

Request for Proposals: **STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

Issued: October 19, 2018

1. INTRODUCTION

Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc., in collaboration with other civil legal service providers (including [Equal Justice Wyoming](#) and the [Wyoming Access to Justice Commission](#)), seek an experienced program evaluator or comparably skilled professional to conduct a statewide civil legal services needs assessment. (See Attachment A for a description of common civil legal services utilized by our low-income clients.)

Purpose of Needs Assessment:

As a key strategic planning tool, the needs assessment will be used to assist the above-listed organizations in better understanding how to best allocate resources, track and improve client/case outcomes, and identify the state's most pressing needs in providing civil legal services services for its low-income client-eligible population.

The assessment will also be used to educate the state legislature & relevant policy professionals, the Wyoming State Bar Association and its pro-bono attorneys, the media, and funders.

Results of the completed needs assessment will help identify:

- Predominant civil legal issues currently facing Wyoming's client-eligible low-income population and whether those issues are being adequately addressed;
- Demographic and other relevant trends likely to affect the legal needs of low-income communities in the reasonably foreseeable future;
- Populations (demographic and geographic) considered over-served, well-served, moderately served, and underserved;
- Barriers to access that eligible clients currently face when seeking civil legal services, either when accessing a civil legal services attorney or navigating the court system on a pro-se (self-represented) basis;
- Whether particular services are duplicative and in need of consolidation, reduction, or elimination;
- How future funding, programming, and staff might be best allocated across the State to better serve eligible populations;
- Whether technology should play a greater role in civil legal service delivery and if so, how;
- What constitutes effective consumer/client/stakeholder outreach in Wyoming's civil legal services community;

- If specific legislative or court rule changes are needed to better assist the civil legal services target client; and
- What particular standardized data sets statewide civil legal aid providers, and the courts, could collect in order to benchmark collective progress moving forward.

Broadening the Assessment

The last statewide needs assessment was conducted in late 2009 by Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc. and the then newly-formed [Access to Justice Commission](#) at the request of the Legal Services Corporation (“LSC”). LSC, the single largest funder of civil legal aid for low-income Americans in the nation, requires that its state grantees [conduct a periodic needs assessment](#). In addition to its 2009 assessment, Legal Aid of Wyoming conducted a less comprehensive needs assessment on the Wind River Indian Reservation in the summer of 2010. These assessments mainly focused on regions where the specific nonprofit Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc. had offices, and did not always cover areas where other civil legal service providers (e.g. University of Wyoming’s Legal Services clinic, the Teton County Access to Justice, etc.) had a presence, offering a somewhat distorted picture of the entire civil legal services landscape.

Therefore, rather than conducting its upcoming required needs assessment on its own, Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc., with the support of the Equal Justice Commission, the Access to Justice Commission, and Justice Lynne J. Boomgaarden of the Wyoming Supreme Court, has decided to take a broader view of Wyoming’s civil legal services landscape. LAW is partnering with other statewide organizations serving the legal needs of low-income communities to issue the needs assessment. The hope is that a collaborative approach will allow the entire legal community providing civil legal assistance and advice to gain a more accurate picture of the state’s civil legal ecosystem, and to foster future inter-agency goal-setting and collaboration. Note that our needs assessment collaborative is interested in understanding need in all areas of the state, not just where existing civil legal service providers have offices.

2. REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Legal Aid of Wyoming, Inc. (“LAW”) is soliciting Requests for Proposals (RFP) from qualified companies, nonprofits, academic institutions, or independent consultants (Respondent/Contractor) to conduct a statewide needs assessment. The goal is to select the most capable contractor offering the most competitive price.

Although multiple civil legal service providers are collaborating to ensure a successful needs assessment as detailed in Section 1, for administrative simplicity, the selected contractor will contract with, report to, and be supervised only by LAW (designated as the primary oversight entity for this project.) The contractor will have wide latitude to liaise with, interview, and present findings regarding the needs assessment to personnel/stakeholders from the many other organizations listed in this proposal.

3. TIMELINE/DUE DATES

1	RFP Release Date	October 19, 2019
2	RFP Questions Deadline	October 31, 2019
3	Response to Questions Posted on LAW's Website	Nov 6, 2019
4	Proposals Due to LAW	Dec 17, 2019
5	Notice of Award Released	Feb 8, 2019
6	Draft Document Submitted to LAW	June 21, 2019
7	Final Document Submitted to LAW	July 31, 2019
8	Contractor Presentation to LAW and Collaborative Working Group	August 15, 2019

Notes:

As part of the selection process, LAW or collaborating agencies may conduct interviews with a shortlist of RFP respondents being considered for this contract.

Above-listed deadlines are an estimate. Actual deliverable deadlines will be negotiated with the Respondent/Contractor. (There may be advantages to spreading the study over a two-year period; we will discuss this option with our shortlist of RFP respondents during the further interview/negotiation stages.)

4. DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

The selected Respondent/Contractor will be responsible for:

A. Coordination of a fully-completed written Community Needs Assessment, following, at minimum, the below outline:

- An Executive Summary
- Description of Design and Methods Used
- Results of quantitative and qualitative data collection from: surveys, interviews, focus groups, relevant datasets, etc.
- Analysis of civil legal services needs and strengths
- Project findings
- Recommendations
- Supporting Appendices

B. Data Collection, Design, and Analysis:

Respondent/Contractor shall design all relevant surveys, interview questionnaires, and facilitation guides necessary to collect and analyze data regarding the civil legal service needs

within the State of Wyoming (including on the Wind River Indian Reservation).

Respondent/Contractor will also be expected to either administer all interviews, surveys, and facilitation groups OR, where appropriate, effectively train staff/volunteers from Wyoming's civil legal service community (e.g. the partners collaborating on this needs assessment) to undertake some of the surveying/interviewing.

Upon reviewing several other legal aid needs assessments from states with rural populations (e.g. New Mexico, Nebraska, Colorado), our collaborative group tentatively prefers a "mixed-methods" approach. Ideally, the needs assessment will incorporate the below-listed data sources (but we remain open to the contracted expert's guidance).

- *Surveys, interviews, or facilitated meetings (whichever is most effective)* of the following:
 - Executive leadership, attorneys, and paralegals from Wyoming's various civil legal service providers (e.g. individuals working for the nonprofit organizations collaborating on this proposal, plus others if determined necessary);
 - Judges, court clerks, administrators, and other relevant court staff/officials;
 - Existing/recent civil legal services clients (coming from partnering organizations);
 - Existing/recent low-income civil court consumers (those who have represented themselves in court without seeking out free advice/services from a nonprofit civil legal services organization-- "pro-se");
 - Potential clients (e.g. those eligible, but not yet using free civil legal services for whatever reason);
 - Staff from non-legal, complimentary organizations serving our same eligible client population (e.g. homeless shelters, Court Appointed Special Advocates "CASA," Department of Family Services "DFS" caseworkers, and other social service providers).

- *Trend Analysis of Open and Closed Cases at Civil Legal Service Providers.* Review of a random selection of civil cases opened at our various partnering nonprofit legal agencies between 2016-2018 by client legal issue and geographic distribution; and a review of cases closed by legal issue, level of service provided, and geographic distribution. (Note: our collaborative team can pull and categorize the types of cases for the Respondent/Contractor, so that the Respondent/Contractor can focus on identifying trends.)

- *Trend Analysis of Civil Law Court Cases by Client Eligible Population:* Some eligible clients choose to represent themselves, rather than seek free legal counsel. An analysis of pro-se court cases (2016-2018) will help identify how the collaborative team can better educate and prepare low-income Wyoming residents who wish to self-represent. (Note: our collaborative team can pull and categorize the types of cases for the Respondent/Contractor, so that the Respondent/Contractor can focus on identifying trends.)

- *Demographic Analysis (using existing publically-available data sources)*. Review of Wyoming's eligible client population, including estimated number, geographic location, and racial, gender, age, and ethnic composition mapped in relation to availability of existing civil legal services for this community. If Respondent/Contractor deems it relevant, helpful, and affordable, we would also be interested in any data external to Wyoming that could affect future service delivery trends or provide a useful base for comparison.

C. Respondent/Contractor Presentation: Respondent/Contractor shall provide at least one (1) in-person presentation to LAW and our collaborative team at the end of the engagement highlighting the needs assessment process, findings, recommendations, and answering questions.

5. PROPOSAL CONTENTS AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

Respondent/Contractor proposals should include:

1. A written narrative answering the following:
 - a. With the information provided in this RFP (especially Section 4, A, B, & C), how does the RFP respondent propose implementing the needs assessment? (Where possible, RFP respondent should quantify how many interviews, surveys, or facilitated meetings they propose doing during the data collection stage.)
 - b. What additional analysis or processes does the RFP respondent suggest be undertaken as part of this needs assessment, if any, and why?
 - c. What cost or efficiency suggestions does the RFP respondent have for our proposed needs assessment project, if any? (Our collaborative team is willing to help gather data, mobilize staff to help conduct interviews, etc.)
 - d. How will the RFP respondent commit to meeting the deadlines listed in Section 3 (Timeline/Due Dates), if awarded this Contract? Would the RFP respondent be willing to phase the work over a two-year period if advantageous for substantive or funding reasons?
 - e. Price for the project.
2. A bio, resume and/or other items outlining RFP respondent's experience with community needs assessments and similar projects, and facility with skill sets commonly used in community needs assessments (e.g. statistical analysis, data visualization, survey design, project management, community outreach and technical writing, etc.);
3. A list of other personnel/subcontractors that will work on the project (please provide resumes or bios);

4. Samples or case studies of similar work projects that the RFP respondent has successfully completed; and

5. Contact name, title, affiliated organization, phone number and e-mail of three contacts for whom the RFP respondent has conducted similar work in the past five years.

