Request for Information (RFI): Accelerating Public Benefits Access
July 2021

Benefits Data Trust (BDT) is a nonprofit that harnesses the power of data, technology, and policy to provide efficient and dignified access to assistance, improving people’s health and financial security. Benefits Data Trust has released this Request for Information (RFI) to identify and provide support to states interested in streamlining their benefits access system to ensure that individuals who are eligible for benefits are able to access them, thereby improving health outcomes, increasing economic mobility, and driving towards a robust post-COVID recovery.

BDT has significant funding to support multiple states with efforts including:
- Data-matching to identify people likely eligible for benefits such as SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid;
- Data-driven outreach to inform people how to apply and recertify for benefits;
- Phone-based application assistance staffed by expert navigators; and,
- Policy and practice consulting/technical assistance to support states’ benefits access and streamlining goals.

In addition, BDT will provide financial support and technical assistance to two states wishing to initiate, accelerate, and/or scale comprehensive improvements to dramatically streamline access to benefits. BDT’s approach is informed by research on making lasting and significant change within complex systems. BDT seeks to help these two states:
- Set ambitious equitable benefits access goals and strategies for achieving them;
- Engage key stakeholders in the process to promote lasting support and human-centered solutions;
- Implement solutions; and,
- Report on progress towards the goals.

This work can also align with state planning processes to use American Recovery Plan (ARP) allocations to make high-impact, strategic investments in their benefits systems.

Who should respond to this RFI? States at every stage of building equitable access to benefits should consider responding to this RFI. Some states may seek help in setting benefit access goals, while others may already have these established but want help building the tools and infrastructure needed to track these metrics and test strategies to improve their outcomes. The scope of assistance offered by BDT will depend on the state’s priorities and could include: pro bono services; a private funding match to support BDT’s inclusion in the state’s SNAP Outreach Plan; and/or, enhanced funding and assistance, such as project management support for the two states making comprehensive improvements in their public benefit systems.

This RFI can be completed by the governor’s office; head of the state health and human services agency/agencies; and/or the directors of state SNAP, Medicaid, or WIC programs. Responding neither commits the state to working with BDT, nor BDT to working with the state.
This RFI is intended to be the starting point for discussions between BDT and interested states. It contains minimal questions and was designed to be completed quickly. Respondents may choose to spend additional time gathering information or coordinating a response within their agency or across multiple agencies, although that is not required.

To respond to this RFI, please use this link. Note that RFI responses are due by Monday, July 26th at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.

Please sign up for an informational webinar on Wednesday July 14th at 2 PM here. The webinar will be recorded and shared.

Questions? Please contact Lura Barber, Associate Director of Partnerships, at RFI@bdtrust.org.

Opportunity Details

Even before the COVID-19 induced economic crisis, more than $60 billion in benefits for eligible people went untapped each year.¹ For example:

- **Substantial numbers of adjunctively eligible families were not participating in WIC.** A recent pilot by BDT and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) found that up to three-quarters of eligible SNAP and Medicaid households were not participating in WIC.²
- **Seven million eligible people were not enrolled in SNAP,** 83% of whom are in working poor households.³
- **Studies have found that 20% or more of eligible SNAP participants lose the benefit in the recertification process due to procedural reasons.⁴**

**BDT’s goal is to assist states in accelerating efforts to streamline benefits access, promote an equitable recovery, and reduce administrative burden for taxpayers, government agencies, and state residents.**

**About BDT**

Together with a national network of government agencies and other partners, BDT helps streamline public benefits systems and directly connect eligible families and individuals to programs that help pay for food, healthcare, housing, and more. Since 2005, BDT has secured more than $7.5 billion in benefits for households across the country, building pathways to economic mobility and a more equitable future. BDT is supported by a mix of government grants and contracts, healthcare contracts, and philanthropic grants.

For more information about BDT’s service model, visit: https://bdtrust.org/what-we-do/

**BDT’s core products and services**

In the past 18 months alone, 16 states (both state- and county-administered) have worked with BDT to meet strategic objectives, from identifying likely eligible WIC recipients, to streamlining SNAP recertification processes, to connecting people to multiple benefits. States can implement BDT’s core products in a variety of combinations to achieve their benefits access goals.

- **Data Sharing** We bring over 15 years of experience in brokering data-sharing agreements among state and federal agencies, which we use to identify individuals who are likely to be eligible for one or more benefits.
• **Data-Driven Outreach** We send outreach via direct mail or text to those who are likely eligible for benefits and educate them on how to apply or recertify for benefits – for example, to call BDT’s contact center for application assistance or use the state/county’s system to apply or recertify for benefits. BDT sees cumulative response rates as high as 40% to data-driven outreach.

• **Phone-Based Application Assistance** Individuals are assisted over the phone by Benefits Outreach Specialists (BOS), expert navigators of the benefits application process. BOS use proprietary case management and application software to screen and apply individuals for multiple benefits seamlessly. This end-to-end solution can be combined with data sharing and data-driven outreach.

• **Policy and Practice Consulting** We provide advice and assistance to states to identify and implement business process and/or policy changes to make benefits access more efficient and streamlined; one example is the SNAP Elderly Simplified Application (ESAP), which reduces the burden for both the applicant and government agency.

For more information about how BDT has worked with states, please see the Appendix.

**Thank you for your interest in this RFI. Please direct questions to Lura Barber, Associate Director of Partnerships, at RFI@bdtrust.org.**

Appendix

**How states have worked with BDT**

BDT supports states in meeting a range of benefits access goals. One state, for example, has worked with BDT since 2017 to:

• Use cross-program data to send letters and texts to residents who are eligible and not enrolled in SNAP, provide phone-based application assistance, and submit more than 27,000 SNAP applications.

• Help the state department of health and human services submit and secure approval of a federal waiver to greatly simplify access to SNAP for seniors.

• Work with researchers to measure how much the state saved in Medicaid costs for every senior we enrolled in SNAP (peer-reviewed paper forthcoming).

• Contract with a healthcare payer to provide phone-based SNAP application assistance to people of all ages; and,

• Pilot the use of an Application Programming Interface (API) to embed benefit screenings into the state’s Information & Referral platform.

**Other ways that BDT has worked with states include:**

• [WIC pilot projects](#) in Colorado, Massachusetts, Montana, and Virginia which demonstrated that states can increase WIC enrollment by matching data to identify families enrolled in Medicaid or SNAP but not WIC, and conducting outreach to them. Enrollment in WIC improves health and developmental outcomes as well as providing food assistance.

• We used [data-sharing and texting](#) to guide eligible NYC SNAP participants through the SNAP recertification process. BDT is working with several states to launch similar SNAP and Medicaid recertification initiatives.

• Supporting states like South Carolina in connecting eligible seniors to SNAP through cross-agency data matching and outreach combined with phone-based screening and application assistance.
• Supporting states and municipalities alike with streamlined multi-benefit application assistance; in Philadelphia, for example, we screen clients for up to 19 benefits in one call.
• Helping six states submit and secure approvals for federal waivers to streamline SNAP for both residents and government agencies.

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\[1\] BDT estimate based on the latest publicly available federal and state data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic for WIC, SNAP, Medicaid, CHIP, EITC, and Pell Grants.