

Michigan Advocacy Program Client Needs Assessment Request for Proposals (RFP)

Responses due: August 29th, 2025

Michigan Advocacy Program
15 S. Washington St.
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Organization Overview

Michigan Advocacy Program (MAP)'s mission is to advance the safety, independence, and economic stability of those most affected by poverty, racism, and other structurally oppressive systems by increasing access to justice and working for systemic solutions. MAP's direct services components are: 1) Legal Services of South Central Michigan, which provides free civil legal advice and representation to low-income residents of 13 counties in south central Michigan and 2) Farmworker Legal Services, which provides free legal assistance to migrant and seasonal farmworkers throughout the State of Michigan, see Appendix A for more information on service area. See Appendix for a description of common civil legal services utilized by our low-income clients and <https://miadvocacy.org/>, <https://lsscm.org/>, and <https://farmworkerlaw.org/> for more information.

Purpose:

It is MAP's goal to conduct a Comprehensive Needs Assessment of client needs every 4-5 years for each of our direct service programs, Legal Services of South Central Michigan (LSSCM) and Farmworker Legal Services (FLS), to ensure that we are prioritizing the appropriate services for the clients in our service area.

Each of the programmatic needs assessments will be used as a key strategic planning tool to help:

- Understand the predominant civil legal issues currently facing the client-eligible, low-income population in MAP's service areas
- Allocate resources effectively
- Track and improve client and case outcomes
- Identify and prioritize the most pressing legal needs of low-income client-eligible populations

Legal Services of South Central Michigan | Family Law Project | Farmworker Legal Services | Crime Victims Legal Assistance Project | Michigan Poverty Law Program | Michigan Legal Help | Michigan Elder Justice Initiative | Michigan Immigrant Rights Center

Assessments will focus on:

- Determining whether predominant civil legal issues are adequately addressed
- Identifying underserved populations and access barriers to civil legal services
- Assessing demographic and trend changes affecting legal needs
- Evaluating service duplication and consolidation opportunities
- Understanding how future funding, programming, and staff might be best allocated across the service area to better serve eligible populations

Description of Services

The selected consultant will be responsible for:

- 1) Data collection and analysis
 - a) The consultant will design all relevant surveys, interview questionnaires, and facilitation guides necessary to collect and analyze data regarding the civil legal service need within the MAP service area
 - b) The consultant will administer all interviews, surveys, and focus groups to key stakeholders including Board members, MAP executive leadership and staff, court personnel, members of the Michigan State Bar Association and local bar associations, existing MAP clients, existing self-represented people, potential clients, staff from partner organizations, and funders
 - i) When appropriate, MAP staff may undertake some interviewing and surveying with the support of the consultant
 - c) The consultant will analyze trends in MAP's existing case data for clients and self-represented people, including trends in legal issues, geographic distribution, demographic information, and level of service provided
- 2) Coordination with and attendance at regular meetings of the Legal Needs Assessment committee, which will consist of MAP staff and Board members
- 3) Production of two fully completed written Civil Legal Needs Assessments, one focused on the Legal Services of South Central Michigan and the other on Farmworker Legal Services, that synthesizes the information found through the data collection and analysis process including at minimum the following:
 - a) An Executive Summary
 - b) Description of design and methods used
 - c) Results of quantitative and qualitative data collection from surveys, interviews, focus groups, relevant datasets, etc.
 - d) Analysis of civil legal services needs and strengths
 - e) Project findings
 - f) Recommendations
 - g) Supporting appendices
- 4) Presentation of the needs assessment process, findings, and recommendations to the MAP Board of Directors

Timeline of Deliverables

- Release of RFP: July 31, 2025

- Questions due: August 15, 2025
- Proposals due: August 29, 2025
- Meetings with finalists, if necessary: September 2025
- Consultant selected: September 30, 2025
- Evaluation conducted: October 2025 - January 2026
- Draft assessment submitted for feedback: February 1, 2026
- Final assessment submitted: March 1, 2026
- Presentation to MAP Board of Directors: April 2026

Project budget: \$35,000

This amount will cover:

- Consultant fees
- Travel expenses and materials
- Administrative costs
- All other relevant expenses related to the project

Selection Criteria

Award of the contract from this RFP will be based on the RFP respondent whose offer will be most advantageous to MAP and the client population in terms of cost, functionality, experience, quality of past work, and factors specified elsewhere in this RFP.

