



LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Office of Program Performance

Final Report

of the

PROGRAM QUALITY VISIT

to

LAND OF LINCOLN

LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION, INC.

Recipient Number: 514050

April 22 - 26, 2013

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**LAND OF LINCOLN
LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION, INC.**

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INTRODUCTION

The Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted a Program Quality Visit (PQV) to Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation (LOLLAF) on April 22 - 26, 2013. The team included Mary-Christy Fisher, OPP Program Counsel who served as the team leader, Janet LaBella, OPP Director, and David Bonebrake, OPP Program Counsel, as well as Patrick ("Mac") McIntyre and Jacquelynne Bowman, who served as LSC Temporary Employees.

Program Quality Visits are designed to give LSC an understanding of a grantee program's operation, in order to determine whether it is providing the highest quality legal services to eligible clients. In conducting its assessment of LOLLAF, the PQV team reviewed documents LSC received from the program, including its most recent LSC grant application, its technology and PAI plans, as well as workforce analysis data, case service reports, and other service reports. The team also reviewed the materials requested from LOLLAF in advance of its visit, including documents relating to the program's needs assessment, intake system, legal work management, advocates' writing samples, board minutes and by-laws, and other administrative materials, as well as the results of a confidential online staff survey. While on site, the team visited all five of LOLLAF's regional offices and spoke with all of the program's current staff. In addition, the team met with or interviewed by telephone a number of LOLLAF's board members, several members of the judiciary, and a variety of community service providers.

In evaluating LOLLAF's delivery system, OPP relied on the LSC Act and regulations, LSC Performance Criteria, LSC Program Letters, and the ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid. The evaluation and this report are organized according to the four LSC performance areas that cover: 1) legal needs assessment and priority setting; 2) engagement with the low income community; 3) the quality and management of legal work, including private attorney involvement; and 4) organizational leadership and program management including board governance, administration, resource development, and involvement with the statewide delivery system.

Following the visit, OPP sent a draft of this report to the program. Land of Lincoln responded with a letter and comments dated June 18, 2013, which are attached to this Final Report. Some of the program's comments were incorporated in the Final Report and, where appropriate, revisions were made.

PROGRAM AND SERVICE AREA OVERVIEW

Land of Lincoln Legal Assistance Foundation provides civil legal services to a 65-county service area (IL-3). Located in the southern portion of the state of Illinois, it is a mix of rural (58) and urban (7) counties. LOLLAF has five regional offices, as well as three satellite offices. The program's administrative and executive offices are located in East St. Louis; this is also the site of LOLLAF's Central Regional Office and Legal Advice and Referral Center (LARC), its centralized telephone intake center.

The program has been in existence since 1972, when the merger of a number of regional programs was completed. LOLLAF is currently directed by Lois Wood. She has worked at the program in a number of capacities since 1974 and has been its executive director since January 2004. Under her leadership, Land of Lincoln celebrated its 40th anniversary with a luncheon in the summer of 2012.

LOLLAF's service area, covering 34,721 square miles, is similar in size to the State of Indiana. It stretches north from Cairo, a now sparsely populated and deeply impoverished town located on Illinois' southernmost border where the Ohio River joins the Mississippi River. The southern part of the service area includes counties comprised largely of rural towns and cities separated by extensive farmland as well as the Shawnee National Forest. LOLLAF has an office in the heavily populated university city of Carbondale. The program's main office is in the East St. Louis area. This city, located in the metropolitan St. Louis area, has seen its population decline and its rate of violence increase.¹ From the main office, LOLLAF's service area ranges west, north, and east to include regional offices in Alton, a port city located on the Mississippi River; Springfield, the state's capital; and Champaign, a university town that is also home to a growing technology and software industry.

In 2005, LOLLAF reorganized its service area and created its current five regional office configuration. The program took poverty population, client accessibility, and private attorney resources into account when redrawing the regions. At the same time, LOLLAF created three satellite offices, although only two of them are regularly staffed; the third satellite office is available on an as-needed basis.

According to the 2010 census, the poverty population in LOLLAF's service area totaled 376,757; this was a 38% increase over the size of the poverty population measured by the 2000 census. Almost half (48%) of the poverty population served by the program lives in six counties: St. Clair, where the program's main office is located; Champaign, the site of the Eastern Regional Office; Madison, the county where the Alton office is located; Sangamon, where the Springfield office is situated; Vermilion, which is adjacent to Champaign County; and Jackson, the site of the Carbondale office.

Almost three-quarters (73%) of LOLLAF's eligible client population is Caucasian. The service area's eligible minority population is primarily African-American (24%). In St Clair County, where East St. Louis is located, 19.4% of the population is below the poverty level; African-Americans constitute 39% of this population.² Although the eligible Hispanic population comprises only 1.5% of the service area's poverty population, it is a growing segment of the population, and LOLLAF has found it to be an underserved group. Over 50,000 persons, approximately 7.5% of those living in poverty in Land of Lincoln's 65 counties, are elderly.

¹ Freedman, Samuel G., "Letter by Letter, Keeping a Catholic Outpost Alive," New York Times, March 23, 2013 at A13.

² S1701, Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, 2011 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau.

Land of Lincoln's client population confronts a variety of legal problems, some of which are magnified by the particular city or county where they live. In East St. Louis, the Housing Authority has been in receivership under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for more than 25 years.³ The state was hit by the foreclosure crisis; its foreclosure rate has been among the highest in the country.⁴ LOLLAF is building on the program's earlier efforts to address farm-related legal issues experienced by its rural clients. The Champaign office, which has a history of community development work, currently has an attorney who, along with a Small Farms Fellow, is doing work in this area. Throughout Illinois, there was an expansion of efforts by creditors to use incarceration to collect unpaid bills.⁵ LOLLAF staff was active in addressing this abuse.

LOLLAF's total revenue for 2012 was \$7,475,037. Almost a third of this amount, \$2,398,513, was LSC funding. This sum includes a Technology Initiatives Grant (TIG) of \$127,467 awarded in 2011. As of the time of the visit, LOLLAF was current in its milestones under the grant and had received \$77,122. The program does not receive LSC migrant or Native American grants.

The program's non-LSC funding for 2012 totaled \$5,076,524. Among its numerous funding sources was the U.S. Department of Justice; it awarded LOLLAF a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant of \$504,000, effective October 1, 2012, to support its domestic violence work over a three-year period. Land of Lincoln also received \$750,000 in 2012 from the State of Illinois' Attorney General's office to underwrite its foreclosure efforts; this was the initial portion of the \$4.5 million LOLLAF will obtain from the state's share of the National Mortgage Settlement over a three-year period. LOLLAF also received \$1,608,992 in IOLTA monies, as well as close to \$300,000 in *cy pres* funds in 2012.

LOLLAF will ultimately benefit from the Illinois Supreme Court's 2012 increase in the state's annual attorney license registration fee. The resulting monies are earmarked for The Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois (LTF), a nonprofit foundation designated to administer Illinois' Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA) program and make grants to LOLLAF and other civil legal aid providers. Registration fee revenue will increase further as Illinois now also requires that retired judges who want to remain active pay the registration fee, from which they had been exempt. Although it will take some time before these changes generate funds that LOLLAF will enjoy, the resulting monies will immediately replenish the state's IOLTA reserves and prevent a decrease in funds to Illinois programs.

At the time of the PQV, LOLLAF's staff totaled close to 100. It had an attorney staff of 59, totaling 55.05 FTEs. Although its advocates are primarily attorneys, including VISTA attorneys and three legal fellows, the staff also includes paralegals and an ombudsman.

³ Smith, Carolyn P., "HUD considers transfer of East St. Louis Housing Authority to St. Clair County," The News-Democrat, February 28, 2013.

⁴ "Illinois foreclosures down, but still high," Illinois Business Journal, May 9, 2013.

⁵ Rickerl, Stephen, "Debtors share frightening tales," The Southern, January 12, 2012.

During calendar 2011, despite reductions in revenue, the program maintained its staff. LOLLAF had strong reserves, and it also instituted a Voluntary Reduced Time Program, which resulted in salary savings as well as decreased costs in health benefits, etc. Eight employees, including the executive director, opted to reduce their time, although the executive director subsequently increased her hours.

LOLLAF did start making plans in late 2011 to address anticipated cuts in its LSC and IOLTA funding. The program froze salaries for 2012. It also began preparing for staff layoffs. Some staff left voluntarily. The program still had substantial carryover funds. Subsequently, it received early notice that it would be awarded a portion of Illinois' share of the mortgage settlement monies. Through a combination of financial planning, staff reductions, *cy pres* awards, and new funding, LOLLAF avoided most of its anticipated layoffs. After receipt of the mortgage settlement funds and the renewal of its VAWA grant, LOLLAF was able to hire 14.5 FTEs, including seven new full-time attorneys, one part-time attorney, two intake workers, and five secretaries. One of the attorneys is a bankruptcy specialist; another is a member of the intake staff. LOLLAF concluded 2012 with a surplus rather than the large deficit it originally projected.

In 2012, LOLLAF closed 9,417 cases. Of the cases the program closed, 44.5% were family, 20% were housing, 12.2% were consumer, and 6.16% were income maintenance. Slightly more than 11% of the program's cases were categorized as miscellaneous; these were predominantly limited service cases involving wills, estates, advanced directives, and powers of attorney.

LOLLAF maintains an active *pro bono* and compensated private bar involvement (PBI), or Judicare, program. It closed a total of 21.8 private attorney involvement (PAI) cases per 10,000 poor persons in 2012, compared with a national median of 22. It closed 19.4 extended PAI cases per 10,000 poor persons; this exceeded the 2012 national median of seven; its actual contested PAI cases per 10,000 poor persons was nine compared with a national median of three.

Land of Lincoln provides a full range of civil legal services throughout its entire service area. LOLLAF's advocates employ a wide variety of delivery methods. They collaborate with community organizations, the private bar, the judiciary, health care providers, local schools, other Illinois legal services providers, and law schools. They administer *pro bono* programs in cooperation with local bar associations, and utilize a Judicare component, primarily for delivery of legal services to the area's more remote counties.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

LOLLAF benefits from its strong executive leadership. The guidance this group provides is an obvious strength felt at all levels of the organization. Senior management's program planning has resulted in the development of talented staff and the enhancement of resources, including the building of reserves and long-range budgeting.

