



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL EVALUATION OF THE LSC TIG PROJECT

Bay Area Legal Services (BALS) will consider all responses that are sent to the project manager, Rastko Durica. Please include the name of the project, "Evaluation of LSC TIG Project" in the subject line. All vendor communications concerning this RFP must be directed to rdurica@bals.org. Any oral communications will be considered unofficial and nonbinding on BALS. Only written statements issued by the project manager may be relied upon.

INTRODUCTION

Through this Request for Proposal (RFP), Bay Area Legal Services (BALS) seeks responses from vendors interested in evaluating the effectiveness of BALS's Foster Youth Project (TIG). In addition to conducting the evaluation, the successful vendor will produce a draft of the evaluation report. This project is funded by a Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) awarded by the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) with an evaluation budget of \$10,000- \$15,000.

ABOUT US

Founded in 1967, Bay Area Legal Services (BALS) is a nonprofit law firm serving low-income residents in the Tampa Bay area and seniors and veterans across the state of Florida. BALS helps with legal problems such as family law and domestic violence, housing law and eviction, consumer law, government benefits and healthcare, bankruptcy, taxes, disaster relief, issues affecting seniors and veterans, support for nonprofit businesses, and many more legal matters. Last year, the firm received more than 58,000 applications for services and assisted approximately 17,600 individual families and community groups – including more than 4,500 senior clients, 3,300 clients with housing problems, 1,200 veterans, and 400 domestic violence survivors. Additional information regarding BALS and our services is available on our website: <https://bals.org/>

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The "Know Your Rights" (KYR) project, proposed by the Children's Law Center (CLC) of Bay Area Legal Services (BALS), seeks to ensure Florida youth in foster care can access vital information on their legal rights, with key project elements that can be replicable in other states. In Florida, numerous lawsuits and news stories provide evidence of overall poor outcomes for teenagers who are in or aging out of the foster care system. Recognizing this issue while still a law student, CLC attorney Taylor Greenberg has created a guide that explains the rights youth have in foster care to empower youth to be their advocates.

Currently, this "Know Your Rights" guide is in paper form and also available as a PDF on the BALS website (<https://bals.org/kyr>). This project will create a website and a downloadable app to make the guide more widely accessible to youth and relevant agencies. As the only comprehensive guide that explains the rights of foster youth in Florida, expansion onto new interactive technological platforms is central to making this information easily available and understandable for youth and the child welfare community statewide.

This goal will be reached through the following objectives:

➤ *Objective #1*

Complete market research or user-centered design process to guide the development of a "Know Your Rights" online platform.

➤ *Objective #2*

Develop an online platform (i.e., website/app) to increase access to legal rights information and resources for Florida youth in foster care.

➤ *Objective #3*

Launch an online platform and promote to Florida foster youth, the child welfare community, and broader access to the justice field.

➤ *Objective #4*

Develop content for and implement a series of in-person and virtual "Know Your Rights" training on youth rights in Florida foster care, designed for youth in care and professionals in the child welfare community

The goal is to empower Florida youth in foster care to become their own advocates by providing access to comprehensive information on their rights through the creation of a self-help online platform and accompanying training program for youth and adults within the child welfare community.

The evaluation will assess the usefulness, usability, accuracy, and efficiency of the Foster Youth Project. In addition, the evaluator will work with BALS to structure the evaluation and help compile the information into a report. BALS wants to ensure it is collecting and measuring the most applicable data from the start of its project.

NOTE: No travel is necessary for this project.

SELECTION SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

- BALS open RFP *July 18, 2022*
- Deadline for bidders to submit questions is *July 22, 2022*
- BALS response to bidder questions *July 29, 2022*
- Bidder proposals due *August 6, 2022*
- Successful vendor announced *August 12, 2022*
- Contract signed and work commences *August 19, 2022*

PROJECT TIMELINE

The Know Your Rights project started on November 1, 2021, and ends on April 30, 2023, with an evaluation period from May 1, 2023, and ends on October 31, 2023.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

RFP responses should be delivered via email in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format. Proposals should adhere to the format below.

- Introduction/Executive Summary, including:
 - Project understanding, recommendation, and objectives
- Project Schedule and Development Process, including
 - Your approach to the evaluation process
 - Process for creating a final scope of work document, e.g., define deliverables, create milestones, etc.
 - Your customer communication and project management procedures
- Project Budget Estimates and Costs Projections, including:
 - Provide a breakdown of costs
 - Identify any additional expenses, fees, etc. that you will require to complete the project
 - Travel should not be included
 - The budget will NOT exceed \$15,000 for the project
- Company Profile, including:
 - Background, capabilities, and related experience
- Attachments:
 - Examples of similar projects recently performed
 - Short biographies of all who will work on the project
 - Professional references

SELECTION CRITERIA

We will consider all responses that are sent to the project manager, Rastko. Please include the name of the project, "Evaluation of TIG Project" in the subject line.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the submitted proposals:

- Experience working with foster youth and/or children
- Experience working with legal aid organizations and/or with nonprofit organizations
- Demonstrated commitment to exceptional customer service and responding to client requests in a timely fashion
- Price that is commensurate with the value offered by the company and the ability to work within a budget
- Responses are clear, organized, creative, and logical
- Candidate has completed similar projects and has the qualifications necessary to undertake this project
- Demonstrated detailed-oriented results
- Past performance working with an LSC-funded project (if applicable)
- Past performance working with BALS (if applicable)

TERMS & CONDITIONS

Ownership of Materials and Confidentiality. All work done for the project and content will, be owned by BALS, its successors, and assigns. BALS, its successors, and assigns will have full access to and the right to customize all outreach materials. The contractors will sign a confidentiality agreement with BALS before the engagement starts.

