



RFP: Legal Issues Interactive Guides Browser-Based Expert System

New Mexico Legal Aid (NMLA) is issuing this Request for Proposal to seek an independent software/technology contractor to develop and implement an interactive, browser-based expert system designed to transfer knowledge from more experienced attorneys to less experienced attorneys and paralegals (“junior advocates”). The goal of the project is to create on-line customizable practice guidance to (1) help junior advocates provide quality legal assistance more efficiently and (2) reduce the need for in-person training and supervision by expert advocates. The implementation will include pilot systems to guide advocates handling major legal aid practice areas such as family law, housing, consumer law, and public benefits.

We request written proposals that clearly identify the contractor’s qualifications and capabilities to achieve the goals of the project. Proposals also should address proposed pricing, and should include examples of previous work done by the contractor that is similar in nature to our project.

This project is being funded by a Technology Initiative Grant (TIG 17032) grant awarded by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) to New Mexico Legal Aid.

New Mexico Legal Aid is New Mexico’s largest provider of free civil legal services for low-income residents throughout the state. NMLA has a staff of 62 working from 10 office locations throughout the state. All NMLA offices share a unified computer network and videoconferencing system.

Project Description

i. Need for the Project

New Mexico has the nation’s second-highest rate of poverty, with over a quarter of its population qualifying for LSC services — approximately, 564,000 people as of 2016. Of those who approach New Mexico Legal Aid seeking assistance, more than half are turned away due to limited resources. The size of New Mexico’s indigent population underscores the importance of NMLA utilizing its limited resources as efficiently as possible. To that end, the expert system proposed for this project is aimed at amplifying one of NMLA’s scarcest resources: staff attorney time.

No expertise system can replace in-person oversight of junior advocates by more experienced staff. However, there is significant opportunity to leverage technology to both help junior advocates more efficiently deliver quality legal assistance and to reduce the time senior staff must devote to supervising junior advocates. In particular, using technology to provide junior advocates with practical, step-by-step guides through case critical but less complicated legal questions would help ensure that supervision is reserved for higher value learning experiences involving more complicated legal matters, while simultaneously providing junior advocates with the support they need.

Current technologies designed for the dissemination of legal expertise are often unduly difficult to learn how to navigate, or how to create or edit interactive content. We are seeking development of a user-friendly expert system that allows for nonprogrammer attorneys to easily author interactive guides for knowledge transfer to junior advocates.

ii. Detailed Description of the Project

The project will create and implement an expert system designed to transfer knowledge from more experienced attorneys to less experienced attorneys and paralegals. The specific technology that will be incorporated for this project will include software that allows for the creation of interactive, browser-based substantive practice guidance (hereafter "Interactive Guides"). These Interactive Guides will help junior advocates provide quality legal assistance more efficiently and reduce the time otherwise needed for on-going, in-person training and supervision by expert advocates.

The proposed expert system implementation will have three primary features:

1. Interactive Guides: The implementation will include at least three state-specific substantive and procedural Interactive Guides. The Interactive Guides will be optimized for use during the delivery of legal services, using — for example — checklists to guide junior advocates through the major steps in particular cases and routing them to appropriate resources and pleadings or flagging when the assistance of expert advocates may be required. The Interactive Guide will utilize branching logic to display legal guidance that responds to the inputs of junior advocate users.
2. Efficacy Tracking: Upon completion of the Interactive Guide, an automated feature will gather critical information (such as the number of hours spent on the case) from junior advocates to evaluate the efficacy of the specific Guide. This data tracking system will collect both qualitative and quantitative feedback on Guides and allow for ongoing quality control of content.
3. Expert Content Management System (CMS): An intuitive CMS will be designed for expert advocates to edit and supplement the content of each Guide. The CMS will be optimized for use by expert advocates who may have limited familiarity with web applications and no programming experience.

Taken together, these features should allow NMLA to create interactive guides, track the impact of these systems, and, based on user feedback, iteratively refine and update the Interactive Guides.

The proposed implementation will include at least three pilot Interactive Guides, which will assist with case matters in one or more of the following major practice areas: family law, housing, consumer law, and public benefits. The specific issue areas to be targeted will be selected after an initial design phase, which will include major stakeholders like NMLA, the technology contractor, agencies that provide specialized legal services coordinated through the New Mexico Access to Justice Commission, attorneys participating in NMLA's Volunteer Attorney Program, and substantive area work groups within the State Bar of New Mexico.

iii. Specific activities and strategies that will be implemented to achieve project goals and objectives;

Objective 1: Identify Interactive Guides and Select Authors — Strategies/Activities:

