



Legal Services Corporation

Veterans Pro Bono Program Request for Proposals for Calendar Year 2016 Grant Funding

Issued: November 3, 2015

**Application Submission Deadline:
Friday, December 11, 2015
By 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time**

Table of Contents

I. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW	1
II. DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY.....	2
III. ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING.....	3
Eligibility.....	3
Availability of Funds.....	3
Single vs. Multiple Grants.....	4
Award Period	4
Funding Instrument.....	4
IV. APPLICABLE LAW AND GRANT REQUIREMENTS.....	4
Reporting and Oversight Activities.....	4
Application of LSC Statutes and Regulations to Veterans Pro Bono Grant Funds.....	4
Freedom of Information Act	5
False Statement	5
Conflicts of Interest.....	5
V. APPLICATION PROCESS AND INSTRUCTIONS.....	5
Application Deadline	5
Late Submissions.....	6
Nonconforming Submissions.....	6
Notice of Intent to Withdraw Application	6
Key Competition Dates.....	6
Format Instructions	6
Application Components.....	7
Method of Submission	8
Acknowledgement of Receipt.....	10
VI. AWARD NOTIFICATION AND GRANT NEGOTIATION.....	10
Grant Negotiations.....	10
Final Award Decisions.....	11
Activities Prior to Award or Negotiated Starting Dates.....	11
Grantee Transition.....	11
VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION.....	11
Payment Schedule.....	11

Eligible Costs	11
Subgrants	12
Contracts	12
Competition in Contracts for Services	13
VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION	13
IX. APPLICATION QUESTIONS.....	14
<i>PROJECT DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES (Weight: 60%)</i>	14
A. Organization Description and Project Overview	14
B. Program Components	15
<i>1. Component One: Outreach to and Access by Eligible Appellants</i>	15
<i>2. Component Two: Case Screening and Placement</i>	16
<i>3. Component Three: Pro Bono Volunteer Recruitment and Support</i>	16
<i>4. Component Four: Additional Program Services</i>	17
<i>ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (Weight: 25%)</i>	18
A. Experience with Veterans Legal Services and Pro Bono Efforts.....	18
<i>COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (Weight: 15%)</i>	19

APPENDICES (provided as separate attachments)

Appendix I:	Applicant Information and Certification of Satisfaction of Threshold Requirements
Appendix II:	Fiscal Application
Appendix III:	Subgrant and Contract Proposals
Appendix IV:	Budget Instructions
Appendix V:	Narrative Outline
Appendix VI:	Text of Public Law 102-229
Appendix VII:	Sample Grant Assurances
Appendix VIII:	Veterans Pro Bono Program 2016 Grant Competition Additional Information

**LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2016 FUNDING FOR
THE VETERANS PRO BONO PROGRAM**

Applicants should read this Request for Proposals (RFP) in its entirety before preparing a proposal. All Applicants will be expected to be in strict compliance with these requirements.

I. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is a private, non-profit corporation established by Congress in 1974 to provide grants of federally appropriated funds for civil legal services to low-income individuals and families. Pursuant to Public Law 102-229, Title I, Ch. II, 105 Stat. 1701, 1710 (1991), LSC awards grant funds for the Veterans Pro Bono Program (Program) for the purpose of furnishing effective, efficient and high-quality pro bono legal and other assistance to “veterans and other persons who are unable to afford the cost of legal representation in connection with decisions” of, or other proceedings in, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (Court).¹ Funds for the Veterans Pro Bono Program are authorized by and subject to Public Law 102-229, as incorporated by reference in subsequent appropriations for the Court. See Appendix VI for full text of Public Law 102-229.

The Court is an independent, federal, judicial tribunal established under Article I of the U.S. Constitution. It has exclusive jurisdiction to handle direct appeals of decisions of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Board of Veterans Appeals (Board) involving claims for benefits provided by the VA for veterans and other eligible individuals. The Court accepts appeals or petitions without geographical limits. The Court’s review of Board decisions is based on the record before the VA and the written briefs of the parties. Oral argument is generally held only in cases presenting new legal issues.

At its inception in 1988, the Court was concerned with the high number of unrepresented appellants, which hinders its ability to provide efficient and effective judicial review and reduces the likelihood that appellants – facing opposing counsel representing the Secretary of the VA as the appellee – will prevail.

In recognition of this problem, Congress instructed the Court in 1992, through Public Law 102–229, to provide funds from its appropriation for LSC to award funds for “a program that furnishes case screening and referral, training and education for attorney and related personnel, and encouragement and facilitation of pro bono representation by

¹ For convenience, the individuals identified in Public Law 102-229 as recipients of services under this Program (“veterans and other persons who are unable to afford the cost of legal representation in connection with decisions,” of, or other proceedings in, the Court) are referred to, collectively, as “eligible appellants” in this RFP.

members of the bar and law school clinical and other appropriate programs, such as veterans service organizations, and through defraying expenses incurred in providing representation to such persons.”