Most staff appears passionate and committed to providing high quality legal assistance in their assigned areas of specialization. The program's legal work is enhanced by its task force structure. Not only do the task forces give advocates the opportunity to have in-depth discussions

about legal issues, but they also enable the task force leaders to cultivate additional management and other skills.

Land of Lincoln is successful in attracting new lawyers and supporting their professional development. On all levels, the program seems invested in providing ongoing training to keep its advocates fresh and fully informed.

LOLLAF regularly evaluates the needs of its client community. Its 2011 needs assessment enabled the agency to both recognize its clients' legal needs and take steps to modify its priorities so it would more appropriately address the problems they were facing.

The program started centralizing its intake system in 1998. The Legal Advice and Referral Center now handles almost three-quarters of the program's intake. LOLLAF also utilizes the LARC hotline for its Medical Debt Relief Brief Services Project, which helps clients address medical debt. More recently, the program opened its Legal Help for Homeowners Hotline, a separate toll-free intake line for homeowners in danger of losing their homes. Land of Lincoln, with the help of TIG funding, is developing a statewide online triage and intake system using the statewide website, Illinois Legal Aid Online (ILAO). LOLLAF is working on this project in conjunction with Prairie State Legal Services, LAF (formerly known as the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago), and Illinois Legal Aid Online.

LOLLAF has an eighteen member board. The board members who were interviewed understood, embraced, and seemed deeply committed to the program's mission. Although the board is appropriately deferential to the views and recommendations of the program's management team, its members - including client-eligible members - do not hesitate to exercise their independent judgment in holding Land of Lincoln's management fully accountable for pursuing the program's mission in an efficient and effective manner.

Land of Lincoln recognizes the importance of addressing potential senior staffing changes in a strategic manner, so that the quality of the program's work and its connections to the community remain strong. Management is taking affirmative steps to address upcoming transition issues – both by identifying potential changes and training other staff to assume management responsibilities.

The program continually enhances its use of technology. It makes a concerted effort to update outdated or poorly performing equipment. LOLLAF recently created a new website, with links to ILAO and LSC. However, LOLLAF lacks a program-wide knowledge management system or intranet which would allow staff to share important documents, practice resources, and other information more easily.

LOLLAF's solid resource development strategy has resulted not only in federal, state, and local grants but also in its receipt of *cy pres* awards and generous private donations. Notwithstanding the program's current financial status, it remains aware of the time-limited nature of some of its funding as it prepares for future efforts.

Land of Lincoln is recognized throughout the state as a vital member of the larger legal and social service communities. LOLLAF effectively works with numerous other providers to expand its reach. In particular, LOLLAF has collaborated with Illinois Legal Aid Online and other LSC-funded providers. It also teamed up with the Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice to establish the self-help centers that now exist throughout its service area.

PERFORMANCE AREA ONE. Effectiveness in identifying the most pressing civil legal needs of low-income people in the service area and targeting resources to address those needs.

Legal Needs Assessments

Finding 1. LOLLAF conducted a thorough assessment of the legal needs of the residents of its service area in 2011.

Land of Lincoln conducted its most recent needs assessment in 2011. It was a thorough process, which was based on its review of census and poverty statistics for its service area as well as information relating to the clients it served in 2010. It also surveyed client-eligible individuals and professional services providers, including *pro bono* and compensated private bar involvement (PBI) attorneys; held legal needs discussions with members of the local judiciary; and met with members of its client Advisory Councils. The resulting report, entitled “*Re-examining Where Communities Need Us the Most*,” was completed in August 2011.

This assessment built on previous efforts to survey client needs. In February 2005, the Lawyers Trust Fund published *The Legal Aid Safety Net, A Report on the Legal Needs of Low Income Illinoisans*, based on a telephone survey of low income households, a written survey of Illinois legal aid attorneys, case data, and research results. During 2007, LOLLAF engaged in a planning process focused on service delivery. Using GIS mapping of demographics and services for over 12,000 clients from 2006 data, LOLLAF ultimately issued *Trends in the Legal Services Population in Counties Served by Land of Lincoln*, which identified emerging trends in its service area.

The program continually attempts to identify legal needs between its formal assessments. LOLLAF’s staff utilizes the task force meetings to review the types of cases that are being handled and identify trends and common legal issues experienced by clients. LOLLAF also regularly monitors and evaluates data from LARC. Staff, board, and client Advisory Councils examine local legal needs to inform each regional office’s Case Acceptance Policies (CAPs).

Setting Goals and Objectives, Developing Strategies, and Allocating Resources

Finding 2. The program recently made efforts to articulate its vision and mission, and to develop priorities which enhance its goals while also addressing client needs.

In 2011, LOLLAF prepared mission and vision statements. After office discussions were conducted, several different versions of each were drafted and then were presented for review

during the program's two-day board-staff planning conference held in June 2011. LOLLAF's board formally adopted new mission and vision statements at the end of the year.

According to its vision statement, Land of Lincoln "believe[s] all people of central and southern Illinois should have access to justice, income security, adequate housing, quality education, healthcare, safety from violence and exploitation, and the opportunity to improve their own lives." LOLLAF's mission "is to provide low income and senior residents of central and southern Illinois with high quality civil legal services in order to obtain and maintain their basic human needs. Through advice, representation, advocacy, education, and collaboration, [it] seek[s]: to achieve justice for those whose voices might otherwise not be heard; to empower individuals to advocate for themselves; and to make positive changes in the communities [it] serve[s]."

Land of Lincoln also regularly revises its priorities. To better address the housing and economic needs issues identified by its clients, LOLLAF is aiming to reduce the resources it allocates to family law matters. For 2012, LOLLAF set minimum levels of service in each area of law. These minimum levels were to reflect a combination of time spent on individual representation and other services or outreach. The allocations were: Family – 35%; Housing – 25%; Health and Economic Security; 16%; Consumer and Utilities – 10%; Education – 4%; and Local Options – 10%.

The program was unable to fully implement its planned resource allocations in 2012. LOLLAF began the year by focusing on its financial concerns and it subsequently began planning to implement its expanded foreclosure efforts. As a consequence of addressing these other issues, LOLLAF fell somewhat behind on achieving its goals.

In November 2012, Land of Lincoln updated its priorities for 2013, taking into account its needs assessment; the demand for its services during 2012, as demonstrated by its case statistics; the work it was to perform under its foreclosure grant; and the input received from its regional office staff and local client Advisory Councils. LOLLAF established the same minimum levels of time to be spent on each priority area as it did in 2012.

Finding 3. Land of Lincoln regularly engages in strategic planning, which involves both its staff and board.

Land of Lincoln is currently operating under its most recently revised strategic plan, also adopted at the close of 2011. This plan is the latest in a series of strategic plans LOLLAF has adopted. It engages in strategic planning approximately every three years.

In 2011, LOLLAF conducted a comprehensive planning process. At its June 2011 board-staff conference all participants were given the chance to review the needs assessment, discuss how Land of Lincoln delivers services, and develop a strategic plan for the next three years. Approximately 80 staff and 15 board members took part in some or all of the conference. At the end of 2011, LOLLAF's board adopted a new strategic plan for 2012-14. The plan took into account that the needs identified by clients (income and housing) were different than those pinpointed by judges (family).

Its regular planning process has continually given LOLLAF insight into client needs and provided it with the incentive to change methods of service delivery. In 2007, LOLLAF identified underserved counties, particularly areas where it was performing less extended work. Its 2008 plan called for an expansion of outreach and services in those counties. LOLLAF also aimed to engage in more strategic advocacy. The program increased its training budget and conducted NITA-style trial and deposition trainings. It involved private trial attorneys in this training.

Implementation

Finding 4. LOLLAF is responsive to the pressing legal needs identified by its clients.

LOLLAF identified education as a critical issue faced by the low-income communities in its service area. Land of Lincoln created a task force designed to provide staff training on education issues and undertake projects such as the identification of school districts with high numbers of low-income children not meeting state standards. Advocates are also partnering with various community leaders to improve the quality of education in the East St. Louis School District. One attorney was invited to serve on an advisory team for the Illinois State Board of Education after its 2011 takeover of East St. Louis' District 189. LOLLAF also works on education issues with a community group, which meets at various public housing projects.

LOLLAF has continually attempted to address the foreclosure-related needs of its clients. Some of its work was initially funded by the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program. After receiving its Illinois foreclosure settlement monies, LOLLAF launched the Legal Help for Homeowners Project in late 2012. Using a designated hotline and additional staff, it is assisting homeowners negotiate new loans or modify existing loans, and providing counseling regarding their foreclosure cases and more.⁶ At the same time, LOLLAF expanded its ability to handle bankruptcy cases.

Evaluation and Adjustment

Finding 5. LOLLAF utilizes many opportunities to review its legal work and evaluate the results it is achieving, including self-assessments for funders and feedback from clients.

The program engages in a number of regular evaluations of its work. LOLLAF prepares an annual evaluation when reporting to The Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, a source of almost one-third of its non-LSC funding. Program-wide data is reviewed internally by the executive director and deputy director for programs and advocacy at least quarterly. The executive director discusses issues they identify with the managing attorney of the appropriate office.

Land of Lincoln is taking steps to enhance its measurement of case outcomes, particularly in its priority areas.⁷ It aims to address high priority legal problems where it can have the most

⁶ Christine Des Garennes, "Project helps homeowners avoid foreclosure," News-Gazette.com, May 4, 2013.

⁷ The program noted a 2012 MIE Journal article entitled "An Outcome Measurement System: Beyond Reporting to Funders." by Colleen Cotter, the executive director of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. LOLLAF is also

impact. LOLLAF reviews the amount of time staff spends handling certain types of cases and determines what results are achieved for clients. By improving its evaluation of the services it provides, it can target its resources most effectively. LOLLAF is also looking to increase the number of extended cases handled by the regional offices.

