



COORDINATING SNAP & NUTRITION SUPPORTS **IMPACT REPORT**

— SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA —

Background & Context

Through the Coordinating SNAP and Nutrition Supports (CSNS) initiative, the San Francisco Human Services Agency (SFHSA), in partnership with CivicMakers and the San Francisco-Marin Food Bank (SFMFB), worked to improve access to CalFresh and other public benefits by reimagining how services are delivered, particularly for residents facing barriers to traditional office-based services.

San Francisco County serves a diverse population, including immigrant communities, transition-aged youth, and families navigating complex economic challenges. While the city has a strong network of services, many residents experience barriers to accessing human services programs, including language access challenges, scheduling constraints, transportation limitations, and concerns related to immigration enforcement. These barriers can prevent eligible individuals and families from enrolling in or maintaining critical supports like SNAP.

Recognizing that traditional service models do not always meet residents where they are, the San Francisco team focused on developing a more flexible, community-centered approach to outreach and enrollment to human service programs by bringing services directly into trusted community spaces.



CalFresh

California's SNAP program, which provides monthly food assistance to low-income individuals and families to help purchase groceries and improve food security.

Medi-Cal

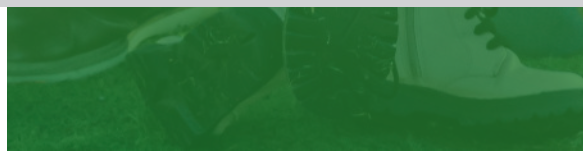
California's Medicaid program, which offers free or low-cost health coverage to eligible low-income individuals and families.

CalWORKs

California's TANF program, which provides cash assistance and employment services to families with dependent children to support basic needs and promote long-term self-sufficiency.

County Adult Assistance Programs

California's General Assistance program, which provides cash assistance and employment services to low-income San Franciscans with no dependent children, including those who cannot work, immigrants, and refugees.



