LSC

Legal Services Corporation
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TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE GRANTS

2000

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Pursuant to a request from the Board, the purpose of this compilation is to provide descriptions of the activities funded in 2000 by the Technology Initiative Grant Program in the Office of Program Performance. What we learn from these activities will repay the investment many times over, and the systems we develop will play a major role in advancing the Board's goals of increased client access and efficient service delivery. The design of these activities -- and the collaboration it often requires -- have both enhanced, and been enhanced by, the Corporation's emphasis on state planning efforts.

If you have need for more information, please do not hesitate to contact the technology unit in the Office of Program Performance.

John McKay, President

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PROJECT CATEGORIES

MODEL TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS - $1,471,186 committed

Integrated, organized statewide model program:

- seamless intake and referral
- statewide web site
    - pro se information and pleadings
    - advocate tools - brief banks, forms
    - referral to resources for clients
- integration with court systems, electronic filing
- statewide technology support
- statewide training program for all staff

INNOVATION PROJECTS - $2,070,129 committed

- Create new technology structure in a state to enhance client access to pro se and legal information
- Special consideration for partnerships with state court systems

INTEGRATION PROJECTS - $608,450 committed

Advance the integration of delivery systems.
Examples:

- coordinated statewide technology plan
- statewide seamless intake
- pro bono network development
- model statewide web site integrating access, pro bono, pro se, and advocate tools, to be used as a template nationwide
- development of model for integrating electronic filing into legal services and pro se practice

Special consideration for partnerships with state court systems

(Total of $4,149,765 committed)

GRANTEES BY CATEGORY

MODEL:

Arizona – *DNA, People's Legal Services*
Hawaii - *Legal Aid Society of Hawaii*
New Jersey - *Middlesex County Legal Services Corporation*
South Carolina - *Legal Services Agency of Western Carolina*

INNOVATION:

California - *Bay Area Legal Aid* and *Legal Aid Society of Orange County*
Florida - *Central Florida Legal Services, Inc.*
Indiana - *Legal Services Organization of Indiana*
Iowa - *Legal Services Corporation of Iowa*
Kentucky - *Cumberland Trace Legal Services, Inc.*
Maine - *Pine Tree Legal Assistance*
Maryland - *Legal Aid Bureau*
Michigan - *Legal Aid of Western Michigan*
Minnesota - *Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services*
New York - *Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York*
Oregon - *Legal Aid Services of Oregon*
Pennsylvania - *Lehigh Valley Legal Services*
Texas - *Texas Rural Legal Aid, Inc.*
West Virginia - *West Virginia Legal Services Plan, Inc.*

INTEGRATION:

Arkansas - *Center for Arkansas Legal Services*
Colorado - *Colorado Legal Services*
Mississippi - *North Mississippi Rural Legal Services*
New Mexico - *Community and Indian Legal Services of Northeastern New Mexico*
New York - *Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York*
North Carolina - *Legal Services of North Carolina, Inc.*
North Dakota - *Legal Assistance of North Dakota, Inc.*
Ohio - *Ohio State Legal Services Association – 2 grants*
South Dakota - *East River Legal Services South Dakota*
Texas - *Legal Services of North Texas*
Vermont - *Legal Services Law Line of Vermont*

WHAT THE TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE GRANT PROGRAM WILL MEAN TO *CLIENTS* . . .

- Faster, seamless intake
- More access to advocates with less travel
- More uniform access
- More self-help information in more formats
- More self-help legal forms
- More assistance with self-help issues
- Increased court assistance
- Advocates who are better trained & better informed
- Increased Pro bono involvement
- More knowledge about using technology
- Efficient use of resources

TYPES OF TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS FUNDED

Web-site Development
- Self-help information and legal forms
- Instructional videos
- Pro Bono information

Self-Help
- Court-assisted Work Stations
- Instructional videos
- Legal forms
- Community Legal Education

Video-conferencing
- Lawyer-client
- Advocates (training)

Systems Integration
- Wide Area Networks
- Case Management Systems
- Voice Over IP (VOIP)*

Intake Systems
- Statewide
- Regional

GRANTEES IN THE "MODEL STATE" CATEGORY

Legal Aid Society of Hawaii

$462,085

This technology project, totaling almost $800,000, will improve access to justice for remote clients.

- By using video-capable workstations on remote islands, clients can have face-to-face interviews with legal aid attorneys.
- Self-help materials, volunteer lawyers, translators, and service agencies will be included on a web site accessible by clients.
- The project will train state library personnel to use the library system's Internet computers to help clients access the web site.

This project will be a model for other states where geographical barriers or vast distances prevent access to justice.