Since 1992, the volume of unrepresented appellants has decreased, but it remains sizable. In FY 2014, pro se individuals filed 33% of the 3,745 appeals filed with the Court and 36% of the 312 petitions filed with the Court. In its FY 2014 annual report, the Court noted steady growth in the overall numbers of appeals and petitions filed that year, reflecting increasing numbers of decisions rendered by the Board of Veterans Appeals. The Court expected that total appeals and petitions filed in FY 2015 would exceed 4,600,² and preliminary statistics from FY 2015 suggest that pro se numbers at filing were below 20%.

II. DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

LSC invites interested parties that have submitted Notices of Intent to Compete acceptable to LSC to submit proposals for use of Veterans Pro Bono Program funds for calendar year 2016.

Through this competitive process, LSC seeks to fund the organization or entity that will most effectively and efficiently further the purpose of the Program:

to facilitate the provision of high-quality legal and other assistance, without charge, to veterans and other individuals who are unable to afford the cost of legal representation in connection with decisions of, or other proceedings in, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

This purpose is to be achieved through a project that incorporates, at a minimum, the core activities prescribed in Public Law 102-229:

- Case screening and referral;
- Training and education for attorney and related personnel;
- Encouragement and facilitation of pro bono representation by members of the bar and law school clinical and other appropriate programs, such as veterans service organizations; and
- Defraying expenses incurred in providing representation to eligible appellants.

LSC expects to fund an Applicant that successfully integrates these core activities into its proposal and responds to the Application Questions below and all other requirements included in this RFP.

² Annual Report, United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, October 1, 2013 to September 30, 2014 (Fiscal Year 2014), at 5. Available at <https://www.uscourts.cavc.gov/documents/FY2014AnnualReport06MAR15FINAL.pdf>.

Veterans Pro Bono Program grant funds are authorized *only for services in connection with decisions of, or other proceedings in, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.*

III. ELIGIBILITY AND FUNDING

Eligibility

In addition to demonstrating the ability to carry out the provisions of this RFP, Applicants must meet the following threshold requirements to be considered for funding. *Failure to meet the threshold requirements disqualifies an applicant.*

Threshold Requirements

- **Organization Type:** Applicants must be either: (1) Non-profit organizations that have as a purpose the provision of free legal assistance to low-income individuals or the provision of free services to veterans; or (2) private attorneys or law firms that seek to establish such a non-profit for these purposes.
- **Submission of Notice of Intent to Compete:** Pursuant to the *Notice of Availability of Calendar Year 2016 Competitive Grant Funds for the Veterans Pro Bono Program* published by LSC in the Federal Register on July 27, 2015.³ Applicants must have submitted a Notice of Intent to Compete accepted by LSC in order to submit a proposal in response to this RFP and participate in the grant competition.
- **Geographic Scope of Services:** An application must include a plan to serve eligible veterans, dependents, or other persons with proceedings before the Court, *regardless of their location or residence.* An application may not be restricted to service in a particular geographic area. To provide the required coverage, an Applicant may partner with other organizations. (These other organizations do not need to meet the “organization type” requirements set forth above.)

Applicants must certify on the form provided in Appendix I that these threshold requirements have been satisfied.

Availability of Funds

The exact amount of available funds and the date, terms, and conditions of their availability for calendar year 2016 will be determined through the congressional appropriations process for FY 2016. As of the date of publication of this RFP, the amount available is not known because Congress has not provided a full appropriation for the Court for FY 2016. For the past three years, Congress has appropriated approximately \$2,500,000 each year to the Court for this Program. Any grant extensions or renewals are subject to the funding amounts appropriated by Congress.

³ Notice of Availability of Calendar Year 2016 Competitive Grant Funds for the Veterans Pro Bono Program, 80 Fed. Reg. 44,398 (July 27, 2015).

For purposes of responding to this RFP, Applicants should assume that LSC will award \$2,460,000 for calendar year 2016. This estimated amount reflects the estimated congressional appropriation to the Court, minus an annual allocation of \$40,000 to LSC to cover its grant administration and oversight expenses. Budget instructions are included below and in Appendix IV. Applications must contain one-year budgets. Please do not submit multi-year budgets.

Single vs. Multiple Grants

LSC intends to award one grant to a single Applicant through this competition. LSC may award more than one grant, however, if it determines that multiple grants are necessary to ensure that all eligible appellants will have access to services in accordance with Public Law 102-229 or other applicable law.