All final proposals and supplementary attachments must be emailed to Connie Lackey (connie@lawyoming.org) by 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time (subject line: "Wyoming Needs Assessment Proposal"). If the RFP respondent would like to send an additional hard copy of the proposal or additional materials to supplement the e-mailed version, submit to: Legal Aid of Wyoming, 1813 Carey Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82001. Proposals must be formatted on letter-size paper. Each page should be numbered and with the RFP respondent's name.

RFP respondents shall bear all costs associated with the proposal meeting(s), interview(s), preparing, and submitting their bids. LAW and its collaborating team shall in no event be responsible or liable for those costs.

6. INQUIRIES

Questions regarding this RFP are to be submitted to Connie Lackey (connie@lawyoming.org) (subject line: "Wyoming Needs Assessment Questions"). A consolidated list of questions and their answers will then be posted on LAW's website (www.lawyoming.org). Please see Section 3 for question deadline. **Questions regarding this RFP will only be accepted by email at the e-mail address provided.**

7. AWARD OF CONTRACT

Award of the contract resulting from this RFP will be based on the RFP respondent whose offer will be most advantageous to LAW, its civil legal service partners, and the client population in terms of cost, functionality, experience, quality of past work, and other factors specified elsewhere in this RFP.

LAW reserves the right to: 1) Consider proposals based on their relative merit, risk, and values to the organization; 2) Negotiate with all service providers; 3) Reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential contractor, when it is in the organization's best interest; 4) Accept other than the lowest priced offer.

Proposals received will be evaluated by LAW and its collaborating team on the following selection criteria:

1. RFP respondent's demonstrated experience with community needs assessments and similar projects, and facility with skill sets commonly used in community needs assessments.

2. Description of the approach the RFP respondent proposes in accordance with the questions asked in Section 5, # 1.
3. Results of communications with the RFP respondent's client references.
4. RFP respondent's familiarity with the legal aid and/or human services landscape.
5. Price, and the RFP respondent's willingness to help the collaborative team find cost-effective solutions to complete the assessment.
6. Quality of RFP respondent's communications and responsiveness during the RFP process.

RFP respondents may be asked to revise their proposal based on further negotiations. This document represents an initial request for proposal only and in no way should be construed as a contract or letter of intent.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

Unless otherwise required by law, all information disclosed by LAW and affiliated organizations during the proposal process shall be considered confidential and should not be released to outside parties.

Likewise, all proposals from RFP respondents will only be reviewed by LAW staff and the collaborative team as necessary for the fair selection of the contractor and will not be shared with outside parties, unless otherwise required by law.

9. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

All recommendations identified during this engagement will be documented and reviewed with LAW and affiliated agency management. All deliverables produced during the engagement are for the sole use of LAW and its collaborative team, and will remain the property of LAW.

10. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

RFP respondents may find it useful to review the following links and documents before submitting a proposal. If there is additional, relevant information, RFP respondents would like to review prior to submission of a proposal, please notify us (see Section 6 for contact info).

Legal Services Corporation's [section on Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Priority Setting](#).

Common civil legal aid services (Attachment A)

List of [current nonprofit civil legal service providers and office locations](#) in Wyoming.

Attachment A. List of Common Civil Legal Services Provided to Client-Eligible population (at or below 125% of poverty or up to 200% of poverty with qualifying conditions):

Domestic Law: This includes divorces, custody disputes, adult and minor guardianship cases, child support modifications, paternity actions, grandparent visitation and noncustodial parent visitation cases.

Public Benefits: DFS, Medicaid, SSA, and other welfare benefit denials, overpayments and underpayments.

Consumer: Defense in lawsuits brought by collection agencies, wrongful garnishments and/or seizures, small claims cases, and debt buyer cases. This also includes a limited number of hardship Chapter 7 Bankruptcies.

Housing: Forcible entry and detainer actions, landlord/tenant evictions, security deposit disputes, enforcement of habitability requirements, housing benefit issues, and utility cutoffs.

Native American Rights: This priority covers all Native American's across the state as well as the Wind River Indian Reservation. In addition to providing all other services this priority also allows Legal Aid to assist with criminal misdemeanor representation in Tribal Court and places a priority on children and victims in domestic violence situations.

Senior Services: This priority targets low income seniors in the state by providing services such as powers of attorney, affidavit of survivorship, guardianship, conservatorship, grandparent visitation, and simple wills. Outreach is emphasized under this priority and Legal Aid attorneys regularly visit nursing homes, senior centers and libraries with various law topics of interest to seniors.

Involuntary Commitment Defense: Title 20 involuntary commitment defense to individuals detained under mental health holds.

Taxpayer Assistance: Representation of taxpayers before the IRS. Providing outreach and materials to communities to assist with understanding and resolving tax issues.

Emergency Assistance: There are times when a situation arises in which a person needs emergency services that do not fit within the Priorities or Case Acceptance Criteria of Legal Aid. These are situations where it is necessary to take immediate action to protect or eliminate a significant risk to the health or safety of an individual, secure or preserve the necessities of life, or address other significant legal issues that arise because of new and unforeseen circumstances.