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# Executive Summary

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# Secure. Smart. **Simplified.**

## Working together for BenefitsCal's mission

**BenefitsCal is unique. There is no other integrated eligibility (IE) system at this scale in the United States—perhaps even the world.** It has taken a lot of work from a lot of talented people to get here. But the hard work must continue to improve the experience for users and county workers and deliver better results for more Californians.

Complaints from advocacy groups, high-profile security incidents, and lack of input from the counties over the past few years have shown the importance of selecting a Maintenance and Operations (M&O) contractor who can respond to all stakeholder groups' evolving needs while keeping the BenefitsCal system running smoothly and securely.

Our unique experience building the CalSAWS back end, our global experience leading design and marketing, and our deep IE and Public Service experience make us the ideal partner for the M&O contract for BenefitsCal. We know how to maximize engagement and collaboration across all CalSAWS contractors to have the best end-to-end experience for both users and counties.

**Our mission is simple—to empower residents to obtain benefits more easily and to simplify the internal benefits administration processes for county workers.** Our enhanced Collaboration Model and user-centered design (UCD) approach will gather input from all stakeholders at the right moments to design and implement solutions that work for everyone, delivering a BenefitsCal that addresses your challenges:

**Secure:** Our proactive security approach helps the Consortium anticipate future risks and mitigates them.

**Smart:** We deliver innovations that get your residents their benefits faster by making life easier for county staff.

**Simplified:** We fix the design process to include key stakeholders, so proposed designs are efficiently implemented, resulting in better public perceptions.

**Together:** We include the voices of each stakeholder group throughout the design-to-implement process, because we know it gets us to better results.

**Outcome-based:** We measure what matters to drive the outcomes residents need.

# 1.1 A partner you know and trust

Accenture has more than two decades of experience running the Consortium's California Statewide Automated Welfare System (CalSAWS) upon which BenefitsCal relies to provide benefits to California residents. By choosing us as your partner for BenefitsCal M&O Services, the Consortium will reap the benefits of improved collaboration and transparency in the design process, a proactive security program, and innovations in process and technology to improve the experience of BenefitsCal for users—all while getting counties the information they need to efficiently deliver the benefits to the Californians who need them.



The Consortium seeks a knowledgeable, dedicated partner—one capable of seamlessly taking over BenefitsCal M&O and enhancing the user experience of both residents and county staff, while tightening security to protect users' data and the overall integrity of the system.

## 1.1.1 A secure, smart, and simplified future

Good design and successful technology application should reduce the administrative aspects of county workers' roles, giving them time back to work with residents and enable those same residents to get their benefits faster. Our mission is to maximize BenefitsCal's ability to provide and process benefits by improving ease of use, addressing your technical requirements, simplifying internal processes, and increasing collaboration across your diverse stakeholders.

The Consortium has much to be proud of as it looks back at the launch of BenefitsCal. And yet, it has not been without its challenges. We understand there have been some major pain points in the last few years, such as:

- **Inefficient collaboration:** The existing UCD and collaboration processes suffer from a lack of collaboration across multiple dimensions. Counties are consulted at the very end of the process, after Design and Build, leading to solutions that add complexity to application processing and increased workload for county employees. Other CalSAWS contractors are brought in too late in the process, leading to designs that are not technically feasible. A recent design of Time Clocks underscores this problem. Lack of input led to a last-minute pull back of a design that was not technically feasible with current CalSAWS data, and not viable for county workers to maintain. You need a partner who uses UCD to illicit the right input from the right stakeholders at key moments, including counties and technical experts.
- **A lack of transparency:** Without a closed loop in the UCD process, advocates and other stakeholders provide design input, but then grow frustrated when they don't see it implemented or receive updates on results. Other stakeholders don't have necessary information at the right times to provide critical input on constraints or dependencies. This degrades trust and deteriorates working partnerships. The Consortium needs a partner who builds in close-looped communications and measurement to build trust and buy in with stakeholders and optimizes results for Californians.