PERFORMANCE AREA TWO. Effectiveness in engaging and serving the low-income population throughout the service area.

Dignity and sensitivity

Finding 6. LOLLAF has taken steps to ensure that it is accessible to clients throughout its service area.

Land of Lincoln's five regional offices are professional in appearance and are well-suited for both staff and clients. The program's East St. Louis office, situated at an equal distance from the state and federal courts, is attractively laid out. The Alton office is well-furnished, spacious, and bright. The outside signage and accessibility were good and the client waiting area was highly pleasant and accommodating. The Springfield office is new as of 2010. LOLLAF's Champaign office, built specifically for the program, is located in the heart of the community. The centrally-located Carbondale office is also a welcoming place for staff and clients alike. LOLLAF's regional offices provide sufficient parking and are accessible to public transportation as well as the state's highways, state courts and offices, and other resources, such as law schools. Offices serving the program's more rural areas are located near medical facilities or social service centers at the convergence of major highways.

LOLLAF retained two satellite offices, located in Charleston and Mount Vernon; they are affiliated with the regional offices they are nearest. In addition, the program has access to a third satellite office in Decatur, located midway between Springfield and Champaign. It is used on an "as-needed" basis to meet client needs.

All of the program's offices are open Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM, although they are closed during the lunch hour. When necessary, case handlers meet clients after normal office hours. They do so by appointment in the office or at the client's homes or alternate public sites, such as nursing homes and senior centers.

The program has made efforts to ensure sensitivity to clients' needs. LOLLAF's entire staff took part in diversity training in 2007. One staffer served on NLADA's Race Equity Committee, and LOLLAF formed its own Race Equity Task Force in 2009. This task force, which first met in 2010, was designed, in part, to address structural racism through advocacy. At LOLLAF's June 2011 Strategic Planning Conference, the task force discussed the work Land of Lincoln was doing to serve minority communities. At its June 2012 board-staff meeting, LOLLAF staff took part in a facilitated exercise entitled "Life Opportunity," which was designed to explore the impact of one's race and ethnicity on an individual's experiences. The exercise gave staff an opportunity to have an open dialogue on race, to examine ways to best serve clients

reviewing Mario Marino's 2011 book, Leap of Reason: Managing to Outcomes in an Era of Scarcity, which was footnoted in Cotter's article.

when issues have race implications, and to promote diversity and inclusiveness as a program. Community members who were interviewed described the LOLLAF staff as being highly professional and treating clients with dignity and respect.

LOLLAF has posted a summary of its grievance procedures on its website along with links to its full policy, its grievance brochure, and a copy of the form to use to file a complaint.

Diversity

Finding 7. Land of Lincoln has made efforts to cultivate the diversity of its staff.

Although the program's entire staff is slightly more diverse than the client population, the current East St. Louis office staff is not reflective of the surrounding community population. LOLLAF's recent staff additions increased the program's diversity. Of the recently-hired foreclosure advocates, two are African-American and one is Asian-American.

LOLLAF's Race Equity Task Force was also designed to ensure that Land of Lincoln supports diversity and inclusion in the workplace. It proposed that LOLLAF create an Employee Minority Group. Any staffer may join, members may attend group meetings during the work day, and the time spent to travel is considered work time. The group, which met for the first time in April 2011, was expected to focus on the program's inclusiveness of minorities, including recruitment and retention issues. The formation of this group is responsive to the desire expressed by several staff of color that they would appreciate the opportunity to interact and develop working relationships with each other. LOLLAF's support is critical since the locations of the offices and the distances between them do not allow this level of interaction to occur in the ordinary course of business.

Recommendation II.1.7.1:

LOLLAF should continue to provide diversity and other appropriate training to its entire staff. In the process, Land of Lincoln should also continue encouraging minority and other staff, particularly those new to the program, to build and expand their working relationships.

Language Access

Finding 8. LOLLAF's language access efforts are appropriate for its non-English speaking client population.

Very few members of the client population in LOLLAF's service area are non-English speaking; those that speak another primary language largely speak Spanish. LOLLAF has some bilingual staff, although none of the current LARC staff or those handling intake for the homeowners hotline, are bilingual. While very few staff members have multiple language capacities, one staff person in Champaign speaks French. The advocate has been able to respond to the legal needs of a growing French-speaking Congolese community which, in turn, has increased the visibility of the office in that community.

The program has a contract with LanguageLine. Its services are available for intake and for interviews in all offices and off-site. The program also utilizes local translators for in-person interviews. For example, in the East St. Louis office, it has a contract with Bridges of Hope, an organization that provides Spanish translation services.

The Illinois School for the Deaf is located in the program's service area. LARC and the regional offices provide telephone advice and referral to hearing impaired persons using the Illinois Relay Operators who utilize TDD technology.

In LOLLAF's service area, clients confront issues resulting from illiteracy, more so than from their use of non-English languages. The program attempts to ensure understanding by explaining documents first and then permitting clients to individually review them. The program has created "plain language" written materials such as fact sheets and brochures for its clients. However, the program's new website home page contains content that may be difficult for some clients to read.⁸

LOLLAF's language access policy contains the recommended elements of a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan outlined in LSC Program Letter 04-2, *Services to Eligible Individuals with Limited English Proficiency*. The program's policy is outdated; it appears to have been written or last revised in 2006. LOLLAF's plan is based on 2000 census data, and contains references to the program's earlier case management system.

Recommendation II.1.8.1*:

LOLLAF should assess the readability of the information posted on its website.

Recommendation II.1.8.2*:

The program's LEP plan should be reviewed and updated to reflect more recent census data, as well as changes in the program's systems, such as its installation of LegalServer.

Recommendation II.1.8.3:

As resources permit, Land of Lincoln should make efforts to include non-English content on its website so that individuals with language access issues understand how to obtain legal services.

Intake

Finding 9. Land of Lincoln has a centralized telephone intake system, which is supplemented by regional office intake as well as intake conducted at outreach sites.

LOLLAF's Legal Advice and Referral Center, established in 1998, is the primary point of intake for most new clients in all 65 counties. Last year, 69% of LOLLAF intakes were initiated by telephone, 16% came through outreach, and 15% were in-house. In late 2012, LOLLAF opened its Legal Help for Homeowners Hotline, a separate intake line for homeowners in danger of losing their homes. LARC accepts calls Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to

⁸ The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level measure of the "readability" of LOLLAF's home page indicates that the reader needs a grade level of 13.1 years to understand its contents.

1:30 PM; the homeowners' hotline accepts calls from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Unlike the rest of the office, these intake systems remain open during the lunch hour. Calls to LARC, the new hotline, and the regional offices are toll free.

The intake center is supervised by an attorney who has been LARC's managing attorney since its inception. LARC currently has a staff of ten; in addition to the managing attorney, the staff is comprised of a senior attorney, five hotline attorneys, two intake specialists, and an administrative secretary. All of the current hotline attorneys work part-time. One is based in the Champaign office while another often works remotely from home; a third intake attorney works remotely from Indiana. LARC intake attorneys handle a case from initial client contact through intake to final advice, referral, or rejection. They can directly access reference information, such as agency addresses, court dockets, etc. from their desks. The intake specialists primarily handle calls from individuals seeking help with homeownership issues. They gather information from hotline callers to determine if they qualify for services. Callers who may qualify for extended representation are transferred to the appropriate regional office, while those who are eligible for advice only are transferred to the LARC queue.

The volume of calls to LARC is high, and access is limited during particularly busy days. The call queue is cut off at 13 callers, and additional callers receive a message to call back at a later time. Callers who are unable to remain on hold are given the option of receiving a call back from LARC without losing their place in the queue. The average wait time is 25 minutes; this includes the time an applicant waits for the automated call-back. The eligibility portion of the call takes about 10 minutes, and is followed by the interview and advice which can take about 30 minutes. Staff reported that the automatic call-back feature was well-implemented and mitigates caller frustration around wait times. LARC attorneys report that they are usually able to re-connect with callers who utilize the feature.

All callers to LARC are asked regarding their possible medical debt to determine if they can be helped by the Medical Debt Relief Brief Services Project. Callers identified as potentially needing such services are called back the same afternoon.

New LARC attorneys receive about 60 hours of initial training and ongoing training at staff meetings. LOLLAF issued its revised Intake, Case Disposition, and Timekeeping Policies and Procedures Manual on February 28, 2013, incorporating changes made in intake after the implementation of LegalServer. LARC personnel must also be familiar with each regional office's Case Acceptance Policies (CAPs), which vary considerably and are often subject to change. LARC staff has online access to current CAPs and to a regularly updated statewide substantive law manual, originally developed for Illinois hotlines, which is available on the ILAO website.

LARC attorney staff meets as a group somewhat regularly. The advocates have also resumed attending task force meetings. The LARC staff meetings are not attended by the regional office staff who conduct in-person or telephone intake or by the foreclosure intake workers.

A LARC intake attorney determines if the case is appropriate for advice based on the problem and the regional office's Case Acceptance Policies. The LARC attorney will provide advice if a caller is eligible for advice only. If the caller is eligible for extended services, the LARC attorney provides immediate advice, if appropriate, and then refers the case to the regional office. Applicants are told to follow up by calling the regional office within 48 hours. Once regional advocates have initial contact with clients, they try to communicate case acceptance decisions within two to five working days. If a caller is not eligible for LOLLAF assistance, LARC attempts to make a referral to Illinois Legal Aid Online, the bar referral program of the Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA), or a *pro se* clinic. Ineligible callers may also be mailed relevant fact sheets.

Regional offices report that coordination with LARC is good and the applications they receive are of high quality. Both LARC and other staff acknowledge that some callers express frustration at having to make multiple attempts to access the system. Other callers report that LARC's not having afternoon intake hours is limiting. In some instances, callers who cannot get through to LARC will call a regional office directly and attempt to apply for assistance in that way.

