

EQUAL ACCESS FUND

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION METHODOLOGY FOR PARTNERSHIP GRANT RECIPIENTS

Each partnership grant recipient must collect evaluative data and report both qualitative and quantitative analysis to the Commission. Projects may employ a variety of methods to collect and analyze the data requested and use whatever methods and forms are best for each individual project, provided that projects collect basic data that responds to the specific questions listed below or explains why that data is not available, and includes outcome measurements in its evaluation plans. Recipients are encouraged to apply the *Evaluation Toolkit* developed in 2002-03 for use by Equal Access Fund grantees.

The data collection and evaluation plan that each project designs for itself will be subject to approval by the Legal Services Trust Fund Program (LSTFP) staff. Staff is available to consult with recipients in the development and implementation of evaluation plans.

Recipients may design the forms to use for their own projects. However, the forms and other evaluation tools used must prepare the projects to respond to the high-priority questions described below, which are to be the basis for their evaluation. LSTFP staff is available to assist projects in the development of forms and intake sheets, best practices, and other model information, including the application of the *Evaluation Toolkit* to the specific evaluation needs and situation of the project.

In summary, recipients are required to submit:

- 1. The Partnership Grant Proposal.** The project narrative should include a clear statement of the goals of the project, strategies to be used to achieve those goals, and the evaluation methods to be used in evaluating the success of the project. These elements lay the foundation for the evaluation and provide guidance for project leaders in the selection of evaluation tools that will be most appropriate.
- 2. Status Reports.** A brief interim status report and one final report on implementation of *new* projects, including progress toward achieving project goals, success in raising other funds, coordination with the cooperating court and other services providers, and other updates. The inclusion of anecdotal information from users of the project as well as comments of judicial personnel, pro bono lawyers, and others about the effectiveness of the project and any recommended changes is encouraged.
- 3. Evaluation Plan.** The evaluation plan must be submitted to the LSTFP for approval. This should be done as soon as possible, but by no means later than July 1, unless correspondence with LSTFP staff explains in advance why that deadline cannot be met.
- 4. End-of-Year Service Reports.** End-of-year service reports include statistical information about the services provided by the project, as described below under *Service Counting Methods* and are due thirty days following the end of the grant period, on a date to be identified by the LSTFP.

5. **Final Expenditure Report.** This report is due thirty days following the end of the grant period, on a date to be identified by the LSTFP. Use the same form as is used for other LSTFP grant expenditure reports.
 6. **The Final Evaluation Report.** The details of which are described below, is due forty-five days following the end of the grant year. Programs may request approval for submitting the evaluation report at a later date, if additional time is needed to complete the evaluation.
 7. **Copies of materials.** Submit copies of materials developed for the project, or the index to lengthy manuals used by staff and volunteers, as attachments to the Final Evaluation Report.
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Goals for Pro Per Assistance

The following general goals for pro per assistance provide the basis for the Partnership Grant projects. The list of goals is followed by the specific questions about pro per assistance that will be the subject of evaluation.

- Pro per assistance can improve public trust and confidence in the judicial system by providing individuals with their day in court and an opportunity to be heard.
 - Pro per assistance can educate individuals so their expectations are reasonable in light of the law and facts, and then can help them achieve what they believe is appropriate from the judicial procedure.
 - Pro per assistance can help increase the likelihood that cases are decided on the law and the facts, free of inappropriate influences, and that litigants are referred to legal representation where necessary.
 - Pro per assistance can have an impact on the actual results of the case. In other words, pro per assistance can help self-represented litigants obtain a fairer result, based on the law and facts, than if they had not had any assistance.
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High-Priority Questions as Basis of Required Evaluation

The following questions are of the utmost concern, and each project's final evaluation report must respond to each of these questions, in the order listed. During a project's first grant cycle, its response to the questions may consist of more subjective and less quantitative answers because there has not yet been time for full implementation of evaluation plans. There is also the need to balance evaluation with the provision of services. However, projects should use the combination of evaluation methods they determine will enable them to provide responsive answers. Individual projects may need to respond to specific questions by explaining why that question could not be answered fully, is not applicable to their project, or must be adapted to provide relevant data regarding their project.

Evaluation Questions:

1. Which legal problem types were most amenable to effective self-help assistance, and are there problem types where self-help assistance is not effective?

2. Which types of assistance (introductory workshops, written and video materials, one-on-one assistance, follow-up sessions, etc.) were most effective in various legal matters?
 3. Were pro per litigants more prepared after using the project's services? Were forms more adequately prepared, and, on balance, were cases less time-consuming for bench officers and clerks after self-help assistance?
 4. Where, and for what reasons, were litigants referred for representation? Was the referral due to the complexity of the subject matter, personal reasons, such as their relative skills, language barriers, etc., or other reasons?
 5. To what extent did pro per litigants have reasonable expectations (that is, consistent with the factors of their case and applicable law) before they received pro per assistance, and did expectations change as a result of the assistance?
 6. Were pro per litigants satisfied with the assistance they received from the project?
 7. Were pro per litigants satisfied with their opportunity to make their case?
 8. Were case outcomes changed as a result of self-help assistance?
 9. How did the representation of opposing parties affect the effectiveness of self-help assistance?
 10. On average, did self-represented litigants achieve results more consistent with the law and facts in their case, after receiving self-help assistance?
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Services Counting Methods

Recipients must report both the number of individuals served by their Partnership project as well as the number of services provided.

