Understanding and Approach to M&E Services

Section 4

RFP Reference: 6.3.8.6 Section 4 Understanding and Approach to M&E Services

The Bidder shall provide a detailed narrative response to the Understanding and Approach topics outlined in Section 5.3. Bidders will respond to the following areas to satisfy or exceed the RFP requirements as described in Section 5 Requirements, addressing the following topics:

- Sub-Section 5.3.3.1 Integrated Multi-Contractor Environment
- Sub-Section 5.3.3.2 Application/Architecture Evolution
- Sub-Section 5.3.3.3 System Change Requests
- Sub-Section 5.3.3.4 Innovation
- Sub-Section 5.3.3.5 Transition-In

By "coloring outside the lines" with Deloitte, the CalSAWS Consortium can deliver County-requested changes faster, provide better integration across vendors, and deliver a next-generation CalSAWS' architecture. To help the Consortium rethink the status quo, we bring a fresh perspective informed by delivering 31 Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) systems, including California. This experience enables us to implement improved M&E processes via user-centered design and enabling technologies (as we have demonstrated on both the BenefitsCal project and the operation of CalHEERS for Covered California).

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- **An M&E approach informed by current E&E delivery projects in 26 states.**
- **An approach that puts humans in the center rather than technology.**
- **An evolved CalSAWS architecture that delivers higher levels of responsiveness while retaining stability.**
- **An approach that helps the Consortium color outside the lines to better serve California Counties.**
- **Processes and tools that accelerate delivery of System Change Requests (SCRs).**

The End Result: The Consortium obtains a responsive, reliable, and innovative vendor that leverages national experience and technical knowledge that supports the Counties with their mission to provide timely health and human services.

4.3.2 Improving Existing CalSAWS SCR Processes (ME-UA10)

RFP Reference: 5.3.3.3 M&E Understanding and Approach to System Change Requests

ME-UA10 Describe your approach to improving the existing CalSAWS SCR process. Include solutions to deliver changes more quickly to end users, including improving processes, tools, RWR and test methodology improvements. Explain how your staffing levels defined within **Attachment B13 M&E Staffing Worksheet** align with your approach. Justification for staffing levels below the current efforts described in Section 3 must be strongly supported.

Refer to the SCR scenario described in Section 6.3.10.7, M&E CalFresh ABAWD SCR Price (Schedule 7). As part of demonstrating your approach to improving the SCR process, explain your methodology for developing and implementing the CalFresh ABAWD SCR.

Over the past 3+ years, serving as the BenefitsCal and CalWIN ISS contractor, and in close collaboration with the Consortium, Counties, and external stakeholders, we've gained a deep understanding of the opportunities to improve the current CalSAWS SCR process. The Consortium has taken significant strides forward, implementing changes such as establishing smaller review-focused workgroups and streamlining build approval processes. These enhancements have effectively reduced the duration of SCRs. However, despite these improvements, the demand for SCRs continues to surpass available capacity. As a consequence, Counties and other users frequently encounter a less-than-optimal operational setting.

The current CalSAWS architecture significantly contributes to the extended duration of the SCR process. This is due to the greater effort required for modifications and validations compared to newer, microservice-based architectures. As referenced in UA4 – Application Evolution, our plan for evolving the CalSAWS architecture involves integrating SCRs that impact the architecture to increase efficiencies and enhance overall quality and speed. This will enable us to deploy legislative and policy changes faster with microservices since only parts of CalSAWS will need re-testing.

Figure 4.3.2-1 below compiles these challenges, and we outline how our approach addresses each in the downstream sections.

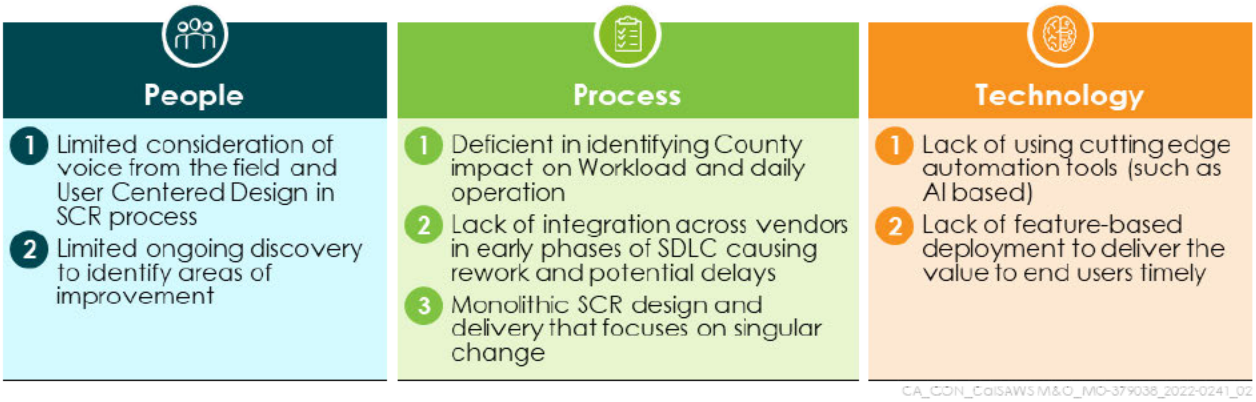

Figure 4.3.2-1. Today's Challenges.

As the successful conclusion of the CalSAWS migration approaches this year and we shift our focus back to addressing postponed changes, the need to enhance the SCR process becomes pivotal in alleviating the workload burden on Counties. Expediting SCR delivery must be counterbalanced by delivering a comprehensive solution to Counties, even if accomplished incrementally. While speed is important, it cannot be

the sole driving factor, as these improvements can deeply affect the daily workload of County employees and potentially enhance the process of delivering benefits to individuals in need. Consider this scenario: expediting the implementation of a new function in BenefitsCal to address a novel policy might impose additional tasks on Counties if the design involves assigning work to a worker. This underscores the paramount importance of placing humans at the center of our SCR approach. Such a perspective allows us to proactively anticipate potential impacts and identify areas for enhancement. We wholeheartedly embrace a continuous delivery pipeline process, aligned with the Hybrid-Agile methodologies as exemplified in Figure 4.3.2-2.

