



LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Office of Program Performance

***FINAL
PROGRAM QUALITY REPORT***

FOR

Legal Aid Society of Orange County

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Table of Contents

VISIT BACKGROUND3
Introduction..... 3
Service Area and Program Overview 3
Summary of Findings.....4

**PERFORMANCE AREA ONE: Effectiveness in identifying the most pressing
civil legal needs of low-income people in the service area and targeting resources
to address those needs.....6**
Needs Assessment and Priorities6
Evaluation and Adjustment.....6
Strategic Planning7

**PERFORMANCE AREA TWO: Effectiveness in engaging and serving the
low-income population throughout the service area.....8**
Intake.....8
Engagement with and access by the low-income population11

**PERFORMANCE AREA THREE: Effectiveness of legal representation and
other program activities intended to benefit the low-income population in the
service area13**
Legal Representation13
Private Attorney Involvement.....17
Other program services and activities on behalf of the eligible client population.....18

**PERFORMANCE AREA FOUR: Effectiveness of governance, leadership
and administration.....19**
Board governance19
Leadership.....20
Overall management and administration, including financial and human
resource administration.....21
Technology22
Internal Communications.....24
Resource Development24
Participation in an integrated legal services delivery system26
Conclusion.....26

INTRODUCTION

The Legal Services Corporation's (LSC) Office of Program Performance (OPP) conducted a Program Quality Visit to the Legal Aid Society of Orange County¹ (LASOC) from April 8-12, 2013. Team members included OPP Program Counsel Nancy Glickman (team leader), OPP Program Analyst Jane Ribadeneyra, and LSC temporary employees Cesar Britos, Alex Gulotta, and John Johnson.

Program Quality Visits are designed to evaluate whether LSC grantees are providing the highest quality legal services to eligible clients. In conducting the evaluation, OPP relies on the LSC Act and regulations, the LSC Performance Criteria, LSC Program Letters, and the ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid. The evaluation was organized to follow the four Performance Areas of the LSC Performance Criteria, which cover needs assessment and priority setting; access to services and engagement with the low-income community; legal work management and the legal work produced; and program management including board governance, leadership, resource development, and coordination within the delivery system.

The team reviewed documents provided by the program to LSC, including recent applications for funding, technology and PAI plans, workforce analysis charts, and case service and other services reports. The team also reviewed materials requested in advance of the visit, including documents relating to board governance, intake, legal work and case management policies and systems, and the results of an online staff survey. While on site, the team visited LASOC's Santa Ana, Compton, and Norwalk offices². The team interviewed program leadership and administration, along with attorneys, paralegals, and administrative and support staff. The team also interviewed several members of the board of directors, judges and court administrative personnel, members of the state and local bar, and other community partner organizations.

SERVICE AREA AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Legal Aid Society of Orange County is one of 11 LSC-funded legal services programs in California. LASOC was founded by the Orange County Bar Association in 1958 to respond to the needs of the County's poor and elderly. In 1984, LASOC successfully bid for a southeast Los Angeles County service area that significantly increased LASOC's geographical reach. LASOC currently serves low-income individuals who reside in all the cities and unincorporated areas in Orange County (the 6th most populous county in the nation) and 18 cities in southeast Los Angeles County (the most populous county in the nation). LASOC serves Orange County through offices located in Santa Ana and Anaheim, which is a mix of urban and

¹ Although the program in the Los Angeles County service area is locally known as Community Legal Services, as Legal Aid Society of Orange County, Inc. is the LSC grantee, LASOC will be used to describe the entire program throughout this report.

² The Community Service building where the Anaheim office is housed was closed for annual repairs. The team interviewed office staff in their temporary location in the Santa Ana office.

suburban. Its Los Angeles County service area, operated under the moniker of Community Legal Services, is primarily urban and is assisted through its Compton and Norwalk offices.

The 2009-2011 American Community Survey estimates LASOC's service area as having a poverty population of 539,250; 356,749 in Orange County and 182,501 in its L.A. County service area. The US Census Bureau also reports that 45.4% of Orange County residents and 57.1% of Los Angeles County residents speak a language other than English at home. Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean comprise the majority of such languages.

In 2012, LASOC received \$3,858,265 in LSC basic field funding; it does not receive migrant or Native American grants. LSC funding comprised slightly more than 50% of LASOC's 2012 revenue of approximately \$7,813,994³. Despite LASOC experiencing an increase in its poverty population since the last decennial census in 2000, the increase did not rise to the level of other LSC grantees and LASOC's LSC funding will be diminished considerably by the recent census adjustments.⁴ LASOC receives funding from over 30 sources including local, state, federal, foundation, and IOLTA grants as well as various entrepreneurial undertakings.

At the time of the visit, LASOC had approximately 82 staff members, including 21 attorneys working out of its four offices and three self-help centers⁵. The administrative unit is located in the Santa Ana office. LASOC maintains a three-tier legal delivery system consisting of hotline advice, pro se assistance, and direct representation. The program has earned a national reputation for its innovative technology in developing computer-based forms that provide access to the justice system for thousands of pro se litigants.

LSC's Office of Compliance and Enforcement conducted a CSR/CMS review of LASOC in 2005 with a final report issued in 2008. Follow-up reviews were conducted in 2010 and 2012. As a result of these visits, LASOC has made significant changes to its Case Handling Manual with the most recent revisions in May of 2012. Although OPP has visited the program on several occasions, most recently a Program Engagement Visit in 2009, this was LASOC's first OPP Program Quality Visit.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

LASOC is a unique legal services program. It has chosen to provide a high volume of service to its client community primarily through its Hotline and vast network of pro se assistance activities as opposed to the more traditional direct representation model. LASOC's innovative self-help assistive technology is an integral part of not only the program's legal representation and delivery model for other services, but provides a vehicle for its resource development as well.

³ LASOC's budgetary process utilizes a fiscal year from February 1 to January 31.

⁴ The census adjustment combined with sequestration will result in a \$243,000 loss in LSC funding for 2013 and, assuming level funding for LSC, an over \$620,000 reduction from 2012 to 2014.

⁵ Subsequent to the visit, but prior to the drafting of this report, LASOC commenced a reduction in force process to address the LSC census adjustment cut in funding. The report will address staffing as it existed at the time of the PQV.

LASOC's last comprehensive needs assessment was in 2008. LASOC does not currently have a strategic plan in place as to how best to address client need but has commenced a planning process. The program has recently identified a number of new and emerging needs and has addressed them through the provision of additional services. While LASOC regularly captures quantitative statistics as to the services it provides, the program does not routinely evaluate the effectiveness of its overall service delivery.

LASOC has an efficient centralized intake system that provides a seamless means for all eligible clients to receive advice at their first point of contact with the program. The Hotline staff (which includes screeners, intake workers, and duty attorneys) does not meet as a group to discuss trends, best practices, or emerging needs. The Hotline refers clients to the program's self-help clinics or directly arranges for an office appointment or Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) referral. Case type referrals for office appointments have not been revised in over a decade.

LASOC provides extensive outreach to its client community and, in accordance with program priorities, places special emphasis on the area's most vulnerable populations including the elderly, homeless and victims of domestic violence. The program provides high quality access to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), especially to populations speaking Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean. Mapping evidence suggests that there are some low-income communities within the program's service area that are comparatively underserved.

