

**Legal Services Corporation  
Technology Initiative Grant Program  
Continuation (Third) Web Site Grant Final Report**

---

Grantee Name: Pine Tree Legal Assistance  
Submission Date: April 3, 2008

TIG Grant #: 05005  
Approval Date: May 14, 2008

Contact Persons: Kathleen Caldwell, Hugh Calkins  
Email address: [kcaldwell@ptla.org](mailto:kcaldwell@ptla.org)  
[hughcalkins@mac.com](mailto:hughcalkins@mac.com)

Telephone: 207 942-0972  
303 218-0288

---

Because of the tardiness of our second year website grant narrative report, much of that report is relevant for this report and incorporated here, as well.

**I. Project Goals:**

The specific goals for Grant #05005 were further development of the Maine MegaSite built on the Open Source Template, with particular attention to expanding content for the pro bono side of the site. Much more than that has been accomplished.

**II. Web Site Description:**

Maine's statewide website, which we refer to as the Maine MegaSite, is an integrated website with seven public faces: 1. Pine Tree Legal Assistance (PTLA - <http://www.ptla.org>) is Maine's statewide LSC grantee. 2. HelpMeLaw (HML - <http://www.helpmelaw.org>) is a client oriented site that includes information from all of Maine's legal services providers, state agencies, federal agencies, and other sources of legal information useful to the low-income population of Maine. 3. The Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP - <http://www.vlp.org>) is Maine's statewide pro bono agency. 4. KIDS Legal (KLA - <http://www.kidslegal.org>) is a project of Pine Tree, whose website focuses on children's issues. 5. Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE - <http://www.mainelse.org>) is Maine's statewide elder law provider. 6. Maine Equal Justice (MEJP - <http://www.mejp.org>) is a legislative and administrative advocacy organization. 7. The Campaign for Justice (CFJ - <http://www.campaignforjustice.org>) is a combined fundraising organization, raising funds from the legal community for all of Maine's legal services providers. These sites are all an integrated part of the MegaSite which sits on the Open Source Template. See Appendix I.

An eighth site, MAIN (Maine Association of Interdependent Neighborhoods), a client oriented and client run site was designed on the MegaSite template but developed and built on a separate Plone site. It had been intended to consolidate it into the once the total upgrade of the platform was completed, but with the likely move of the OST to another platform that has been abandoned. A ninth site, MAP (Maine Assistance Program for Lawyers and Judges), was designed in draft form only and never completed. See the tabs to Appendix II.

Pine Tree Legal Assistance launched the ptla website in 1996. In 2002 it was brought onto the OST platform. HelpMeLaw served as a prototype for the Open Source Template and was first launched in 2001. It was brought officially onto the template in 2005. Legal Services for the Elderly first launched their website in 1998 and were brought onto the template in November 2005. MEJP's website was launched in 1999 and brought onto the template in January 2006. KIDS Legal launched in March 2004 and the Campaign for Justice in March 2006.

The MegaSite has a very wide range of content available for clients, advocates and volunteer attorneys. Client topics include: Landlord/Tenant & Housing, Family Law, Education, Public Benefits, Employment Law, Health Care Issues, Consumer Law, Tax Issues, Court Procedures, Elder Law, Farmworker Issues, Kids Legal Issues, and a Legal Guide for Immigrants to Maine. There are more than 200 client education pieces available on the MegaSite, with links to many more that sit off site. The Advocate library contains documents in thirty major topics, with many more sub-topics. At last count there were 565 documents in the advocate library.

The MegaSite uses, in moderation, text, audio and video files. The video on the PTLA site, along with some other still in development, was created through our partnership with the courts. There is a long video on the CFJ site describing the work of all of the legal aid providers in Maine - those who are part of the MegaSite and those who are not.

The primary document assembly system used by the MegaSite is interactive PDF files. There are ninety-two interactive forms available on the site covering family law, protection orders, small claims housing and consumer. 422,452 of our court forms were downloaded in 2007, most of them assembled on line. Nearly all of these forms are used by both clients and advocates. There are a few (four or five) that are used only by advocates. We do utilize the HotDocs document assembly program for our Food Stamp Estimators. They were used 2,018 times in 2007.

