



Legal Aid Infrastructure & Innovation Report on Grant Recommendations

March 2022

Number of LOI Received: 69
Total Funding Amount Requested: \$9,864,741
Number of Grants Funded: 47
Total Amount Allocated for Funding: \$4,950,000

In 2021, the State allocated \$5 million of Equal Access Funds for distribution by the California Access to Justice Commission for Infrastructure and Innovation grants to legal services organizations. Eligible organizations provide civil legal aid to persons at or below 200% of the federal poverty threshold, including both IOLTA and non-IOLTA funded organizations. Service priorities were rural and immigrant populations and organizations that work with community partners.

The Commission launched the grants program with a webinar, "*A Community Conversation about Creating Change.*" In December 2021, the Commission released a request for letters of intent and received 69 letters seeking nearly \$10 million in funds. The Commission invited 49 organizations to apply for grant funds. Demonstrating the quality of the applications and the vast needs, almost all were recommended for funding, with some funded at reduced amounts to maximize diversity.

While infrastructure and innovation may seem at opposite ends of the spectrum, they have in common the potential to make a long-term difference in the organizations' ability to serve more clients with greater efficiency and increased quality. To make this possible, dedicated funding is necessary to develop long-term strategies, which often seem out of reach given the pressing demand to serve current clients.

These grants provide needed services to immigrants, regardless of their status, in traditional and innovative ways. For example, one grant expands the use of the private right of action against private detention centers to improve conditions; another improves access to its online searchable database of expert witnesses for asylum cases. A third will develop a portal for pro bono attorneys managing Special Juvenile Status cases. Eleven grants will fund work specifically addressing immigrant needs, and an additional 26 grants will provide services to predominantly immigrant populations.

Grants to rural communities are also robust, including a grant to support central valley community leaders advocating for water and other rights; a grant to empower students and their parents in northern rural communities to advocate for equal education, and assistance to help a small rural organization strengthen its administrative structure enabling it to add a new Family Law program.

Many projects propose using new ways to reach hard to serve clients, including text messaging to reach unhoused individuals, incarcerated persons, seniors, or unaccompanied minors. A common theme is improved client communication through enhanced technology, computer or telephone lines, or enhanced websites. Others sought basic software or systems to increase efficiency.

In short, it is clear that there is an overwhelming need for these infrastructure and innovation funds and that the legal aid community is well-positioned to put the funds to good use.

SUMMARY OF DIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS



INFRASTRUCTURE vs. INNOVATION

70% Infrastructure (33)
30% Innovation (14)

*Total LOI =
67% Infrastructure
33% Innovation*



GEOGRAPHY

17 Statewide
5 Central Valley*
16 Northern California
16 Southern California

**5 LOI received to serve the
Central Valley*



ORGANIZATION SIZE

5 < \$1MM*
11 \$1-2MM
16 \$2-5MM
15 > \$5MM

**8 LOI received for orgs with a
budget <\$1 MM*



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES*

32 Rural
36 Immigrant
24 CBO Partnership

**Many Applications include
multiple priority areas. 14 orgs
are purely rural and 11 serve
only immigrants.*



IOLTA vs. NON-IOLTA

77% IOLTA (36)
23% NON-IOLTA (11)