- Complexity impairing enrollment:** California is under-enrolled versus the national average for core benefits available on BenefitsCal. A recent report from Nourish California estimated 2.7 million Californians are eligible for CalFresh, but are not receiving benefits. The same report cited a burdensome application process as one of the drivers of low enrollment. Also, more needs to be done to build awareness and drive adoption for BenefitsCal. The Consortium needs a partner who will design for a simplified end-to-end experience—from application to benefit received—and who has experience successfully driving awareness and adoption on similar programs.
- Measuring outputs versus outcomes:** As Jennifer Tracy, the lead representative for advocacy groups with BenefitsCal, pointed out in the recent subcommittee hearing, metrics currently reported by the BenefitsCal contractor are measures that lack context and meaning. Instead of reporting on the “number of accounts,” a more insightful website measure might be to “change in number of applications” or “time from creation of account to application submission.” Even more insightful might be end-to-end metrics like time for an application to be processed. That measure not only considers the simplicity of the front-end experience—it also incorporates whether the site encouraged complete and accurate information. The Consortium needs a partner who is concerned about measuring outcomes and will transparently share key performance indicators that enable us to optimize for results.
- Opportunity for innovation:** Your application architecture and analytics can be greatly improved with new technologies, such as GenAI. For example, your current chatbot has very low adoption because it lacks meaningful conversation ability, and rarely returns a successful answer when using the free-form chat box. An improved chatbot could help complete application tasks and update the appropriate information based on the assisted flow, simplifying the work process for both the county staff and the users. The Consortium needs a partner who is committed to innovating and can lean on an extensive network of experts in the emerging technologies of tomorrow.
- Security incidents:** A security breach impacted users of BenefitsCal. We understand that the remediation has consumed many Consortium resources. Going forward, the Consortium needs an experienced partner who can help keep BenefitsCal secure in a complex, ever-changing technical environment.



Nourish California attributed an “overly complicated and burdensome application process” for the low numbers of SNAP beneficiaries.

“We urge the state to immediately prioritize improving CalFresh participation to help the millions of families who need help putting food on the table.”

— Jared Call,  
Director of Policy at Nourish California

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“We know from the website that there are 3.8 million accounts created. But it's not clear if those number demonstrates success, or cause for concern. The website was launched over 2.5 years ago, and we are still unable to make informed recommendations for allocation resources, which we know are increasingly limited.”

— Jennifer Tracy in the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2 on Human Services

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By choosing Accenture as your partner for BenefitsCal M&O, the Consortium will receive the following benefits:



Secure

**A proactive security program that anticipates future risks and mitigates them.**

- Regular review of designs to ensure all unnecessary PII is redacted in the user interface
- Collaborative security operating model to work along with BenefitsCal Infrastructure contractors to handle security threats and malicious events
- Security operational monitoring to identify and remediate suspicious activities
- Maximize automation to optimize application security scanning and more quickly identify vulnerabilities



Smart

**Innovations that meaningfully improve the experience and architecture of BenefitsCal, and new methods of communication that drive awareness and adoption.**

- We will build on our CalSAWS work with the counties to help you make faster determinations, so eligible Californians get their benefits faster.
- We bring award-winning creative capabilities to drive relevance among your target audience to change perceptions, increase awareness, and drive enrollment.
- We bring strategies to reduce “churn” by proactively reaching out to recipients to let them know when their benefits are up for renewal, instead of allowing coverage gaps to occur.
- Smart solutions like image verification will confirm uploaded images (such as IDs) are relevant and readable, reducing the time county staff spends validating documents.
- Continuous improvement—at every step, we are looking for potential improvements. Innovations we have planned and can quickly implement.



Simplified

**Simplicity. Simple can be difficult, but the benefits to county staff, residents, and other stakeholders make it worth the effort.**

- Use smart solutions to streamline the validation, review, and authentication processes by reducing the volume of inaccurate data.
- Improve wayfinding, error prevention, and comprehension on the site.
- Implement usability enhancements in line with industry recommended practices, to improve the chatbot so simple questions can be answered in real time, without adding to county workloads.



Together

**Improved collaboration and transparency, driven by the belief that each stakeholder group has unique insights and perspective to bring to the process.**

- We will improve the UCD process by including key stakeholders from both the front and back end throughout the process, so proposed designs consider technical feasibility and viability for county workers.
- We agree to common goals, objectives, and KPIs and report on them regularly—to build alignment across all stakeholders and drive toward unified results.
- We lead by example and with a One Team mentality, to build trust with other CalSAWS contractors.
- We solicit feedback at regular intervals, and act on that feedback—so all stakeholders know their opinion matters, and we continue to improve as one.