Regional office staffers conduct a substantial amount of intake - primarily for cases involving domestic violence, divorces, seniors, and for some walk-ins. When clients walk in or call with an emergency, regional offices have the option of conducting intake, giving walk-in clients the LARC phone number, or allowing them to use an office phone to call LARC while they are on site. Depending on the caller's legal problem, and taking into consideration such factors as distance and special needs, the office may mail intake forms. In non-emergency cases, regional office support staff generally determines eligibility in LegalServer and then refers cases to the managing attorney for assignment to staff or private attorneys. Intake procedures vary somewhat by regional office and are supervised by the managing attorney in each office.

Intake may also occur when staff is conducting outreach, particularly at off-site locations such as nursing homes, senior centers, or in clients' homes. Some staffers use a laptop to enter intake information directly into LegalServer. In other cases, staff completes a paper intake and inputs the intake information into the system upon return to the office. Other applications may be based on referrals faxed from lay advocates working at domestic violence shelters and from the various medical sites that are part of the program's medical-legal partnerships (MLPs).

All applicants receive a post-intake letter from LOLLAF. Clients who are given advice receive a closing letter, often accompanied by a pamphlet or other information, and those applicants who are rejected receive a non-engagement letter. LARC attorneys take advantage of the robust web resources available through ILAO and the Southern Illinois University (SIU) website to complement the advice provided to clients over the phone. LARC attorneys find that callers increasingly have Internet access and the web materials provide important summaries of and reminders about the legal issues that callers face.

During 2012, LARC attorneys spoke to almost 9,700 people, closing 4,045 cases, referring 1,072 cases to regional offices, rejecting 2,768 applicants, and referring over 1,831 other callers before intake was complete.

Land of Lincoln, with the help of TIG funding, is in the process of developing a statewide online triage and intake system using the statewide website, Illinois Legal Aid Online. LOLLAF is working on this Online Access Project in conjunction with Prairie State Legal Services, LAF, and Illinois Legal Aid Online. This system will allow potentially eligible users with high priority legal problems to submit an online application for services; at the same time, it will divert low priority and non-eligible users away from program intake and direct them to self-help tools, as well as private bar and other referrals available on www.IllinoisLegalAid.org.

Recommendation II.1.9.1*:

Land of Lincoln should explore ways to enhance the intake staff's connection with the rest of the program staff. LARC staff should continue to regularly attend task force meetings. LOLLAF should also reconsider assigning one LARC attorney to each regional office; this would not only give each of the regions a specific contact at LARC; it would also provide that there is a LARC staff person responsible for being aware of the particular legal needs of that part of the service area.

Recommendation II.1.9.2*:

LOLLAF's intake staff should meet on a more regular basis; perhaps as an intake task force. The regional office staff who conduct intake should also participate in this group, whether in person or remotely. All intake staff would benefit from the chance to review issues and learn about substantive law changes. Such regular group discussions would also allow all the intake staff to benefit from the questions and comments of their peers. These meetings could periodically include presentations from advocates regarding the results of a specific intake.

Recommendation II.1.9.3*:

LOLLAF should expand LARC hours to include some afternoon coverage. This could be achieved by staggering the working hours of existing staff.

Recommendation II.1.9.4:

LOLLAF should review its Case Acceptance Policies with a goal of simplifying and streamlining them, and achieving greater consistency across the regions.

Recommendation II.1.9.5:

LOLLAF should pursue its plan to centralize the program's divorce intake. Its use of a separate telephone queue devoted solely to divorce applications would benefit both clients and staff.

Recommendation II.1.9.6:

LOLLAF should engage in a deliberative process to assess certain LARC processes, including how technology could improve internal communication of changes in Case Acceptance Policies and client survey response rates. Its Intake Committee could be reinstated to engage in this review. The program could also determine whether it would benefit from having additional trained paralegals, as well as students or *pro bono* attorneys, assist the LARC attorney staff in handling calls, whether in the central office or remotely. The managing attorney should also continue to reach out to the staff of the other hotlines being run in Illinois, including Prairie State, LAF, and the Coordinated Advice and Referral Program for Legal Services (CARPLS).

Recommendation II.1.9.7:

Land of Lincoln should continue its efforts to determine how its existing intake process can best interface with the statewide online triage and intake system the program is developing.

Engagement with the low-income population/Access and utilization by the low-income population

Finding 10. LOLLAF makes a concerted effort to engage with many segments of its client population throughout its service area.

LOLLAF is actively engaged with its client population, and works to ensure that they can access and utilize its services. Each regional office work plan describes proposed outreach for the following year; the individual work plans of most staff members include specific outreach responsibilities.

LOLLAF's staff reports significant outreach activities at sites ranging from rural areas to inner-city neighborhoods. Staff visits clients' homes, nursing homes, or other facilities. Other staff provide community legal education. Targeted populations include senior citizens, caregivers for seniors, minorities, homeless individuals, victims of domestic violence, public housing tenants, mobile home park residents, persons in need of health care, and groups focusing on elder abuse.

Land of Lincoln interacts with staff from a wide variety of social service organizations. LOLLAF staff members actively participate in domestic violence coordinating councils, interagency coalitions, and continuums of care. Some advocates are heavily involved with local community advocacy groups, such as those focused on helping children get the support needed to attend and stay in school. Other staff members enjoy collaborative relationships with agencies such as the Oasis Women's Center, a shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children. Another advocate is setting up a *pro se* assistance clinic with a domestic violence shelter.

LOLLAF staff engages in community development projects, such as the creation and maintenance of Prosperity Gardens, a community garden located across the street from the program's Champaign office. Started three years ago to teach local children about growing food and nutrition, it was also designed to address issues such as food insecurity and obesity confronted by clients.⁹

Advisory Councils continue to exist in all five of LOLLAF's regions. Council members, who are or were clients or client-eligible individuals, consult with area staff regarding the functioning of the program and advise them of the particular legal needs of clients. They also inform potential clients about the program and recruit volunteers to assist the staff, when needed. The councils appear to be having difficulty recruiting new members.

⁹ Pressey, Debra, "Growing Season," The News-Gazette, April 14, 2013 at A 1.

Many courts and other providers are knowledgeable about LOLLAF but view it largely as a source of family law representation. The foreclosure advocacy group is beginning to see results from their outreach efforts but awareness of LOLLAF's education work appears limited.

Recommendation II.3.10.1:

As part of its effort to diversify its caseload, LOLLAF should identify more opportunities for outreach activities to community-oriented groups. The program should continue to examine its existing Advisory Councils and determine whether there are ways to re-invigorate them.

PERFORMANCE AREA THREE. Effectiveness of legal representation and other program activities intended to benefit the low-income population in its service area.

Legal Representation.

Finding 11. Land of Lincoln staff possesses the capacity and resources needed to provide high quality legal assistance.

Many members of the LOLLAF attorney staff are highly experienced and possess the expertise to provide high quality legal assistance. Managing attorneys average 25 years of legal experience and generally have experience in all of the program's priority areas. Senior staff attorneys average 18 years of experience and have demonstrated a high level of competence in one or more substantive areas.

Much of the program's work is organized through its task forces, which cover family law, tenants' rights and homelessness prevention, health and economic security, consumer law, homeownership, and education. It had a senior task force, which was not active at the time of the PQV. Task force chairs ensure staff attorneys remain updated on legislative and case law developments. The chairs remain available between meetings to answer questions pertaining both to individual cases and larger legal developments. Land of Lincoln's advocates are also supported by program-wide specialists on bankruptcy and utility issues. The task forces are overseen by LOLLAF's deputy director for programs and advocacy.

Advocates possess the legal materials necessary to provide quality representation to eligible clients. Staff has access to ILAO's statewide website, which includes a wide range of materials, including Illinois' Institute of Continuing Legal Education's online Smart Books and HotDocs pleadings, as well as online discussion groups. LOLLAF subscribes to Lexis-Nexis, and the regional offices have hard copies of research materials. Many advocates noted the statutes and other materials that filled their office shelves. As noted later in this report, the staff generally has the equipment and technology necessary to support their legal work.

LOLLAF currently lacks an easily accessible program-wide knowledge management system of pleadings, memoranda, and other materials. Task force members share standard documents, including intake questions, pleadings, and briefs, and the task forces maintain central folders for program-wide use. Many files are shared on network drives, but the program has not established an organizational structure for such file sharing. In addition, the program does not utilize an intranet. While its transition to LegalServer has been successful overall, LOLLAF can

still make better of this case management system by uploading correspondence, pleadings, and other materials.

LOLLAF maintains a central calendar and advocacy staff regularly uses it to keep track of court dates or other important case related events. Files appear to be maintained in office-wide file systems and not in individual advocate's offices.

Staff members have limited access to technology (laptops, cameras, etc.) when they are out of the office. As a consequence, program staff often prepares handwritten materials and have some difficulty documenting problems in housing conditions cases.

Recommendation III.1.11.1*:

LOLLAF should develop a program-wide knowledge management system that can facilitate the sharing and promotion of key practice resources, documents, and other information.

Recommendation III.1.11.2:

The program should determine whether it should invest in laptops and other mobile devices to expand the work of its advocates outside of the office. It probably makes sense for LOLLAF to purchase a limited number of smartphones or tablets, or to provide a small subsidy to some staff for the purchase of such equipment

Finding 12. LOLLAF has developed standards and systems, including individual and office work plans, to carefully outline what is expected of individuals and of offices and to encourage all staff to perform quality work.

LOLLAF's board adopted Performance Standards and Developmental Guidelines for Staff Attorneys in December 2011. This document was modeled after similar standards adopted by Prairie State Legal Services, with modifications appropriate to Land of Lincoln. The standards have seven sections pertaining to different aspects of an advocate's work: Relations with Clients; Legal Skills and Effective Handling of Cases; Caseload; Effective Case Administration; Role Within the Office; Outside Relations; and Professional Dress, Language and Comportment. Although these standards did not alter the program's expectations regarding performance, the guidelines do provide a clear picture of how an advocate should handle all aspects of client representation.