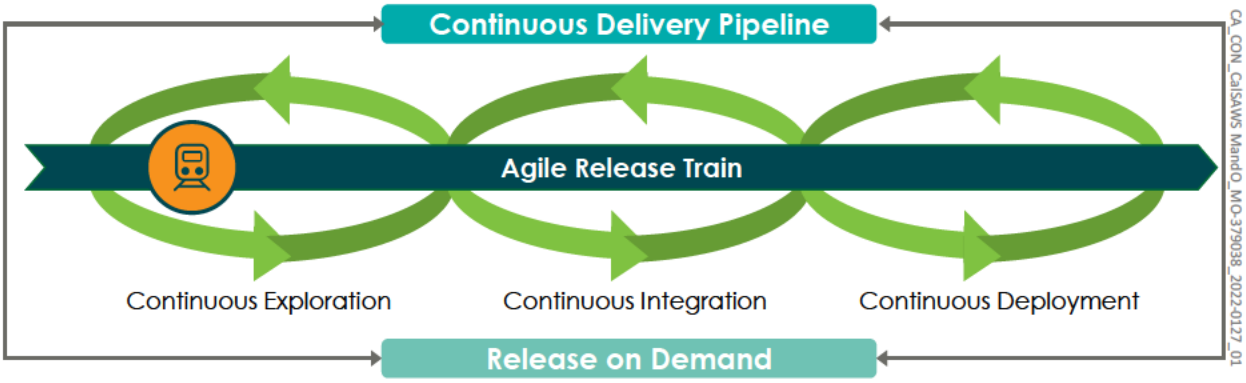

Figure 4.3.2-2. Continuous Delivery Flow.

Our process adheres to the principles of Hybrid-Agile, with a strong emphasis on User-Centered Design (UCD). We maintain an ongoing commitment to actively listen, explore, and consistently integrate the human perspective throughout every phase of the SCR lifecycle. We **engage more than just the user to understand the full end to end view,** this includes speaking with such groups as Help Desk staff and Customers to understand their perspective. It also aids in early identification of downstream impacts resulting from an SCR on existing processes and procedures. This, in turn, translates into smaller, more manageable bundles within the delivery process, enabling accelerated delivery of certain CalSAWS features to end users. Outlined in Table 4.3.2-1 below, these processes serve to enhance the existing Release When Ready (RWR) process for swift delivery and bolster the release of discrete sets of new functionalities. These functionalities are subsequently deployed to meet end user needs and expectations.

Aspects	Description and Benefits
Continuous Exploration (CE)	Our team utilizes CE as a method for ongoing discovery to identify areas of improvement by consistently exploring and listening. We work with users through focus groups and field visits to understand their concerns, and continually identify changes that are most impactful. This exploration process helps us to fully understand the **voices from the field (County staff), customer, Community Based Organization (CBO), operations and policy.** As part of continuous exploration, in addition to listening to customers, we also review the existing solution architecture for improvements that not just bring value to users but also reduce technical debt and maintenance effort. We explore change request backlog to identify items that will bring immediate value to the user and work with the Committees for prioritization. Our team meets with our national Human Services Nerve Center weekly and alliance partners twice a month to keep current with the latest enhancements that are being introduced and could be applied as an accelerator for CalSAWS SCRs. For example, when the Counties requested to

Aspects	Description and Benefits
	introduce a change in BenefitsCal that would allow uploaded SAR7s to be evaluated for potential changes reported, our team leveraged architectural and design patterns from other states that had implemented a similar feature to identify periodic reports that had no changes. Being able to leverage what other state E&E systems have introduced both reduces effort and contains overall cost.
Continuous Integration (CI)	Our team's primary focus is to analyze enhancements and create journey maps for changes that are rooted in customer requirements, expectations, and their direct feedback. We then conduct **review and focus sessions with end users.** The journey map helps the user to see the translation of user story to a tangible working specification and helps them understand the feature, it's impact on business process and downstream impacts. These changes are completed, tested end to end, and then validated through a staging environment. Completed work is scheduled to be released in production.
Continuous Deployment (CD)	**Features are continuously verified and monitored** in a lower environment before production deployment. They are deployed and released to the end user after being tested. These changes can also be user and/or County-specific upon release utilizing tools like LaunchDarkly.
Release on Demand (RoD)	This process **enables changes to be made available at once or through stages** (e.g., one County, and then to other Counties). This provides the Consortium and the Counties the ability to make decision of deploying changes to the fifty-eight Counties or work with smaller set of Counties to soft launch the solution. The availability of such release options enables users to validate changes and helps the Consortium in mitigating release-related risks and maintaining system stability.

Table 4.3.2-1. Aspects of Continuous Delivery.

4.3.2.1 Continuous Delivery Flow Helps Implement Changes Faster

Our Continuous Delivery Pipeline methodology is in alignment with Agile methodologies, as previously mentioned in this section. While we've explored the four pillars of this process, it's important to understand the benefits this methodology offers to you and how it facilitates expedited change delivery.

Continuous Exploration for Faster Delivery

To attain rapid delivery of SCRs that truly enhance operations and provide value to users, it's imperative to unite the perspectives of customers, Counties, stakeholders, and partners. This collaborative approach should be accompanied by a comprehensive exploration of the underlying business needs. This optimization is achieved by continuous exploration. It's an ongoing process, as each SCR and bundle of SCRs come with their own distinct requests and requirements. Each time we navigate through this process, we keep learning and exploring to drive ongoing improvement. Figure 4.3.2-3 below outlines areas that we continuously explore to optimize delivery of SCRs.

Figure 4.3.2-3. Continuous Exploration (CE) Synergies.

Exploration increases the value of the SCR process by streamlining tasks and steps throughout the enhancement process. This approach promotes the initial rapid delivery of enhancements and minimizes the need for rework.

Table 4.3.2-2 below summarizes key processes and techniques deployed to deliver a SCR faster and the areas of improvement (as documented in Figure 4.3.2-3) these tools and techniques address.

How to Enable Faster Delivery	The Right Tools and Techniques	Addresses Challenge
Increase SCR delivery throughput by consolidating similar changes. By assessing comparable SCRs and CERs in the pipeline, we can merge these requests to provide value with reduced risk. Employ appropriate tools to efficiently extract data from JIRA, SNOW, social media, surveys and web usage analytics for swift identification of similar themes and functionalities.	[redacted] Surveys Focus Groups County Visits	Process 3 Technology 1
Beginning with an evaluation of the outlined user stories in an SCR, **we organize user focus groups and field visits to grasp County-specific effects**. This approach sharpens our strategy, enhances impact understanding, and minimizes the need for future SCRs while reducing maintenance debt.	Understanding County business processes through work sessions and feedback [redacted]	Process 1
By conducting usability testing of the design and utilizing feedback channels, **we collect frequent user input.** This enables iterative design updates and facilitates sign-off from Committees, Consortium, and Stakeholders through design/wireframe reviews and demos. We also **regularly update Committees, RMs, and Counties on development and testing progress** during the software lifecycle for transparent insight into end-to-end advancement and deployment timelines.	Figma Usability Testing of Design [redacted]	People 1 People 2

Table 4.3.2-2. Continuous Exploration Improvements.