LASOC has an extremely experienced staff that delivers legal services by means of a three-tier system: hotline advice, pro se assistance, and direct representation. While the Hotline provides a large volume of advice, and the clinics provide extensive pro se assistance, direct representation is limited. In the absence of uniform policies, supervision of the legal work varies among offices. The program does not have a formal vehicle for advocates to strategize within the program on substantive areas of law. Staff development and support is primarily self-directed. LASOC's PAI component is an integral part of the program, and mirrors the staff delivery system. LASOC engages in a vast array of other services and activities on behalf of the low-income population.

LASOC has a core group of actively engaged board members but overall board involvement could be enhanced. The program is led by a highly experienced senior management team that is supplemented by a host of middle managers. Communication between the various offices/units, as well as from top administration to staff is in need of improvement. While LASOC has been in the forefront of utilizing technology in providing access to the justice system for self-represented litigants, the program's internal technology is not used to its fullest potential. LASOC has a creative and multi-prong approach to resource development, but it lacks a cohesive plan. LASOC is integrally involved with various local, regional, and state partners in a coordinated legal delivery system.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PERFORMANCE AREA ONE: Effectiveness in identifying the most pressing civil legal needs of low-income people in the service area and targeting resources to address those needs.

Needs Assessment and Priorities

Finding 1. Although LASOC periodically measures client need through focus groups and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping, it has not undertaken a comprehensive needs assessment since 2008.

LASOC's most recent comprehensive needs assessment was conducted in September of 2008. The assessment utilized a variety of mechanisms including: telephone or in-person interviews; surveys and focus groups of low-income residents; focus groups and meetings of court personnel; meetings of community organizations, social services organizations, bar members, and other legal services providers; and meetings of LASOC staff and the board. The program also reviewed various internal and external data as well as GIS mapping. The assessment findings resulted in the board's adoption of the following priority areas: (1) support for family; (2) preserving the home; (3) maintaining economic stability; (4) safety, stability and health; 5) populations with special vulnerabilities and (6) delivery of legal services. The program's priorities are sufficiently broad to cover a wide array of legal issues in traditional poverty law areas.

Since the 2008 comprehensive needs assessment, LASOC has engaged in several limited assessment projects. In 2009, the program conducted various community focus groups to determine the public's attitude towards legal services in general. Additionally, from June to October 2011, five focus groups (consisting of 58 client eligible individuals) were conducted throughout LASOC's service area to discuss community legal needs. In December of 2012, University of California-Irvine (UCI) students completed a GIS mapping project that compared LASOC's 2010 closed case statistics for its Los Angeles County service area to the same area's 2010 poverty data. Of note, the project concluded that while LASOC is receiving many cases from high poverty areas, other areas with similar levels of poverty do not have the predicted levels of closed LASOC cases. The report went on to recommend that the data serve as a framework for further investigation into why the identified areas may not be utilizing program services and what options, if any, can be taken to increase access to services for those particular neighborhoods.

Evaluation and Adjustment

Finding 2. The program does not routinely evaluate the effectiveness of its service delivery.

While LASOC closes a large number of cases each year, the effectiveness of the assistance is not routinely assessed. The program regularly captures programmatic statistics, but they are generally quantitative as opposed to qualitative in nature. For example, the program

captures the number of Hotline calls received, the number of clients that attend clinics, and the number of hits on its various websites. When proposing yearly outcomes for its program priorities, the program often lists a numerical goal of clients assisted as opposed to a desired disposition; i.e., “2,100 clients assisted on evictions” as opposed to maintaining available housing for the client community. Moreover, due to the extensive amount of pro se assistance provided, any evaluation of a more qualitative nature would be incomplete as there appears to be little in the way of case follow-up in cases where assistance does not continue through final judgment. For example, although the majority of family law clinic cases are not closed until the entry of judgment, the same is not true for the unlawful detainer clinics. Thus, in 2012 while more than 2,100 clients were in fact assisted in landlord/tenant cases, there is no way of knowing in most cases whether the assistance resulted in avoiding or delaying an eviction. Due to LASOC’s extensive collaborative efforts with the local courts as to both self-help assistance and technology, the program is in a unique (and somewhat enviable) position to perhaps access case disposition information in order to truly evaluate its service delivery.

LASOC does utilize more evaluative measurements, such as monetary gain for the client, when required by specific funders. Comparable data is not routinely captured on all cases, however. Matrix, the program’s case management system, has the functionality to report a series of outcomes at the close of each case. However, it does not appear that extensive outcome options have been developed and/or that staff consistently enter such information into the system at the close of a case.

Finding 3. LASOC has recently identified new and emerging legal needs and addressed such needs as they became apparent.

In the past few years, LASOC noticed an increase in Orange County client complaints about difficulties in obtaining General Relief (GR) benefits. LASOC began to investigate these complaints in collaboration with other service providers and with the assistance of UCI students. The investigation revealed an extremely low level of GR participation as well as numerous unlawful barriers to the receipt and continuation of benefits. LASOC’s representation of these GR clients led to major substantive changes to the County’s GR procedures. Ultimately, some 20,000 people received notice of the right to potentially receive retroactive benefits. LASOC implemented, and continues to have, a separate routing system for GR applicants/recipients when calling LASOC. The number of Orange County GR recipients has quadrupled since LASOC’s involvement in the project first began.

The program also became aware of the difficulty families were having in navigating California’s complex limited conservatorship process as children with disabilities were reaching adulthood. With a grant from the Equal Access Fund Partnership program, LASOC created both a workshop at the Orange County Courthouse as well as a more assistive clinic held at the program. In 2012, some 180 people attended the workshop and 46 clients were assisted at the clinics.

Strategic Planning

Finding 4. LASOC does not currently have a strategic plan in place.

In the past two years, LASOC has had to make a number of funding and staffing decisions without the benefit of a strategic plan to guide them. With this backdrop, members of LASOC's management recently attended a Management Information Exchange conference that discussed in detail a non-profit business model of sustainability. The model encompasses both mission impact of an organization's core activities and financial sustainability. LASOC has decided to implement this model and the program's technology project manager, who holds an MBA with an emphasis in organizational development and leadership, will be spearheading the initial data collection and analysis. The effort includes conducting surveys of staff and board, as well as the formation of a board subcommittee in the near future.

Recommendation I.1.1.1⁶ When resources allow, LASOC should engage in a comprehensive needs assessment involving a variety of tools that may include GIS mapping, focus groups, surveying, or any other methods available to assess the needs of its client population. The assessment should assist in forming the basis of the program's strategic planning process.⁷

Recommendation I.4.2.1 LASOC should endeavor to establish meaningful outcome measurements for all its casework and, in the area of pro se services, formally assess the effectiveness of their work.

Recommendation I.2.4.1* LASOC should commence engagement in the non-profit sustainability planning module or other appropriate strategic planning process as soon as practicable. The process should question and challenge the fundamental direction and operations of the program so as to provide a roadmap for future program development. Board and staff at all levels should be involved in the strategic planning process. Throughout this report, recommendations will highlight specific areas to be included in the plan.