All advocates, whether attorneys or paralegals, work with their managing attorneys to develop individual annual work plans. The plans set forth the percentage of time a case handler will spend in addressing different substantive areas, working on private bar activities, and performing supervisory and management tasks, if appropriate. The plans also include caseload expectations and a maximum pending caseload goal, which is assessed given the staffer's level of experience, the types of cases being handled, and other activities. The plan also specifies who will be monitoring, through LegalServer, the advocate's open cases and reviewing case closings. Each advocate is expected to engage in some community work or systemic advocacy.

Each regional office also prepares an office work plan. It is a summary outlining allocations of time, and an individual work plan is included for each attorney and paralegal. No narrative plan is required. However, it does include a description of the office's PAI plan.

The use of office and individual work plans allows for clearly articulated roles and expectations of staff. Although the program has no caseload limits or requirements, staff is made aware of case type/caseload expectations. Some offices have broad Case Acceptance Policies to increase representation in certain substantive areas of practice. Offices have significant latitude and autonomy in determining which cases to accept for representation. Some managers approve case acceptances while in other offices case acceptance decisions are made by individual advocates.

Despite all the attention that is focused on preparing these plans, it is unclear how vigorously the work plans are reviewed during the course of the year. The program's strategic plan does call for LOLLAF's administrative staff to conduct a June 2013 review of how attorney time was spent in the first half of the year.

Recommendation III.1.12.1:

The program should consider establishing a mid-year review of individual work plans to ensure that substantive law goals are met and that adequate outreach is being conducted. This will support the program's efforts to decrease its emphasis from family law cases.

Finding 13. LOLLAF staff are offered comprehensive training opportunities, both when they are new members and throughout their careers.

Training is a high priority of Land of Lincoln. One of the program's most senior advocates serves part-time as its litigation and training specialist. LOLLAF's in-house training includes sessions on trial skills and depositions. They are conducted annually, if the program has enough new staff. The training has been enhanced by regularly involving private bar "teachers," including two strong litigators, one of whom serves on LOLLAF's board. In addition, as of January 1, 2013, Land of Lincoln became a certified MCLE provider.¹⁰

Attorneys and paralegals identify needed professional development when preparing their annual individual work plans. One of LOLLAF's task force chairs also serves as the program's MCLE coordinator and is responsible for reviewing the training requests submitted by staff for CLE credit. The executive director, in consultation with the managing attorneys and the deputy director for programs and advocacy, identifies and approves specific training opportunities, especially out-of-state trainings.

LOLLAF has a training protocol for new attorneys. Designed by two of the program's managing attorneys and reviewed by the entire management team in late 2011, it serves as a guide for new attorneys during their first year of practice.

¹⁰ All Illinois attorneys must report 30 CLE credits every two years - the reporting is divided, so that half the alphabet reports every other year.

Staff described attending numerous trainings. These ranged from substantive sessions at task force meetings to program-wide and statewide trainings to those conducted by national organizations - NCLC, etc. Staff is encouraged to attend trainings via webinars or in-person. The training provided to attorneys hired to conduct foreclosure work is particularly impressive. At the time of the visit, those advocates had participated in two trainings in Chicago and a 5-day trial skills training.

Every third year there is an Illinois Advocates Conference, a two-day training focusing on a wide range of substantive areas and advocacy skills. Nearly every attorney and paralegal from Land of Lincoln attends this conference. The deputy director for programs and advocacy also works on this statewide training.

Some recently hired staff indicated that they would benefit from more comprehensive orientation to Land of Lincoln policies and practices.

Recommendation III.1.13.1*:

Given the program's broad service area, LOLLAF should provide a more uniform and comprehensive orientation on internal policies and practices to newly hired staff.

Finding 14. Land of Lincoln generally maintains a strong culture of supervision of legal work, and managers follow system protocols, although practices vary among offices.

LOLLAF has a strong culture of supervision, although the nature and level of supervision is not consistent throughout the program.

Most staff utilizes LegalServer to keep track of and manage their cases, and many supervisors routinely use it to monitor case progress. Some managers conduct periodic open case reviews. The team's impression is that managing attorneys conduct a rigorous review of cases as they are closed; this includes an examination of the quality of the work that was performed. Staff described all supervisors as generally having open doors, and members of the staff seemed comfortable in approaching both supervisors and colleagues for discussion and advice.

LOLLAF utilizes the supervisory skills of *all* members of its workforce. A smaller group of staff are senior supervisory attorneys; these individuals are recognized as capable of performing significant administrative and supervisory functions, such as the supervision of other attorneys or the management of a satellite office. They can fill-in for managing attorneys, when necessary. Such staff must have seven years of legal experience.

After five years, attorneys are eligible for a promotion to senior attorney status; this promotion is accompanied by a salary increase as well as an increase in responsibility, such as supervision of a new attorney or law student(s) or taking over management of a project. Such promotions are usually recommended by the managing attorneys, although the process appeared to vary somewhat by region. Senior attorney staff members are those who demonstrate commitment to the program and its clients, quality legal skills, and effective advocacy.

In addition to LOLLAF's formal supervision mechanisms, the program staff has developed their own, informal support systems. In the East St. Louis office, advocates gather regularly over lunch to discuss cases and trade ideas.

Land of Lincoln decided to eliminate its litigation director position in 1996. In addition to her other substantial and competing responsibilities, the deputy director for programs and advocacy has assumed the role of overseeing litigation program-wide. Given likely programmatic changes, it is time to reevaluate this decision. An advocacy director would coordinate advocacy program-wide, overseeing LOLLAF's ongoing effort to both diversify its legal work and engage in the more complex advocacy needed to achieve lasting results for the client community.

Recommendation III.1.14.1*:

LOLLAF should ensure that the procedures followed for achieving senior attorney status are consistent throughout the program.

Recommendation III.1.14.2*:

LOLLAF is encouraged to create an advocacy director position that would coordinate, develop, and oversee advocacy across the entire program.

Finding 15. LOLLAF's advocates are knowledgeable and energetic about pursuing efforts on their clients' behalf.

Advocates appear to be well aware of the key issues related to their areas of substantive work. Many of them demonstrate an enthusiasm for the representation they are undertaking. LOLLAF benefits from an experienced mid-level staff and an energetic group of new attorneys, whose presence is invigorating. Their commitment to clients is obvious beyond the confines of the office. LOLLAF appears to be well respected by lawyers and judges. Program attorneys were described as prepared, conscientious, and a "cut above the private bar" by several members of the legal community who were interviewed by the team.

Housing advocates address a variety of legal issues through individual representation and the collaborative work of the housing task force. For example, the task force is currently working on a brochure on lock-outs which they intend to distribute to the police to educate them about tenants' rights. In conjunction with the Shriver Center,¹¹ LOLLAF advocates represented clients who were in danger of losing project-based Section 8 vouchers and were ultimately successful in obtaining scattered site vouchers for 78 families. LOLLAF is also attentive to utility issues. One of LOLLAF's managing attorneys, who is involved with the statewide energy committee, keeps the program informed about legislative and regulatory changes, through emails, updates, and trainings, and is available to take calls from other staff.

Land of Lincoln handles a diverse set of issues for seniors – for those living in the community and those who are in nursing homes and other facilities. In addition to providing

¹¹ The Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, in existence for over 40 years, has endeavored to work with legal services programs to develop innovative and effective programs and policies that advance justice and opportunity.

assistance to clients seeking wills, advance directives, or powers of attorney (POAs), LOLLAF assists seniors with housing problems, consumer issues related to telemarketing or other scams, and custody or guardianship issues relating to grandchildren care. In one case, when a neighbor illegally converted an elderly person's property, the program brought a replevin action and the neighbor was convicted of felony exploitation. Direct representation is supplemented by assistance from LOLLAF's state-funded ombudsman, who investigates issues, stabilizes situations, or provides in-service training. The ombudsman focuses on quality of institutional care; nursing home rights, such as involuntary discharges; and family conflicts.

LOLLAF has engaged in domestic violence-related work since 1972. Many victims needed (and secured) protective orders but were reluctant to appear in court to have them extended. The program significantly expanded this work beginning in 1997, when it secured Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds from Illinois. The next year, LOLLAF first received Department of Justice (DOJ) funding. Its initial DOJ Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant allowed the program to expand its services into the more rural counties where the challenges are even greater. DOJ awarded LOLLAF a new VAWA grant in 2006. This funding, just renewed through 2015, supports the program's collaboration with three area law schools.

Some of Land of Lincoln's advocates address health and economic security cases. Their work covers a wide range of matters including public benefits, predatory lending, low-wage worker issues, and health issues.

Attorneys' active participation in the substantive area task forces provides them with opportunities for cross-office collaboration, knowledge sharing, and issue identification. LOLLAF encourages staff to develop special projects which can help them increase program awareness of larger community needs. There appear to be some variations in how staff identify and respond to systemic issues. However, the projects that are undertaken are often incubators for lasting initiatives that expand the program's reach.

A primary example is Land of Lincoln's establishment of a series of medical-legal partnerships, integrating legal services into health care settings. Since its initial partnership with Southern Illinois Healthcare in Carbondale in 2002,¹² LOLLAF has developed new partnerships throughout its service area. Champaign began developing such an effort in 2006. That work, initially prompted by a local hospital's failure to adequately provide charity care,¹³ has expanded. It now involves two Equal Justice Fellows, and the program is also about to establish a partnership with the local VA Hospital. In East St. Louis, the MLP is staffed by an AmeriCorps VISTA paralegal who is on site at the hospital weekly. LOLLAF's Springfield office, in collaboration with Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and its Family Medicine Clinic, has an MLP that is focused on training SIU medical provider staff to identify patients who may meet the Medicaid and SSI disability standard. And, in 2013, Land of Lincoln anticipates utilizing an additional AmeriCorps VISTA member to work with community health

¹² The MLP in Land of Lincoln's Carbondale office celebrated its ten year anniversary in 2012, the same year it was named the 2012 MLP of the Year by the National Center for Medical Legal Partnership.

¹³ McWilliams, Valerie and Alop, Alan A., "The Dearth of Charity Care: Do Nonprofit Hospitals Deserve their Tax Exemptions?" Clearinghouse Review, July-August 2010, at 110.

partners to form a partnership in Alton. Each of the partnerships is designed to meet the specific needs of the community population where it is based.

