Founded in 1990, the mission of Access Justice Brooklyn is to provide high-quality, pro bono legal services and community education to our neighbors in need. Using the collective talents of our dedicated staff and volunteers, we help ensure a more accessible legal system and equitable Brooklyn. During this IOLA grant period, we provided direct civil legal services in 2,069 matters affecting 5,012 Brooklyn individuals and families. In addition, we provided pro se assistance in matters that impact basic rights and necessities to a total of 670 people. Through our community legal education initiatives, we provided critical legal information and resources to an additional 1,009 individuals, and provided referrals for other legal and social service needs to 1,199 individuals. Central to our mission and service model, we also engaged 205 pro bono attorneys, law students and other professionals who, with our support, provided 6,287 hours of high-quality legal representation, advice and counsel, brief legal services and community education throughout Brooklyn.

We also helped clients obtain critical financial support and avoid fees and other debts, increasing their overall financial stability. As a result of our advocacy, our clients obtained $237,326 in child support arrears and $15,206 in monthly child and spousal support benefits. We helped clients save or recover $410,275 through settlements in foreclosure actions; $746,269 through bankruptcy; $424,345 by avoiding or reducing consumer debt; and $116,750 in fines and penalties imposed by the New York City Department of Buildings through representation before the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings. We were also able to save clients $14,740 in court filing fees by obtaining fee waivers.

Population Served: Low Income Populations

Area Served: Kings County (Brooklyn)

Total IOLA Grant: $212,500.00

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:
- Total Staff: 12
- Lawyers: 8
- Paralegals: 1
- Other: 3
Direct Legal Services: Cases

Foreclosure:
Access Justice Brooklyn recently assisted Mr. and Mrs. L, an elderly couple who have lived in their home in East Flatbush since 1995. The year after they moved into their home, Mr. and Mrs. L took out a small ($18,000) mortgage to make repairs to the property. The mortgage was then sold and assigned several times, to the point that the couple no longer received statements or knew the servicer to whom they would need to send payments. Then, in 2021, after well over a decade without any contact from the mortgage servicer, Mr. and Mrs. L received a demand for payment from Real Time Resolutions, a company which suddenly claimed to service their loan. The clients had never heard of this company, and were not given any substantial verification that Real Time Resolutions was a legitimate servicer.

As one of the clients was a member of the DC 37 union, they had brought their matter to the attention of the union’s attorneys, who then referred the couple to Access Justice Brooklyn for further assistance. We soon realized that the statute of limitations to collect on the debt had expired, and we filed a quiet title lawsuit in Kings County Supreme Court. That same day that the lawsuit was filed, the in-house counsel of Real Time Resolutions called our attorney and conceded that the statute had expired. Real Time then agreed to satisfy and discharge the mortgage, which resulted in savings of almost $30,000 for Mr. and Mrs. L.
Direct Legal Services: Cases

Consumer Debt:
Access Justice Brooklyn met Mr. P at our Volunteer Lawyer For a Day (VLFD) program in Kings County Civil Court, which provides limited scope representation in consumer debt matters. Mr. P explained that he had Stage 3 cancer and no income, and had recently been notified that there was a judgment against him from 2006. Our VLFD attorney explained that the judgment was related to a debt buyer and that she would try and vacate the judgment against him. Our attorney then reviewed Mr. P’s paperwork and advocated for him before the Judge. While Mr. P’s case was initially adjourned due to an issue with service of his papers, on his second court date our VLFD attorney successfully argued Mr. P’s motion, after which the judge vacated the judgment and dismissed the action.

Access Justice Brooklyn's VLFD attorney explained to Mr. P that the statute of limitations prevented the debt buyer from bringing another lawsuit against him, and that any monies taken in relation to the action would be returned to him.

Other Services: Overview

In addition to our direct legal services, we provide pro se assistance to unrepresented individuals by directing them to information from LawHelpNY.org or Legal Information for Families Today. We also refer clients to the COVID-19 resources which we developed at the start of the pandemic and have since kept up to date on our website, and which we have also shared with elected officials and through LawHelpNY to reach a broader audience. During this period, we provided pro se assistance to a total of 670 Brooklyn residents, helping them better represent themselves in their legal matters.

