



## Comments to the Board – External

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June 14, 2018 Board Meeting

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May 31, 2018

Covered California

Via e-mail at [CommunityPartners@covered.ca.gov](mailto:CommunityPartners@covered.ca.gov)

Re: Comments, Recommendations, and Questions for Covered California Draft Navigator Grant Program Request for Application (RFA) 2018

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA) strongly supports Covered California's vision and efforts in making health coverage accessible and affordable for all Californians. As a Covered California Navigator since the program's inception, Advancing Justice-LA and its collaborative have reached and educated more than 2 million people, resulting in over 6,800 effectuated enrollments and renewals between 2014 and 2018. We appreciate the opportunity to continue our partnership with Covered California to conduct the vital range of navigator activities, including outreach, education, enrollment, renewal, and post enrollment (OEE) support for hard-to-reach communities, particularly the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) population across the state.

We are excited to learn more about the new RFA and thank Covered California in advance for responding to our questions, comments and recommendations.

### **Comments and Recommendations on Covered California's Draft Navigator Grant Program Request for Application (RFA) for 2018**

Advancing Justice-LA applauds Covered California for its forward thinking and anticipation of potential challenges for the next Open Enrollment Period 6 (OEP). We also expect a more challenging landscape for health coverage enrollment in the upcoming OEP due to various changes to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) by the current Administration, including its' recent decision to stop paying insurance companies cost-sharing reductions for low- and moderate-income consumers, the uncertainties resulting from the elimination of the enforcement of the tax penalty starting in 2019, and the proposed regulations permitting the sale of largely unregulated, short-term, limited duration insurance and association health plans. Moreover, health insurance premiums are projected to increase by 7% to 22% in 2019 in California. According to the Congressional Budget Office, premiums will increase 31% to 54% in the next two years depending on metal level. Therefore, it will be harder to enroll and renew individuals and even more important to have Navigators to provide culturally- and linguistically-appropriate outreach and education to encourage community members to enroll into health coverage and to maintain the progress the state has made in reducing the number of uninsured Californians. The RFA reflects Covered California's anticipation of the new challenges by including outreach and education in its funding mechanism and is a step in the right direction

## **1. Proposed Performance-Based Funding Model**

As a Navigator grantee, Advancing Justice-LA and our collaborative have more than 100 Certified Enrollment Counselors, who provide the full range of navigator services, including enrollment and renewal assistance. Additionally, we provide services that agents are often unable to provide, such as extensive, culturally- and linguistically-appropriate, one-on-one and group outreach and education to AANHPI community members, many of whom are low-income and/or limited-English proficient. Moreover, we provide quality post-enrollment assistance, such as translating Covered California notices, and answering questions regarding eligibility, payment, health system navigation, and health plan utilization. We also constantly troubleshoot problems that our clients face with Covered California, including assisting many individuals who are originally enrolled by agents but who subsequently receive little to no post-enrollment support from them or are referred to our organizations for post-enrollment assistance.

Therefore, Advancing Justice-LA welcomes the proposed performance-based funding model and appreciates Covered California's incorporation of the Navigators' suggestions to take into account more of the navigator activities that we provide, including outreach activities. We support changing the current Block-Grant Model to the newly proposed Performance-Based Model, which acknowledges the broader work that Navigators perform beyond enrollments and renewals. The RFA specifically recognizes the importance of outreach activities and requires grantees to meet certain outreach activity goals to receive a percentage of the awarded funding, allocating 50 percent to outreach goals and 20 percent to effectuated enrollment goals. Thus, the new model better reflects and rewards the work that Navigators do beyond providing enrollment and renewal assistance. However, the RFA raises many questions about what those outreach activities would include, the actual goals related to those activities, and whether it includes other types of services, such as education and post-enrollment assistance. We recommend that the "outreach activity" goals are realistic and can be set by the Navigator grantees.

## **2. Recommendation for the Definition of "Outreach Activity"**

Since, the draft RFA has no definition for what constitutes an "outreach activity," Advancing Justice-LA recommends Covered California define "outreach activity" broadly as follows:

- Outreach: any interaction, activity, or event that takes place with the intention of sharing information, educating or providing services about any health care coverage or program to any individual/population that might not otherwise have awareness of or access to the health information or services.
- These should include but are not limited to: workshops, community fairs, forums, and events, business expo events, faith-based events, conferences, school/educational events, in-person trainings, information booths, webinars, media activities (newspaper ads, radio shows, television appearances, newsletters, articles, etc.), etc.

It would be very helpful to have clearly defined terms and goals in order to limit both misinterpretation from potential grantees and overly burdensome administrative reporting and tracking requirements for Navigators.

