

Actions to Implement LSC's Strategic Plan
Annual Report to the Operations and Regulations Committee
January 2014

Following is an overview of actions LSC has undertaken to date to implement the three goals and related initiatives identified in LSC's 2012-2016 Strategic Plan.

Goal No. 1: Maximize the Availability, Quality, and Effectiveness of Legal Services
(Strategic Plan pp. 5-11)

- **Initiative One: Identify, promote, and spread best practices in meeting the civil legal needs of the poor**
 - Highlighted best practices at quarterly board meetings and White House forums, and, for the first time, captured board presentations on video and posted links to them on LSC's website and included links in *LSC Updates*.
 - Updated, improved, and added content to the "LSC Resource Information" portion of LSC website (lri.lsc.gov), which includes many examples of best practices from LSC grantees and other sources.
 - Issued and publicized the report of LSC's Pro Bono Task Force, which identified numerous practices for increasing the use of pro bono lawyers to expand access to justice.
 - Convened a national Summit on the Use of Technology to Expand Access to Justice and issued a report on the Summit's recommendations. The report charts a path toward using technology to provide some form of assistance to every low-income person with a significant civil legal need. LSC is currently publicizing the report. White papers written in preparation for the Summit were published in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Technology*.
 - Convened "brainstorming" sessions at LSC's annual Technology Initiative Grant conference.
 - Presented on best practices at the largest conferences for legal aid providers – the Equal Justice Conference and the annual conference of the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association.

- Began process for updating the “technology baselines” for LSC grantees – that is, LSC’s recommendations for the basic technology that all grantees should have.
- Used Technology Initiative Grants to replicate and expand successful technology projects developed with prior TIGs.
- **Initiative Two: Develop meaningful performance standards and metrics**
 - Continued progress on the data collection and analysis project funded by the Public Welfare Foundation. Created an inventory of existing measurement tools used in legal aid to identify best practices. Conducted a comprehensive survey of LSC grantees regarding their current and desired use of data to improve service delivery, to enhance program management, and to build an effective case for funding. Currently formulating recommendations for improved data collection and analysis by LSC and developing a tool kit that grantees will be able to customize for their own operations and needs.
 - Completed comprehensive, multi-year trend analysis of Grant Activity Reports, allowing comparisons of cases closed by each LSC grantee against median for all grantees and against results for each other grantee. In 2013, each grantee received its trend analysis with comparisons to national medians. In 2014, each grantee will have access to results for all other grantees, allowing comparisons to programs with similar funding, staffing, and settings (e.g., rural programs, urban programs, programs serving Native Americans, etc.).
 - Hired Operations Research Analyst, reporting to the Vice President for Grants Management, increasing LSC’s ability to analyze its performance and that of its grantees.
 - Began a business process analysis of LSC’s collection and use of all information collected from grantees, which will facilitate the development of performance standards and metrics.
 - Analyzed number of cases closed with Private Attorney Involvement by LSC grantees and followed up with grantees showing substantially fewer cases closed than LSC medians.
 - Analyzed changes in numbers of cases closed between the first six months of 2012 and the first six months of 2013, and followed up with programs showing unexpectedly large decreases.

- Awarded a Technology Initiative Grant to Prairie State Legal Services to help measure the effectiveness and impact of legal services in Illinois and to inform strategies for delivering services across the state.
- **Initiative Three: Provide legal practice and operational support to improve measurably the quality of civil legal services to the poor**
 - Used “Program Quality Visits” by the Office of Program Performance to educate grantees about best practices and to provide practical advice about improving legal practice and program operations.
 - Collected useful practice and operational tips on the LSC Resource Information section of LSC’s website.
 - Hosted and facilitated quarterly webinars featuring staff of the Federal Trade Commission’s Bureau of Consumer Protection. The webinars, developed exclusively for LSC grantees, provide substantive training on consumer protection issues relevant to legal aid programs and identify free resources for grantees to access. Participation in the webinars grew from 44 in February 2013, to 135 in June, to 165 in November.
 - Used Technology Initiative Grants to promote improvements in practice and service delivery. For example,
 - A grant to Idaho Legal Aid Services provides for development of a Web-based virtual law office. This project (consisting of a practice management platform, e-signature software, video conferencing, video court appearance software, hybrid Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) phones, and scanners) integrates existing technologies to help legal aid attorneys serve rural clients more efficiently.
 - A grant to Legal Aid Services of Northeastern Minnesota will improve the effectiveness of pro bono attorneys by creating a set of settlement checklists and client interview guides that have been optimized for mobile platforms like smartphones and tablets. These resources offer new support for attorneys in the field who are helping low-income clients with matters that are outside the attorneys’ usual areas of expertise.
 - Launched LSC Tech Blog, providing a channel for technology leadership in the legal services community. Blog is growing in popularity; in its first month, the blog netted close to a quarter of visits to main LSC web site.