The two principal standards utilized for the MegaSite are web accessibility and readability. The site strives to comply with the standards of section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (WC3). We are pretty successful in that regard. We also strive, with respect to client oriented material to achieve a fifth grade literacy readability standard. In reality an eighth grade literacy level is all we can achieve for much of our material. Complex legal issues are often difficult to reduce to a lower literacy level.

The MegaSite, particularly the sections for Pine Tree Legal Assistance and Legal Services for the Elderly have extensive contact information available. Pine Tree has material in Farsi, Somali, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Croatian, French, Arabic and Polish. LSE has material available in Farsi, Somali, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, Croatian, French, Arabic, Amharic and Cambodian (Khmer). The PTLA site has its extensive Legal Guide for Immigrants to Maine available in both English and Spanish with the ability to toggle between the languages. PTLA also has available on its website Protection from Abuse court forms in Spanish, French, Somali, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Arabic, along with the eighteen page Instructional Guide to PFA and PFH cases. There are also links off site to a Safety Planning Guide in the same languages. An additional twelve of Pine Tree's substantive legal guides are available in Spanish, dealing with fair housing, protection from abuse, earned income tax credit, rights to hospital care, workers' compensation, debt collection, general assistance, and others.

In terms of quality control measures Pine Tree maintains a "Website Manual," in reality an electronic folder containing thirty-three protocols, instruction sheets and calendars. Perhaps most important of these is the Client Content Management calendar and spreadsheet. Kathleen Caldwell, Client Education Coordinator (among other things), each year after the legislative session, reviews the client content and makes or requests appropriate changes to reflect action by the legislature. Other regular updates include the poverty guidelines, generally updated in February or March each year (these affect eligibility for legal services and various health programs) and the food stamp regulations and eligibility requirements, usually updated in October each year.

With respect to usability and usefulness, we incorporate in the assessment section, below, as an adjunct to the evaluation surveys submitted for the second year website grant, some comments from site users from an earlier report.

### **III. Achievements to date:**

We believe the MegaSite to be one of the most effective of the statewide websites. Although we do not have comparable statistics, we believe the more than one million visits it draws each year exceed that of almost every other state, if not all states, and certainly many states with far greater population. We believe this to be a reflection of the quality of the site and the value and range of material found on the site. The two major areas drawing people to the website are our interactive forms which were downloaded 422,452 times in 2007 and our client education material. Pine Tree's client education material (including KIDS Legal, but not including that of MEJP and LSE) drew 787,223 page views in 2007.

The creation of the MegaSite is itself a major achievement. It allows all seven websites to be administered from one central site. It allows data to be shared, or not, among all seven sites. For example, much of the information on the PTLA and MEJP sites changes each year with changes in the poverty guidelines. On the MegaSite we have created one central place where poverty guideline data is entered and changes there are automatically effected in the very many documents that reference those guidelines no matter which site they appear on. In another example Pine Tree developed its Food Stamp Estimators using the HotDocs document assembly program and the NPADO HotDocs server. Those are used on PTLA site and shared with the LSE, KIDS and VLP sites, as well. In a third example, the HelpMeLaw library exists both on its own and as part of the LSE Know Your Rights section. Materials added in one place are immediately available in both.

The central administration allows Pine Tree to maintain "news boxes" throughout the MegaSite. These are "boxes" where particularly relevant news articles from news sources around the country are highlighted. You can see some of these in Appendix I. There are news boxes for the PTLA home page, HelpMeLaw home page, KIDS Legal home page, VLP home page, PTLA foreclosure news, two PTLA health law news boxes, one for prescription drug news and one for Dirigo Health news. The administrative pages for the news boxes are part of Appendix II.

The PTLA, VLP, LSE and MEJP sites all have private, as well as public sides. The private sides are for staff and volunteer attorney advocates. The most significant aspect of the private sides of these organizational sites is the shared advocate library. Documents that are put into the shared library by any of the organizations can be tagged as available only for staff of that organization, available only for staff of any of the provider organizations, or as available for the providers and for volunteer attorneys as well.