Award Period

The Veterans Pro Bono Program award normally has a grant period of twelve months, from January 1 through December 31. Because of the timing of the 2016 competition cycle, the start date of the grant term may be delayed for 2016, in which case LSC may award funding for a different period, not to exceed twelve months. LSC may award the grant for a shorter period, which may be subject to discretionary renewal or extension. LSC may also decide on a funding term of up to three years. In that case, at the end of the grant period, the grantee may apply for renewal or extension of a grant within the funding term. Noncompliance with the grant terms or applicable laws and rules may result in termination of the grant award at any time during the grant period.

Funding Instrument

The funding mechanism for the Veterans Pro Bono Program is a grant.

IV. APPLICABLE LAW AND GRANT REQUIREMENTS

All grants made pursuant to this solicitation are subject to the authorizing legislation in Public Law 102-229. Grantees must also comply with the requirements stated in the grant assurances and grant award documents, which will be provided to the successful Applicant upon notification of the final award decision. See Appendix VII for sample grant assurances for reference.

Reporting and Oversight Activities

Grantees will be subject to oversight by LSC, as specified in the grant assurances. LSC will require submission of periodic reports of program activity and financial status during the grant period. Further details on reporting requirements will be made available to the successful Applicant as part of the grant award package and during the term of the grant.

Application of LSC Statutes and Regulations to Veterans Pro Bono Grant Funds

The Veterans Pro Bono Program grant is funded through a congressional appropriation to the Court. LSC administers the grant with funds from the Court, and these funds are not part of LSC's federal appropriation. Accordingly, this grant is not subject to most restrictions applicable to recipients of LSC's basic field awards (general, migrant, or

Native American). For example, the grant is not subject to restrictions on lobbying or class actions or the requirements for board composition. Nonetheless, many LSC requirements regarding the use of funds, oversight, and management apply.

LSC specifies which LSC requirements apply through the Veterans Pro Bono Program grant assurances and grant award documents. In the most recent grant cycle, LSC applied 45 C.F.R. Part 1629—Fidelity Bond Coverage, 45 C.F.R. Part 1630—Cost Standards, and a fund balance rule similar to 45 C.F.R. Part 1628. Other requirements, similar to those applicable in LSC grantee grant assurances, also apply such as use of the LSC Property Acquisition and Management Manual. Please see Appendix VII for sample grant assurances and Appendix VIII for illustrations of the application of LSC restrictions to grant funds.

Freedom of Information Act

LSC may receive requests for copies of applications submitted to it. Applicants are hereby notified that the applications they submit are subject to the Freedom of Information Act. For guidance on the availability of information submitted by any Applicant, see LSC’s Freedom of Information Act Regulation, 45 C.F.R. Part 1602. To assist LSC in making disclosure determinations, Applicants may identify sensitive information and label it “confidential.”

False Statement

A false statement on an application is grounds for denial or termination of funds and grounds for possible punishment by a fine or imprisonment as provided in 18 U.S.C. § 1001.

Conflicts of Interest

Grants awarded under this program are subject to requirements regarding conflicts of interest and whistleblower protection.

Applicants must disclose and identify how they will address any potential conflicts in which people directly associated with a proposed payment of these grant funds to a subgrantee or contractor also have a direct association with the Applicant. Applicants must also provide a copy of written conflicts of interest and whistleblower policies.

LSC may specify additional conflicts requirements may apply at the time the award is made.

V. APPLICATION PROCESS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Application Deadline

Complete applications for this grant program must be received by **Friday, December 4, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern time**. Application materials must be submitted by email as PDF documents or Excel spreadsheets, pursuant to the instructions provided below. LSC will not accept applications or portions of applications in hard copy format.

Late Submissions

LSC will not accept applications submitted after the application deadline.

Nonconforming Submissions

LSC will reject applications that when first submitted are not substantially complete or not substantially conforming to these requirements. If LSC determines that an application is substantially complete and substantially conforms to these requirements, but needs minor amendments, then LSC may, at its discretion, notify the Applicant of the need for amendment. Applicants must submit their conforming and complete amended application to LSC no later than seven calendar days from the date of LSC’s notice (which will also state the deadline). Applicants who fail to complete and/or revise the application within the designated time will be disqualified.

Notice of Intent to Withdraw Application

Applicants who wish to withdraw their application submission should promptly notify LSC by sending an email to veteransprobono@lsc.gov.

Key Dates

Release of Request for Proposals (RFP)	October 28, 2015
Deadline for Submission of Applications	Friday, December 4, 2015 by 5:00 p.m. Eastern time
Grant Award Decision	January 2016

LSC will notify Applicants of any changes to these dates.

