

Court Technology Fund Application

Please refer to the *Court Technology Fund – Information and Award Guidelines Sheet* for details on the application process and award guidelines for the technology fund. The 2014 applications must be submitted to Dan Ostdiek@courts.state.mn.us at the MN Judicial Branch by August 11, 2014.

Agency Information:

Name of Organization: *Volunteer Lawyers Network*

Address: *600 Nicollet Mall, Suite 390A, Minneapolis, MN 55402*

Telephone: *612.752.6655* Web site: *www.vlnmn.org*

Name of Director/Administrator: *Suzanne Pontinen*

Telephone: *612.752.6671* Email: *sue@vlnmn.org*

Name and Title of Contact Person: *Thomas Walsh, Resource Attorney*

Telephone: *612.752.6675* Email: *tom@vlnmn.org*

Overall Project Request:

Name of Request/Project *Collaboration and Shared Resources Platform Implementation and Development*

Dollar Amount Requested *\$14,000*
(Requested amount can be from \$10,000 - \$1,000,000)

Total Estimated Cost of Project *\$14,000*

Expected start date of project *December 1, 2014*

Expected end date of project *August 15, 2015*
(Project must be completed by December 2016)

Project Summary:

Provide a 2-3 sentence summary of your project request:

VLN proposes to develop and implement the use of document management platform and web application framework (Microsoft SharePoint) to facilitate collaboration with VLN's community partners, including pro bono attorneys, law firms, social service agencies, community centers, law librarians and the court's Self Help Centers. Implementing such a tool will allow VLN staff and volunteers to more

seamlessly provide services in needy communities and will be particularly useful at our major courthouse clinics where volunteer attorneys will be able to more efficiently collaborate with VLN staff and Resource Attorneys, accessing up-to-date forms and documents as they serve their pro bono clients. This is true, too, for our staff attorneys who will have the ability to access case files remotely

Equally if not more important, this platform will create a foundation for implementation of future applications that will promote continued and significantly enhanced collaboration among VLN and its partners. Examples of this type of development include: 1) case management and tracking tools that will allow clients and partners alike to quickly and securely access case status and other case profile information; 2) retrieve information from existing data systems managed by VLN and others; and 3) create a portal to future web-based solutions that streamline the legal intake process for low-income and underserved populations.

Project Initiatives: (Provide 1-3 sentence responses to these questions.)

1. Does the project partner with other Justice System partners through shared or integrated systems, interfaces, or shared information? List the justice partners.

This tool will provide for greatly increased efficiencies between VLN, the following justice partners and the clients we serve:

- *Hennepin County Self-Help Center (at which our largest legal clinic is located);*
- *State Self-Help Center (with whom we currently partner on a lawsuit answering project for which we rely on email and telephone services to share documents);*
- *Hundreds of volunteer attorneys (at our major courthouse clinics) and law firms;*
- *Courthouse legal clinics at Hennepin County Government Center, Hennepin County Housing Court, Hennepin County Family Justice Center and the Hennepin County Conciliation Court.*

2. How does the project use technology to enhance the experience or simplify the process for customers or constituents, including self-service applications?

Implementation of a platform such as Microsoft Sharepoint will immediately improve our ability to collaborate with our partners and more efficiently serve our common client base by allowing shared access to up to date forms and case file materials and will give VLN the option of implementing other tools that support collaboration and efficiency (e.g., shared calendars and contacts). See

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/sharepoint/>

If VLN is able to accomplish the installation of this foundational system, the roadmap for future application development includes solutions that will significantly improve communications between VLN clients, VLN staff, volunteer attorneys and community partners, our individual and shared operations, collaboration between justice partners and management of individual and share client matters. For example, VLN clients will more easily be able to check on the status of their cases (e.g. whether their case been placed with a volunteer attorney). To do so now, a client must telephone the Intake Line and this can involve an inconvenient wait time for callers, requires personnel to investigate and respond to the question posed, and does not result in an automated means of tracking the information provided.

3. Describe how the project uses technology to reduce overall costs to the Justice System.

What is the estimated cost savings? What agency/budget will see the cost reduction?

The ability to share client information, legal documents and other resources online between our organization, the self-help centers and the volunteer attorneys at courthouse clinic sites will result in

- *a **significant** time savings for all involved (e.g., VLN staff will spend less time coordinating client cases and answering questions; volunteer attorneys will spend less time acquiring complete and up to date information regarding a client's legal situation and the status of their case);*
- *greatly enhanced communications – and reduced frustration— between the client seeking services and the volunteer attorney; and*
- *improved quality of the legal services.*

The attorneys will be able to easily access client files, necessary legal documents and other forms and needed resources in one convenient and secure location. It will also reduce the time the self-help center staff spend looking up court files and answering repeat questions.

4. Describe how the project uses technology to increase efficiencies to the Justice System. Please quantify the estimated impact of efficiencies through measurable data such as employee hours saved or improved data accuracy.

