

# E-SJI NEWS

## SJI Receives First Quarter FY 2015 Grant Applications

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SJI received 22 grant applications requesting a total of \$1,410,671 for the first quarter of FY 2015. The Board of Directors will meet on December 8, 2014 to consider these applications.

Applicants seeking SJI funding are asked to consider projects that address one or more of SJI's [Priority Investment Areas](#). As always, SJI encourages applicants to contact SJI staff prior to, and during, the development of their grant applications with any questions. Applicants are also required to review the FY 2015 [Grant Guideline](#), and research prior work

on their issue using the [NCSC Digital Archive \(eCollection\)](#), where all grant reports produced after 2010 by SJI grantees are archived.

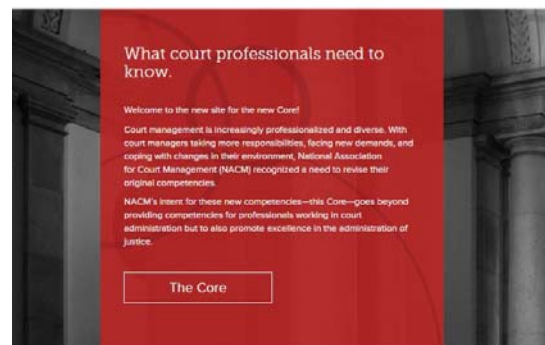
SJI Grant funding remains available on a **first-come, first-served, basis for grant applications that merit funding**. Deadlines for the remainder of FY 2015 are as follows: 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter – February 1, 2015; 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter – May 1, 2015; and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter – August 1, 2015.

## NACM Announces Update to Core Competencies

The [National Association for Court Management](#) recently announced an update of its core competencies - The Core. Through the support provided by the State Justice Institute (SJI), [the Core is now available online](#) (SJI-11-I-165).

The Core tag line, “Strengthening Court Professionals,” defines NACM's goal in updating its core competencies. NACM's approach provides a roadmap to the profession—from the foundational knowledge of the enduring principles that every individual working in the court system should possess, to the more complex and advanced areas required to be an effective court professional.

As such, the Core is organized into three modules: Principles, Practice, and Vision. Within each are competencies that describe what court professionals

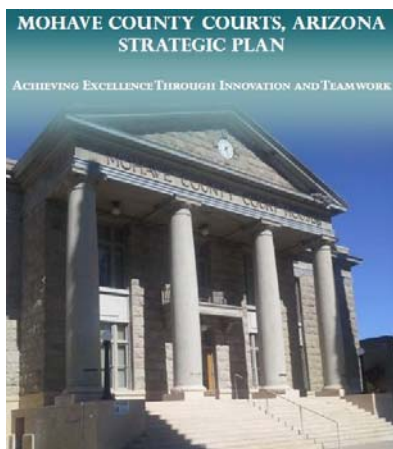


need to know within the diverse field of court administration while promoting excellence in the administration of justice.

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## High Performance Court Strategic Planning



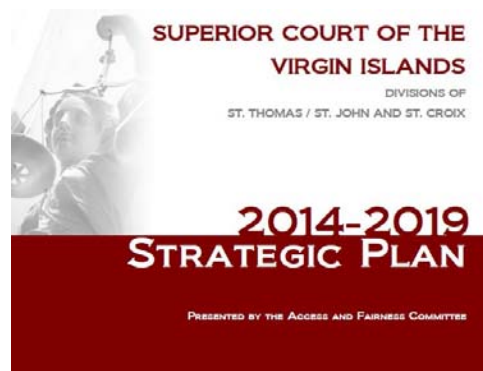
SJI frequently receives Technical Assistance (TA) grant requests for strategic planning.

These applications address a myriad of changes that have occurred within the court, among the courts and its partners, and the demographics of the community. Frequently, these applications address multiple [SJI Priority Investment Areas](#), such as providing access to justice for self-represented litigants and limited English proficient court users. Recently, two jurisdictions already utilizing the [High Performance Court \(HPC\) Framework](#) completed a strategic planning process.