We expanded our portfolio of community legal education presentations adapted for virtual platforms, allowing us to continue providing Brooklynites with these important resources, even in the pandemic context. Delivering presentations via Zoom and similar videoconferencing platforms still allows for interaction with attendees, giving them an opportunity to connect with our staff and make appointments for follow-up assistance as needed. We advertise events on our website and social media platforms, and post links to presentation recordings where available – allowing individuals unable to attend the live event to watch these presentations at a later date. We have continued to hold these and other presentations virtually, in accordance with public health guidelines and the preferences of our partners and community members, though with the relaxing of COVID-19 measures we are again scheduling in-person outreach events for the coming months.
Other Services: Overview

We continued our targeted outreach and education to Brooklyn’s elderly population through our National Grid Foundation Senior Legal Education and Assistance Program (NGF Senior LEAP), an initiative which provides elder law education in partnership with senior centers, allowing senior Brooklyn residents to understand potential legal issues and access help to address them. As part of NGF Senior LEAP, in the last year we conducted a total of 15 presentations on topics relevant to seniors such as wills and advance medical directives, foreclosure and deed theft, and consumer debt. These presentations were held in coordination with our senior center partners, including Glenwood Senior Center in East Flatbush, Fort Greene Council, JASA Scheuer House of Coney Island; the Phillip Howard NORC Program, and Vandalia Neighborhood Senior Center. In total, we provided community legal education to 384 attendees through NGF Senior LEAP during the period.

In addition to our outreach targeting seniors, we also hosted or participated in six other presentations intended for a wider audience through our partnerships with community organizations, religious groups, and elected officials. These presentations reached another 432 members of the Brooklyn community and primarily focused on changes to the pandemic-related foreclosure moratorium, which ended on January 15, 2022, and avoiding deed theft and scams targeting homeowners. We also attended one in-person event, a Senior Resource Day held by Senator Roxanne Persaud’s office on September 14, 2021, where we met with 22 senior community members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of People who Benefitted from Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Legal Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Se Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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2,580 People Benefitted by Services Other Than Direct Legal Representation
Other Services: Technology and Other Innovations

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, our service model has relied heavily on use of technology to communicate with clients, complete and file documents, and appear in court. Our staff began working remotely due to COVID-19 in March 2020, and all intake calls were seamlessly redirected to staff cell phones using an app provided by our VOIP provider. Clients have been able to complete intakes through our case management system, LegalServer, and also sign retainers and other documents electronically. Our staff have become adept at providing legal assistance and appearing in court proceedings virtually through Zoom and telephonically. We also adapted our community legal education and CLE trainings to be delivered virtually, allowing us to successfully reach a wide audience; our virtual presentations were attended by over 1,300 community members, attorneys, and other professionals during the period.

In addition, in the last year we began an organizational rebranding effort that will allow us to engage a broader audience and more accurately reflect our mission and direction. Part of this rebranding process will involve comprehensive changes to our website which will create a more user-friendly interface and improve language accessibility, enabling clients to more easily obtain our online information and resources. The initial phase of this website redesign will launch by late Spring 2022, with the more extensive final phase to be implemented in 2023.

Other Services: Trainings

We regularly pay for staff trainings; all attorneys can join two bar associations for professional development, the costs of which are covered by our organization, and staff also have a Pro Bono Privileged Membership through the Practising Law Institute (PLI)—enabling staff to attend PLI programs and webinars for free. Our staff and board members attend webinars and CLE programs presented at the Brooklyn Bar Association, NYC Bar Association, Her Justice, LSNYC, CNYCN, New York Courts Access to Justice Programs, ProBonoNet, Nonprofit New York, Candid, BoardLead, BoardSource, New York Council of Nonprofits, New York Nonprofit Media, Lawyers Alliance, Empire Justice Center, Fordham Law School, the Better Business Bureau, the Support Center, and the Community Service Society, among others.

After the start of the pandemic, we adapted our training materials so our staff could continue to deliver CLEs and webinars to pro bono attorneys, law students, and non-legal professionals, and since then we have successfully provided training to hundreds of volunteers. These trainings assist us in recruiting new attorney and non-attorney volunteers, developing the skills of current volunteers, and addressing the needs of the community. During this reporting period we offered 11 virtual CLEs and trainings to 352 attendees.
Pro Bono Volunteer Involvement

Through our partnerships with private law firms and law schools, we recruit, train, and actively supervise lawyers and qualified law students to provide direct representation in court, advice, brief legal services at courthouse clinics and in-office clinics (prior to the pandemic), and community legal presentations that cover issues related to family law, homeowner assistance, consumer debt, bankruptcy, Article 17A guardianship, and wills and advance directives. Combining the expertise and mentorship of our staff with these volunteers allows us to provide high-quality, comprehensive services to far more individuals than we could alone. During this grant period, we trained and supervised a total of 205 pro bono attorneys, law students, and other volunteers who provided 6,287 hours of direct legal assistance and community legal education to Brooklyn residents. With the commitment of these volunteers, we provided direct legal assistance in 2,069 matters during the period, benefitting a total of 5,012 people.