Middlesex County Legal Services Corporation – *New Jersey*

$267,970

This project will enhance self-help and improve communications in the New Jersey legal aid system. By using T-1 lines[1] and enhancing the hardware in the statewide WAN (wide area network), clients and lawyers will use Voice Over IP (VOIP) technology to use computer workstations to see and speak to one another through internet connections. Clients will be able to watch instructional video clips about the legal system. Images and voices will be sharp and clear, and long-distance charges will be substantially reduced.

This project will also employ and evaluate a centralized technical support helpdesk with remote diagnostic and repair capability.

Legal Services Agency of Western Carolina – *South Carolina*

$501,600

This $1.8 million statewide technology project, entitled "Partners for Justice," will set up a virtual legal aid office in every county of the state, including 23 counties that do not have legal services offices. Each of these virtual law office workstations will consist of computer, monitor, scanner, printer, microphone, and video camera. These virtual law offices will offer self-help videos and clinics and real-time video-conferencing between staff and client. Clients will be able to obtain court

[1] T-1 lines and, to a lesser degree, DSL lines allow more information to travel through a line in any given instant by allowing transmissions in a greater range, or band, of frequencies. (Hence we have the term *broadband.*)

pleadings from the clinics or the project's web site. The virtual law offices will be housed in churches, municipal offices, elementary schools, boys' clubs, law firms, shelters, and funeral homes.

Other funders include the state's LSC programs, the South Carolina Bar, and the South Carolina Bar Foundation.

DNA – People's Legal Services – *Arizona and region*

$246,925

This project, entitled "Computers That Speak of the Law,"[2] employs high-speed satellite connections and broadband lines to communicate with kiosks in remote offices in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico -- all served by this Native American program. These kiosks will have touch-screen capability and will consist of monitor, computer, printer, and web camera. By touching symbols and text in Navajo, Hopi, and English, users and clients will select, view, and print community legal education information, pro se forms, and social services information from the project web site. DNA will create digital video, audio and text files containing *pro se* and community legal education resource materials, and will transmit this information, including updates and additions, to all offices simultaneously through the remote server in northern Arizona. Users will have access to this important information without having to speak to advocates, and they will become familiar with the uses of technology in the process.

[2] Translated from the Navajo: Naalkidi bee haz'aanii yaa halne'

GRANTEES IN THE "INNOVATION" CATEGORY

Bay Area Legal Aid - California

$175,235

This LSC program, also known as BayLegal, was formed on January 1, 2000 through the merging of three existing programs. They were presented with the formidable task of combining five intake systems, three case management systems, two word processing applications, two Web sites, and four e-mail systems. In the Communications Unification And Support Project (CUSP) they will:

- expand the existing wide area network to include other regional offices
- reconfigure their database technology so that one database server will be available throughout the WAN, using software that will allow communications with individual workstations by reducing the amount of processing at the workstations themselves
- unify word processing software and legal documents
- create a document production system that will allow advocates and clients throughout the region to use networked computer terminals to easily access forms and information, and
- train staff to use these new systems.

Central Florida Legal Services, Inc.

$176,925

This "Legal Helpline" project will demonstrate whether or not the use of an outside company to provide the phone system and operators for the intake function is more efficient than other centralized intake approaches, hotlines, or traditional methods. In this project, three legal services recipients serving 22 counties will contract with a national hotline operator, Tele-Lawyer, to provide intake and routing. By "out-sourcing" this function, the projects will forego the usual staff and equipment expenses associated with the startup and operation of a hotline or centralized intake system. When clients call in on the Helpline, Tele-Lawyer operators will complete the intake process and then transfer eligible clients to a designated duty office in the three programs. It is anticipated that the wait-time for clients will be dramatically reduced. Tele-Lawyer will also act as an application service provider for the project; it will store and manage the case management data of the project on its own server. All advocates in the three participating LSC programs can access the database.

Cumberland Trace Legal Services, Inc. - Kentucky

$101,600

This LSC program is the result of a merger in which a smaller contiguous program was absorbed. In order to unify case acceptance and client services, CTLS will integrate intake and case management in the new 34 county service area by establishing a wide area network (WAN), combining databases, and setting up a centralized intake unit using a toll-free service. They will reconfigure their database

technology so that one database server will be available throughout the WAN, using software that will reduce the amount of processing at the users' workstations. Operations will be improved by increasing the speed with which local offices can access data and route cases and thus better serve clients.