### 3. Recommendation on Reporting and Tracking Requirements for “Outreach Activities”

With the shift in focus on outreach, we recognize that the new Navigator Program will likely have new reporting and tracking requirements. As the RFA noted, it does not want to impose additional administrative burdens on its Navigator grantees. Therefore, Advancing Justice-LA recommends Covered California allow a broad definition of “outreach activities” and the use of aggregated numbers of all types of activities for its bi-monthly reports. We also recommend that Covered California make minimal changes or refrain from making drastic changes to its current reporting form to limit additional administrative burdens for the Navigators.

### 4. Recommendation for the Definition of Effectuated Enrollments and Renewals

Since the draft RFA has no definition for an “effectuated enrollment”, Advancing Justice-LA recommends that effectuated enrollments and renewals include the following: cancelled enrollments, terminated enrollments, plan selected, and passive and active renewals. We are glad that Covered California recognizes that credit should be give for all renewals, whether they are passive or active. We also hope that Covered California will count the numbers from all of the suggested categories above on the Navigator reports as effectuated enrollments and renewals to ensure the accurate measurement of grantees’ enrollment and renewal performance.

### Additional Questions

- During the Navigator Grant Program Webinar on May 25, 2018, Covered California stated that an entity may apply as a lead applicant *and* as a subcontractor. However, the draft RFA (p. 14) states that “an entity may appear in only one Navigator Grant Application, either as the lead *or* as a subcontractor.” Can you please clarify?
- The list of Required Submission Documents in the draft RFA (p. 18) includes “B.2 County Funding Info, B.3 Experience with Target Population, and B.4 Subcontractor Assignments.” These are missing from the draft RFA so there is no information about these sections of the applications. Will there be templates/questions for these sections?
- The draft RFA (p. 20) states that Documentation of Eligibility includes: 1) IRS Determination Letter, and 2) a Federal Tax ID # and any corresponding status determination on official letterhead. Do applicants (both lead and subcontractors) need to submit *either* or *both* documents?
- The draft RFA (p. 25 and p. 27) requests two ethnicity breakdowns of the proposed target population. Can you please confirm if these two tables are requesting the same information?
- How will the different sections of B.1.4 (Approach to Statement of Work) be weighed between Section B.1.4.1 (Identified Areas of Enrollment Opportunity) v. B.1.4.2 (Target Population)?
- In Attachment 1 (Navigator Grant Application), in section B.1.4.3, questions #2 and #6 are repeated.
- The Letter of Intent (LOI) to Respond asks applicants to identify the target population(s) they intend to reach and serve. Can you clarify how we should define the target population(s), e.g. by geographic region, age, ethnicity, etc.?
- If a grantee exceeds their enrollment and renewal goal, can the grantee apply for an increased amount of funding in the subsequent contract year(s), i.e. 2019/20 and 2020/21 State Fiscal Years?

- Could you please confirm if there will be a bonus pool available for enrollments and renewals beyond the agreed-upon Navigator goals, the process for determining the amount of the bonus, and what the bonus amount would be?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [dwong@advancingjustice-la.org](mailto:dwong@advancingjustice-la.org) or (213) 977-7500 ext. 271.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doreena Wong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Doreena Wong  
Project Director, Health Access



June 12, 2018

Covered California Staff and Board

Via email at [CommunityPartners@covered.ca.gov](mailto:CommunityPartners@covered.ca.gov), Peter Lee and Covered California Board

Re: Comments, Recommendation, and Questions for Covered California's Funding Model of Navigator Grant Program Request for Application (RFA) 2018-19

Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA) submitted a comment letter to Covered California on May 31, 2018 in response to the May 25th draft RFA presentation and draft RFA published on [hbex.coveredca.com](http://hbex.coveredca.com) and are awaiting response to our questions. As both an Outreach and Education Grantee and Navigator partner since 2013, Advancing Justice-LA shares Covered California's goal of continuing the success of the Navigator program. However, although we initially supported some of Covered California's proposed changes to the Navigator program outlined in the May 25th RFA, after hearing the most recent webinar on June 11, 2018 and the big differences between the two proposed Navigator Grant RFAs, we cannot support Covered California's June 11th proposed changes, specifically the large increase in the new effectuated enrollment/renewal goals presented at the June 11th webinar. The June 11th webinar also raised a number of other concerns and questions, detailed below. We strongly urge Covered California's staff and the Board to use the recommended goals from the May 25th RFA rather than those in the June 11th RFA. Moreover, we have not been given much notice to submit our comments, only a day and a half. We thank Covered California in advance for addressing our concerns and recommendations in both this comment letter as well as the one submitted on May 31, 2018, and hope we can work with Covered California staff to develop a fairer and more reasonable Navigator Grant RFA that meets all of our needs, especially California's consumers who need health coverage.

