

TIG Sample LOIs

Applicants can utilize the sample LOIs below when preparing their funding requests. These documents are intended to provide general guidance to applicants and may not meet all requirements for the 2012 TIG cycle. Programs should review the full 2012 Notice before drafting their LOIs.

Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grants
Legal Aid of New Bridge
TIG LOI
Amount Requested: \$ 59000

Description of Project

Legal Aid of New Bridge (LANB) in collaboration with the New Bridge Justice Action Group Tech Collaboration [Collaboration] and the New Bridge public libraries, will host twelve video conferencing clinics presented by volunteer lawyers on issues that correspond with the civil legal needs of low-income New Bridge residents. LANB will collaborate with the same partners to enhance the New Bridge statewide website with four new videos on the overarching theme of empowering pro se litigants and demystify the court process.

The Collaboration has been meeting for the past two years to develop ideas for harnessing technology to enhance pro se support services throughout New Bridge. In 2010, librarians from all areas of New Bridge were trained on how to support their patrons' use of the statewide website (while at the same time avoiding the unauthorized practice of law). Building on the broader awareness of this online resource among public librarians, the Collaboration now proposes to develop and present a series of video clinics as a first step towards getting pro bono services into the libraries. Private attorneys working with the Collaboration have already committed to conducting virtual clinics on the following legal issues: divorce, bankruptcy, and consumer issues. If we are chosen to submit a full proposal, the Collaboration will finalize the subjects of the clinics and the online videos, detail a recruitment plan for the additional clinic presenters, and set out the steps for presenting the clinics by video to New Bridge libraries, and also identify the libraries that serve large immigrant populations where we can enhance the clinic presentation with interpreter services.

The overall objective of both the Clinics and the new videos will be to familiarize clients with court procedures, to demystify the experience, and to give potential pro se litigants the confidence to represent themselves in matters of great importance in their lives, including issues that do not fall within legal services and pro bono priorities for full representation.

Major Benefits

New Bridge is a rural state, and many counties have very few practicing attorneys, which limits the availability of local pro bono services. Many small towns, however, have libraries that function as vibrant community centers, where librarians are focused on providing their communities with access to information and services, especially through technology. In 2010, New Bridge Libraries were the recipients of a BTOP grant that boosted high-speed internet access to libraries, and provided a number of them with video conferencing ability. The Collaboration wrote in support of the BTOP grant, having come to appreciate that legal services, the courts and libraries working together are able to leverage previously untapped resources to increase access to justice for low-income New Bridge residents.

This proposal will build on these prior steps—the launch of statewide website, the creation of the Collaboration, the Collaboration’s training of public librarians, and the enhanced technical infrastructure through the BTOP grant—by bringing pro bono attorneys into the libraries through video-conferencing. Beyond the value of the general clinic series itself, this project is likely to form the basis of future limited representation video clinics, where low income rural clients will be able to individually consult with an urban-based pro bono attorney by video.

As the Collaboration moves toward finding new ways to support unbundled attorney services for pro se litigants, it has also identified the need to push forward with fresh, user-friendly content on New Bridge’s statewide website. As more parts of rural New Bridge are gaining access to high-speed connections, video is often the learning tool of choice for many people. This is especially true for low-level readers. New Bridge is no exception to the national statistics on reading levels—a major bar to self-empowerment through knowledge. The best tool we have available, in response to this problem, is online video.

These new videos will also be a useful resource for the clinic attorneys who are coaching pro se’s through the court process. Moreover, as we continue to involve our public librarians in helping library users to navigate our SWWS self-help resources, the librarians have expressed the need for even more user-friendly content to demystify the court processes. Knowing that many of their patrons have difficulty understanding written material, they are enthusiastic supporters of more online self-help video content.

Estimated Costs

Legal Aid of New Bridge is seeking \$59,000 over an 18 month period.

Managerial: \$6,300

\$4,500: Project Management (Volunteer Lawyers Project and LANB)

\$1,800: Project Evaluation and Reporting (LANB and VLP)

VLP/ProBono Video Clinic Costs: \$18,200

\$8,000: Clinic Management, Development and Coordination (VLP)

\$2,000: Library Coordination (New Bridge libraries)

\$7,200: Video-conferencing Transmission fees

\$1,000: Promotional and Educational Materials

Video production and posting costs (LANB, New Bridge Communications School): \$34,500

In-Kind Contributions

Pro Bono hours preparing for and presenting Clinics

Free use of video and sound equipment for video production

New Bridge Communications School student time

Librarian time, advertising and hosting clinics

Collaboration members' donated time - planning, contributing to development of clinic model, video concepts and scripts

Judges and lawyers volunteering to play parts in videos

Major Partners

The major partners are Volunteer Lawyers Project, Legal Aid of New Bridge, the Tech Collaboration, the New Bridge public libraries, the School of Communications , and iKnow.