Format Instructions

Unless stated otherwise in the Application Components section below, all documents that an Applicant creates (i.e., those that are not fillable PDF forms or the Excel template provided by LSC) should conform to the following formatting instructions:

Page Size	8.5 in. x 11 in.
Margins	At least 0.75 in. margins on all four sides for narrative text. Headers and footers must have 0.50 in. top and bottom margins, respectively.
Font	Standard font type (Times New Roman, Arial, or equivalent as measured by words per page), not less than 12 points for narrative text; not less than 10 points within tables and fillable PDF forms; and not less than 8 points within graphics or charts.
Page Numbers	All narrative pages must be numbered and the Project Narrative must be structured according to the Outline provided in Appendix V.

Page Limits	<p><u>Project Narrative</u>: The total page limit for the Project Narrative portion of the application is twenty (20) double-spaced pages as a PDF document.</p> <p><u>Subgrants and Contracts Proposal(s)</u>: The total page limit for each Subgrant or Contract Proposal is two (2) double-spaced pages. Applicants should respond to the Proposal questions provided in Appendix III.</p> <p><u>Appendices and Supporting Documentation</u>: The total page limit is fifteen (15) pages, including any cover pages, divider pages, or tables of contents.</p> <p><u>Required Supplemental Documentation</u>: There are no page limits for required supplemental materials. These documents should be submitted as a single PDF document with a table of contents and consecutive pagination.</p>
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Application Components

A completed application package consists of the items described below, including designated forms and required supplemental documentation. The following format and guidelines are provided to assist the Applicant in preparing the contents of the application.

- **Completed Applicant Information and Certification of Threshold Requirements Form (Appendix I)**
- **Project Narrative**
- **Completed Fiscal Application and Segregation of Financial Duties Worksheet (Appendix II)**
- **Completed Project Budget Template (Excel template is attached to the email transmitting this RFP)**
- **Completed Subgrant or Contract Proposal(s), if applicable (Appendix III)**
- **Appendices and Supporting Documentation:**
 - Appendices may include documents such as maps, relevant data and statistical information, letters of support, information on past projects, and credentials of partners and other entities involved in the project.

- **Required Supplemental Documentation:**
 - Resumes of Applicant’s Executive Director (CEO or functional equivalent), Governing Body/Policy Chair, Chief Financial Officer, and other key project staff or management responsible for implementing the project. For lawyers and law firms, provide the resumes of partners, senior associates, and administrative managers who will be most involved in project management or service delivery if a grant is awarded.
 - List of up to five professional references for Applicant’s organization, or in the case of a new organization, provide references for its principals. Provide addresses and telephone numbers. Do not submit letters of reference.
 - List of members of the current governing board and their affiliations, or, if the non-profit organization has not yet been established, list of prospective members of a governing board and their affiliations.
 - A copy of the Applicant’s organizational budget for current fiscal year, listing all income and expenses. This may be submitted in the organization’s own format.
 - Statement disclosing any potential conflicts of interest (see Section IV of RFP). Also, provide a copy of written conflicts of interest and whistleblower policies.
 - List all professional disciplinary complaints, criminal convictions, civil contempt, and malpractice lawsuits and/or claims made against the applicant or any of its attorneys during the past thirty-six months, as well as all pending lawsuits and/or claims, regardless of the date of the lawsuit or the date the claim was initiated.
 - The applications, policies, and coverage limit pages for any current malpractice, errors and omissions, fidelity, or liability insurance coverage.
 - List of organizational performance evaluations and monitoring reports received within the past three years by funders, regulatory agencies or evaluators, if any. Applicants should list the name of the report, the date of the report, and the name of the agency that prepared the report for all non-LSC reports. Please do not submit copies of reports at this time.
 - Most recent federal income tax return for Applicant organization or firm (e.g., IRS Form 990 for non-profit entities).

Method of Submission

Application materials must be submitted via email to upload.Veteran.y07jasicxg@u.box.com.

Applicants must assemble application materials into four documents submitted in four separate emails, according to the detailed instructions below. Each document must use the naming conventions specified below to ensure that it is attributed to the correct application. For purposes of naming the four attachments described below, an Applicant may abbreviate its full organizational name, if necessary; the Applicant must use the same form of its name in all four documents titles. For example, Equal Justice For All

Legal Aid Services, Inc., could be abbreviated as “EJFALAS” or as “Equal Justice Services,” but whichever is used must be used for the file name for each of the four documents. Documents must be compiled as follows:

Attachment 1: Please combine the following materials:

- Project Narrative
- Appendices and Supporting Documentation
- Subgrant or Contract Proposal(s), if applicable. Applicants must submit a Subgrant or Contract Proposal for each proposed subgrant or contract. Applicants do not need to submit a Subgrant or Contract Proposal if no such arrangement is proposed.

Attachment 1 must be submitted as a single PDF document named “Applicant Name-Narrative.”

