

Legal Services Corporation Technology Initiative Grants

Notice

Request for Letters of Intent to Apply for 2020 Grant Funding

Issued: February 7, 2020 (Revised: March 26, 2020)

Original Submission Deadline: Monday, March 16, 2020 by 11:59 p.m. EDT

New Submission Deadline: Friday, May 15, 2020 by 11:59 p.m. EDT

Submit online at: <http://lscgrants.lsc.gov>

TIG Application Process: <https://www.lsc.gov/grants-grantee-resources/our-grant-programs/tig#Apply>

**Legal Services Corporation
Technology Initiative Grant Program
Request for Letters of Intent to Apply for 2020 Grant Funding**

I. Summary

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) issues this Notice describing the criteria governing submission and processing of Letters of Intent (LOI) to Apply for Technology Initiative Grants (TIG). Since LSC's TIG program was established in 2000, LSC has made over 750 grants totaling nearly \$70 million. This grant program funds technology tools that help achieve LSC's goal of increasing the quantity and quality of legal services available to eligible persons. Projects funded under the TIG program develop, test, and replicate innovative technologies that can enable grant recipients and state justice communities to improve low-income persons' access to high-quality legal assistance through an integrated and well-managed technology system.

II. General Information

The Legal Services Corporation awards TIG funds through an open, competitive, and impartial selection process. All prospective applicants for 2020 TIG funds must submit a Letter of Intent to Apply prior to submitting a formal application. The format and contents of the LOI should conform to the requirements specified below in Section IV.

Through the LOI process, LSC selects those projects that have a reasonable chance of success in the competitive grant process based on LSC's analysis of the project description and other information provided in the LOI. LSC will solicit full proposals for the selected projects.

LSC Requirements

TIG funds are subject to all LSC requirements, including the requirements of the Legal Services Corporation Act (LSC Act) 42 U.S.C. §§ 2996–2996k; LSC regulations at 45 CFR Parts 1600–1644; LSC's applicable appropriations acts; and any other applicable laws, rules, regulations, policies, guidelines, instructions, and other directives from LSC, both procedural and substantive, including, but not limited to, [the LSC Audit Guide for Recipients and Auditors](#), [the Accounting Guide for LSC Recipients](#), and [the CSR Handbook](#).

You will also comply with any new or amended LSC laws, regulations, or guidance that become effective before or during the grant term. LSC provides a number of statutory and regulatory compliance guidance materials for your reference, and you are always encouraged to contact us with compliance questions or requests for technical assistance.

Before submitting a Letter of Intent to Apply, applicants should be familiar with the distinction between and requirements for LSC-funded subgrants under [45 CFR Part 1627](#) and LSC-funded procurements under 45 CFR [Parts 1630](#) and [1631](#). LSC has provided additional material about the distinction between subgrants and procurements in the chart

and examples provided at pages 10,276–10,277 of the Federal Register Notice at [82 FR 37,327 \(Aug. 10, 2017\)](#)

For additional information and resources regarding TIG compliance, including subgrants, third-party contracting, conflicts of interest, grant modification procedures, and special TIG terms and conditions, see [LSC’s TIG compliance webpage](#).

Eligible Applicants

Only current LSC basic field grant recipients awarded at least a one-year basic field grant term are eligible to apply for a TIG.

LSC will not award a TIG to any applicant that is not in good standing on any existing TIG projects. Specifically:

- Applicants must be up to date according to the milestone schedule on all existing TIG projects prior to submitting an LOI or have requested and received an adjustment to the original milestone schedule.
- LSC will not award a TIG to any applicant that has not made satisfactory progress on prior TIGs. LSC recipients that have had a previous TIG terminated for failure to provide timely reports and submissions are not eligible to receive a TIG for three years after their earlier grant was terminated.

This policy does not apply to applicants that worked with LSC to end a TIG early after an unsuccessful project implementation resulting from technology limitations, a failed proof of concept, or other reasons outside of the applicant’s control.

Funding Availability

The amount of TIG funding available for upcoming awards is \$4 million as provided by the 2020 fiscal year appropriation to LSC from Congress. In 2019, 30 TIG projects received funding with a median funding amount of \$103,739. (See [TIG’s past awards webpage](#) for more information on past grants).

