

**Model Self-Help Centers Pilot Program Evaluation
Request for Proposals – Bidders’ Conference
May 7, 2002**

Participating Organizations

- Berkeley Policy Associates
- Justice Management Institute
- KPMG
- National Center for State Courts
- Jane Peppy (independent qualitative researcher)
- Policy Studies, Inc.
- Tech Pros
- WestEd

Key Project Team Members

- Bonnie Hough, Supervising Attorney – Project Manager for pilot programs
- Deana Piazza, Research Analyst – coordinator/overseer of evaluation efforts
- Jon Schiller, San Francisco Superior Court – grant awardee and fiscal agent for evaluation contract

Introductory Remarks

The Judicial Council is making a significant commitment to and investment in self-help centers and addressing the plight of self-represented litigants in California. There is a great deal of interest in learning how – and how well – self-help programs work, and in working to develop a set of best practices. This is one reason why there has also been a significant investment in the evaluation component of this project.

The successful bidder should be prepared to work in close collaboration with the courts involved in these grants, to ensure that the evaluation falls in line with the goals of their programs. The programs are expected to be active participants in the research design.

Deana Piazza is a Research Analyst with the Center for Families, Children & the Courts. Her responsibility will be to oversee the evaluation, including acting as a liaison between the project team and the evaluators and ensuring that the work of the evaluator remains consistent with the goals and objectives of the AOC and of the self-help programs. She has also performed a fairly extensive literature review on evaluations of similar types of programs and will be a conduit of information for and provide feedback related to outcomes measurement.

Q & A

Question 1: Can you provide any more information about the mediation services the Law Resources Center in Contra Costa County plans to provide?

- *The proposal says, "By allowing parents to hold mediation sessions via videoconference, some with domestic violence issues will be able to have at least limited dialogue regarding their preferred parenting plan, while maintaining the distance and safety appropriate to their circumstances. Videoconferenced mediations may also allow parents or litigants with other types of cases who live in Southern California or out of state to avoid traveling to Martinez. Videoconferenced mediation in child custody and visitation cases will have the added benefit of freeing an estimated 100 hours of already-scarce family court services' mediator time for other case-related activities."*

Question 2: What is the total contract cap is for this contract

- *The total amount of the contract, as listed in Section 5.0 of the RFP, is \$400,000.*

Question 3: Are there any page limits on the various sections of the proposal?

- *No, but you are encouraged to be as brief as possible without sacrificing the detail needed to describe the scope of your work.*

Question 4: We are hoping to use a center, as a subcontractor, in Los Angeles that might be part of the coordination effort conducted by the Los Angeles Management Center project. They are not a partner in this or any other of the five funded efforts. Is this all right?

- *This could be a potential source of conflict, if the organization stands somehow to gain from the results of the evaluation. It is also possible, because of the close contact with the program being evaluated, that the organization would possess some type of insider knowledge that would not be present at other program sites, hence introducing bias.*

A proposal would not necessarily be disqualified for proposing to work with this type of subcontractor. However, the bidder should disclose the name of the organization, as well as the anticipated nature of the relationship, so that this may be considered in the evaluation of the proposal.

Question 5: Are there any caps on indirect expenses?

- *There are no caps on indirect expenses. However, the State does not accept indirect cost rates as an item in your budget. All indirect costs need to be embedded in your project costs. The rates should be proposed fully burdened (meaning the proposed rate(s) is inclusive of the base direct, indirect and any overhead or profit, so the AOC does not contract or pay separate elements of cost and price).*

Question 6: Will a list of conference call participants be made available?

- *Yes. A list of conference call participants will be posted, along with the Q & A from this call, to the CFCC Web site. However, since participation in the bidders' conference is not mandatory, this list may not represent all firms that intend to submit a proposal. A complete list of bidders WILL NOT be provided.*

Question 7: When do you expect to select a contractor? What is your estimate of a contract start date?

- *A contractor is expected to be selected by mid-June, and the contract should commence shortly thereafter.*

Question 8: When do you expect the pilot Centers to be operational (the RFP says their funding begins May 2002)?