Outcome-based

**Measurable outcomes, not outputs.**

- We are driven by the outcomes that are most important to your people or core to your mission—the opposite of a “check-the-box” mentality.
- Our dashboards will focus on the metrics that matter to you and your residents, enabling BenefitsCal to specifically cite the improvement in Californians' lives.
- We focus on outcomes, like the number of new families who received CalFresh this month, because that is BenefitsCal's mission.
- We will implement new monitoring and reporting, measuring what matters to drive the outcomes your residents need.

## 1.1.2 Accenture + California = a winning partnership

Accenture is immensely proud to have been CalSAWS' M&O partner for more than 23 years. Through the evolution of service, we focused on one singular goal—delivering success for the counties, the Consortium, the State, and Californians. We have been with the Consortium and the counties through every step to help achieve the seemingly impossible—integrate 58 counties' benefits systems and requirements to deliver benefits to 15.7 million residents a year.

**We put your mission first.** When situations required us to help other contractors, we view it as our responsibility to step in and partner with the CalSAWS partner ecosystem to deliver success. We collaborated with Deloitte and complimented their team knowledge and skills with resources having CalSAWS business and technical knowledge, leading to better overall organizational change management (OCM) and business process reengineering (BPR) efforts, and providing post-implementation support to ease the counties' transition in. We teamed with Gainwell to deliver an innovative solution to administer General Assistance and General Relief (GA/GR) for the CalWIN counties. Repeatedly, we have demonstrated that we put your mission first. We are a true team player, and we are playing for Team California.

## 1.1.3 Experience you can trust

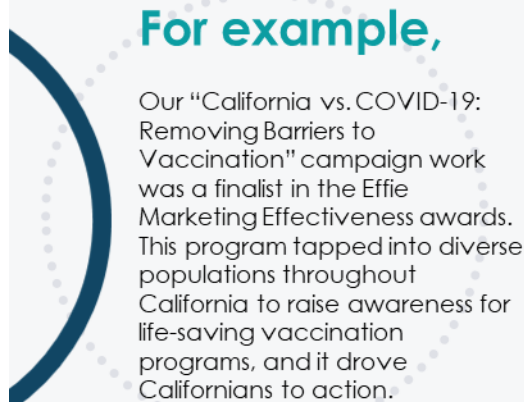
We combine our strength in technology and leadership in cloud, data, and AI with unmatched industry experience, functional expertise, and global delivery capability. We have over 35 years of experience providing collaborative system implementation and M&O services to public sector clients. Our proposed approach to M&O has been refined over three decades of experience and incorporates years of lessons learned, reducing the risk for clients. We have experience managing complex, integrated systems for a growing number of state clients, which has facilitated the development of a robust set of operational tools to proactively monitor system health and automate and optimize our service delivery. We have delivered quantifiable improvements to clients worldwide and will bring this wealth of experience to BenefitsCal.

We have worked with 16 states, including California, New York, and Texas, and three state-supervised, county-administered clients, to deliver services related to public assistance eligibility system implementation, maintenance, and enhancements. This includes completing the design, development, implementation (DD&I), and operations of the 39 counties in the C-IV system, including their migration to CalSAWS in 2021 and the remaining 18 CalWIN counties in 2023. We have executed M&O for Los Angeles County's eligibility solution and the CalSAWS system for 40 counties.



Through Accenture Song—the world's largest technology-powered creative group—we provide communications and marketing services, including user experience expertise, world-class creative, and intelligent marketing performance. We have won more than 350 industry and creative awards worldwide. For BenefitsCal, we're committed to a partnership that effectively connects with the people who need clear, user-centered communications.

Accenture Song is also the world's largest collection of designers and makers. Together, using user-centered design, we deliver design and technology solutions at scale. We have 62 creative studios, with over 2,500 creative professionals worldwide. We work with clients across all industries, including life sciences, retail, banking, automotive, technology, and more.



**For example,**

Our "California vs. COVID-19: Removing Barriers to Vaccination" campaign work was a finalist in the Effie Marketing Effectiveness awards. This program tapped into diverse populations throughout California to raise awareness for life-saving vaccination programs, and it drove Californians to action.