Continuous Integration for Faster Delivery

Efficient delivery of system changes hinges on the continuous integration of the CalSAWS multi-vendor stakeholders. From the outset, we engage with the Consortium, Committees, Counties, RMs, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), other CalSAWS contractors and employ user-centered design throughout the change lifecycle. This ongoing integration covers the SCR phases within the delivery pipeline, promoting transparency and coordination across stakeholder groups—from initial identification through the delivery of each respective change.

With special focus on coherent and faster coordination across teams in the enhancement delivery pipeline, we assist the Delivery Integration Office (DIO) with multi-vendor coordination including early release planning to align the delivery milestones and establishing Teams channels for operational coordination across teams throughout the system change delivery lifecycle.

Our UCD mindset starts from the discovery phase to define the actual need through the focus group sessions and design prototypes. The usability testing also allows us to continuously involve the key stakeholders and proactively identify the operational support needs for the Counties as well. We will also leverage Hybrid Agile workgroups with representations from Committees, Counties, RMs, SMEs and stakeholders where quick decisions are needed, as indicated in Figure 4.3.2-4.

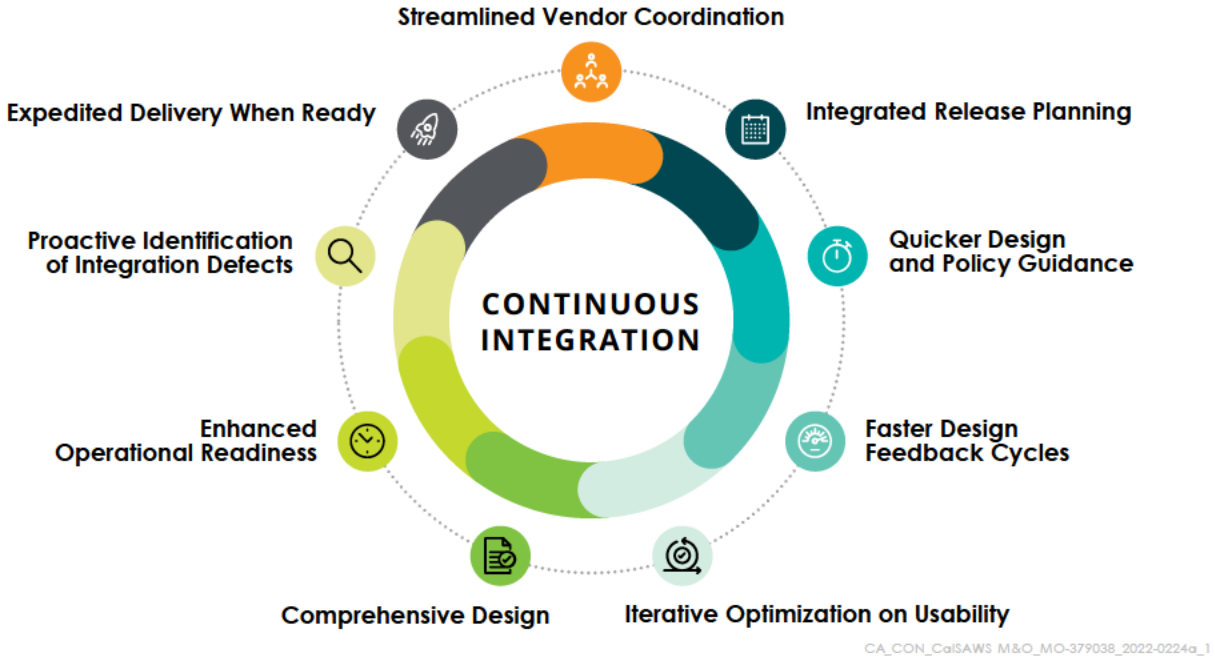

Figure 4.3.2-4. Continuous Integration Improvements.

Table 4.3.2-3 below summarizes key processes and techniques deployed to deliver a SCR faster and the areas of improvement (as documented in Figure 4.3.2-4) these tools and techniques address.

How to Enable Faster Delivery	The Right Tools and Techniques	Addresses Challenge
Expanding on the usability testing of Figmas as part of Continuous Exploration, the **screen clickthrough prototypes** for the user stories/scenarios will be provided for early evaluation to the stakeholders, which will also allow us to receive direct and quick feedback, incorporate revisions suggestions and achieve design confirmations faster. For correspondence and NOAs, our team will review the proposed language with Customers to confirm reading comprehension. Changes that require modifications to IVR will also be usability tested with Customers to confirm that the navigation tree structure is easy to understand as a challenging experience with IVR can lead individuals to instead come into an office. The **iterative optimizations** in the design feedback cycle and decision-making process will allow quicker start of build phase (development) of the system changes and faster delivery of the functionality in the pipeline.	Early end user feedback through usability testing through prototyping	People 1 Process 1 Process 3
Working with the DIO, we will leverage Agile workgroups with representation from Committees, Counties, RMs, SMEs, Infrastructure and other vendor partners Central Print, BenefitsCal, CalHEERS) and other stakeholders where quick decisions are needed, and for **early confirmation on design interpretations based on policy guidance**. Through **transparent communication**, we will encourage Committees, RMs, and Counties to share progress updates and provide details about the ongoing activities related to the SCRs.	Create quicker designs and Faster feedback cycles with Figma	People 1 Process 2
During the build phase, we implement end-to-end integrated unit testing across vendors for **early identification of integration defects**. This results in **smoother and faster execution** during UAT/County Validation phases. Operating with a RWR approach, this proactive validation facilitates accelerated SCR delivery and delivers overall business value to end-users sooner.	Proactively identify Integration defects Identify early readiness	Process 2 Technology 2 People 1
Guided by the end-to-end testing vision, we will collaborate with the DIO, infrastructure vendor and other impacted CalSAWS contractors (e.g., BenefitsCal or Central Print) to suggest a unified environment for the SDLC phases. This will **accelerate** the Consortium's environment consolidation, minimize data setup and test scenario execution times, accelerate SCR delivery and optimize the allocation of SCR hours.	Streamline Vendor Coordination	Technology 1 Process 2

Table 4.3.2-3. Continuous Integration Improvements.

Continuous Deployment for Faster Delivery

We establish a robust foundation for swift system change delivery through continuous deployment. This prioritizes providing value to end-users promptly, aligning with business requirements, and commencing with comprehensive release and delivery planning for each SCR. Through continuous deployment, we also determine how we'll measure the adoption and usability of our solution and implement the appropriate data tracking methods, where we measure the success of the solution and monitor for future enhancement opportunities, which serves as an input to the Consortium's overall SCR strategy.