Attachment 2: Project Budget

The Project Budget must be completed in the Excel template provided with this RFP.

The completed template must be submitted as a single Excel document named “Applicant Name-Project Budget.”

Attachment 3: LSC Forms

Three PDF forms are provided with this RFP as a single document labeled “LSC Forms.” Two documents are fillable PDF forms: (a) the Applicant Information and Certification of Threshold Requirements Form, and (b) the Fiscal Application. The third document, the “Segregation of Financial Duties Worksheet,” is a standard PDF document and can be downloaded and completed manually.

The completed forms must be submitted as a single PDF document named “Applicant Name-LSC Forms.”

Attachment 4: Required Supplemental Documentation

All required supplemental documentation must be submitted as a single PDF document named “Applicant Name-Required.”

Applicants must email the four required attachments –one attachment per email—to upload.Veteran.y07jasicxg@u.box.com. The subject line of each email should be the name of the file that is attached. Documents sent to this email address will be automatically uploaded to LSC’s “Box” document management system.

Please *do not include any text in the body of the email*—it will *not be uploaded* to Box and *will not be considered* with your application. You must email any questions or comments to veteransprobono@lsc.gov.

Applicants will receive confirmation automatically via email from Box that each attachment has been uploaded successfully. Applicants should receive four confirmation messages – one per emailed attachment. The email will be sent from the address “noreply@box.com,” and the subject line will read “Success! Your email attachment was uploaded to Box . . .#”

Box will also send an automatic response when attachments are not uploaded successfully. This email will be sent from the address “support@box.com,” and the subject line will read, “Your attempt to email a file to ‘a folder’ failed.” Please send an email to veteransprobono@lsc.gov if you are unable to upload attachments successfully. Please note: Box will not accept any submissions emailed after the application deadline. Applicants that miss the deadline will receive the automatic response from Box indicating that their attempt to upload documents failed.

Please add noreply@box.com and support@box.com to your email program’s “safe senders” or similar list to ensure you receive automatic notifications from Box.

Acknowledgement of Receipt

Applicants should receive Box notifications promptly after an email submission. Please email veteransprobono@lsc.gov if you do not receive a notification from Box within 24 hours of your email submission. Please keep your sent emails as evidence that the application was submitted.

Documents submitted to upload.Veteran.y07jasicxg@u.box.com may not be edited or retrieved by Applicants. Please allow enough time before the application deadline to review your submission.

VI. AWARD NOTIFICATION AND GRANT NEGOTIATION

Grant Negotiations

LSC may, in its discretion, conduct discussions and/or site visits with some or all Applicants before making final grant decisions. Such discussions and visits may result in changes to the timeframe for making a final award decision.

Applicants may be subject to additional grant conditions as part of the final grant award.

LSC reserves the right to: (1) vary the amount awarded from the amount applied for; (2) provide funding in graduated amounts to assist new grantees with start-up and transition; and (3) award close-out funding to any current grantee not awarded a grant pursuant to this competition.

Final Award Decisions

The final award decision will be made by the President of LSC. LSC anticipates awarding the grant in January 2016. The beginning of the award period will depend on the date of the grant award and the logistics of commencing the award.

Activities Prior to Award or Negotiated Starting Dates

LSC is not obligated to apply grant funds to cover pre-award costs. If an Applicant incurs any project costs prior to the project start date negotiated at the time of award, it does so solely at its own risk.

Grantee Transition

If LSC awards the 2016 grant to an applicant other than the 2015 grantee, then LSC, the new grantee, and the 2015 grantee will develop a transition plan to minimize disruption for clients and services. LSC may allocate transitional funding to the 2015 grantee to help accomplish an orderly transition.

In the event that enactment of future legislation necessitates changes in the timing of the competition cycle and/or the content of this RFP, notice will be provided to all Applicants via email and posted on LSC's website at www.lsc.gov under "Meetings and Events." In such circumstances, continued funding may be provided to the 2015 grantee during any interim period necessitated by legislative actions.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Payment Schedule

LSC will issue the first grant payment to the successful Applicant upon receipt of the executed grant award documents and grant assurances from the successful applicant. Normally, grant payments are divided equally by the number of months in the grant term. The first payment will two monthly payments for the first and penultimate months of the grant. The remainder of the grant will be made, subject to the availability of federal funding, in equal installments on or about the first of the month for the remaining months of the grant term. This payment schedule is subject to change based on the timing of the grant competition and the congressional appropriations process. See Section VI, Award Notification and Grant Negotiation Section. LSC may provide a different payment schedule based on the specifics of the grant and grant award.