PERFORMANCE AREA TWO: Effectiveness in engaging in and serving the low-income population throughout the service area.

Intake

Finding 5. The vast majority of LASOC's intakes are processed through a centralized system that provides a seamless means for eligible clients to receive advice at their first point of contact with the program.

⁶ Recommendations in this report will have a Roman Numeral to identify the Performance Area, followed by three numbers identifying, respectively, the Criterion addressed by the recommendation, the number of the finding and a number designating whether it is the first, second, third, etc., recommendation under that finding. For example, III.2.14.3 designates Performance Area III, Criterion 2, finding 14, and third recommendation under finding 14. There are two levels of recommendations in this report: Tier One and Tier Two. Recommendations that are indicated with an asterisk are Tier One recommendations and are seen as having a greater impact on program quality and/or program performance. In its next Application or Renewal, the program will be asked to report on its implementation of Tier One recommendations.

⁷ LASOC may want to consult LSC Resource Information (LRI) (<http://lri.lsc.gov/identifying-need/needs-assessment>) for examples of recent comprehensive needs assessments.

LAOSOC's centralized intake system, the Hotline, is housed in the Santa Ana Office. The Hotline has thirteen stations staffed by two eligibility workers, up to 11 intake workers, and one to three duty attorneys. Additional staff can also supplement the Hotline through remote access, if needed. The Hotline operates from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Fridays.⁸ It has both a toll-free number and a local Orange County number. Walk-in applicants are directed to phone the Hotline and are offered an appropriate place to make the call on-site. Over 150 calls are processed by the Hotline each day.

The Hotline is divided into four intake queues: English Screening, Spanish Screening, English Intake, and Spanish Intake. Korean and Vietnamese callers are transferred to staff that can provide intake services in those languages and a call back is made within twenty-four hours. For other languages, the Hotline staff utilizes the telephonic interpretation service Ethnic Bridge.

The eligibility workers screen the applicant for both case type and financial eligibility as well as a quick conflict check on just the caller. The screening takes anywhere from one to three minutes and the queue, if any, is relatively small. If found ineligible for services, the screener will refer the caller to an appropriate alternative resource from the Matrix database of over 350 agencies. Many callers are referred to LASOC's Legal Resolutions Center which includes the program run Lawyer Referral Service (LRS). A phone transfer to LRS can be made seamlessly at the time of the call, if requested by the applicant. If the screener determines the applicant categorically eligible, the caller is placed in the queue for the next available intake interviewer. Approximately one-half of all initial calls are forwarded to the intake queues.

In December of 2011, LASOC installed a new phone system which significantly reduced intake queue wait times by providing a call back option for applicants. Callers are automatically informed of the option after 10 minutes of wait time. Intake interview queue wait time now varies in length from 1 minute to as much as 45 minutes depending upon the day and staffing. The average wait time is less than 15 minutes. During the wait, applicants hear reminders as to having paper, pens, and documents ready for the interview. Once connected, the intake worker first performs a more detailed conflict check. If a potential conflict is found, the intake worker notifies the duty attorney by signaling through their computer. Only the duty attorney can determine if a conflict exists. If one does, the standard rejection referral procedures are followed. If there is no potential conflict, the intake worker next obtains all of the facts of the case. The facts are typed into the case management system (CMS) simultaneously with the intake. Each intake worker has questionnaires for various problem codes. LASOC's database manager is in the process of building scripts, or 'trees' into the Matrix CMS that will guide intake interviewers through appropriate questions.

Once the intake interview is completed, the worker notifies a duty attorney that the case is ready for review by clicking the advice control button on their computer. A message is sent not only to the duty attorney's desktop but also lights up on a 60 inch computer screen on the wall of the Hotline room. An intake station ready for review initially lights up green on the screen. After five minutes, it changes to yellow, and if eight minutes passes it becomes red signifying an extended wait time and that the station should be the first priority. The duty attorneys are rarely

⁸ Subsequent to the PQV, Friday afternoon hot line hours were reduced to 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to allow for additional staff training.

at their desks but rather are literally walking the room and selecting which intakes to review according to the wall screen.

Intake workers follow a formal training sequence that includes reviewing a Hotline training manual, shadowing other workers through a variety of steps, attending designated LASOC clinics, and watching prescribed LASOC videos on its YouTube channel. While the training appears comprehensive, quite a few staff interviewers expressed concern with the quality of fact gathering. This may be due to the increased use of volunteers in Hotline staffing which leads to a higher rate of turnover.

Duty attorneys are comprised of contract PAI attorneys as well as program attorneys who each take one rotation every 3 weeks on the Hotline. The duty attorney is responsible for reviewing the facts of the case, providing advice and counsel, determining whether the client should be referred to one of the program's clinics for further assistance, or if an individual office appointment should be scheduled. If advice is to be given, the duty attorney types it directly into the CMS for the intake worker to tell the client. If a clinic is suggested, the intake worker will inform the client of the time and place for the next scheduled clinic for their location and substantive area. Available office appointments are also directly scheduled from the CMS at the time of the intake. The Santa Ana, Compton, and Norwalk offices have approximately ten appointment slots two days per week. Anaheim will see clients four days a week. Office appointment scheduling may range from one to four weeks in advance.⁹ Attorneys rotate emergency appointments duty. Certain units, most notably health and foreclosure mitigation, have all of their intakes sent directly to the unit for an initial call back as opposed to an in-office interview. The program does not currently assess the satisfaction of Hotline clients.

Duty attorney advice does not appear to be regularly reviewed.¹⁰ Other than a brief Monday morning meeting of Hotline staff in attendance, there is no mechanism for Hotline staff, both workers and duty attorneys, to meet and share any noticeable trends or emerging needs and discuss best practices. In addition, there does not appear to be any substantive training beyond the initial orientation schedule.

Applicants screened for eligibility outside of the Hotline system, primarily at outreach sites, complete a paper application and are generally screened and referred in the same manner as if the interview were being conducted by the Hotline. Conflict checks are completed telephonically and the data provided by the applicant on the intake form is later entered into the Matrix database by LASOC staff.

The program's database manager is currently developing an online intake program for Matrix. LASOC will be setting up a computer in the Santa Ana waiting room for clients to use

⁹ While PQV team interviews reflected that appointments could be scheduled up to 28 days in advance, LASOC's comments to the Draft PQV Report stated that general office appointments could only be scheduled up to two weeks in advance with appointments for the Senior Citizens Advocacy Program scheduled up to eight days in advance and the Santa Ana Family Law Clinic appointments scheduled up to 20 days in advance.

¹⁰ LASOC's comments to the Draft PQV Report stated that advice provided on the Hotline is reviewed regularly by "designated staff".

the new online intake system in order to obtain usability feedback before rolling it out on the program's website.