Table 4.3.2-4 below summarizes key processes and techniques deployed to deliver a SCR faster and the areas of improvement these tools and techniques address.

How to Enable Faster Delivery	The Right Tools and Techniques	Addresses Challenge in
In order to plan release and delivery dates, we work with the DIO, CalSAWS contractor teams, Consortium, RMs, Committees, Counties and advocates (for public facing changes), when necessary, to breakdown the components into releases for the **SCRs into smaller bundles to expedite delivery to users.**	Collaboration Reviews	Process 1 Process 3
Our team closely monitors the build and testing phase outcomes for the SCRs, where features are **continuously verified** in a lower environment. The components will be deployed and released to the end users once the functionality is fully validated.	Continuous Validation Process	Technology 1 People 1
The **feature-based release capability** enables the deployment of these changes either for users or tailored to specific Counties upon release.	LaunchDarkly	Technology 2

Table 4.3.2-4. Continuous Deployment Improvements.

4.3.2.2 Process Improvements through the Continuous Delivery Flow

Over the years, we have continuously refined the end-to-end cycle of delivering SCRs based on our evolving experience. Our enhancements integrate insights from CalSAWS users, customers, and CBOs, confirming that we align with their expectations for the desired changes. This is illustrated in Figure 4.3.2-5. The Deloitte Team will support the Consortium with providing updates to the Advocate community, as we have done with BenefitsCal, for SCRs that have a public facing impact.

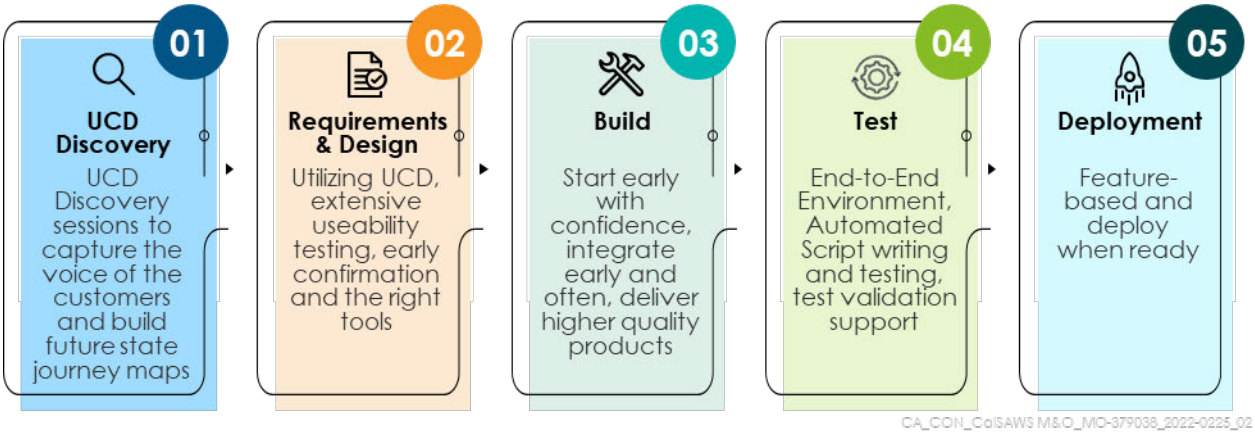

Figure 4.3.2-5. End-to-End Delivery Process Improvements.

UCD Discovery

Our approach to enhancing the CalSAWS end user experience through User-Centered Design (UCD) begins by establishing a vision and setting clear goals for delivering SCRs to the CalSAWS platform.

Process Improvements for UCD Discovery

Our UCD methodology enables CalSAWS leadership, Counties and stakeholders to leverage both our curated user research learnings and performance data collected through established listening channels and usage analytics, which is described in Section 4.3.3 Improving the Existing CalSAWS Approach to UCD UX (ME-UA11). The inputs collected through these channels help identify new SCRs and improvement opportunities as well as refine the prioritization of the system enhancements.

During the discovery phase we conduct discovery and focus group sessions as well as qualitative and quantitative research to understand and document the voice of the customers. With the objective of learning about the needs, expectations, and pain points of CalSAWS end-users, we craft current state journey maps to find and document pain points, moments that matter, and opportunities for improvement with using UCD tools and techniques throughout. These are reviewed by stakeholders and users, and feedback is used to craft future state journey maps. The future state journey maps and feedback from stakeholders and users are galvanized as input for the next phase in the delivery flow, to discover & define the requirements and design for SCRs.

For more details about our process improvements for the existing CalSAWS UCD Approach please refer to Section 4.3.3 Improving the Existing CalSAWS Approach to UCD UX (ME-UA11).

How this is used for the CalFresh ABAWD SCR scenario

Below are key activities that occur during discovery phase for ABAWD SCR:

- We involve stakeholders, the related Committee members, Counties, RMs, State partners, and contractor teams (i.e., infrastructure, BenefitsCal, Central Print and QA) starting from the discovery phase.
- Using the [redacted], we identify other ABAWD, Interface, Reports, and NOA-related changes in the pipeline that can leverage the same code base for

enhanced efficiency. We collaborate with Consortium, Committees, Counties, Policy, and other Stakeholders to prioritize these related changes collectively.

- We use focus group sessions with end users and different committees such as Reports Committee, NOA Committee, CalFresh Committee to understand the impact of the change to their workload, and how to best approach the change to minimize disruption and increase efficiency. [redacted]
- We engage external stakeholders —FIS (EBT vendor), Central Print vendor, Committees, and State Policy team—early on to establish a shared understanding of the solution, approach, and respective responsibilities.

[redacted]

Requirements and Design

During the requirements and Design phase, we use what we've learned in the UCD discovery phase to design and prototype solutions. During this phase, we re-engage with users for usability testing and incorporate their feedback before providing the development team with the specifications to initiate the next steps. Through the validation of requirements and collaborative design efforts involving stakeholders affected by the process, we establish transparency about the evolving solution, confirming its alignment with SCR expectations. These procedures and tools not only uphold synchronization but also continually contribute to improving the requirements and design process.

[redacted]

Process Improvements for Requirements and Design

- Continuous exploration throughout the phases via UCD allows us to get direct feedback from individuals involved or impacted by the process and their expectations.
- Modification to the baseline design documentation in addition to providing SCR documentation so that individuals understand what the complete design will be. [redacted]
- Usability Testing: By conducting multiple rounds of usability testing with users and other stakeholders, we confirm the design from concept to a working model.