### **1. New Proposed Changes on the Funding Model**

The May 25th draft RFA appeared to be a positive step in the right direction since Covered California wanted to change the Navigator program from a block grant to a performance-based funding model, acknowledging the many services beyond enrollment that Navigators conduct. However, the June 11th webinar raised many additional concerns and questions, especially the drastically different goals to the funding model for the Navigator program.

- **Major Concerns about Higher Navigator Targets** - Our first major concern is Covered California's proposal to drastically raise the target ranges for effectuated enrollments (see charts below). The May 25th draft RFA used the same enrollment/renewal goals that were used from 2015-18, which we support. We are very concerned with the major

changes to the target ranges for effectuated enrollments shared on the June 11th webinar. While it was explained on the webinar that one of the reasons for increasing the target goals was because “passive renewals” would again be counted toward Navigator target goals as they were for the first year, it is extremely unrealistic that the volume of passive renewals would help Navigators meet the much higher proposed target ranges. Please see comparison chart of enrollments/renewals from the two RFAs below. Furthermore, Advancing Justice-LA has requested during the last several grant cycles that Covered California not make any distinction between “active” and “passive” renewals and would recommend counting any renewals towards the target goal.

May 25th RFA:

Suggested Number of enrollment and renewal goals by grant size

Grant Size	Enrollment and Renewal Goal (Individuals)
\$50,000	250
\$100,000	500
\$150,000	750
\$200,000	1,000
\$300,000	1,500
\$400,000	2,000
\$500,000	2,500

June 11th RFA:

Projected funding recommendations based on current modeling: **subject to change**

# of Awards	Range of 2017-18 Effectuations	Funding Level
2	Over 4,500	\$500,000
1	4,000-4,500	\$475,000
1	3,500-4,000	\$450,000
1	3,100-3,500	\$375,000
1	2,500-3,100	\$350,000
1	2,250-2,500	\$275,000
1	1,750-2,250	\$250,000
5	1,500-1,750	\$200,000
1	1,400-1,500	\$175,000
2	1,250-1,400	\$150,000
1	1,000-1,250	\$125,000
3	800-1,000	\$100,000
8	520-800	\$75,000
15	Below 520	\$50,000

- Funding Formula is Inconsistent** - Related to the higher Navigator target ranges, Covered California should provide a clarification on the changed funding formula. It is currently very confusing. On the June 11th webinar, Peter Lee shared that the reimbursement rate would be \$130/enrollment or renewal, which is a large

reimbursement reduction from prior grant periods and much less than the \$200/enrollment or renewal paid to Navigators during the 2015-18 grant cycle. After some analysis of the 2018/19 projected funding levels and the corresponding range of 2017-18 effectuations, there is no consistent funding formula. In fact, if you divide the number of enrollments into the various funding levels, there is a range of about \$111-\$144 paid per enrollment or renewal. Having such a wide range of reimbursement is not only inconsistent, but unfair to the Navigators who will be paid at different levels. We strongly recommend that Covered California use a consistent reimbursement rate per enrollment for clarity. For example, at a minimum, if Covered California insists on reducing the reimbursement rate to \$130 per effectuated enrollment/renewal, and an applicant applies for a grant targeting 4,500 effectuated enrollments, the total funding amount would be \$585,000. However, we do not believe it is fair to reduce the reimbursement rate by 35% for the critically important range of Navigator activities that Navigator entities provide, particularly given Covered California's alleged recognition of our work and its desire to acknowledge our efforts. We also do not understand why there are grants for \$100,000, \$200,000, and \$500,000 but no grants for \$300,000 or \$400,000 listed. Moreover, because there is no consistent funding formula, it is very difficult to calculate the target ranges for grants of \$300,000 or \$400,000.

Additionally, on the June 11th RFA, on pages seven to nine at the bottom of each slide, is a statement noting: "For 2018/19- Navigator goals will be adjusted down 12% to account for no individual penalty in 2019." We are not sure what this adjustment is referring to or if the adjustment has been taken into account in the proposed target ranges and would like clarification on this statement. Does Covered California mean it will automatically lower the Navigator goals by 12% next year? For example, for a 400 effectuated enrollment goal, it will be adjusted down 12% to 352 as the proposed enrollment goal or is it already reflected in the goal of 400?