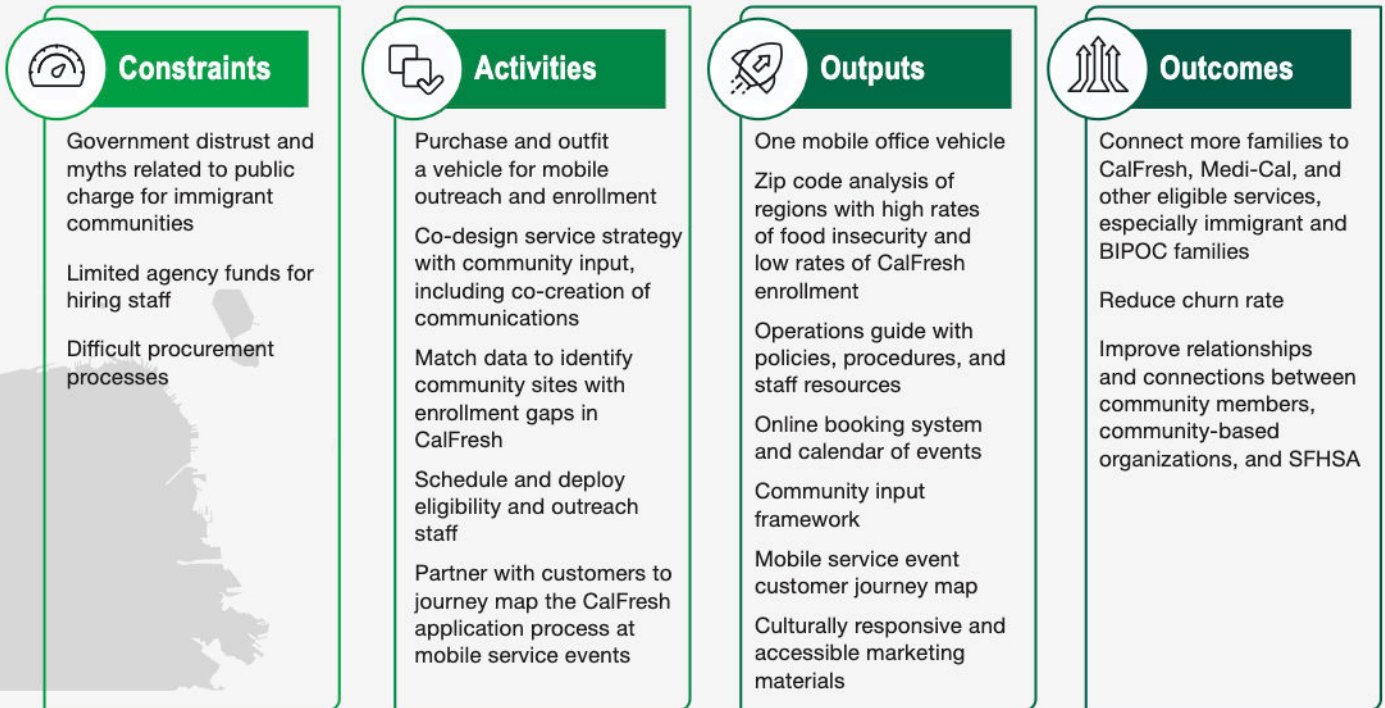
Project Description

The San Francisco CSNS project focused on designing and implementing a Mobile Benefits Center to increase access to CalFresh and other public benefits. Rather than relying solely on centralized service centers, the project aimed to bring services into the community through a mobile unit located within and supported by local community-based organizations. Designed to serve as a one-stop shop, the Mobile Benefits Center enables residents to apply for CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CAAP, and CalWORKs in a single visit within a familiar, accessible community setting.

Key Objectives

-  Increase access to public benefits by bringing eligibility and enrollment staff directly into trusted community settings residents already trust and frequent.
-  Improve and modernize service delivery by streamlining enrollment processes, testing new approaches to mobile benefits access, and creating more efficient pathways for residents to connect with services.
-  Center community voice and lived experience in program design to ensure services are responsive to resident needs, build trust among customers, and strengthen community engagement.

Logic Model



Approach

San Francisco's CSNS project used a human-centered design approach to develop a Mobile Benefits Center that reflected the needs, experiences, and preferences of residents. Throughout the project, SFHSA partnered with a consultancy firm (CivicMakers), community-based organizations, frontline staff, and residents to better understand barriers to accessing benefits and design solutions that were responsive to community needs. While procurement delays and staffing constraints extended the timeline for launching the mobile office, the team used this time to engage in an iterative design process that strengthened both the service model and the operational systems needed to support it.

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN (HCD)

Human-centered design (HCD) is a problem-solving approach that places the experiences, needs, and perspectives of the people affected by a program, policy, or service at the center of decision-making. Rather than designing solutions based solely on organizational assumptions or requirements, HCD engages users throughout the process to better understand their challenges, test potential solutions, and make improvements based on feedback.

Discovery

The project began with an exploration of residents' experiences accessing CalFresh and other public benefits. Prior to and throughout the CSNS project, the San Francisco team conducted community listening sessions, focus groups, and interviews with residents and community partners to better understand barriers to food security and benefit access.



"The community spoke loudly and clearly: ease the geographic barriers and bureaucratic processes that hinder access to CalFresh and other vital benefits. That community feedback is the primary driver of this project."

Working alongside CivicMakers and community-based organizations, SFHSA conducted customer interviews, field observations, informal conversations, and community engagement activities with populations facing significant access challenges, including transition-aged youth, immigrant communities, and families with young children.

These efforts helped the team better understand barriers related to transportation, scheduling, language access, trust in government systems, and immigration-related concerns. Community members also shared feedback on where services should be located, what supports would be most helpful, and ways in which outreach could be conducted that felt welcoming and accessible.

Define

Insights gathered during discovery were used to define key challenges and opportunities for improving benefit access. Through journey mapping exercises, staff workshops, and collaborative discussions with community members and partners, the team identified pain points in the customer experience and clarified the goals for a new service delivery model.

This phase reinforced the need for a flexible, community-based approach that could bring multiple services directly to residents in trusted locations. It also highlighted the importance of creating operational systems that would allow staff to coordinate services across programs, support walk-in assistance, and provide warm handoffs to other resources when needed.

Design

Using insights from residents, staff, and partners, SFHSA designed the Mobile Benefits Center as a one-stop shop for accessing CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CAAP, and CalWORKs. Community members and frontline staff helped inform decisions related to the vehicle's safety, functionality, accessibility, and overall customer experience. Residents directly contributed to the design of the vehicle's exterior wrap, helping shape how the Mobile Benefits Center would appear in neighborhoods and ensuring it felt welcoming, recognizable, and reflective of the communities it was intended to serve.

