



Cradle-to-Career Data and Tools Advisory Board Public Proposal Form

Instructions:

Per the [Governance Manual](#) proposal forms submitted will address significant gaps regarding whether the data system is providing access to actionable information. Please note there should only be one proposal per form.

Name:

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Proposal Title: no more than 50 characters

CalFresh Data Element for Student Eligibility Gaps

- By checking this box, I understand that if a Data and Tools Advisory Board member sponsors my proposal, it will be considered as a submission from the Data and Tools Advisory Board member.

Type of Proposal¹:

- Changes to tools such as dashboards or practical tools (*Complete section one*)
- Adding data points not available through the P20W data set or adjusting (including the removal of) the existing P20W data points (*Complete section two*)
- Please note a proposal form(s) can recommend adding one data point or several clearly related data points to the data system.

¹ The C2C Governance Manual notes that DTAB members can also submit recommendations related to the data request process. As this is not yet live, it has been removed from the version of this form.

[Section One: Changes to Dashboards or Practical Tools](#)

1. What is the nature of the gap regarding access to actionable information?

2. What type of tool should be developed?

3. How would a tool address the gap?

4. Who would be the likely user(s) of the tool?

5. How does the tool relate to the [mission and vision](#) of C2C?

[Section Two: Adding Data Points Not Available Through the P20W Data Set or Adjusting the Existing P20W Data Points](#)

1. Please state the research question of interest that cannot be fully addressed with the [existing data elements](#) in the P20W Data System.

Who are the higher education students experiencing limited access to CalFresh benefits?

Are there barriers to students accessing CalFresh benefits?

Where are the gaps in CalFresh outreach, eligibility, and enrollment support available to students?

How are student outcomes impacted by food insecurity?

2. How does this research question relate to the [mission and vision](#) of C2C?

These research questions align closely with the mission and vision of the

California Cradle-to-Career Data System by generating insights about how access to CalFresh shapes students' ability to persist through the education-to-employment pipeline. By identifying which students experience limited access, examining barriers to enrollment, and uncovering gaps in outreach and support, the questions contribute to C2C's goal of expanding access to tools and services while highlighting inequities across systems. Allowing CDSS to begin enrollment of CalFresh for students who are potentially eligible according to their financial aid would simplify the process for students while alleviating basic needs centers and county staff appointment slots. Additionally, by linking food insecurity to student outcomes, this research connects education, economic, and health data—advancing C2C's vision of an integrated data system that supports evidence-based decision-making and helps build a more equitable future for California students.

3. Please propose additional data element(s) needed in order to successfully address the research question of interest.

Currently, the P20W Data System includes a CalFresh status data point. This proposed data element would expand that measure to capture additional information about the student experience, including the types of services accessed. Expanding this element would provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of food insecurity among higher education students and help assess its impact throughout their academic journey.

The gap in actionable information relies on students currently being proactive to figure out their eligibility to CalFresh, either through their county department of social services or campus basic needs center, and pursuing a tedious process of documentation, income verification, interviews and more over the course of several weeks to be able to access food assistance/EBT. However, most students already submit a financial aid application processed through the California Student Aid Commission, meaning that income eligibility may already be available, just not utilized to determine CalFresh eligibility. This proposal would allow the California Department of Social Services to easily

identify eligible CalFresh recipients through California Student Aid Commission income data.

This expansion would enable better identification of students who may be eligible for CalFresh and ensure they are connected to appropriate supports. Together, these enhancements would move the CalFresh status data point beyond a static indicator of participation toward a more integrated understanding of eligibility, access, outreach, and service connection.

4. Please verify that the proposed data element(s) do not already exist in the P20W Data System.

Verified

5. If the P20W Data System does not currently include the proposed data element(s), can the proposed data element(s) be derived from the existing data element(s) in the P20W Data System?

No. While the P20W Data System does include a CalFresh status data point, it is unclear whether the data collected captures information on the specific CalFresh-related supports and services students access, such as outreach, application assistance, or enrollment support. It also does not appear to provide information that would allow institutions to identify gaps in CalFresh access or service delivery, or to track how students engage with these supports over time.

6. If the P20W Data System does not currently include the proposed data element(s), are there existing data element(s) closely related to the proposed data element(s)? If so, please list them and why they are not sufficient to answer the proposed research question.