LANB is New Bridge’s statewide legal aid provider and LSC grantee. LANB has developed several successful websites including our statewide website, www.LANB.org , www.elderlegalweb.org and, www.nbvlp.org. LANB staff will administer the grant and be involved with developing the concepts and scripts for the videos. LANB staff attorney Jane Smith, with over 20 years of video production experience, will be the primary coordinator of the video work.

Volunteer Lawyers Project is New Bridge’s statewide pro bono program. VLP will co-ordinate and oversee the twelve video clinics.

New Bridge Tech Collaboration Group, co-chaired by New Bridge Supreme Court Justice Bob Smith and New Bridge Volunteer Lawyer’s Project Director Kelly Jones, includes representatives from the New Bridge Bar Association, New Bridge’s legal services programs, the state’s public librarians and other key partners. The Collaboration provided the inspiration for this proposal and will play a vital role in the final designation of Clinic topics, location and format, as well as finalizing the specific video topics and collaborating on scripts and content.

The New Bridge State Library and the Libraries of the Northeastern New Bridge Library District - one of three regional groups of New Bridge public librarians representing the most rural and remote areas of the state - will provide input on the video productions and host the clinics. (Also represented on the Tech Collaboration (see above) are the New Bridge State Law Library, the New Bridge School of Law library and the New Bridge State Law Library in Capitol City, NB.) These groups will designate at least one librarian to participate in designating topics, formulating themes and reviewing and editing scripts. These groups will also contribute volunteer publicity.

New Bridge School of Communications Video Production Department, based in Capitol City, New Bridge, will contribute free student time toward the production of at least one video. The school charges for faculty oversight and overhead costs.

Innovation/Replication/Sustainability

Innovation. This project is innovative in that it makes use of the collaboration between libraries, courts and legal services to harness technologies in bringing pro bono attorneys and enhanced online self-help resources into rural communities. Thanks to the earlier BTOP grant, and the Collaboration’s support of that grant, the VLP and LANB will be able to provide these new services at minimal cost, with the technical infra-structure – library video-conferencing and high-speed internet - already in place.

Replication. The project is straight forward and contained. By recording the steps taken to present the clinics, noting problems encountered and their possible solutions, and by sharing evaluation tools and outcomes, VLP will be able to offer a model project, which could be used

in other rural states, and likely adapted for larger metropolitan areas with multiple branch libraries. VLP and LANB will be open to offering this model and lessons learned to other programs, through online and conference trainings. LANB will contribute our videos to the national legal aid Video Exchange Project. Although the specific topics are not yet finalized, contemplated topics, such as basics of evidence, how interpretive services work in the courtroom, courthouse demeanor for teens, could be re-usable by other SWWS's with minimal editing.

Sustainability. The Clinic Project will be sustainable at lower cost over the long term because the initial work of recruitment, development, and evaluation can be repeated with a smaller time commitment. Most pro bono attorneys will be willing and able to repeat clinics and promotional and educational materials will already be developed. In choosing the topics for our videos, one of the primary considerations will be topics and content that will endure for at least a few years. Otherwise, maintaining the videos on the website does not involve ongoing costs.

If the project is successful and useful to clients, both the VLP and the New Bridge Libraries are likely to be willing to absorb the lesser costs of continuing this project. We believe that our optimism on this point is well-founded because this project aligns the libraries' mission to act as centers of access to information in their communities, VLP's mission to increase Access to Justice through pro bono service, and LANB's mission to provide high-quality, user-friendly online pro se support.

Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grants
Program Name: Legal Aid of New Bridge
Open Category
Amount Requested: \$ 73,000

Description of Project

This project, New Bridge Court Help, is being submitted by Legal Aid of New Bridge (LANB) in partnership with the New Bridge Court Administration Office (CAO) and New Bridge Legal Services Center (NBLSC) through NewBridgeLegalWeb (www.NewBridgeLegal.org). The primary goal of the project is to build on existing resources to improve low-income self represented litigants' access to the court system, with a special emphasis on access for limited English proficient (LEP) populations. By creating a "virtual self-help center" with emphasis on the court experience, users will have enhanced court-specific resources to guide them through the judicial process. This project will strengthen the relationship between the court system and legal aid to improve access to the courts statewide.