In 2012, the Hotline closed 4,175 cases. During the same time, branch offices/units closed a similar amount of counsel and advice cases. While clearly some of the branch advice cases were the result of outreach intake and/or additional clinic assistance, many of the cases were Hotline referred office appointments. Although portions of the program's *Case Handling Manual* that outlines intake procedures and referrals was updated as recently as July 2012, the case acceptance guidelines, which form the basis for scheduling office appointments through the Hotline, has not been revised since January of 2001. The list is quite expansive and the program's case service reports reflect that many of the listed referable cases do not result in extended representation by the branches or units. Clients are thus often waiting two to three weeks to receive advice that could have been, or already was, provided in the initial call. While office interviews may provide more in depth or local nuanced advice, the program needs to determine if that is an effective use of office advocacy resources given the existence of the duty attorney based Hotline advice system. Any concerns about expertise or local practices can easily be dealt with by training sessions or inclusion in the Matrix tree system.

Recommendation II.1.5.1* Hotline staff, both intake workers and duty attorneys, should hold regular meetings to review emerging needs, receive substantive legal training to help identify issues, provide skills training on interviewing/customer service/cultural competency, and share insights and/or best practices.

Recommendation II.1.5.2 Advice being given by Hotline duty attorneys should be reviewed regularly by the Hotline directing attorney, and feedback should be given, as appropriate, to ensure the delivery of high quality advise.

Recommendation II.1.5.3* The program should develop more specific protocols for Hotline referrals to the branch offices as a means to limit duplicate advice, ease office appointment wait times, and free up more time for branch office advocates to engage in extended representation. This may necessarily include expanding the advice given at the Hotline level. These protocols should be reviewed regularly at the Hotline staff meetings when branch staff is in attendance to adjust advice/referrals as appropriate to address emerging needs.

Recommendation II.1.5.4 The Hotline should consider incorporating a survey to follow up regularly with Hotline advice clients to help evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the advice provided. This could be done through a follow-up email survey, or the program could also explore implementing a low-cost text messaging survey to accommodate clients with limited Internet access.

Recommendation II.1.5.5 The program should continue to work toward implementing an online intake option.

Engagement with and access by the low-income population

Finding 6. LASOC provides extensive outreach to its client community with special emphasis on the area's more vulnerable populations including the homeless, elderly, victims of domestic violence, and those with limited English proficiency.

LASOC services are not only readily accessible through the Hotline but the program also conducts ongoing outreach through both clinics and onsite intake at various locations throughout its service area. Program services can be accessed through, among other places, community centers, health clinics, domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters, and senior citizen centers. Moreover, recognizing the growing Asian population in the area, the program created specialized Vietnamese and Korean outreach projects, which have resulted in hands-on, immediate, personal service to these traditionally underserved communities. Community partners routinely praised the access LASOC provides and the dignity and sensitivity with which it treats clients. The supervising attorney of the Homeless Outreach and Assistance Unit recently received the Orange County Superior Court's 2012 Humanitarian of the Year award for his work with the county's homeless population.

In addition, LASOC staff members are also engaged in the communities they serve. They work with various local entities that assist the most vulnerable of their client populations including the Homeless and Veterans Court, the Low-Income Health Program Advisory Committee, the Affordable Housing Projects of Orange County, Inc. and the Department of Public Social Services Domestic Violence Advisory Group. Staff members attend human service collaborative meetings and various other community gatherings throughout their individual service areas.

LASOC has also made a commitment to remove language access barriers for clients who seek assistance. Hotline staff are bilingual in English and Spanish and separate callbacks are promptly made for Vietnamese and Korean speakers. Remarkably, over 60% of LASOC's staff and close to half of all LASOC advocates are proficient in a language other than English. Numerous program materials are in both English and Spanish. While self-help online materials are in various languages, it is interesting to note that, LASOC's main web site is only in English.

Despite such laudable efforts, both staff and community partners did, however, report that there are still a number of low-income neighborhoods within LASOC's service area that are unaware of the services available. This was corroborated by both the UCI mapping project as well as LSC's own GIS maps created in preparation for the visit and later shared with the program.

Recommendation II.2.6.1 LASOC should consider targeted outreach and other additional methods to inform potential clients of the availability of its services especially in the localities known to be underserved.

Recommendation II.2.6.2 The program should insure that all of its website content is, at a minimum, in both English and Spanish.

PERFORMANCE AREA THREE: Effectiveness of legal representation and other program activities intended to benefit the low income population in its service area.

Legal Representation

A. Staffing and Expertise

Finding 7. LASOC has highly experienced advocacy staff housed throughout the program

At the time of the PQV, LASOC had four offices: two in Orange County (Santa Ana and Anaheim) and two in Los Angeles County (Compton and Norwalk). Each office has a designated service area with exceptions for more regional projects. Although the offices vary in size, advocacy staff generally matched service area poverty populations and/or localized funding levels. Attorneys operate as specialists or generalists depending upon specific funding sources. While the smaller offices tend to operate as a team, the majority of the Santa Ana litigation unit operates as separate substantive or project based units often defined by specialized grants. Units include the Senior Citizen Advocacy Program, Vietnamese & Korean Outreach, Foreclosure Mitigation, Low Income Tax Payer Clinic (LITC), Homeless Outreach and Assistance, and the Health Consumer Action Center/Medical Legal Partnership. Four of the six specialized units house only one attorney.

The average experience level of LASOC's attorneys is an impressive 20 years, with more than a quarter of them having over 30 years' experience. Equally notable, there are currently no attorneys on staff with less than 5 years' experience. The supervisory attorney staff averages more than 25 years of legal experience and each office has a highly experienced directing attorney. LASOC's director of litigation, housed in the Santa Ana office, has 39 years of legal aid experience and is highly respected throughout the legal services community.

The majority of attorneys and paralegals have worked at the program for more than 10 years. They have developed specialized knowledge in particular areas and often share their experience with other attorneys and paralegals in their respective offices. Attorneys have expertise in the areas of housing, public benefits, health law, family law, tax, and foreclosures. However, apart from internal training, opportunities for them to share their expertise throughout the program were not evident.

B. Quantity and Quality of Legal Work

Finding 8. LASOC has a three-tier delivery system that results in a high volume of limited services and pro se assistance for its clients and a reduced amount of extended direct representation.

LASOC's three-tier legal delivery system consists of advice, pro se assistance, and direct representation. In 2012 LASOC closed 13,938 cases. This was well in excess of the median number of total cases closed per 10,000 poor persons for LSC grantees. (315 compared to 245). The types of cases handled are dispersed among the program's priority areas. In 2012, the

majority of closed cases were in the areas of family (34.5%), housing (25.4%), consumer (15.6%), and health/public benefits (10.5%).