Legal Aid Services of Oregon

$175,959

This pro se online information project is designed to complement the state's Online Court Forms And Electronic Filing Project. In this addition, pro se litigants who access the state's centralized web site in marriage dissolution cases will link to a legal services web site containing specific substantive legal information about the court forms on the central state site. This information, which will be developed for this project, will assist pro se litigants in completing the forms. Fifteen workstations will be set up in legal services offices and in the offices of collaborating social services providers in communities throughout Oregon.

Legal Aid Bureau - Maryland

$48,925

In conjunction with the Maryland Legal Assistance Network (MLAN), this project will equip ten sites with legal self-help stations to increase client access to self-help materials online and telephonic advice through the MLAN hotlines, as well as to the existing on-site pro se project staff. Each self-help station will consist of computer, modem, heavy-duty telephone, and printer. Clients will have access to the wide variety of legal information, self-help information, and court forms that are already available in the Maryland statewide legal aid community. This project includes a substantial staff training component and a circuit-riding part-time consultant to work with the sites.

Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York

$176,600

This project, entitled LawHelp, will improve access to self-help information and to information concerning the availability of legal services and community agencies by creating a database that will be accessible through a web site. Clients, courts, legal service providers, and social services organizations can conduct targeted searches for legal information, referral information, and other services by ZIP code, legal issue, and eligibility criteria. Clients will locate services and needed information in a much shorter period of time, referrals can be made faster, and more information will be available. Clients will be able to download and print self-help information and pro se materials. Participating organizations will be responsible for maintaining their own information on the site. Law help is a joint venture of New York's Legal Aid Society, United Way of New York, private foundations, and the New York Community Trust. The total project budget is $400,000.

Legal Aid Society of Orange County – California

$176,600

This project, entitled I-CAN (Interactive Community Assistance Network), is an ambitious multi-partner project designed to make the most useful pro se information available through a web site and through Internet interactive self-help kiosks. Clients accessing this multi-lingual system will view video clips explaining the law, complete court forms on screen, and then electronically file them in a variety of proceedings, including domestic violence, unlawful detainers, and paternity actions. I-CAN will also be tied into the legal system's provider community to expedite access and referral. The system is expandable and could eventually reach all of California's 6 million poor people. In its initial phase, the system will employ five high-speed computers as servers and four touch-screen kiosks. Total project funding is $694,000. Participating partners include the Public Interest Clearinghouse and the California Commission on Access To Justice.

Legal Services Corporation of Iowa

$176,600

This project will develop the Iowa legal aid web site, fund a technology advocate position for the state, and create a hybrid network that will connect all of the legal services providers in the state. The web site will provide legal information to the state's low-income residents and will also serve the needs of the legal services community, including volunteer attorneys. This grant will directly tackle the problem of the digital divide by hiring a technology advocate who will be charged with the responsibility of expanding access to the Internet for low income Iowans. Through the hybrid network, the nine regional offices of the Legal Services Corporation of Iowa and the Legal Aid Society of Polk County will be connected through a wide area network (WAN). Additional connections of the Polk County Volunteer Lawyer Project and the Iowa State Bar Association will be achieved through virtual private network connections. By improving the ability of more providers to work more closely together, we can provide our clients with improved access to available services. These connections go through the Internet, but are made secure with equipment and software that encrypts the data to insure the privacy of client information.

Legal Aid of Western Michigan

$176,925

This project is a collaborative effort among several Michigan legal aid providers: Legal Aid of Western Michigan, Legal Services of Northern Michigan, the Michigan Poverty Law Project, and the Michigan State Bar foundation. It will set up workstations in 35 community sites in remote areas served by Legal Services of Northern Michigan. Each workstation will consist of computer, scanner, and digital video camera. Clients will access a web site in order to review and download useful legal information, including substantive pro se materials developed pursuant to this grant. Clients can also

carry on direct conversations with advocates and will have the ability to send legal documents and other papers to advocates through scanners and associated software. The legal services providers collaborating in this grant will also conduct a study of pro se initiatives in the state through the bar foundation.

Legal Services Organization of Indiana

$176,925

LSOI is the entity resulting from the merger of four LSC-funded programs. This grant project, totaling $444,000.00, will integrate the operations of the nine legal services offices with a new case management system (CMS) and statewide phone system. More importantly, the phone system and CMS will be directly linked to the IOLTA-funded pro bono program and the Pilot Hotline Project, and the intake screens will be available to other service agencies assisting clients in the application process. These linked programs and agencies will have access to legal information and self-help information for the clients. The CMS software will reside on a group of servers (server farm) that will operate on the principle of immediate data replication between servers. This will speed up access and provide failure redundancy. Access to the CMS by remote stations will also be improved through the use of Citrix software that limits the amount of processing performed by workstations, depending instead upon the more powerful and much faster database software in the server farm. Operation of the server farm will be outsourced, although the equipment itself will be purchased by LSOI. This is a unique approach and worthy of study.

