

**ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT LSC'S STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE OPERATIONS AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**JANUARY 2015**

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The following is an overview of actions LSC has undertaken to date to implement the three goals and related initiatives identified in LSC's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan.

**Goal No. 1: Maximize the Availability, Quality, and Effectiveness of Legal Services**  
**(Strategic Plan pp. 5-11)**

***Initiative One: Identify, promote, and spread best practices in meeting the civil legal needs of the poor***

- 1) Highlighted best practices at LSC's quarterly board meetings, White House forums, and 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events. Captured presentations on video, posted links to them on LSC's website, on social media, and included links in *LSC Updates*.
- 2) Updated, improved, and added content to the "LSC Resource Information" portion of LSC website ( <http://lri.lsc.gov/> ), which includes many examples of best practices from LSC grantees and other sources. Recent updates include overviews of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) mapping and organizing data through the use of Google Fusion Tables; these were also subjects of webinars for LSC grantees.
- 3) Expanded LSC's role and presence at the largest conferences for legal aid providers – including the Equal Justice Conference, the annual conference of the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association (NLADA), and the Management Information Exchange (MIE) conference. For example, in 2014, the Office of Compliance and Enforcement (OCE) made three presentations at the NLADA conference, including an overview of the purpose and scope of OCE reviews, recent regulatory and fiscal findings, and Case Service Reports. Similarly, the Office of Program Performance (OPP) staff presented a number of sessions at national conferences, including on technology tips, rural pro bono strategies, innovations in legal services, and rural service of delivery.
- 4) Successfully planned and executed panel discussions at LSC's 40th Anniversary Conference on best practices in non-profit leadership and management (both within LSC grantee community and in the broader non-profit world).
- 5) Revised Capability Assessment Visit Manual to improve and standardize procedures for assessing grant applicants in competitions.

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- 6) Updated "Technology Baselines" for LSC grantees – that is, LSC's recommendations for the basic technology that all grantees should have. New Base Lines discussed at 2015 TIG Conference.
- 7) Used Technology Initiative Grants (TIGs) to replicate and expand successful technology projects developed with prior TIGs.
- 8) In 2014, the Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted 36 onsite grantee visits. Through these visits, OPP educated grantees about best practices and provided practical advice about improving legal practice and program operations. OPP followed up on recommendations from prior visits through the grant application process and through regular contact with grantees.

***Initiative Two: Develop meaningful performance standards and metrics***

- 1) Completed a business process analysis of LSC's collection and use of all information collected from grantees, which will facilitate the development of organizational performance standards and metrics and the standardization of LSC processes.
- 2) Office of Information Technology (OIT) developed plans for a new centralized data and document repository that will be used for enhanced analysis of and reporting on grantee performance.
- 3) Continued progress on the data outcomes collection and analysis project funded by the Public Welfare Foundation. Expanded an inventory of existing outcomes measurement tools used in legal aid to identify best practices. Reported findings from comprehensive survey of LSC grantees regarding their current and desired use of data to improve service delivery, to enhance program management, and to build an effective case for funding. Issued report to summarize project findings to date. Currently developing a tool-kit that grantees will be able to customize for their own operations and needs.
- 4) Improved LSC's process for timely and effectively evaluating and responding to complaints relating to grantee services. OCE developed a set of standard complaint response letters to allow for more standardized and timely responses to complainants. OCE also developed a survey that complainants are asked to complete after a complaint has been closed to provide feedback on the process to determine what, if any, aspects of the complaint process OCE should consider changing. This process will continue in 2015, with additional improvements and revisions to the complaint process and related survey.

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- 5) Developed and implemented performance standards for LSC staff as part of an updated and expanded performance management system.
- 6) Updated comprehensive, multi-year analysis of Grant Activity Reports (begun in 2013), allowing comparisons of cases closed by each LSC grantee against median for all grantees and against results for each other grantee.