This system was instituted in response to concerns about sharing every single document beyond the borders of a particular organization because of client confidentiality issues and strategic issues.

Advocates, particularly from PTLA and LSE are beginning to use the advocate library extensively. This has been a slow process, but perseverance has paid off. As indicated in Section II, there are 565 documents currently in the advocate library. We recently upgraded the search function in the advocate library, which has made some subtle, but significant improvements in the quality of search returns.

As also indicated in Section II, our food stamp estimators are extensively used in Maine. These tools have served as a model for many other states that have developed or are developing similar systems.

Our interactive court forms have been a great boon to the organization. They are used not only by our staff and by pro se litigants, but are used substantially by the legal community throughout the state. We have developed an ongoing relationship with legal secretaries around the state to help discover bugs and improve the functioning of the forms. At least one law firm began making substantial financial contributions because of the service Pine Tree provided with the interactive forms. Anecdotal feedback from the judiciary suggests that perhaps a majority of family law practitioners utilize Pine Tree's forms.

The interactive forms gave rise to another project with the judiciary in which we created disks for all judges and family law magistrates that prepared all forms and performed all calculations necessary to complete a child support order with its associated documents. This package has been made available to participating volunteer attorneys in a password protected area of the VLP website. It is our hope that making this and other resources available to volunteer lawyers will eventually increase willingness to accept pro bono cases in the bar.

In addition to the password protected area for pro bono attorneys, the VLP site has private areas available for lay volunteers, the domestic violence panel, the advisory panel, and others, including our new foreclosure prevention project, MASH. MASH, Maine Attorneys Saving Homes, is a joint project with the Attorney General's office. It has its own resource library, training section, resource links and a "Homeowners Foreclosure Prevention Toolkit."

The HelpMeLaw search engine is a major achievement, and one of the most sophisticated search engines available. We believe it to be even more sophisticated than major search engines like Google because it does far more than just word searches. The administrative side of the HelpMeLaw search engine allows us to review searches their returns and make adjustments to the functioning of the engine so that the most appropriate returns possible come back for any given search. We can even override word search returns to "hard wire" specific top level returns for any particular search before the word search returns are provided. In addition the HelpMeLaw search engine has five levels of return available to provide specific associated information and referrals based on the site user's particular demographics. For example, although a word search for "divorce" wouldn't necessarily return information on the IRS innocent spouse rule, we can adjust the HelpMeLaw search returns to provide that in addition to the usual information returned for a divorce search. The search engine also makes referrals to specific state and local agencies that might be able to help with the problem being searched for.

The KIDS Legal site, in part, reflects Pine Tree's partnership with the medical community. It provides lots of resources to medical and other professionals working with children. The resource "code card" is

available both as a traditional code card in pdf format and as an electronic code card designed to assist Maine medical professionals identify environmental and social problems impacting children's health, and provide direct resource information to families regarding benefits and services. The website has been a big part of the success of the project.

Maine Equal Justice (MEJP) and Legal Services for the Elderly (LSE) are independent organizations providing services to the same client community as Pine Tree Legal Assistance. A major achievement of the MegaSite is the fact that they can have and maintain websites with their own identity and their own content while sharing the structure and resources of the MegaSite. Without their ability to maintain their own identity, their participation in the statewide website would be much less. This is a departure from the typical statewide website which discourages individual organization sites in favor of a single statewide source of information. We think ours is the better model and a few other states are beginning to follow the MegaSite's lead.

The fact that we had a statewide website that was able to present individual faces for different organizations made it easy to respond to the request from the Campaign for Justice for its own website. The Campaign for Justice is the single unified fundraising effort to raise funds from the legal community for the various legal aid providers. Although we doubt the CFJ website has much value as a fundraising effort in itself, it is the vehicle by which a majority of the CFJ funds are gathered.