- Design review between integration partners (CalSAWS, BenefitsCal, and other vendor partners) to validate the correctness and compatibility of the design.
- Early confirmation of design reduces the time required for design approval, reduces re-work caused by identifying defects later, starts build activities early.
- Conduct UCD sessions and employ usability testing for the proposed design to gather early user feedback before start of development. This enables iterative design updates and facilitates sign-off from Committees, Consortium, and Stakeholders through design/wireframe reviews and demos.
- Engage Customers in reviewing the text of the new NOAs to make sure that the language is easy to understand. To accelerate the creation of the Figmas and the NOAs, [redacted].
- Tools Used:
  - We create clickthrough design visuals using Figma (see Figure 4.3.2-6), where stakeholders can experience the end-to-end journey.
  - [redacted]

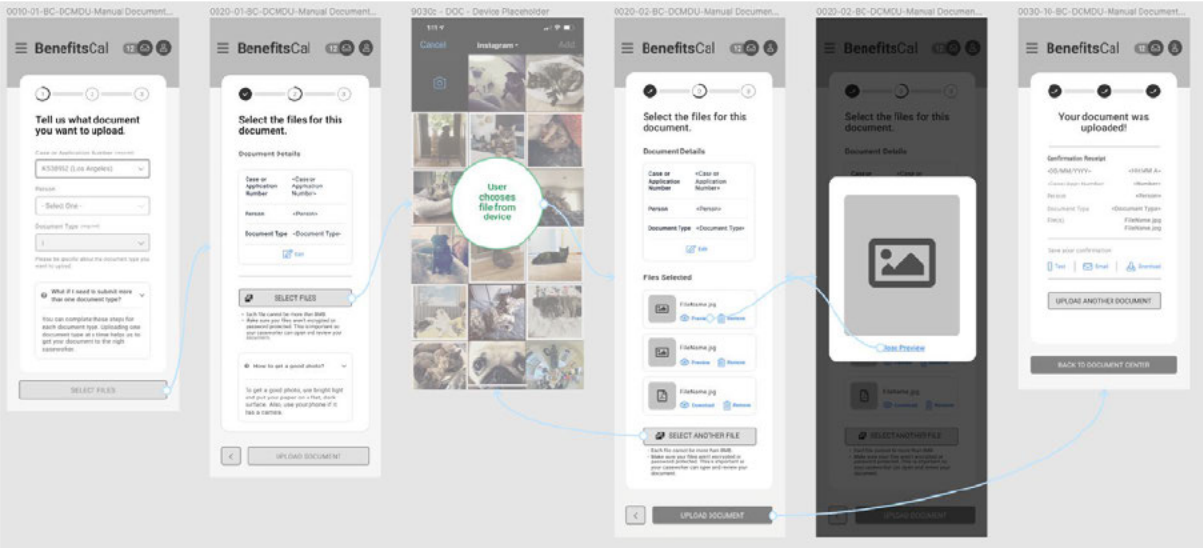

Figure 4.3.2-6. Design Clickthrough and Usability Testing via Figma Tool.

How this is used for the CalFresh ABAWD SCR scenario

- We work with Committees and user groups (i.e., eligibility, reports, correspondence, fiscal) to fully understand their needs and expectations relative to this change.
- We provide clickthrough screen prototypes to stakeholders and committee members for evaluation and feedback.
- We validate task routing rules for most efficient way to work this additional workload from a County operations standpoint.
- We refine the understanding such as identifying the need to automate work participation verification with introduction of iOCR (this goes beyond just reading of the barcode on the document).
- [redacted]

- We conduct usability testing with wireframes to get feedback that allows users to see something tangible and provide more pointed feedback. Please refer to Section 4.3.3 Improving the Existing CalSAWS Approach to UCD UX (ME-UA11) for further details.
- We get early buy-in from Committees and County users to reduce the time of design approval.

Build

Currently, there exists a 4-6 week gap between the completion of the Requirement and Design phase and the commencement of the Build phase. This presents a significant opportunity for streamlining to enhance efficiency and reduce delivery time. By validating requirements and devising the design in collaboration with users, we can initiate the solution-building process earlier and commence integration testing with partner teams.

Process Improvements for the Build Phase

- Start the build phase early given the focus on confirming the design during usability testing with users.
- Conduct early integration (e2e unit) testing of modules with partner teams for early identification of issues and proactively resolve incidents. We bring iterative optimization for quicker delivery to testing phase.
- Utilize feature management tools for flexibility to deploy features to environment for integration testing, County validation and Staging.
- Tools Used:
  - We employ LaunchDarkly to support feature management to provide flexibility of when to deploy features and to which environment. The tool allows one or multiple large features (features that take multiple sprints to complete) to be placed behind a feature flag and developed in concert with smaller enhancements or changes. Furthermore, with the feature management tool, our development teams realize many advantages, specifically a more streamlined and simple code branching strategy. No longer do teams need multiple, long-running feature branches that must be merged into the main branch weeks or months later causing significant effort to resolve the merge conflicts. This allows the team to continuously deploy these smaller changes into testing environments while simultaneously working on larger features to be released later. This provides continuous delivery of features to testing in shorter timeframes and significantly lowers the effort associated with merging and the likelihood of regression issues in the future. As the feature releases are more flexible, the teams can now take advantage of multiple code deployment strategies like A/B testing, Blue-Green, and Canary, among others.
  - [redacted]

How this is used for the CalFresh ABAWD SCR scenario

- [redacted]

Test

Implementing ongoing evaluations of current system functionality and meticulously selecting appropriate data and testers result in a streamlined validation process. Our proposed testing approach improves processes and removes outdated or isolated practices between Counties and the Consortium, as shown in Figure 4.3.2-7.

Process Improvements for Testing Phase

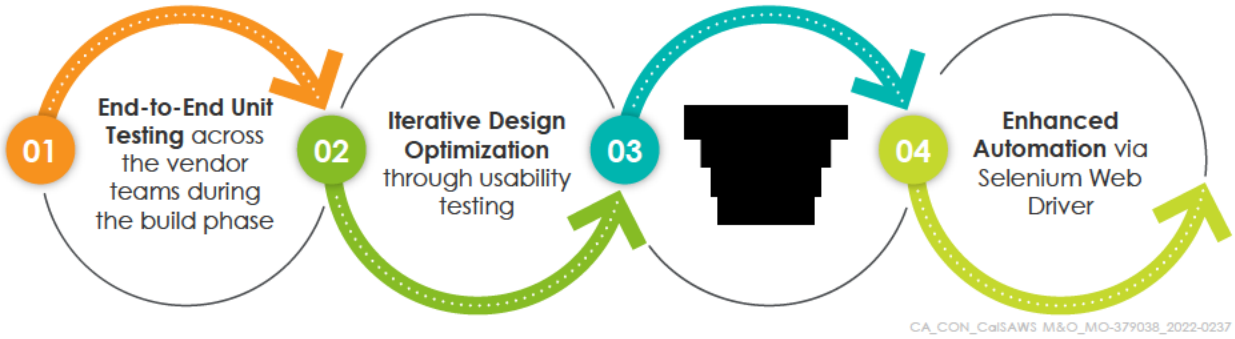

Figure 4.3.2-7. Testing Improvements.