***Initiative Three: Provide legal practice and operational support to improve measurably the quality of civil legal services to the poor***

- 1) Continued to use program visits by OPP to educate grantees about best practices and to provide practical advice about improving legal practice and program operations.
- 2) Expanded collection of useful practice and operational tips on the LSC Resource Information section of LSC's website.
- 3) Continued to host and facilitate quarterly webinars featuring staff of the Federal Trade Commission's Bureau of Consumer Protection. The webinars, developed for LSC grantees, provide substantive training on consumer protection issues relevant to legal aid programs and identify free resources for grantees to access. Participation in the webinars has grown from 44 in February 2013 to typically more than 125 participants (with a high of 178 participants for the most recent webinar in October 2014).
- 4) Used the competitive TIG program to promote improvements in practice and service delivery. In 2014 LSC awarded 38 TIG grants. For example:

Two projects funded through LSC's TIG program recently were named finalists for the Hague Institute for the Internationalisation of Law's (HiiL's) 2014 Innovating Justice Awards. These awards encourage innovations across the justice sector by promoting successful ideas and initiatives to legal professionals around the world.

Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut's Online Advocacy Simulation for Self-Represented Parties was the top online vote-getter in HiiL's "Innovative Ideas" category. The Connecticut project uses gaming technology to provide self-represented litigants with advocacy experience before going to court and attempting to meet their own legal needs. The project was also recently the subject of an in-depth feature in the *Hartford Courant*. Connecticut is working closely with NuLawLab at Northeastern University School of Law on this project.

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The A2J Author software application (funded through a partnership with Idaho Legal Aid Services) is a finalist in Hiil's "Successful Innovations" category. LSC has funded A2J Author in multiple TIG cycles, and nearly 2.5 million unrepresented people have now used interviews designed in A2J to create court forms and other legal documents. The current A2J TIGs focus on transitioning the software to an HTML5/JavaScript cloud application and incorporating simple native document assembly within the tool.

LSC highlighted these initiatives at the 2015 TIG Conference.

- 5) Continued to add content to LSC's Tech Blog, providing a channel for technology leadership in the legal services community.
- 6) Developed a competitive leadership development grant program to enhance quality of grantee leadership. Program will be rolled out in early 2015.

***Other Activities to Promote Goal 1:***

- 1) Closed out all Government Accountability Office recommendations, eliminating a potential impediment to LSC funding. This is the first time in seven years that LSC has not been operating with open GAO recommendations.
- 2) Initiated the competitive Pro Bono Innovation Fund (PBIF) grant program, awarding grants to 11 programs.
- 3) Initiated the Midwest Legal Disaster Coordination Project with private funding. Reviewed five proposals and made two awards in Iowa and Nebraska. Staff continued to monitor grants made with funds for relief from Hurricane Sandy.
- 4) Continued expanding outreach to Members of Congress (MOCs) to increase prospects for LSC's funding. In 2014, 51 MOCs provided quotes for LSC press releases regarding TIG and PBIF grants and 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary statements for the Congressional Record. Seven MOCs contributed multiple quotes. Likewise, in 2014, seven MOCs and 60 congressional staff members attended LSC events (Board meetings, White House Forum, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary conference, and press conferences).
- 5) Made additional improvements to LSC's formal budget request to Congress, LSC's Annual Report, and LSC's By the Numbers (formerly LSC's Fact Book) to make a stronger case for funding.

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- 6) OCE and OLA developed and implemented a training program on the requirements of 45 CFR Part 1612 (Restrictions on Lobbying and Certain Other Activities). This training was provided to OCE staff, one LSC grantee, and to an audience at the Annual NLADA Conference in November.
- 7) Conducted six Executive Director Orientation (EDO) sessions (combination of webinars and in person). During 2012 OCE conducted four sessions (two in person and two via webinar), and during 2013 OCE conducted ten sessions (one in person and nine via webinar).
- 8) The Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) revised Part 1614 (Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) Regulations), Part 1626 (restrictions on legal assistance to aliens), and Part 1613 (criminal representation in tribal courts); developed a rulemaking agenda; and implemented the new internal risk management committee, including enhanced reporting to the Board on risk management.
- 9) In 2014, LSC's Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) received 241 applications (new and renewal) from attorneys at 78 grantee offices in 40 states and Puerto Rico. The average law school debt for first-year applicants was nearly \$148,000. LSC provided loan repayment assistance to 181 of those 241 applicants, including 74 new LRAP participants.
- 10) OIT developed a new "Find Legal Aid" application for LSC's website that incorporates maps and simplifies searching. The new application was supplemented by a text messaging version developed by Frontline SMS.
- 11) Continued to improve OCE's report-writing process for onsite compliance reviews to provide more timely, clear, and effective communication of findings and required corrective actions. Engaged consultants to revise OCE's report structure to allow for more timely and streamlined reporting of OCE findings. Additionally, engaged consultants to evaluate OCE's onsite review processes and to provide recommendations for standardization and adoption of best practices.
- 12) Provided training on report writing and interview skills to a significant number of OPP program counsel. Program counsel held an all-day session to develop improvements for Program Quality Visit reports and related communications. Report templates and protocols were developed.
- 13) OPP Program Counsel worked with four programs that needed special assistance with improving quality and followed up on recommendations from program quality visits.