- *Due to the variation in scope, resources, etc., for the programs, this will vary by site, but it is estimated that the centers will be operational by the end of Summer 2002.*

Question 9: Is there a requirement to seek a DVBE?

- *No. This is not a requirement of the San Francisco Superior Court contracts.*

Question 10: Is there a small business preference?

- *No.*

Question 11: Were the five program areas pre-designed (where courts could apply under one of the five categories) or were the areas determined because certain themes emerged upon review of the courts' proposals?

- *The five categories were pre-determined, as they had been identified in the grant as areas of great need or areas with the potential of making great improvements with respect to providing assistance to self-represented litigants.*

Question 12: Are there other sites that have been funded for this project, but are not a part of the evaluation?

- *No. All sites being funded are included in the evaluation.*

Question 13: In light of the March 1, 2005 deadline for submitting the evaluation report to the legislature, what is the proposed end date for the project?

- *A written product should be completed by Fall 2004, in order to allow enough time for review and revisions before the report is due to the legislature.*

Question 14: Your RFP addresses potential methodological difficulties, particularly with respect to access to data from the courts. What help can the contractor expect to receive from the courts?

- *The participating courts entered into the project aware that there would be a heavy emphasis on evaluation, so it is anticipated that they will be active and cooperative participants in the assessment of the availability of data. However, the courts must continue with their regular course of business as the projects are*

being implemented, so the evaluator's data collection efforts should attempt to be as non-invasive as possible. It is not expected that the courts will help to extract information from files, information systems, etc.

- Question 15: Will the results of the evaluation feed into the courts' efforts to seek continued funding or address the sustainability of their programs?
- *The primary interest of the AOC is whether the Judicial Council should ask the legislature for additional funding to continue the programs.*
- Question 16: Will the proposals from the successful – and maybe even unsuccessful – courts be made available to potential bidders?
- *The proposals were not submitted in electronic form, so it would be very difficult to provide them to potential bidders in their entirety. However, overviews of each of the funded programs can be found in Section 1.2 of the RFP. This information will also be supplemented with each of the program's desired outcomes, and an expanded document will be posted to the CFCC Web site. Information on the proposed programs that did not receive funding will not be posted.*
- Bidders should also be aware that the programs that are actually implemented may not match the programs as proposed, so the proposed research design should not rely on any specific program designs.*
- Question 17: Are you looking for a contractor to develop appropriate measures AND collect the data to report on them?
- *Yes.*
- Question 18: In light of the fact that the evaluation will involve collaborative work with the project team, would you be amenable to revisions to the research plan down the line?
- *Yes. In fact, revisions are likely. As mentioned above, the programs as implemented may not match the programs as proposed. Additionally, as the evaluator works with the project team to flesh out the program objectives, research plans may have to be refined. Data availability (or lack thereof) may also prompt a need for revisions to the research plan.*
- Question 19: I noticed that there is no formal face sheet to submit with the proposals. Do we need to create some kind of tear sheet so the proponent is not known throughout?
- *No. This has not been a standard AOC process.*
- Question 20: With respect to the evaluation of the proposals, are you assigning a specific number of points to particular parts of the proposal?
- *A proposal scoring sheet has not yet been developed, so it is not known at this time exactly how many points will be assigned to each component of the proposal. However, great emphasis will be placed on your overall approach and proposed methodology, as well as background and relevant experience – in terms of familiarity with the California court system and work on projects similar in*

scope (e.g., involving multi-site research or use of similar methodologies).

Question 21: Will the questions and answers to this call be posted on the Web site?
➤ Yes. *The Q & A will be posted to the CFCC Web site in the early part of the week of May 13.*

Question 22: If we have additional questions, can we e-mail them to you as well?
➤ Yes, *additional questions should be sent to Bonnie Hough (bonnie.hough@jud.ca.gov). The answers to those questions will be added to the list posted to the Web site, along with any additional information or materials about the process, which may include discussions of the outcome measures.*

Question 23: Will there be a cutoff date for posting new questions and answers to the Web site?
➤ *May 17 will be the final day to post new Q & A to the Web site.*

Question 24: Is there any provision for e-mailing the proposals and having a postmark for the hard copy submission?
➤ *E-mail submissions will be accepted, as long as they are received by 5 p.m. on the due date, May 31, **and include all materials required in the RFP** (such as work samples). The hard copy submission must be postmarked by May 31.*

NOTE: A postmark only will not be accepted. If you choose to postmark your submission on the due date, a copy of the proposal, either faxed or e-mailed, MUST reach the AOC by 5 p.m. May 31 .