- **Other Activities to Promote Goal 1:**

- Expanded outreach to members of Congress to increase prospects for LSC's funding.
- Revamped and improved LSC's formal budget request to Congress, LSC's Annual Report, and LSC's Fact Book to make a stronger case for funding.
- Made substantial progress in closing out GAO Recommendations, reducing a potential impediment to LSC funding.
- Participated in the federal government's Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable and enhanced relationships with federal government agencies serving the clients of LSC grantees. These activities improved grantees' prospects for funding from government agencies, increased the agencies' understanding of the civil legal needs of low-income people, and helped the agencies design their activities with the legal needs of low-income people in mind.
- Worked for enactment of the Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, including funding for LSC. Established a grant program using the appropriated funds and distributed \$874,041 to four LSC grantees. LSC made additional Sandy-related grants totaling \$295,379 using existing disaster relief resources.
- Initiated rulemaking to amend LSC's Private Attorney Involvement regulations to facilitate the provision of pro bono legal services to clients of LSC grantees. Conducted two workshops to obtain input from the field and others.
- Conducted 11 training webinars for new Executive Directors of LSC grantees in 2012 and 2013. The webinars, conducted by LSC's Office of Compliance and Enforcement, promote compliance with LSC regulations and requirements and reduce the risk of activities that could threaten LSC funding.
- Successfully aligned LSC's Basic Field Grants with the Census Bureau's most recent estimates of the location of the poverty population adjustments. Congress adopted LSC's proposed process for implementing the census adjustment.
- Eliminated a backlog of requests for legal opinions in the Office of Legal Affairs, permitting more timely issuance of program visit reports with recommendations for improvements in grantee service delivery and operations.
- Adopted a strategic plan for the Office of Information Technology that is linked to LSC's strategic plan. The plan will facilitate the development of performance standards and

metrics, and will improve communication with and training opportunities for LSC grantees.

Goal No. 2: Become a Leading Voice for Access to Justice and Quality Legal Assistance in the United States (Strategic Plan pp. 11-15)

- **Initiative One: Provide a comprehensive communications program around a compelling message**
 - Participated in the creation of a “communications hub,” funded by the Public Welfare Foundation and the Kresge Foundation, which is using survey research and communications expertise to expand public awareness of the role and importance of civil legal aid in the United States. Jim Sandman serves on the hub’s advisory committee. This project is a collaboration with a number of stakeholders, including the National Center for State Courts and the U.S. Department of Justice’s Access to Justice Initiative.
 - Overhauled LSC’s communications strategy. Revised the annual budget submission to Congress, LSC’s annual report, and *LSC Updates* to present a compelling case for legal aid and to communicate LSC’s commitment to innovation, collaboration, strong management, and prudent stewardship of public funds.
 - Expanded the use of video, charts, graphics, and social media in LSC’s communications. Expanded LSC’s Twitter followers from 1,200 to more than 2,600. Created a Facebook page.
 - Grew LSC’s “story bank” documenting grantees’ successes in serving clients from ten to more than 1,000 stories, organized by state and by congressional district to facilitate targeted communications with local connections.
 - Obtained media coverage in both national and local markets. Expanded the use of targeted press releases for local markets.
 - The Chairman and the President sought and accepted opportunities to speak to broad audiences – such as law students, the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association, the City Club of Cleveland, the Harvard Club of New York, law firms, the College of Law Practice Management, bar associations, and state-wide access-to-justice convenings.
 - Improved consistency of messaging across all of LSC’s communications outlets.

- **Initiative Two: Build a business case for funding civil legal services**
 - Developed a library of studies of the economic benefits of legal aid for communities and for government. Cited the results of these studies in LSC’s budget request to Congress for FY 2014 (pp. 1-2).
 - Began exploring possible data collection and analysis by LSC on the economic benefits achieved for clients and communities by LSC grantees.
 - Conducted surveys of grantees to obtain evidence of the impact of funding reductions on client service. Publicized the results and used them in support of funding requests.

