

E-SJI NEWS

Board Approves Grants for the 3rd Quarter

The SJI Board of Directors met on June 3, 2011, to award new grants for the 3rd quarter of FY 2011. Thirteen (13) grants were awarded totaling \$655,572.

A Project Grant was approved for the 5th District Court of Appeal in California to build on their earlier Technical Assistance (TA) grant (SJI-09-T-160), which piloted an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) as part of a Transcript Assembly Program (TAP) in 2 counties. This project will expand the program by deploying the tools to the remaining 7 counties within the District, and reduce costs associated with the compiling and storage of transcripts for cases on appeal.

Nine (9) TA grants were approved, including: two assessments of court and clerk operations in Prince George’s County, Maryland, and Marion County, Indiana; an administrative office review for the Court of Common Pleas in York County, Pennsylvania; development of a court performance measurement dashboard utilizing *CourTools* in Lubbock County, Texas; strategic planning for the Judiciary of Guam; development of a juvenile justice plan for the Michigan courts; an assessment of collections for the South Dakota Unified Judicial System; multi-lingual translation of small claims forms for the Massachusetts Trial Courts; and implementation of interac-

tive forms for self-represented litigants for the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts.

Three (3) Curriculum Adaptation & Training (CAT) Grants were approved, including: a program by Legal Momentum for judges on adjudicating cases involving violence between intimate partners; two statewide education programs for judges and administrative staff on elder abuse issues in Nebraska; and implementation of an online training curriculum for court officers in San Bernardino County, California.

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New White Paper on Appellate Court Staffing

The [Council of Chief Judges of the State Courts of Appeal](#) (CCJSCA) released the results of their SJI-funded (SJI-10-T-152) cost benefit evaluation of appellate court legal staff. With analysis assistance provided by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), CCJSCA evaluated the benefits and limitations of central appellate research staff, entry-level law clerks, and professional law clerks.

The purpose of this study was not to conclude whether or not a state intermediate appellate court (IAC) should select a specific type of legal staff over another; but to inform chief appellate court judges on how IACs currently use legal staff, and then provide a comparative analysis of the productivity, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and work quality of the different types of legal staff.

NCSC Consultants surveyed IACs on the functions, costs, and responsibilities assigned to three different legal research staff types, with 34 of 39 states provid-

ing responses. NCSC then selected 17 of the IAC respondents, analyzed their use of legal staff to avoid or reduce backlogs, and assessed the length of various stages of the appellate process and clearance rates. The three types of legal staff included in the analysis were:

- Law Clerk: attorneys working for a single judge, having no direct responsibilities to the whole court;
- Central Staff Attorney: attorneys working for the court as a whole rather than for an individual judge, under the direction of a supervising attorney; and
- Other court attorney: attorneys who are not part of a central staff and perform primarily administrative duties.

The white paper includes profiles of specific IAC legal staff systems and an analysis based on size (established through number of filings). The final paper is available through the [NCSC Library](#).

Court of Common Pleas in Lancaster, Pennsylvania Completes Operational Evaluation

The Court of Common Pleas of Lancaster County, in the 2nd Judicial District of Pennsylvania, has concluded an operational evaluation it began in the fall of 2010. The Court released its two-volume report titled, *Twelve Steps to Enhance the Efficiency of Court Operations in Lancaster County, PA*, as part of its SJI-funded Project Grant (SJI-10-N-175).

In 2010, the Court made a commitment to the County to review the efficiency and economy of court operations as part of a general initiative to streamline services. As part of that commitment, President Judge Joseph C. Madenspacher and District Court Administrator Mark M. Dalton engaged NCSC Consultants to assist the Court in enhancing the operational efficiency of the various departments of the Court, without loss in quality and effectiveness. Like most state, county, and municipal governments, Lancaster County has identified the need for more services and programs, despite significant budget shortfalls.

Located in one of the most populous counties in the Commonwealth, the Court has an authorized judgeship level of 15, and receives a significant portion of its funding from the County. As a large court system, it has more than 540 full-time and part-time employees organized through a variety of departmental and mid-level managers, all of whom are

under the direction of the District Court Administrator. In addition to the administrative office, the other departments of the court include the Magisterial District Courts, Jury Services, Adult Probation and Parole Services, Court Reporters, Domestic Relations, Juvenile Probation, Court Reporters, and the Law Library.



The NCSC report contains an extensive volume of appendices providing a review and comparison/contrast of the Court's policies in relationship to other courts across the country, in addition to the final report. The report also includes NCSC study findings and recommendations, including estimated cost-savings and efficiencies that might be expected as a result of the implementation of the key steps to broadly improve operational efficiency, including:

- Improve collection of fines and fees in Magisterial District Judge (MDJ) Courts;
- Reduce pressure on local criminal justice system capacity;
- Reduce inefficiencies in juvenile delinquency cases;
- Reduce inefficiencies in domestic violence (PFA) case services to indigent parties and limited-English proficiency persons;
- Improve court reporter work scheduling and consider digital recording;
- Continue reorganization of Adult Probation & Parole Services (APPS);
- Introduce court information technology improvements;
- Consolidate MDJ Court support operations; and
- Promote enhanced court employee commitment and productivity.

The final report highlights existing efforts already undertaken by the Court to improve efficiency, and provides recommendations to continue with those efforts. Each step is connected to a specific series of improvements the Court can expect to observe, as well as detailed data and background information, which supports the process and recommendations.

A copy of the [report](#) and its [appendices](#) are available through the NCSC Library.

- processing;
- Continue improvement of adult probation misdemeanor and felony collections;
- Streamline processes for



NCSC Library Serves as Repository for SJI Grant Reports

Effective October 1, 2010, (FY 2011) the NCSC Library became the repository for all SJI grant products, including reports, curricula, media, and any documents in their final version created by SJI grant funding.

A benefit of this collaboration with the NCSC Library is their online searchable [catalog](#) and [digital archive](#). The catalog contains a listing of all holdings at the physical location in Williamsburg, Virginia, and the digital archive allows users to access electronic versions of NCSC Library holdings. Applicants are strongly encouraged to research previous SJI-funded grant products by using these tools prior to developing grant applications.

All grantees must send SJI one hard copy and one digital copy (preferably in Adobe PDF or Microsoft Word) of their final grant products. Project Grant recipients are requested to send three (3) hard copies and one (1) digital copy upon completion of their grant.



In addition to the SJI Grant Products, the Library holds over 36,000 items in various formats: print, video, CD-ROM, and microfiche. As part of its print collection, the Library receives, either by subscription or donation, approximately 200 professional journals, court newsletters, annual reports, and other periodicals.

For more information on NCSC Library holdings, its strategic vision, and loan of materials to judges and court personnel, please visit their [website](#).

SJI is Now on Facebook

SJI has joined Facebook and encourages you to “Like our Page.”

SJI’s Facebook page is focused on connecting the innovations produced by grantees with the larger state court community, promoting events that SJI is participating in or supporting, and sharing information on grants, including deadlines and reminders.

The SJI Facebook page will complement



existing outreach efforts, which include the SJI [website](#) and monthly E-SJI News.

Founded in February 2004, Facebook is a social utility that promotes efficient communication in a trusted environment.

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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 state courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common issues faced by all courts. SJI is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the President.