- a. Develop, disseminate, and collect findings for survey that assesses current legal research and drafting practices, as well as supervisory needs of junior advocates — data can be utilized for both design and evaluation (e.g. “before” and “after” comparisons) phases;
- b. Drawing on survey findings, conduct Initial Planning Session with project stakeholders (including but not limited to NMLA, technology contractor, Volunteer Attorney Program attorneys, and Justice Commission agencies) to develop criteria for selecting pilot Interactive Guides;
- c. Using the abovementioned criteria, develop list of potential issues areas for Interactive Guide implementations and work with State Bar substantive area work groups to identify potential author(s) for each guide — *strong preference* will be given to pre-existing, static written materials (e.g. practice manuals, CLE packets, etc.) that working groups identify as suited for translation into Interactive Guides; and
- d. In collaboration with stakeholders and based on availability of authors and fit with selection criteria, finalize issue areas for Interactive Guide implementations.

Objective 2: Implement Interactive Guide, Efficacy Tracking, and Expert CMS — Strategies/Activities:

- a. Engage with technology contractor to conduct immersive design research (e.g. in-person shadowing) on current internal processes for transferring knowledge and case supervision employed by NMLA;
- b. Develop high-fidelity prototypes of the custom implementations of the Interactive Guide, Efficacy Tracking, and Expert CMS technologies;
- c. Circulate prototypes to stakeholders and end-users for feedback, iterate on prototypes on as-needed basis, and finalize prototypes (including spec sheet with feature list);
- d. Implement the custom technologies; and
- e. Conduct extensive, multi-device quality assurance testing.

Objective 3: Launch Pilots — Strategies/Activities:

- a. Engage with contributing authors and technology contractor to create high-level flowcharts outlining the planned Interactive Guides;
- b. Circulate flowcharts to stakeholders and end-users for feedback, iterate on flowcharts on as-needed basis, and finalize flowcharts;
- c. Use custom technologies implemented under Objective #2 to translate high-level flowcharts into Interactive Guides for the selected issue areas; and
- d. Engage with technology contractor to train NMLA advocates and attorneys participating in Volunteer Lawyers Program in use of Interactive Guides and Efficacy Tracking technologies, as well as author attorneys in use of CMS for editing Interactive Guides.

Objective 4: Evaluate Guides — Strategies/Activities:

- a. Embed Interactive Guide technology into internal workflows in the applicable issue areas within NMLA;
- b. Aggregate and analyze data collected through Efficacy Tracking system; and
- c. Determine impact of Interactive Guides (e.g. compare to survey data collected under Objective #1) and assess whether additional modifications or further implementations of Guide technology are advisable.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Contractor will work with staff members from NMLA to determine the technical specifications of the Interactive Guides system.
2. Contractor will work with staff members from NMLA to design the user interface for the Interactive Guides system.
3. Contractor will work with staff members from NMLA to design the CMS interface of the Interactive Guides system.
4. Contractor will work with staff members from NMLA to test all aspects of the Interactive Guides system.
5. Contractor will provide regular updates on its progress, with a monthly update minimum.
6. Contractor will be responsible for completing the project on time and within budget, and submit the final version of the Interactive Guides system on or before June 30, 2019.

RFP INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRACTORS

All contractor communications must be directed to the RFP Coordinator listed below. Any oral communications will be considered unofficial and nonbinding to NMLA. Only written statements issued by the RFP Coordinator may be relied upon:

Ed Marks, Executive Director
New Mexico Legal Aid, Inc.
PO Box 25486
Albuquerque, NM 87125-5486
edm@nmlegalaid.org
Telephone: 505-768-6122

RFP SCHEDULE

RFP released: December 22, 2017

Proposals due not later than 5 p.m. MST, January 22, 2018

Successful contractor announced: on or before February 1, 2018

CONTRACTOR QUESTIONS

Interested contractors may contact the RFP Coordinator at the email address and/or phone number listed above with any questions concerning this RFP. All questions must be received prior to the response due date and time listed above.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

- RFP released December 22, 2017

- Responses due no later than 5pm MST January 22, 2018

- Successful contractor announced on or before February 1, 2018

- Contract signed and work commences on or before March 1, 2018
- All work completed, including all data and technical specification necessary for completion of a final project report, on or before June 30, 2019

RESPONSE FORMAT

The proposal must be sent electronically via email in Microsoft Word or PDF format to the RFP Coordinator designated in this RFP. The email subject should be clearly marked "Interactive Guides Expert System RFP". The proposal must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. MST on January 22, 2018. Contractors should allow enough electronic delivery time to ensure timely receipt of their proposals by the RFP Coordinator. Contractors assume the risk for any email delay problems. Late proposals will not be accepted and will be automatically disqualified from further consideration. NMLA assumes no responsibility for delays caused by a third party or communication device.

