its collaborations with community organizations, will it be possible to reimburse approved paper applications at the same rate as electronic applications so as not to penalize organizations for partnering with their counties and respecting their preferences when evaluating budgets? (p. 14 of 41)
A	Section L.3.a states that "the budget guideline amounts used in this RFA were selected to make more efficient use of federal funds, encourage the use of electronic application submissions to reduce county workload and increase client retention with a greater emphasis on SAR 7 and Annual Recertification Application submissions."
Q	Exhibit B specifies that "the SOW monthly activity page showing activity corresponding to the invoice period" must be submitted with invoices. It also says that invoices can be submitted as frequently as monthly, but not less frequently than quarterly. If an organization is invoicing on a quarterly basis, will a report showing quarterly activity be acceptable? (p. 2 of 6)
A	Yes. Exhibit B Budget Detail, Section I.A.5.b states "A copy of the SOW monthly activity page showing activity corresponding to the invoice period." CDSS will not accept a mixture of monthly and quarterly invoicing/reporting. Contractors will have to commit to one invoicing/reporting period.
Q	The RFA (p. 10 of 41) implies that keeping application confirmation numbers is optional

	(“The contractors may keep application confirmation numbers...”), whereas Exhibit B says that they are to be submitted with invoices. Please clarify which is correct.
A	Contractors may keep application confirmation numbers and if they choose to submit them, please submit them with invoices. The language requiring submittal of confirmation numbers in Exhibit B Budget Detail will be removed and noted in the addendum.
Q	Many rural areas of California do not have reliable internet or cell service, making electronic application submissions nearly impossible even if application assistors have mobile hot spots. CDSS’ reimbursement structure seems to inadvertently penalize outreach to these underserved communities, which is already challenging because residents are so spread out. How will CDSS take this into account when determining whether budgets are reasonable? (p. 14 of 41)
A	Section K, Program Deliverables states "If contractors submit paper applications, CDSS will calculate each prime contractor’s approved paper applications based upon CDSS report totals for the prime contractor and all its subcontractors, if applicable. To determine the number of paper applications approved, CDSS will use the approved and denied numbers from the CDSS report to calculate an approval rate. Approved paper applications submitted each invoice period will be calculated by dividing the number of approved electronic applications by the sum of approved and denied electronic applications for the invoicing period... CDSS encourages contractors to submit applications electronically."
Submission Forms Question	
Q	The RFA specifies the use of bond paper. In the past, CDSS has waived this requirement and accepted applications printed on standard paper. Will CDSS accept applications that are not printed on bond paper? (p. 25 of 41)
A	Yes, CDSS will accept applications printed on standard paper. CDSS will write an addendum to remove the term bond paper. Standard 8.5 X 11 paper is fine.
Training Question	
Q	CDSS is requiring agencies and subcontractors to attend statewide and regional trainings. Is there a limit to the number of people per organization CDSS will be willing to host and/or cover expenses for? For budgeting purposes, if additional people wish to attend these trainings but CDSS is not able to cover travel, how frequently and where does CDSS anticipate they will be held?
A	Section L.5.e notes: "CDSS will provide statewide and regional training events to agencies and their subcontractors. Attendance at these events is required. Expenses will be covered by CDSS. At least one representative from the applying agency will attend planning meetings with CDSS throughout each year of the contract. Expenses will be covered by CDSS." Each training event will have its own attendee requirements and CDSS will reimburse based on those needs.