LOLLAF advocates have also successfully challenged debt collectors' aggressive use of arrest warrants to collect on outstanding judgments for credit card, auto loan, and other consumer debts. In addition to successfully representing individual clients, a number of LOLLAF advocates were asked to participate in public hearings and provide suggestions regarding how to change this practice. The Illinois Attorney General made the issue a priority, and the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) shut down and fined collection agencies. Due, in part, to LOLLAF's advocacy, the Illinois Attorney General and the IDFPR drafted the Debtors' Imprisonment Prevention Act,¹⁴ which was enacted in July, 2012.

The Alton staff has been instrumental in initiating and staffing, at least initially, a number of court-based projects – a DV advocacy project that has operated for more than 9 years; a court-based debt collection defense project utilizing law students; a project that covers the Protection Order Docket in Carlinville (Macoupin County); and a mortgage foreclosure mediation project staffed by an AmeriCorps volunteer, which had been “spun off” to Madison County.

The Springfield office has a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) project, which grew out of its Ryan White HIV grant. Initially designed as outreach to make LGBT seniors aware of the services the program provides, the effort has transitioned into a project focused on issues involving children and civil unions.

LOLLAF engages in some community economic development, much of it affiliated with its small farms and local foods initiative. An attorney and a legal fellow in Champaign primarily handle this work, which includes outreach and networking with University of Illinois Extension staff, small farmers, and farmers' markets. They work with farmers and non-profit organizations involved with local foods, and provide transactional legal work, education, and assistance with general legal issues.

Despite these varied efforts, much of LOLLAF's legal work tends to be fairly routine in nature.¹⁵ With some exceptions, including a case of first impression stemming from an expungement, LOLLAF's extended case work is still heavily family-oriented. Family cases account for 611 of 672 uncontested court decisions and 240 of 339 contested court decisions in 2012. This orientation is likely to change as the program implements its current priorities and expands its foreclosure-related work.

The writing samples reviewed by the PQV team were of mixed quality; several were simple letters or form pleadings submitted by senior staff. Other advocates submitted solid, well-researched, and compellingly presented materials, including motions, memoranda, appeals, and letter briefs.

LOLLAF is aiming to expand its extended client representation. Some of this is reflected in the \$15,958 in attorneys' fees it was awarded in 2012.

¹⁴ HB 5434 (July 12, 2013).

¹⁵ See LOLLAF's comment at page 10 of the attachment.

LOLLAF provides limited service where advice is sufficient, cost effective, and likely to produce a good result. Its Medical Debt Relief Brief Services Project has successfully provided limited service to hospital charity care applicants. Since 2007, the total amount of debt forgiven by hospitals due to LOLLAF's efforts has exceeded \$1 million.

All callers to LARC are asked whether they are facing legal issues due to unpaid medical bills. Callers who respond affirmatively are then separately contacted in an effort to proactively resolve their problems. Services provided by this project are normally brief, and case turnover is rapid. In many cases, clients who would benefit from these services do not follow up with the information necessary for the project's attorney to assist them. In some instances, the clients who fail to follow up are actually being represented by other LOLLAF attorneys on different issues. These advocates are often not aware that the clients they are representing are also confronting medical debt issues and do not encourage these clients to pursue this relief.

LOLLAF provides considerable amounts of limited representation in particular areas. In 2012, staff closed 268 cases involving wills as limited action and 599 cases involving advance directives or powers of attorney as limited action.

Recommendation III.1.15.1*:

LOLLAF should encourage advocates to undertake more extended representation, as well as more complex litigation, with an emphasis on achieving lasting results for the client population.

Recommendation III.1.15.2*:

LOLLAF should use LegalServer to indicate if an applicant was referred for medical debt relief so that attorneys representing them in other capacities can encourage them to pursue such relief. LegalServer should also alert the medical debt relief project attorney when an applicant already has an open file at LOLLAF.

Finding 16. LOLLAF's statistics demonstrate that the program is productive.

In 2012, LOLLAF closed 9,417 cases. Its case numbers compare favorably with those of other programs. Almost three-quarters (74.7%) of its closed cases in 2012 were limited service cases; the national median for limited service cases was 77.4%. LOLLAF closed 352 cases per 10,000 poor persons in 2012, compared with a national median of 245. Its extended and contested closed cases per 10,000 poor persons were also above the national medians.

Of the cases LOLLAF closed in 2012, 44.5% were family, 20% were housing, 12.2% were consumer, and 6.16% were income maintenance. Slightly more than 11% of the program's cases were categorized as miscellaneous; these were predominantly limited service cases involving, wills, estates, advance directives, and powers of attorney.

Private attorney involvement (PAI)

Finding 17. LOLLAF has taken a number of steps to increase the involvement of private attorneys in its work.

LOLLAF uses a mix of *pro bono* and compensated private bar involvement delivery models to help serve local clients. Each of the five regional offices has a designated *pro bono* coordinator. Most of the *pro bono* attorneys are concentrated in the more urban counties while the PBI model, also known as Judicare, is primarily utilized in more remote counties. All Judicare attorneys also accept *pro bono* referrals.

In response to its strategic plan, the program created a *pro bono* task force in 2012, to help coordinate the recruitment and retention of *pro bono* attorneys, increase the amount of participation in its *pro bono* program, and develop new projects. The task force grew out of the program's *Pro Bono* Committee after LOLLAF decided it needed a more formal structure and greater resources for its efforts. The task force will help the program deal with the challenges it faces due to decreasing participation from attorneys in rural areas, new attorneys facing law school debt,¹⁶ and the retirement of attorneys who are existing PAI participants. Although recruitment and recognition of private attorneys will be handled by each regional office, the task force will help the program work on standardizing *pro bono* referral criteria and nominating proposed awardees for the Joseph R. Bartylak Annual *Pro Bono* Awards.

In 2013, the task force will be assisted by a VISTA worker who will help identify registered attorneys who may be potential volunteers and develop program-wide systems to improve the *pro bono* program.

The program uses LegalServer to identify potential attorneys. To encourage participation, Land of Lincoln presents awards in each judicial district. LOLLAF enjoys some excellent relationships with local bar associations. It collaborates with the Coles-Cumberland Bar Association, which passed a resolution in 1996 that requires every member (with certain exceptions) to perform 10 hours of *pro bono* work or donate \$250 annually to LOLLAF. The proceeds support the rent for the satellite office in Charleston. The bar association won the 2009 ISBA McAndrews Award in recognition of its exemplary *pro bono* efforts.

Such relationships with the private bar and bar associations are critical to increasing PAI participation. Some staff expressed concerns that building these relationships should be a higher priority among LOLLAF attorneys.

In 2012, 240 attorneys accepted *pro bono* referrals and 38 of 45 panel attorneys accepted Judicare referrals. Last year, 321 *pro bono* and 262 Judicare cases were closed and 359 cases

¹⁶ The Illinois State Bar Association formed a Special Committee to review the Impact of Law School Debt on the Delivery of Legal Services. It issued its Final Report & Recommendations on March 8, 2013. Lois Wood, LOLLAF's executive director, was a member of the Special Committee that authored this report.

were open at the end of the year. Close to 90% of PAI cases were family (mostly non-DV divorces) and close to 90% were closed with extended representation (33.8% settlement with litigation, 37% uncontested court decision, 7.7% contested court decision, and 9.6% extensive services). The percentage of family cases may change, as LOLLAF specified that a portion of its 2013 Judicare referrals be specifically for foreclosure and other non-family cases.

LOLLAF closed a total of 21.8 PAI cases per 10,000 poor persons in 2012, compared with a national median of 22. It closed 19.4 extended PAI cases per 10,000 poor persons for 2012; this exceeded the national median of seven; its actual contested PAI cases per 10,000 poor persons was nine compared with a national median of three.

Although the program's *pro bono* referrals appear to have increased in 2013, the increase is not consistent among regional offices. While most of the offices have made around 40 referrals, the Springfield office has only made seven. The referrals are still primarily in the family law area; all the cases referred from the Central Office were divorce cases. Some bankruptcies have been referred, particularly from the Eastern Office.

Given the state's minimum CLE requirements, it is notable that there has been an increase in the number of private attorneys acting as trainers. LOLLAF was itself certified as a MCLE provider. In 2008, LOLLAF received the Outstanding Achievement in Public Interest Award for its training on "Divorce Basics for *Pro Bono* Attorneys." The training was presented in person and as a live webcast on a number of occasions over Illinois Legal Aid Online's website. The session is now part of the *Pro Bono* Basics training, being done in conjunction with Prairie State Legal Services and ISBA's Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services, which was expanded in 2012 to cover other areas of law. Now called "*Pro Bono* Potpourri: Assisting Clients in Several Practice Areas," it will next be presented during Illinois' 2013 *Pro Bono* week.

LOLLAF has also benefited from a number of statewide initiatives aimed at improving *pro bono* participation. The Illinois Supreme Court adopted rules that require attorneys to annually report *pro bono* hours and financial contributions to legal aid, and give retired, inactive, and corporate attorneys with limited status the ability to provide *pro bono* services in conjunction with a legal aid program. LOLLAF is certified to use retired attorneys. The Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct were amended in 2010 to make it easier for private lawyers to provide short-term, limited scope *pro bono* representation. In April 2013, the Illinois Supreme Court enacted a new rule that permits in-house attorneys in the state to provide *pro bono* legal services free from unnecessary restrictions.

Recommendation III.2.17.1*:

LOLLAF should work to diversify the types of cases that are referred to private attorneys, including bankruptcies, Orders of Protection, wills, advance directives or powers of attorney, adoptions, security deposit returns, and other cases requiring limited representation.

Recommendation III.2.17.2*:

LOLLAF should diversify the non-representational opportunities available to *pro bono* attorneys, including their participation in community education events (at senior centers, DV shelters, and other venues), advice clinics, and *pro se* assistance.

Recommendation III.2.17.3*:

Given the recent Illinois Supreme Court rule changes, LOLLAF should make an effort to recruit retired and corporate attorneys who are living or working in its service area.