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**Goal No. 2: Become a Leading Voice for Access to Justice and Quality Legal Assistance in the United States (Strategic Plan pp. 11-15)**

***Initiative One: Provide a comprehensive communications program around a compelling message***

- 1) Planned, hosted, and obtained media coverage of successful three-day conference attended by more than 500 people (including senior government officials and leaders from the business, academic, and non-profit sectors) to mark LSC's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Developed and managed list of more than 4,000 contacts for the conference and development database, coordinated outreach and logistics for more than 100 conference speakers, and drafted program catalog.
- 2) Continued active participation in Voices for Civil Justice, the "communications hub" funded by the Public Welfare Foundation and the Kresge Foundation, which is using survey research and communications expertise to expand public awareness of the role and importance of civil legal aid in the United States. LSC President serves on the hub's advisory committee. This project is a collaboration with a number of stakeholders, including the National Center for State Courts, the U.S. Department of Justice's Access to Justice Initiative, and the American Bar Association.
- 3) Organized a well-attended briefing by State Supreme Court Justices in a House of Representatives hearing room to educate congressional staff about the impact of pro se litigants on courts.
- 4) Expanded media coverage in both national and local markets. Targeted press releases to local markets to highlight, for example, TIG awards and Pro Bono Innovation Fund awards. Placed grantee op-eds in 10 local papers and legal publications.
- 5) Recent media highlights include: LSC President was featured in *New York Times* story on civil legal aid that touched on many of LSC's key message points; Chairman was interviewed by *American Lawyer* editor; robust media coverage of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary conference; substantial coverage of Board meeting panels and awards (particularly Albany and Des Moines); and regular coverage in *National Law Journal* and other legal papers.
- 6) The Chairman and the President of LSC continued to seek and accept opportunities to speak to multiple audiences – such as law students, law firms, bar associations, community leaders, and state access-to-justice convenings.

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- 7) Hired GRPA Communications Manager and Writer to improve consistency of messaging and tone across all of LSC's communications outlets.
- 8) Continued refinements to LSC's communications strategy. Further revised the annual budget submission to Congress, LSC's Annual Report (more fully multimedia), LSC's By the Numbers (formerly LSC Fact Book), and *LSC Updates* (including embedding videos and multiple links) to present a compelling case for legal aid and to communicate LSC's commitment to innovation, collaboration, strong management, and prudent stewardship of public funds. Continued upgrades to publication design to make them more user-friendly.
- 9) Further expanded the use of video, charts, graphics, and social media in LSC's communications to promote LSC activity and practices.
- 10) Used social media to amplify LSC's message. Created Facebook page with more than 500 followers. Twitter followers grew from 1,200 at beginning of 2013 to more than 2,600 at end of 2013, and more than 3,700 currently. Likewise, enhanced video capacity to record Board forums affords access to media, grantees, and equal justice community. This made robust coverage of White House forum possible, even though it was closed to the press.
- 11) Grew LSC's "story bank" documenting grantees' successes in serving clients from ten at beginning of 2013 to more than 1,000 stories, organized by state to facilitate targeted communications with local connections. Posted more than 100 of the most compelling stories to website, arranged by state. In the process of adding new stories and arranging all by Congressional district.
- 12) Re-designing and expanding capabilities of LSC's website to integrate all four websites and create more user-friendly taxonomy. Developed new website pages to focus on 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events, donations and development, Best Practices, and Pro Bono Task Force.