More than 93% of LASOC's total closed cases were limited service consisting of advice and counsel and limited action. The program's Hotline, discussed in detail previously, is the program's primary vehicle for providing initial advice within the first tier. LASOC's innovative technology and impressive array of pro se clinics provide the second tier of LASOC's delivery. While pro se assistance is often considered an "other service", LASOC's individualized pro se assistance for eligible clients in preparing pleadings, often on an extended basis, elevates such assistance to the level of representation.¹¹

LASOC conducts clinics covering bankruptcy, divorce, domestic violence, landlord and tenant, limited conservatorship, foreclosure mitigation, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and low income tax payer issues. The clinics vary in format but generally all provide assistance in proceeding pro se and contain an individualized component. For example, the bankruptcy clinic, held at least monthly in Santa Ana, Compton, and Norwalk includes a group session component as well as a one on one follow-up appointment with a bankruptcy attorney. The landlord and tenant clinic is held weekly in Santa Ana and consists of a video about the eviction process (which includes a mock pro se trial), a presentation by an attorney on various landlord and tenant issues, and finally individual assistance in preparing answers to an unlawful detainer complaint. The Santa Ana office also hosts a family law assistance clinic each Thursday with continued follow-up assistance until a divorce is entered. The program's Domestic Violence Prevention Program at the County Superior Courthouses in Compton and Norwalk assists victims in obtaining restraining orders and, if needed, other domestic court orders, and is open five mornings a week. No specific time or appointment is necessary and the assistance is one on one. All of the various clinic attendees are first screened either by the Hotline or on site for financial eligibility. Case dispositions for the clinics vary from advice and counsel for combined Hotline advice and group offerings, to limited action for individualized assistance on preparing a pleading, and extensive service when more extended follow-up services have been provided. Both the judiciary and court administrators interviewed by the PQV team were uniform in their high praise for the assistance LASOC provides to pro se litigants.

While thousands of clients are assisted each year through these first two tiers of LASOC's delivery model, the third tier, direct representation, is extremely limited. LASOC's case statistical reports for 2012 reflect that 6.7 percent of the program's 2012 closed cases were extended representation. The program closed 21 extended cases per 10,000 poor persons, compared to the LSC grantee's national median of 57. As the program reported that the vast majority of its "extensive case" category, comprising close to 75% of its extended case calculation, are the lengthier pro se assistance cases, a direct representation extended figure would be considerably lower. In 2012, the program closed a total of 242 cases that were concluded by means of negotiation, agency decision, or court decision. Of these, the program closed four contested cases per 10,000 poor persons. The LSC national median is 28 contested cases per 10,000 poor people.

¹¹ Alternatively, LASOC's workshops and self-help centers, while often utilized by eligible clients, are informational in nature and are properly placed under other services discussed in a later section of Performance Area Three.

The extent of any direct representation appears to vary by grant and/or office. For example, the CalWorks grant demands a more holistic approach to services as the goal is to remove the client's reliance on public assistance. Cases under this grant necessarily involve more direct assistance involving court and agency representation. Similarly, the IRS grant results in individual negotiations with the IRS and appearances in Tax Court. The Santa Ana office, which houses the Homeless Project and a weekly landlord and tenant clinic, has the most housing litigation of any office.

Although the direct advocacy undertaken appears to be of good quality, it is primarily traditional service oriented representation with a heavy emphasis on family law. Consumer work rarely reaches beyond limited service and foreclosure assistance does not currently include litigation. The individual caseloads discussed with staff did not appear strategic or impactful. There was no evidence of engagement in federal court practice or appellate advocacy. It was of concern to the PQV team that of the 30 writing samples submitted as the program's advocates' best legal work over the past 24 months, nine were pro se pleadings and five were not advocacy products involving representation of a client. As evidenced by the General Relief case described previously, the program is capable of complex and/or impactful advocacy if it is considered a priority.

The team is mindful of the fact that clinics and pro se assistance provide access to the justice system for scores of clients as compared to the time necessary to provide direct representation in a single case. However, program and attorney credibility is earned largely through presence in the justice system, as is a deeper knowledge of the operations of the system itself. Moreover, again as evidenced by the General Relief case, significant direct representation can impact large segments of the community. There is also a host of collateral benefits to increasing direct representation including skill retention/development, improvement in the quality of clinic/pro se advice, and PAI recruitment. Finally, it is important to note that concern about the program's lack of extended direct representation was raised across all categories of team interviews; staff, board, community partners, and the judiciary.

C. Legal Work Management and Supervision

Finding 9. Due to the lack of uniform legal work management and supervision protocols, the level of management and supervision varies throughout the program.

Although LASOC has an extensive *Case Handling Manual*, it primarily consists of LSC compliance standards and internal record keeping/referral requirements. The program's various clinics, workshops, and self-help assistance projects are discussed in detail as well. There is little, if any, direction as to the handling of direct representation cases nor are there any protocols for the supervision of such cases.

Attorneys throughout the program have wide discretion regarding the cases that are accepted beyond the office appointment consultation, with little review. Although office/unit case review meetings are routinely held, advocates often determine which cases are offered for discussion. Individual open case reviews are sporadic and usually consist of samples offered by the attorney and samples pulled by the supervisor. There was little evidence of any case reviews of an attorney's full caseload. Closed cases are reviewed for compliance by support staff, but

there does not appear to be any review for quality of the legal work performed. While some advocates affirmatively seek guidance and supervisors are routinely available to provide it, there did not appear to be an overall culture of requisite supervision. A notable exception are the paralegals that support the work of attorneys, who meet weekly with their supervisors and engage in a full and robust discussion of their caseload and work.

The team is aware that invoking formal supervision policies with such an experienced staff can be a challenge, and it is not meant to be a reflection on the quality of work. However, a culture of ongoing supervision is necessary to serve not only as a model for emerging supervisors and younger staff, but to allow for those instances when experienced staff is no longer performing as presumed.

D. Training and Support

Finding 10: While encouraged by the program, staff development and support is generally self-effectuated.

LASOC's annual budget provides each staff person with a training budget: \$200 for staff attorneys; \$100 for paralegals; and \$50 for support staff. While these appear to be nominal allocations, staff members may attend additional trainings that coincide with special projects or specified priority areas if approved by the director of litigation and/or the executive director. Such additional trainings appear primarily available to attorney staff.

As program staff members do not have individualized professional developments plans, training is generally self-selected. Team interviews reflected that the majority of attorney training is accomplished through webinars and free or low cost training sponsored by state-wide entities such as Benchmark, the Legal Aid Association of California, and the Practicing Law Institute. Non-lawyer training appears more limited. Although there are over 20 presentations posted on the program's private YouTube channel as well as periodic in-person internal trainings, a number of non-attorneys reported that they have experienced mostly "on the job" training and expressed a desire for more formal training on a variety of topics.

Staff members are on various state and national listservs of their choosing; however, there are no program-wide task forces/listservs or other means to share substantive knowledge or to strategize on emerging needs. The program does not have a formal brief or pleadings bank. While there is a searchable shared drive, advocates generally turn to their own personal compilations of documents. The director of litigation is a valuable resource to the program. While she is available for consultation throughout the program, her responsibilities as both the director of litigation for LASOC and the directing attorney of the Santa Ana office, combined with her own caseload, necessarily limit her activities.

Recommendation III.1.8.1* As part of its planning process, LASOC should develop a means for its advocates to engage in more extended direct representation in all its priority areas that address both individual and systemic needs.

Recommendation III.1.9.1* The program should implement uniform legal work supervision protocols.

Recommendation III.1.10.1 As part of its evaluation system, professional development plans should be completed for all staff members that include desired skills and attendant training needs.

Recommendation III.1.10.2* The program should provide a forum for advocacy staff from the various offices/units to share substantive knowledge and strategize on emerging needs.

Recommendation III.1.10.3 As resources allow, the Santa Ana directing attorney position should be separated from that of the director of litigation.

Private Attorney Involvement

Finding 11. LASOC's PAI program is fully integrated into the program's delivery system and provides a wide range of opportunities.