Costs of Preparing Responses. BALS will not pay any vendor costs associated with preparing responses submitted in response to this RFP.

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

Proprietary Information/Public Disclosure. All responses received shall remain confidential until the evaluation is completed, and the vendor is selected and approved.

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

Minor Administrative Irregularities. BALS reserves the right to waive minor administrative irregularities contained in any response.

Inability to Enter Contract. BALS reserves the right to eliminate from further consideration any vendor that BALS, because of legal or other considerations, is unable to contract with at the time responses are due.

No Obligation to Enter a Contract. The release of this RFP does not compel BALS to enter any contract.

- BALS reserves the right to refrain from contracting with any vendor that has responded to this RFP whether or not the vendor's response has been evaluated and whether or not the vendor has been determined to be qualified. Exercise of this reserved right does not affect BALS' right to contract with any other vendor.
- BALS reserves the right to request an interview with any vendor and/or a demonstration from any vendor before entering a contract with that vendor. If a vendor declines the request for an interview or demonstration for any reason, the vendor may be eliminated from further consideration.

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

Contract Payment Limitations. To be negotiated.

ATTACHMENTS

- Project Milestones
- Project Plan
- Application Form

Bay Area Foster Youth Project Milestones

Goal: Empower Florida youth in foster care to become their own advocates by providing access to comprehensive information on their rights through the creation of a self-help online platform and accompanying training program for youth and adults within the child welfare community.

Objective #1: Complete a market research or user-centered design process to guide the development of a "Know Your Rights" online platform.

- Utilize a market research or user-centered design process to conduct substantial research on the needs and preferences of current and former foster youth and how they would most benefit from a website/app.
- Leverage user/market research to develop design concepts and a technical roadmap for the site, including a strategy for platform use (mobile web/native app), visual design components, and the format and presentation of content.
- Develop a plan for robust user testing and input throughout the project.
- Engage contractors through a competitive selection process (RFP, RFI/RFP) to complete research, design, development, and marketing components of the project.

Objective #2: Develop online platform (i.e., website/app) to increase access to legal rights information and resources for Florida youth in foster care.

- Leverage design concepts and technical roadmap to create a mobile-friendly product in the best format for foster youth.
- Work with video production company and leverage market research and design planning efforts to produce 15-25 videos on youth legal rights as featured in KYR guide.
- Create document assembly interviews for 3-5 selected forms -- e.g., requests for fee waiver, Extended Foster Care, Post-Secondary Support Services, and aftercare applications.
- Conduct outside plain language review of existing KYR foster youth guide and incorporate changes to make it a more usable online resource.
- Ensure that user testing is completed throughout the development process and that user input results in appropriate refinements of the online platform.

Objective #3: Launch online platform and promote to Florida foster youth, the child welfare community, and the broader access to justice field.

- -Work with marketing consultant to develop strategic plan for launch of website and app to foster youth, child welfare agencies/professionals, and legal communities.
- Launch the online platform for use.
- Implement a calendar of KYR outreach and marketing to child welfare community and foster youth, to ensure youth are aware of, have access to, and understand how to use KYR's tools.

- Apply to and (if chosen) make KYR presentations at 2-3 local, statewide, and national conferences to offer information and insights on the KYR project development, the KYR website and app, and to raise awareness of children's rights in foster care.

Objective #4: Develop content for and implement a series of in-person and virtual "Know Your Rights" trainings on youth rights in Florida foster care, designed for youth in care and professionals in the child welfare community.

- Produce a series of 7-8 training modules targeting different groups within the child welfare system, , the Guardian ad litem program, attorneys, judges, and case managers.
- Develop a plan and timeline to promote and roll out videos, and to ensure they reach KYR project's multiple target audiences.
- Develop and publicize a calendar of frequent scheduled events and provide in-person and virtual KYR trainings to at least 200 youth in foster care.
- Conduct at least 12 in-person and virtual KYR trainings throughout Florida for different groups within or with interests in Florida's child welfare system, to train a minimum of 600 professionals and other adult stakeholders.
- Develop pilot project with 13th Judicial Circuit staff to conduct KYR virtual/in-person trainings for all attorneys, judges, court personnel and staff on website and app and youth rights; to produce KYR signage; and to incorporate method of informing foster youth of resource into relevant court hearings.

Special Grant Form - Project Plan

Overview

Project Plan (25%)

1. State the project's objectives.

Objective 1 (Technology): Develop "Know Your Rights" website, phone app, videos, and selected forms (through document assembly), to increase access to legal rights information and resources for Florida youth in foster care.

Objective 2 (Training): Develop content for and implement a series of in-person and virtual "Know Your Rights" trainings on youth rights in Florida foster care, designed for youth in care and professionals in the child welfare community.

2. State the project activities that are designed to help you achieve your objectives.

Objective 1 (Technology):

- Employ a market research company to assist with surveying a minimum of 100 current and former foster youth to solicit feedback on usefulness of website/app and on content of guide in current and planned formats. Will be used to shape website/app design for best user experience.
- Send content of guide to plain language expert after soliciting youth feedback on current guide content (with market research contractor). Product: Revised KYR guide will enhance accessibility and usability by foster youth.
- Send content of guide (after youth feedback and plain language expert review) to branding and design contractor. To raise foster youth awareness, understanding, and application of KYR tools and legal rights information.
- Solicit input from minimum 75 youth and young adults with assistance of market research company for user testing, market research, readability; compile feedback and refine. To produce final products and project activities (outreach, trainings) that reflect youth input.