The content for the virtual self-help court center will include step-by-step guides about filing a lawsuit, service of process, preparing for court, courtroom conduct, and basic trial procedures. Brief and simple, court-specific guides on topics such as protective orders, foreclosures, affidavits of inability to pay, and mediation will augment forms available on NewBridgeLegalWeb. The project will add more A2J Author-based self-help pleadings to the NewBridgeLegalWeb site. The guides will be produced in plain language in English and Spanish, and will help a pro se litigant navigate the process of completing and filing court forms. We will create videos to accompany the most popular guides. The videos will have voiceovers in English and Spanish, with the ability to add other languages in the future. The video self-help guides will also be posted on YouTube and rendered for viewing on mobile devices. Staff across the state will collaborate on self-help guides and videos in English and Spanish; translate A2J document assembly interviews into Vietnamese; educate advocates in LSC-funded programs about the new resources for people they cannot represent; engage judges, court clerks, court administrators and coordinators, law librarians, and others; market the virtual self-help center; and train local court personnel and librarians on the use of the self-help center.

Major Benefits

Approximately 4 million New Bridge residents currently qualify for legal aid, and that number may grow as a result of the current economic crisis. It is estimated that four out of five people seeking assistance from LSC-funded legal aid providers in New Bridge are denied service because of insufficient program resources. Many of the persons who are turned away end up representing themselves. New Bridge Court Help will create a powerful tool for educating litigants about the state court system, self-help resources, and low-cost civil legal assistance for those who cannot afford legal help.

The virtual self-help center will be located on the CAO website, New Bridge Courts Online, to emphasize the judiciary's commitment to a statewide effort to transform access to justice in

the disaggregated courts of New Bridge. New Bridge has 180 counties and a combined total of more than 1,200 trial-level courts whose jurisdiction varies considerably from county to county.

Estimated Costs

Legal Aid of New Bridge is seeking \$73,000 from the TIG program for an 18-month project (+3 month reporting period afterward) to launch New Bridge Court Help. The estimated total project costs are \$92,560. Anticipated costs of the major components of the project are summarized as follows:

Translation of three A2J interviews to Spanish - \$12,000
Translation of web-guides to Spanish (est. 50 pages) - \$ 2,000
Contract for programming (est. 200 hours @ \$45/hour) - \$ 9,000
Contract for videography (60 min.) - \$10,000
Creation of additional A2J interviews as needed throughout the project - \$30,000
Spanish translation/narration of scripts (est. 100 pgs.) - \$ 3,600
Outreach (webinars) \$ 255
Outreach (travel) \$ 1,500
Administration of the grant - \$ 4,645
Total grant request: \$73,000

The written content (web-guides and scripts) would be generated by CAO staff at an estimated in-kind value of \$7,560. Vietnamese translations will be done by LANB staff at an estimated in-kind value of \$12,000. Additional funding from other sources may expand the amount of content added in the grant year.

Major Partners

Legal Aid of New Bridge

LANB is the eighth largest legal aid organization of its type in the United States. New pilot initiatives for the firm include the Rural Pro Se Litigation Project (staffed pro se help centers and web kiosks with online document assembly for self-represented litigants). LANB has a long history of developing and distributing “pro se” materials to those it turns away or who choose to represent themselves and will use its direct knowledge of the substantive areas and court procedures to expand the self-help materials. LANB will create A2J Author-based interviews and translate some of them into Vietnamese, manage the project, and administer the grant.

Court Administration Office

CAO’s mission is to provide resources and information for the efficient administration of the judicial branch. CAO is accustomed to working on solutions for the judicial branch within the high degree of decentralization, complexity, and shared local/state responsibility that characterizes the New Bridge court system. As a partner in the New Bridge Court Help project, CAO will provide content, access to courts, and court-related information.

New Bridge Legal Services Center

NBLSC has led efforts to establish the Partnership for Legal Access, which provides web based self-help legal information to low-income New Bridge residents. The success of the center has been demonstrated by the numbers. There are more than 1,000 Spanish and English legal resources on the statewide website, which had more than 300,000 unique visitors in 2010. Materials are continuously updated and additional documents are being translated into Spanish. NBLSC will provide technology assistance through the Web Coordinator and Web Librarian for New Bridge Law Web.

Innovation/Replication/Sustainability - Identify how and why the proposed project is new and innovative. Identify how and why the proposed project can significantly benefit and/or be replicated by other legal services providers and/or the community at large. Identify how the proposed project will be maintained to ensure sustainability.

