

E-SJI NEWS

SJI Receives FY 2012 3rd Quarter Grant Applications

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SJI received 15 grant applications requesting a total of \$756,684 for the 3rd quarter of FY 2012. The Board will meet on June 18, 2012 to award new grants for the 3rd quarter. The results of this Board meeting will be available the following week.

The final grant deadline for FY 2012 (4th quarter) is: **August, 1, 2012.**

SJI staff are available to help interpret the [Grant Guideline](#), and offer assistance on other matters related to grant applications. All future applicants are reminded that they are required to describe how their proposed project addresses one or more of SJI's new

[Priority Investment Areas](#). In addition, applicants must delineate specific performance outcomes and define how success will be measured.

Several applications submitted this quarter were developed from SJI's previous Strategic Initiatives Grants (SIG) program solicitation on Self-Represented Litigation and the state courts. Increases in self-represented litigants continue to challenge state courts, as they seek innovative methods to address the issue despite limited resources. In addition to the other Priority Investment Areas, SJI remains committed to assisting the state courts in assuring access to justice for these litigants.

Wisconsin Justice Initiative Identifies Promising Sentencing Alternatives

With support from SJI (SJI-10-N-004), the *Wisconsin Justice Initiative*, comprised of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, Director of State Courts, and the Planning and Policy Advisory Committee (PPAC), recently released findings and recommendations from an assessment conducted by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) on three promising alternatives

to incarceration. The report includes a thorough analysis of current initiatives in several counties including, the risk-and-needs pilot project, Assess, Inform, and Measure (AIM); problem-solving courts; and criminal justice collaborating committees. It also details best practices for each of these initiatives and how the Initiative has leveraged local support for breaking with traditional processes to improve the justice system and outcomes for offenders. These improvements are marked by common measurements of success, including increased

public safety, reduced recidivism, and reduced costs associated with incarceration.

The partners of the *Wisconsin Justice Initiative* requested SJI assistance in December 2009. The [final report](#), *Effective Justice Strategies in Wisconsin/A Report of Findings and Recommendations*, was two years in the making. NCSC visited 15 counties across the state and also surveyed numerous justice system stakeholders to assess the value of a range of strategies developed in Wisconsin to improve public safety.

The report provides recommendations on developing a statewide strategy and plan of action for expansion to other counties throughout Wisconsin.



New Mexico Releases Online Court Officer Basic Training Program

SJI awarded the New Mexico Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) a grant (SJI-11-E-153) in June 2011 after the AOC experienced inconsistencies with state and county probation compliance programs. In New Mexico, probation duties are the constitutional responsibility of the executive branch, housed within the New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD). Because of limited resources, the probation department observes a policy that prioritizes surveillance efforts on felony offenders. Per the State's statute, county officers and the programs they administer must follow the misdemeanor guidelines of the AOC.

The New Mexico Judiciary did not have an internal training program for officers, and instead had often depended on applicants' prior training in law enforcement or as NMCD probation officers as qualifying background for their positions. The AOC and county affiliates did team up to host two training sessions. However, the State's budget reductions resulted in a 13 percent cut to the Judiciary. Courts no longer had funding available for training and travel, since that funding was reallocated to cover basic operational costs.

The New Mexico Judiciary recognized the need to establish a training regimen for its own



court probation/surveillance officers. Given the Judiciary's funding and staff issues, the AOC determined the most efficient method to train officers was to provide the classroom portion of the training via web-enabled online modules. Some components of the training, such as CPR/First Aid and self-defense are still required to be in a classroom setting; however, most of this type of training is available through various agencies throughout the state. The Judiciary did not want to delay cursory training for the officers because they would be performing their duties without

statutory knowledge or awareness of best practices. This could lead to significant safety issues for the officers.

The Judiciary worked with a contractor to turn the existing training footage into web-based learning modules through the use of a multimedia software program called QuidPro®. QuidPro® e-Learning Software is a revolutionary product that allows organizations to develop innovative, interactive, educational programs. The completed programs are considered cross platforms and can either be burned to CD or DVD, posted on the internet, or used with a local network. The court officer basic training includes the following modules: 1) Ethics; 2) Report Writing Basics and Documentation; 3) Office Safety; 4) Introduction to Controlled Substances and Drug Testing; 5) Field Safety; 6) Law Block; and 7) Stress Management.

The New Mexico Judiciary reports there will be approximately \$943 in cost savings per officer trained using the online training. The savings is realized not only in staff time, but in other expenses associated with costly travel.

The module is available to the public and can be viewed at <http://www.nmcobt.com>.

CCE Releases Video from Bench-Bar-Media Dialogue Project

On March 27, 2012, the Council for Court Excellence (CCE) held a program titled, *The Technology and Law of Cameras in the Courtroom*, in Washington, D.C. A video of that program is now available [online](#).

Made possible through an SJI grant (SJI-11-E-176), this program explores the implications of the media presence in the courtroom.



For technical assistance with the video download process or questions regarding the content of the video, please contact Peter Willner at willner@courtexcellence.org.

Mahoning County, Ohio Completes Study of Court Consolidation

The Mahoning County Bar Association (MCBA), on behalf of its four local courts, received a grant in FY 2010 (SJI-10-T-090) from SJI to contract with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) on a study of potential court consolidation for all courts in the county. This included a municipal (limited jurisdiction) court system based in Youngstown, Ohio.

Prior to the project, the Ohio Supreme Court and State Court Administrator's Office had been encouraging courts and counties to move towards greater efficiencies, and identified court consolidation as one of the methods of achieving those goals. With the support of the Judiciary and AOC, as well as the Mahoning County Board of Commissioners, the MCBA began coordinating with the NCSC to submit an application to SJI for further support and funding of the analysis.



With one of the more robust municipal courts systems in the country, Ohio's courts of limited jurisdiction have responsibilities that go beyond standard municipal court case proceedings. Mahoning County has a strong bar association who, along with other stakeholders, observed the difficulties of the current court system. Of particular interest to the MCBA, County Commissioners, and courts, were the following considerations: 1) constitutional and statutory framework for limited jurisdiction

courts in Ohio; 2) statutes explicitly dealing with limited jurisdiction courts in Mahoning County; 3) potential governance and management structure required to consolidate and operate the courts post-consolidation; and 4) consolidated court system facilities.

The project recently concluded, and a final report was released detailing the advantages and disadvantages of consolidating the limited jurisdiction courts in Mahoning County below the Court of Common Pleas, including four County-area courts, the Youngstown Municipal Court, two additional municipal courts, and three mayor courts. Ultimately, the [report](#) concludes that there are a number of benefits to court consolidation in Mahoning County and provides a 3-phase plan to complete the process.

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