- Conduct market research to guide content, length, format, and style of videos on foster youth legal rights; produce plan/recommendations. To result in videos effective in delivering complex KYR legal information to youth.
- Work with video production company to incorporate market research results from foster youth to produce 15-25 videos on youth legal rights as featured in KYR guide. To be available on KYR website/app; and as tools for in-person and virtual trainings, to increase knowledge of KYR details for foster youth, child welfare and legal aid professionals, public.
- Work with marketing consultant to develop strategic plan for launch of website and app to foster youth, child welfare agencies/professional, and legal communities. To ensure efficient targeted process and mechanisms for disseminating KYR project information most effectively to multiple, diverse audiences.
- Load/open new KYR website/app for use. To make KYR content immediately more accessible to foster youth and other targeted parties in Florida, and to the wider public.
- Implement a calendar of KYR outreach and marketing to child welfare community and foster youth, to ensure youth are aware of, have access to, and understand how to use KYR's tools.
- Create document assembly interviews for 3-5 selected forms (ex: requests for fee waiver, Extended Foster Care, Post-Secondary Support Services, Aftercare applications, Ombudsman complaint forms, appeal for wrongful discharged from EFC, aftercare, of PESS, FAFSA applications, request to DCF for case file upon turning 18). Integrate selected forms into KYR platforms to make online interview forms and legal forms easier to use, and more likely that youth can and will actually use the KYR website/app to take actions to assert their legal rights within the relevant child welfare and legal systems.

Objective 2 (Training):

- With video production company, produce a series of 7-8 training modules, targeting different groups within the child welfare system such as youth and young adults in foster care/Extended Foster Care, the Guardian ad litem program, attorneys, judges, case managers, etc. To open access to and increase knowledge and understanding of KYR details and application by foster youth.
- Develop a plan and timeline to promote and roll out videos, and to ensure they reach KYR project's multiple target audiences. To increase access to and knowledge of KYR legal information and how all parties can use KYR to generate positive outcomes for Florida youth in or aging out of foster care.
- Develop and publicize a calendar of frequent scheduled events and provide in-person and virtual KYR trainings to at least 200 youth in foster care. To ensure that the project's primary target population, youth in foster care, receive accurate and actionable information from a KYR expert.

- Develop a plan and confirm a schedule to conduct at least 12 in-person and virtual KYR trainings throughout Florida for different groups within or with interests in Florida's child welfare system, to train a minimum of 600 professionals and other adult stakeholders. Will use professional platforms (webinars; meetings, conferences; conventions) to promote awareness and use of KYR resources among child welfare and legal aid professionals.
- Develop pilot project with 13th Judicial Circuit staff to conduct KYR virtual/in-person trainings for all attorneys, judges, court personnel and staff on website and app and youth rights; to produce KYR signage; and to incorporate method of informing foster youth of resource into relevant court hearings. Use 13th Judicial Circuit as a model and work with Office of the State Court Administrator to roll out similar practices in other circuits across Florida. Will raise awareness and uses of KYR project and resources within legal community and the formal judicial system to improve outcomes for foster youth.
- Apply to and if chosen make KYR presentations at 2-3 local, statewide, and national conferences to offer information and insights on the KYR project development, the KYR website and app, and to raise awareness of children's rights in foster care. To widely raise awareness of KYR project details and project's potential for replication.

3. Based on the current assumptions at the time this application was submitted, what outcomes will you accomplish during the grant period?

Outcome: New KYR website, app, and 15-25 short videos will be readable, engaging, and easy-to-navigate for youth in foster care.

Output: Summary of market research/survey of a minimum of 100 current/former foster youth at each stage of user testing for website, app, and video development.

Outcome: Website, app, and videos on youth rights in foster care are widely used in Florida.

Output: KYR app: minimum of 1500 downloads; website hits: 2,000/month; social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, IG, Tiktok): minimum total of 1,000 followers; 15 video shorts with views minimum 2,500 per video.

Outcome: Youth and young adults will be able to take independent action to assert their legal rights by employing user-friendly forms integrated into and accessible via KYR platforms.

Output: Website and app will contain easy-to-use document assembly system to assist with filling out 3-5 most needed forms for: fee waivers for Master Trust Accounts, EFC, PESS, and Aftercare applications, appeals for wrongful discharge from EFC, PESS, and Aftercare, request for case file upon turning 18, Ombudsman complaint form, and sending them to respective agencies (Note: Foster youth to date have no other way to access required or useful forms without access to a computer, a printer, and the stamps, envelopes, and post box or post office required to mail out forms).

Outcome: Child welfare community increases individual/agency knowledge and application of rights of youth in foster care.

Output: Conduct trainings virtually or in person for a minimum of 600 adults working in or (as with foster parents) otherwise engaged in the child welfare system.

Outcome: Youth in or aging out of foster care in Florida increase their individual knowledge and application of their legal rights.

Output: Conduct trainings virtually or in person for a minimum of 300 foster youth/young adults in Florida.

Outcome: Persons and organizations at statewide and national level increase their general awareness of the rights of youth in care and learn how to access website/app to assist foster youth.