The proposed project is replicable because it uses existing statewide resources and partners them with a specific goal of making the court system easier to navigate, particularly for limited English proficient pro se litigants. The fact that LSC-funded organizations will collaborate directly with state court administration on this project to expand resources and access to justice for low-income self-represented New Bridge residents is innovative and fosters a long-term relationship while addressing the exploding unmet civil legal needs in the state. New Bridge Court Help is sustainable after the project ends because the resources will be on existing websites that are already maintained by NBLSC and CAO. The content will be maintained and expanded using staff resources at NBLSC, CAO and the consortium of legal services providers in New Bridge.

Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grants
Program Name: New Bridge Legal Aid
Open Category
Amount Requested: \$182,500

New State has been hit hard by the economic recession. Economists at the University of New State have predicted that New State's recession will be severe and prolonged. In the past year, New State's unemployment insurance claims have increased 83%. In December 2008, New State lost over 23,000 jobs. Almost half the jobs were lost in New Bridge (Smith County). New State is ranked 8th in the nation for the most foreclosures. In 2006, the New Bridge area had the highest number of foreclosures nationally. New Bridge has recently been ranked as the nation's third emptiest city due to unoccupied housing. Smith County is the largest county in the state. As a result of the economic crisis, Smith County eviction filings increased to more than 51,000 in 2008.

New Bridge Legal Aid's content portals project seeks to address the legal needs of those affected by New State's recession. The content portals will present legal information in different formats to reach people regardless of their computer skills or literacy levels. The portals will contain traditional print resources, interactive A2J interviews and Webcast videos. The content portals will be available at the Smith County Self Help Center, through direct links and through NewStateLegalWeb.org. To further increase accessibility, the videos will also be posted on New Bridge Legal Aid's YouTube channel.

Major Benefits:

The New Bridge Legal Aid, in partnership with the State and Magistrate Courts of Smith County, the New Bridge Volunteer Lawyers Program (NBVLF) and NB Legal Network (NBLN), will create online consumer law content portals for a new self-help center at the Smith County Court. Each content portal will contain interactive brochures using A2J and HotDocs technology. The interactive brochures will walk users through their legal problem, point them to existing legal resources and assemble simple legal documents. The information portals will also include Webcast videos. The videos will contain short conversations between an expert and a layperson that explain important aspects of consumer law issues.

This demonstration project will create five online content portals for our court partners, covering the following subjects: 1) foreclosure for tenants and homeowners, including attorney and housing counselor referrals; 2) landlord/tenant issues, including an answer to a dispossessory suit; 3) debt collection, including self-help letters and an answer to a debt dispute complaint, 4) consumer scams, including an affirmative complaint against a business/corporation; 5) wage claims, including an affirmative complaint for unpaid wages. The online information portals will initially be created using the existing LegalWeb program site template. NBLN will partner with New Bridge Legal Aid to create five new topic-based content portals for our court partners under this grant. To do this, NBLN will develop a new flexible web interface that will accept syndicated content out of the NBLegalWeb.org statewide website. The interface could be tailored around a specific legal topic (such as a statewide resource specifically on foreclosure issues) or for a specific audience (such as a court-branded interface similar to Illinois' model, <http://mchenry.illinoislegalaid.org/>). This project will build on the upcoming rebuild of

the LegalWeb statewide website template, which will create the database architecture to allow content syndication.

The computer and internet access needed for use of the content portals will be available from a variety of sources, including public access computers at the Smith County Self-Help Center and at housing and consumers counseling offices, court clerk's offices, court law libraries and public libraries. The idea for the Self-Help Center originated when judges became concerned about self-represented litigants making mistakes in post-foreclosure evictions and debt collection suits. Our court partner has already begun meeting the needs of these litigants through mediation of post-foreclosure evictions. The Self-Help Center is scheduled to begin offering additional services later this Spring.

This new interface portal will create maximum flexibility to reach broader audiences online, while keeping the content centralized on NBLegalWeb.org statewide website. By syndicating the content out of the site, New Bridge Legal Aid will continue to manage all of the content in one place, thus making ongoing content maintenance easier and more efficient. The mini-portals also allow more branding flexibility for partners such as the courts to feel more ownership. The web-based content portal benefits other LegalWeb states as well who will be able to take advantage of this new functionality in their own state. It will allow states to experiment with varying views of LegalWeb content that are appropriate for different contexts. A state might partner with a family court to create a kiosk with a court-branded interface that shows only relevant content from their LegalWeb statewide website.

