

News: 2015 TIG Grants Included Five Court Partnership Grants - 2016 Should Bring More As We Build a 100% Access Technology Infrastructure (LSC 2016)



LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

[LSC's 2015 TIG grants included five grants to projects being undertaken by legal aid and court partnerships](#), according to the [Request for Letters of Intent to Apply for 2016 Grant Funding](#) we should see significantly more partnership awards in 2016. LOIs are currently being accepted through February 29, 2016, and LSC has identified three areas of particular interest:

- Achieving 100% Access

- Projects to Move Organizations Above the LSC Technology Baselines
- Innovations in Legal Information Design and Delivery

While LSC has three areas of particular interest in which programs are encouraged to submit proposals for innovative technology approaches, the designation of these areas does not in any way limit the scope of proposals in which LSC is interested.

However, for courts and legal aid programs, this is a tremendous opportunity to join together to build an infrastructure that will support 100% access so that each person will have access to what legal help they need, when they need it, in a format they can use.

Specifically with respect to 100% access, LSC has written the following:

A. Achieving “100 Percent Access.” LSC’s 2013 Technology Summit Report proposed an integrated service-delivery system that would “move the United States toward providing some form of effective assistance to 100 percent of persons otherwise unable to afford an attorney for dealing with essential civil legal needs.” Recently, the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators adopted a resolution advocating a similar access goal:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators support the aspirational goal of 100 percent access to effective assistance for essential civil legal needs and urge their members to provide leadership in achieving that goal and to work with their Access to Justice Commission or other such entities to develop a strategic plan with realistic and measurable outcomes;

and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conferences urge the National Center for State Courts and other national organizations to develop tools and provide assistance to states in achieving the goal of 100 percent access through a continuum of meaningful and appropriate services.

With this area of interest, LSC seeks proposals that use technology to further the goal of 100 percent access to effective assistance for essential civil legal needs, particularly through projects that advance related objectives developed by the Access to Justice Commission in the applicant’s state. (Emphasis added.)

LSC's Technology Summit Report [provides examples of strategies for achieving 100 percent access](#), but proposals should not be limited to approaches discussed in the report. Applicants should work with their local commissions (where they exist) and/or other stakeholders to determine the best ways to use technology to move toward achieving this goal.

The 2015 Legal Aid - Court partnership grants illustrate the incredible potential of creating a 100% ecosystem when we combine the expertise of various partners and think of SRLs not as either clients or litigants who need to be handed between uncoordinated systems, but rather people in need of legal help. [Read more about 2015 TIG Awards](#) on the LSC webpage and summaries of five legal aid - court partnership grants below.

Legal Aid Society of Orange County, Inc. - Orange County Superior Court

Small Claims Online Dispute Resolution and Mediation Portal: LASOC plans to develop an Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) and Mediation Portal for small claims cases in Orange County with the goal of simplifying access for self-represented small claims litigants to mediation through online services. This is predicted to also reduce small claims calendar congestion and save time and expense for both the litigants and the Court. The project will be done in partnership with the Orange County Superior Court, experienced court administrators, and certified mediators. The LASOC will promote the ODR and Mediation Portal on its website and will also link to infographics, cartoons, and videos that promote negotiation and further explain the process. The court also plans to this project through its triage program.

Blue Ridge Legal Services, Inc. - National Center for State Courts - the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia - the Virginia Access to Justice Commission

Data Analysis of Unmet Civil Legal Needs: The partners plan to organize and analyze data from the Court's existing statewide case management systems with the dual goals of shedding light on the unmet civil needs within the court system and measuring the impact of a lack of representation in types of civil cases commonly

litigated in Virginia's court system. There will be a particular focus on the types of cases that legal aid's low-income client population most frequently confronts.

The research initiative was initially proposed by BRLS Executive Director John Whitfield, who serves as co-chair of the Virginia Access to Justice Commission, as a means of obtaining baseline data for the new Commission, established in late 2013. The Virginia Access to Justice Commission will participate in the proposed project as an advisory council.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation - Alaska Court System

Digital Learning Modules: ALSC will partner with Family Law Self Help Center (FLSHC) on this project aimed at developing classroom modules that can be made readily available online featuring issue areas self-represented litigants most need to learn about. FLSHC will help identify the module topics most needed in partnership with clerks and other court staff in the Alaska Court System. Once developed, the FLSHC will also support outreach to self-represented litigants via its website, court staff training, toll free helpline, and legal and social service providers across Alaska.

Lone Star Legal Aid - Texas Office of Court Administration - Texas Access to Justice Commission

Plain Language Document Assembly and E-Filing Project: LSLA will implement the Texas Interactive Forms Project (TIFP), an initiative that will develop and implement plain-language, step-by-step guided interviews for self-represented litigants to assemble and electronically file court forms using Tyler Technologies Guide & File platform and the statewide eFiling portal. TIFP plans to automate 100 individual forms during the two-year grant term and will roll out the project with support from Texas Access to Justice Commission and the Office of Court Administration.

Legal Services of Northern Virginia, Inc. - Fairfax County Court

Court Case Navigation and Resource App for SRLs: LSNV plans to develop the Legal Case Navigator, a mobile-friendly web-app that will allow legal aid clients and self-represented litigants in Fairfax County, VA, the ability to access and navigate the court process for their legal cases. The project leaders plan to design the portal in a secure, easy, and convenient way that will enhance a user's interaction with the

court system and provide information and resources to make better-informed decisions about their legal rights. LSNV will implement the project in partnership with the Fairfax County Courts.

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