At the same time, the agency designed the operational infrastructure needed to support mobile service delivery. This included developing scheduling and request systems, intake and data-tracking workflows, mobile service kits, staff training plans, and processes for coordinating outreach activities with internal records management systems. The project also strengthened cross-department collaboration and established customer intake workflows that can be scaled and integrated into broader agency operations.

Prototype

The team tested and refined the Mobile Benefits Center model through a series of prototype events that served as both service delivery opportunities and learning environments.

An initial staff prototype event allowed the team to simulate the mobile office setup, map customer journeys, test service flows, and identify operational needs before engaging with residents. These exercises helped staff anticipate challenges and refine processes related to technology, equipment, privacy, and service delivery.

Later client-facing prototype events allowed the team to test the model in real-world community settings. Residents were able to apply for or renew benefits while staff gathered feedback on accessibility, service delivery, and customer experience. Feedback from these events revealed a need for greater flexibility in how services were offered, leading the team to explore walk-in models and expand available services beyond CalFresh to include Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, and case support. Throughout the prototyping process, community-based organizations played a critical role in outreach, trust-building, and ensuring that services were delivered in familiar and culturally responsive settings.

Test & Iterate

The Mobile Benefits Center officially launched in April 2026, marking an important milestone in the project's evolution. Throughout the design and development process, SFHSA used feedback from residents, staff, and community partners to continuously refine the service model, resulting in a stronger, more responsive approach to community-based benefits access. This iterative process not only improved the customer experience but also strengthened internal capacity for innovative service delivery and cross-department collaboration.

As the Mobile Benefits Center begins operating in communities across San Francisco, SFHSA will continue gathering feedback, evaluating performance, and identifying opportunities for improvement. By maintaining a commitment to human-centered design and ongoing partnership with residents, the team aims to ensure the Mobile Benefits Center remains responsive to community needs and effective in increasing access to CalFresh, Medi-Cal, CalWORKs, and other supports.

Results

Although full deployment occurred later in the project timeline than anticipated, the project generated meaningful results through pilot events, outreach activities, enrollment support, and systems improvements. By using the implementation period to test, refine, and strengthen the model, SFHSA established a strong foundation for ongoing community-based service delivery while helping thousands of residents access benefits and supports.



EXPANDED COMMUNITY REACH & ACCESS TO BENEFITS

Through outreach, application assistance, enrollment events, and pilot activities, the project significantly expanded access to CalFresh and other public benefits. During the grant period, SFHSA, in partnership with SFMFB, conducted 274 outreach, application assistance, and enrollment events in partnership with community-based organizations, universities, and community hubs across San Francisco.

These efforts reached more than 23,700 community members and resulted in nearly 20,000 service interactions, including benefit screenings, application assistance, case troubleshooting, eligibility questions, and referrals to additional services. Staff assisted residents with submitting 1,956 CalFresh and dual-benefit applications, as well as 3,515 renewal and reporting forms. Applications submitted through these events achieved a 78 percent approval rate, while renewal and reporting forms exceeded project goals with a 91 percent approval rate. Many applicants also qualified for expedited services, allowing eligible households to access benefits more quickly during times of need.



STRENGTHENED INTERNAL SYSTEMS & OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

The project resulted in meaningful improvements to internal processes and operational readiness. Through prototype events, staff testing, and ongoing refinement, SFHSA developed new systems for scheduling, intake, application tracking, and coordination between outreach teams and records management staff.

The team also created new Power Automate, Microsoft Forms, and Microsoft Lists workflows to streamline application tracking and improve coordination across agency units. These investments strengthened cross-department collaboration and established operational processes that can support not only the Mobile Benefits Center but future innovations in community-based service delivery.



INCREASED COMMUNITY TRUST & ENGAGEMENT

By prioritizing co-design, consistent community presence, and partnerships with trusted organizations, the project strengthened relationships between residents, service providers, and community-based organizations. More than 200 engagements with community partners helped expand outreach efforts and ensure services were delivered in familiar and trusted settings.

Customer satisfaction consistently exceeded project goals, with pilot events averaging around 90 percent satisfaction. Residents expressed appreciation for receiving services in community locations and for the opportunity to access multiple supports through a single point of contact. In addition to benefit enrollment, staff connected residents to housing resources, legal services, food assistance, CalWORKs, 2-1-1, and other community supports, reinforcing the Mobile Benefits Center's role as a gateway to a broader network of services.