## 1.1.4 Summary of our response

### 1.1.4.1 Understanding and approach to the CalSAWS integrated multi-contractor environment



UA1

**'Collaboration first' is our mantra.** Our 'collaboration-first' approach focuses on working as one CalSAWS team, putting the users' and counties' experience as a priority. We believe that building trust with the customers, counties, state partners, and advocates within the Collaboration Model will happen if we are transparent and consistent in our communications. By implementing transparent communications and our collaboration-first approach, guided by RACI and OLA established with each CalSAWS contractor (both Infrastructure and M&E contractors) at the beginning of transition and prior to operations, we will effectively manage the scope in the multi-contractor environment. With a relentless focus on continuously improving the overall experience for all users, we identify and implement improvements to how we manage our work and how we collaborate with other CalSAWS contractors.



UA2

**Collaborating for shared services success.** When handling issues together with other M&O contractors, it is essential to put communication at the forefront while taking action swiftly to remediate issues. By working as One Team, we can propose recommendations and solve issues first before determining roles and responsibilities for any gaps that exist in the RACI and/or OLA. We garner support from the CalSAWS contractors to bring in the best minds from all contractors to jointly discuss solutions to problems and then determine owners to quickly resolve the agreed-upon solution. On an ongoing basis, Accenture will collaborate with CalSAWS Infrastructure and M&E contractors, aligning with the Consortium's requirements. We understand the importance of having a transition that causes minimal disruption, and we bring a proven transition methodology to achieve this.



### 1.1.4.2 Understanding and approach to software development

UA3

**Working together toward a common goal.** UCD relies on deep teamwork and inclusion with client stakeholders and other contractors, using each group's unique expertise to deliver the best outcome for residents. For design to influence the software development lifecycle (SDLC) without creating unintended and negative consequences, our approach creates space for review, collaboration, and refinement of new design concepts derived from user-centered research before they enter sprint cycles. Once concepts are vetted and refined for feasibility and viability, they are supported and more fully defined, in high fidelity by designers embedded with product development teams. By proposing a dedicated measurement phase to be added to the current four-phase process, we create a mechanism to ensure design changes create substantive positive impact to service delivery. Our measurement strategy carefully analyzes user engagement with metrics that relate to end-to-end user experiences, rather than isolated interactions, and we avoid unpleasant surprises by sharing design work early, and often, with diverse stakeholders across the Consortium. Our enhanced collaboration model collects input at critical moments throughout the process, but also provides transparency on status of enhancements pre-deployment, and measurement of results post-deployment. This transparency builds trust and buy in across stakeholders. We invite recommendations on how best to integrate with current working groups, and value creative discourse around the constraints or tradeoffs that inevitably influence design decisions and transformations.

UA4

**Strengthening BenefitsCal's security with proactive measures.** We are guided by our experience, learnings, and improvements made to the overall security posture at CalSAWS and the practices and capabilities of our industry-leading cybersecurity practice. Our DevSecOps framework provides a comprehensive approach to integrating security practices into the SDLC and operations processes. DevSecOps emphasizes automation, continuous integration and continuous delivery (CI/CD), and the use of secure development practices and tools. Our process integrates AWS design principles and AWS accelerators and tools to optimize resources, strengthen operational security, and increase productivity with Automated Continuous Compliance (AC2).

### 1.1.4.3 Understanding and approach to application evolution and innovation

UA5

**Outcome-focused application evolution.** Only through evolution of the portal—and the critical CalSAWS back-end systems upon which it relies—will BenefitsCal be able to keep up with the pace of changing user needs; take advantage of technological advancements; respond to legislative mandates; and stay ahead of evolving security threats. Applying our stakeholder-inclusive, UCD-based evolution model, we will work with you to continually improve BenefitsCal. We will integrate data analytics with improvements to provide evidence-based outcomes and enable real-time insights and better decision making. We already have ideas for outcome-focused enhancements to reduce costs and improve optimization, scalability, and flexibility, like enhancements to Robin using generative AI, intelligent document processing, AI-assisted coding and more.

UA6

**Innovation for impact with emerging technologies.** We believe in co-innovation through collaboration and shared objectives, and we share your passion for driving technology innovation into the BenefitsCal application. We will explore, identify, analyze, evaluate, and recommend innovative solutions—using emerging technologies like AI and GenAI—to help you innovate for impact. We will seek to help grow the culture of innovation and work collaboratively with the entirety of the CalSAWS partner and contractor ecosystem. With ideas like a CalSAWS ServiceNow Idea Portal and a link on the BenefitsCal Portal, we will make it easy for the entire stakeholder community to submit innovation and improvement ideas at any time.