Output: KYR presentations at 2 Florida conferences and 2 national conferences. (Note: will make at least the targeted applications; number of actual presentations depends on acceptance as presenter).

Outcome: All youth in care in Hillsborough County will be informed of how to access information on their rights.

Output: Project will disseminate and request display of signage about how to access/download KYR website and app In all 5 dependency courtrooms in Hillsborough County Project will produce method/mechanism by which, In dependency case, the court will inform youth of app during court hearings.

Outcome: Judges across Florida can inform foster youth on how to access their rights through KYR project resources.

Output: Creation of training materials on pilot project on foster youth rights in 13th Judicial Circuit; materials will be disseminated to all other circuits in Florida.

4. Identify the evaluation methods and data you will use to assess the proposed project's impact, success, and challenges.

The KYR team will contract and project staff will work directly with an experienced external evaluator to develop a project evaluation plan, for which the Project Lead will be responsible. The proposed project involves elements of design and application of diverse technologies, and the engagement through technology of multiple, diverse target audiences both locally and across Florida (including foster youth, parents/foster parents, child welfare professionals and related legal community representatives, courts, legal aid firms, etc.). The project activities will generate a number of useful measurable project-specific inputs for evaluation as indicated below. The evaluation will be able to use document review of the project's instrument development (i.e., interview protocols, focus group protocols, survey development), and data for both qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis), and contractors' final reports. Other data sets for project evaluation will include:

- List of attendees for all trainings (with date and place/platform); if virtual, attendee counts
- Satisfaction/assessment survey (paper or online) of training attendees

- Data compiled from user research surveys, and any summary report of results
- Data on website visitors, app downloads, and video views to determine how resources are being utilized
- Data from market survey to determine reach of project with each target audience (ex: how many youth/adults have heard of guide, know how to access, find it useful, etc.)
- Data from survey to address project outcomes for youth and for community being informed of youth rights (ex: Are more youth receiving allowance, more access to social security/death benefits being managed by state, attendance in court hearings, higher rate of youth entering benefit programs when aging out of care, etc.)
- Obtain data from DCF on increase in submission of forms that are provided in document assembly
- Copy of KYR training materials
- List of agencies, courts, etc. whose staff received education/training
- List/samples of forms integrated into KYR platforms via document assembly

TIG - Application form

Overview

Project Description (20%)

1. Please provide a description of the proposed project including the specific technologies the project will develop or implement.

The “Know Your Rights” (KYR) project, proposed by the Children’s Law Center (CLC) of Bay Area Legal Services (BALS), seeks to ensure the almost 15,000 Florida youth that reside in foster care have access to vital information on their legal rights, with key project elements that can be replicable in other states.

In Florida, numerous lawsuits and news stories provide evidence of overall poor outcomes for youth who are in or aging out of the foster care system. Some spend months or years without permanent placements and spend nights sleeping in offices or cars, many put on psychotropic medications without an understanding of side effects, long-term risks, or their right to refuse assent; some have survivor or social security benefits that are taken each month by the state but aren’t notified of their right to access their funds, and more. In the past 3 years over 2,500 youth aged out of care without ever finding a permanent home.

Florida children have no right to counsel in dependency cases, even though they are parties to the case, unless they meet special qualifications under statute. This leaves most Florida youth without legal counsel and little ability to access information on their rights or know when their rights are being violated. Recognizing this issue while still a law student, BALS’s CLC attorney Taylor Greenberg, now a respected expert, has created a guide for youth to explain the rights they have in foster care and to empower youth to advocate for themselves.

Currently, as Florida’s only comprehensive guide to the rights of foster youth, this KYR hard-copy guide is also available as a PDF at BALS’s website (<https://bals.org/kyr>) with 5 key sections: placement, medical health, mental health, money rights, and rights for LGBTQ youth; updates include 2 new sections on education and independent living benefits. BALS’s 18-month TIG project will create a KYR website and app to make the guide widely accessible to youth, foster parents, agency staffs, and the legal community, including pro bono attorneys. The project will employ a number of technologies to help youth understand their rights, including short videos, animation, interactive graphics, and document assembly for key forms.

BALS will hire a Digital Project Manager to work with Ms. Greenberg to design, integrate, and test the KYR website and app. As Project Lead (PL), Ms. Greenberg will work with a user research company and will then partner with stakeholder agencies that serve foster youth to solicit and employ feedback from the

youth on the design and ease of use of the website and app, through online and in-person focus groups/surveys. Ms. Greenberg has the commitment of Florida Youth Shine, a youth advocacy organization, to solicit feedback from current and former foster youth statewide, and other Florida legal aid firms are also willing to help, including Legal Services of Greater Miami and Legal Services of North Florida. Ms. Greenberg will also work with a plain language service to ensure content is easily digestible for the target audience and will also solicit feedback on language during the user research stage.

Once the new app and website launch, the PL will implement outreach events and multi-platform marketing of these new tools to local and statewide stakeholders, so that both youth and adults involved in the child welfare system will know how to access and assert the legal information.

The PL will work with a video production company to film a series of webinars, trainings, and short videos on the guide's subject matter targeting different audiences including youth, attorneys, judges, child welfare workers, and Guardian ad litem volunteers which will be available for viewing within the website and app.

Ms. Greenberg will partner with the 13th judicial circuit dependency court system on this project with plans to test and implement best practices to then expand into other circuits across Florida. She will also plan to present at summits and conferences around the state and will continue to coordinate a team of pro bono attorneys from Greenberg Traurig LLP and Stetson law students to update the guide annually.

