



**Legal Services Corporation
Technology Initiative Grants**

Notice

**Request for Letters of Intent to Apply for 2010 Grant
Funding**

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Technology Innovative Grant Program
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I. Summary

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) issues this Notice describing the conditions under which Letters of Intent will be received for the Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) program. LSC's TIG program was established in 2000. Since that time, we have made 413 grants totaling \$33 million. This grant program provides an integral tool to help achieve LSC's goal of increasing the quantity and quality of legal services provided to eligible persons. When submitting Letters of Intent, applicants should consider the phenomenal growth and continued development of technology and the resulting effects on the practice of law, program management and service delivery. Projects funded under this program develop, test and replicate innovative technologies that can enable grant recipients and state justice communities to improve clients' access to high quality legal assistance through an integrated and well managed technology system.

II. General Information

All prospective applicants for 2010 funds from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) program must submit a "Letter of Intent" prior to submitting a formal application. The submission and review of Letters of Intent enables a prospective applicant to vet their project ideas with TIG staff, who can then identify those projects that have a reasonable chance of success in the competitive grant process. LSC will solicit full proposals for only those projects that have a reasonable chance of success in the grant competition process based on LSC's analysis of the information provided in the Letters of Intent.

The format and contents of the Letters of Intent should conform to the requirements specified below in Section III.

Funding Availability

Approximately \$3.4 million will be available for 2010 grant awards.

Court Collaborations

From its inception, the TIG program has emphasized the importance of projects that help those persons who cannot obtain the services of an attorney. We have also encouraged our programs to work with the courts in order to find solutions to the problems often encountered by unrepresented litigants. The State Justice Institute (SJI) awards grants to improve the quality of justice in state courts and to foster innovative, efficient solutions

to common problems faced by all courts. This year LSC and the State Justice Institute will again work closely together to identify a number of worthy collaborative projects where each organization might be able to provide funding. While there is no guarantee that such projects will be selected for full proposals, we encourage our grantees to reach out to their local and state courts to identify such projects and to submit Letters of Intent to LSC. For more information, applicants should check out the SJI website, <http://www.statejustice.org/>.

Grant Categories

LSC will accept projects in three application categories:

- 1) Website**
- 2) Replication**
- 3) Open Category**

Grant Category 1: Websites

A. Renewal Websites

Maximum Grant Amount: \$25,000

Recipients of statewide website grants in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 or 2007 may submit a Letter of Intent for additional funding up to \$25,000 if they:

- a) have not previously received a renewal grant, and
- b) anticipate they will complete, report on and be approved by LSC for successful achievement of their milestones through *the third payment milestone period by April 3, 2010*.

NOTE: This will be the last year for the Renewal Website category.

B. Continuation Websites

Maximum Grant Amount: \$25,000

Recipients of statewide website grants in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, or 2007 may submit a Letter of Intent for additional funding up to \$25,000 if they:

- a) have received a renewal website grant, and
- b) have not previously received a continuation website grant, and
- c) anticipate they will complete, report on and be approved by LSC for successful achievement of their renewal grant *first payment milestones by April 3, 2010*.

NOTE: This will be the last year for the Continuation Website category.

C. Website Improvement and Innovation

LSC has funded the creation and continuation of statewide website grants since 2001 to help states build and coordinate effective websites for the use of clients, advocates and pro bono attorneys. TIG will continue that funding for the 2010 grant year. In 2010, TIG

will fund a new category of website initiatives that expands the potential use of websites. Websites should no longer be considered primarily as static repositories to post and download information. For instance, live help and video may provide better assistance and direction to clients looking for information, and Web 2.0 tools can provide opportunities to enhance websites to better engage and educate clients, advocates, partners and communities. Every year, more of the client-eligible population is using the Internet. According to a September 2009 survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, individuals in 62% of households with incomes of less than \$30,000 have access to and use the Internet, either from home or from public access points, at least occasionally.

The Website Improvement and Innovation category is designated for initiatives that will add new tools, promote website traffic, build community and increase the effectiveness of statewide websites to better serve their community, partners, advocates, and client population.

Grant Category 2: Replication

To leverage TIG funds, LSC has always stressed that grants be replicable. LSC requires that any software developed with TIG funding be available to other legal services programs at little or no cost. This policy has allowed LSC to develop two website templates, which have been successfully replicated at a fraction of the cost of development of standalone websites in each state. In 2010, LSC will continue to use a Replication Category to focus on the implementation of tested methodologies and technologies to encourage the replication and improvement of previous TIG projects.