#### **IV. Assessment of Web Site**

##### **Visitors:**

For as long as we have been keeping statistics, site use on the MegaSite and its predecessor sites has been increasing. Unfortunately the statistics we have kept and paid attention to have not always been consistent. In the early years, circa 1996, we kept statistics on hits - not really a helpful statistic for modern sites. Since that time we have found that the two statistics that provide us with the most useful information are site visits (that's different from unique visitors) and page views of specific individual pages (that's different from "page views" for the entire site).

Attached as Appendix III are annual statistical reports detailing site visits, page views for top viewed pages, and other significant information from 2000 through 2007 (longer than the period of the three website grants, and since before the existence of the TIG website grants. Most of these statistics relate to the PTLA website, which is the central site of the MegaSite. There is some information in them about the other sites, as well.

Here are site visits detailed for those years:

2000 - 188,165 site visits to PTLA

2001 - 315,845 site visits to PTLA

2002 - 402,710 site visits to PTLA, 69,815 site visits to HelpMeLaw

2003 - 585,936 site visits to PTLA, 105,205 site visits to HelpMeLaw

2004 - 747,033 site visits to PTLA

2005 - 895,108 site visits to PTLA, 1,296,838 site visits to the MegaSite (KIDS Legal - 44,789, HelpMeLaw - 116,747, VLP - 39,148, LSE - 90,101, MEJP - 110,945)

2006 - 908,097 site visits to PTLA, 1,479,726 site visits to the MegaSite (KIDS Legal - 67,431, HelpMeLaw - 134,713, VLP - 48,132, LSE - 163,294, MEJP - 138,295, CFJ - 19,563)

2007 - 951,322 site visits to PTLA, 1,777,627 site visits to the MegaSite (KIDS Legal - 116,852, HelpMeLaw - 142,313, VLP - 96,887, LSE - 250,286, MEJP - 192,706, CFJ - 26,271)

Although the statistics continue to increase, we may be seeing a leveling off of the rate of growth in the more mature sites. This is something we have been expecting for several years.

### **Page Views:**

We are doubtful of the value of the statistics for total site page views for a number of reasons. We keep two statistics which we believe are much more meaningful because they (insofar as possible) capture the traffic for useful information and assistance on the PTLA site. These are 1) page views of substantive client education pages and 2) downloads of court forms. These too show consistent and substantial increases over the years. Appendix IV is an Excel spreadsheet the number of page views and downloads for each of those documents for the years 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The results are summarized here.

Page views of substantive legal information from the PTLA site (including KIDS Legal):

2004 - 417,562

2005 - 535,620

2006 - 630,864

2007 - 787,223

Downloads of court forms and other forms (mostly family law)

2004 - 353,698

2005 - 364,360

2006 - 352,970

2007 - 422,452

There are quirks, subtleties, and suspected (but uncertain) errors in some of these statistics, but the trend, and the substantial use is obvious. In some ways Pine Tree's statistics program under-reports these statistics because of limits of the reporting software and the way the site was constructed in its early years. In some ways we believe that certain forms may be over-counted. However, the over-counting and under-counting are relatively minor and probably cancel each other out.

### **User Feedback:**

These were taken directly from the feedback form on the PTLA site, and include all of the misspellings and errors of grammar. They are a sampling of user comments we have gotten over the years.

ss worker told me we won't put you in jail yet! I am badlyinjured from a stroke and elderly, I guess my humor is gone too. Thankyou

THIS WEB SITE HAS HELPED ME ALOT

although i was unable to contact ptl by phone, there were options which empowered me to help myself. i took all 411 i could get on unmarried parental rights.

What client education pages have you used?:  
most of them...:) I have helped others with them and have used them before.

Wish this site was more publisized. But It is a great place for materials and information.

What materials would you like to see that aren't here?  
You have all the materials needed.

I used the Renter's Rights section.  
This site has been very informative. I thank everyone who put this site together.

I BELIEVE THAT I HAVE THE CONFIDENCE AND ABILITY TO REPRESENT MYSELF  
WITH GUIDLINES TO THE PROPER PROCEDURE & INFORMATION

It is a great site except you need to be able to contact the offices on line with a request to call you.

I found your website very helpful and was able to download all the forms I needed. Thanks!

