CalFresh Outreach

FFY 2023

*Mid-Year Report*

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| **CONTRACTOR: Chico State Enterprises- Center for Healthy Communities** |
| **CONTRACT NUMBER: 21-3058** |
| **REPORTING PERIOD:** October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023 |

**Instructions: Complete this form and e-mail it to your CDSSProgram Analyst by**

**April 28, 2023.**

Please attach the following document(s) to this report:

Current organizational chart

Current list of subcontractors (if any)

*Narrative responses were collected through Qualtrics. Out of 48 subs, 48 submitted their narrative report.*

List of upcoming subcontractor site visits (if any)

*We do not have any upcoming subcontractor site visits planned.*

**You are not required to complete all the rows in tables one through seven below. If needed, you may add more rows.**

1. As part of your Scope of Work requirement, please list the CalFresh Outreach activities conducted by your agency and your subcontractors (if any). This includes, but is not limited to, partnering with counties and community-based organizations serving target populations to address barriers to participation, distributing outreach materials, providing training and any activities designed to meet the overall goals of your CalFresh Outreach plan.

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|  | **Activities** |
| 1. | 49 out of 49 (100%) responses said they tabled on campus, at campus events, or community events. |
| 2. | 47 out of 49 (96%) responses said they provided drop-in assist/application assistance. |
| 3. | 46 out of 49 (94%) responses said they did social media promotion. |
| 4. | 44 out of 49 (90%) responses said they developed new partnerships in the community or on campus to increase outreach efforts. |
| 5. | 42 out of 49 (86%) responses said they posted flyers on campus or in the community. |
| 6. | 41 out of 49 (84%) responses said they conducted presentations to classrooms, departments, or community partners. |
| 7. | 41 out of 49 (84%) responses said they held CalFresh Outreach Day/Week. |
| 8. | 29 out of 49 (59%) responses said they did Financial Aid or other online portal outreach. |
| 9. | 16 out of 49 (33%) responses said they trained new departments or organizations to have them conduct outreach activities. |

1. Please list successes and promising practices for your agency and your subcontractors

(If any).

**Prescreens**

Due to more in person activities occurring with subs and many operating in a pre-pandemic way, we are seeing prescreening promising practices shift away from virtual practices. While many subs still utilize an online prescreen form, many of our campus subs have reported prescreening during classroom presentations, cooking demos, and settings specific to their campus LPIE programs. Subs who are continuing to use online prescreen forms have also added LPIE questions to their form. For subs with food pantries, prescreening is done when individuals sign in to use the pantry to catch individuals who may be eligible for CalFresh who are not currently enrolled. Staff will contact these individuals to apply for CalFresh. Campus subs also reported that collaborating with departments like Financial Aid is helpful to conduct prescreens. Far-north subs reported prescreening at USDA commodity food distributions. Subs are also pushing for staff/faculty to include prescreen information on their syllabi, specifically for LPIE programs. More advanced subs have identified using platforms like JotForm or Calendly to improve their prescreening process. Our University of California (UC) subs reported adding information to prescreens on why someone is not eligible (ex: meal plans) for CalFresh, to encourage folks who will be possibly eligible in the future to apply when they are possibly eligible.

**Outreach/Promotion**

Similar to prescreens, outreach and promotion is happening in person. Our Far-North subs are conducting successful outreach and promotion at kids’ fairs, parent classes, and other family support programs. Campus subs reported that when conducting tabling outreach, a promising practice is to pair the event with some type of giveaway or food distribution utilizing other funding to attract people. It was mentioned that a promising practice is to partner with other ongoing outreach events or partner with departments that have a large reach such as Financial Aid, Registrar's Office, or University communications to outreach to a larger audience. Partnering with specific groups such as LPIE programs or sharing information with LPIE instructors was also noted as a success. Many subs are still utilizing current social media platforms such as TikTok for promotion as well as promotion via flyers or pamphlets around campus or in the community. Our more advanced subs have started to increase promotion specifically around Semi-Annual Reports (SAR7) and Annual Recertifications (RE).

**Application Assistance**

Our subs reported a variety of successful practices related to application assistance. Many have found it successful to offer both virtual and in person drop- in hours, as well as one-on-one appointment options. Others have found success in holding application workshops to assist a large number of people. Subs have found the application process to go smoother when the applicant feels empowered, educated, and can self-advocate for themselves. This is done through providing a full overview of CF application process such as what to expect in the next 30 days, how to contact the county, setting up online benefits portal, collecting verification documents, etc. Campus subs who have strong partnerships with their counties have also found success in holding monthly county collaboration events where the county can come onto the campus. Lastly, more advanced campus subs indicated a promising practice is to develop referral systems with departments like the Health/Wellness center and Financial Aid to identify and refer possibly eligible students. Far-north subs noted that a promising practice is to offer application assistance whenever conducting outreach in order to get the individual signed up right away.

