

National Legal Aid Resource Development Technical Assistance Project

History and Development of this Project

The American Bar Association (ABA) through ABArray, collects data on funding available for civil legal aid in the U.S. through a survey of funders and providers of civil legal services in all 50 states. The ABArray website allows users to sort through a comprehensive database using interactive dashboards to access a wealth of national funding information. Further, for those organizations who have obtained a license, additional dashboards are available to display state-level information. Technical assistance was previously provided to the field through a consultant, Meredith McBurney, previously supported by the Management Information Exchange and the ABA, and the Justice in Government Project led by Karen Lash. The Justice in Government Project is no longer providing this technical assistance and the ABA was able to continue the ABArray funding data collection, but not the technical assistance.

In 2021, an ad hoc group of individuals from the [ABA Standing Committee on Legal Aid and Indigent Defense \(SCLAID\)](#) and its [Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives](#), the [Management Information Exchange \(MIE\)](#), the [National Association of IOLTA Programs \(NAIP\)](#), and the [National Legal Aid & Defender Association \(NLADA\)](#), began meeting to assess the gaps in the provision of technical assistance regarding the data available through the ABArray. We determined that target audiences that might need technical assistance included legal aid organizations, state/IOLTA funders and ATJ Commissions. We reviewed the various technical assistance needs around private fundraising, state legislative funding, funding through state executive branches, federal non-LSC funding and special funding opportunities.

The ad-hoc committee reviewed the gaps and expertise needed to provide technical assistance. The committee determined that MIE was best situated to provide technical assistance on private fundraising and state legislative funding and NLADA was best situated to provide technical assistance on state funding through the executive branch, non-LSC funding and special opportunities. Both entities agreed to hire staff to provide this function with the hopes of having funding from some NAIP entities moving forward. NLADA hired Isi Stone, who is supervised by Radhika Singh and MIE hired Jared Smith, who is supervised by Kesha James.

The committee plans to continue to meet and Isi and Jared have both been able to provide useful feedback to the ABA about data collection, so that the data can be collected, collated and shared in the most useful way. ABA staff have made modifications to data collection and reporting based on the feedback. For example, different data sets such as number of lawyers, number of low-income individuals below 200% of federal poverty, were added to the data sets so that states can look for states with similar demographics.

Project Services Description

The project provides civil justice organizations, including NAIP members, across the country, a new tool to support their resource development efforts. This project will assist organizations looking for fundraising information in the following ways:

ABArray Private Data Dashboard License Holders: For those state reporters of legal aid data or other organizations who have access to state-level data through the Tableau platform, assistance is available to help orient and answer questions about navigating the Tableau site and the data dashboards available. State Reporters are those organizations that collect legal aid funding data from the legal services organizations in their states and report that data to the ABArray, and are often a state's IOLTA program.

Data Providers: For those organizations that directly or indirectly provide the ABA with data included in the ABArray data set, assistance is available to provide standalone information and resources that communicate state-level data, enabling comparisons such as state-level funding amounts by funding source, poverty population, attorney population, and legal aid attorney population.

Additionally, for legal aid organizations that provide data included in the ABArray data set, additional benchmarking metrics may be available based on similarly situated programs. While peer programs will not be

identified, ranges of benchmarking information may be requested based on requested criteria such as budget size, LSC status, and geography.

Other Stakeholders: For organizations that do not provide data to the ABArray data set, assistance is available to answer general questions and help make connections informed by the Report around state legislative and private charitable funding efforts. Further, if approved by ABArray contacts in the respective state(s) in strict accordance with the [ABArray Data Privacy Policy](#), additional information and resources may be shared directly.

Project Outreach

The project has communicated and will continue to communicate to the field about the availability of technical assistance for resource development. Project staff have regularly presented at NLADA and ABA conferences, including an introduction to ABArray and a summary of the technical assistance available. Organizations can request assistance through MIE, NLADA or ABA SCLAIID.

Project Cost and Funding Need

MIE and NLADA are each estimating that it will cost approximately \$25,000 per year, so \$50,000 total, for a portion of a full-time staff to devote to this project. NAIP has dedicated \$10,000 per year to this project, \$5,000 to each organization. We would like to raise the remaining \$40,000 from the Funders Collaborative and, assuming the project is meeting objectives, hope to be able to provide ongoing support to the project each year.

Project Supervision

NAIP and the Funders Collaborative will be funders of this project and continue to participate in the ongoing ad-hoc committee. NAIP is asking for an annual report of services, including the following:

1. Brief description of the purpose of the funds;
2. A description of TA requests/activities, both qualitative and quantitative, the qualitative component should include user surveys/feedback loops;
3. Project actual costs compared to budget; and
4. Description of challenges faced in providing technical assistance.