Eligible Costs

If included in the approved project budget, and subject to 45 C.F.R. Part 1630, LSC will allow costs for personnel; fringe benefits; computer hardware and software and other end-user equipment; telecommunication services and related equipment; consultants, evaluators, and other contracted services; travel; rental of office equipment; furniture and office space; and supplies. Administrative costs must be captured through these line items only; no general "administrative cost" line item will be approved. All costs must be reasonable and directly related to the project.

The provisions of 45 C.F.R. § 1630.5 requiring prior approval of the purchase or lease of any individual item, or a group of related items of personal, non-expendable property over \$10,000 in value, apply to this grant. To expedite purchases or lease after the grant award, the Applicant may wish to include a request for prior approval with its grant application. The procedures for requesting prior approval can be found in Section 3 of the LSC Property Acquisition and Management Manual (PAMM). This manual is available online at <https://federalregister.gov/a/01-23008>. For questions about this process, please contact Lora M. Rath, Director, LSC Office of Compliance and Enforcement, 202.295.1524; rathl@lsc.gov.

All costs involving subgrants must be described in the application and included in the Project Budget with specificity. A proposed subgrant must include a budget for the subgrant, not just the total amount of the subgrant. The Application must include the required Subgrant Proposal forms for all proposed subgrants.

The proposal must also include all projected costs involving anticipated contracts for \$10,000 or more in goods or services that are handled in one transaction or could reasonably be handled in one transaction. All such contracts, regardless of whether included in the budget in the application, will be subject to grant assurances requiring competition or sole-source justification. Purchases or leases of personal property over \$10,000 are also subject to the PAMM, discussed above. The Application must include the required Contracts Proposal forms for all proposed contracts for over \$10,000.

Any purchase of real property or capital expenditures of over \$10,000 to improve real property must follow the provisions of the PAMM.

Failure to obtain required prior approval for an expenditure may result in disallowance of the entire cost.

Subgrants and Contracts

Subgrants

Generally, subgrants occur when the grantee provides grant funds to another entity to provide a core, programmatic activity of the main grant (e.g., a subgrant to another entity to provide intake, screening, and placement for people living west of the Mississippi River).

All subgrants require prior approval from LSC. The grantee must email veteransprobono@lsc.gov for prior-approval forms and procedures.

Contracts

Contracts are agreements by which another entity provides goods or services to the grantee for the grantee's use (e.g., a lease for office space).

Contracts (purchases or leases) for real or personal property are covered by sections of Part 1630 and the PAMM, including prior approvals. All requirements must be followed; otherwise, the costs may be disallowed.

Some cases require careful consideration of the circumstances and the Applicant should contact LSC for advice (e.g., hiring an outside screener for occasional complex cases involving subtle brain injuries could be a contract, but hiring an entity to do all screening could be a subgrant).

Competition in Contracts for Services

When a grantee expends more than \$10,000 in a single transaction (or transactions which could reasonably be handled in one transaction) as a contract for goods provided or services to be performed by a third-party, and that grantee is not otherwise subject to the LSC Property Acquisition and Management Manual, the grantee will undertake the following:

- Solicit bids from a minimum of three providers; if it is necessary to award a contract on the basis of fewer than three responses or to purchase from a “sole source” due to technical or quality requirements, organizational or personnel expertise, knowledge of the program, the lack of dependable vendors or when there is an emergency, the reasons for this shall be documented;
- Maintain documentation for LSC review, including the solicitation and receipt of bids or sole-source justification; the reason for selection of a contractor; senior management approval of contractor selection and any sole source justification; the terms and conditions of the agreement; and all payments, adjustments and credits;
- Provide a copy of the contract to LSC with the payment request for the period in which the contract was executed (submission of the contract and the resulting LSC payment do not constitute LSC approval of the contracting process); and
- Ensure the proper expenditure, accounting for, and audit of the contracted funds.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION

Applicants should direct all inquiries by email to veteransprobono@lsc.gov.

IX. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

LSC will evaluate each Applicant's responses to the Application Questions below. The Project Narrative must respond to these questions, and, together with the required and supplemental documentation, and other information available to LSC, will provide the basis for LSC's award decisions.

Applicants must demonstrate that their project can effectively and efficiently accomplish the purpose of the Veterans Pro Bono Program – to facilitate the provision of high-quality legal and other assistance, without charge, to veterans and other individuals who are unable to afford the cost of legal representation in connection with decisions of, or other proceedings in, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, as described in Section II of this RFP (Funding Availability).

The information requested in each section below should be provided in a narrative format and correspond to the structure of the **Outline for Project Narrative (Outline)** in **Appendix V**. Failure to follow this Outline may result in disqualification from the competitive process.

The section heading should be included in the narrative response. Do not, however, include the instructional language that identifies the specific information that should be addressed.

Applicant's narrative descriptions must be concise and responsive to the information requested. The narrative, exclusive of attachments, may not exceed twenty (20) double-spaced pages and must follow the formatting instructions provided in Section V of this RFP (Application Process and Instructions).