Yes. The P20W Data System currently includes a CalFresh status data element, which provides a basic indication of whether a student is participating in the CalFresh program. In some cases, related data elements may also include general financial aid information or indicators of student basic needs status

within institutional or administrative datasets.

However, these existing elements are not sufficient to fully address the proposed research questions. The current CalFresh status data point is limited in scope because it captures only participation status and does not provide information on whether students are eligible but not enrolled, how they were informed about CalFresh, or what types of supports (e.g., outreach, application assistance, enrollment support) they accessed. It also does not capture barriers to access, nor does it allow for analysis of gaps in service delivery or differences in student experiences across institutions or populations. As a result, the existing data does not adequately support a comprehensive understanding of CalFresh access, outreach effectiveness, or its relationship to student basic needs and outcomes.

7. C2C keeps a [repository](#) of previous data elements that were either a) considered during the planning process or b) proposed through the mechanisms as outlined in the Governance Manual, but were ultimately not included in the P20W, along with related feasibility studies. Do any of the data element(s) being proposed overlap with the data elements in this repository? (New proposals can build on or duplicate prior proposals. It is helpful for proposers to share that context, including prior related feasibility studies.)

The data element(s) that are being proposed do not overlap with elements previously proposed in the C2C repository.

8. Are the proposed data element(s) already collected by a state-level entity? For data element(s) already collected, please answer question nine. For data element(s) not collected, please answer question ten.

Yes

9. [For proposed data element(s) already collected] To the extent possible, please share details pertaining to the proposed data element(s). Relevant details may include but are not limited to: a) corresponding entity that collects

and houses the data element(s); b) specific variable name(s) used in the originating data system; and c) timeframe available.

To the extent possible, the proposed CalFresh-related data elements are currently housed across multiple entities, including the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and postsecondary education institutions and their respective financial aid offices (e.g., California Community Colleges, California State University, University of California, and Independent Non-Profit campuses). The data would streamline existing data by combining two agencies collection and reporting to ensure increased utilization of existing resources. CSAC maintains student-level financial aid application and eligibility-related data through its financial aid systems, which may include indicators relevant to student participation in or potential eligibility for public benefit programs. CDSS houses administrative data on CalFresh enrollment and participation at the county and state level, including eligibility determination and benefit receipt. Educational institutions also maintain institutional data related to student engagement with basic needs services, including CalFresh outreach, application assistance, and campus-based referrals.

Specific variable names and data structures vary by system and are not standardized across entities; for example, CSAC data is generally organized around financial aid application fields, while CDSS data is organized around CalFresh case and eligibility records managed at the county level. Institutional data systems may include fields related to basic needs service utilization, but these are not consistently defined across campuses. Timeframes for available data also vary by system, with CSAC and CDSS maintaining longitudinal administrative records over multiple years, while institutional basic needs data availability depends on campus-level tracking practices and implementation timelines.

10. [For proposed data element(s) not collected] Please propose institution(s) that would be most suited for the new data collection effort.

N/A

11. Please explain the desired level(s) of grain size for each data element proposed. (i.e., individual-level, institution-level, or other aggregated levels)? Multiple grain sizes may be requested for each proposed data element.

Individual level, institutional level, segment level, county level, and state level.

12. Please explain the intended use case(s) for the proposed data elements (i.e., dashboards, query builder, or the research request tool)? Multiple use cases may be requested for each proposed data element.

The proposed CalFresh-related data elements are intended to be used across multiple C2C Data System tools, including dashboards, the query builder, and the research request tool. In dashboards, the data would support high-level visualization of student CalFresh eligibility, access, and engagement with related supports, helping stakeholders monitor trends, identify equity gaps in real time, and streamline systems to better connect students to services. This includes supporting earlier identification of students who may be eligible for CalFresh so they can be linked to resources at the beginning of their academic careers. Through the query builder, users would be able to disaggregate CalFresh-related outcomes by student demographics, institution type, and time to better understand patterns of access and need across populations. For more in-depth analysis, the research request tool would enable researchers and policymakers to examine relationships between CalFresh access, service utilization, and student outcomes such as retention, persistence, and completion, supporting evidence-based decision-making and program improvement.