Lehigh Valley Legal Services – Pennsylvania

$99,670

This project creates a partnership between legal services organizations and courts to create Family Law Help Desks. At the courthouse, court clerk personnel will help pro se litigants access an open (non-protected) website repository of pro se manuals, commonly used forms, self-help information, and procedures in support, custody, divorce, and abuse cases. The web site can be accessed by anyone using the Internet. The forms will be developed, or converted to electronic form, as part of this grant project. Forms that are downloaded will contain codes to allow tracking through the court system. Both end users and the court will evaluate the project. These Family Law Help Desks will first be established in Carbon and Lackawanna Counties. The model will then be used in five additional judicial districts in northeastern Pennsylvania. This project is a cooperative effort of the grantee, the Court of Common Pleas of Carbon County, the Family Court of Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania Legal Services, and the Association for Children for Enforcement of Support Inc. It is particularly noteworthy for the courts' involvement and economic commitment.

Pine Tree Legal Assistance – Maine

$116,925

This project creates the HelpMeLaw web site, which will combine information from multiple web sites in the state of Maine. This web site will be a dual portal to information for both advocates and clients. Volunteers from a statewide group of senior citizens (CyberSeniors) will encourage and train clients to access the web site in schools and public libraries. The web site will contain interactive court pleadings, local community resources, live audio video conferencing between client and attorney, and legal education materials. The latter will be multilingual and will include legal primers, community legal education materials, and streaming (moving video – as opposed to still shots) instructional videos on such subjects as court proceedings and directions to the courtroom. Advocates will use passwords for access to pleadings and other documents, a statewide legal services calendar, and training materials, including streaming video presentations of recent training events.

Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services

$176,925

This Statewide Portal Project, which will serve half the state, will expand the probono.net/mn web site for advocates' side of the portal, and will also create a client side. Content for both sites will be transferred from existing sites, and new content will be solicited from collaborative partners. Member organizations can have pages and will provide distributed input -- adding directly to the database containing the content for their sections of the site. A unique feature of the client side will be live online interactivity concerning requests for information by those accessing the site. Clients will be able to type in questions at the web site and have them answered by law students and legal services staff. There will be a dedicated Spanish section, and accessibility by disabled and literacy-impaired will be designed into the site. Trained law student volunteers will "coach" potential users in libraries and rural areas. This project has a strong evaluation component and builds on goals identified in the state plan.

Texas Rural Legal Aid, Inc.

$96,714

The grantee will develop and host the National Migrant Network Project -- a single case management system for use by all migrant advocates nationwide. This system will address the special concerns of migrant advocacy, in which the legal problems of the clients go beyond state boundaries and require a high degree of coordination among advocates for farm workers. The existing intra-state DOS-based case management system, including documents and forms, will be converted to a current operating system. It will be installed in a thin-client server, i.e., a powerful high-speed computer that is accessed by workstations that do little processing themselves. Since almost all processing takes place in the server, communications to the workstations consist primarily of screen commands and images – allowing for high-speed transmission. Connections will be through a virtual private network (in

which transmissions occur over the Internet through proprietary encryption hardware and software) and by traditional Internet service provider dial-up. This system will allow linkups between multiple clients in a single case and multiple parties. It will allow for the easy generation of database information concerning case activities, courts, case transfers, registered and unregistered farm labor contractors, and witness lists.

West Virginia Legal Services Plan, Inc.

$38,100

To our knowledge, this project will be the first in the country to allow clients to apply for legal services while visiting the statewide web site. Clients will provide information about their eligibility and their legal matters by answering questions on the web. Their answers will generate self-help materials and automatically link them to self-help materials on the state Supreme Court's web site. The information entered by the client will be routed to the appropriate office and start their application for legal services. The grantee will set up a statewide on-line question and answer format for generation of self-help material and the opening and routing of cases. This project includes a strong staff training component and includes a campaign for raising client community awareness of this tool. It is a collaborative effort that follows the state plan. Users will provide end-of-session evaluations about the pluses and minuses of the question screens.

GRANTEES IN THE "INTEGRATION" CATEGORY

Center for Arkansas Legal Services

$21,600

The Center will place pro se information on its web site. This process will include canvassing the state for existing pro se information and forms, compiling existing forms and information or drafting new ones where necessary, designing the content for presentation on the site, and converting the word processing format to HTML -- hypertext markup language.