Response Requirements and Content: Contractors must respond to each question/requirement contained in "Exhibit A: Contractor Required Responses" below. In preparing their proposal, contractors should restate each required response, and then give their response to that requirement.

Costs of Preparing Responses: NMLA will not pay any contractor costs associated with preparing proposals submitted in response to this RFP.

Responses Property of NMLA: All proposals, accompanying documentation, and other materials submitted in response to this RFP shall become the property of NMLA and will not be returned.

Proprietary Information/Public Disclosure: All proposals received shall remain confidential until the RFP evaluation is completed and a contractor is selected and approved. Thereafter proposals shall be deemed public records.

RFP Amendments/Cancellation/Reissue/Reopen: NMLA reserves the right to change the RFP Schedule or issue amendments to this RFP at any time. NMLA also reserves the right to cancel or reissue the RFP.

Minor Administrative Irregularities: NMLA reserves the right to waive minor administrative irregularities contained in any proposal.

Inability to Enter Contract: NMLA reserves the right to eliminate from further consideration any contractor that NMLA, because of legal or other considerations, is unable to contract with.

No Obligation to Enter a Contract: The release of this RFP does not compel NMLA to enter into any contract. NMLA reserves the right to refrain from contracting with any contractor that has responded to this RFP whether or not the contractor's proposal has been evaluated and whether or not the contractor has been determined to be qualified. Exercise of this reserved right does not affect NMLA's right to contract with any other contractor. NMLA reserves the right to request an interview with any contractor and/or a demonstration from any contractor prior to entering a contract with that contractor. If a contractor declines the request for an interview or demonstration for any reason, the contractor may be eliminated from further consideration.

Multiple Contracts: NMLA reserves the right to enter contracts with more than one contractor as a result of this RFP.

Non-Endorsement: The selection of a contractor pursuant to this RFP does not constitute an endorsement of the contractor's services. The contractor agrees to make no reference to NMLA in any literature, promotional material, brochures, sales presentations, or the like without the express written consent of NMLA.

Contract Payment Limitations: Contractors should anticipate payment at the end rather than the beginning of the invoice period in which they provide services or after they submit any deliverable for which a payment is due.

RFP Evaluations: Evaluation of proposals submitted in response to this RFP may include consideration of past contract performance and contact with references beyond those listed in the contractor's proposal. As part of the evaluation process, contractors may be asked to clarify specific points in their proposal.

Notification of Selection of Unsuccessful Contractors: Contractors whose proposals have not been selected for further negotiations or award will be notified via email.

Contract Award/General Terms and Conditions: The successful contractor(s) will be expected to enter into a contract with NMLA.

EXHIBIT A: CONTRACTOR REQUIRED RESPONSES

Proposals must contain the following information in the following order. Please number your responses to correspond with the information requested here:

1. Contractor's name, address, federal tax identification number or Social Security Number (SSN), Uniform Business Identifier (UBI) number, and a description of the contractor's legal status, e.g., corporation, sole proprietor, etc.
2. Contractor principal contact's name, telephone number, fax number, and email.
3. A statement that guarantees that the proposal constitutes a firm offer valid for sixty (60) days following receipt and that NMLA may accept any time within the 60-day period.
4. A statement on whether the contractor or any employee of the contractor is related by blood or marriage to a NMLA employee or board member or resides with an NMLA employee or board member. If there are such relationships, list the names and relationships of said parties. Include the position and responsibilities within the contractor's organization of such contractor employees.
5. State whether the contractor has been a party to any litigation during the past five (5) years; all such incidents except employment related cases must be described, including the other parties' name, address, and telephone number. Present the contractor's position on the matter.
6. Provide two (2) references from programs/organizations for which you have completed software development or other technology projects. Please include a telephone number or email address of the referenced individual or program contact.

7. Describe in detail your proposed approach, strategies, methods and timeline to complete the project.
8. Propose the cost to create and deliver the Interactive Guides Expert System as described in the RFP. Include a breakdown of all costs, expenses and fees that you will require to complete the project. Total contractor cost shall not exceed \$100,000.
9. State whether all persons assigned by contractor to work on the project will be employees of the contractor, or whether any third-party contractors or sub-contractors will be used. If third-party contractors or sub-contractors will be used, please provide a detailed description of their names, contact information, qualifications and intended roles and assignments for this project.
10. Describe the following in regard to the contractor's experience and capabilities:
 - Knowledge and practical similar experience in software or expert systems development. Include links to examples of similar work;
 - Ability to have virtual meetings with staff from NMLA;
 - Ability to deliver projects on time and within budget;
 - Your customer communication and project management procedures; and
 - Familiarity and/or experience working with the non-profit legal services sector or other non-profit organization projects.