- **Clarification on Enrollment Ranges** - We also do not understand why there is a range for the enrollment goals and the purpose for an upper range for each level. There are upper limits but there is no explanation as to what happens if we meet or exceed that upper goal. We would also appreciate clarification on why there are inconsistencies between the different enrollment ranges across the various funding levels. For example, for the range of 520-800 effectuated enrollments, the difference between the lower and upper limits is 280 enrollments, then for the category of 1,400-1,500 effectuated enrollments the difference drops to 100 enrollments. When we jump to level of 2,500-3,100 effectuated enrollments, the difference between the lower and upper limits is 600 enrollments. If these ranges do matter, then why is there such a large difference across these different levels?



- **Concerns about the “Incentive Plan” for Additional Enrollments or Renewals** - On slides seven to nine of the June 11th presentation, the proposed "Incentive Plan" only pays \$25 extra per enrollment/renewal, which does not provide much incentive to enroll additional individuals considering the considerable effort and energy that Navigators exert to get consumers to “cross the enrollment finish line,” troubleshoot tough cases, and provide post-enrollment and other types of support needed. For example, on page seven of the presentation, if a Navigator achieves their goal of 400 effectuated enrollments, does exceptionally well and enrolls an additional 400 more consumers, the incentive amount would be an addition \$20,000. If we average the grant award with the incentive amount (\$50,000 + \$20,000) for a total of 800 enrollments, it equates to \$87.50 per enrollment. This is much lower than even the already low \$130 rate originally suggested by Mr. Lee. As Covered California knows, with each passing Open Enrollment Period and Special Enrollment Period, our jobs as Navigators get increasingly harder as it gets more challenging to find the harder-to-reach enrollee and overcome the increasing barriers to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) as it continues to be challenged and weakened. We handle some of the most complicated client cases and while we appreciate that Covered California continues to maintain its Navigator program, Navigators must be fairly compensated for our efforts in order to ensure the effective implementation of the ACA.

**We have attached our May 31, 2018 comment letter and have included some of the questions/issues that still need to be addressed as well as other questions that have been raised by the June 11th webinar:**

**1. Recommendation for the Definition of “Outreach Activity”**

Although Mr. Lee stated that the final RFA will have a definition for what constitutes as an “outreach activity,” we will not have an opportunity to see the definition before the RFA is finalized. Therefore, Advancing Justice-LA reiterates its recommendation that Covered California define “outreach activity” broadly as follows:

- **Outreach & Education:** Any interaction, activity or event that takes place with the intention of sharing information and/or educating any individual/population on all of the health coverage program options. If the community member would like assistance with enrolling into a health coverage program or renewing their coverage, staff conduct a one-on-one consultation with the individual/family at a separate time to do an eligibility screening for the various health coverage programs and provide enrollment, renewal, navigation, and/or utilization support as needed.
- Outreach & Education efforts are best measured by reporting the total number of outreach and education activities or events of each type (e.g. workshop, community event, business, faith-based) conducted during a reporting month. In addition, the cumulative number of outreach & education touches for a reporting month can be reported.

## **2. Recommendation on Reporting and Tracking Requirements for “Outreach Activities”:**

As Mr. Lee shared on the June 11th webinar, we agree that the current bi-monthly reports should cover the reporting and tracking requirements for “Outreach Activities.” As the May 25th RFA noted, it does not want to impose additional administrative burdens on its Navigator grantees. Therefore, Advancing Justice-LA recommends Covered California allow a broad definition of “outreach activities” and the use of the current bi-monthly reports.

## **3. Recommendation for the Definition of “Effectuated Enrollments and Renewals:**

The definition of “effectuated” enrollments and renewals has changed over the Navigator grant period and it would be helpful to have a consistent definition so Navigators can plan and anticipate their work over the year. Advancing Justice-LA recommends that “effectuated” enrollments and renewals include the following: new effectuated enrollments, cancelled enrollments, terminated enrollments, plan selected, new QHP plan selection, run eligibility, and passive and active renewals or simply one category for renewals.

## **4. Additional Questions Regarding the Navigator May 31st RFA Draft:**

- During the Navigator Grant Program Webinar on May 25, 2018, Covered California stated that an entity may apply as a lead applicant *and* as a subcontractor. However, the draft RFA (p. 14) states that “an entity may appear in only one Navigator Grant Application, either as the lead *or* as a subcontractor.” Can you please clarify?
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- If a grantee exceeds their enrollment and renewal goal, can the grantee apply for an increased amount of funding in the subsequent contract year(s), i.e. 2019/20 and 2020/21 State Fiscal Years?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [dwong@advancingjustice-la.org](mailto:dwong@advancingjustice-la.org) or (213) 977-7500 ext. 271.

Sincerely,

Doreena Wong  
Project Director, Health Access