Thanks so much. I don't feel quite so alone!!!

We also get unbidden feedback from clients who call our offices. At least that which gets reported to the website managers is almost all positive. We get feedback from other segments of the public, as well. Judges have told us that they use the HelpMeLaw and PTLA sites to familiarize themselves with areas of the law affection low-income litigants. Social Service and referral agencies have told us that they copy and distribute our client education materials for their clients. Legal secretaries and paralegals who call us with suggestions and questions about the forms tell us how much they are appreciated. One major law firm which had never made a financial contribution to Pine Tree began doing so because of the value they got from our website, particularly the interactive forms. Pine Tree's interactive forms have been downloaded by the Attorney General's office and major law firms who use them on their own internal servers.

Staff, while slower than the public to appreciate the value of the website, have come to appreciate it more and more. When, during a recent upgrade the private side advocate library didn't work for a time there were numerous staff complaints. (We take that to be positive feedback.)

### **Stakeholders:**

Most of the stakeholders now view the website as a major part of their service delivery system.

The VLP operates much like a hotline where people call in for help. Not able to provide pro bono lawyers to the vast majority of callers the VLP uses the PTLA and HelpMeLaw websites as referral and information sources for the hotline callers. The VLP helpline (as opposed to hotline) provides ongoing help to pro se family law litigants. It involves a complex and ongoing interplay between the litigant, telephone support and the website. Callers are referred to the site for instruction and forms and then call back the following week for telephone feedback on what they have done and next steps. In most cases this goes through several loops before a case is completed.

LSE has used its site as the major means of delivering Medicare Part D drug formulary information to its client population and to physicians and medical providers throughout the state.

The Campaign for Justice uses the website for receiving the majority of its contributions from the legal community.

MEJP, a policy advocacy organization, uses its site as a major means of distributing its research and advocacy papers.

KIDS Legal has used its site as a major distribution mechanism for its "code card," cementing its partnership with the medical community.

PTLA views its site and HelpMeLaw as a major means of delivering its services.

## **V. Partnerships**

Rather than just taking pride in the ways partnerships have increased the quality of the web site (although this is certainly true) we take more pride in the ways in which the website (MegaSite) has increased the quality of the partnerships Pine Tree has with other legal aid oriented organizations in Maine. Even before the other organizations joined the OST template, because the individuals who did the website work for Pine Tree were part time employees, they could spend time with the other organizations working on their websites. Since 1996 the website work has been the one thing on which all of the involved organizations have consistently worked together collaboratively.

The allocation of content development among partners (e.g., elder law issues to LSE, TANF and Parents as Scholars issues to MEJP, housing issues to PTLA, children's issues to KIDS Legal, consumer issues to the Attorney General) helps to ensure that there are no major gaps in legal issues important to the low-income community and that materials are produced by those with the greatest expertise in any particular area. The system isn't perfect, but it seems to work pretty well. With interlinking and particularly with the HelpMeLaw search engine the appropriate materials are available to people where they are most likely to be looking for them. Most of the sites' libraries refer both to documents on that specific site and to documents on the other sites. The HelpMeLaw search encompasses all of the sites.

Each of the partner participating sites has its own identity, its own design, its own organization and its own content. Each of them was designed by the partner organization in consultation with the MegaSite managers.

PTLA's ongoing work with the courts to develop a user-friendly forms based family law system has not been focused primarily on the website, but it is reflected strongly in the website. The courts regularly supply the "official" court forms and any changes to those forms so that Pine Tree can make them available in interactive format. The most complex of the interactive court forms, the child support worksheet, was produced by a joint effort of Pine Tree and the courts. Likewise the special project that grew out of the partnership to create an interactive system to produce child support orders and all of the associated forms was a joint project funded by the courts.

Pine Tree's partnership with the Attorney General's office produced M.A.S.H. (Maine Attorneys Saving Homes) and its associated website, part of the VLP site. Significantly, this effort is largely funded by the Attorney General.

The partnership with the medical community, in particular the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital, was largely responsible for the development of KIDS Legal and its website.