Our research did find some KYR websites, but an app to explain the rights teens have in foster care has apparently never been attempted. Integration of a KYR app and website is the next logical step in elevating KYR through more accessible, widely-used technology, with greater impact than current formats.

CLC Managing Attorney Heather Tager will oversee Ms. Greenberg; the KYR Digital Project Manager will report to David Gray, BALS BPI/Project Manager (who developed BALS's new website under a 2018 LSC disaster relief grant).

[2. Please describe the research you've done to inform this solution, including specific examples of projects that helped you develop your approach.](#)

In 2017, Ms. Greenberg researched teens' rights in foster care in Florida and in other states before creating the KYR guide. In Florida, she found no comprehensive guide for the legal rights of youth in foster care. Some states had their own guides, but they were either too simplistic to be helpful or too lengthy and wordy for youth to navigate and understand. Ms. Greenberg wanted to create a resource that had it all: simple, straight-forward explanations of the law in an easy-to-read format with citations a teen could bring to a case manager, Guardian ad litem, attorney, or to court when their rights were being violated.

After the hard-copy guide was created, Ms. Greenberg discovered most of her clients lost the guides when shuffled from placement to placement. Worse, a staffer at a group home ripped the guide to shreds when the client, after being tackled to the ground by this employee, pointed out the KYR section stating that

she “shall not be physically restrained or punished in foster care.” Ms. Greenberg saw that almost every teenager she represented had a cell phone: sometimes they lost their phones, but they would always find a way to acquire a new one, and even if they did not have a cell service account, they could access Wifi part of each day and could download an app.

BALS’s 2021 TIG proposal will use web-based technologies based on input from foster youth and others, to open access to comprehensive KYR information and resources for all who need them. Ms. Greenberg, now a full-time attorney with BALS’s Children’s Law Center, is now recognized as one of Florida’s premier authorities on this area of law; as our Project Lead, she has conducted research and outreach to other programs to help shape the project concept.

We surveyed websites of other legal aid firms nationally, to see what KYR resources were highlighted and available for foster youth -- these are rare. Our team targeted and spoke with recipients of an LSC TIG grant in West Virginia. They had a similar project in that it was utilizing technology for a small but very vulnerable population in the state. Their key points: set up a framework that can be replicated statewide, make sure the technology is visual and interactive, and incorporate user testing and market research before launching the final product. All these suggestions have shaped our project plan and budget.

Ms. Greenberg consulted with Attorney Robert Latham, a specialist in the representation of teens and data analysis of foster care trends and system shortcomings in Florida, who has a background in computer science and extensive experience in both representing teens and technology. Mr. Latham emphasized the need for accurate information in an app and for subsequent, ongoing updates; he has committed to being a resource throughout this project. Stetson University Law School’s pro bono program and Greenberg Traurig LLP have agreed to continue volunteering their time to update the guide yearly; together they have already given hundreds of hours to create, edit, and update the guide. Florida Youth Shine, a statewide advocacy organization comprised of current and former foster youth, has also agreed to offer feedback from its youth members on the design and language of the app and website.

With more research and brainstorming, the team even more ways this project can help put the knowledge youth gain about their rights into action. The project’s document assembly element will target 3-5 common forms to enable youth to file complaints about their care with the state’s Ombudsman; fill out forms to request access to their own social security benefits that the state manages; apply for Extended Foster Care and other aging out programs; appeal wrongful terminations from these programs; receive guidance on how to apply for financial aid for college/post-secondary opportunities; or request their case file once 18 years old. The updated guide will add local and statewide resources with contact information for non-profits that assist youth in foster care; how to access local mental and medical health services; how to contact case management, Guardian ad litem, and DCF offices, food banks, clothing closets; and more.

Project team member David Gray set up meetings with vendors to discuss in detail the technology assistance needed for this project, including website/app creators, illustration and design, branding, marketing, plain language services, video production, and user research. The team believes it is vital to the success of the project to develop an app and website that use all necessary technological advancements to ensure the information is readable and easily accessible to youth.

3. Does this project replicate another project?

No

3.1. What is new or innovative about your proposed project?

Based on our research statewide and nationally, no app exists that explains teens' rights in foster care. While some PDF guides and websites can be found by a simple google search, most are either (1) too simplistic and don't provide any citation to the laws or suggested action steps for youth to stand up for their rights, or (2) extremely daunting: not user-friendly, difficult to navigate, and filled with complicated legal terms that are impossible for a layperson to understand.

This TIG project will further refine the already comprehensive KYR guide that currently exists so that it is simpler to navigate and is more easily accessible. Having handy access to information on their legal rights on these platforms will allow youth to learn information they would not otherwise receive anywhere else -- and it will be updated regularly by trusted attorneys and law students. Embedded along with the legal rights information and links to related resources will also be: (a) graphics, illustrative design, and short videos to help explain and simplify complicated legal topics (b) selected web-based forms made easier using document assembly, targeted as most important for next steps youth can take to translate their KYR knowledge into applied assertion of their rights, including actionable legal steps as appropriate.

The current format of the "Know Your Rights" guide created by Ms. Greenberg is a PDF on the BALS website, but if youth do not have a printed copy, the guide in present form remains difficult to navigate on a laptop or phone screen and impossible to regularly update. Having an interactive app that can be downloaded onto a cell phone is particularly useful: once it is saved onto the device, all of the information can be viewed and accessed even without cell service or Wifi and the app can update when the youth is able to connect to Wifi. Currently, there is no other way teens can find in one place, much less put to use, this KYR information and related resources.