Collaborations

The TIG program encourages applicants to reach out to and include in TIG projects others interested in access to justice – such as the courts, bar associations, pro bono projects, libraries, and social service agencies. Partnerships can enhance the reach, effectiveness, and sustainability of many projects.

Grant Categories

LSC will accept projects in three application categories:

- 1) Innovations and Enhancements
- 2) Replication and Adaptation
- 3) Technology Improvement Project

Grant Category 1: Innovations and Enhancements

The Innovations and Enhancements Category is designated for projects that: (1) implement new or innovative approaches for using technology in legal services delivery; or (2) enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of existing technologies so that they may be better used to increase the quality and quantity of services to clients.

LSC recommends a minimum amount for funding requests in this category of \$40,000, but projects with lower budgets will be considered. There is no maximum amount for TIG funding requests that are within the total appropriation for TIG. Although there is no funding limit or matching requirement for applications in this category, additional weight is given to projects with strong support, including financial support, from partners. Proposals for initiatives with broad applicability and/or that would have impact throughout the legal services community are strongly encouraged.

Grant Category 2: Replication and Adaptation

The Replication and Adaptation category is for proposals that seek to replicate, adapt, or provide added value to the work of prior technology projects. This includes, but is not limited to, the implementation and improvement of tested methodologies and technologies from previous TIG projects. Applicants may also replicate technology projects funded outside of the TIG program, including sectors outside the legal aid community, such as social services organizations, the broader non-profit community, and the private sector. LSC recommends a minimum amount for funding requests in this category of \$40,000, but projects with lower budgets will be considered. There is no maximum amount for TIG funding requests that are within the total appropriation for TIG.

Project proposals in the Replication and Adaptation category may include, but are not limited to:

A: Replication of Previous TIG Projects

LSC requires that any original software developed with TIG funding be available to other legal services programs at little or no cost. Applicants should look to previous successful TIG projects and determine how they could be replicated at a reduced cost from the original project, and/or how they could be expanded and/or enhanced. Projects where original software or content has already been created lend themselves to replication, and LSC encourages programs to look to these projects to see how they could benefit the delivery systems in their state.

B: Automated Form Replication

In 2013, participants at LSC's Tech Summit concluded that one of the five main components for implementing a strategy to achieve 100% access to legal assistance includes "[d]eploying sophisticated document assembly applications to support the creation of legal documents...." This is as true today as it was when LSC issued the report in 2013.

There are many forms available that organizations can replicate in other jurisdictions. Despite differences from state to state in content and format, forms can be edited for use in different jurisdictions with less effort, hence at a lower cost, than developing the form from

scratch. Even if a form differs from one state to another, the information needed to populate a form will, for the most part, be similar – e.g., the names of the plaintiff and defendant. Much of the development time needed is to create the branching logic for these interview questions, which can be shared across jurisdictions and platforms. LSC strongly recommends thinking through these replication considerations before submitting an LOI for an automated forms project.

The number of document assembly platforms available to the legal services community has expanded in recent years. HotDocs and A2J Author are offered through [LawHelp Interactive](#), and [A2J Author](#) also supports document assembly on its own. [Docassemble](#) is a free, open-source expert system for guided interviews and document assembly developed by a legal aid attorney. [Documate](#) and [Community Lawyer](#) are third-party services that provide interview development tools using Docassemble and offer free options for legal aid organizations. Finally, Tyler Technology's [Odyssey Guide and File](#) is available for projects that partner with court systems using Tyler's case management and efilng products.

C: Replication of Technology Projects in Other Sectors

In addition to replicating other TIG-funded technology projects, LSC encourages replication of proven technologies from non-LSC funded legal aid organizations as well as sectors outside the legal aid community. Ideas for replication may be found through resources and organizations such as the [Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project \(LSNTAP\)](#), the [American Bar Association Center for Innovation](#), international legal aid providers such as the [Legal Services Society of British Columbia](#), [HiiL's Innovating Justice project and Australia's JusticeConnect](#), [Idealware](#) (see the article on [Unleashing Innovation](#)), [NTEN](#), and [TechSoup](#).