Together, these efforts demonstrated the value of bringing services directly into communities and established a strong foundation for the continued evolution of the Mobile Benefits Center.

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The project has had a lasting impact on our agency by strengthening cross-team collaboration, improving operational processes, and increasing our capacity to deliver services more efficiently.

Lessons Learned



Cross-department collaboration is critical to successful implementation.

Implementing a mobile service model required strong coordination across multiple units within the agency, as well as with external partners. The project highlighted the importance of engaging all relevant departments early, including operations, IT, procurement, and frontline staff, to anticipate needs and avoid delays. This collaboration was especially important given the operational complexity of delivering services outside of traditional office settings, which introduced new challenges related to staffing, technology, logistics, and site coordination. Regular communication, shared ownership, and flexibility across teams enabled the project to move forward despite these complexities and helped lay the groundwork for more integrated service delivery.



Procurement and staffing constraints can significantly impact timelines. Delays in vehicle procurement, coupled with staffing limitations such as hiring freezes and capacity constraints, affected the timeline for full deployment of the Mobile Benefits Center. These challenges reduced the time available for implementation and learning during the project period. The experience underscored the importance of building in additional time for procurement processes, aligning staffing plans early, and identifying contingency strategies to maintain progress when delays arise.



Trust-building is essential, particularly in communities facing fear and uncertainty.

Building trust with communities, particularly communities who may be hesitant to engage with government systems, was a critical component of the project. The team found that consistent presence in trusted locations, culturally responsive outreach, and opportunities for listening and relationship-building were key to increasing participation. Partnerships with trusted community organizations also helped SFHSA reach immigrant communities and other residents who may face barriers accessing traditional government service settings. Addressing concerns related to safety and immigration enforcement and ensuring that services were delivered in ways that felt comfortable and respectful helped strengthen relationships between residents and service providers. These efforts reinforced that trust is not built through one-time interactions, but through sustained, intentional engagement.

Sustainability & Improvement

While the grant provided the opportunity to design, test, and launch a new approach to service delivery, the project's long-term impact extends beyond the vehicle itself. The San Francisco team is committed to continuing and refining the mobile service delivery model, with adjustments based on lessons learned during the CSNS project.

Key elements of sustainability include:



CONTINUED OPERATION AND REFINEMENT OF THE MOBILE BENEFITS CENTER

Following its launch in April 2026, SFHSA will continue using feedback from residents, staff, and community partners to refine services, improve customer experience, and identify opportunities to expand the model's reach.



ONGOING COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY-CENTERED DESIGN

The co-design practices developed through the project, including community engagement, customer feedback, and iterative testing, have established a framework for ensuring that services remain responsive to community needs and priorities.



INTEGRATION OF IMPROVED WORKFLOWS INTO AGENCY OPERATIONS

New systems for scheduling, intake, data tracking, and departmental coordination have been incorporated into agency operations, creating a foundation for more efficient and flexible service delivery both within the Mobile Benefits Center and across other programs.



STRENGTHENED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Relationships with community-based organizations, universities, and neighborhood partners will continue to support outreach efforts and ensure services are delivered in trusted, accessible locations. These partnerships also provide ongoing opportunities to gather feedback and identify emerging community needs.



INCREASED ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Through the design and implementation process, staff developed a deeper understanding of the barriers residents face when accessing benefits and gained experience delivering services in community settings. This knowledge will continue to inform future program design, outreach strategies, and service delivery innovations.

Through their CSNS project, the San Francisco team has established a strong foundation for more flexible, accessible, and community-responsive service delivery. By combining mobile outreach, community partnership, and human-centered design, SFHSA is better positioned to meet residents where they are and connect them to the supports they need.

Key Takeaways

- 1 Mobile, community-based service delivery can significantly reduce barriers to accessing benefits.
- 2 Human-centered design leads to more effective and trusted use of services.
- 3 Cross-department and community partnerships are essential for innovation.

Project Library

[Coordinating SNAP & Nutrition Supports \(CSNS\) Cohort 2 Case Study – San Francisco, California: Meeting Communities Where They Are–Transforming CalFresh and Nutrition Outreach](#)

[Mobile Benefits Center \(MBC\) – San Francisco Human Services Agency](#)

[San Francisco’s Benefits Hub on Wheels \[Video\]](#)

[Designing with Community in Mind: Shaping San Francisco’s Mobile Benefits Center](#)

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