LASOC's PAI component utilizes private attorneys in each of the three tiers of its delivery model, primarily on a compensated basis. Reduced fee contract attorneys routinely take shifts as the duty attorney for LASOC's Hotline giving advice to eligible clients. Similarly, reduced fee attorneys conduct a number of LASOC's clinics including bankruptcy and family law. LASOC also utilizes a Judicare component for direct representation in select subject areas. LASOC contracts with Community Lawyers, Inc., a Compton based non-profit corporation, to provide reduced fee direct representation in a number of family law matters for residents of Southeast Los Angeles County. Justice in Education, a Santa Ana not for profit, provides evaluation and reduced fee referrals for direct representation in education matters.

LASOC has recently instituted an incubator program which educates and trains newly licensed lawyers to receive PAI contract referrals from the program. The attorneys receive training, attend LASOC clinics, and assist with the program's pro se activities. Attorneys can also attend free weekly accredited continuing legal education sessions sponsored by LASOC in exchange for taking two pro bono cases. With four law schools in Orange County graduating new attorneys each year, the program has been able to recruit a number of attorneys to the program and the PAI coordinator is working towards broadening the program offerings.

LASOC also has a number of pro bono projects. The program has a long standing relationship with the Public Law Center (PLC), an Orange County low income legal services provider which grew out of a pro bono program originally established by LASOC in 1981. Although initially solely a bar pro bono organization, PLC now has numerous funding sources and, in addition to administering the volunteer lawyer program, it also provides in-house legal assistance through a number of projects. LASOC receives a monthly menu from PLC of the numbers and types of cases it can refer. LASOC screens the clients for eligibility and refers them directly from the Hotline to PLC via both a confirming email and a direct call transfer for the client. A fee is paid by LASOC to PLC per case for evaluation and, if referred to a pro bono attorney, for the administration of the referral. The goal is 150 cases a year. It would appear from PAI closed case statistics that the goal is not always fulfilled. LASOC also has its own panel of pro bono emeritus attorneys who routinely provide assistance to the program's Senior Citizen Legal Advocacy Project.

In 2011, in partnership with the president of the Orange County Bar and the president of its Young Lawyers Section (YLD), LASOC attempted to establish pro bono opportunities for YLD members. The project involved referring tenants from LASOC's weekly unlawful detainer clinics that were in need of representation to volunteer YLD attorneys. Despite LASOC's investment of extensive landlord and tenant law training to some 25 YLD members, the program never took flight. LASOC's PAI coordinator has yet to fully give up on the endeavor and is considering ways to reinvigorate the project.

PAI closed case numbers generally mirror LASOC's three tiered statistics. Total PAI case closures for 2012 were well above the national median per 10,000 poor persons (73 as compared to 22). While extended closed PAI are slightly above the median (9 compared to 8), over 93% of PAI extended work was extensive services consisting primarily of pro se assistance. LASOC's contested PAI closed cases per 10,000 poor people was a statistical 0, compared to the national median of 3.

Although LASOC has a wide variety of PAI activities, there does not appear to be an overall strategy on how to best use such a valuable resource in program delivery. Recently, the directing attorney who oversees the Hotline, pro se clinics, and the Orange County courthouse self-help center and office based Legal Resolution Center, was named program PAI coordinator. While most of the PAI opportunities stem from the Hotline or clinics, others are overseen by the project attorneys that have developed their own PAI component including LITC and the Senior Citizen Legal Advocacy Project. PAI cases are generally reviewed at closure as well as a sampling during the year.

Recommendation III.2.11.1 As part of its planning process, LASOC should consider the role of PAI in the program's overall delivery scheme as well as how to best leverage its resources to increase the percentage of uncompensated PAI.

Recommendation III.2.11.2 As resources permit, LASOC should designate one person with sufficient time to coordinate and provide uniform oversight of all PAI activities.

Other program services and activities on behalf of the low income population

Finding 12. LASOC engages in a myriad of other services and activities that provide both education on, and access to, the justice system for the low income population throughout its service area and beyond.

In 1999, LASOC created I-CAN!, the Interactive Community Assistance Network, an Internet based system designed to enable pro se litigants to access the court system by easily creating their own pleadings. Since its inception, close to 200,000 pleadings have been created using I-Can! Legal. Not only are numerous California pleadings available, but partnerships with other legal service providers have led to additional pleadings for Georgia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Oklahoma. LASOC's various web sites, including those on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter not only provide access to I-CAN! but contain community education materials, forms, and videos.

In addition to LASOC's various pro se clinics for eligible clients, the program provides informational workshops, court based self-help centers, and a program based Legal Resolutions Center for the communities it serves. In 2012, over 18,000 self-represented litigants were assisted by LASOC at the Orange County Superior Court Central Justice Self-Help Center and the Los Angeles County Superior Court Compton Court Self-Help Center. LASOC also houses its own Legal Resolutions Center (LRC) that includes a Small Claims Advisory Program, a State Bar certified Lawyer Referral Service, and various materials and computer terminals for public use. In addition to providing individual telephonic and in-person information, the Small Claims Advisory Program provides weekly workshops in both Spanish and English on preparing a case and collecting on a judgment in Small Claims Court. In 2012, LASOC's Lawyer Referral Service made over 12,000 referrals. LASOC's informational workshops include recurring sessions on conservatorship, education, employment rights, and foreclosures.

LASOC provides extensive community legal education beyond its clinics and workshops. The program's web sites have a plethora of information and over 4,000 pieces of educational materials were downloaded in 2012 alone. In addition, presentations on a variety of priority area topics are routinely given to client groups, faith based organizations, and service providers throughout their service area. LASOC has recently started a community-wide newspaper, The Notice, which includes weekly columns on various legal topics.

PERFORMANCE AREA FOUR: Effectiveness of governance, leadership and administration.

Board governance

Finding 13. While there is a core group of actively engaged board members, overall board engagement could be improved.

The Board of Directors is comprised of 26 members; 16 attorneys, nine client eligible members, and one community or bar member. The bylaws state that 11 attorney members will be selected from the Orange County Bar Association and five appointed by the State Bar with efforts made for those appointees to be from the program's Los Angeles County service area. Client members are to be selected by community groups throughout the program's service area. Currently, 14 attorneys, six clients, and an additional bar member are from Orange County.

Monthly meetings of the board had been rotated among LASOC's offices but are now each held in the Santa Ana office. Perhaps due to travel challenges, only 12-14 directors attend meetings regularly in person as reflected in the minutes of the last two years.¹² The board president joined the board in 1990 and has served as president since 1999. The vice president joined the board in 1980 and has served as vice president for at least a decade. There have also been a number of recent appointees to the board that appear very active and engaged. The board has an executive committee which also serves, as needed, as the finance committee, grievance

¹² It was reported to the team that additional members often appear by phone but this is not reflected in the board minutes.

committee, and personnel committee. There is a separate audit committee. The executive committee meets immediately before each board meeting.

Written materials, including financial and litigation reports, are prepared for each board meeting. They are not always received in advance of the meeting by all members. Some of the directors interviewed reported this rendered little time to review the documents to allow for a meaningful discussion during meetings. While this concern was expressed by both attorney and client board members, this would appear to be especially problematic for the client board members as some client members reported they found the financial materials somewhat confusing. The general sentiment among client directors interviewed is that they trust management to make appropriate financial decisions.