Applicants who propose to partner with third parties, including by contract or subgrant, must discuss the partnership's role in the narrative.

PROJECT DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES (Weight: 60%)

A. Organization Description and Project Overview

Please provide a brief description of the Applicant organization. This description should include a discussion of Applicant's mission, highlighting the alignment between Applicant's experience and accomplishments and the purpose of the Veterans Pro Bono Program Applicant should demonstrate how the core activities prescribed in Public Law 102-229 will be addressed.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Clearly describe project need, using, as appropriate, available statistical information and other data as support.*

B. Program Components

The narrative questions for the following section are organized around four “Program Components” that reflect the core activities prescribed for the Veterans Pro Bono Program in Public Law 102–229, as discussed in Section II of this RFP (Funding Availability):

- Component One: Outreach to and Access by Eligible Appellants
- Component Two: Case Screening and Placement
- Component Three: Pro Bono Volunteer Recruitment and Support
- Component Four: Additional Program Services

As detailed in the Outline for Project Narrative (Appendix V), there are two parts to the response for each Component: “Description of Work” and “Measurement and Evaluation.” Responses to “Description of Work” should describe Applicant’s goals and objectives for the specific Component and the specific activities and strategies that will be implemented to achieve those goals and objectives. Responses to “Measurement and Evaluation” should specify the methods and data sets that will be used to evaluate Applicant’s accomplishments for the particular Component.

As appropriate, Applicants should discuss the use of technology and describe how technology tools will support and enhance their work under each Program Component. Reviewers will consider the use of technology in their assessments.

1. Component One: Outreach to and Access by Eligible Appellants

- a. Description of Work:** Please describe the outreach and education activities Applicant will conduct to inform eligible appellants about the services Applicant proposes to provide under this grant. Please include a discussion of how appellants will access Applicant’s services.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify the goals, objectives, and specific activities for this Component in clear, concrete, and measurable terms.*
- *Describe Applicant’s plans to coordinate with appropriate stakeholder groups, such as veterans service organizations or social services providers, for purposes of outreach and education.*
- *Describe the methods by which eligible appellants will access Applicant’s services (e.g., office hours, online, by telephone).*
- *Describe Applicant’s plans to ensure that individuals with limited literacy or limited English proficiency and individuals with disabilities will be able to effectively access and obtain assistance.*

- b. Measurement and Evaluation:** Please identify specific, measurable outcomes associated with this Program Component that Applicant proposes to accomplish during the first year of the grant.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify specific, measurable outcomes that are aligned with the purpose of the Veterans Pro Bono Program and the goals for this Program Component.*
- *Specify the outcome measures, evaluation methods, and data sets that will be used to evaluate Applicant's achievements for this Component.*

2. Component Two: Case Screening and Placement

- a. Description of Work:** Please describe the Applicant's process for identifying and evaluating cases appealed to the Court and for selecting those that will be placed with pro bono volunteers for representation. Include a description of case management and other systems that will be used to track, record and monitor case screening and placement activities.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify the goals, objectives, and specific activities for this Component in clear, concrete, and measurable terms.*
- *Describe Applicant's process for determining financial eligibility of appellants who apply for representation.*
- *Propose a set of criteria to guide Applicant's assessment and selection of cases for representation by pro bono volunteers.*
- *Describe the systems and staffing to be used to evaluate cases.*
- *Describe the systems and staffing to be used to match selected cases with pro bono volunteers, monitor volunteers' progress on cases, and track case outcomes for eligible appellants.*

- b. Measurement and Evaluation:** Please identify specific, measurable outcomes associated with this Program Component that Applicant proposes to accomplish during the grant term.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify specific, measurable outcomes that are aligned with the purpose of the Veterans Pro Bono Program and the goals for this Program Component.*
- *Specify the outcome measures, evaluation methods, and data sets that will be used to evaluate Applicant's achievements for this Component.*

3. Component Three: Pro Bono Volunteer Recruitment and Support

- a. Description of Work:** Please describe Applicant's plans to recruit, train and support a pool of pro bono volunteers to provide assistance to eligible appellants that apply for Applicant's services.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify the goals, objectives, and specific activities for this Component in clear, concrete, and measurable terms.*
- *Discuss the specific groups of volunteers that Applicant will target for participation and a strategy for recruitment.*
- *Demonstrate that the targeted volunteers are well situated to address the needs of eligible appellants who seek assistance from the Applicant.*
- *Describe clear, well-defined roles for volunteers that leverage their skills and experience.*
- *Describe a plan for supporting pro bono volunteers through training, education or other methods.*

- b. Measurement and Evaluation:** Please identify specific, measurable outcomes associated with this Program Component that Applicant proposes to accomplish during the first year of the grant.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify specific, measurable outcomes that are aligned with the purpose of the Veterans Pro Bono Program and the goals for this Program Component.*
- *Specify the outcome measures, evaluation methods, and data sets that will be used to evaluate Applicant's achievements for this Component.*

4. Component Four: Additional Program Services

- a. Description of Work:** Please describe any additional services not addressed above and/or other relevant components of Applicant's current work. The response should focus on how these services or efforts will complement or support the work Applicant proposes to fund with the Veterans Pro Bono Program grant.

