

**Legal Services Corporation  
Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) Program  
Final Grant Report**

**Grantee name:** Legal Aid of West Virginia  
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## **I. Project Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this partially TIG funded project was to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of program operations by installing an organization-wide videoconferencing system. Three objectives were necessary to accomplish this goal. Those objectives were to:

- Implement a videoconferencing system that increases the quality and quantity of statewide communications between LAWV's staff serving out of twelve geographically disparate offices.
- Ensure that the system increases the organization's operational effectiveness through increases in staff communications, trainings, board participations, and similar improvements.
- Employ the videoconferencing system to increase the quality and quantity of communications or collaborations with partner organizations.

## **II. Evaluation Data and Methodologies**

In order to assess the success of the first objective the following evaluation data was gathered:

- List of system requirements
- Description of system obtained via RFP process
- Description of tests and test results
- List and impact of any changes required to ensure system functions effectively
- IT staff assessment of the videoconferencing system's operational effectiveness
- Maintain usage data (eg. staff meetings, task force meetings, consultations, etc.)

In order to assess the success of the second objective the following evaluation data was gathered:

- Training materials used for videoconferencing system training
- Training evaluations
- Protocol for requesting technical assistance
- LAWV Board, management and staff survey data
- Utilize usage and survey data to compare the quality and quantity of communications before and after system implementation.

In order to assess the success of the third objective the following evaluation data was gathered:

- List of partner organizations interfaced with LAWV system
- Maintain a log of interfacing frequency (number and type of meetings conducted with partner organizations)

### **III. Summary of Major Accomplishments, Recommendations and Future Steps**

A very feature rich and user-friendly statewide videoconferencing system was designed, purchased, and installed. The system is being used frequently by Legal Aid of West Virginia (LAWV) staff for interviews, staff meetings, substantive discussions, presentations, and trainings, saving a great deal of time and travel and increasing the quality and quantity of communication across the organization.

Videoconference participation in the Social Security Administration Representative Video Project, as well as videoconference collaboration with West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and select domestic violence shelters is planned.

### **IV. In-Depth Analysis of Accomplishments**

To begin this project, a RFP for the videoconferencing system was created. The system requirements in the RFP were:

- the system must have configurable network (quality of service) QoS settings, so it can be programmed to match current LAWV network configuration,
- one videoconference station in the conference room of each regional office, and maybe two in Charleston (display size depends on cost),
- each station must have the capability to switch between camera input and multimedia (PC) input during the conference session,
- the system must have the ability to establish a single videoconference between multiple stations simultaneously,
- the system must be able to establish multiple conferences simultaneously,
- IT staff must be able to setup a videoconference between a LAWV videoconference station and an outside organization's videoconference equipment (other law firms, partner organizations, WVU College of Law etc.)
- LAWV would like to have one PC in each office capable of establishing a videoconference with another similarly equipped PC or a conference room videoconference station (this isn't as high a priority as the rest).

A second station in the Charleston office and having PCs integrated into the videoconferencing system were not included in the final system purchased via RFP process due to budget constraints.

Legal Aid of West Virginia IT Supervisor Chris Martin is the primary contact for technical support for the videoconferencing system.

The videoconferencing system is comprised of the following components:

- A Lifesize Bridge 2200 – A core component that allows multiple videoconferencing stations to participate in a single videoconference.
- A Lifesize Videocenter 2200 – A core component that provides seamless streaming, recording, and playback of videoconferences.
- Lifesize Control – A core component that centralizes management of the videoconferencing components and allows for Exchange integration for videoconference scheduling and automatic launching of videoconferences.
- 12 Lifesize Express 220 codecs – The primary component in each videoconferencing station.
- High definition displays – 32" displays for each regional office and a 52" display for the large conference room in Charleston.

- Wall mount or cart mount hardware – Whether the system was wall mounted or mounted to a wheel cart was determined by the individual office needs.
- PC interface and network cabling – Additional cabling was installed with each system to allow users to easily connect a computer to the system in order to share multimedia content.
- Assurance/Maintenance/Service Agreements for all Lifesize hardware – One-year agreements covering software updates, technical support, and advance hardware replacement for all Lifesize hardware and software were purchased.

A great deal of preparation was done before the videoconferencing system was installed in the organization. The core systems, which reside in the Charleston office, were installed and configured. Custom wall mount and cart mount setups were designed and built for each installation. Each Lifesize Express codec was preconfigured and tested. A training guide was also prepared while IT staff familiarized themselves with the system. The first videoconferencing station, in Charleston, was installed on March 24, 2011. Training for all staff in that office was spread over three sessions the following week. The remaining eleven videoconferencing stations were installed, one per week, and office staff were trained on the same day as the system installation.

All staff were asked to complete a survey following the training. Fifty surveys were received, in total. Here are the results:

*How was the training (1=disagree, through 5=strongly agree)*

This training was thorough enough to feel comfortable using the system.

5-70%, 4-20%, 3-8%, 2-2%, 1-0%

The trainer's communications skills were adequate.

5-90%, 4-10%, 3-0%, 2-0%, 1-0%

The trainer was able to answer your questions satisfactorily.