UA7

**Working side-by-side with the current CalSAWS Innovation team.** Participation with and support of the existing CalSAWS Innovation team are central to our innovation strategy and approach. We recognize the critical need to continue working closely with the team as we propose innovative solutions for BenefitsCal—particularly as we confirm integration between the front-facing portal and the back-end systems it relies on. With ongoing touchpoints, we will confirm our efforts are aligned with the team's vision, goals, and efforts. We've demonstrated our commitment to working with the Innovation team—through the Shark Tank initiative while the program was active, coordinating Quarterly Innovation Challenge topics, and more. We'll continue building on the trust we've established as we innovate for BenefitsCal.

#### 1.1.4.4 Understanding and approach to user experience, marketing, and public communications

UA8

**Engaging stakeholders to enhance integration of BenefitsCal with county processes.** As we work together to move BenefitsCal forward, integration of the application with county processes is essential to ensuring both users and county workers are supported. We will take an innovative approach to stakeholder engagement, applying the UCD model and shifting how and when we engage with users, counties, CBOs, and others. We will measure against established objectives to confirm our collective progress. Our plan—guided by integrated, end-to-end thinking; a commitment to achieving shared outcomes and continuous, transparent communication; and stakeholder inclusivity throughout the process—will lead to improved outcomes for all. We operate with transparency and integrity throughout the process, to build trust and buy in across all stakeholders.

UA9

**Driving awareness, increasing adoption and improving public opinion through communications and marketing.** Key to the success of BenefitsCal's mission is drawing users to the portal and fostering long-term relationships so they continually return. With a focus on collaboration; relevant, transparent communication; and an audience-first approach that applies UCD, we will bring all stakeholders along on the journey with communications and marketing aimed at increasing awareness and adoption. We'll meet stakeholders where they are with personalized journeys and multi-channel options like social media, posters, landing pages, and more. Stakeholders will be involved in the end-to-end process—from creation, through implementation and training, to measurement of our efforts against established key performance indicators (KPIs). We will also bring secure, smart, enhancements to make BenefitsCal easier for residents to use, and easier for county workers as they process applications—working

together to improve user experiences and outcomes—and leading to greater adoption and improved opinion.



**Collaborating toward best outcomes.** Our approach is grounded in the belief that Stakeholder Community groups have invaluable insights to share and provide a unique channel to the audiences we serve. We collaborate not just because it is required, but because we believe that Stakeholder Community expertise is necessary to get to the best outcomes for BenefitsCal and Californians.

## 1.1.5 Your A-team

To meet and exceed your expectations, goals, and requirements for the M&O Staffing scope of work, we have assembled a team that not only has the right skills and experience, but that also has a passion for this mission and will build a culture for success.

We ensured our team exceeds your mandatory requirements and also created five additional criteria to confirm we selected the right people for BenefitsCal. M&O Key Staff lead the entire M&O team and set the tone for success. Each member of our Key Staff embodies the values we designed specifically for BenefitsCal and the Consortium, as outlined in Figure 1.



Figure 1. These core tenets will create a successful culture of collaboration and innovation.



Your A-team is led by people you already know and who know you. With Lisa Salas as Project Manager at the helm, our nine key staff bring 190 years of professional experience between them, including 114 years of combined health and human services experience. This committed group of leaders brings a mix of CalSAWS experience and a fresh perspective, and all have a passion for the Consortium's mission.

## 1.1.6 Accenture is the best choice for BenefitsCal

With Accenture by your side, you get a proven partner who has demonstrated deep, unwavering commitment to your success for over two decades—a partner who believes that CalSAWS is most successful when all vendors are operating as One Team helping each other to succeed—and has been operating that way over the years on all shared services. You get a partner who continuously invests in your success through the innovation program, the IDEA program, and countless other ways. You get qualified people who believe in your mission and who have already poured millions of hours, and their hearts, into making CalSAWS a success, and for whom delivering benefits to California residents is more than a job—it is our life's work! You get a team that has earned your trust by acting for years with honesty, integrity, and transparency. The stakes are too high to make a choice that could fall short of what Californians need and deserve. This is the time to improve the way BenefitsCal works for California with Accenture!

