

Project Handoff: Benefit Navigator Job Description

Date: June 23, 2025 **Project Lead:** Graham, DHS/FIA **Objective:** To consolidate all project artifacts, analyses, and final deliverables related to the creation of the Benefit Navigator (Service Year Member) job description into a single, comprehensive handoff document.

1. Executive Summary & Objective

- **Objective:** The primary goal of this project was to synthesize information from multiple internal planning documents and stakeholder notes into a single, cohesive, and professional job description for the new "Benefit Navigator" role within the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) Service Year Program.
- **Methodology:** The process was highly iterative, beginning with an initial analysis and definition of the role, expanding to incorporate multiple source documents, and moving through several formatting structures (including a standard job description and a formal MS22 State Position Description). The final version was optimized for clarity, accessibility, and alignment with state government communication styles.
- **Outcome:** The final deliverable is a complete, public-facing job description that accurately reflects the role's responsibilities, qualifications, and the multi-agency support structure of the program. This document is ready for immediate use in recruitment and program implementation.

This project was initiated to create an official job description for the Benefit Navigator position, a key component of a multi-agency initiative between DHS, the Department of Service and Civic Innovation (DSCI), the Governor's Office for Children (GOC), and Community Based Organizations to enhance access to essential benefits (like SNAP and TCA) for residents in high-need ENOUGH communities. The core task was to distill complex, and sometimes disparate, information from various planning documents into a clear, compelling, and actionable recruitment tool. The final document is intended for public posting and needed to be encouraging to a diverse pool of applicants, especially those with lived experience, while maintaining the professional standards of a state government posting.

2. Project History & Methodology

The development of the Benefit Navigator job description followed an iterative and responsive methodology, evolving with each new piece of information and directive.

1. Initial Definition & Analysis:

- **Input:** Initial project files (OBA [DHS copy] Benefit Navigators_ Service Year Application - shared.docx versions).
- **Task:** Define the "Benefit Navigator" role based on the provided text.
- **Process:** The initial analysis extracted the core functions of the role: providing direct support to residents, assisting with benefits applications, conducting proactive outreach, and increasing benefit enrollment. This formed the foundational understanding of the position.

2. Expanded Synthesis & First Comprehensive Draft:

- **Input:** Additional source documents were introduced, including the Multi-Benefit Navigators Program Briefing Document, Benefits Access in Maryland Research, Service Year Option Application - Benefit Navigator Version 2, and GoC ENOUGH

Navigator - Initial Project Concept Write Up & Notes.docx.

- **Task:** Synthesize all available information from the expanded file set into a single, coherent job description.
- **Process:** Information from all documents was collated to build a more detailed picture. This included clarifying the multi-agency partnership (DHS, DSCI, GOC), the target population (ENOUGH communities), the specific benefits (SNAP, TCA, etc.), the number of service members (20), the proposed supervision model, and the strategic importance of recruiting members with lived experience. The output was a standard, public-facing job description draft.

3. Formatting Pivot to MS22 State Template:

- **Input:** MS22 Benefits Access Director (1).docx was provided as a formatting and style template.
- **Task:** Reformat the existing job description content into the formal MS22 State Position Description structure.
- **Process:** This involved a direct transposition of content into the numbered sections of the MS22 form. "Principal Responsibilities" became "Essential duties and responsibilities," "Qualifications" became "Minimum Education and Experience Requirements," and so on. This step was crucial for internal alignment and familiarizing the document with state HR processes.

4. Iterative Refinement of MS22 Draft:

- **Input:** Directives to clean up the MS22 format for readability.
- **Task:** Remove form-specific instructions (e.g., "(Check all that apply)"), non-applicable multiple-choice options, and entire numbered sections for which no information was available (e.g., PIN, Agency Appropriation Code, which are filled by HR).
- **Process:** The MS22 draft was edited multiple times to create a version that looked less like a data-entry form and more like a finalized document, improving its professionalism while retaining the state-specific structure.