*Total LOI =
75% IOLTA
25% NON-IOLTA*



PRO BONO

19 Pro Bono

Total LOI = 23

Descriptions of Grants Funded

<p>AIDS Legal Referral Panel of the San Francisco Bay Area will use grant support to transition its database from an old, crash-prone Access platform to a Salesforce platform that will provide greater security, reliability, and remote access. The database tracks ALRP's attorneys and cases, donors, and volunteers and is vital to providing civil legal services to more than 1,300 clients living with HIV each year.</p>	\$90,000
<p>Alameda County Homeless Action Center sought critical infrastructure support to enhance communications. HAC will transform its current phone system to include much-needed texting capabilities to improve accessibility for homeless clients while allowing the cloud phone system adopted during the pandemic to provide complete functionality for drop-in center services and in-office staff.</p>	\$76,000
<p>Alliance for Children's Rights, which provides critical legal services to underserved children, youth, and families in the child welfare system, will incorporate a new case management system to create a more efficient and effective intake system. In addition, the Alliance will update its intake process to assess client needs, eliminate barriers to sharing information, open cases, enhance case management and data collection.</p>	\$190,000
<p>California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform will use funds to modernize its website, including a document assembly program to assist seniors and their caregivers in resolving civil matters such as Medi-Cal Recovery, residents' rights complaints, and demand letters related to eviction or discharge. The project expands consumer education resources in Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese related to eviction and illegal discharge, Medi-Cal for long-term care, and options to avoid institutionalization.</p>	\$100,000
<p>California Collaborative for Immigrant Justice will expand its capacity to serve detained immigrants housed in rural areas, often held in for-profit detention centers in remote areas, far from legal counsel, their families, and communities. CCIJ will provide legal advice and referrals to immigrants detained in the Imperial and Central Valley regions and track systemic abuses. CCIJ will support individuals who are eligible to bring a lawsuit under AB3228, a new law that creates a private right of action for detained immigrants to sue private detention operators who violate the standards of care in their contracts.</p>	\$200,000
<p>California Indian Legal Services, which provides legal services to indigent Native populations, will use grant funds to migrate its archaic case management system. This will save a significant amount of staff time that is currently being used on outdated and time-consuming systems and processes. The time saved will enable serving more clients in the indigent and vulnerable Indian communities throughout California who critically needs help.</p>	\$50,000
<p>California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, Inc. will engage consultant support to transition from multiple software systems to more updated, integrated platforms. The funds will foster a long-term social media plan for client outreach and promote client workshops and virtual events. The funds will increase CRLAF's online engagement, and enhanced communication capability will increase rural migrant communities' capacity to access services, document violations, and communicate with legal advocates who can evaluate their cases and provide legal assistance.</p>	\$78,000
<p>California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. will expand financial and data management capacity by reducing administrative inefficiencies and improving CRLA's case management system service data capture. To further improve data input and staff investment in the process and its outcomes, CRLA will train all staff on the principles of data, evaluation, and outcomes measurement. The improved data collection and integration will improve and expand legal services for low-income, rural clients.</p>	\$80,000

<p>Center for Gender and Refugee Studies - California, Inc. has developed an innovative—first-of-its-kind in the field of asylum law—online searchable database of expert witnesses. The tool streamlines how legal services providers connect with asylum experts. The database currently holds more than 312 (68 of whom are California-based) pre-vetted experts ready to provide testimony. Expert witness reports and testimony are integral to building and winning an asylum case, enabling advocates to better secure protections for their clients and advance asylum law generally. CGRS-CA will expand the database and make technical improvements identified through user feedback.</p>	<p>\$75,000</p>
<p>Central California Legal Services, Inc. serves clients in underserved communities and will use funds to upgrade its technology infrastructure to enhance its primarily rural operations. Applying American Bar Association best practices metrics for ongoing project evaluation and modification and incorporating valued input from clients, volunteers, and other community stakeholders, the organization proposes hardware and other technology upgrades to improve services and enhance security.</p>	<p>\$170,000</p>
<p>Centro Legal de la Raza leads regional collaboratives, serves as administrator for crucial safety net consortia, provides critical direct legal services, and incubates smaller organizations. After a period of exponential growth, Centro needs new case management and accounting systems to sustain its growth and expanded leadership role. Investing in data infrastructure will improve services and equip Centro to track trends for advocacy and analyze equity in services, impacting thousands of low-income residents and supporting systemic change.</p>	<p>\$125,000</p>
<p>Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking will hire a one-year Legal Fellow who is a survivor of human trafficking. The fellow will work within Cast's Legal Department and add a lived experience perspective to legal services delivery – something it believes has never been done before in California. In addition, as part of Cast's Learning Hub model, the Legal Fellow's input will be harnessed to provide insight on policy implementation. Finally, it will increase staff attorneys' capacity to take on more clients.</p>	<p>\$70,000</p>
<p>Contra Costa Senior Legal Service will engage a consultant to design and conduct an innovative, replicable needs assessment survey specific to older adults. This process will help it better understand barriers preventing low-income seniors from resolving their civil legal problems. Data findings will improve outreach and services and result in a toolkit to be shared widely within the legal community.</p>	<p>\$71,000</p>
<p>Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF) will create a new leadership structure to ensure that its leaders reflect the community that they serve. While discrimination affects all disabled people, marginalized disabled people of color experience far greater discrimination, segregation, and exclusion than those who are white. DREDF envisions a new leadership structure that builds its capacity to continually develop generations of diverse disabled leaders within and outside of DREDF.</p>	<p>\$66,000</p>
<p>East Bay Community Law Center has rapidly expanded to meet the ongoing community need for services. Implementing a Human Resources Information System would fully digitalize all human resources and payroll functional areas and provide greater accuracy, efficiency, and a more positive and transparent employee experience, enhancing staff retention and focusing more on direct services to clients. Shifting to a more sophisticated cloud-based fund accounting software will position its financial systems to support anticipated budget growth and staff capacity, improve management of the financial activity, and provide more timely information for fiscal accountability and strategic planning.</p>	<p>\$115,000</p>
<p>East Bay Sanctuary will create an accessible and efficient digital immigration-legal-services model to complement their in-person services. The proposed technology-based improvements will allow them to more effectively reach and manage a larger client pool beyond the Bay Area; increase accessibility to services through their website and mobile texting platforms; strengthen digital legal case management systems; improve training programs and how they collaborate among staff and volunteers.</p>	<p>\$130,000</p>

