



LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR A RESEARCH/GRANT FACILITATOR

September 28, 2015

INTRODUCTION

The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is inviting proposals for research/grant facilitator services based on the specifications and requirements set forth in this Request for Proposal. LSC needs research/grant facilitator services to help develop the framework for creating an online curriculum that would instruct public librarians how to assist library patrons access civil legal information and advice. LSC is looking for a consultant or consulting firm that can offer the most advantageous balance of price, quality, and performance to LSC for the services requested.

ABOUT THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

LSC is a federally established and funded grantmaking organization that supports civil legal aid providers across the country. Its mission is to expand access to justice by *funding* high-quality, free attorneys for low-income Americans in basic civil matters like divorce, child custody, and eviction. It does not provide direct legal services itself.

LSC is headed by a bipartisan board of directors, whose 11 members are appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the United States Senate. Much like federal agencies, LSC receives an annual appropriation and is subject to ongoing congressional oversight. But as a private nonprofit, it enjoys greater independence and flexibility than its federal counterparts. For example, LSC has initiated a large-scale fundraising campaign in conjunction with its 40th anniversary celebration and generally conducts its day-to-day business like any other charitable organization.

LSC promotes equal access to justice by awarding grants to independent legal aid providers through a competitive grants process. LSC distributes almost 95 percent of its total funding in grants. LSC currently has 134 grantees with more than 800 offices in every county in the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and Micronesia.

LSC performs robust oversight of its grantees, conducting audits and on-site visits to evaluate grantee quality and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and various funding restrictions. LSC also provides training and technical assistance to grantees. LSC encourages its grantees to leverage limited resources by partnering and collaborating with other funders of civil legal aid, including state and local governments, Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts programs, state access to justice commissions, the private bar, philanthropic foundations, law schools, and the business community.

LSC grantees are independent 501(c)(3) organizations with their own boards of directors that are statutorily required to be comprised of mostly attorneys and client-eligible members. The legal services provided by grantees differ based on the unique and pressing needs of the respective communities served. The most common practice areas, however, are family, housing, income maintenance, consumer, health, and employment law. The types of cases frequently encountered by LSC grantees include evictions, debt collection, foreclosures, divorces, child custody, spousal abuse, child abuse or neglect, access to health care, and benefit claims such as unemployment, disability, food stamps and public assistance.

RFP OVERVIEW

Public libraries are an underutilized resource for low-income individuals seeking legal assistance with civil legal problems like divorce, child custody, and eviction. With proper training and support, however, public librarians could help millions of Americans who qualify for LSC-funded legal aid, but are turned away due to lack of resources.

LSC received a planning grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for its “Library Initiative,” which seeks to partner with public libraries to improve access to justice. Specifically, the grant requires LSC to develop a framework for creating an online curriculum that would teach public librarians how to assist patrons access publically available civil legal information and advice. The objective is to increase public librarian’s ability to help patrons learn about their legal rights, find self-help legal resources, and improve their opportunities for self-advocacy.

LSC envisions that the training curriculum will be based on a combination of currently available resources (such as librarian webinars created by ProBono.net) as well as new, original content. It may focus on specific issues, such as language access, state resources, and user comprehension based on literacy levels, or may provide general guidance on the following topics:

- The role librarians can play in providing legal information to people in need of assistance;
- The most common areas of civil legal aid, including landlord/tenant law, family law, and consumer law;
- The most common civil legal aid resources;
- How to identify a legal issue a patron might be facing; and
- How to partner with other local librarians, civil legal aid providers, and law libraries.

LSC anticipates partnering with organizations like ProBono.net and the American Library Association to complete this grant project. It will also convene an advisory group comprised of national civil justice and library science leaders to provide subject matter expertise and guidance throughout the project.

The research facilitator, in consultation with LSC’s Vice President for Grants Management and Director of Data Governance and Analysis, will coordinate every aspect of LSC’s Library Initiative. Specifically, the research facilitator will research and catalog existing civil legal aid self-help resources; create a white paper on civil legal aid self-help resources; support, advise, and compile a report of findings for the project’s Advisory Group; and develop a detailed proposal for creating an online curriculum that would teach public librarians how to assist patrons access publically available civil legal information and advice.

This is a fixed-price contract engagement. Total compensation is \$60,000.