5. Final Formatting Pivot & Content Finalization:

- **Input:** A directive was given to abandon the strict MS22 format in favor of a final version that used the *language* and professionalism of a state posting but was formatted in a more modern, clean, public-facing style. A request was also made to add "Community Based Organization(s) (Supervising Service Provider)" to the partnership list.
- **Task:** Reformat the content from the MS22 draft back into the standard job description layout and incorporate the final stakeholder addition.
- **Process:** The content was restructured under clear headings like "Program Overview," "Key Responsibilities," and "Qualifications." The language was reviewed to ensure it was clear, direct, and aligned with plain language principles. This produced the final deliverable.

6. Comprehensive Project Handoff Generation:

- **Input:** An explicit directive to create a single project handoff document containing *everything* created during the project, including the final deliverable, project history, and source file list.
- **Task:** Generate this comprehensive document.
- **Process:** The current document was created, fulfilling the final project requirement by encapsulating the entire project lifecycle in one auditable and complete file.

3. The Final Deliverable

This is the final and approved version of the Benefit Navigator job description, incorporating all project data and refinements.

Job Title: Benefit Navigator (Service Year Member)

Organization: Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) In partnership with the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation (DSCI), the Governor's Office for Children (GOC), and Community Based Organization(s) (Supervising Service Provider).

Location: Various community sites within designated ENOUGH (Empowering Neighborhoods of Opportunity and Unlimited Hope) communities in Maryland. Host sites may include Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) offices, ENOUGH Community Quarterback organizations, or similar community-based organizations.

Position Type: Service Year Member, Full-time (30-40 hours per week)

Compensation:

- Service Year Members earn at least \$15.00 per hour.
- A \$6,000 taxable cash stipend is provided upon successful completion of the program year.

Program Overview & Position Summary: This position is part of the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) Multi-Benefit Navigators Program, a Service Year initiative. Benefit Navigators play a crucial role in the DHS mission to assist people in economic need by enhancing access to essential benefits. The program aims to deploy dedicated Service Year Members directly into high-need communities to provide personalized assistance, helping individuals and families navigate the complexities of the benefits system and connect with resources designed to foster economic stability.

Key Responsibilities:

- Provide direct support and personalized assistance to individuals and families throughout the benefits application process within ENOUGH communities.
- Educate residents on eligibility criteria for a range of benefits programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), energy assistance, and childcare subsidies.
- Assist residents with accurately completing and submitting applications for these benefits.
- Conduct proactive community outreach to raise awareness of available benefits and the navigator services.
- Perform comprehensive benefits screenings to identify all potential programs for which an individual or family may qualify.
- Work to reduce barriers to benefits access by offering hands-on assistance, advocating for residents, and connecting them with additional community support services.
- Support ongoing case management activities as required.
- Potentially assist clients engaged through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) partnerships with navigating DHS benefits.
- May contribute to financial literacy education efforts.
- Maintain accurate records and report on key outcomes, such as the number of individuals assisted, applications completed, and successful enrollments.

Qualifications:

Minimum Qualifications:

- Must meet all eligibility requirements for Maryland Corps or the Service Year Option program (e.g., Maryland residency. Specific age and educational requirements vary by

program: Service Year Option typically requires a recent high school diploma or GED; Maryland Corps requires individuals to be at least 18 years old, with high school completion not mandatory).

- A strong interest in community service, personal and professional skill development, and making a tangible difference in Maryland communities.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to interact effectively and empathetically with diverse individuals.
- Ability to explain complex information in a clear, understandable, and patient manner.
- Basic computer literacy for tasks such as data entry and accessing online resources.

Desired or Preferred Qualifications:

- Personal lived experience navigating social services systems.
- Previous experience in community outreach, benefits access work, social services, or a related field.
- Demonstrated problem-solving skills and the ability to help individuals overcome challenges.
- Proven cultural competency and experience working effectively with diverse populations.