Grant Category 3: Technology Improvement Projects

In 2015, LSC updated its publication [Technologies That Should Be in Place in a Legal Aid Office Today](#), sometimes referred to as the LSC Technology Baselines. The updated Baselines demonstrate LSC's commitment to improving the use of technology across its grantee organizations. LSC recognizes that grantees need to have sufficient technology infrastructure in place before they can take on a more innovative TIG project, and this grant category is for applicants that need to improve their basic technology infrastructure. Therefore, only LSC grantees that have not received a TIG award in the last five years (since 2015) are eligible to apply for a Technology Improvement Project. The maximum amount for funding requests in this category is \$25,000 to conduct a technology assessment, business process improvement, and/or a technology planning project.

Many legal aid organizations do not have internal expertise or capacity to take on such projects. An award for a Technology Improvement Project is intended to provide funding for appropriate consulting services to conduct the technology assessment, business process improvement and/or technology planning process. The project should result in a plan for the organization to make the investments needed to improve its use of technology in the delivery of legal services.

III. Areas of Interest

For 2020, LSC has two areas of interest under which programs are encouraged to submit proposals for innovative technology approaches. The designation of these areas does not limit the scope of proposals in which LSC is interested.

Projects that develop national technology solutions related to federal laws affecting the clients of LSC recipients

Federal law solutions that are user-friendly, technology-driven, and centralized can be particularly valuable given their ability to provide legal information and resources for low-income individuals across the country. Applicants should consider how these solutions can provide meaningful assistance to low-income people on a more significant scale using features such as thorough screening tools and document assembly.

The [Upsolve Chapter 7 bankruptcy application](#) is the most prominent example of this type of centralized resource. Upsolve begins with a screener and questionnaire to determine if the user is a good candidate for Chapter 7 bankruptcy and then guides them through the process of providing the information necessary for their discharge application. Upsolve also benefits from offering a single point of entry that appears prominently in most consumer bankruptcy search results on Google and other search engines. A recently funded TIG project to Alaska Legal Services Corporation hopes to replicate Upsolve's national platform model to help Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) applicants through the process of their initial application, along with reconsideration and appeals when necessary.

LSC believes that having more high-quality solutions focused on issues that have substantively similar legal resolutions across states could increase the efficiency of the broader service delivery system and ease some of the burden on local providers. Substantive legal areas might include but are not limited to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, FEMA appeals, public and federally subsidized housing, and Medicare.

Projects to take advantage of regulatory changes to improve access to justice

Jurisdictions around the country are recognizing that statutes, regulations, and court rules can often impede access to justice for self-represented litigants. Recent examples of actions to correct this are H. B. 378 in Utah that creates the "Regulatory Sandbox Program" to allow "a person to temporarily test an innovative product or service on a limited basis without otherwise being licensed or authorized to act under the laws of the state" and the amendment to Michigan Court Rule 8.115 to permit the use of smartphones in courtrooms.

LSC's TIG Program would like to encourage this movement by providing funding for technology projects that take advantage of such changes. For example, a project might facilitate the introduction of evidence from a smart phone into the record of a case. Applicants should discuss how their projects will build on recent regulatory changes in their jurisdiction to improve access to justice and how it might serve as an example for other jurisdictions.

IV. Specific Letter of Intent to Apply Requirements

One Project per Letter of Intent

Applicants may submit multiple LOIs, and a separate LOI should be submitted for each project for which funding is sought.

Letter Requirements and Format

Letters of Intent must be submitted using the online system at <http://lscgrants.lsc.gov>. Additional instructions and information can be found [on the TIG website](#). This system will walk you through the process of creating a simple two or three-page LOI. You will start by picking the category in which you are applying from a drop-down list. After that, you will be taken to a form to be submitted. You will start by filling in the amount you are requesting from TIG, followed by two questions concerning whether you are also applying to LSC's Pro Bono Innovation Fund for funding related to this project.