Other program services to and activities on behalf of the eligible client population.

Finding 18. The program actively collaborates on a number of levels with other members of the legal community to meet client needs.

Land of Lincoln has cultivated solid relations with other members of the statewide legal community. It collaborates with many local, regional, and statewide advocates on behalf of its clients. One of its regional managing attorneys is a member of the recently formed Illinois Access to Justice Commission, which is focusing on *pro se* litigants. He is serving on a committee working to develop standardized forms. One Springfield staff attorney serves on multiple committees of the Illinois State Bar Association, and an attorney from Champaign is on the ISBA's Family Law Section Council. The current president of the Illinois State Bar Association is a member of LOLLAF's board.

Some staff members are active members in bar associations in their regions. The program pays for their membership to one bar association. For example, the head of LOLLAF's *pro bono* task force is active in the state legal community. She is the president of the Edgar County Bar, the vice president of the East Central Illinois Women's Bar, and a member of several other county bars. One of the Carbondale staff attorneys is concluding her term as president of the Jackson County Bar Association; she holds this position after it was held by a number of her co-workers.

LOLLAF attorneys, along with members of the private bar, participate in the Third Judicial Circuit's Legal Advice Clinic and make presentations on housing issues to both residents and landlords. Other advocates took part in the People's Law School hosted by the Madison County Bar Association, either by making presentations or organizing the sessions. A senior staff attorney writes a column on legal issues, "The Law Q&A," which is published in *The News Gazette*.

The program's entire staff took part in "Lawyers Feeding Illinois," the ISBA's food and fundraising initiative to address the food needs of state residents. Land of Lincoln won the campaign's 2013 Governmental/Nonprofit Award.

LOLLAF has worked with the Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice to establish computer-based self-help centers in all 65 counties in its service area. The centers, located in libraries and

court buildings, also provide applicants with Internet access to pamphlets on legal issues and other materials referred to by the program.

PERFORMANCE AREA FOUR. Effectiveness of governance, leadership and administration.

Board governance

Finding 19. LOLLAF has an involved board of directors whose life experience makes them well-suited to developing the program's resources and promoting awareness of its work.

Land of Lincoln's board consists of 18 persons: 12 attorney members and 6 client board members, as well as two non-board member officers. Five of the client members are selected by the local Advisory Councils and represent each of the regional offices; the remaining client member is appointed by a vote of the full board. No member of the board (other than those selected by the advisory councils) shall serve more than four consecutive terms. The board is also assisted by two advisory members: a financial advisor, who is appointed by the board, and the board of director's immediate past president, who serves for two years after his/her successor is elected.

The board holds four regular meetings every year. Special meetings are conducted, as needed. Members can participate remotely. A quorum of seven members is required. A portion of each board meeting is devoted to an informational presentation on some aspect of the program's delivery system.

When new members join the board, the executive director meets with them individually to review the Board of Directors' Handbook and orient them to the organization. The program has proposed involving the board treasurer in the orientation of new board members to improve their awareness of and involvement in LOLLAF's fiscal and development matters.

The current board has a fairly diverse makeup in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, areas of practice or interest, and specific regional geographic attachments. It is composed of active members and includes individuals whose prior life experience and stature not only enables them to improve the level of sophistication and overall quality of board deliberations, but significantly enhances the program's reputation in the client, legal, and broader communities in which it operates. The current board includes former bar presidents and judges and, reflective of the program's long history and strong internal sense of continuity, it also includes an attorney member whose father preceded him as an active and revered board member.

Overall, it appears that LOLLAF's governing board fully understands and is diligently carrying out the bulk of its oversight responsibilities. The team's review of board records, supplemented by interviews with key officers and active committee members, indicates that board members are effectively oriented; regularly receive timely, accurate information; and are fully engaged. All of the board members who were interviewed understood, embraced, and seemed deeply committed to the program's mission. While the board is appropriately deferential to the views and recommendations of LOLLAF's highly seasoned and well-regarded management team, it appears that members - including client-eligible members - do not hesitate

to exercise their independent judgment in assessing the management team's effectiveness in pursuing the program's mission. One client board member was responsible for proposing the Voluntary Reduced Time Program, described below, which allowed the program to save money on salaries and benefits. If needed, the board will discuss issues at one board meeting and then act on them at the following meeting in order to give all members the opportunity to further review and consider any written or other materials and reflect on the issues which are before them.

Land of Lincoln, aware of the need to plan for transition, has developed a succession strategy with the active involvement of the board. It does not have a written succession plan. Under its strategy, LOLLAF annually devises a new action plan. Senior staffers are to notify the executive director well in advance of any plans to retire. This strategy permitted the program to begin successfully planning for the 2014 retirement of its long-time deputy director of finance and administration.

The board conducts an evaluation of the executive director on an annual basis.

Recommendation IV.1.19.1*:

Land of Lincoln should develop a written succession plan for executive leadership that includes the appointment of interim leadership as well as a search committee. The plan should specify the composition (board members, management, staff, and other constituencies) of the search committee and should outline a timeline for the succession process.

Finding 20. The program's by-laws are atypical in a number of respects.

The PQV team noted that LOLLAF's by-laws, which were last updated in 2006, are atypical in several respects. First, upon their election, the president and vice president shall no longer be members of the board, and are thereby ineligible to vote except in the event of a tie. Both officers, along with the secretary and treasurer and other appointed board members, serve on LOLLAF's executive committee, which also operates as the program's financial and oversight committee, and is authorized to "...exercise the powers of the Board...between meetings." Although it is unusual for a president and vice president to serve in this capacity, LOLLAF's board composition is in technical compliance with the requirements of 45 C.F.R. § 1607.3. This configuration has not detracted from the board's carrying out of its responsibilities.

Secondly, LOLLAF's by-laws differ from those of most other legal aid programs in the limited number of standing board committees they establish. The program has an executive committee, which, according to the bylaws, is empowered and authorized to act as the audit finance committee, and a nominating committee.¹⁷ While there are no formal requirements to have any particular number or types of committees, LOLLAF is a large program with many diverse elements and would likely derive substantial benefit from having more ongoing board assistance through the committee process.

¹⁷ See LOLLAF's comments at page 12 of the attachment.

In addition, in regard to the board's involvement in overseeing the program's handling of client grievances, some board members interviewed did not demonstrate any familiarity with the requirement for a client grievance committee under 45 C.F.R. §1621.2.

Recommendation IV.1.20.1:

LOLLAF should consider amending the by-laws to create a standing committee, whether a client grievance committee or a quality of practice committee, which would have a fairly in-depth knowledge of the client grievance procedures and how to handle the review of such issues.

Leadership

Finding 21. Land of Lincoln is led by dedicated and highly respected executive director.

LOLLAF's executive director is highly respected both within and outside the organization. Staffers described her as committed to the program's mission and enormously supportive and respectful of the entire staff. She appears willing to listen, open to new ideas, and supportive of innovation and risk-taking, but in a thoughtful and deliberative way. She regularly meets with individual staff members; she particularly does so when the agency is confronting difficult issues that may impact them or their office. And, while the director is sensitive to staff concerns, she is also willing to make and execute tough decisions. It appears that she models a strong work ethic, but is also sensitive to the importance of maintaining a work-life balance.

The esteem in which the staff holds the executive director and her top management team is also evident outside the program. The executive director was recently appointed by Senator Durbin to serve on a judicial appointment committee. She has been a member of ISBA's Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services Committee since 2004, and will begin serving as the chair of the committee in June 2013.

The executive director is supported by a well-regarded deputy director for programs and advocacy, who is sought out by staff for advice and input regarding innovative projects and activities. The two directors work closely and complement each other's areas of strengths.

Overall Management and Administration

Finding 22. LOLLAF's management team effectively administers the agency and ensures that it competently utilizes systems to meet client needs.

Land of Lincoln is well managed. Its efforts are overseen by a management team comprised of the executive director, the deputy directors for programs and advocacy and of finance and administration, managing attorneys, and other senior staff. This group meets in person, twice yearly, and conducts at least one other telephone conference call meeting. Between meetings, the directors regularly remain in touch with the regional offices. For example, in advance of composing the program's vision and mission, both the deputy director for programs and advocacy and the development director visited every office and obtained input from regional staff.

The regional offices are supervised by managing attorneys who are also deeply committed to the program. They are, in turn, framing a vision and actively inspiring a culture of energy, creativity, innovation, excellence, and achievement.

The program, aware of the need to pass on the institutional knowledge it has developed, has taken affirmative steps to ensure leadership development. In early 2013, LOLLAF began to include task force leaders in some management meetings, in an effort to expand their awareness of the program's management structure, etc. It is anticipated that these expanded meetings will now take place twice a year. In addition, LOLLAF has sought training opportunities that will enhance staff leadership skills. In October 2011, eight supervisors - ranging from potential leaders who did not yet have extensive management responsibilities to managing attorneys and the executive director - attended a workshop entitled "Successful Supervision and Management."

The service area, bordered by the Mississippi, Ohio, and Wabash Rivers, periodically suffers from floods as well as tornadoes. The program has a disaster plan, which identifies a wide range of potential disaster threats and notes both the impact such problems would have on the agency as well as the likelihood of such threats. LOLLAF has established and implemented a number of strategies - emergency lighting, natural gas generators, and weather alert radio systems - to help the program reduce or eliminate disaster-related risks.

Recommendation IV.3.22.1:

The program should continue making affirmative efforts to build on its success in attracting, nurturing, and retaining positive and effective leaders.

Finding 23. LOLLAF maintains an information technology (IT) environment that, subject to a few exceptions, meets user needs.

LOLLAF outsources many of its information technology functions to Acropolis, an established managed service provider (MSP) in the region. The program appears to have a good relationship with the vendor. Acropolis provides most support and maintenance remotely but can be available on site when necessary. They handle a broad range of IT issues, including supporting the program-wide MPLS network, LOLLAF's servers, and its use of Microsoft Remote Desktop Services (RDS). Acropolis uses established MSP solutions to monitor the LOLLAF network, process helpdesk requests, and implement security patches and other software updates. They handle back-ups for the program too, except for LegalServer data, which is handled through PS Technologies, Inc.