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Expertise and relevant experience in needs assessments and project management
- Relevant experience and past performance
- Proposed solution and methodology
- Cost-effectiveness and budget alignment

The final decision is the sole decision of MAP and the respondents to the RFP have no appeal rights or procedures guaranteed to them. The consultant selected will be evaluated in part on the ability to deliver products on time and within budget, and their demonstrated understanding of the solution required based on their responses and subsequent interviews.

Proposal Organization

The proposal should be organized in the following manner with the subject headings and sequence indicated:

- Introduction
- Experience and Past Performance
- Organization and Personnel
- Proposed Solution(s) - Based on Description of Services
- References
- Pricing, Hourly Rates, and Other Fees

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to MAP by August 15th, 2025. Please send questions to Jennifer Visel at jvisel@lsscm.org. Please send complete proposals to Jennifer Visel by August 29th, 2025. RFP respondents shall bear all costs associated with the

proposal meeting(s), interview(s), preparing, and submitting their bids. MAP shall in no event be responsible or liable for those costs.

Additional Information

RFP respondents may find it useful to review the following links and documents before submitting a proposal:

A. Legal Services Corporation's website section on Comprehensive Needs Assessment & Priority Setting: <https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/model-practices-innovations/plan-strategically/comprehensive-needs-assessment-priority-setting>

B. The Legal Services Corporation's performance criteria that incorporate its grant oversight experience with the American Bar Association (ABA) standards for the provision of civil legal aid is described under the "Performance Area One" section at the following link: <https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/publications/other-publications-and-reports/lsc-performance-criteria>

Appendix A - MAP Clients and Service Area

Legal Services of South Central Michigan: 5 field offices located in Battle Creek, Jackson, Lansing, Monroe and Ypsilanti serving 13 counties including Barry, Branch, Calhoun, Clinton, Eaton, Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson, Lenawee, Livingston, Monroe, Shiawassee, and Washtenaw Counties. LSSCM services low income individuals and families as well as older adults prioritizing clients at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Line or up to 200% with qualifying conditions.

Farmworker Legal Services: statewide program based in Kalamazoo, Michigan serving conducting outreach and education as well as representing immigrant, migrant, and seasonal farmworkers throughout the state of Michigan in cases related to their agricultural employment or status as an immigrant or agricultural worker.



Appendix B - Civil Legal Services Provided to Client-Eligible population:

Family Law: This includes divorces, custody disputes, adult and minor guardianship cases, child support modifications, paternity actions, personal protection orders, and noncustodial parent visitation cases.

Public Benefits: Cash Assistance (TANF), Food Stamps/SNAP, Medicaid, SSA (SSDI, SSI, SSR, etc.), Medicare, Unemployment/Re-employment assistance, and other welfare benefit denials, overpayments and underpayments.

Consumer: Defense in lawsuits brought by collection agencies, wrongful garnishments and/or seizures, small claims cases, credit report disputes, fair debt collection, and debt buyer cases.

Housing - Renters: Forcible entry and detainer actions, landlord/tenant evictions, security deposit disputes, enforcement of habitability requirements, housing benefit issues, and utility cutoffs. Issues involving lot rentals in mobile home parks. Cases in which someone's rental status is being threatened, and the client is at imminent risk of homelessness.

Housing - Homeownership: Defense of foreclosure, including traditional, FHA, VA, USDA, and reverse mortgages; Defense of foreclosure on mechanic's liens and other contractor issues; Heirs' property and other title clearing issues; limited other real property issues involving easements, surveys, and property descriptions; theft of real property, issues involving mobile homes owned by a client and related title. Cases in which someone's homeownership status is being threatened and the client is at imminent risk of homelessness.

Elder Services: This priority targets low-income seniors in the service area facing civil legal issues impacting their health and economic stability. While focused mainly on issues like housing, Medicaid, long-term care, Medicare, Social Security, and other economic issues; these services also include advanced directives, and simple wills.

Veteran Law: To increase and enhance access to legal services for veterans.

Farmworker Law: Representing immigrant, migrant, and seasonal farmworkers throughout the State of Michigan in cases related to their agricultural employment or status as an immigrant or agricultural worker. Case types include labor trafficking, wage disputes, discrimination, sexual harassment, violations of an employment contract or working arrangement, recruitment or crew-leader problems, unsafe working conditions, unemployment, unsafe housing conditions, evictions and threatened evictions, civil rights abuse, and immigration for victims of certain crimes.