Such additional program services might include, but are not limited to:

- Assistance for appellants determined to be ineligible for representation by Applicant's pro bono volunteers (e.g., resources for appellants who will proceed without representation).
- Referrals to other legal and non-legal service providers for veterans and other stakeholders with matters outside the scope of the Veterans Pro Bono Program (e.g., representation for benefits claims before the VA).

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify the goals, objectives, and specific activities for any additional program services in clear, concrete, and measurable terms.*
- *Discuss additional program services that support and facilitate the provision of high-quality, effective and efficient assistance to eligible appellants.*

- b. Measurement and Evaluation:** Please identify specific, measurable outcomes associated with this Program Component that Applicant proposes to accomplish during the first year of the grant.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Identify specific, measurable outcomes that are aligned with the purpose of the Veterans Pro Bono Program and the goals for this Program Component.*
- *Specify the outcome measures, evaluation methods, and data sets that will be used to evaluate Applicant's achievements for this Component.*

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (Weight: 25%)

A. Track Record on Veterans Legal Services and Pro Bono Efforts

Please discuss Applicant's experience and expertise in delivering legal services for veterans and implementing pro bono efforts, including specific recent examples. In the case of a non-profit organization that has not yet been established, please discuss the experience and expertise of the proposed organization and its prospective principals and staff. Please indicate the dates/years such activities were conducted and highlight relevant partnerships and collaborations for each.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Discuss Applicant's experience and expertise in the provision of legal or other assistance in the area of veterans benefits law, including reviewing and evaluating the merits of veterans benefits cases.*
- *Discuss Applicant's experience and expertise in practicing before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims and/or supervising attorneys practicing before the Court.*
- *Discuss Applicant's track record of success in management of a law office and supervision of attorneys and other staff.*
- *Discuss Applicant's track record of success in establishing and operating a pro bono program, including recruiting, training, supervising volunteer attorneys and assigning and monitoring cases referred to volunteer attorneys or law school clinics.*
- *Describe Applicant's history of partnerships and collaboration with other organizations, including, but not limited to, veterans service organizations and legal services providers.*
- *Describe Applicant's history of implementing effective outreach and education efforts targeted to veterans and their dependents regarding veterans benefits rights and procedures.*

B. Ability to Provide Project Support, Oversight, and Capable Leadership

Please describe Applicant's capacity to set and implement goals and provide programmatic and fiscal oversight of this project. The response should describe the Applicant's board of directors, general governance structure, program governance, and

the program's management staff. It should also describe project staffing and provide relevant information about the key staff who will be responsible for the project.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Describe Applicant's experience operating and providing oversight to successful programs or projects comparable to the one being proposed, including specific examples of prior accomplishments and outcomes in these efforts.*
- *Describe a staffing plan that engages staff, consultants, and/or volunteers with sufficient capacity and relevant experience to be effective and compliant with programmatic and fiscal requirements.*
- *Present a roster of staff members that have the experience and capacity to implement the proposed project effectively. This includes the involvement of senior management and board members, as appropriate. If new hires are anticipated, Applicant should describe desired job qualifications. If existing staff members will be allocated to the project, Applicant should demonstrate that they have capacity to work on this project. All individuals engaged in the project should appear in the Project Budget Template.*
- *For projects that include contracts or subgranting funds to another organization, describe Applicant's experience monitoring contractors or subgrantees for compliance with regulatory, fiscal, and programmatic requirements.*
- *Discuss Applicant's ability to prevent and detect compliance issues and hold itself, subgrantees, and contractors accountable if instances of risk or noncompliance are identified.*

COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (Weight: 15%)

A. Budget Justification

Please provide a brief statement to supplement the Project Budget that describes how the project budget, including other sources of support, will advance the desired goals, objectives, and activities being proposed.

Applicant Guidance:

- *Proposed budget should be reasonable, justifiable, and consistent with the proposed goals and objectives of the project.*
- *In the Project Budget Template, provide clear detail and adequate narrative that demonstrates the relationship of budgeted items to project activities.*
- *Identify other potential sources of support for the project.*

Please see Appendix IV: Budget Instructions for more information on eligible costs and completing proposed project budgets.