LOLLAF's technology committee, which is made up of members of the program's executive team along with technology-responsible staff, meets with Acropolis twice a year. Program staff reported that the vendor is generally responsive to helpdesk requests and resolving IT issues, but some staff, particularly those in outlying offices, reported that RDS and the Internet were often slow and less reliable. Some staff also reported that these issues can impact their ability to complete their work effectively.

The program utilizes staff workstations running Windows XP, Vista, and Windows 7. Given LOLLAF's receipt of foreclosure funding, the staff involved in that project received new

desktops running Windows 7. This allowed LOLLAF to cycle out its older computers. However, several computers still run Windows XP, which Microsoft will stop supporting in April 2014. These computers will need to be upgraded or replaced.

Staff utilizes many of the case management features available in LegalServer. As mentioned earlier, LOLLAF can still make better of this system by uploading correspondence, pleadings, and other materials.

Land of Lincoln is a potential beneficiary of the Technology Initiatives Grant awarded to Prairie State Legal Services to develop more advanced data collection and analysis at both the state and the program level, including the use of GIS mapping to capture and analyze geographically-referenced data and a statewide collaborative that will expand data analysis capacities across Illinois. This will provide LOLLAF with an opportunity to better use data to monitor program effectiveness and more efficiently allocate resources. For example, real-time “dashboards” could allow managers to routinely assess how the program is meeting key metrics and adapt quickly when changes are needed.

Although the program has taken important steps to improve its computers and network, several office telephone systems are outdated, causing call quality issues, and would benefit from an upgrade. Phones are also not connected between offices with extensions. The LARC hotline utilizes a modern phone system, but LOLLAF will need to ensure that the phone systems in other offices meet staff needs.

Land of Lincoln launched an impressive redesign of its website in 2013. The new site is professional, utilizes a clean and crisp design, and displays well on smartphones and tablets. Instead of trying to create its own client materials, the program simply links to the numerous materials already made available through Illinois Legal Aid Online. It also provides a direct link to the LSC website.

LOLLAF is well-positioned to move its IT systems beyond the standard server environment. As it did with LegalServer, the program could move its email, calendaring, and productivity software to a reliable cloud provider such as Microsoft Office 365 or Google Apps. This change would likely provide cost-savings and improved access for staff, and could ultimately eliminate Land of Lincoln’s need for the program-wide MPLS network.

Recommendation IV.3.23.1*:

LOLLAF should explore adopting a cloud solution such as Office 365 or Google Apps to eliminate its reliance on Remote Desktop Services and the program-wide MPLS network. Connecting to LegalServer and other key applications directly through the Internet should improve access and could reduce overall costs and maintenance needs. In the meantime, staff should receive training on the best ways to access LegalServer and shared files.

Recommendation IV.3.23.2:

LOLLAF should consider standardizing its desktops on Windows 7 and continue to cycle out older workstations.

Recommendation IV.3.23.3:

As resources permit, Land of Lincoln should take steps to make certain that the telephone system throughout the program meets staff needs. It should upgrade all of its telephones, and endeavor to connect phones between offices with extensions.

Finding 24. Land of Lincoln’s financial operations appear to be well-managed.¹⁸

LOLLAF has sufficient financial policies, procedures, and practices in place and has a capable and trained staff dedicated to financial administration. The program conducts effective budget planning and oversight. It issues useful financial information that is regularly provided to the board on a timely basis.

Land of Lincoln’s current financial staff consists of three FTEs, including the deputy director of finance and administration, an accountant, an accounting assistant, and a legal assistant (secretary). While the current configuration of the accounting department has been sufficient to handle the LOLLAF’s financial administration, the department is now working to its full capacity. Given the program’s expanded funding sources and levels, together with upcoming transitions among key accounting department personnel, the LOLLAF board approved the agency’s hiring of another accountant.

The program had retained the same auditor for many years. Its 2011 audit was rejected by LSC’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG); this matter is currently under appeal. LOLLAF had hired a new auditor for the 2012 audit. That audit, completed in April 2013, reveals no significant problems or issues.

The program’s accounting handbook is in need of a set of revisions which the program has commenced but not completed.

Recommendation IV.4.24.1*:

LOLLAF should aim, as expeditiously as possible, to fill the open accounting department position.¹⁹

Recommendation IV.4.24.2*:

Land of Lincoln should promptly complete the revisions it is currently making in the program’s accounting handbook.

Finding 25. LOLLAF’s human resources administration is a shared responsibility. As a program, it has established policies designed to recruit and retain high quality staff.

LOLLAF’s human resources administration is largely supervised by the deputy director of finance and administration utilizing a total of 1.25 FTEs. Salaries and benefits are reviewed

¹⁸ This visit was conducted by the Office of Program Performance (OPP) for the purposes set forth in the Introduction. OPP findings and recommendations under this criterion are limited to staffing, organization, and general administrative functions. Assessment of fiscal operations is conducted by other offices at LSC.

¹⁹ See page 13 of the attached comments. The position was filled after the visit took place.

annually by management and the board; comparisons are made to salaries offered by local public defenders, states' attorneys and other legal services agencies.

The program has taken employee opinion into account when making benefit decisions. For example, when LOLLAF was to change health insurance providers, staff raised questions since some providers did not cover in-network doctors in large portions of the program's service area. The executive director willingly presented options and asked for feedback; the employees made a proposal and were pleased with management's response.

LOLLAF aims to recruit new attorneys from law schools with loan forgiveness programs, and has successfully nominated existing employees for loan forgiveness fellowships.

In order to address financial issues as well as the changing needs of its workforce, Land of Lincoln introduced a Voluntary Reduced Time Program in 2011. Under the program, employees can opt to reduce their time. This results in salary savings as well as decreased costs in health benefits, etc.

Since no one individual officially administers human resources, it can be difficult for staff to determine who they should approach concerning particular questions or problems. Given the number of time-limited and part-time positions, including the staff at LARC, it is important for the program to ensure that everyone feels as much a part of the program as possible.

Most of the staff members are evaluated yearly. It appears that each office conducts the process somewhat differently.

Recommendation IV.5.25.1:

The program should consider having one staff person serve as the point person for the administration of human resources. This would ensure that all staff members receive the same message regarding this important aspect of their work.

Internal communication

Finding 26. Land of Lincoln effectively maintains and enhances its staff-management communications.

The executive director regularly send emails informing staff of grants received, funding issues, etc. She also makes periodic visits to each regional office, where she meets individually with many staff. Some support staff indicated that they would appreciate more one-on-one interaction with the executive director.

Management recognizes that the distances between offices make it challenging to bring the staff together regularly. LOLLAF has begun issuing a newsletter, "What's Up at Land of Lincoln," to inform all staff, particularly the newer members, of the work being done by their colleagues throughout the program. It will probably be published quarterly and will contain biographies of new staff, reminders of task force and other meetings, updates on legal achievements, as well as personal news.

General resource development and maintenance

Finding 27. Land of Lincoln has implemented an effective system for resource development and successfully diversified its funding sources.

Land of Lincoln's resource development is currently managed by a director and an associate director, who was formerly an attorney with the program. The development director appreciates that successful development is based upon an understanding of the operation of a program's financial and administrative units and that, to achieve such understanding, the development unit must work hand in hand with the colleagues engaged in those functions.

Land of Lincoln regularly seeks out new sources of support from both grants and contracts. Under its 2012 Development Work Plan, it aimed to identify at least two new grant sources per month, and to annually submit funding applications to newly-identified funders. It has been successful in increasing, and diversifying, its sources of funding; it is now administering more than 85 different grants and contracts. Almost a third of the program's current funding is from LSC.

The program has been successful in raising funds from the private bar. LOLLAF held its first private bar campaign in 1996. It has subsequently engaged in a number of highly successful capital and critical services campaigns. It has been the beneficiary of substantial gifts, permitting it to purchase and refurbish two of its office buildings and to renovate or relocate its other offices. Now that it has celebrated its 40th anniversary, the program is about to embark on another capital campaign. This appears to be a carefully thought-out process. The director of development conducted a series of meetings with current and potential donors and key stakeholders throughout the service area. Members of the private bar have launched a Campaign for Equal Justice; its goal is to make Land of Lincoln the focus of charitable giving in the legal community.

The program recognizes its most substantial donors by naming its facilities and the rooms within them in their honor. Its East St. Louis office was named the "Dorothy O. Cook Community Law Center," in honor of the deceased mother of a local attorney. To date, the program has not been supported by corporate donors.

LOLLAF is seeking to involve younger professionals in its work, whether as financial or other supporters. It is starting a Young Friends Group in the Madison-St. Clair County area, which will include lawyers and non-lawyers in both social events and social service projects. The program hopes to eventually replicate the initial group throughout the entire service area.

The program produces and distributes an annual report newsletter. It also intends to produce and distribute a 40th Anniversary Report by August 31, 2013.

Land of Lincoln is likely to benefit from the Equal Justice Illinois Campaign, a newly-created, bi-partisan coalition of state leaders working to increase state funding of civil legal aid so that all Illinois residents – regardless of income – have access to the justice system.

Recommendation IV.7.27.1:

Land of Lincoln should review the corporations that are based in its service area and make an effort to involve corporate attorneys in some of its program operations, including board membership and its Young Friends Group.

Coherent and comprehensive delivery structure/Participation in an integrated legal services delivery system.

Finding 28. Land of Lincoln, an active participant in the legal community, is respected throughout the service area and the state.

Land of Lincoln is an active member of the statewide justice community on a number of levels, whether through local or state bar associations or other groups. A number of staff, including LOLLAF's executive director, serves on the ISBA's Delivery of Legal Services Committee, and a managing attorney is on the Illinois Access to Justice Commission. Program staff collaborates with hospitals, schools, and other non-profit social service organizations. LOLLAF also coordinates with the law schools and law students in its area, including the University of Illinois, Southern Illinois University, and St. Louis University. Land of Lincoln regularly partners with the other LSC-funded legal services programs located in Illinois.