The Board has not discussed the design or implementation of a strategic plan to guide their decision making process. For example, the board is actively involved in the development of alternate sources of funding, but it appears there has been little discussion of what to do with the additional funds, if obtained. In 2011, when the board addressed a necessary reduction in force, board minutes reflect that decisions were guided by economics as opposed to an overall delivery design.

At the time of our visit, the board was in the process of evaluating the performance of the executive director. Although a draft leadership succession plan was submitted to the PQV team, it does not appear as if it has been fully adopted by the board.

Recommendation IV.1.13.1* The board should strive to increase membership engagement in board activities by, among other things, seeking increased attendance at monthly board meetings and/or removing inactive members as allowed by the program's bylaws, distributing board meeting materials with sufficient anticipation to permit effective preparation by members, and providing training for board members in its roles and responsibilities including interpretation of financial information.

Recommendation IV.1.13.2 The board should be actively involved in the development and implementation of a strategic planning process recommended under Finding 4 of this report.

Recommendation IV.1.13.3 The board should engage in succession planning for both the program and board leadership.

Recommendation IV.1.13.4 Continued efforts should be made for Southeast Los Angeles County representation on the board.

Leadership

Finding 14. LASOC's leadership has a wealth of experience and is well known and respected by their peers.

The top tier of LASOC's management consists of the executive director, the director of finance and operations, and the director of litigation. They have combined experience of nearly 120 years and each has been with the program in excess of 30 years. The executive director is

known nationally for innovation and creativity, especially in bringing technology to bear on access to the legal system by pro se litigants. He has received extensive recognition for these efforts including multiple awards from both the American Bar Association and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association. Community partners and funders expressed a high level of confidence in LASOC's ability to "deliver as promised," a testament to program leadership and their connections in their communities.

Overall management including financial and human resources administration¹³

Finding 15. While the program has experienced, capable, and diverse management, they appear to work independently as opposed to part of a cohesive team.

The leadership team is assisted by a cadre of mid-level managers. Under the direction of the director of litigation are various directing and supervising attorneys. Each office has a directing attorney and there is also a directing attorney of the Hotline/LRC/PAI. There are also supervising attorneys of the Senior Citizens Legal Advocacy Project, Health Consumer Action Center, Foreclosure Mitigation Unit, and LITC/Homeless Unit as well as other special projects supervising attorneys. The directing and supervising attorneys all have significant experience and are known and respected in their respective geographic or substantive spheres. The directing attorneys and supervising attorneys have quarterly meetings with upper management and are responsible for passing on any information gained to their respective staff.

There are also various mid-level managers under the supervision of the director of finance and operations including the director of fund development and director of information services and telecommunications. According to the program's organizational chart, the controller also serves as management.

Although LASOC's leaders/managers are strong individually, they do not appear to function as a cohesive team as one might expect in a law firm with an annual budget in excess of \$7 million. Each office/unit/operational section appears to operate in its own silo. It is unclear how programmatic decisions are made on either the advocacy side or the operational side, as well as for the program as a whole. As noted later in this report, internal communication is a challenge.

LASOC appears to have processes and systems in place to address compliance with funder requirements as well as guide the day to day operations of the program. LASOC's administrative team dealing with financial and Human Resources (HR) issues is overseen by the director of finance and operations.¹⁴ She has an MBA and over 38 years of experience with the program. The accounting and HR staff consists of the controller, two accounting assistants, and an administrative clerk. While the accounting assistants and administrative clerk have each been

¹³ This visit was conducted by the Office of Program Performance (OPP) for the purposes set forth in the Introduction. OPP findings and recommendations under this criterion are limited to staffing, organization, and general functions. Assessment of fiscal operations is conducted by other offices at LSC.

¹⁴ The longtime director of finance recently retired and the director of operations assumed his responsibilities.

with the program in excess of ten years, the controller was just hired in December of 2012. The prior director of finance preferred that the unit functions be performed manually on paper. The new controller is bringing paperless automation to the unit. Currently paper time cards are still distributed and collected weekly for payroll purposes. The accounting manual was recently updated.

The controller presents monthly financial reports that are approved by the board. At the time of the PQV, the 2013 budget had not been finalized due to LSC funding uncertainty, including both sequestration and use of the census data. Similarly, while LASOC usually prepares financial forecasting for the following year, 2014 projections had yet to be completed.¹⁵

LASOC's salaries and benefits are compared annually to those of the surrounding LSC grantees. LASOC's salary schedule has not been updated since March 2007 due to funding considerations. Staff evaluations are tied to step increases on the salary scale. As many staff have topped out of the scale, they have not undergone an evaluative process in a number of years. Evaluations of other staff are sporadic and not performed regularly or uniformly.

Recommendation IV.3.15.1 LASOC should consider adopting a more team orientated model of program management that: includes all key leadership positions; meets on a regular basis; considers agenda items offered by staff; and, regularly reports a summary of results back to the staff (as is appropriate).

Recommendation IV.5.15.2 The program should consider technology solutions to support HR functions, as resources allow.

Recommendation IV.5.15.3* All staff should be evaluated regularly, regardless of their status in or beyond the program's salary scale.

Technology

Finding 16: Despite LASOCs leadership role in external technological access issues, programmatic internal technology is not used to its full potential.

As noted throughout this report, LASOC has been at the forefront of innovative use of technology to provide legal resources and information to self-represented litigants. Through its development of the I-CAN! software, including I-CAN! E-File, I-CAN! Legal, and, most recently, its work on smart forms and e-filing systems for state court, LASOC has assisted thousands of low income and pro se litigants locally, throughout California, and, with its partners, various states across the United States. I-CAN! is used at courthouse self-help centers as well as the various clinics and resource centers staffed by the program. Although LASOC ceased receiving an LSC Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) for the I-Can! E-File tax project in

¹⁵ Upon receipt of final census/sequestration figures from LSC in May, LASOC completed its 2013 and projected 2014 budgets and plans to submit them to the board for approval at its June meeting.

2013, during its 10 years of existence, it helped return more than \$796 million in tax refunds and credits, preparing a total 356,577 returns.

The program hosts nine servers in its Santa Ana office and is planning to move 12 servers being used by I-CAN! Legal from an off-site data center into the Santa Ana server room. Most of the current servers are at least six years old and are no longer under warranty. The servers will gradually be moved to a virtual server environment. The program is also considering moving its Exchange email server into a hosted environment as well as implementing a virtual desktop environment. The servers are backed up regularly, stored offsite, and backups are periodically tested.

LASOC'S CMS, Matrix, started as an early version of Kemps which has been significantly modified and customized by LASOC's database manager after being given access to the source code. Through the program's Wide Area Network (WAN) all users have real-time access to the data in the CMS. Although the program has discussed the need to fully document the programming of the custom CMS, this has not been completed. Case handlers generally enter opening and closing notes in the CMS, but most ongoing notes and casework is done in paper files. Matrix does not allow documents to be scanned and uploaded into the case file thereby losing the functionality of meaningful online case reviews.

