

JusticeCorps Evaluation Plan and Timeline

This document was drafted using AmeriCorps' Evaluation Plan template and requirements of the AmeriCorps 2025 Request for Applications. It is considered a working draft, and therefore project scope, research questions, methodology, and tasks and activities may be subject to change.

Organization Name: Judicial Council of California

Program Name: California JusticeCorps Program

Application ID: TBD

1. Introductory Sections and Program Description

1.1 Theory of Change

The JusticeCorps theory of change posits that by training and supervising 300-hr, Minimum-Time Legal Access Interns (LAI's) and 1,700-hr Full-Time Graduate Fellows, self-represented litigants (SRLs) will receive personalized service including triage, case management, referrals, forms assistance, court follow-up, and language assistance.

Annually JusticeCorps Members are to provide some assistance to 75,000 SRLs (duplicated) and at least 15 minutes of service to 2,000 of those SRLs. In the short term, those that receive personalized attention (15 minutes or more of service) are expected to have a better understanding of the legal process and feel better prepared to proceed with the next steps in their case. In the medium term, SRLs served by JusticeCorps Members will submit legal forms for court filing that are filled out accurately and completely, which will in turn result in court processes being more efficient and effective. In the long term, more court cases of self-represented litigants will be concluded with judgments in a timely manner, which will result in improved life circumstances.

In addition, the JusticeCorps Members themselves benefit from "workforce development" aspects of the JusticeCorps program including rigorous legal content training, supervision and mentoring from seasoned attorneys and other court professionals, and the personal and professional service experience. In the short term, they increase their civic knowledge and engagement, as well as their understanding of the legal process. This leads to their reporting, at the end of their service year (medium-term), that their career choices have been influenced, and they will voice a commitment to future civic engagement. After they leave the program, in the long-term, it is expected that Members will have pursued public interest or judicial branch career paths by furthering their education (e.g., law school or other advanced degrees) or accepting public service or judicial branch employment. In addition, it is expected that they will continue to volunteer in their communities.

The California JusticeCorps program was originally designed to provide in-person, real-time assistance to litigants seeking services at court-based Self-Help Centers. The COVID-19 pandemic forced an immediate shift from in-person to remote services for all California court operations, including supplemental programs like JusticeCorps. Over the past four years, the program has—out of necessity—responded to this evolution by adopting virtual and remote alternatives for training members and delivering service. The program seeks to learn how these changes have affected JusticeCorps from a National Service operational standpoint. Has the program been successful training members, providing assistance, and reaching AmeriCorps goals as it adds and expands on new service and training modalities? What has this shift been like for Members and the court staff who supervise them? Do litigants who receive assistance remotely have a different experience from customers receiving in-person services?

1.2 Scope of the Evaluation

The goals of the evaluation are to assess the breadth and impact of all JusticeCorps workforce and professional development trainings by topic, region, duration, and dosage with a specific focus on differing modalities and how these trainings impact member development. In addition, the evaluation will assess if there are any differences in SRL outcomes based on different service modalities.

2. Evaluation Outcome(s) of Interest

One outcome of interest for this evaluation is short-term and the other two are medium term:

- (1) JusticeCorps will gain a deep understanding about how workforce and professional development trainings impact Members and how this impact differs by topic of training, region, duration, dosage, and modality.
- (2) JusticeCorps will learn whether there are different levels of program satisfaction, skill attainment, education and career development, and civic engagement for Members by program service modality (in person compared to remote).
- (3) JusticeCorps will learn whether there are differing levels of impact for self-represented litigants based on the service delivery modality (in person compared to remote).

3. Research Question(s)

The research questions that will guide the California JusticeCorps project evaluation are:

1. What are all the workforce and professional development components provided to Members (including all topics, which regions they are provided in, the duration of the trainings, the dosage of the trainings, and what training modalities are used)?
2. Do supervisors (the qualified court staff who oversee JusticeCorps members) feel specific modalities used for trainings are effective for Members and what are the benefits and challenges of each approach? What are the implications for Member learning styles, training and support for Members, levels of program engagement, and later impact on service delivery?
3. Do Members have differing levels of program satisfaction, feelings of program connectedness and support, skill attainment, education and career goals, levels of civic engagement based on whether they received in person or remote/virtual training and whether they provide in-person compared to remote/virtual services?
4. Do self-represented litigants who receive services remotely compared to those who receive in-person services have differing levels of: satisfaction with services; understanding about what to do next; trust and confidence in the process; and feelings about how prepared they are to handle their legal situation?