**Follow Ups**

Subs have noted that follow ups are successful when they are conducted daily or weekly by student staff utilizing a combination of calling and emailing the client. However, this can be very time-consuming for those who don’t have staff to support this activity. Subs mentioned utilizing external platforms such as ConexED to assist with tracking follow ups. For more advanced campus subs, a promising practice is to partner with groups that students can refer to if they need assistance with CalFresh appeals if they feel like they were wrongfully denied.

**CFO Week**

For CalFresh Outreach Day/Week subs reported a variety of virtual and in person promising practices. Virtual successes include social media campaigns that have live video promotion, testimonials, and social media campaigns for giveaways. For in-person events, promising practices include having food distributions or cooking demos at the event to help draw people in. Campus subs reported that it’s important to conduct events in popular areas on campus and to partner with other campus departments and student clubs/organizations.

1. Please describe any challenges you are experiencing and its current status. If a challenge has been experienced and resolved, please note the challenge and the outcome.

**Space**

Subs that have limited space to conduct in person CalFresh application assistance have reported that this makes it challenging to conduct applications and to keep confidentiality. Campus subs reported that where they are located on campus impacts the amount of foot traffic they receive. For example, one campus sub mentioned they were located in the back of a building that required individuals to be escorted to their office. Another sub noted they were located in the basement of a building, making it difficult for students to find. Other campus subs reported that they share their office space with the public or people unrelated to CalFresh Outreach which also makes confidentiality challenging. One solution noted by our campus sub is that they are going to partner with well-known campus resources such as the Health/Wellness Center to offer application assistance at that location one day a week to have more space.

**Staffing**

The main challenge reported with staffing is high staff turnover. One challenge with staff turnover is that it makes training challenging. For our subs that rely mainly on temporary students for their staffing, they need to train new staff fairly frequently. Staff turnover also makes accomplishing SOW difficult due to disruption in services. Our Far-North subs also mentioned that staff turnover means that the new staff now needs to build rapport and trust with communities. Some subs reported that they don’t have enough staff in general and need to hire more permanent staff. Subs reported wanting to hire more people but also not having the space to have a larger staff. Subs also reported that it is extremely challenging when staff are hired and then quit within a few months of being hired.

**Outreach and Promotion**

A campus and Far-North sub reported one challenge they experienced related to outreach/promotion is that individuals are uninterested in applying for CalFresh because they don’t believe that the application process and the process to maintain benefits is worth the effort to receive such little benefits, particularly due to the emergency allotment change. Another sub reported a challenge when working with their Registrars’ Office. When they were getting ready to send out mass emails to students in LPIE programs, they ran into IT/campus related issues. They are currently waiting for their IT department to fix the problem.

**Application Assistance**

Challenges reported around application assistance include approval/denial data and BenefitsCal transition. One sub requested that having better approval and denial data would be helpful. Conducting follow-ups to obtain approval and denial data can be difficult because of how time consuming it is. A campus sub reported they have seen an increase in letters being received by students requesting to pay back benefits. This seems to be linked to county error in benefit approval amount and/or delay in processing SAR-7 and benefits posting prior to final review. IT was also reported clients are not receiving benefits for some months/Report Month. Late approvals are causing clients to receive inconsistent amounts of benefits which in turn causes confusion and fear of potential over allotment.

**Submitting Verifications**

Subs reported many challenges with clients submitting verifications. The challenges faced by our subs regarding submitting verifications are due to challenges with the counties. One challenge is that clients upload their verifications on either GetCalFresh.org or through BenefitsCal.org and case workers are reporting that they have never received them, or caseworkers miss checking the online portals for verifications. Another challenge is that clients are submitting verifications that are then being sent back as insufficient when those are the required documents needed. Clients are also experiencing challenges with the Semi-Annual Recertification (SAR7) and Annual Recertification (RE). They will receive a notice about their SAR7 or RE being due after the deadline has passed. While subs can help clients by reminding them to submit a SAR7 or RE, having better approval or denial information could also help with completing SAR7’s and RE’s on time. If subs had access to approval or denial data, they would know which clients were approved for benefits and when. This could enable the sub to easily track when SAR7’s and RE’s are due for clients. With the lack of approval and denial data currently, this means subs have to manually track this information and clients need to provide this information to subs in order for subs to be able to notify clients of upcoming SAR7’s or RE’s. This can be challenging for subs that have limited time or staffing to support this activity as it tends to be very time consuming.