DUTIES, TASKS, MILESTONES, AND DELIVERABLES

The successful applicant is expected to perform the following duties and tasks during the grant project term:

- Research existing self-help resources for civil legal aid, including webinars and online trainings that have been specifically designed for librarians. Research should focus on the most commonly identified areas of civil law impacting low-income clients, including family law, housing law, consumer law, and veterans' issues. Known online legal resources include A2J Author, Hot Docs, and StatesideLegal.com, in addition to local and state-specific resources;
- Research and determine which organizations creates, maintains, and funds the self-help resources identified;
- Organize and catalog the identified self-help resources in an electronic database that can be easily accessed and analyzed;
- Develop a White Paper reporting on currently available and reliable civil legal aid resources available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the American territories.
- Research and compile a list of key civil justice and library science community stakeholders to participate in the Library Initiative's Advisory Group. Based on that list, recruit members for the Advisory Group.
- Provide administrative support to and facilitate coordination of the Advisory Group. Compile findings rendered by the Advisory Group to develop curriculum.
- Develop a curriculum framework for training public librarians on how to help patrons access publically available civil legal information and advice. Work with the Advisory Group members to refine the proposed curriculum areas with the goal of jointly implementing the plan to create a curriculum and pilot it in a small number of libraries across the country.
- Assist LSC's Technology Innovation Grants (TIG) and Office of Information Technology (OIT) staff to create a technical dissemination plan for the trainings (e.g. dissemination through websites, webinars, interactive forums, etc.).
- Assist Chief Development Officer with drafting a detailed proposal for additional funding to implement a pilot program of the proposed curriculum, i.e. move the Library Initiative from concept to pilot phase.
- Prepare grant close-out reports for the Andrew Mellon Foundation.

- Develop and maintain good-working relationships with community stakeholders and Advisory Group members.
- Perform other related project activities as assigned.

The successful applicant will be responsible for meeting the following milestones and producing the following deliverables:

Deliverable	Timeline
Database of self-help resources for civil legal aid	November 2015 – December 31, 2015
List of key civil justice and library science community stakeholders	November 2015 – December 31, 2015
White paper of civil legal aid resources	January 2016 – April 2016
Compilation of Advisory Group's findings	May – June 2016
Detailed proposal for creating an online curriculum framework that would teach public librarians how to assist patrons access publically available civil legal information and advice	June-August 2016
Additional funding proposal	September 2016
Grant close-out and financial reports for Andrew Mellon Foundation	October 31, 2016

Project Management

The research facilitator will work closely with LSC's Vice President for Grants Management, Chief Development Officer, and Director of Data Governance and Analysis, who are administering the Library Initiative pursuant to the Andrew Mellon Foundation grant. The facilitator will also work with LSC's TIG and OIT staff. The successful candidate will be expected to come to LSC's office for meetings and may work on-site every now and then, but otherwise will work remotely from their office. LSC expects to receive regular progress updates from the facilitator and to be notified immediately of any concerns or delays that may arise during the course of the engagement.

The successful applicant will be expected to comply with all LSC workplace policies, rules, and regulations, as well as the Andrew Mellon Foundation's Guidelines for Grants involving Consultants and/or Subcontractors.

Estimated Contract Term and Schedule

The grant term is September 2015 – December 2016. The research facilitator's work is expected to begin on November 1, 2015 and be completed by September 30, 2016.

CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

Both individual consultants and consulting firms are eligible for this engagement. Individual consultants or firm principals will ideally have the following qualifications and experience:

Education: An undergraduate degree (BA, BS) is required. A graduate degree (J.D., MA, MSc., MBA, Ph.D.) is preferred.

Experience: A minimum of five years' experience working in a research environment is required. Experience with and knowledge of library structures, proposal development, granting agencies, and project management, is also required. Advanced knowledge of poverty law and the national and regional research funding environment is preferred.

Skills: Proven research and writing skills; effective interpersonal skills; demonstrated ability to deliver proactive, user-oriented services; excellent communication skills; proven track record in project management together with strong critical and analytical abilities; ability to exercise judgment, tact, diplomacy, and confidentiality; ability to manage competing interests and deadlines of projects; and knowledge of and proficiency with relevant computer applications; meticulous attention to detail; ability to meet deadlines; and creative problem solving skills.