Support and Professional Development:

- **Comprehensive Training:** Receive initial and ongoing training covering various benefit programs, eligibility determination, application procedures, language access, and cultural competency.
- **Skill Development:** Opportunities for skill enhancement in areas such as community outreach strategies, client communication techniques, case management principles, problem-solving, and trauma-informed service delivery.
- **Mentorship:** Assignment of a dedicated Mentor prior to the commencement of service, with a focus on matching with individuals who have relevant lived or professional experience.
- **Supervision:** Benefit from a structured supervision model involving day-to-day guidance and mentorship from designated staff at the community host site, complemented by programmatic coordination, technical assistance, and connection to statewide resources provided by DHS personnel.
- **Coaching & Feedback:** Regular coaching sessions, constructive feedback, and performance discussions to support growth.
- **Additional Support:** Access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) offering confidential counseling and work-life balance resources, information regarding state transportation assistance, and opportunities for professional development through DHS and DSCI.

Work Environment and Schedule:

- Benefit Navigators are expected to perform their duties fully in-person at their assigned community-based host site.
- The position requires providing meaningful work for 30 to 40 hours per week.
- Work schedules may require flexibility to accommodate occasional longer days for activities mandated by the Host Site Partner or the Service Year Program.
- Necessary equipment to perform duties (computer, phone, desk, internet, printer access, relevant software, and DHS platform access) will be provided, typically through the hosting location.

Program Benefits (Beyond Compensation):

- Valuable job training and hands-on professional experience in the human services field.
- Dedicated mentorship and ongoing coaching.

- Access to a network of supportive services and professional development opportunities.
- The opportunity to make a significant and positive impact within Maryland communities by increasing access to vital benefits.
- Host Site Partners are responsible for providing fringe benefits as required by law (e.g., health coverage, FICA, Workers' Compensation).

To Apply: Individuals interested in this Service Year opportunity should visit the Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation website (serve.maryland.gov) for more information on the Service Year Option program and application details.

4. Usage & Implementation Notes

- **Intended Use:** This document is the primary recruitment tool for the Benefit Navigator position. It is designed to be posted on state government job boards, partner websites (DSCI, GOC, CBOs), and other public-facing recruitment platforms.
- **Distribution:** This job description should be provided to the Department of Service and Civic Innovation (DSCI) to be used in their official recruitment process for the Service Year Option. It should also be shared with partner Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) that will serve as host sites.
- **Audience:** The language is intended to be professional yet accessible, speaking to a broad audience of potential applicants. It specifically aims to be encouraging to individuals with diverse backgrounds, including those with personal lived experience in social services, who are a preferred candidate pool.
- **Key Project Documents and Inputs:** The final deliverable was synthesized from the following source files, which constitute the complete project record:
 1. **OBA [DHS copy] Benefit Navigators: Service Year Application - shared (.docx & .gdoc versions):** Provided the initial framework, DHS mission statement, and core responsibilities for the role. Contained key questions that shaped the supervision and support model.
 2. **Multi-Benefit Navigators Program Briefing Document (.gdoc):** Outlined the program's overall strategic goals, scope, key components (recruitment, training, supervision), and project timeline. Confirmed the number of members and the focus on ENOUGH communities.
 3. **Benefits Access in Maryland Research (.gdoc):** Served as background context, reinforcing the need for navigator roles by detailing systemic barriers to benefits access in Maryland.
 4. **Service Year Option Application - Benefit Navigator Version 2 (.gdoc):** A more refined draft of the application, providing specific details on the support structure, equipment provisions, supervision model, and mentorship plans.
 5. **GoC ENOUGH Navigator - Intial Project Concept Write Up & Notes.docx (.docx):** Offered insight into the program's conceptual origins, including the short-term pilot strategy (repurposing VITA members) and long-term vision for a dedicated cohort. Highlighted the importance of prioritizing navigators with lived experience.
 6. **MS22 Benefits Access Director (1).docx (.docx):** Served exclusively as a formatting and style guide during the intermediate phase of the project to ensure alignment with Maryland state government conventions. Its content was not used, but its structure informed an interim draft.