1. **Number of clients provided with legal case services.** Projects that provide individual legal counsel and advice or other brief legal services (such as reviewing relevant information and counseling the client on how to take action, or helping the client negotiate with the opposing party) should include the number of clients to whom such services were provided in their annual Case Summary Report (CSR) to the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission. This number should also be maintained separately for the Partnership Grant project and reported in the recipient's annual report for the project. Form B – Report on Partnership Project Services may be used for this purpose.

To the extent it is possible to count the total number of *contacts* with those clients, we encourage you to collect this data, otherwise an estimate of the total number of client contacts based on a reasonable sample will be satisfactory.

2. **Quantity of services other than legal case services.** Projects should count the quantity of services they provide that do not include individual counsel and advice or other brief legal services to clients. These include such services as pro per assistance that consists of information rather than legal advice, community legal education, and referrals to non-legal service providers.

We are aware that this set of reports will probably involve some duplication because one individual may take advantage of more than one of the services offered. Information on total users of the system, without any duplication, is also required; see the last report below.

3. **Additional statistical reports.** In addition to the above, quantitative reports should include the following:
- a. The number and type of informational workshops, video presentations, or legal clinics conducted and total number of individuals attending each such session.
 - b. The number of one-on-one meetings during which information was provided to pro per litigants for each area of law and type of assistance offered.
 - c. The number of information packets distributed for each area of law.
 - d. The number of pro bono attorneys working with the project and total number of hours of assistance they provided.
 - e. A count, or estimate, based either on a reasonable sample or on a client survey, of the total number of individuals served (as opposed to the number of client contacts) regardless of how many different services were used by any one individual. Programs may also want to calculate the total number of persons helped by their services, including family members, etc. However, this number should be reported separately from the total number of individuals served directly.

The LSTFP recognizes that Partnership projects may be innovative and experimental. This will mean that in some cases the project will be tracking data other than those described above. It may also mean that the project, and the data collected, may change over the course of the grant period. Please contact the LSTFP if the project needs to establish different service counting methods.

Outcome Measurement

All recipients will be asked to include some outcome measurements, even in their first year evaluations. In subsequent years, Partnership Grant recipients will be required to undertake a more thorough measurement and evaluation of the projects. Several tools are available for this purpose in the *Evaluation Toolkit*, issued in 2003 to EAF grantees. See the table below for examples of evaluation tools that are available for measuring specific kinds of outcomes.

Outcome measurements and analysis of those measurements should be included in the responses to the high-priority questions listed above. Each project's plan for measuring results, as part of an overall evaluation plan, should be approved by the LSTFP, and the quality of these plans will be a factor in funding decisions. The LSTFP will provide support to programs requesting assistance with this aspect of the Partnership project.

Project staff should identify and define specific desired outcomes for pro per litigants who receive service, and develop a plan for measuring how frequently these results are achieved. Outcomes to be measured may also include effects on the court, and on the legal services program itself. For example, a study of a statistical sampling of cases involving those using the Partnership Grant project could compare the following information with a baseline:

- Were more judgments completed?
- Were fewer defaults entered?
- Was service more often completed appropriately?
- Were fewer hearings continued due to procedural problems?
- Were more stipulations reached?
- Did the litigant's legal situation appear to improve as a result of pro per assistance?

Outcome Measurement Method	Applicable Tools from the Evaluation Toolkit
1. Individual interviews with judges, court clerks, private attorneys, and unrepresented litigants both who were and were not users of the Partnership Grant project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Partner Survey • Client Follow-Up Interview
2. Focus groups with the same types of individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Groups
3. Phone calls to a random sampling of users of the services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Follow-Up Interview
4. Written questionnaires, including client satisfaction forms, submitted immediately upon receiving assistance, as well as questionnaires mailed to users shortly after their court hearing. These questionnaires could ask for satisfaction, level of preparedness, and suggestions for improving the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Satisfaction Survey
5. Analysis of a selection of court files. An expert could look at case files and, aware of the inherent limitations of depending solely on the written case file, seek to make a determination as to the effectiveness of the pro per litigant's self-representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client Case File Review
6. Court observers. Students or other volunteers could view pro per litigants who have been assisted and note their ability to self-represent. They could record the outcome of the hearing. Court watchers could also attend hearings in other courtrooms in similar subject matters where no assistance has been provided, for comparison purposes. Although court watchers would obviously be limited in their ability to actually evaluate the outcome of an individual case, their overall impression of the abilities of pro per litigants could be a valuable part of an evaluation plan that includes several other components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Court Observation Process