**The Mohave County Courts (SJI-13-T-020)** unveiled its 2014—2018 Strategic Plan earlier this year, which revised an existing document and process that was five years in the making. With assistance from the NCSC, the Strategic Planning Committee, including representatives from the Superior Court, Justice Court, Clerk, probation, and county administration, collaborated on a cohesive vision to meet the needs of the community.

Using the HPC Self-Assessment that addresses ten core areas of court performance, the SPC identified areas for improvement in the new plan. Five “Strategic Pillars” for the Mohave Courts were identified including: serving the public; delivering timely justice; court access, facilities, and infrastructure; engaged staff; and community collaboration and outreach. Results of the assessment, detailed descriptions of the pillars, and guidance regarding implementation are included in the final report. The [Mohave County Courts Strategic Plan](#) is available through the NCSC Digital Library.

**The Superior Court of the U.S. Virgin Islands (SJI-13-T-087)**, which includes operations in the Divisions of St. Thomas, St. John,



and St. Croix, began utilizing the HPC Framework following their implementation of [Court Tools](#) over five years ago.

Utilizing the same format, judicial, administrative, and human resources leadership from the Court collaborated to establish three principal objectives, including, access and fairness for the community, delivering timely justice, and employee satisfaction. The [strategic plan](#) includes: the Court’s mission, vision, and action steps; the process used to develop the plan and disseminate the HPC Self-Assessment; and, recommendations from the Access and Fairness Task Force.

## National Assessment on Remote Services Delivery to Self-Represented Litigants

The [Self-Represented Litigation Network \(SRLN\)](#) and the [National Center for State Courts \(NCSC\)](#) are assessing the development of programs to provide services to self-represented litigants through remote technology (SJI-14-P-081). This project currently involves five participating court systems (CA, UT, AL, MD, and MN), and one large trial court in California (Orange County).



The project will consist of two phases: An assessment of five states that have state or

local court-sponsored remote/virtual service delivery processes for assisting self-represented litigants, in addition to three programs from other access to justice entities, such as legal service organizations. This phase will observe and gather cost/benefit information on these existing programs and produce a resource handbook describing their business models, technology infrastructures, and strengths/weaknesses. The resource

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handbook will be helpful to other states seeking to develop these types of programs.

The development of a full service pilot “triage portal” will serve as a single point of entry to legal information and services for self-represented litigants. The portal will help individuals assess their legal issues and needs, directing them to the most appropriate service for their case using established triage protocols. The protocols were developed under a previous SJI grant (SJI-12-P-085). The pilot portal will be conducted in one of the jurisdictions involved in the study of current remote services delivery programs, and will incorporate the best practices identified in that study.

Maryland, which is one of the five states evaluated by this project, integrated successful self-help services for persons appearing without lawyers in the Circuit Courts of Maryland beginning in 2009. The Maryland judicial branch established a pilot project in the Glen Burnie District Court to provide assistance to

persons appearing without lawyers in Maryland’s limited jurisdictions courts.

The project evaluation, completed in 2012, showed that the project helped over 7,000 litigants during its first eighteen months – primarily in debtor/creditor and landlord/tenant cases. It demonstrated effectiveness in 1) clarifying case specifics, paperwork, and obligations; 2) assisting litigants in determining which court forms are needed and how to fill them out; 3) focusing litigants on those elements of a claim that can reasonably be addressed through the court; 4) listening to litigant experiences and concerns and responding to litigant questions; and 5) assessing case complexity and referring litigants for additional legal assistance when appropriate. The evaluation concluded that the project was meeting its objective of greater understanding and engagement of litigants about the case and improved chances for judgments being based on merits and rights, rather than on default.

Based on this positive evaluation, the program was expanded to assist District Court litigants statewide by delivering the services by telephone, chat, and email. The service is operated by attorneys working via a contract between the Administrative Office of the Courts and Maryland Legal Aid. Persons needing help with District Court cases throughout the state are referred to the self-help hotline and receive assistance by phone, email, or online chat.

This is one of several state court programs using telephone, videoconference, online chat technology, text messages, and email to provide information to persons representing themselves in court cases, or seeking information about how to initiate such cases.

Maryland’s experience is critical to informing the national assessment project.

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The State Justice Institute is a federally-funded, non-profit corporation established by federal law in 1984 to improve the quality of justice in the state courts.

