

Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grants (TIG)
Sample Letter of Intent for TIG

Category: Technology Improvement Project
Amount Requested: \$25,000

Are you also requesting funding for this project through LSC's Pro Bono Innovation Fund program? **No** Are you applying for a Pro Bono Innovation Fund that complements this grant? **No**

Description of Project - *Briefly describe what type of project will be undertaken, such as a technology assessment, business process analysis or technology planning process. Describe how this will lead to a plan for improving the program's operations. Also, discuss who will be responsible for carrying out the activities, such as by internal staff or an outside contractor.*

Legal Aid Organization (LAO) has consistently made efforts to align its technology initiatives with its overall programmatic strategic planning efforts. Even with these efforts and given the fast-paced evolution of technology in general, it is challenging to fully understand and determine the best options for supporting existing efforts and expanding on and implementing new technologies to improve the program's efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, to improve the program's efficiency and effectiveness, and to make information and services more accessible to applicants for LAO's services and its clients, LAO is requesting funding to complete a technology assessment of its overall use of technology. Technologies to be assessed include the following: network infrastructure, internet services and alternatives, software, hardware, data backups, security and privacy, online efforts to provide legal information and assistance, staff technological roles and responsibilities, staff technology training, technology carriers/vendors and contracts, technology policies and procedures, budgeting, remote data access, management of mobile devices and more. LAO proposes to hire an experienced consulting firm that has experience assessing technology efforts in legal services programs and/or non-profit organizations. LAO staff, including senior management, technology staff, supervising and managing attorneys throughout the organization and "technology point" staff persons from each outlying office will assist in the assessment. LAO technology staff, senior management and LAO Technology Committee members will assist in the planning and implementation of recommendations from the technology assessment. LAO expects the final assessment report from the consultant to include not only an assessment of LAO's existing technology, but recommendations regarding areas of improvement to the program's current use of technologies. Implementation of these recommendations will improve the program's ability to support staff, applicants, clients and stakeholders.

Major Benefits - *Describe the promise that the project has to increase or improve services to clients and/or enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of program operations. To the extent feasible, discuss both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of these benefits.*

A technology assessment will provide LAO with a comprehensive view of the program's current computing environment. It will provide a broad perspective on hardware and software available, staff technology skills, technology budgets, vendor relationships and commitments, technology procedures and policies, remote data access and much more. This perspective and knowledge will help identify gaps in current technologies and determine whether any critical procedures or policies are missing, or new initiatives are needed. It will identify where LAO might best spend technology training dollars, including identifying additional hard technology skills needed by LAO technology staff and/or skills needed from consultants. It will inform decisions including the possible need to change software, hardware or systems currently being

used to support the program's work. For example, LAO is considering moving additional services and technology to the cloud within the next few years. This assessment will help LAO determine whether such a move is wise and best practices were it to do so. This assessment will inform discussions of the risks and benefits of all options. Also, efficiencies created in improvements to technologies used by staff will have a positive effect on LAO applicants and clients.

Applications for services will be processed more quickly and accurately, and identification of services appropriate for a client's legal issues may be more efficiently identified. Information and services available to applicants and clients online will be improved upon based on the recommendations made as a result of the assessment. In 2017, the state's Access to Justice community, with funding provided by the National Center for State Courts, completed a statewide assessment of services available throughout the state with the goal of providing 100 percent meaningful access to the state's population. LAO had several staff who participated in the Justice for All project which created a strategic plan to meet its' goals. Stakeholders followed up and requested funding to implement recommendations in the strategic plan. LAO will work closely with stakeholders as it pursues implementation of recommendations from the assessment to ensure its maximizing use of resources and minimizing duplication of efforts. Implementation recommendations provided in the assessment will positively affect LAO' technology strategy, technical infrastructure and the program's overall technology investment.

Estimated Costs - *Start by stating the amount of funding you are seeking from the TIG program, and then give the estimated total project cost, summarizing the anticipated costs of the major components of the project. List anticipated contributions, both in-kind and monetary, of all partners involved in the project.*

Legal Aid Organization (LAO) is requesting \$25,000 from the TIG program for this project and estimates the total project cost would be \$35,500. From the \$25,000 received from TIG, LAO would allocate:

\$14,000 to the consultant who would perform the technology assessment;
\$7,000 to a consultant who would assist with implementation of recommendations flowing from the assessment;
\$4,000 would be allocated to support LAO technology staff time necessary to support the assessment and implement prioritized recommendations.

LAO would contribute \$6,000 of staff time to assist with the assessment and \$4,000 of in-kind resources (including benefits).

Implementation - *Discuss the organization's commitment to implement the plan or recommendations that result from the project, including probable financing sources.*

LAO is committed to implementing recommendations. This project will be used as our foundation to begin restructuring our technology needs. Currently, we commit at least \$100,000 a year to new equipment and another \$30,000 to training. With a plan that lays out our direction, we can systematically tap our own existing budget to implement projects.

Technology staff will meet with additional staff to prioritize recommendations which will be prioritized using the "Action Priority Matrix". This will help LAO prioritize work based on

impact and effort (including human and financial resources available). The matrix uses four quadrants in which to plot activities. “Quick Wins” are high impact, low effort. Technology Unit staff will accomplish these tasks with help from staff and volunteers. “Major Projects” category (high impact, high effort) recommendations will be prioritized by budget and time available to complete projects having the highest impact on overall strategic goals. “Fill Ins”, or low impact, low effort tasks will be addressed “as time is available” by tech unit staff. The technology budget will be reviewed to ensure allocation of funds needed to implement high priority projects.

Other potential funding sources include: Community Foundations in our service area that are interested in funding infrastructure upgrades to enhance client services; the State Bar Foundation, which provides grants to organizations working towards providing 100 percent access to justice to state residents; and LAO will consider partnering with the State Judicial Branch to apply for funding from the State Justice Institute. A joint project may be identified that will align with funding available through the State Justice Institute. A technology assessment will provide LAO with information to more effectively allocate technology resources throughout the program.