This KYR information will also be useful for adults in the child welfare community as there is also no centralized space for them to access information on youth rights in care, aside from the current PDF on the BALS website or having a printed copy. Due to the nature of child welfare, turnover is high, making online access to this information more practical for case managers and pro bono attorneys who often have limited time and resources to research legal issues. Guardian ad litem volunteers who are laypeople and often do not come with experience in the child welfare arena will also benefit, and because their role is to advocate for the best interests of the child, it is also vital for them to understand what youth are entitled to in foster care so they can effectively advocate on their behalf.

4. Are you requesting funding through the LSC PBIF program for this initiative?

No

5. Please select your primary purpose:

Website/Online Tools

Project Rationale (20%)

6. Describe the specific problems the proposed project will address.

Florida continues to have poor outcomes for youth who are in or age out of foster care. 6 years ago, millions of dollars were invested into the child welfare system in Florida to hire more child protective investigators. The result was a large influx of kids coming into care with no plan on where to house them. An investigation conducted by USA Today in October 2020 found Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) regularly placed children into homes that had reports of abuse. Eckerd Connects, the lead foster care agency in Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas counties, reported 75 children to have slept in an unlicensed setting (offices or cars) in 2019 for at least one night— just in Hillsborough County alone. Currently, Eckerd is on a corrective action plan for its foster care failings; the main issue: the constant state of chaos many teens face without a permanent placement. This means they arrive late at night to a group home, overnight foster home, or shelter to sleep and then must leave at dawn. Eckerd was on a corrective action plan in 2018 for the same issues. According to the DCF dashboard, there are currently 14,934 children and young adults in licensed care in Florida and 1,516 of those youth reside in Hillsborough county, which continually has the highest number of kids in care in the entire state of Florida -- and not enough placements to house them.

Eckerd provided data at our request: in the last 3 years more than 2500 teens across Florida aged out of care, many of whom are not enrolled in programs that could provide them with housing, financial assistance, and help them prepare for adulthood – such as Extended Foster Care, Aftercare Services, or Post-Secondary Support and Services. In Hillsborough County, for instance, approximately 37% of youth who aged out of care are not enrolled in Extended Foster Care, even though they are eligible to receive the benefit.

20% of youth nationwide who age out of care become homeless instantly (National Foster Youth Institute data). Fewer than 3% will ever obtain a college degree, and only half will obtain gainful employment by the age of 24. Having easily accessible information on the benefits they are entitled to could help foster youth become enrolled in programs to help them succeed.

Children in foster care do not have the right to an attorney in Florida unless they meet special qualifications, even though they are parties to the dependency

case. As a result, most children in care do not have an attorney and access to legal information on their rights. The new virtual KYR guide will provide vital information on what their rights are while in the custody of the state.

Ms. Greenberg has represented dozens of foster youth clients in the past three years and has trained hundreds of youth throughout Florida on their rights while in care. She always walks away from trainings horrified at the experiences youth share. Once, a teen was told by her case manager if she did not take the medication that was prescribed to her, they would inject it into her arm without her consent. She did not know she had the right to refuse assent to medication and would then be entitled to an attorney. Another teen who had faced extreme placement instability for the past three years was never advised she was entitled to an allowance the entire time she was in care. She did some calculations and discovered she was owed more than \$2,000. One pregnant teen was not being allowed to see her sister and did not know she was entitled to sibling visits; she had no other family and wanted her sister to be there when she gave birth to her child.

Once armed with the knowledge of the law and their rights, teens become fueled to take action. In these trainings, many youth report feeling empowered to know that what was happening to them was not just “wrong” but a violation of their rights, giving them the courage to stand up for themselves and for other foster youth. Some have gone on to join advocacy groups and regularly advocate for the need for youth in care to know their rights. Persistently, though, there are never enough KYR paper guides: youth are always asking for guides to give to their foster siblings, their case managers, to their group homes. Teens need this information, and they need to be able to access it in a convenient and meaningful way which could be achieved through having access to a website and app.

New laws passed this year in Florida finally recognize that youth knowing their rights is vital to their safety and well-being. The law also states that DCF shall work with stakeholders to ensure youth are informed of their rights. This is a pivotal time to implement this project.

[7. Explain how the proposed project will enhance legal service delivery and/or improve your organization's operations.](#)

Teens too often age out of the foster system unprepared, launched into adulthood with a higher risk of continued victimization, educational failure, substance misuse, poverty, homelessness, and criminal justice system involvement.

In 2018, Ms. Greenberg began a fellowship with Equal Justice Works at BALS in our Children's Law Center, representing teens in group home care. Developing the KYR guide became an integral part of her work to improve outcomes for teens on a macro and micro level, and she has trained more than 300 youth and adults on the rights youth have in foster care. Statewide discussions by key stakeholders have underscored the need for youth in foster care to know their rights: many youth say they were unaware of their rights prior to reading the guide and afterwards felt empowered to advocate for themselves.

Having access to this information can change their trajectory – youth who often face insurmountable odds can now have the knowledge and resources they need

to lead healthy, productive, independent lives. The 64-page KYR guide explains teens' rights in 5 areas: placement, mental health, medical health, money, and rights for LGBTQ youth. Two additional sections on education and independent living benefits have been created for the updated version of the guide, making the previous guide obsolete, lacking information on rights in these areas. The new guide will also have a glossary of terms, a flowchart explaining the dependency court process, and a resource guide of local and statewide organizations that benefit youth in foster care and young adults that have aged out of care.