A: Replication of Previous TIG Projects Category

During the past ten years of this program there have been many successes. A complete list of completed projects with contact information can be found at <http://tig.lsc.gov/>. The final reports of a range of successful projects are available at: <http://tig.lsc.gov/evaluation.php>. Although successful, many projects have not been replicated in other states and programs because of the costs incurred in doing so.

Applicants should look to previous successful TIG projects and determine how they could be replicated at a substantially reduced cost from the original project. Projects that lend themselves to replication are projects where software or content has already been created. Since any software developed through the TIG program is available to all LSC grantees at little or no cost, it is recommended that you look to these projects to see how they could benefit the delivery systems in your state.

Projects that do not lend themselves to replication are projects for the development or acquisition of hardware or technical equipment. In addition, the bandwidth costs of wide area networks (WAN) are driven by costs from local providers and benefit little from replication.

B: Automated Form Replication

There are over 3,500 active HotDocs templates being hosted on the LawHelp Interactive National HotDocs Server. While there are differences from state to state in the content

and format of the forms, many of these can be edited for use in other jurisdictions with less effort, hence a lower cost, than starting from scratch.

In addition to these templates, the server hosts more than 1,300 A2J interviews to gather the information needed to complete the templates. Even if a form differs from one state to another, the information needed to populate the form will, for the most part, be the same. What is the name of the plaintiff, the name of the defendant, the name of the children, etc. This means the interviews are more easily replicated than templates.

All of these templates and interviews are available to be modified as needed. TIG has always sought to leverage its scarce grant dollars by encouraging replication, so we have created this specific category to invite such replication. Applicants should identify which forms and templates are to be adapted, then estimate the cost to do this and how much that would save over doing them from scratch.

Grant Category 3: Open Category

The Open Category is designated for projects: (1) that implement new or innovative approaches for using technology in legal services; (2) that enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of other TIG initiatives or that enable the legal services community to better use technology to increase the quality and quantity of services to clients; and/or (3) that enable grantees to substantially increase and/or improve the services provided their client communities.

There is no funding limit or matching requirement for applications in this category. However, additional weight is given to projects with strong demonstrated support from appropriate partners.

Proposals for initiatives with broad applicability and/or that would have impact throughout the legal services community are strongly encouraged.

For applications that do not have broad applicability or impact, LSC will carefully consider the size of the request and the cost-effective balance of risk and reward.

III. Areas of Interest

LSC has always welcomed applications for a wide variety of projects. For 2010, LSC has four areas of particular interest in which programs are encouraged to submit proposals for innovative technology approaches. The inclusion of these areas does not in any way limit the scope of proposals in which LSC is interested. A new funding category is not required for proposals that address these areas of interests because these are encompassed by the broad categories listed above.

These areas of interest are:

Board Training and Oversight. It is paramount that an effective legal services program have an active board that is well trained in governance, fiscal and program oversight, and resource development. While some issues are unique to individual programs, most areas of training and oversight are common among the programs, offering the opportunity to create web-based training modules and modalities that can be configured to the needs of individual programs. Also, the large geographic areas served by many programs may create challenges for active board engagement. Programs should explore how

technologies such as video conferencing, online meeting centers, wikis, listservs, and blogs can help them increase efficiencies to address and overcome these types of challenges.

Changing Service Demands Caused by the Economic Crisis. The Congressional Budget Office and other analysts project that annual unemployment for 2010 will hover around 10%. The impact of the recession and continued high unemployment could significantly increase the size of the client eligible population by as much as 30% over its numbers in 2007. In addition to sharply increasing the overall demands for grantees' services, the economic crisis has greatly intensified the need for assistance on a range of specific legal problems. These include but are not limited to: (1) the impact of foreclosures on both owners and renters; (2) a range of consumer issues, such as predatory lending, credit card debt, repossessions, excessive medical debt and bankruptcy; (3) unemployment compensation insurance and other public benefits; and (4) evictions and homelessness. LSC is looking for proposals that would use technology to enhance services to clients adversely affected by the issues noted above. These could include use of document assembly to make pleading preparation more efficient for advocates and pro se litigants, training modules, knowledge management tools, technology to increase collaboration and other creative use of technology.

