Benefits Referral Sites RFI
Questions and Responses

Response Process

1. Is this only an RFI for the Benefits Access Centers? Can we respond to both the Benefits Access Center RFI and the Benefits Referral Site RFI?

There are two RFIs currently posted. One is for the Benefits Access Centers, and the second RFI is for the Benefits Referral Sites. Here are the links to each of these opportunities:

Benefits Access Center RFI –
http://www.phila.gov/rfp/Documents/Benefits%20Access%20Center%20RFI%20FINAL.pdf

Benefits Referral Sites RFI --
http://www.phila.gov/rfp/Documents/Benefits%20Referral%20Site%20RFI%20FINAL.pdf

Organizations are encouraged to respond to both RFIs if they are interested.

2. If an organization is interested in becoming a Benefits Access Center in one office but also interested in becoming a Benefits Referral Site in another office, how would you recommend handling the RFI submission? Should we do two separate submissions (one for each office) for the Benefits Access Center RFI and two separate submissions (one for each office) for the Benefits Referral Site RFI?

You should submit one response to the Benefits Access Center RFI for the one office, and a separate response to the Benefits Referral Site RFI for the other office. It is likely that many of the responses to the questions for each submission will be the same.

3. Is it possible that the Benefits Access Centers and Benefits Referral Sites' can be co-located or that one organization might do both?

It would be duplicative to have a Benefits Access Center and a Benefits Referral site co-located because both screen people for benefits. The difference is that the Benefits Access Center also helps people to apply for the benefits.

4. It appears that the two RFI documents are the same other than the order of "Access" and "Referral" information and items 8 and 9 at the top of page 9 of the "Access" document. Are there any other significant differences?

No. The only significant difference in these two RFIs is the additional information needed to submit for the Benefits Access Centers.

5. Is a well-established network of existing non-profits eligible to respond to the Benefits Access Center RFI or do the individual non-profits need to respond separately? Would there be anything to preclude operating the program out of multiple locations? Would you be open to a joint application from two organizations?

Because the Benefits Access Centers are focused on connecting people to benefits in their neighborhood at a place where they can receive multiple support services that will help them to lift themselves out of poverty, each non-profit should plan to respond separately. However, if you think it is relevant, you can choose to highlight your network in your response.

Because we are looking to build Benefits Access Centers' reputation in a neighborhood as a place where people can get help at any time and have a full time person on staff to support benefits enrollment, we are not looking to operate the program out of multiple locations where a single staff person would split their time. However, we would welcome separate applications for multiple locations to serve as Benefits Access Centers or Benefits Referral Sites.

We will accept joint applications from two organizations, but please make the following clear: 1) Where the services will be provided, and 2) The role of each of the organizations in the partnership, including which organization will serve as the lead partner.

6. May we include attachments to our response, such as an annual report of our services, in addition to the three-page maximum?

You can include attachments not to exceed five pages added to your response. Please be sure to submit your response and any attachments as a single document.

Roles

7. What is a Benefits Enrollment Organization? Do you know who will serve as the Benefits Enrollment Organization? Will you inform applicants who that will be? Are the Access Centers different then the Enrollment Organization?

In September 2013, the Mayor's Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity (CEO) released a Request for Information (RFI) to identify potential organizations to serve as the Benefits Enrollment Organization. The role of the Benefits Enrollment Organization is different than that of a Benefits Access Center, and is laid out in detail on page seven of the Benefits Access Center and Benefits Referral Site RFIs, In short, the Benefits Enrollment Organization would oversee the work of Benefits Access Centers and Referral Sites, including providing training, reporting on outcomes across the system, and troubleshooting issues with Centers and Referral Sites as they arise.

A final decision has not been made on what organization will serve as the Benefits Enrollment Organization. Organizations that submitted a response to serve as a Benefits Enrollment Organization may also choose to submit a response to the Benefits Access Center or Referral Site RFIs.

Timeline

8. When will CEO make a decision about who will serve as the Benefits Access Centers and Benefits Referral Sites?

CEO intends to make the selection of Benefits Access Centers in late January or early February. The selection of the first round of referral sites will likely occur at the same time, but more may be added going forward.

9. Is it possible the timeline for launching this initiative will be pushed back?

While we recognize that this is an aggressive timeline, we do not anticipate it being pushed back.

Locations

10. Do you have a list of high need neighborhoods that you want to target beyond Mantua/West Philadelphia, Eastern North Philadelphia and the 22nd Police District? It is stated that there will be 4 Access Centers. Three areas of the city are already identified as priorities. For agencies not in one of the 3 identified areas, is there any information on what the 4th area might be?

All of the access centers will be in high need areas. We do not have a list of high need neighborhoods that we have identified, but define "high need" as areas with high concentrations of low-income residents, and areas with high concentrations of individuals who are eligible but not enrolled in benefits. While the areas identified are priorities, we are not necessarily going to have a Benefits Access Center in each of those areas. The location of sites is one of a number of criteria that will be used to select a site.

Hours of Operation

11. My organization does not have regular business hours. Would non- traditional hours be a benefit or impediment to providing services?

We are looking for organizations that can provide services at times that are accessible for low-income individuals. This would likely mean normal business hours as well as times in the evenings and weekends. With this in mind, non-traditional hours could be an asset that you highlight in your response.

Outcomes

12. Are there any minimum performance objectives that the CEO has in mind for each Benefits Access Center in terms of numbers of screenings, applications, and enrollments?

We are still defining specific outcomes, but our initial goals are for each Benefits Access Site to meet the following minimum targets: screen 800 clients for benefits, support the completion of 500 applications, and ensure the successful enrollment of 350 clients.

Resources

13. Will there be financial support/grant funds/fees to help support the work of the agencies selected as Benefits Referral Sites? Can you provide any additional information about the benefits to the sponsoring agency of becoming a referral site?

Benefits Referral Sites will receive benefits screening software, training, and ongoing technical support, but it is not anticipated that they will receive additional funding. Referral sites will be

able to connect their clients and the public to key public benefits, and high performing Benefits Referral Sites will be well positioned to become Benefits Access Centers in the future.

14. Does CEO have a sense of what funding it will be able to provide to the four Benefit Access Centers?

While we will be using information from the responses to the RFI to flesh these details out, we anticipate providing funding of approximately $80,000 per Benefits Access Center to fund a full-time position to screen and enroll people in benefits, report on activities and outcomes, as well as to provide outreach support.