***Initiative Two: Build a business case for funding civil legal services***

- 1) Expanded library of studies of the economic benefits of legal aid for communities and for government. Cited the results of these studies in LSC's budget request to Congress for FY2015 (pp. 2-3)
- 2) LSC President participated in meetings of private foundations convened by the Public Welfare Foundation to explain the benefits of civil legal aid and was a panelist at the annual meeting of the Council on Foundations.
- 3) Used surveys of grantees to obtain evidence of the impact of funding reductions on client service. Publicized the results and used them in support of funding requests.

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***Initiative Three: Recruit and enlist new messengers and sources of funds to increase private support for civil legal services***

- 1) Developed a comprehensive case statement for private funding for LSC.
- 2) Secured contributions or pledges of more than \$2.9 million from 18 leading law firms. Introduced naming opportunities for projects, and conducted first year-end personal appeal. Developed specific project outlines for funding (e.g., fellowships, technology, leadership training).
- 3) Secured \$65,500 in sponsorships for the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary conference.
- 4) Secured a \$1.2 million 2-year grant from the Margaret Cargill Foundation for disaster preparedness and response. This grant substantially expands LSC's ability to assist LSC grantees and their clients to respond to disasters. By way of comparison, in 2013, as the result of the enactment of the Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, LSC established a grant program using appropriated funds and distributed \$874,041 to four LSC grantees. LSC made additional Sandy-related grants totaling \$295,379 using existing disaster relief resources.
- 5) Continued convening panels of justices and judges to address access to justice issues at quarterly Board meetings. Panel videos posted on LSC's website and highlighted in *LSC Updates*. Continued working with individual judges on access to justice issues. Promptly provided information on messaging to state Chief Judges and Justices, as requested.
- 6) Continued working with the Conference of Chief Justices and the National Association of Women Judges to encourage judges to address the access to justice crisis in America.
- 7) Continued work with the Public Welfare Foundation to encourage private foundations to provide support for civil legal aid.
- 8) Planned and executed donor cultivation events and receptions in Austin and New York City.
- 9) Secured six exhibitors and sponsors for the 2015 TIG conference, doubling the 2014 number.
- 10) Identified former and current Members of Congress to be included in events (e.g., Board meetings, White House Forum, 40th Anniversary events).

***Initiative Four: Institutional advancement and grantee development support***



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- 1) Significantly expanded development and institutional advancement activities. Hired Development Associate to support Chief Development Officer. Coordinated activities of Institutional Advancement Committee (IAC) and IAC's Communications Subcommittee.
- 2) Launched <http://lsc40.lsc.gov/> campaign website, wrote web text for all pages, and integrated online giving into <http://www.lsc.gov/> and <http://lsc40.lsc.gov/>
- 3) Recruited and expanded list of messengers for civil legal aid through the 40th Anniversary conference and related cultivation activities. Continued to identify candidates for Leaders Council, honorary committees, and advisory groups.
- 4) Coordinated and executed more than 40 development meetings, including major cultivation events in Austin and New York City (80+ attendees).
- 5) Created and implemented a database for development purposes to track prospects, interactions, and gifts. Expanded database of donor prospects, adding more than 120 approved prospects. Integrated development prospects into Board meeting invitation lists for all 2014 meetings.
- 6) Registered LSC as an approved fundraiser in states requiring registration.
- 7) Continued developing policies and procedures for gift acceptance and related activities.

***Initiative Five: Enhanced Strategic Collaboration***

- 1) Continued working with the Department of Justice's Access to Justice Initiative and the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable to expand awareness of civil legal aid in federal government agencies and to increase sources of funding for legal aid using grants by federal agencies that serve clients of legal aid programs. LSC President is a member of the roundtable.
- 2) Continued strong working relationships with state IOLTA programs and state bar foundations funding civil legal aid. LSC President participated in and spoke at biannual meetings of IOLTA funders and state bar foundations. Consulted with state funders on data collection and reporting, grant applications, and legal aid program oversight.
- 3) Collaborated regularly with the American Bar Association's leadership, Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants, Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, and Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives.
- 4) LSC President participated in and spoke at multiple annual convenings of state access to justice leaders.