A partnership with the Immigrants Legal Advocacy Project and the Coalition for Maine Law & Civics Education of the University of Maine School of Law produced the Legal Guide for Immigrants to Maine and funding from the Maine Bar Foundation enabled it to be converted into its present bilingual web based format on the PTLA website.

A partnership with the Violence Intervention Partnership of Cumberland County enabled the Pine Tree website to provide ten Protection from Abuse court forms, along with the twenty-four page "Courts Guide to PFA and PFH Cases" in six different languages - Spanish, Arabic, French, Khmer, Somali and Vietnamese. Although the forms cannot be filed with the courts in those languages the process can be much more understandable to native speakers of those languages.

Because of the heavy use and wide acceptance of the MegaSite and the PTLA and HelpMeLaw sites in particular, we are not as fixated on marketing and outreach as are many of the statewide websites. However, our relationship with the Maine Bar Foundation has produced some substantial marketing efforts by the Bar foundation on behalf of the HelpMeLaw site and the various sub-sites of the MegaSite. This was particularly true in the early days of the site development, but continues today.

## **VI. Factors affecting ability to implement the SWWS and accomplish project goals, and the strategies to address these challenges**

The primary factor both enhancing and limiting the accomplishments of the MegaSite has been resources. Pine Tree's leadership early recognized the value of the website as a means of delivering information and resources to our client population and committed substantial resources to the effort. Virtually all the goals for a statewide website from the LSC perspective have long been accomplished. However, had the website been accorded more resources, much more could have been accomplished.

Because of the structure of the MegaSite, its success is in part dependent on the efforts of the individual participating organizations. Fortunately, for most of its history all of the participating organizations have been enthusiastically involved. However, at times interest has flagged for one organization or another. The VLP pro bono part of the MegaSite was ambitiously designed and built yet has not yet been fully utilized because of changes in leadership and staffing issues. The LSE site has from time to time languished because the organization lacked resources to keep content updated. It is unlikely that a

different structure or less concession to individual organization identity would have resulted in a different result, and in the context of the MegaSite these issues are barely noticeable.

Although it might be impacted by the current major economic downturn, the recent planning effort by the Justice Action Group (Maine's statewide planning agency) resulted in a recommendation that the MegaSite efforts be separately funded and maintained at a level not dependent on the individual organizations. This recommendation has been well received by the Maine Bar Foundation, Maine's IOLTA funder. However, it is unclear what impact the economic downturn will have on the Bar Foundation's ability to fund the recommendations of the JAG.

## **VII. Financial and in-kind support for the Web site**

Pine Tree Legal Assistance has always devoted far more resources to the statewide website than it has received from TIG website grants. Roughly \$125,000 per year in salary and benefits has been devoted to development and ongoing implementation of the site. This is the salaries for two part time attorney employees, each working twenty-one hours per week. Although not 100% of their time was devoted to website work, contributions from other staff more than compensated for their non-website time. Much of the (current) website director's time was devoted generally to content development, and while that content was also distributed by other means almost all of it was used on the website.

Pine Tree paid \$5 - 6,000 yearly for a technical support contract with Kaivo (the developer of the Open Source Template) and another \$1,800 (approximately) in hosting fees. In addition to that the other partner organizations (MEJP, LSE, VLP) paid separate, although considerably less, hosting fees. Each of the separate partner organizations (MEJP, LSE) also paid separate development and implementation costs to the site managers. These were roughly \$3,000 per year plus an additional \$5,000 for the year in which they joined the MegaSite. These amounts do not include content development by partner organizations like MEJP and LSE.