End-to-End Unit testing: Testing end-to-end early is key to developing a solution that is complete and comprehensive. We introduce end-to-end integrated unit testing across vendors to facilitate early detection of integration defects. This leads to smoother and swifter execution in subsequent testing cycles, including UAT/County Validation phases. Centered around the end-to-end testing vision, we will collaborate with the DIO and infrastructure vendor to formulate a comprehensive testing environment for the various testing phases. Employing a single end-to-end environment will streamline the process, minimizing the need to repeat data setup, script writing, test planning, and test execution across multiple environments. This consolidation significantly saves time and effort in supporting the testing procedures.

Iterative Optimization through Usability Testing: We engage in usability testing with users, and when necessary, with State policy representatives or Advocates (for public-facing SCRs). This testing occurs at two key junctures: first, when the design's visual clickthroughs (Figmas), NOAs, and IVR call flow scripts are prepared, and second, both before and after County validation.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Enhanced Automation via Selenium Web Driver: Most of the automation testing tools in use only provide scripting and execution capabilities, which creates a lot of dependency on manual testing for validation. We will work with DIO and bring a new tool, Selenium web driver, which not only records the scripts, but also brings execution and validation capabilities, as indicated in Figure 4.3.2-9. It will reduce the manual testing effort to only look for critical scenarios and boundary conditions, which significantly increases the overall delivery pace of the SCRs.

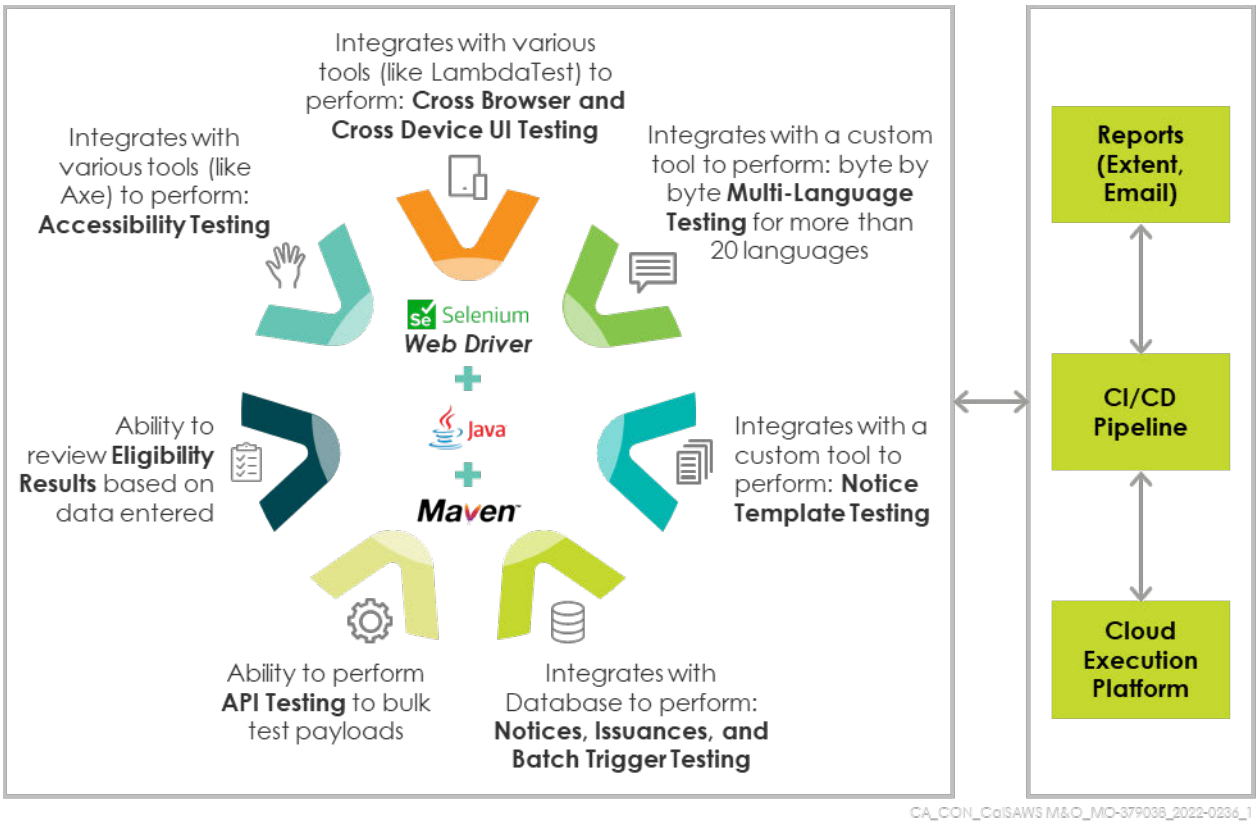

Figure 4.3.2-9. Enhanced Automation via Selenium Web Driver.

Feature Based Validation: We utilize a feature management tool, LaunchDarkly. With its SCR features can now be deployed to Lower Environments and Production by the Development Teams with the feature configuration turned off making the SCR feature invisible to the end user. With that Consortium, Counties and Stakeholders can then determine at their own discretion when to toggle on that SCR feature making it visible to the end user allowing to conduct feature-based validation activities in pre-production environments as well.

Additional Support for County Validation Testing: We will work with DIO and Consortium to provide additional support for County testers for the County Validation phase which will reduce the overall timeline for this phase.

Our proposed testing approach updates processes and reduces old/siloed processes between Counties and the Consortium. Our approach to improve testing through different methods and processes are detailed in Figure 4.3.2-10.