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- 5) Coordinated regularly with the Conference of Chief Justices.
- 6) Participated actively in Voices for Civil Justice, the communications hub.
- 7) Established new relationships with private foundations interested in funding civil legal aid.
- 8) Established and expanded relationships with private foundations funding civil legal aid.

**Goal No. 3: Ensure Superior Fiscal Management (Strategic Plan pp. 15-17)**

- 1) LSC received a clean audit of its FY2014 annual financial statements with no management letter.
- 2) Revitalized the Technical Assistance Review (TAR) process. TARs are provided to LSC grantees that have not had a full OCE review recently, as well as grantees that have undergone leadership transitions or are experiencing difficulties. TARs focus on subjects such as intake, accurate case tracking and reporting, segregation of fiscal duties, bank reconciliations, and complying with lobbying and other restrictions on activities. Each TAR includes customized feedback and/or training at the end of each review day. During 2014, LSC conducted 3 TARs; by comparison, in both 2012 and 2013, LSC conducted one TAR per year.
- 3) Conducted training on LSC's budgeting process for new and existing budget-responsible staff members to help them better understand the process and their responsibilities.
- 4) OCE hired a Deputy Director for Fiscal Compliance in order to improve and standardize fiscal oversight functions. The new Deputy Director for Fiscal Compliance met with each OCE Fiscal Compliance Analyst (FCA) to understand the various tasks and responsibilities performed by OCE fiscal staff and identify opportunities to improve various fiscal compliance-related work processes. Additionally, the Deputy Director for Fiscal Compliance will continue to collaborate with the OIG to streamline and implement procedures that enhance the audited financial statement review and A-50 referral processes.
- 5) OCE continued to revise and improve upon the Fiscal Compliance Analysts' (FCA) review of grantees' grant applications during the LSC Grants competition process. The FCAs revised the fiscal application and corresponding evaluation guide and scoring system. The Deputy Director for Fiscal Compliance and FCAs will continue to work on the development of grant application questions and on the review and assessment of answers and materials provided during that process. OCE interviewed candidates and continues to actively recruit to fill two Fiscal Compliance Analyst (FCA) vacancies.

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- 6) Under leadership of Vice President for Grants Management (VPGM), the Directors OPP and OCE continue to focus on maximizing communication, coordination, and cooperation. VPGM, OPP, and OCE meet monthly to share information.
- 7) LSC's President and the Inspector General meet every two weeks. OCE, along with OPP and the VP for Grants Management, continued to hold monthly meetings with representatives of the OIG staff to discuss issues of concern and share information.
- 8) Further improved sharing of information between OIG and management that is relevant to grant applications, grant terms, and special grant conditions.
- 9) Continued to improve sharing of information between management and OIG to expedite investigations, avoid duplicative work, and provide early notice to management of potential problems with grantees.
- 10) OCE, along with members of the OIG staff, continued to make quarterly presentations to the Audit Committee of the LSC Board of Directors regarding fiscal oversight and communications between OIG and LSC management. Improved quantity and quality of reporting to the Audit Committee.
- 11) Office of Information Technology worked to implement new software to ensure that all LSC staff have access to LSC information and documentation relating to grantees.
- 12) Revised the Whistleblower, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and other employee policies and consolidated on LSC eWeb (intraWeb).
- 13) Implemented new internal Risk Management Committee, including enhanced reporting to the Board on risk management.
- 14) Development Unit initiated quarterly meetings with OFAS to reconcile gift records.
- 15) Continued using outside reviewers in the grant application process to ensure objectivity in the process.
- 16) Continued rotating review of grant applications by Program Counsel to ensure objectivity in the process.
- 17) Continued the use of special grant conditions and short-term funding to address fiscal concerns.
- 18) Continued planning overhaul of grants management system, including comprehensive business process analysis, to improve access to and management of all information LSC maintains on grantees. Expert to choose new grants management software in mid-2015.