5-92%, 4-8%, 3-0%, 2-0%, 1-0%

Do you have any suggestions or comments? (just a sample of the responses are below)

- Very excited for LAWV to have this technology readily available to staff.
- I can't wait to be able to start using it. This is wonderful!!!
- The hands on training was helpful.
- The trainer seemed to know a lot about the videoconferencing.
- The videoconferencing capability is outstanding. It will save LAWV money and time.
- It is going to be awesome to video conf. with other offices....
- Training was very good. May have questions after I start using the system, but he explained well and it seems like it will be easy to use.
- it was satisfactorily, but i know I will call for more/re information.
- Chris always does a great job in trainings. He has lots of patience.

After some trials, troubles, and testing, the only real adjustment made to the system to improve performance after it was fully live was a minor change in the network switch configuration. It was determined that putting all videoconference core components on a separate switch from all other systems in the central office (Charleston), and slowing all link speeds to 100Mbps, slightly improved video quality when linking all twelve offices together via videoconference.

Feedback forms were created on the LAWV website, allowing easy and optionally anonymous comments to be submitted concerning the use of the system.

A few additional examples of videoconferences that saved drive time, based on feedback submissions, are as follows:

7/12/11 – Representatives from West Virginians for Affordable Care presented to staff, statewide, on the state of the Affordable Care Act and on the changes to expect and opportunities for clients if passed.

7/13/11 – Staff in Charleston and Clarksburg participated in interviews held in the Morgantown office for an attorney position.

7/25/11 – Charleston staff participated in interviews held in the Beckley office for an attorney position.

7/27/11 – Wheeling staff participated in interviews held in the Huntington office for a Behavioral Health Advocate position.

8/12/11 – Charleston staff participated in interviews held in the Martinsburg office for an attorney position.

9/28/11 – An attorney in the Princeton office interviewed a client who lives near the Elkins office. The client visited the Elkins office and the staff there helped get client and attorney connected.

9/29/11 – Staff from five offices participated in a ATLAS (Access to Legal Aid Services) advisory committee meeting (or centralized intake program). These meetings have been held in person in the past.

A few examples of videoconferences that did not save drive time, but increased productivity, based on feedback submissions, are as follows:

8/8/11 and 9/27/11 – Intake staff member participated in regional office staff meeting (Martinsburg). This staff member would not have been able to participate in the meeting at all without the videoconferencing system.

9/6/11 – Attorneys in Charleston and Wheeling had a case discussion via videoconference. The feedback submission stated that, “Advocates probably would not have gotten together to discuss the housing issues without the videoconferencing system. Probably would’ve just talked individually on the phone instead of group videoconf.”

9/9/11 – For the September Board of Directors meeting, held in the LAWV Morgantown office, one board member and one presenter joined the meeting via videoconference. This allowed them to join from a closer office than where the meeting was held, while still participating visually, instead of through the phone.

10/24/11 – Attorneys from the Princeton and Charleston offices had a case discussion via videoconference. The feedback submission stated that, “We would have used conference call instead. But I believe it improved the effectiveness and efficiency of our case discussion.”

The most substantial example of how video conferencing increased productivity and reduced travel costs is with our fall statewide staff meeting. We have traditionally held statewide staff meetings twice a year, and all staff across the state have met in a single location for these meetings. On November 8, 2011, we had our statewide staff meeting via videoconference. Eleven of our twelve offices were connected via videoconference. The twelfth office was closed due to plumbing problems and joined the Charleston office for the meeting. There was no travel time (besides the staff from the closed office), no overnight stays, and the staff meeting only lasted about 2:30, instead of all day. To bring all staff together for an all day staff meeting costs the program approximately \$35,000. Not only did we save time, we saved a lot of money. We had a second statewide staff meeting to discuss the organization reduction plan resulting from a faltering budget on January 26<sup>th</sup>. All twelve offices participated via videoconference, and the discussion was productive. Three such meetings would pay for the entire statewide system even if it was not used for anything else. Good feedback was received concerning each of the statewide meetings, as well.

Legal Aid of West Virginia (LAWV) was not able to connect with partner organizations via videoconference during the term of this grant. LAWV will be applying to participate in the Social Security Administration (SSA) Representative Video Project (RVP) in order for advocates and clients to participate in Administrative Law Judge hearings from LAWV offices. Additionally, LAWV is working with West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WVCADV) to apply for grant funds that will go towards deploying videoconferencing technology for WVCADV and select domestic violence shelters with the intent to interface with LAWV.

#### **V. Factors affecting project accomplishments**

This project was thoroughly planned, and no significant challenges were encountered. The outcome of the project was as expected.

#### **VI. Strategies to address major challenges**

No major challenges were encountered.

#### **VI. Major lessons and recommendations**

This project went through several design plans and, over a period of a couple of years, the technology that the design was based on had evolved. After the TIG had been approved, just before it was time to start ordering equipment, the whole design was reevaluated. What we ended up with, as a result, was a much more complete system, based on the latest technology from the same chosen vendor, than what was in the design that was in the original TIG application, but at around the same cost. With the rate at which technology evolves, it is important to reevaluate system designs just before investing in the technology and be prepared to make changes to the design.