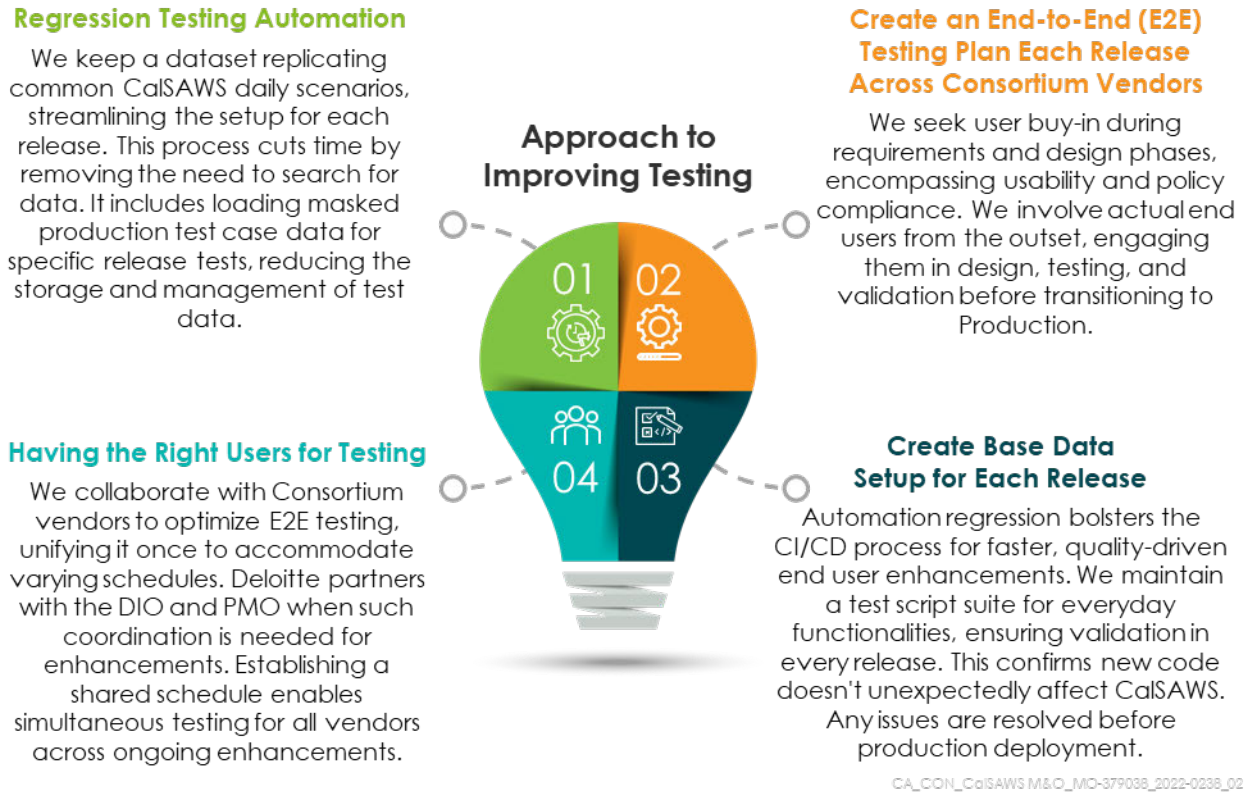

Figure 4.3.2-10. Testing Approach.

This continuous analysis encompasses testing methodology and necessary testing support activities, all aimed at identifying enhancements for improved Consortium, end user, and stakeholder support through these validation processes.

How this is used for the CalFresh ABAWD SCR scenario

- We use a **unified environment** that enables us to test related functionalities (i.e., Eligibility, Interfaces, Reports and Notices) in one environment. This allows for reduced total testing time and enhances the user experience/confidence during County validation.
- [redacted]

Deployment

Effectively managing deployments to align with the end users' schedules and readiness is crucial. Recognizing that not all Counties require identical features or policy changes on the same start date, we employ tools like LaunchDarkly to release code when it is prepared and to selectively enable features for specific end users or when the change demands activation.

Process Improvements for Deployment

- Closely monitor the build and testing phase outcomes for the SCRs, where features are continuously verified in a lower environment. The components are deployed and released to the end users once the functionality is fully validated.
- Use feature-based release capability which allows these changes to be deployed for user and/or specific Counties upon release.
- Training team creates Quick Reference Guides and Job Aids leveraging GenAI to pull from the library of design artifacts including functional design documents, meeting minutes, project communications and other project artifacts. Leveraging GenAI to create these materials enables County Help Desks, the Infrastructure Vendor Service Desk staff and County users to receive comprehensive, detailed information at the right level, in a digestible format, and timed to when it is relevant.
- Additionally, our communications team works with the BenefitsCal team to coordinate communications so that there is not confusion created between communications generated by CalSAWS and independently created by BenefitsCal.
- We also coordinate with the Counties as the Counties also independently send out communications to Customers and Community Based Organizations.
- Tools Used:
  - We employ LaunchDarkly to decouple code deployment from a feature release. Using the tool, code can now be associated to a feature flag and released to Production without the feature appearing to users. This is known as deploying code "in the dark" or "dark launching." The ability for Stakeholders to fully control when a feature is released to end users will allow the users to see more rapid deployments, minimization of DCRs/hotfixes, and continuous delivery of system functionality. Once released, an authorized user can navigate to the LaunchDarkly user interface to toggle the feature on (visible to the end users) or off (invisible to the end users). By launching the code in the dark using a feature flag management tool, our

DevOps team has full control of their software feature deployments. Utilizing feature flags, SCR code can now be consistently merged into the Main branch with the flag set to off. It can then be deployed to higher environments, all without presenting itself to users. This greatly streamlines branch management and enables a continuous deployment of code to Production.

- [redacted] It is common for Customers to call when their benefit amounts have changed so providing clarity in the communications starting with the design of NOA language through to release related communications is critical to reduce potential calls to the County.

How this is used for the CalFresh ABAWD SCR scenario

Having this SCR prepared for February 2024 aligns with our timeline. Given the policy's activation in July 2024, we collaborate with the Consortium to make sure that the deployment of the SCR coincides with the policy becoming active.

Employing a feature-based release, we gain the capability to easily enable or disable features through configuration. This approach also permits us to tailor releases by County, allowing us to launch this SCR in Production ahead of schedule. Furthermore, it empowers us to concurrently focus on additional SCRs throughout the February to July timeframe.

4.3.2.3 Alignment to M&E Staffing Worksheet

Staffing is key for supporting the SCR process and activities we have proposed in this response and to align to existing activities conducted by the Consortium, Counties, and other stakeholders. We are not proposing a reduction in the current SCR levels from what the Counties and Consortium are currently accustomed. We are proposing a realignment of the resources towards our guiding principles, as depicted in Figure 4.3.2-11, for analyzing through implementation of SCRs.