<p>Elder Law & Advocacy will create a new website that will transform how it interacts with seniors, their families and caregivers, attorneys, and other senior service organizations. With online intake capability, fillable forms, interactive assessments, multiple language accessibility, EL&A will provide up-to-date and critically needed information to help seniors access the information they need to avoid being scammed, defrauded, or otherwise victimized and to educate and empower them as they address legal concerns.</p>	<p>\$140,000</p>
<p>Family & Children's Law Center will increase its capacity to provide critical legal services to low-income clients in need of Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) predicate orders, domestic violence legal services, and family law services. SIJC predicate orders have a life-changing and long-term impact on Unaccompanied Minors by stopping removal proceedings and creating a viable path to U.S. permanent residency. In addition, domestic violence restraining orders are a critical component for stopping cycles of violence in Marin County, where FACLC has seen an increase of 50% in requested domestic violence services.</p>	<p>\$76,000</p>
<p>Family Violence Appellate Project has an extensive library of resources to further appellate advocacy, but only a fraction of the resources are accessible to advocates. FVAP will create systems to make its existing comprehensive resources, including law review articles, legal briefs, case law, research memos, referral resources, and sample motions, accessible to attorneys, advocates, and survivors. FVAP will provide better legal outcomes and safety for survivors and their families by reducing barriers to maintaining, cataloging, and providing access to resources.</p>	<p>\$115,000</p>
<p>Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law will use funds to create statewide capacity among nonprofit legal service providers and others to access a share of pension benefits in dissolution proceedings. This is a crucial but unaddressed asset for low and moderate-income persons, especially women. Legal aid and court self-help programs will learn how to advocate for an equitable division of retirement benefits through specialized legal training.</p>	<p>\$175,000</p>
<p>Inland Counties Legal Service will develop a mobile-first web-based application for the assembly of dissolution forms. Direct legal services will be provided to eligible persons. In addition, the app will be shared with community-based organizations and other legal aids in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties that serve similar populations. The goal is to create a platform that is user-oriented, including language and accessibility components for non-English speaking litigants and persons with disabilities.</p>	<p>\$77,000</p>
<p>Inner City Law Center will lay the groundwork for scaling up the number of attorneys doing Right to Counsel (RTC) work first in Los Angeles to make it available throughout the state. The Judicial Council recently issued a report supporting an RTC for low-income tenants facing eviction. While a notable goal, the legal aid community is not adequately prepared to scale eviction staff and service to the level that an RTC would require. ICLC will create a robust training, supervising, and mentoring program to support a full-scale RTC and enhance the recruitment and retention of housing attorneys.</p>	<p>\$110,000</p>
<p>KIND, Inc will leverage community and pro bono networks and technology to provide legal services across California, including the Central Valley; develop a pro bono portal to recruit and train pro bono attorneys and stakeholders on trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices, including language justice; and improve legal outcomes for children through a program to provide cell phones to foster children's connectivity to their pro bono attorneys, provide support, and improve their legal outcomes.</p>	<p>\$150,000</p>
<p>Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights (SF Bay Area) will allow LCCR to make critical investments in the tools they need to provide high-quality remote and in-person services: up-to-date laptops, printers, Zoom and Adobe licenses, and video/graphic design support. Funding will directly translate to more cases, more victories, more money in clients' pockets, more protection of their livelihoods, and more safety and status for immigrant clients.</p>	<p>\$62,000</p>