Question 25: Can proposals be hand-delivered to your office?
➤ Yes, *as long as they are received by 5 p.m. May 31.*

Additional Questions Submitted After the Bidders' Conference

Question 26: Page 4 of the RFP notes that the AOC will contract with the Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco, one of the five courts with a pilot program, to oversee the evaluation. The contract for the evaluation outlined in the RFP is between the evaluator and the AOC. How does the AOC see the lines of responsibility among the evaluator, the AOC, and the Superior Court of California, County of San Francisco?
➤ *The San Francisco Superior Court is primarily the fiscal agent for the evaluation contract, as the funding is to be distributed through the courts. However, the Judicial Council, as the "genesis" for the grant, has a significant interest in and will have ultimate authority over the evaluation. AOC staff will be overseeing and monitoring the evaluation process so that the direction of the evaluation remains consistent with project goals, from the standpoint of the AOC and of the programs themselves. AOC staff intend to have a strong presence in the collaboration efforts between the courts and the evaluator in fleshing out goals*

and objectives, as well as appropriate ways to measure whether they are being achieved.

Question 27: Are there existing outcome measures consistently used by the California courts to assess:

- access to justice
- "just" outcomes
- satisfaction with the court process
- efficiency and effectiveness of the court system

If so, is this study expected to use measures that are comparable to existing measures? If not, is the AOC aware of any are any courts implementing exemplary measures of these constructs that this study should build upon?

- *There are no existing outcome measures used consistently by the California courts. In fact, there is generally little court-related data that is measured consistently across the state. The National Center for State Courts' Trial Court Performance Standards do speak some of these outcomes, but they may not be sufficient to address all of the issues involved in a project such as this which targets services to a particular population.*

Question 28: Do the courts keep records of the users of self-help services that can be analyzed to create the profiles described on page 6 of the RFP? If not, are they prepared to begin collecting such data or will that be the responsibility of the contractor?

- *The courts do not currently collect any data on self-help center users. In most if not all of the courts that received grants, the programs have not even been implemented yet, so it would not be possible to collect such data. Again, there is in general little available data on self-represented litigants, or on self-help center users. Developing the profile will be the responsibility of the contractor, though it may be necessary to collaborate with the courts and/or program staff to collect the data to develop the profiles.*

Question 29: Is any documentation of the pilot programs currently being required by the five pilot courts?

- *There is no specific requirement for the courts to document the development of their programs, though some of this may be done an informal level. However, the documentation is the primary responsibility of the contractor.*

The contractor should expect to engage in a very intensive data collection effort for this project, including the assessment of the availability of the data and the feasibility of collecting it. Many instruments will have to be developed to collect data which are not consistently collected by courts. Furthermore, bidders should be aware that any data which may be consistently collected by the courts may not be comparable (e.g., different definitions of the same event).

Question 30: Does the AOC have any centralized data for the courts that could be used

as a starting point for baseline data collection?

- *The AOC does not have much centralized data for the courts. Most of it is essentially case counting and is expected to be of relatively little utility for this project.*

Question 31: You state that little research has been done on this population. Is there any data or information previously collected by CA courts or the AOC on the self-help litigants?

- *Neither the AOC nor the California courts has engaged in any targeted data collection with respect to self-represented litigants. Some data related to individual project evaluations (e.g., Santa Clara County's Self-Service Center Project, Van Nuys Legal Self-Help Center) may be available, but the scope and service delivery models are likely to differ from the projects the AOC has funded.*

Question 32: Would an evaluator who has a contract with the AOC to develop evaluation plans for the courts on another topic be eligible to compete for this contract?

- *Yes.*