Pine Tree has attempted to include the MegaSite in as many grants and other funding sources as possible. The website is an integrated part of our service delivery. This has included roughly \$10,000 per year as part of an "earmark" grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) for 2004 - 2006 for development of the KIDS Legal portion of the MegaSite. The KIDS Legal site was allocated and additional \$2,500 in a grant from the Maine Health Access Foundation for the development of the "code card." Pine Tree's Low Income Taxpayer Clinic grants allocated roughly \$2,000 per year to the website work. Fair Housing grants for 2005 and 2006 allocated another approximate \$4,500 per year. Our IOLTA grant from the Maine Bar Foundation contributed another amount ranging from about \$5,000 in 2004 to \$10,000 in 2006 for development and implementation of the VLP site. The Legal Guide for Immigrants to Maine was developed for the website with a \$5,000 grant from the Maine Bar Foundation. The remainder of the funds devoted to the MegaSite were from the Maine Civil Legal Services Fund (funded by a filing fee surcharge).

Total funding for the MegaSite has varied slightly from year to year, but has been fairly constant at approximately \$150,000 per year, including TIG funding, partner contribution.

## **VIII. Major lessons and recommendations**

It has become our view that the single most important factor in the success of a statewide website, overshadowing all other factors by far, is content. High quality, accessible, useful, reliable up-to-date content is what these websites should all be about, on both the advocate and public sides. If we provide that the websites will market themselves. The websites will become integrated parts of the legal aid delivery system. The websites will become a meaningful part of the state justice system. Most importantly the websites will provide a service to our client populations which enables them to be better informed participants in the legal and governmental systems that affect them and takes some significant steps toward ensuring them access to justice.

Pine Tree has devoted an experienced attorney, largely self-trained (but well trained) in the art of content development for our low-literacy client population, to the production of client education materials both for the web and otherwise. It is significant that this is a position filled by a senior attorney, a fact which helps ensure the quality of the work, and the status of the position. The Pine Tree staff know that this is work that is valued by the organization. It is also significant that although this is a part-time position, the only duties that go with the position are web work and content development. This is far different from a full time attorney being given part time responsibilities for web work and / or content development. In the latter case the web work and content development would always take second place to the demands of an active case load.

We believe that Pine Tree's insistence on preserving the organizational identity of the participating groups has helped make Maine's statewide website particularly successful. Our client population does not look to some vaguely defined amalgam of organizations for help. They know and look to the specific organizations that provide them help in their offices - Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Legal Services for the Elderly, Maine Equal Justice, etc., not the Maine coalition of web-based legal information providers. Likewise the organizations themselves are more likely to take pride in, and want to support a website that bears the organization name and logo.

There is a difficult balance to be maintained between forging ahead with the websites and web features ("If you build it they will come.") versus building staff and community consensus before undertaking an effort. We seem to be unable to define that balance, but proffer a few examples.

The advocate library on the private side of the MegaSite met with widespread staff indifference and some skepticism. Staff did not, and still do not, contribute their significant pleadings and documents to the library. The web managers built it anyhow, and enlisted an attorney returning from sick leave who had a significantly reduced case load to populate the library. She went to each staff attorney and effectively required them to identify documents which she then indexed and put into the library. It was much more difficult for the staff not to cooperate with a sympathetic co-worker sitting next to them, than to fail to respond to repeated email requests for the submission of documents. Maintenance of the library requires a constant effort and we have learned that we cannot rely on the staff to do it themselves. However, we seem to have built the library to a size where it is now viewed as a valuable asset to the staff. Having only a few documents in the library is not enough to make it useful or something worth sustaining. It is only after the outside imposition of a vision of what it could accomplish and persistent effort that the tipping point is finally achieved.

Similarly, most of the significant features of the website have been the idea and product of one or two people which they pushed forward in the hope that "if they built it they would come," and by and large they did.

On the other hand, the VLP section of the MegaSite is significantly overbuilt. Those parts of the site that are used provide great service to the public and to volunteer lawyers, however, much of the built in capacity is simply not used at all. The then director of the VLP, working with one of the web managers designed a complex, feature-filled site. When she left there was not the staff energy or desire to take advantage of many of these features.

### **Recommendations:**

At the risk of sounding patronizing, we would distill two key recommendations from the lessons we have learned.

1. Focus on content development.
2. Provide sufficient and substantial resources to the websites. This is not a novelty, a distraction or something being foisted on us by LSC. It is a primary means of doing the jobs we are supposed to do. If it means taking resources from face to face attorney delivery of services that's something we will have to live with.