

Technology Initiative Grants Program

Congress created LSC's Technology Initiative Grants program in 2000 and continues to fund it through the annual budget process. Thus far, more than \$33 million has been provided. Here are some examples of what that investment has yielded:

- **Legal services Web sites in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.** Those Web sites, nearly all of which were developed with TIG support and templates, provide information such as the locations of LSC-funded programs and their offices, information about *pro bono* and volunteer opportunities, and a range of legal resources and legal information. Surveys show that users of TIG-supported Web sites are highly satisfied: 76 percent find them "easy" or "very easy" to use and 88 percent find the information they provide "easy" or "very easy" to understand.
- **Federal earned-income tax credits for low-income taxpayers.** "I-CAN!"—a tax preparation program created by the Legal Aid Society of Orange County, California, with TIG support—has helped low-income Americans in 45 states secure more than \$31 million in federal earned-income tax credits in 2009. Anyone can file a federal tax return with I-CAN! Residents of California, Michigan, Montana, and New York can use it for state income tax returns as well. "I-CAN!" is available at www.legal-aid.com.
- **105,000 documents for *pro bono* lawyers and *pro se* litigants—people who represent themselves in court.** Using customized templates developed with TIG support, residents of 26 states and U.S. territories have created legal documents required for everything from child support to housing eviction defense claims.
- **Enhanced service and increased efficiency.** TIG grants have provided the means for LSC-funded programs to centralize and streamline basic office functions: answering calls, routing cases, and handling more service requests. For example, over a two year period, Bay Area Legal Services in California handled 71 percent more service requests and the Montana Legal Services Association's intake staff increased productivity by 43 percent. Legal Services of New York City combined 11 case management systems and 12 e-mail systems, laying the groundwork for a single, city-wide system.
- **Partnerships that help leverage limited funds.** In 2009, the TIG program will receive \$330,000 in matching funds from the State Justice Institute to help fund joint projects that focus on access to the courts. Iowa Legal Services describes TIG grants as a "multiplier of new technology funding"—they helped the program secure nearly \$700,000 in funding from other sources.