North Mississippi Rural Legal Services

$21,600

This program will create a statewide web site by using a template that will be developed by another Technology Initiative grantee. The template will include all of the essential elements for a statewide web site, including a friendly protocol for clients to access pro se and legal information and forms. (See Ohio State Legal Services Association, below.)

Colorado Legal Services

$71,600

This project will set up a WAN (wide area network) among the state' s legal aid providers using a variety of high-speed lines and traditional dial-up connections. The creation of this network is an essential step in the state plan, which includes a recent reconfiguration into one program. Central database servers will be used for concentrated processing that will eliminate the need for bulky data transfers to and from workstations. This is being set up to improve clients' access to legal services. Once the system is completely implemented, it will mean that cases can be opened and handled much faster. Other benefits will include unified case management and increased statewide staff connectivity.

Community and Indian Legal Services of Northeastern New Mexico

$71,925

This is another project to set up a WAN (wide area network) in order to fully integrate a service area that has been created by virtue of a reconfiguration. Processing will be confined primarily to a central database server, which will house the case management software. Existing databases, including one written in an outdated computer format, will be combined. The elimination of primary

processing at the workstation level will eliminate the need for bulky data transfers to and from the server. High-speed lines will be used where available. This network will improve program wide staff communications and speed up case opening and handling.

East River Legal Services -- South Dakota

$71,600

In this project law students at the University of South Dakota law school will be trained to do telephone intake for the grantee and Black Hills Legal Services. Reviews of applications for services will take place by videoconferencing between the service providers and the law students. Purchases will include communications bandwidth (high-speed lines), computer workstations for three law students, and three multipoint videoconferencing systems. Operating hours for the law school intake unit will be in the evening for maximum accessed by clients. The great distances of this sparsely populated state will be traversed digitally by both advocates and clients.

Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York

$71,600

This project, Community Legal Education with an Edge, is a cooperative venture between the grantee, the Western New York Law Center, and Greater Upstate Law Project Inc. the purpose of the project is to create standards for categorizing community legal information and "marking up" this information in an XML format. XML stands for extensible markup language. The standards created by this project, particularly in the XML format, can be used by legal services providers across the nation to provide quality legal information and self-help information to clients.

Legal Services of North Carolina, Inc.

$71,600

Central Carolina Legal Services will be the initial site for this pilot project to create an Internet accessible case management system (CMS) using a customized version of an existing commercial legal case management package --LegalFiles. This CMS will be accessible statewide by all legal services providers and will speed up case opening and handling. As the system develops, information from existing case management systems will be added. Purchases include bandwidth -- high-speed lines -- and database servers for the case management system. This project can provide valuable information concerning this commercial package, its applicability to legal services, and the process of customizing a commercial package for legal services use.

Legal Assistance of North Dakota, Inc.

$21,600

This program will create a statewide web site by using a template that will be developed by another Technology Initiative grantee. The template will include all of the essential elements for a statewide web site, including a friendly protocol for clients to access pro se and legal information and forms. (See Ohio State Legal Services Association, below.) This site will include a public information area, a secure area for advocates, and a special area for Indian law and other Native American information.

Legal Services Law Line of Vermont

$13,550

This is a joint venture between the grantee, Vermont Legal Aid, the Vermont Bar Association, and other providers and entities having an interest in the state's equal justice system. The project will create a statewide legal services web site and will borrow heavily from knowledge gained in the development of other sites. The site will include forms and information for pro se litigants and links to other useful sites. It will also house a brief bank for legal services advocates.

Legal Services of North Texas

$71,600

The grantee will create a statewide web site with "self-directed" pro se materials to help with eviction defense and appeal, small claims, powers of attorney, basic real estate transactions, and other needs, and will expand existing web sites to include community education material for the general public.

Ohio State Legal Services Association

$48,100

The Domestic Violence Computer Pilot Project (DVCPP) will develop a web-based court preparation and tutorial system designed to increase client access to and successful navigation through the courts by providing online pro se assistance and educational resources to domestic violence victims and the lay advocates and shelter staff who assist them. Domestic violence victims and will be able to access the site and tutorial from three locations. Shelter staff and victims advocates will receive training concerning use of the site.

Ohio State Legal Services Association

$70,000

This grantee will create a website that can be used as a template for other Technology Initiative grantees building web sites. The site will centralize legal information and expertise on poverty law issues in Ohio. This project has the dual goals of (a) increasing the number of clients who receive legal assistance, community legal education, and access to pro se information and forms, and (b) to increase collaboration among legal services and related programs. The site will include interactive practice pages and online problem questionnaires.