**County Interviews**

Many challenges were reported regarding the interview process. One challenge is that clients are missing their interview. Interviews can be missed for a variety of reasons. A reason for missing interviews is that clients are notified after the deadline has passed. Students in particular miss their interview due to scheduling conflicts. The county also calls for interviews at times different from the scheduled interview time, causing a missed interview. Another challenge is the long wait time for the scheduled interview due to understaffing on the county end. Many are seeing their interview is more than 30 days since they applied. This relates to the challenge noted by two subs with regards to outreach and promotion. Having to wait more than 30 days just to get an interview can be really discouraging for students and make many not want to apply for benefits. It’s also discouraging and frustrating for those who go through the entire lengthy application process to only receive the minimum allotment amount. These individuals most likely will still need to utilize other resources such as food pantries and food banks due to their allotment amount.

**County Denials**

The biggest challenge identified for county denials is related to the Local Program that Increases Employability (LPIE) programs. Counties are denying individuals because their enrolled LPIE is not being considered as eligibility and due to insufficient verifications for LPIE programs. Students are also being denied because they are not currently working, and the county says that working is a requirement to be eligible for CalFresh. Many students are also being denied and not given a reason why.

**County Questions**

1. Please list the counties with which you have strong partnerships. Please describe your accomplishments (e.g., good communication, training opportunities, etc.).

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|  | **County** | **Accomplishments** |
| 1. | Alameda | Good communication, good system in place to communicate case issues, training opportunities, and resource for other partnerships in the county. |
| 2. | Butte | Quick responses to questions, during transition to BenefitsCal they let clients turn in SAR7 after the submit month and reinstated client benefits if they missed their SAR7 by a few days, good at communicating the end of Emergency Allotment benefits, quick with expediting services for eligible individuals. |
| 3. | Fresno | Good partnership, provides opportunity to conduct outreach with other organizations. |
| 4. | Los Angeles | Quick communication on case questions, goes to campuses for outreach events. |
| 5. | San Bernardino | Good partnership with county liaisons, meet regularly to discuss student eligibility and host countywide college eligibility trainings. |
| 6. | San Luis Obispo | Good communication with point of contact, offers to host trainings for interns and supports with complex cases. |
| 7. | Yolo | Quick turnaround time for client interviews. |

1. Please list the counties with which you have challenges. Please describe your challenges.

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|  | **County** | **Challenges** |
| 1. | Butte | Some individuals received an over issuance due to computer error. |
| 2. | Fresno | Problems with recognizing certain programs as LPIE programs. |
| 3. | Los Angeles | Slower response rate on more complex case questions, no county training offered, difficulty getting in contact with county, slow interview and application process. |
| 4. | Riverside | Denials with verifications for LPIEs and work study even though proper documentation was provided. |
| 5. | San Luis Obispo | Slow interview process (or missing without communication of interview waiver), wrongful denials, very poor communication from case workers, entire process is taking longer than 30 days |
| 6. | San Mateo | Long application processing time, applications getting stuck in pending as they wait for the case to be assigned to a caseworker. |
| 7. | Santa Barbara | Slow interview process, poor communication from case worker to client. |
| 8. | Shasta and Siskiyou | County is short staffed, so the application processing time is taking longer than usual. |

**County Accomplishments/ Challenges**

County relationships both accomplishments and challenges are specific to each subcontractor. Different subcontractors reported accomplishments with specific counties, while other subcontractors reported challenges with those same counties. One challenge noted by a sub is that when they county experiences frequent staff turnover, it means that the sub then needs to develop a new partnership with the new staff which can challenging.

1. Has the list of counties where you are providing services changed? If so, please list any changes in county coverage as well as contractor(s) affected.

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|  | **New County Being Covered** | **Agency** |
| 1. | Santa Barbara | Allan Hancock Community College |
| 2. | Alameda, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, San Benito, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Sonoma, Ventura | Cal Poly San Luis Obispo |
| 3. | San Diego | Cal State LA |
| 4. | Alameda, Glenn, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Mono, Monterey, Nevada, Placer, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Clara | Center for Healthy Communities |
| 5. | Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Santa Barbara, Sonoma | CSU Dominguez Hills |
| 6. | Alameda, Kern, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, Ventura | CSU Northridge |
| 7. | Yolo | First 5 Colusa |

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|  | **County No Longer Covered** | **Agency** |
| 1. | Colusa, San Bernardino, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Shasta | Center for Healthy Communities |
| 2. | Santa Clara | CSU Northridge |

**Prime Contractors with Subcontractors Only:**

1. Since October 1, 2022, have you lost subcontractors? If so, please list the subcontractor and the county of coverage.

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|  | **Subcontractor** | **County** | **Exit Letter on File** |
| 1. | Sierra Joint Community College District | El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, Sacramento | YES NO |
| 2. | Yuba Community College District | Sutter, Yolo, Yuba | YES NO |
| 3. |  |  | YES NO |
| 4. |  |  | YES NO |