4. Evaluation Design

4.1 Evaluation type

The California JusticeCorps evaluation will consist of a dual framework. One component will consist of a non-experimental outcome evaluation specific to the scope and impact of workforce and professional development trainings by topic, region, duration, dosage, and modality. The second part of the evaluation will be a quasi-experimental study centering on how service modality impacts Members by region as well as how program service delivery impacts the outcomes for self-represented litigants. This dual design will be the most appropriate framework to measure the training and service modality impact on Members and self-represented litigants as this will offer in-depth pre/post comparisons of training experiences and service delivery.

4.2 Control or Comparison Group Formation

Within the quasi-experimental component of the evaluation, outcomes for Members providing services in the Bay Area and Los Angeles via remote modalities will be compared with outcomes for the Members in San Diego who provide services in person..

5. Sampling Methods

5.1 Sample Selection

Each of the three regional California JusticeCorps cohorts in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and San Diego will participate in this study, and data will be collected from every service site. Each region will have appropriate representation from site supervisors in key informant interviews.

Members serving during the study period will have the opportunity to complete surveys on the topics of training and service modality. JusticeCorps' proposed slot allocation comprises 67 Members serving in the Bay Area, 162 in Los Angeles, and 51 in San Diego. With 280 AmeriCorps members overall, the sample goal will be 163 (95% confidence in the results +/- 5%). Also, the sampling framework will include a representative total from each region as well as modalities utilized. Members will be offered the opportunity to take part in focus groups on service delivery; those who volunteer for these focus groups will be randomly selected. All Members will be told that participation is voluntary, that they can skip any question, that they can stop participating in the evaluation at any time, and that their choice to participate or not participate in the evaluation will have no adverse impact on their role within the program.

With respect to surveying self-represented litigants, after conducting a power analysis (1 sided, $p_0 = .70$, $p_1 = .85$, $\alpha = .05$, $\text{power} = .80$), two random samples of 50 SRLs will be utilized. The first sample will be 50 SRLs who receive brief, one-on-one interventions for 15 minutes or more (half in person and half via remote service). The second sample of 50 SRLs will be people who attend a group workshop either online or in-person. SRLs will also be assured that surveys they complete are for program evaluation only, and that participation is voluntary.

5.2 Sample Size Justification

The sample sizes referenced above will be adequate to answer each of the study's research questions as they either consist of all respondents (i.e., supervisors and Members) or utilize a power analysis in the case of self-represented litigants. It should be noted that while the focus group participants will be randomly selected, sample sizes in this case will not be representative given that each group will only have up to 12 members. However, as in the case in any focus group, these discussions will allow for in-depth discussions about service delivery modalities.

6. Data Collection Procedures, Data Sources, and Measurement Tools

The various sources of data for this evaluation include all legal content training, workforce training, and professional development materials and curriculum along with interview feedback from supervisors, in-person and remote training observations and corresponding data, survey and focus group feedback from Members, and survey feedback from self-represented litigants. Measurement tools will include the following: interview scripts; comprehensive observation forms for remote and in-person site visits; surveys specific to Member and Fellow trainings by topic, region, duration, dosage, and modality; Member and Fellow surveys about the experience and impact of differing service modalities; and surveys of self-represented litigants.

7. Analysis Plan

The analytical plan for this evaluation will consist of qualitative and quantitative components. With respect to the qualitative, these will center on document review, key informant interviews, site visits, and focus groups that are conducted. All qualitative feedback from interviews and focus groups will be grouped via Excel and common themes will be articulated in project reports.

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8. Timeline

The project timeline, with estimated dates of completion, is found below:

- Build training materials library, meet and engage with staff and leadership from participating courts, and design SRL outreach and communications plan (December 2025)
- Review and finalize evaluation plan (pending AmeriCorps approval) and develop all data collection instruments (April 2026).
- Conduct a full inventory of all workforce and professional development program offerings including but not limited to training sessions provided. This inventory will include training information by topic, region, duration, dosage, and modality (September 2026).
- Interview all regional site supervisors to learn more about the impact, benefits, and challenges of various trainings by modality (October 2026).
- Survey all Members about their levels of satisfaction with the trainings offered along with the impact of trainings on members' level of knowledge, confidence with service delivery, education and career goals and by modality (pre- and post-surveys to be administered as part of each training from October 2026 to June 2027).
- Conduct surveys of Members specific to the impact of program service delivery by modality (pre-survey to be administered October 2026 and the post-survey to be administered in May 2027).
- Conduct three Member focus groups, one in the Bay Area, one in Los Angeles, and one in San Diego, on their experiences with different service modalities (June 2027).
- Administer a randomized and representative survey of self-represented litigants with a focus on impact by service modality (June 2027).
- Review all qualitative and quantitative data and submit final evaluation report (June 2028).
- Present findings of the evaluation at the JusticeCorps statewide meeting (August 2028).