Youth regularly lose important documents, including the current print guide, due to frequent placement changes in foster care. Many have cell phones, however, making an app and website handy and more feasible alternatives to deliver this legal information and, through document assembly technology, a number of the forms necessary to advance their rights within the appropriate systems. Print guides are costly and quickly outdated; online user-friendly platforms will create open access, increase users (especially the targeted foster youth), make vital updates easier, and facilitate more efficient service delivery for all parties. All interested parties have access to the same information at the same time, including updates to keep the legal information and links current. This new concept will not only enhance current legal service delivery, it will create a new system that doesn't yet exist for youth in foster care (or adults working in or associated with foster care) -- one that is very much necessary to improve outcomes for this vulnerable population.

For BALS, and eventually other legal aid programs and attorneys working with foster children's cases across Florida, these tools will greatly streamline our ability to communicate actionable information and expand our capacity to assist many more youth in or aging out of foster care, even if not through direct representation. These same mechanisms also should prove to be of great use for foster care professionals, parents, foster families, and court personnel – as a reliable source of information and referral for the rights of foster youth.

Ms. Greenberg has overseen dozens of pro bono attorneys and law students who work to keep the guide updated and expanded (ex: new sections on education, independent living, and a statewide resource guide). New 2021 Florida laws for the first time direct that youth in foster care “shall know” their rights, and that the Department of Children and Families “shall” work with all stakeholders to ensure youth are being informed. This clarity marks a major milestone in efforts to improve outcomes for youth in foster care and a pivotal time to implement this project.

We will design KYR elements to be replicable in Florida, and useful to legal aid firms working in other jurisdictions, to enhance delivery of legal assistance to youth in or aging out of foster care. To this end, project staff can work with colleagues nationally to further refine the project, provide outreach to other legal aids adapting this model, and together develop Best Practices in this vital realm of children's legal services.

[8. Please describe what client or stakeholder input was obtained to identify the need for the project.](#)

Ms. Greenberg has represented dozens of teens in foster care and has trained hundreds of teens as well as adults in the child welfare community on teens' rights in foster care. Through her representation and trainings, Ms. Greenberg has learned how impractical existing paper guides are for youth in care and how much

more likely teens will be to access information on their rights if the information is readily available on their phones. Ms. Greenberg also continually has conversations with key stakeholders and community partners including case managers, Guardian ad litem staff and volunteers, attorneys who specialize in representing teens, and youth themselves –seeking more effective ways to ensure teens have access to this information.

Through the years, the feedback has remained the same: most teens in foster care have phones and would be able to easily download, save, and utilize an app that has information on their rights. Even if the phone is lost or stolen, they could download the app once they were to get a new phone, or access the website through a tablet or laptop. Once the app is downloaded into a phone or tablet, the youth doesn't even need cell service or Wifi connection to access KYR information. This proposed solution, a Florida KYR app integrated with a dedicated website will prove easy to use once ready, an invaluable component for youth education and adult training, and a legal services tool that without a doubt change lives through the empowerment and action of foster youth.

With the assistance of a company specializing in such, Ms. Greenberg will also conduct user research to ensure that the type of app/website, design, format, and language are all appropriate for the audience.

Ms. Greenberg has learned through training youth and providing direct representation the impact it has on a teen to know what their rights are. An adult with little experience working with youth in foster care may wonder what type of benefit teens will gain by being informed of their rights, and the impact is great. Teens have a number of crucial rights while in the custody of the state, and are at a much greater risk of harm due to having the state as their parent. For instance, youth have the right to live in a family-like setting and the right to due process if the state seeks to place them in a restrictive environment such as a psychiatric facility. Youth also have the right to refuse assent to psychotropic medications, and must be appointed an attorney if they are prescribed medications they do not want to take. LGBTQ youth have the right to dress in clothes that fit their gender expression and cannot be forced to wear certain types of clothes by foster parents or group homes. Additionally, youth in care cannot be forced to attend religious services. Ms. Greenberg has seen firsthand how just having this information empowers youth to stand up for themselves. Almost all children in foster care have experienced some form of abuse, neglect or abandonment, and are used to not having a say in what happens to them, even if they are being harmed. Having this information accessible empowers them to stand up for themselves and speak out when something is not right. The child welfare system expects youth to instantly become adults and subsequently speak up for themselves and their needs once they turn 18, and with the high number of youth aging out of care each year in Florida, it is problematic that the system does not give youth the tools they need to become their own advocates. This guide, however, can provide a solution to this problem: the accessibility a website and app will provide coupled with the power of knowledge of the law that will be gained by reading it is the greatest benefit the guide will have to ensure better outcomes for youth in foster care in Florida.

9. Have any justice community stakeholders agreed to participate in or committed to the development and implementation of the proposed project?

Yes

9.1. Please list those stakeholders and discuss their role in the proposed project. Upload any letters of support or commitment from community partners/stakeholders as attachments to this proposal.

This project will seek to partner with the state's Department of Children and Families, case management organizations, and various foster care agencies, and has committed partnerships with the Guardian ad Litem program, the non-profit agency Florida's Children First and youth advocacy group Florida Youth Shine, Legal Services of North Florida and Legal Services of Greater Miami, attorneys for children throughout Florida, judges, and the 13th Judicial Circuit court system. Although representing very diverse elements of the realm of services and resources connected to foster youth, some more directly than others, all can play a valuable role in project activities. The Project lead will work with project partners variously: to administer surveys or a project-related focus groups for input into the app/website designs; to schedule and host/conduct the project's core KYR trainings on youth rights in foster care – to their particular staff and/or client bases; to help publicize the project and raise both awareness and use of the website and app, once launched; to help gather feedback on project effectiveness for evaluation purposes.

