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Request for Proposals Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) Evaluator

Release date: **August 22, 2025**

Responses due: **September 19, 2025**

Contact for inquiries and submission:

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Invitation

Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA) is seeking proposals from qualified evaluators to conduct an evaluation of two legal technology projects.

Background

PLA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit legal services organization that provides free legal assistance in civil matters to low-income people. PLA receives funding from the Legal Services Corporation (LSC).

LSC's Technology Initiative Grants (TIG) program funds projects that increase access to high-quality legal services, the judicial system, and legal information. The only organizations that are eligible to receive TIG grants are legal services organizations that receive funding from LSC.

In 2017, PLA applied for and received a TIG grant to build a cloud-based, mobile-optimized software application to guide clients through the steps necessary to file for Chapter 7 bankruptcy on their own, without attorney representation. PLA proposed to do this work using Upsolve, Inc. as a vendor.

Upsolve, Inc. is a non-profit founded in 2016 by Rohan Pavuluri, then a Harvard College student, and Jonathan Petts, a bankruptcy lawyer. At the time of PLA's initial grant, it was a startup non-profit being incubated at Blue Ridge Labs in Brooklyn.

With funding from the 2017 TIG grant, Upsolve built an on-line questionnaire that generated the documents necessary for a bankruptcy petition.



PLA applied for other TIG grants to support the further development of Upsolve's system. Through a 2018 TIG grant, Upsolve built a portal to enable Upsolve staff to review users' bankruptcy petitions efficiently. Through a 2019 TIG grant, Upsolve built tools to assist debtors during the post-filing phase of bankruptcy. Through a 2020 TIG grant, Upsolve developed tools to help debtors address debt collection issues, as well as to improve the content on its web site.

While receiving this support from the TIG program, Upsolve evolved into a modern legal services organization that helps over 2,000 people per year nationally to obtain a bankruptcy discharge without paying for a lawyer. In 2019, Upsolve's team participated in the prestigious Y Combinator startup accelerator. By investing in writing content for its web site and conducting outreach to stakeholders in the legal services community, Upsolve achieved very good search engine optimization, leading to high traffic to its web site. Upsolve figured out efficient and effective ways to provide customer service, facilitate peer-to-peer assistance (e.g., through a user community on Facebook), and use automation to reduce the amount of human assistance necessary to help debtors prepare high-quality petitions and achieve a bankruptcy discharge.

In 2023 and 2024, PLA applied for and received two additional TIG grants to support the expansion of Upsolve's client-facing tools. Under the 2023 grant, Upsolve developed tools to help manage and (if possible) eliminate student loan debt. Under the 2024 grant, Upsolve built tools to help with debt management.

Evaluation

PLA has funding from the 2023 and 2024 TIG grants to pay for a third-party evaluator to evaluate the student loan and debt relief projects.

We wish to do an evaluation of these projects because PLA, with LSC funding, has invested significant resources in Upsolve over the last eight years, but we have never conducted a third-party evaluation of the effect of that investment. It would be helpful to have the impressions of an outside party to determine if funding the expansion of services of Upsolve has resulted in significant social return on investment or other benefits. If it has, it may be worthwhile to fund additional expansion, as well as to fund other legal-tech organizations that provide "pro se assistance" at scale.

There is no existing logic model or framework for evaluation. The evaluator will have the discretion to develop a framework and methods that are appropriate for the circumstances and the budget. The evaluation will be backward-looking in part and forward-looking in part. Much of the software development work under the projects has been completed, although the tools that Upsolve has developed continue to be used and data continue to be collected. The evaluator will have the full cooperation of PLA and Upsolve to conduct the evaluation. The evaluator will work directly with Upsolve to gather information for the evaluation.

The primary deliverable is a written report of findings. The audience for the report is PLA and LSC.

The budget for the evaluation is no more than \$60,000. We plan to select an evaluator by September 22, 2025. After PLA selects an evaluator, we will seek LSC pre-approval, a process that could take up to 30 days. The evaluation may begin as soon as possible after LSC provides pre-approval and a contract is signed. Whether this project proceeds is contingent on LSC approval. The plan is to complete the evaluation by May 30, 2026, although there may be a possibility of extending that time frame if an extension of time is warranted.

All work must be done in accordance with the terms and conditions that apply to funding by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC). See <https://www.lsc.gov/about-lsc/laws-regulations-and-guidance/lsc-restrictions-and-other-funding-sources> and <https://www.lsc.gov/i-am-grantee/grantee-guidance/grant-terms-conditions/special-grants-terms-and-conditions>.

Proposals

Proposals should address the following:

- 1) A brief overview summary of the project evaluation services to be rendered;
- 2) A general description of the evaluator's approach to evaluation projects;
- 3) Three references;
- 4) If possible, provide examples (or descriptions) of prior project evaluations provided.
- 5) All-inclusive fee (suggested range: \$45,000-\$60,000)

In selecting an evaluator, PLA will examine factors, including but not limited to:

- 1) The extent to which the response addresses the needs described above;
- 2) Qualifications and experience in performing comprehensive project evaluation services; and
- 3) Total cost for providing services.

The deadline for proposals is 11:59 p.m. Eastern time on September 19, 2025.

PLA reserves the right to: 1) consider proposals based on their relative merit, risk, and value to PLA; 2) negotiate with all RFP respondents; 3) reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential contractor, when it is in PLA's best interest; and 4) accept other than the lowest priced offered. RFP respondents may be asked to revise their proposal based on further negotiations. This document represents an initial request for proposals only and in no way should it be construed as a contract or letter of intent.

Additional documentation about the two projects to be evaluated is available upon request.

Please send questions and proposals via email to Jonathan Pyle, Contract Performance Officer, at jpyle@philalegal.org.