Estimated Costs

New Bridge Legal Aid is seeking a total of \$182,500: \$156,000 for New Bridge Legal Aid staffing over 36 months, including template development staff; \$22,000 for the NBLN upgrade to the program site template; and \$4,500 for additional computer and video recording technology. We anticipate that the State and Magistrate Courts of Smith County, the New Bridge Volunteer Lawyers Program, the New State Legal Services Program, and the Pro Bono Project of the State Bar of New State will each provide in-kind support for content development and outreach assistance. Our court partners will also provide space, furniture and public access computers to access the content portals at the Self-Help Center. We plan to seek additional funding from outside resources but expect that results from this effort may be limited. Key organizations within New State have lent their approval and support to the project:

Major Partners

The Smith County State Court and the Smith County Magistrate Court support the project and will provide assistance with content development and outreach. Smith County will also provide the physical space, furniture and computers to access the content portals at the Self Help Center. New Bridge Legal Aid has previously collaborated with Smith County Courts to create the Family Law Information Center and self-help materials to support that Center. New Bridge Legal Aid is confident that it can similarly

collaborate successfully with Smith County to create online self-help materials for the consumer law content portals and to provide the outreach and education needed for this demonstration project to succeed.

- The New Bridge Volunteer Lawyers Foundation supports the project and has been integral to the development of the Self-Help Center. AVLf will provide assistance with content development and assistance with outreach. AVLf will also train and provide volunteer lawyers to staff the self help center. This project will build upon our existing collaborations with AVLf, such as the Saturday Attorney Program and the Eviction Defense Project.

- The New State Legal Services Program (NSLSP) and the Pro Bono Project of the State Bar of New State support the project and will also provide support with content development and assistance with outreach in rural New State.

- We anticipate additional project support from other New State courts with self help centers, including Boardwalk County Courts and the Rural Judicial Circuit. In addition, there is support from the project within the national legal services technology community:

- NBLN supports the project and will provide the technical expertise necessary to upgrade the user interface of the LegalWeb program site templates.

- New Bridge Legal Aid and NBLN will coordinate with National Legal Aid Developers regarding the production of training modules and user manuals that may be needed to sustain the life of this project beyond the demonstration stage.

- Bob Smith, the Director of the Center for Justice and Innovation at National College of Law lends his support for the project. He will consult with New Bridge Legal Aid regarding the creation of the new interface portals. He will additionally help explore the possibility of pilot project involving students from New State University School of Law.

- Kelly Jones, the LegalWebCalifornia.org coordinator at the California Justice Center supports this project and has agreed to provide input regarding the creation of the new interface portals.

Innovation/Replication/Sustainability

A major priority for this demonstration project is to develop the content portals so that national legal services community can easily modify the major components for use in their own states. The A2J interviews can be easily modified by other programs to conform to their state laws. The videos will be designed, as much as possible, so that the actors give general topical information. More state specific information will be given through inserted text. This will enable other programs to modify the videos for their own use and will assist with maintenance as well. The upgrade to the LegalWeb template will have universal applicability to other programs using the LegalWeb template. As with all technology development on the LegalWeb statewide website template, this new portal interface would be available after this pilot project to all 28 LegalWeb states to use.

We selected consumer law not only because they will greatly serve our own New State residents, but also because the content can be easily modified to assist eligible clients nationwide. With the onset of

the recession, it is clear that self-help consumer law forms are a priority for many legal services programs nationwide. Over 15 programs have uploaded either consumer or tenant forms to the LawHelp Interactive server. We believe that our foreclosure content will be particularly useful to other non-judicial foreclosure states. Of the ten states with the highest foreclosure rates, eight (8) have non-judicial foreclosure. There are currently no document assembly projects addressing non-judicial foreclosure.

This project will build on the work of previous TIG grants, including the national LSXML project and the LegalWeb 2.0 rebuild. Additionally, there are many other consumer document assembly templates on the LawHelp Interactive server that can be replicated for use in this project, including an A2J debt collection guide from Illinois, landlord-tenant A2J interviews from several states, and HotDocs and A2J interviews creating debt dispute letters and small claims court pleadings. California has created a content portal using existing LegalWeb technology and it will serve as a model for temporary content portals, pending the development of new interface portal by NBLN.

Arkansas, Colorado, Montana and British Columbia have created pro se videos that will serve as models for New Bridge Legal Aid's new self help videos. We believe that New Bridge Legal Aid—working in tandem with its collaborative partners—has the expertise and knowledge to complete and sustain this project. Alison Walker is an attorney and template developer with New Bridge Legal Aid who has created over 70 HotDocs templates over the past four years. She has successfully programmed three complex A2J interviews that are designed to be translated into Spanish. Her article, *Setting Up an Automated Document Assembly Program*, was published in the *LSTechie Journal* at www.eJustice.org on December 19, 2005. In her capacity as content manager of our statewide website, Ms. Walker regularly works with the LegalWeb template and authors resources for individuals with low literacy.