Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

2026 California Nutrition Incentive Program Expansion - Request for Proposals

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

Q: Is it possible to apply as an independent non-profit farm with a farm stand? We've been certified to receive SNAP benefits, so wondering if a similar process is possible here?

A: At this time CDPH/WIC does not authorize farm stands or CSAs to accept WIC or Senior FMNP benefits.

Q: A previous grantee instituted a Bonus Bucks program where they distributed incentives to clients - would our organization be able to replicate this?

A: Yes

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Q. It appears the links in the "H. Communities Reached" section are not live in the proposal template. Are you able to send the correct link to the cited CDPH data source and advise on appropriate data source for estimation of nutrition benefits eligibility?
The Food Access Research Atlas no longer works. Are you amenable to use of other data sources for low-income locations (CARB Priority Populations) and estimation of low food access areas (Healthy Places Index)?

A: Currently, some of the federal resource pages have limited access due to the federal shutdown. The current CA CDPH homepage site is https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/CDCB/Pages/HeartDiabetesResources4LHDs.aspx. Applicants for the 2026 CNIP Expansion grant can use the suggested resources provided in the question and/or provide a general description of the communities reached through their proposal. CDFA recognizes the federal resources provided may not be available and will accept other references/descriptions without penalty is technical review.

Q: Is "nutrition benefits" meant only to refer to WIC or including SNAP CalFresh as well?

A: For CNIP Expansion, benefits are only for WIC, WIC FMNP, and SFMNP clients. CDFA does administer the CNIP program which matches SNAP/CalFresh Benefits. The CNIP program is currently funded through state general funds and previously supported through both state and federal GusNIP funding. CNIP anticipates releasing an RFP in 2026, contingent on state and federal budget allocations.

Q: Confirming that the character limit does include spaces.

A: Yes

Q: Does source of Cost Share matter? For ex, are other CDFA funds allowable for Cost Share?

A: You should note the source of the cost-share in the proposal, but they are not necessarily weighed differently. There should not be any overlap in funding from other CNIP programs and delineation between funding sources and projects should be explained in the cost share section of the proposal.

Q: I saw that staff time can be considered for cost sharing-- does that mean staff time is not included in allowable expenses in the grant?

A: Staff time is an allowable expense and can also be included as a cost share if the staff time is covered by other funding sources.

BUDGET QUESTIONS

Q: For Track 1 applications, is there guidance on total amount of incentives over the project term we can include in the budget? For ex: percentage of budget, a cap, etc.

A: There is not currently a cap. In the past, we have required 50% or more toward incentives but we eliminated that requirement for the past two rounds because of the need to direct resources toward technical assistance for both shoppers and farmers as they adapt to the new system. However, in the budget scoring section, the grant does give greater weight to proposals that spend a higher percentage of funds on TA/Incentives over administrative costs.

Q: Is there a cap on the incentives?

A: No

Q: Is there a suggested incentive ratio or maximum ratio?

A: Typically, grantees propose a 1:1 ratio, but it depends on overall funding and is not set by the grant. There is no stated maximum. Applicants can justify their chosen ratio in the proposal.

Q: Is there a cap for indirect costs?

A: The CNIP Expansion has a 15% cap on indirect costs unless the applicant has a state negotiated rate agreement, a copy of which needs to be submitted as an attachment to this application.

Q: Are incentives included when calculating Indirect Costs?

A: Incentives are NOT included when calculating Indirect Costs. Incentives should be subtracted from Direct Costs and then multiplied by 15% or your organization’s indirect rate with supporting documents.

Q: Can we use funds from this grant to purchase a company vehicle to provide the transportation services or can we partner with ridesharing services such as Uber and Lyft to provide transportation services to seniors from their home to the farmers markets?

A: The purchase of a company vehicle, while not explicitly unallowable would fall outside the $5000 per item limit of supplies and would likely need additional CDFA approval. It would also likely be considered a high cost for this grant program and may receive reduced points in the technical review. While third-party rideshare, services have not been used in previous CNIP Expansion grant programs, we may consider these options if costs are reasonable within the scope of the project. Applications should include a justification as well as a tracking plan to ensure that appropriate records are kept. Matching funds from such partners would be encouraged to maximize benefits to incentive shoppers.

CNIP EXPANSION FUNDING & PROGRAMATIC QUESTIONS

Q: Could you please review the incentive distribution process

A: Generally, FMNP shoppers receive incentives on their farmers’ market cards and will spend them electronically similarly to how they spend their FMNP benefits. For Track 1 applicants, you can add additional incentives on top of the electronic ones. Typically, grantees have chosen to use tokens or paper vouchers that are distributed to shoppers at the market. They can then use those vouchers with the farmers who redeem them with the market managers at the end of the day.

Q. Do we know how many clients will be available to us through our County? Will the local WIC and Senior offices be able to provide client information?

A: We will defer to CDPH, but I'm pretty sure they cannot share client information. However, coordination with local WIC and AAAs to help market the CNIP incentives to their clients is recommended. Local WIC offices have been able to come out to the market to distribute the benefits in the past

Q: Wondering about connecting electronic and paper benefits: I don't think we will have visibility into how much is spent using the cards (correct?) - how will we

know how much matched incentives people get if we have a, say 1:1 match, without knowing how much they are spending with their cards?

A: Correct, market managers wouldn't have insight into what participants have spent on their cards. For the incentives, usually the ratio is based off of the distribution of the incentives (e.g. giving WIC shoppers an additional $30 to match their $30 in FMNP benefits) at the time of distribution. Distribution is then tracked to ensure that each shopper only receives a distribution once.

Q. **Can you please provide additional clarification on what qualifies as an incentive? What type(s) of vouchers are we able to provide? Are we able to also provide cash incentives**

A: Incentives qualify as a financial benefit used to increase California-grown fruit and vegetable purchases. They can be offered as tokens/scrip/vouchers that are good for $1 worth of fruits and/or vegetables, or through the electronic WIC FMNP and SFMNP Farmers Market Cards that can store the incentives for purchases. Cash incentives are ineligible under this program- incentives must be used toward CA-grown produce.