<p>Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability will expand legal aid and support community engagement, and leadership development and advocacy through workshops held simultaneously in-person and remotely. This will allow broader access to services and civic engagement to people with diverse needs and limitations, including people in remote communities, mobility limitations, inability to travel due to work and family care responsibilities, and internet connectivity issues. In addition, funding will support technical assistance and equipment for people joining by virtual means, support in-person collaboration through multiple in-person sites, and provide language interpretation.</p>	\$100,000
<p>Learning Rights Law Center will upgrade an antiquated accounting infrastructure. The project will be supported by a consultant specializing in nonprofit bookkeeping who will complete a comprehensive review of the organization's accounting infrastructure needs and recommend changes to policies and software to achieve streamlined workflows that are user-friendly for staff and provide comprehensive, accurate data and current. The grant will support the purchase of the new software, the development of a new accounting manual, and staff training.</p>	\$25,000
<p>Legal Access Alameda is the lead agency of the Disaster Legal Assistance Collaborative (DLAC), a partnership network of 27 organizations, including legal service providers, law firms, FEMA, the Red Cross, Cal OES, local bar associations, and social service providers. Funds will support staff to administer the Free Legal Advice virtual advice clinic, DLAC website content, and DLAC hotline to disaster survivors. DLAC address the wide range of legal issues that disaster survivors face, including landlord-tenant, insurance, employment, and public benefits.</p>	\$100,000
<p>Legal Aid at Work will build a web-based employment-law navigator that is dynamic, visually appealing, and accessible to low-literacy populations and persons with disabilities. The navigator will guide low-wage workers statewide experiencing job-related legal problems to the self-help materials most relevant to their unique legal issues. LAAW will use a human-centered, legal design approach to create the navigator, and will iteratively test versions of it with actual low-income clients to ensure that it is linguistically, culturally, and otherwise accessible to the vulnerable communities they serve.</p>	\$161,000
<p>Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County will use funds to close gaps in technology needs that developed during the pandemic. Funds will be used to upgrade its online intake and case management system and purchase some laptops for attorneys. The project will make it easier for clients to remotely access intake, eliminate inefficiencies/duplication in staff work, and enable attorneys to work in a hybrid environment.</p>	\$40,000
<p>Legal Aid of Marin will use funds to streamline legal services by using iPads to conduct remote hearings, including on-site intake conflicts checking, educating clients about other nonprofit organizations, providing referrals, accessing translation services, sharing bilingual flyers, and conducting legal research. LAM seeks to leverage lessons learned during COVID and to re-imagine the possibilities of providing civil legal services to indigent persons where they live, work, and gather.</p>	\$27,000
<p>Legal Aid Society of San Diego will revise its website to provide substantive information in more than a dozen different areas of law. The teams that currently provide services have critical information that is difficult to disseminate through their current website; a new website will facilitate communication in an efficient and timely manner.</p>	\$50,000
<p>Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County will build a more diverse leadership team and address the general difficulty of recruiting, promoting, and retaining legal aid staff by reexamining and reshaping its recruiting, hiring professional development, and promotion practices. LASSM will work with a consultant to create a shared professional development plan template, modified position descriptions, and a more transparent professional development path for all employees that articulates 'unwritten rules' and supports retention and career growth.</p>	\$60,000

<p>Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice will strengthen its technology infrastructure and staff efficiencies by updating its case management system. Improvements will help LACLJ meet growing demand from underserved survivors, work more effectively in an increasingly remote/virtual service environment, and make data-driven decisions that enhance its responsiveness and community partnerships.</p>	<p>\$145,000</p>
<p>Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County and Three Subgrantees (Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Mental Health Advocacy Services, and Legal Aid of San Bernardino) are partnering for a Collaborative Texting for Outcomes and Longer-Term Impact Project. The Project will use text messaging to gather outcome and longer-term impact data from clients to get a comprehensive picture of the impact of brief services provided by the four organizations that together serve the Los Angeles, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties, allowing policymakers to improve services and allocate resources where they are most needed.</p>	<p>\$400,000</p>
<p>Oasis Legal Services works in the Central Valley and will use funds to establish a Fresno satellite office, engage regional partners to provide a safe space to meet the hard-to-reach community's intersectional needs, and increase access to life-changing documented status. Oasis clients are asylum seekers who are undocumented, low-income people of color, and victims of hate crimes struggling under compounding systems of oppression. Asylum offers protection from persecution and alleviation from poverty, establishes eligibility for critical benefits, and helps clients become fully engaged members of society while embracing their LGBTQ+ identity.</p>	<p>\$129,000</p>
<p>OneJustice will build systems to connect volunteers with rural opportunities. Working with Inland Counties Legal Services, Legal Services of Northern California, and California Rural Legal Assistance, OneJustice will create a streamlined pro bono clinic service delivery model that, among other things, adapts local technology to local community needs; includes recruitment plans and marketing templates; and, streamlined training. This project will increase access to justice in rural communities by developing replicable practices that tailor pro bono participation to community needs.</p>	<p>\$150,000</p>
<p>Open Door Legal is pioneering a Case Management System to manage legal services data. The grant will enable Open Door Legal to refine the case management system and to work with its beta testing partners, the SF Bar's Justice & Diversity Center, the Marin Family & Children's Law Center, and the Cooperative Restraining Order Clinic to develop the policies and practicalities for org-to-org connections; to develop features; and, to migrate their data. Legal aid operations and data management are complex, and Open Door's solution seeks to improve data management and particularly the ability to effectively collect data that can be used when referring cases between organizations.</p>	<p>\$125,000</p>
<p>Peoples College of Law will use funds to expand legal clinics year-round instead of solely during the summer months. The year-round legal clinic program will begin with an eviction defense. However, it will be designed with flexibility in mind so that the College can address specific community needs as they emerge.</p>	<p>\$26,000</p>
<p>Public Advocates, Inc. will use funds to expand their innovative community partnership model to implement equitable educational policies and expanded community partnerships in the far Northern California region. Through engagement of students and families, this partner will support Public Advocates' provision of legal services, research and policy analysis, education on legal rights and opportunities for advocacy, and communications. Outcomes will include increased capacity for providing legal services and effective and impactful advocacy by indigent families and students to hold schools accountable,</p>	<p>\$50,000</p>
<p>Public Interest Law Project will use funds to improve its communication externally by updating its website and purchasing hardware and software necessary to give staff mobile access to the office. Combined, these upgrades will facilitate redefining its online presence while providing a more dynamic infrastructure to support staff. It also will establish itself as a model for others in the legal services arena to follow in their efforts to address an organization's post-pandemic technological needs.</p>	<p>\$50,000</p>

