FREE SCORECARD · CALIFORNIA APP AGENCIES · 2026

Shortlist smarter.

Find, check and compare California app development companies.

Why this matters: most "top 10" lists are paid placements, and California talent is expensive: software developers earn a median of $174,410 statewide against $133,270 in the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario area (BLS 2025 wage data via O*NET). Where a team sits changes the rate.

How to use this: find candidates with page 2, cut them to 3–5 with the shortlist checks, then score each on page 3 after the first call.



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FIND Where to look

- ✓ Review directories such as Clutch (filter by city or state, see project sizes and rates).
- ✓ The BBB and Google Maps reviews for local studios.
- ✓ Referrals from business owners in your industry.

CUT TO 3-5 The shortlist checks

☐ 01 **Live apps you can download**

WHY Screenshots can be mocked up; a live app shows real quality.

DO Ask for App Store or Google Play links and use one for 10 minutes.

☐ 02 **Work close to yours**

WHY A team that has built your kind of app prices it more accurately.

DO Ask for one similar project and what went wrong on it.

☐ 03 **Reviews that describe the process**

WHY Star averages hide how a team handles deadlines and problems.

DO Read the written reviews on Clutch, the BBB and Google; look for communication and post-launch comments.

☐ 04 **Everything in your name**

WHY Whoever owns the accounts controls the app.

DO Store accounts, code repository, domain and hosting in your name from day one.

☐ 05 **They'll tell you no**

WHY A team that agrees with everything is selling, not planning.

DO Notice whether they push back on scope that doesn't fit your budget.

SCORE After the first call (0–2 each, max 16)

CRITERION	A	B	C	D	E
Live apps I could install					
Similar work shipped					
Reviews describe the process					
Accounts in my name					
Clear version-one scope					
Straight answer on privacy (CCPA)					
Named team members					
Plan for the first 90 days after launch					
Total / 16					

CA RULES Two California questions to raise

- ✓ **Privacy (CCPA):** covers for-profit businesses that meet a threshold, such as annual gross revenue above $26,625,000 (2025 adjusted figure, CA Privacy Protection Agency). Ask how the team handles consent, deletion requests and analytics.
- ✓ **Contractors (AB 5):** hiring an individual freelancer? The ABC test presumes an employee unless you prove otherwise (CA DIR). Working with an established company avoids most of that question.

RED FLAGS Walk away if you see these

- ✗ A firm price before they've seen a feature list.
- ✗ No live apps you can install, or all-five-star reviews posted the same month.
- ✗ Pressure to sign this week, or vague answers about who owns the code.

Sources: O*NET local wages, Software Developers 15-1252, BLS 2025 wage data. California Privacy Protection Agency, Updated monetary thresholds in CCPA (cppa.ca.gov). CA DIR independent contractor FAQ.

General information, not legal advice. GMSS is a California app development company; score us too: globalmcliensoftwaresolutions.com/contact.