An upgraded version of Matrix is currently being tested by the program. It has been rewritten in a programming language called ASP.Net, and will provide new functionality such as online intake, capturing additional data for special projects, and allow non-programmers to create scripts for Hotline workers to use when creating intakes.

The program recently upgraded from Office 2003 to 2010. It is unclear whether sufficient training on current technology programs is provided to ensure a consistent level of expertise. Many internal staff members have workstations that are over 5 years old and efficiency could be improved with a more up-to-date infrastructure. The program is planning to implement Microsoft SharePoint as a document management system, pleadings bank, intranet, and to improve internal communication and collaboration.

Recommendation IV.3.16.1* LASOC should ensure that the Matrix system is well documented so as to be capable of support by more than one staff person.¹⁶

Recommendation IV.3.16.2 As resources allow, LASOC should ensure that internal staff have appropriate hardware to work as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Recommendation IV.3.16.3 The program should consider ways it could better utilize technology internally to improve staff efficiency and effectiveness by decreasing the reliance on paper case files and managing more case information in the CMS.

Internal Communications

¹⁶ LASOC's comments to the Draft PQV Report reflect that this has since been accomplished.

Finding 17. Although there is extensive collaborative communication within each branch office or unit, the program lacks systems or procedures to ensure regular communication among all staff, particularly across offices and internal units, and from administration to staff.

The need for heightened internal communication and increased transparency were common themes throughout the visit. Members of program staff were often unaware of what their colleagues in other offices, if not units in the same building, were doing. The smaller offices engage in various forms of informal and formal meetings, but the entire Santa Ana office does not appear to meet as a whole. Although the program held a staff wide retreat in 2009, there are currently no regular program-wide staff meetings. In addition, senior leadership does not appear to have regular in-person interaction with the outlying offices. Aside from meetings with each office during times of programmatic retrenchment, communication from management is generally either via e-mail or passed down by mid-level managers after their quarterly meetings. There are no clear procedures for soliciting staff input on significant decisions and some staff expressed concern that they did not know of the existence of certain issues until after the fact.

Recommendation IV.6.17.1* The program should develop a means to ensure ongoing communication to and among staff as to administrative decisions, funding initiatives, office/unit accomplishments, and other areas of interest. This could be accomplished through several means, including regular emails, sending leadership minutes to staff, an online newsletter, and use of SharePoint.

Recommendation IV.6.17.2 LASOC should make an effort to hold periodic all-staff meetings. These meetings could be used for educating staff about the work, special projects, and priorities of the various offices and units; providing training regarding policies, procedures, and data collection; providing substantive background in areas of emerging client needs; reviewing results achieved for clients and strategizing as to potential changes in the delivery of services to clients that may improve the quality and effectiveness of the representation; and other similar activities designed to inform staff and build institutional cohesiveness.

Resource Development

Finding 18. LASOC has a creative and multi-faceted approach to fundraising and development but lacks a cohesive plan.

The *Resource Development Plan* submitted to the PQV team for review consisted of a grid outlining the elements of ten different development activities. Six of the activities were projected revenues for use of various innovative technology based forms developed by the program. Included in this category were established document assembly and E-filing fees that are charged for users that do not qualify for a court fee waiver as well as a court smart form project that is currently in negotiations. LASOC also relies upon the collection of attorney's fees garnered from its Lawyer Referral Service wherein they receive 15% of fees less than \$3,000 and 20% of fees collected over \$3,000. In addition, LASOC's newly developed community newspaper receives advertising and subscription revenue.

Not all of LASOC's entrepreneurial efforts have proven successful. In an attempt to capitalize on the program's technological innovations, in 2011, LASOC created a separate for profit corporation to market Legal Genie, its I CAN! attorney-assisted product. A consultant was retained to seek investors and much time and expense was spent on the project. Sufficient investors had yet to be confirmed when LASOC was approached by the court administrative office to collaborate on an E-filing assistance project. As the collaboration was predicated upon Legal Genie being retained by LASOC, the newly formed corporation was dissolved and the program incurred additional expense to wind down the project. The E-filing collaboration is still in negotiations and LASOC offers Legal Genie assistance as an option for ineligible applicants.

A relatively new revenue source is the program's annual Great Wine Festival which will be in its third year of operation. The festival requires an initial outlay of costs as well as a considerable amount of staff resources. Although profits from the festival increased from its first to second year, the gain still remained less than \$10,000.

The largest development activity in the grid, 90% of the total goal, was a general category of grant funding. LASOC currently has over 30 grants from various city, state, and federal sources. There was some concern expressed that sufficient attention is not given to resource development for the Los Angeles County Service area. A review of LASOC's projected funding, which is designated by county, lends some credence to this concern.

The development plan does not contain a clearly articulated vision for the use of future revenues to help guide where development resources and energy should be focused. Additionally, there does not appear to be a clear process for conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the efficacy of the various development activities which would seem to be a critical component of setting the course for future development activities.

Various members of the staff are involved in the task of resource development. The director of fund development, who is new to the position, takes primary responsibility for grant revenues and private fundraising activities. Other staff members are responsible for the Lawyer Referral Service and the various entrepreneurial activities. The board is involved in some subset of these development activities but it is difficult to judge the depth of that involvement beyond their involvement in the Great Wine Festival. Reporting on grant activities is the combined responsibility of the director of fund development, the finance staff, and the program lead assigned to the grant. Given the size and complexity of the program, and the potential opportunities for further growth, the development department may be under-resourced with only one FTE development staff member.

Recommendation IV.7.18.1* As part of the strategic planning process, LASOC should develop a clear vision for future program restructuring, growth and expansion. That vision should be incorporated into the resource development plan so as to focus on development activities that move the program toward its strategic goals.

Recommendation IV.7.18.2 LASOC should create a process for assessing, over time, the cost benefit analysis of the various development activities. This process should consider all costs, including staff time, necessary to realize a particular return. This process should be used to decide which activities should continue to be prioritized. However, it need not be mechanistic.

The process could take into consideration reasonable start-up time and costs but there should be clearly defined benchmarks which trigger a careful reassessment if anticipated goals are not being achieved.

Recommendation IV.7.18.3 As resources allow, LASOC should consider expanding its resource development experience, knowledge and capacity.

Integrated Delivery System

Finding 19. LASOC is integrally involved with its local, regional, and state partners in the delivery of legal assistance to California's low-income population.

As demonstrated throughout this report, the program is highly involved with its local courts, bar, law schools, and fellow service providers through various projects, grants, and collaborative efforts. It shares specialized grants with neighboring legal service providers to assure coverage throughout the vast Los Angeles metropolitan area. The executive director is actively involved in the Project Directors Association of California and the director of litigation participates in the Directors of Litigation and Advocacy Section of California's One Justice. The directing attorney of the Hotline/LRC/ PAI is on the State Bar's Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services. LASOC is involved in statewide health initiatives through the Health Consumer Alliance, works to facilitate coordinated statewide delivery through the Legal Aid Association of California, and routinely works with the state Administrative Office of the Courts on technology access issues.

CONCLUSION

While LASOC must face the challenge of a major reduction in funding, the program's decision to engage in a thorough planning process provides them with the opportunity to strategically map the future direction of the program. It is hoped that the recommendations contained in this report will assist in guiding this effort.