Then, for the categories **Innovations and Enhancements** and **Replication and Adaptation**, you will have the following five fields:

1. **Description of Project (maximum 2500 characters)** - Briefly describe the basic elements of the project, including any specific technologies the project will develop or implement, how they will be developed, how they will operate, the function they will serve within the legal services delivery system, their expected impact, and other similar factors. (Only the impact should be highlighted here; more details about the system's benefits should be provided below).
2. **Major Benefits (maximum 2500 characters)** - Describe the specific ways in which the project will increase or improve services to clients and/or enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of legal aid organization operations. To the extent feasible, discuss both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of these benefits.
3. **Estimated Costs (maximum 1500 characters)** – This should include the amount of funding you are seeking from the TIG program, followed by the estimated total project cost, summarizing the anticipated costs of the major components of the project. List anticipated contributions, both in-kind and monetary, from all partners involved in the project.
4. **Major Partners (maximum 1500 characters)** - Identify organizations that are expected to be important partners. Specify the role(s) each partner will play.
5. **Innovation/Replication (maximum 1500 characters)** - Identify how and why the proposed project is new and innovative and/or is a replication or adaptation of a previous technology project. Identify how and why the proposed project can significantly benefit and/or be replicated by other legal services providers and/or the legal services community at large.

For the category **Technology Improvement Project**, you will have these four fields:

1. **Description of Project (maximum 2500 characters)** - 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 internal staff or an outside contractor.
2. **Major Benefits (maximum 2500 characters)** - 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.
3. **Estimated Costs (maximum 1500 characters)** - 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.
4. **Implementation (maximum 1500 characters)** – Discuss the organization's commitment to implement the plan or recommendations that result from the project, including probable financing sources.

Letter of Intent to Apply Deadline

Letters of Intent to Apply must be completed and submitted into the online system at <http://lscgrants.lsc.gov> no later than **11:59 p.m. EDT, Monday, May 15, 2020**. The online system may experience technical difficulties due to heavy traffic on the day of the deadline. Applicants are strongly encouraged to complete LOI submissions as early as possible.

LSC will not accept applications submitted after the application deadline unless an extension of the deadline has been approved in advance (see Waiver Authority). Therefore, allow sufficient time for online submission.

LSC will provide confirmation via email upon receipt of the completed electronic submission of each LOI. Keep this email as verification that the program's LOI was submitted and received. If no confirmation email is received, inquire about the status of your LOI at Techgrants@lsc.gov.

Selection Process

LSC will initially review all LOIs to determine whether they conform to the required format and clearly present all of the required elements listed and described above. Failure to meet these requirements may result in rejection of the LOI.

LSC will review each LOI to identify those projects likely to improve access to justice, or to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of legal services provided by grantees. The LOI will also be reviewed to determine the extent to which the project proposed is clearly described and well thought out, offers major benefits to our targeted client community, is cost-effective, involves all the parties needed to make it successful and sustainable, and is either innovative or a cost-effective replication of prior successful

projects. LSC will invite those applicants that satisfy these criteria to submit full applications.

Next Steps for Successful Applicants

LSC will notify successful applicants by June 12, 2020. Successful applicants will have until 11:59 p.m. EDT, Friday, July 24, 2020, to complete and submit full applications in the online application system.

Waiver Authority

LSC, upon its own initiative or when requested, may waive provisions in this Notice at its sole discretion. Waivers may be granted only for requirements that are discretionary and not mandated by statute or regulation. Any request for a waiver must set forth the reason for the request and be included in the application. LSC will not consider a request to extend the deadline for a Letter of Intent to Apply unless the extension request is received by LSC prior to the deadline.

Contact Information

For information on the status of a current TIG project, contact **Eric Mathison**, TIG Coordinator/Program Analyst, Telephone: 202.295.1535; Email: emathison@lsc.gov.

For questions about projects in CT, IL, IN, ME, MA, MI, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, WI, WV, VT, contact **David Bonebrake**, Program Counsel, Telephone: 202.295.1547; Email: dbonebrake@lsc.gov.

For questions about projects in AK, AZ, CA, CO, GU, HI, ID, IA, KS, MP, MN, MT, NE, NV, NH, NM, ND, OK, OR, SD, TX, UT, WA, WY, contact **Glenn Rawdon**, Senior Program Counsel, Telephone: 202.295.1552; Email: grawdon@lsc.gov.

For questions about projects in AL, AR, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, MO, NC, PR, SC, TN, VI, VA, contact **Jane Ribadeneyra**, Program Analyst, Telephone: 202.295.1554, Email: ribadeneyraj@lsc.gov.

If you have a general question, please email techgrants@lsc.gov.