RFP SCHEDULE

DATE	EVENT
September 28	RFP issued
October 5	Deadline for respondents to submit RFP questions
October 6	LSC responds to RFP questions
October 13	Deadline for respondents to submit proposals
October 14-24	Evaluation of proposals and potential applicant interviews
October 25	Notification to successful <i>consultant/consultant</i> of preliminary selection and contract negotiation
October 30	Contract approval
November 1	Performance begins

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All proposals must be 10 pages or less, well-organized, and demonstrate how the consultant's proposed services, approach and methodology, qualifications, experience, and terms meet or exceed LSC's requirements. Proposals must also contain the following:

Consultant Information

- Your full name, address, telephone number, contact person, email, and website.
- If applicable, a firm overview, including a brief history, mission, number of employees,

and number of years in operation.

- RFP point-person. Please include title, phone number, and email address.
- What, if any, experience do you have working with grant-making organizations?

Pricing and Pricing Methodology

- This is a fixed-price contract of \$60,000. No benefits are included.

Project Staffing

- Provide resumes and/or biographies for staff members who will be working on LSC's project.

Other Information

- You may provide other information or material that you believe is relevant to our evaluation or that provides additional value to LSC.

RFP RELATED QUESTIONS

Please submit questions relating to this RFP by email to Rebecca Weir at rweir@lsc.gov, with a copy to Lynn Jennings, jenningsl@lsc.gov, no later than 5:30 pm EST, on October 5, 2015. Answers to questions will be shared with all RFP respondents.

PROPOSAL DEADLINES AND MODE OF DELIVERY

Proposals must be in electronic form (PDF or Microsoft Word), and received on or before 5:30 p.m., Eastern Time, on October 5. Please email your proposal and mail 3 hard-copies (post-dated Oct. 5 or before) to:

Rebecca Weir
Contracts Coordinator
Legal Services Corporation
3333 K St. NW, 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20007
202.295.1618
rweir@lsc.gov

You are solely responsible for ensuring that your proposal is delivered on time. Late proposals may be accepted in LSC's sole discretion. You must bear all costs incurred in preparing your proposal; contract awards will not cover proposal costs.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

The contract will be awarded to the consultant who provides the **best value** – the most advantageous balance of price, quality, and performance – to LSC. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- ✓ **Price**
 - The reasonableness of the price for the service being provided.
 - Whether the price is realistic (especially if it is an estimate), reflects a clear understanding of LSC's need, and is consistent with other parts of the proposal.
 - Cost by labor category (if a times and materials contract).
 - The cost of incidental expenses, including taxes and service fees, administrative costs, maintenance/customer support costs, system or software conversion costs, travel and transportation costs.

- ✓ **Quality**
 - Qualifications and experience of consultant/contractor and proposed staff
 - Technical expertise
 - Delivery schedule
 - Project plan and approach

- ✓ **Performance**
 - Timeliness of deliverables
 - Capacity
 - Understanding of and ability to meet LSC's needs
 - Responsiveness to LSC
 - Professionalism of representatives (sales, customer support, technical assistance, designated consultants, etc.)

- ✓ **Demonstrated reputation for excellence in price, performance, and quality**

- ✓ **Willingness to accept LSC's terms**

LSC'S RIGHTS

LSC reserves the right to:

- Accept or reject any or all proposals, or any part thereof;
- Waive any informalities or technicalities contained in any proposal received;
- Conduct discussions with respondents and accept revisions of proposals after the closing date;
- Make an award based upon various selection criteria;
- Request clarification from any respondents on any or all aspects of its proposals;
- Cancel or re-issue this RFP at any time;
- Retain all proposals submitted in response to this RFP;

- Invite some, all, or none of the respondents for interviews, demonstrations, presentations and further discussion;

CONFIDENTIALITY

During the RFP process, you may be given access to LSC's confidential or proprietary information. You agree not to use this information for your or any third-party's benefit, and will not disclose this information to any person who does not have a need to know.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and associated LSC regulations may require LSC to disclose certain documents to the public, including portions of your proposal. Generally, LSC will not release any documents that would cause your consultant competitive harm. You are encouraged, however, to label any confidential information contained in your proposal to facilitate LSC's ability to withhold it from disclosure.