This project would also deepen partnerships with Stetson University College of Law's faculty and law students, as well as with pro bono attorneys from Greenberg Traurig LLP, who volunteer their time to help update and edit the guide. Local attorneys from Greenberg Traurig LLP have already donated 215 hours of legal pro bono to edit and update the guide, valued at more than \$115,000, and this nationally renowned firm has committed to continue updating the guide yearly as needed. Ms. Greenberg has continually cultivated partnerships with the aforementioned agencies since the creation of the KYR guide; their cooperation has paved the way for her to conduct numerous trainings for child welfare workers and youth across the state, a key element of the KYR project going forward.

10. Does the project address any recommendations from an LSC program visit?

Yes

10.1. What recommendations are addressed?

An LSC on-site visit recommended that BALS participate in more outreach and partnerships. The Know Your Rights project would directly address this recommendation: the project design would create and strengthen partnerships across Florida, including the statewide Guardian ad Litem program, the Department of Children and Families, several related non-profit organizations (ex. Florida Children's First and youth advocacy group Florida Youth Shine), the court system locally and across Florida, two LSC-funded legal aid organizations, and community-based care agencies throughout Florida that serve youth in foster care. Ms. Greenberg, as Project Lead, is ready to implement project activities immediately upon award; she will work throughout the 18-month project

period to strengthen existing collaborative relationships, especially as part of ongoing outreach locally and on a regional/statewide level by providing trainings to youth, agency personnel, the legal community, and other system stakeholders. She also will implement a proactive rollout of online and in-person events and other strategic mechanisms to promote awareness of the guide to youth and adults within the child welfare community. The TIG project staff will reach out and stand ready to offer expertise and resources for interested), community-based organizations, including CBCs (community-based care agencies), and other public agency staffs across the state.

Replication and Sustainability (10%)

11. Is there potential for the proposed project to be replicated by other organizations?

Yes

11.1. Why would other legal aid organizations want to replicate your model or project?

Legal aid organizations throughout the country would be given a blueprint for how to create a guide on teens' rights in care that is easy to understand and will be utilized by the target audiences. Most states have similar struggles with teens' rights being violated in care. There are other legal aid organizations that have some form of a "Know Your Rights" guide around the country; they could use the guides they already have and learn from BALS's model to transform them into a website and app that would provide much-improved access and higher use by more audiences, leading to much greater impacts. Other states could also use BALS's model to create their own document assembly systems for necessary forms to help youth in care access the tools they need to assert their rights. Based on our research, we do not believe this use of technology to meet this particular need exists in any other state, and teens deserve to know their rights in every state, not just Florida.

For legal aid organizations to replicate the KYR project in another U.S. state or territory, BALS estimates approximately \$50,000-\$60,000 in funding is needed to launch the program (i.e., market research, plain language, multimedia, videos) and approximately \$10,000-\$20,000 in annual funds to sustain it (i.e., content updates). Our estimate includes all future programs using the same BALS-funded website/app, and excludes staffing needs, as this will vary for each organization and depend on its access to pro bono attorneys.

11.2. How would you promote your model to other legal aid organizations?

Ms. Greenberg has formed a partnership with the National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC), and the NACC has committed to assisting with connecting BALS to other legal aid organizations that represent children around the country to help promote other states taking on this project. Additionally, Ms.

Greenberg, a former Equal Justice Works fellow, will also employ the extensive EJW alumni network of legal aid organizations across the United States to send information and solicit questions/feedback about this project. She also plans to apply to present at statewide and national conferences with the aforementioned and other appropriate organizations to engage interest from other legal aid practitioners and organizations working with foster care youth around the country, to offer access to and generate ongoing improvement of project elements. This project involves development of 15-25 short videos to engage and inform target audiences which would be useful examples for legal aid firms contemplating a similar project. Along these lines, Ms. Greenberg can provide online webinars or other opportunities for information and idea exchanges with legal aid firms across the country interested in replication.

12. Describe the anticipated ongoing costs to support the proposed project and how you still sustain these costs.

Ongoing costs to sustain the Know Your Rights project include staff salary/wages and fringe benefits, web hosting, and content updates (guide, videos, training, etc.). The project budget indicates that costs will be considerably lower to sustain the project in the years following a TIG grant award. The Project Lead will only need to devote about 25% of her time (.25 FTE) to coordinate and implement ongoing program activities, and the Digital Project Manager is a temporary position, ending with the project.

Below is an outline of the total expenses BALS expects to have incurred in the two years following the TIG project period and anticipates that future costs to sustain the program will remain consistent.

Salary/Wages: [REDACTED]
Taylor Greenberg (25% FTE)
Heather Tager (5% FTE)
David Gray (5% FTE)

Fringe Benefits: [REDACTED]
Taylor Greenberg (25% FTE)
Heather Tager (5% FTE)
David Gray (5% FTE)

Hosting: \$5,000

Content: \$15,000

Bay Area Legal Services is committed to sustaining the KYR project and working with community partners and child welfare organizations to seek ongoing funding from government, corporate, and private foundation sources committed to improving the life outcomes of foster youth.