Oftentimes clients seeking pro bono services at the courthouse locations need to visit a clinic more than once to complete their legal services. This can result in numerous inefficiencies including the client having to share their story with a different volunteer attorney each visit; the clients failing to bring the needed paperwork and information to the clinic; and repeated requests to the self-help center and courthouse staff to look up records and provide forms and copies of court orders. Rather than the volunteers attorneys having to learn the client's legal dilemma anew, drafting letters or pleadings and supporting documents from scratch, the volunteer attorney can simply review the client's case information online and easily access the necessary documents, forms and relevant resources so that they may efficiently advise and assist the client, without duplication of previous efforts and requests for outside assistance. These efficiencies will conserve pro bono resources and ultimately increase the number of clients served, and the quality of the services provided. In 2014, VLN provided at total of 4062 services at the Legal Access Point clinic and the Housing Court Project, both at the Hennepin County Government Center, at the Family Law Clinic located at the Family Justice Center and at the Hennepin County Conciliation Court clinic.

Project Deliverables:

5. If this project involves other agencies, are these agencies committed to the project and timelines provided in the application? Please list all other agencies and contacts.

While other agencies are not participating in this grant application per se, we have consulted with staff from the Hennepin County Self-Help Center and know that they are moving to a Sharepoint system which would further serve to increase collaborations and efficiencies between our programs and our clinics which they host. For example, VLN and the Self-Help Center may want to jointly develop a Sharepoint application, sharing costs and creating a resource familiar to users in both environments. Alternatively, the Self-Help Center and other justice partners may want to jointly develop or upgrade an application that is used by all but resides on only one system (reducing costs in development and maintenance).

6. Identify the measurable goals and objectives for the project.

- *Schedule and complete VLN network/system assessment*
- *Schedule and complete preliminary project planning meeting*
- *Receive detailed project documentation including*
 - *planned infrastructure design,*
 - *security/access objectives,*
 - *web interface design objectives,*
 - *data management objectives,*
 - *project plan, and*
 - *implementation schedule.*
- *Receive detailed cost proposal(s) for implementation, including*
 - *Technology solution requirements & costs (hardware, software and related purchases required)*
 - *Installation and implementation services*
 - *Project and data management services*
- *Draft/review/execute necessary purchase approval documentation / contracts to acquire needed system resources and reserve professional services*
- *Complete data management tasks necessary for implementation*
- *Complete installation of platform technology*
- *Complete modification of web interface*
- *Confirm functionality and access; confirmation of completed design and data management objectives*
- *Complete preliminary user documentation*
- *Schedule and deliver user acceptance testing training*
- *Complete user set up and testing*
- *Complete user application testing*
- *Finalize application design and documentation; “go live”*
- *Schedule and train VLN employee users regarding use of application*
- *Prepare and deliver communications regarding application access to volunteers and partners*

7. The project recipient will be required to provide periodic progress reports. Describe the project schedule and dates for key deliverables (programming, implementation) to meet the goals.

<i>Proposed Dates*</i>	<i>Key Deliverables</i>
<i>December 31, 2014</i>	<i>Project documentation</i>
<i>April 30, 2015</i>	<i>Confirmation of completed design and data management objectives</i>
<i>June 15, 2015</i>	<i>Accessible collaboration application “live”</i>
<i>July 31, 2015</i>	<i>Confirmation of completion of VLN employee training</i>
<i>August 15, 2015</i>	<i>Communication to volunteer and partner network regarding application platform and access.</i>

**Dates will be finalized during initial planning meeting when resource availability can be confirmed.*

8. Once the project is completed, please explain how your agency will cover any ongoing maintenance or processing costs.

We anticipate that the ongoing costs for this system will be relatively nominal and VLN will be able to cover costs from our general operating budget.

9. Would you accept a partial award for the project? If partial funds are approved, would your agency have the funds to cover the remaining project costs?

No. In order to ensure project success, it is imperative that the award be granted in its entirety.

10. Are there any other approved or pending requests for grants or other outside funding for this project?

No, VLN has not made any additional requests for grants or other outside funding for this project.

11. Would your agency be willing to match the award funds?

No, VLN is not willing to match the award funds.

Funding Information:

12. Provide project cost details.

Overall Cost of Project (estimated):

Provide a detailed budget summary outlining the major project expenses:

Salaries (current employees or contractors for the project)	
Professional Services	
- Technical	\$5,000
- Design and project management; data management	\$5,000
Technology Costs (New database/system purchases)	\$2000 (licensing)
Technology Costs (Upgrades to current systems)	\$0
Technology Costs (New computers, equipment)	\$2000 (hardware)
Other expenses (Any other major costs) – list details	\$0
Total Expenses (Should equal the Overall Cost of Project listed above)	\$14,000

I certify that all information in this award application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and that I have the authority to commit the Organization to the work proposed.

Authorized Signature: /s/ Thomas J. Walsh

Date: 8/11/2014

Submit your application electronically by August 11, 2014 to Dan Ostdiek, MN Judicial Branch – Finance Director at: Dan.Ostdiek@courts.state.mn.us.