Increasing access to legal assistance for limited English proficient client populations. In a recent publication entitled Language Access in State Courts, the Brennan Center for Justice reports that "Nearly 25 million people in this country have limited proficiency in English (LEP)..." In recent years legal services programs serving both urban and rural populations have seen an increase in demand for assistance from this special population. There is a higher incidence of poverty within the LEP population and the lack of services or information in that population's native languages results in even greater difficulty accessing services. Technology-enabled strategies can greatly enhance access to and utilization of legal services for LEP persons. To this end, LSC encourages technology-based proposals that seek to increase system capacity and promote greater LEP client access to legal services.

Improving Fiscal Operations. The fiscal management of a legal aid program, with multiple funding sources, evolving technology, numerous offices and new electronic banking arrangements, is a constantly challenging endeavor. There is an increased emphasis on internal controls with the enactment of Sarbanes Oxley and the fiscal audits of legal aid programs by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and LSC's Office of Inspector General (OIG). To assist grantees to improve fiscal operations LSC is involved in an effort to identify best fiscal practices and to revise the LSC Accounting Guide. In the Improving Fiscal Operations category, LSC encourages proposals for applications that will use technology for more efficient ways to improve fiscal operations by, for example, (1) surmounting the technological challenges for fully integrating the timekeeping records employees enter for work on a grant in its case management system with the accounting and payroll programs so they are electronically transferred and the timekeeping and accounting functions are one seamless operation in which employees need enter time only once; or (2) build into payroll and accounting systems automated queries and data validation rules derived from the internal fiscal controls found in the

Fundamental Criteria of LSC's Accounting Guide in a manner that efficiently facilitates and requires the use of, and adherence to, these controls.

IV. Specific Letter of Intent Requirements

One Project Per Letter of Intent

Applicants may submit multiple Letters of Intent for multiple projects. Each project for which you seek funding should be submitted in a separate Letter of Intent. For example, do not combine a request for a statewide website grant with a grant request to expand the intake system.

Letter Requirements and Format

The Letter of Intent must be submitted using an online system that can be found at <http://tig.lsc.gov/> under the TIG Online Systems tab. This system will walk you through the process of creating a simple two page Letter of Intent. You are not required to submit a hardcopy of your Letter of Intent. The Letter of Intent should concisely provide the following information about the proposed project:

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

Waiver Authority

It is the general intent of LSC not to waive any of the provisions set forth in this Notice. However, under extraordinary circumstances and when it is in the best interest of our targeted client community, LSC, upon its own initiative or when requested, may waive provisions in this Notice at its sole discretion. Waivers may only be granted for requirements that are discretionary and not mandated by statute or regulation. Any request for a waiver must set forth the extraordinary circumstances for the request and be included in the application. LSC will not consider a request to waive the deadline for a Letter of Intent unless the waiver request is received by LSC prior to the deadline.

Eligible Organizations

TIG grants are only available to current LSC program grantees. Although other entities are not eligible to apply, they are encouraged to participate as project partners. 2010 TIG grants will not be awarded to programs unless they have made satisfactory progress on all previously awarded TIG grants. Because of the time and effort involved for programs to submit Letters of Intent and for LSC staff to review and assess them, programs should be up to date according to the milestone schedule on all previous TIG grants prior to submitting a Letter of Intent. If there are compelling reasons for delays in completing prior grants, programs must work with LSC staff to secure new payment due dates prior to submitting a Letter of Intent. Failure to do so will disqualify submissions.

Letter of Intent Deadline

Letters of Intent must be completed and submitted into the online system no later than midnight EST, Monday, March 1, 2010. The online system often experiences technical difficulties due to heavy traffic on the day of the deadline. Applicants are strongly encouraged to complete their Letter of Intent submissions as early as possible.

Non-conforming Letters of Intent

LSC will initially review all Letters of Intent to determine whether they conform to the required format and clearly present all of the required elements. These requirements are listed and described in Section III. Failure to meet these requirements may result in rejection of the Letter of Intent.

Next Steps for Successful Applicants

LSC will notify successful Letter of Intent applicants by Friday, April 2, 2010. Successful applicants will have until midnight EST, Friday, May 21, 2010 to complete full applications in the online application system.