We continued to partner with Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, Willkie Farr & Gallagher, Goodwin Procter LLP, Kirkland & Ellis LLP, and Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP to place cases and engage their employees through clinics. On June 9, 2021 we collaborated with Goodwin Procter LLP to hold a virtual uncontested divorce clinic, which had 14 Goodwin attorney volunteers. On June 11, 2021 we engaged six volunteers from Proskauer Rose to participate in a citizenship clinic, coordinated by NALEO Educational Fund, and in September 2021 we collaborated with AXA XL to hold a bankruptcy clinic with the support of 14 AXA XL employees.

As an accredited CLE provider, we design and present CLE training programs that prepare both new and existing volunteers to provide critical community legal support. In light of ongoing public health restrictions due to COVID-19, we held virtual CLEs and trainings during this period, offering 11 such CLEs and trainings to a total of 352 attendees. To complement our trainings, we also offer written materials with relevant case law, statutes, and forms, and match volunteers with experienced practitioners and mentors to facilitate learning. Whenever a pro bono attorney represents one of our clients, our staff provides mentoring, supervision, and support until the case has been resolved.

1,237 Attorneys volunteered 2,157 hours

25 Law Students volunteered 2,730 hours

4 Other Volunteers volunteered 1,400 hours
Significant Collaborations

We regularly collaborate with a range of Brooklyn-based and citywide legal service providers. Through our partnership with OATH and Brooklyn Law School, we work with trained volunteers to provide limited scope representation to homeowners in Department of Buildings matters. Our foreclosure intervention team collaborates with Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A, Brooklyn Legal Services, NHS Brooklyn, and the Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN). We also participate in the Brooklyn Foreclosure Advocates, a consortium of nonprofit legal service providers and the private foreclosure defense bar who convene periodically to discuss issues related to foreclosures in Kings County, as well as in the New York City Bar Association Foreclosure Task Force to discuss city-wide issues and strategy involving foreclosure cases.

We maintain an ongoing dialogue with members of the community and the judiciary at state and federal levels to identify and address common legal obstacles as well as unmet needs among self-represented individuals. We participate in the Brooklyn Bar Association’s Pro Bono and Judiciary Committees, the New York State Bar Pro Bono Coordinators Network, and the Public Interest Pro Bono Association. Our director of legal services is also chair of the New York City Bar Association Civil Court Committee, through which he regularly meets with other advocates and the Administrative Judge of the New York City Civil Court to discuss updates to court operations. Our staff attends bankruptcy Judge Elizabeth Stong’s pro bono “Lunch Bunch” meetings where legal advocates discuss challenges and improvements to the delivery of legal services and pro bono coordination.

During this grant period we conducted outreach in coordination with community-based organizations, religious entities, senior centers, and elected officials to expand our presence in the community and reach new community members in need of legal help. We continued to provide legal education through our NGF Senior LEAP Program partners, including Glenwood Senior Center, Fort Greene Council, the Philip Howard NORC Program, and Mill Basin Center for Active Adults, and developed new connections with Vandalia Neighborhood Senior Center and Amico Senior Center. In addition, we established a new relationship with Brooklyn Oratory’s St. Boniface Church to provide community legal education to its parishioners. We also met with several Brooklyn representatives in the City Council and New York State Assembly to discuss legal problems observed among their constituents and to plan community education presentations in response to these needs.

Central to our mission and essential to our service model, we deepened our relationships with private law firms, in-house counsel, and law schools to provide pro bono assistance to our clients, engaging a total of 205 pro bono attorneys, law students, and other volunteers during the period.
Sources of Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>IOLA Grant</td>
<td>$212,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foundations</td>
<td>$206,437.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>City and County Funding</td>
<td>$107,500.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td>State Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,483,593.89</strong></td>
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Breakdown:
- IOLA Grant: 14%
- Fundraising: 22%
- Foundations: 14%
- City and County Funding: 7%
- State Funding: 43%