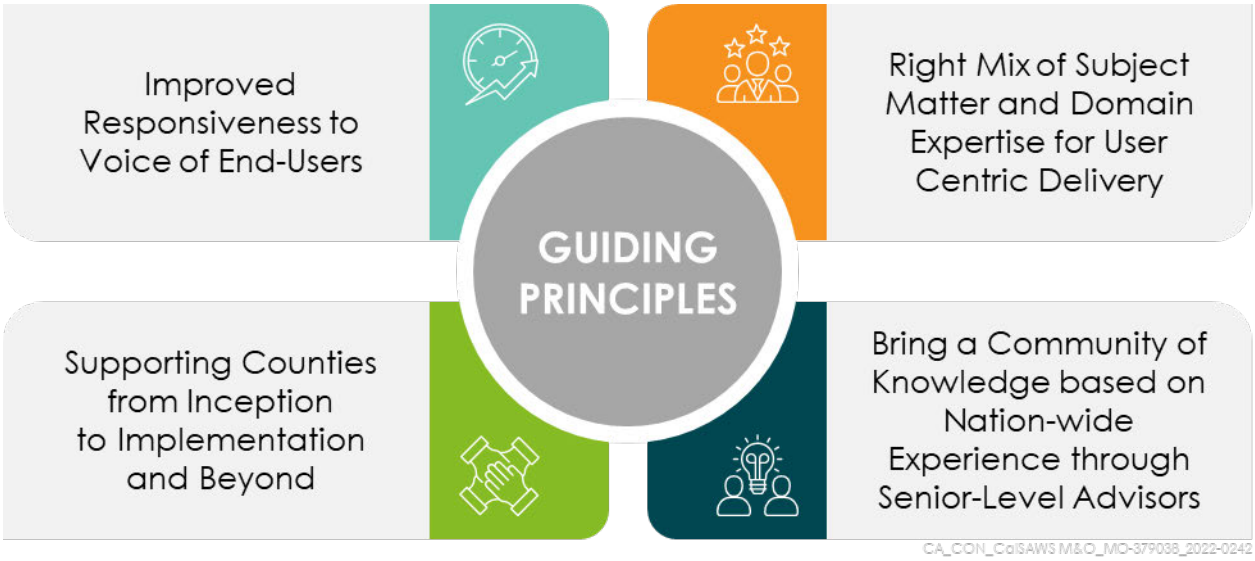

Figure 4.3.2-11. Guiding Principles.

Conventional vendors tend to place excessive reliance on developer staff, resulting in a less user-centric approach. This frequently leads to increased defects, iterations of coding changes, testing failures, and even adjustments to requirements due to incomplete understanding of basic user needs. In contrast, our approach places less emphasis on developer resources compared to other pivotal phases of the SDLC. The visual (Figure 4.3.2-12) and Table 4.3.2-5 below shows a representation of our staffing levels compared to those of a typical vendor and how our approach is aligned with Consortium goals of improving the SCR process for the Counties.

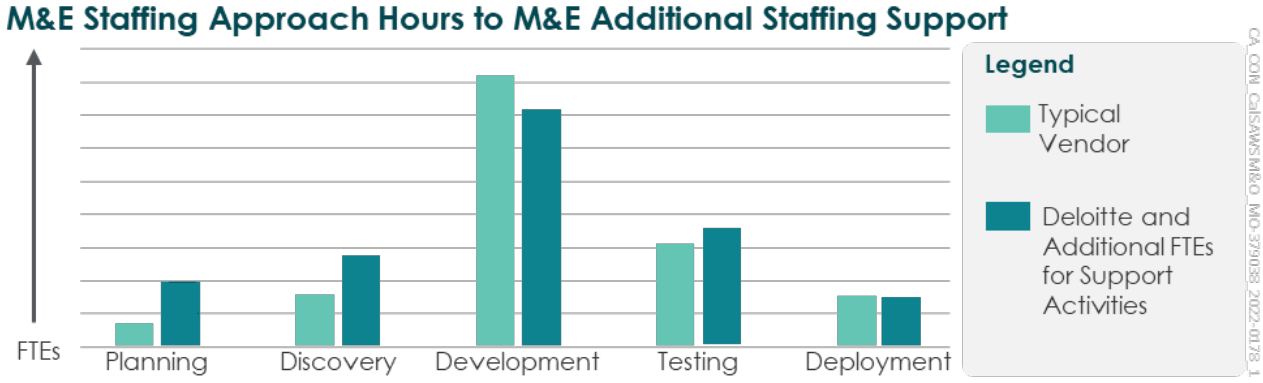

Figure 4.3.2-12. Additions for Resource Capacity.

Phase	Alignment to Staffing Worksheet
Planning	Our staffing worksheet encapsulates the collaborative process with the Consortium, Committees (Policy and Committee Prioritization), and Counties. We focus on prioritizing and gathering feedback for the priorities of specific County regions. Additionally, we balance these priorities considering capacity constraints and allocate them to releases accordingly. This approach harmonizes with our Release and delivery planning endeavor. In this phase, we collaborate closely with the Consortium, RMs, Committees, and Counties. Our goal is to break down the components of the Release into smaller, manageable portions for quicker design review and expedited delivery of these changes.
Discovery/UCD/ UX	The resources are front-loaded and aligned to conduct discovery sessions and UCD activities upfront. Also, the Staffing Worksheet takes into consideration the resources allocation to account for the effort taken to define the actual business need through the focus group sessions and design prototypes.
Development	We work with consortium and County to bring efficiency in design approval process. As we use continuous design feedback cycles and an update Consortium decision-making process, it enables quicker start of build phase (development) of the SCRs. The FTEs in the staffing worksheet are in alignment based on these efficiencies.
Testing	Our staffing worksheet is in alignment with the FTEs planned to coordinate and support end-to-end integrated testing, particularly if across systems with other vendors, as well as automation testing and usability testing phases before and after County validation. Our staffing also accounts for providing extended support the Counties during County validation support.
Deployment	The activities including the release planning and delivery dates, supporting the DIO and coordinating with the vendor teams, Consortium, RMs, and deployment activities to lower environments, production and RWR are reflected in the staffing worksheet. As part of this phase, our staff is also involved in conducing training and change management activities to help users adopt the change and validate that the change implemented meets their needs.

Table 4.3.2-5. Staffing Alignment.

In our approach, we realign the staff's focus to engage in the following supplementary activities, aiming to enhance the overall SCR process:

- Conducting and supporting UCD activities that are further described in **Section 4.3.3 Improving the Existing CalSAWS Approach to UCD**. Our UCD-experienced team members engage in a more comprehensive range of activities during the Discovery process compared to typical vendors. They also proactively provide suggestions for continuous process enhancement and innovative approaches to usability and user experience testing.
- Conducting upfront policy clarifications prior to requirement and design sessions so the full need is understood to remove the need for additional 'add on' SCRs.
- Planning and facilitating usability/user experience research and testing.

- Assisting Counties in identifying crucial changes in the CalSAWS system and representing these needs in SCR prioritization and approval processes, while also aiding in anticipating workload and operational impacts during UCD discovery sessions.
- Offering staff to aid in County validations for releases, ensuring our user-centric focus extends throughout the SDLC and beyond. This includes support during County validation phases, user training, and facilitating familiarity with new functionality post-implementation.