



Breaking Barriers to Justice

Purpose of Proposal: Request for Proposal—internal and external assessment of Land of Lincoln Legal Aid’s Pro Bono Program

Land of Lincoln Legal Aid seeks the services of a qualified and experienced consultant to work with our staff to engage in a comprehensive internal and external assessment of our Pro Bono Program that will provide also provide actionable recommendations for modernizing our pro bono program.

Introduction:

Founded in 1972, Land of Lincoln Legal Aid (LOLLA) is an LSC-funded, not-for-profit organization. We provide free civil legal assistance to low-income Illinoisans in 65 counties in central and southern Illinois through five regional offices, four satellite offices, and a centralized Legal Advice and Referral Center (LARC). More than 740,000 Illinoisans are eligible for our help. We are the sole provider of a full range of legal services, from advice to representation, in our service territory. Our mission is to provide low income and senior residents of central and southern Illinois with high quality civil legal services in order to obtain and maintain their basic human needs. Through advice, representation, advocacy, education and collaboration, we seek:

- To achieve justice for those whose voices might otherwise not be heard;
- To empower individuals to advocate for themselves;
- To make positive changes in the communities we serve.

We provide assistance in the following areas of civil law: housing, foreclosure, public benefits, family, consumer, criminal records clearing, and education.

Assessment background:

Our Pro Bono Program has changed very little since our founding in 1972. Each of our regional offices has designated individual staff members who spend a small portion of their time (.05-.1 FTE) recruiting pro bono volunteers and referring cases. Pro bono is not integrated into all our substantive law practices, nor our regional offices themselves. Pro Bono remains an afterthought in our service delivery methods and the amount of pro bono assistance provided to clients throughout the years has dwindled.

In the last five decades, LOLLA has changed a lot—including our staff size, our service delivery models, and our programs. More than a decade ago, LOLLA created a pro bono task force to improve our pro bono program. The attorney chair of the task force devotes .15 FTE to task force activities. In total, LOLLA devotes 1.48 FTE staff to pro bono. Beyond adding a pro bono task force, the only other change in our Pro Bono Program is the addition of a LSC Pro Bono Innovation Fund grant-funded Justice in Schools initiative, with an attorney and paralegal who are responsible for recruiting new pro bono volunteers, training them, and creating opportunities for them to provide legal help within the East St. Louis School District.

In 2023, the ABA Center for Pro Bono to conducted a pro bono peer consulting visit. Their final report highlights the significant deficiencies in our program, our antiquated approach to pro bono, and offered many recommendations. Their strongest recommendation was hiring a full-time Pro Bono Manager to coordinate pro bono work program wide. We just created the position and are currently searching for a Pro Bono Manager. This new manager will initially be charged with working with the consultant and our pro bono team to perform this comprehensive assessment.

With recommendations based on a comprehensive assessment and increased leadership capacity, LOLLA is well-positioned to revolutionize our Pro Bono Program. Land of Lincoln envisions a robust Pro Bono Program that delivers meaningful assistance to eligible Illinoisans through:

- Recruitment of a variety of volunteers unconstrained by geography
- Integration of pro bono in all our substantive law practices providing opportunities to volunteer across a wide variety of areas of law
- Opportunities to volunteer that do not require taking cases for extended representation, but include bite-sized and limited scope opportunities, among others
- More LOLLA staff to train, nurture and problem-solve with volunteers
- Standardized pro bono referrals and practices across all our regional offices

Scope of work:

The consultant for this project is expected to guide LOLLA in developing a plan to transform our Pro Bono Program to provide valuable, high-quality assistance to eligible Illinoisans

regardless of where in our service area that they live. This vision involves 1) recruiting a variety of volunteers from diverse locations, including some outside of our service area such as Metropolitan St. Louis and Chicago; 2) incorporating pro bono work into all our substantive law practices for diverse volunteer opportunities; 3) providing volunteer options that do not require long-term case commitments; 4) increasing our internal pro bono staff to support, train, and collaborate with volunteers; and 5) implementing standardized pro bono practices and referral across all our offices.

We anticipate that the consultant will assist us in clarifying our vision, creating an assessment framework to achieve this vision, creating the necessary assessment tools, conducting the assessment, and summarizing the findings in a written report. The report will include specific and practical recommendations for enhancements to align with our vision and objectives. The consultant will work with internal pro bono stakeholders to develop and conduct the assessment and to create buy-in for its findings and recommendations.

The consultant will provide the following services:

- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of our pro bono practice to determine how we can better integrate pro bono into all our substantive law practices in all our regional offices;
- Conduct an external assessment that involves current pro bono volunteers, members of the Bar—including some outside of our service area, paralegals, law students, paralegal students and clients to better understand barriers to pro bono and how to overcome them and to identify projects that meet volunteer and client needs;
- Conduct an external assessment, including surveying similar legal aid organizations, to determine the best way to recruit and retain a variety of volunteers who may provide services remotely;
- Conduct an internal assessment whether LOLLA's current pro bono staff and structure are appropriate to expand pro bono opportunities and provide the support volunteers need to perform meaningful client-centered work;
- Provide recommendations for the best way to increase pro bono staffing, including roles and responsibilities;
- Work closely in conducting the assessment with the Pro Bono Manager, Executive Director, and pro bono staff to ensure buy-in for the final assessment and recommendations;
- Identify and recommend technology improvements needed for internal and external pro bono efficiency;
- Provide preliminary findings and recommendations based on the assessment, providing LOLLA with the opportunity to review and discuss the final recommendations;

- Provide a comprehensive assessment report for implementation to LOLLA;
- Work with LOLLA’s Pro Bono Manager and Executive Director to develop a communication plan for the assessment’s implementation.

We anticipate the assessment to occur between October 1, 2024 and February 2025. A final report is due to LOLLA by March 25, 2025.

Timeline:

- RFP published in July 2024.
- Proposals due by August 15, 2024.
- Interviews conducted in August-September 2024.
- Consultant selected by mid-September 2024.
- October 1, 2024, the consultant meets with the LOLLA Pro Bono team and begins assessment.
- Preliminary written assessment and recommendations are provided to LOLLA’s Pro Bono Team by February 21, 2025.
- Final report delivered by March 25, 2025.

Submission guidelines:

We value concision, so please be as focused as possible in responding. Proposals should include:

- Consultant qualifications, including a comprehensive resume or curriculum vitae.
- Three professional references from organizations for which similar services have been provided.
- Total costs for providing services including a proposed budget with all anticipated expenses. Costs may not exceed \$35,000.
- Two relevant examples of completed assessments with recommendations.
- A description of your approach to conducting the assessment and generating the recommendations as described in the Scope of Work, including but not limited to:
 - How you will help LOLLA clarify its pro bono vision;
 - How you will engage pro bono staff in the process;
 - How you will engage outside stakeholders, including clients and volunteers;
 - How you will engage the data to provide an assessment with reasonable recommendations.

Submission deadline: All proposals must be submitted by August 15, 2024 to avivod@lincolnlegal.org. “Pro Bono Assessment” should be in the subject line.

Contact information: For inquiries or additional information, please contact Clarissa Gaff, Executive Director, at cgaff@lincolnlegal.org