- **Initiative Three: Recruit and enlist new messengers and sources of funds to increase private support for civil legal services**
 - Worked with the Conference of Chief Justices and began working with the National Association of Women Judges to encourage judges to address the access to justice crisis in America.
 - Convened panels of justices and judges to address access to justice at quarterly board meetings. Began posting videos of the panel presentations on LSC’s website. Linked to the videos in *LSC Updates*.
 - LSC President addressed incoming state and local bar presidents at the ABA Annual Meeting to encourage them to include access to justice in their leadership priorities.
 - Worked with individual judges on access to justice issues.
 - Worked with the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable to expand sources of funding for legal aid using grants by federal agencies that serve clients of legal aid programs. Had some identifiable successes, particularly with Department of Labor reentry program grants.
 - Worked with the Public Welfare Foundation to encourage private foundations to provide support for civil legal aid. Reviewed and provided input into *Natural Allies: Philanthropy and Civil Legal Aid*, PWF’s new brochure. LSC grantees report using the brochure successfully to solicit funding from foundations that have not previously funded legal aid.

- **Initiative Four: Institutional advancement and grantee development support**
 - Recruited and hired LSC's first Chief Development Officer in 2013.
 - Created a case statement for fundraising for LSC's 40th anniversary.
 - Identified specific projects for which to seek support (e.g., fellowships, technology, leadership training).
 - Built a database of donor prospects (currently over 500).
 - Identified candidates for honorary committees and advisory groups.
 - Registered LSC as an approved fundraiser in states requiring registration.
 - Developed policies and procedures for gift acceptance.
 - Secured contributions or pledges of more than \$500,000 in 2013, the first year that LSC has engaged in private fundraising.
 - LSC's Chief Development Officer led a well-attended session on using social media to expand development for legal aid at the national Management Information Exchange Fundraising Conference.

- **Initiative Five: Enhanced strategic collaboration**
 - Worked closely with the Department of Justice's Access to Justice Initiative and the Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable to expand awareness of civil legal aid in federal government agencies and to increase sources of funding for legal aid using grants by federal agencies that serve clients of legal aid programs. LSC President is a member of the roundtable.
 - Established good working relationships with state IOLTA programs and state bar foundations funding civil legal aid. Consulted with state funders on data collection and reporting, grant applications, and legal aid program oversight.
 - Collaborated regularly with the American Bar Association's leadership, Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defendants, Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service, and Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives.

- LSC President participated in and spoke at multiple annual convenings of state Access to Justice leaders.
- Coordinated regularly with the Conference of Chief Justices.
- Established relationship with the National Association of Women Judges.
- Participated in the establishment of the legal aid communications hub.
- Established relationships with private foundations funding civil legal aid.

Goal No. 3: Ensure Superior Fiscal Management (Strategic Plan pp. 15-17)

- Established regular schedule of meetings between management and the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to maximize communication, coordination, and collaboration. LSC's President and the Inspector General meet every two weeks. LSC's Vice President for Grants Management, Director of the Office of Program Performance, and Director of the Office of Compliance and Enforcement (OCE) meet monthly to share information.
- Improved sharing of investigation information between management and OIG to expedite investigations, avoid duplicative work, and provide early notice to management of potential problems with grantees.
- Improved sharing of information between OIG and management that is relevant to grant applications, grant terms, and special grant conditions.
- Audit Committee initiated regular reviews of status of audits and investigations and of referrals from OIG to OCE.
- Initiated a more integrated approach to grants management, making information about grantees more accessible across the organization and educating staff about grantee information resources.
- Planned training by OCE for OIG staff on grantee case management systems.
- Expanded involvement by OCE in review of grant applications.
- Initiated focused review of grant applicants' fiscal practices and operations. Developed a scoring system for the reviews. Incorporated fiscal reviews into LSCGrants database.

- Hired Fiscal Compliance Specialists.
- Began using outside reviewers in the grant application process to ensure objectivity in the process.
- Began rotating review of grant applications by Program Counsel to ensure objectivity in the process.
- Revised conflict-of-interest policy for LSC staff to require disclosure of relationships, past and present, with LSC grantees.
- Increased the use of special grant conditions to address fiscal concerns.
- Obtained GAO approval of risk assessment criteria for identifying grantees for program visits.
- Began overhaul of grants management system, including a business process analysis, to improve access to and management of all information LSC maintains on grantees.
- Conducted training for LSC managers on compliance with procurement and contracting policies.
- Conducted 11 training webinars for new Executive Directors of LSC grantees in 2012 and 2013 addressing compliance with LSC's Accounting Guide.