



Plan: California Savings Plus

401(k) pre-tax and Roth

457(b) pre-tax and Roth

Participants: 256,372

Assets: \$24.5B

Administrator: Nationwide

Investment Consultant: Callan

Category: Technology & Cybersecurity

Initiative: Savings Plus 2024 Simplified Enrollment and Onboarding Experience

BACKGROUND

Today, providing an effortless user experience is crucial, especially for retirement plans, where user experience can significantly impact overall adoption rates. Studies have shown that improving the user experience can increase adoption rates by up to 25%.

State of California employees have access to multiple retirement systems, including the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) and Savings Plus. All full-time state employees participate in CalPERS, which can replace up to 75% of an employee's final compensation.

However, some state employees may find that they have a gap in their retirement income. Savings Plus offers state employees the opportunity to supplement their pension—but employees can only take advantage of this opportunity if they enroll.

Savings Plus recognizes that removing barriers and confusion in the enrollment process is the first step to supporting state employees' longer-term retirement goals. By simplifying the enrollment experience and adding an onboarding process that guides participants through actionable next steps, we aim to make the first step towards closing the gap on their retirement goals easier.

"A streamlined and user-friendly enrollment experience can have a profound impact on participants' success. Simplifying the enrollment experience is not just about making it easier for state employees to enroll—it's about removing barriers that can deter participation and ensuring that every participant feels confident and supported from the very beginning.

By offering a simple and intuitive enrollment experience, we empower employees to take proactive steps towards securing their financial future. When employees feel that the process is straightforward and accessible, they're more likely to take advantage of the benefits offered and make informed decisions about their retirement savings." – Sandy Blair, Plan Administrator

GOALS

To improve the overall enrollment experience for incoming eligible state employees and further support existing Savings Plus participants, we aimed to:

- Overhaul the online enrollment process to eliminate sticking points and simplify the experience.
- Provide outreach and education to maintain interest and encourage plan enrollment.
- Create an onboarding experience to guide new participants after enrollment.
- Modify the post-login experience to offer reminders and actionable steps, ensuring account information is accurate and investments align with participants' goals.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

To achieve our goals, we implement a series of enhancements, outreach, and education, including:

- To enhance the enrollment experience for state employees eligible to enroll in Savings Plus, we partnered with Nationwide to completely redesign the online enrollment process. Our focus was on streamlining the information required during enrollment to make the process as simple and intuitive as possible, while also creating the ability to capture contact information for those that entered the process but did not complete.
- For those that did not complete the enrollment process, we implemented a two-touch email stream encouraging them to complete the process. Depending on where they left off in this process, the communication provided resources to help them make the decision and then linked them back to where they left off.
- For new participants, we created an onboarding experience in post-login that provided actionable steps around beneficiary setup, contribution/investment review, and more. We supported this with a series of actionable emails designed to guide new participants through each step with simple actions, ensuring they were not overwhelmed.
- We also enhanced the post-login experience for existing participants, helping them ensure their contact information was up-to-date, and their investments still met their needs through timely notifications to review their accounts. Timely reminders via email encouraged existing participants to review their contribution rate, investments, and contact information annually, based on previous participant behaviors.
- In February 2024, we implemented personalized web banners targeting users who did not complete their enrollment and later returned to the Savings Plus website, encouraging them to continue the process. We also sent out emails to participants who did not complete their enrollment, including a video highlighting the benefits of enrolling in the Savings Plus plan.
- To further boost enrollment, we targeted eligible employees who had attended relevant webinars, encouraging them to enroll in the plan.
- We developed a simplified workshop on the benefits of enrolling in Savings Plus to educate eligible employees without overwhelming them. Simplified enrollment materials were also created for Savings Plus representatives to use in the field, providing key information needed for discussions with household decision-makers.
- After the launch, we continued to analyze data, including completion rates and drop-off points, to identify roadblocks and continuously optimize the experience.

RESULTS

The simplified enrollment experience not only made it easier for employees to enroll in their deferred compensation plan but also ensures they are well-prepared to manage their retirement savings effectively.

As a result of our efforts, we saw:

- Redesigning the enrollment experience resulted in a **58% (15 minutes overall) reduction in the amount of time to enroll, 63% increase in online accounts**, and accounted for 88% of all plan enrollments
- This experience enabled Savings Plus to achieve **record level enrollment**. We saw an **increase of 39% in total enrollments, leading to 20,847 new plan participants in 2024**.



FEASIBILITY

Implementing similar approaches to enhance the enrollment experience and support participants is highly feasible for other plan sponsors. The strategies we employed, such as partnering with recordkeepers, analyzing user data to optimize processes, and utilizing personalized outreach methods, are adaptable and scalable.

By leveraging digital tools and targeted communication, plan sponsors can streamline enrollment, provide effective onboarding, and maintain ongoing engagement with participants. These approaches not only improve user experience but also drive higher participation rates and better retirement outcomes. With careful planning and execution, other plan sponsors can successfully adopt these methods to meet their unique needs and goals.