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Supporting Medi-Cal Recipients by Screening for Employment Eligibility in San Francisco


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Executive Summary

This project recommends that the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Innovation (MOI,) in partnership with the San Francisco Human Services Agency (SFHSA), pilot a digital screening tool for its JobsNOW! employment program, which matches low-income residents with job and volunteer opportunities. Under new federal work requirements, thousands of additional Medi-Cal clients are expected to seek JobsNOW! support, straining the program's intake process. The new screener would route clients into different support tiers to reduce time-consuming intake meetings and better serve clients across the full range of support needs. By expanding access with this low-barrier digital tool, the MOI could position its service to scale and proactively prevent drops in coverage.

Problem

MOI and SFHSA currently lack a process for screening Medi-Cal clients' JobsNOW! eligibility, limiting the program's ability to scale to meet growing demand. The 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act, also known as H.R. 1, will now require Medi-Cal recipients to complete 80 hours per month of work, volunteering, or training, driving thousands of clients toward JobsNOW! for employment support. The current intake process — a phone or in-person appointment and a 2-page paper form — is too time-intensive to scale, creating a bottleneck that puts clients at risk of losing coverage. Although digital screeners have proven effective at streamlining benefits onboarding, the tool has yet to be applied to the JobsNOW! program.



“This solution is designed to streamline staff capacity so that the City can focus more on the residents who need additional support.”

Solution

The project suggests that MOI and SFHSA partner to pilot a digital screening tool that routes Medi-Cal clients through JobsNOW! onboarding based on their eligibility and barriers to job access. The screener would take only 3-5 minutes to complete by phone or computer and would assign residents to 1 of 4 support tiers: redirected to other resources, self-directed onboarding, guided onboarding with a staff check-in, or 1-on-1 caseworker support. This triage system would give job-ready clients independence to apply to roles while freeing staff to focus on higher-need cases. With built-in “frequently asked questions” guidance and multilingual options, the screener would make JobsNOW! intake more accessible to those most at risk of losing benefits.

If you’d like to learn more, see the full project at aspempolicyacademy.org/project/sf-digital-screening-tool-2026.



About the Tech Executive Leadership Initiative (TELI)

This project was completed as part of TELI, a partnership between the Aspen Institute’s Policy Academy and the Tech Talent Project. TELI is a multiweek skills-building initiative that prepares experienced technology leaders to engage effectively with public sector challenges. Learn more at aspempolicyacademy.org/teli.

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