<p>Public Law Center will restructure its intake system to improve the efficiency, connectivity, availability, and issue-spotting abilities of its first line of contact with community members. In addition, the new intake positions will expand linguistic access and cultural competencies. PLC will hire 2 Spanish-speaking and 2 Vietnamese-speaking intake staff and train them to perform in-person appointment-based intake, walk-in inquiries, event-based intake, phone and virtual intake, social media inquiries, and text-based communications.</p>	<p>\$200,000</p>
<p>Root & Rebound will use funds to make critical technology updates. Before the pandemic, it operated very much in-person, using dated desktops and antiquated phone systems to run its statewide reentry hotline. Funds will be used to purchase laptops for staff, improve telephone services technology (essential to serving incarcerated individuals without access to the internet), and update the security and functionality of the current case management system, including integrating Salesforce.</p>	<p>\$100,000</p>
<p>San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program will undertake an IT infrastructure improvement project to maximize the effectiveness of its case management software, Legal Server. Configuration and implementation of Legal Server's Online Intake and Clinic Modules, with special attention to Spanish language translation and mobile optimization, will facilitate automated data entry and hassle-free coordination between SDVLP's program staff and attorneys who volunteer to provide pro bono legal services to clients.</p>	<p>\$30,000</p>
<p>San Luis Obispo Legal Assistance Foundation will use funds towards adding administrative support. Over the last two years, the organization has tripled in budget and staff size. Increased support will provide the organization with the capacity to take on new programs to serve dire needs in this rural area. In particular, SLOLAF has been asked to start a Family Law program in Spring 2022, which cannot happen without adding critical new positions.</p>	<p>\$80,000</p>
<p>Senior Citizens Legal Services will use grant funds to strengthen its infrastructure by making vital hardware and software acquisitions. Since 1972, SCLS has provided high-quality legal services to seniors, one of the most vulnerable communities in their area. Yet SCLS continues to operate on a shoe-string budget and with outdated technology. In addition, the April 2020 onset of the Covid-19 pandemic showed SCLS how far it was from being able to serve clients remotely, demonstrating the need for improvements.</p>	<p>\$61,000</p>
<p>The TransLatin@ Coalition will enhance services to serve Trans, Gender Nonconforming, and Intersex (TGI) people to secure name and gender marker changes and complete medical health directives. TGI people experience discrimination, especially in accessing healthcare, housing, and employment when their name does not reflect their gender identity. This project will add an attorney to expand capacity, review and provide comments on new name changes and gender marker forms, and will work with a consultant to build on resources in Spanish and English, and enhance a dedicated website for TGI people to have access to court forms, and instructional videos, and medical health directive forms.</p>	<p>\$210,000</p>
<p>Veterans Legal Institute has seen a trend in Southern California Veterans who do not understand their legal rights and have not been fully informed on how to receive and use their veteran's benefits after their military service has ended. Funding will permit VLI to address this significant gap in information by producing an educational video series catered to veterans and (separately) to the advocates who serve veterans. The video series will address immigration, unlawful detainer, veteran benefits, discharge upgrades, limited family law, bankruptcy, and estate planning. Understanding their legal rights in these civil law areas will have a life-changing ability to empower veterans.</p>	<p>\$40,000</p>
	<p>\$4,950,000</p>

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