SNAP Enrollment Center Request for Proposals: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The following Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) provide clarification and additional context regarding the National Council on Aging's (NCOA) **SNAP Enrollment Center Request for Proposals (RFP)**. These responses are intended to guide potential vendors in preparing responsive and competitive proposals. The FAQs address expectations around operations, staffing, data management, performance measurement, and collaboration with NCOA's SNAP Enrollment Center (SEC) network.

Proposal Submission & Contract Process
Q: Is this opportunity available to organizations in all states, or only certain states? **A:** This opportunity is only available to organizations serving Virgina, West Virginia, and Ohio. **Q:** Will NCOA provide technical assistance to organizations preparing their full proposals? **A:** No. **Q:** Will NCOA provide guidance on setting up the SNAP Enrollment Center (SEC)? **A:** NCOA expects the vendor to already have experience providing SNAP application support. However, NCOA will provide support and guidance on setting up the SEC's account in Cumulus (Canto) to ensure familiarity with the network, systems, and workflow for connecting clients to SECs. **Q:** Will the SEC have the opportunity to join meetings for best practice sharing? **A:** Yes. NCOA will host monthly peer-learning webinars for the SEC network, regular check-ins with each SEC's NCOA point of contact, and additional professional learning opportunities as they arise. **Q:** How will this project be monitored by NCOA? **A:** There will be a designated point person at NCOA responsible for overseeing and managing this contract. This individual will serve as the primary contact and provide ongoing guidance and support.

Q: Are local governments eligible to apply, or is eligibility limited to 501(c)(3) organizations?
A: Local governments are eligible to apply, but preference will be given to local community-based organizations.

Q: Is a local Department of Social Services (DSS) eligible?
A: Yes, if they are a 501(c)(3) organization.

Q: Can organizations apply as a group or region?
A: Organizations can take a group or regional approach and collaborate with other organizations. However, one organization would need to serve as the lead applicant and legally responsible entity that NCOA would have an agreement with.

Q: What is the best way for an applicant to demonstrate organizational readiness?
A: The best way for an applicant to demonstrate organizational readiness is by providing clear, specific responses to the narrative questions. Applicants should use these questions to demonstrate their organization's capacity, experience, and ability to successfully carry out the proposed activities. Responses should be detailed enough to show how the organization meets the criteria used to assess organizational readiness.

Q: Are current Benefit Enrollment Centers eligible to apply?
A: Yes. However, SNAP applications counted toward the BEC grant cannot also be counted toward this grant.

Funding and Budget Guidelines

Q: What is the funding amount available per organization for this grant?
A: $50,000

Q: What is the maximum available indirect cost rate?
A: The maximum available indirect rate is **10%**, unless the applicant has a documented Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA).

Q: Will the contract commit funds for the full 18-month project term, and how should the budget be structured?
A: The proposal should include a complete budget covering the **full 18-month contract period, with funds allocated across the project term.**

Q: What is the payment schedule (reimbursement vs. advance)?
A: This will be a reimbursement-style contract. The SEC must submit financial reporting before interim and final payments are issued. The first payment will be awarded upon contract execution.

Q: Can the grant award be less than $50,000 if a small community does not need the full amount?
A: No. Grant awards will be a minimum of **$50,000**. Applicants should develop their proposed scope of work and budget based on the full award amount.

Q: What can grant funds be used for?
A: Grant funds may be used for reasonable and necessary costs associated with carrying out the approved project, including **staff salaries, outreach and marketing, promotional materials, food and refreshments for project-related activities, events, and other expenses directly related to the approved scope of work.**

Operational Scope, Timeline, and Promotion

Q: Is this RFP requesting that the SNAP Enrollment Center (SEC) be established?
A: Yes. NCOA is seeking an established SEC site that can demonstrate the capacity to sustain and strengthen its operations, expand its reach and quality, and achieve the project's goal.

Q: With the time frame between notification of award and beginning of services, what is the expectation for service readiness?
A: The SEC is expected to have the infrastructure in place to accommodate the service within 60 days of the start of the grant. SECs that cannot launch on time may face a capability assessment plan, termination of the agreement, and rescission of funds. Onboarding and system alignment with NCOA will occur during the month of December.

Q: Does NCOA observe federal holidays?
A: Yes. NCOA generally observes the standard federal holiday schedule. Vendors may align operations accordingly or propose an alternative coverage plan.

Q: What is NCOA's plan for promoting SNAP Enrollment Centers?
A: NCOA will lead the development of a marketing and social media toolkit that SECs can use to promote their services locally. However, NCOA is open to collaborating with the selected partners on new strategies to increase visibility and engagement.

Q: Is there a required geographic coverage area within a state?
A: No. There is no required geographic coverage area. SECs are expected to serve the communities within their existing service area but may also serve eligible older adults in communities outside of their primary service area.

Staffing, Accessibility, and Service Delivery

Q: What is the expectation for staffing levels to handle the average volume?
A: NCOA does not manage staffing for the SEC. Determining the amount of staffing needed will be the SEC's responsibility.

Q: Will staff travel to client homes or other locations within the service area be permitted?
A: Yes.

Data Systems, Technology, and Reporting
Q: Are the costs of utilizing Cumulus (Canto) currently being covered by NCOA? Would NCOA expect the grantee to assume these costs? **A:** NCOA will cover the costs for SEC access to Cumulus (Canto). SECs using their own CRM do so at their own expense and must integrate call data into Cumulus monthly via API or approved method. **Q:** Will NCOA provide API access for Cumulus integration? **A:** Yes. NCOA will provide API access and documentation for vendors who choose to integrate with Cumulus (Canto). **Q:** What data security protocols are required for transferring participant information? **A:** All participant information must be transferred using secure, encrypted methods in compliance with federal privacy and security standards. **Q:** Are there additional key performance indicators (KPIs) beyond those listed that NCOA wants monitored? **A:** NCOA encourages monitoring the core KPIs outlined in the RFP and welcomes grantee proposed metrics that enhance measurement of impact. **Q:** If an organization's system cannot integrate with Cumulus, can staff enter information directly into Cumulus? **A:** Yes. **Q:** Will grantees submit SNAP applications directly through the Cumulus platform? **A:** No. **Q:** Regarding client privacy, what types of client information will be entered or updated in Cumulus? **A:** Cumulus will collect and update personally identifiable information (PII), including the client's name, address, phone number, other contact information, and details about the services or support provided. Cumulus includes safeguards to protect this information, such as two-factor authentication.

Training, Performance, and Continuous Improvement
Q: How frequently does NCOA expect staff training or refreshers? **A:** Grantees must provide initial training before launch and periodic refreshers as needed (e.g., when benefits programs or systems are updated). **Q:** What is NCOA's position on using chatbots? **A:** NCOA is open to the use of chatbots or automated tools to support accessibility and after-hours inquiries, provided they comply with privacy, accessibility, and data security standards.