

Interest on Lawyer Account Fund of the State of New York

Funding civil legal assistance for low-income New Yorkers since 1984

Justice Infrastructure Project Statewide Support Function Convening – January 16, 2025

Provided below is a summary of feedback received at IOLA’s initial Statewide Support Function Convening held January 16, 2025. In total, 71 individuals, representing 63 organizations attended the convening (48 attended in-person, 23 attended virtually).

Potential Functions of a Statewide Support Function in New York

Participants were asked to share their initial thoughts regarding potential functions of a Statewide Support Function in New York. Provided below is a summary of the feedback shared during this session. It is important to note that participants indicated that their comments were mindful that prior feedback had been provided during Phase 1 of the Justice Infrastructure Project¹ and that additional feedback should be sought from additional staff of their organizations and the staff or organizations not able to participate in the convening. Further, participants also noted that ongoing collaboration and trust among grantees will be essential for the effective development and implementation of a Statewide Support Function in New York.

- Advocacy pertaining to contract terms and timely payment
- Assistance with financing sources or banking services to assist with cash flow financing
- Staff training (including online modules) for substantive issue of law, professional development, supervision, management training, client communication, secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, trial practice, and other topics essential to delivering legal services and working in a legal services organization
- Content development for client-facing and internal resources, including advisories to inform staff about changes in the law, new opinions, enforcement trends and other topics
- Cost-effective, simple guided forms and other tools to assist with frequently repeated tasks (customizable for local jurisdictions)
- Coordination and organization of group meetings, convenings, or summits for the legal services community (accessible for staff of various positions and specialties)
- Statewide affinity groups for the legal services community
- Guidance and training regarding data privacy and confidentiality
- Resources and support for legal services organizations that need supplemental access to resources such as organizational legal issues (i.e., General Counsel services), human relations (HR), recruiting, information technology (IT), artificial intelligence (AI), etc.
- Listserv administration
- Knowledge management and information sharing, including local topics that may be relevant and important for people unfamiliar with a particular locality
- Shared calendars of advocacy and impact litigation plans, groups and initiatives
- Continued Legal Education (CLE)
- Coordinating access to modern AI tools
- Language access and translation resources and best practices

¹ Feedback regarding potential elements of a Statewide Support Function in New York received in Phase 1 can be reviewed here: <https://www.iola.org/about-iola/justice-infrastructure-project>

- Access to screened vendors specializing in certain areas (e.g., strategic planning, evaluation, community needs surveys, DEI, etc.) or with certain qualifications (e.g., MWBE)
- Repository of Requests for Proposal (RFPs) that legal services organizations can leverage when they need to draft RFPs
- Repository of information about software and other technology tools that legal services organizations may consider
- Assistance with talent acquisition strategies, including law school engagement
- Assistance with development of pro bono partnerships
- Assistance with union workforce relations
- Coordination and communication with other funders (government and philanthropy)
- Development and maintenance of outreach materials
- Resources to assist and coordinate with development staff
- Coordinated public media about civil legal aid
- Development and maintenance of template materials accessible to civil legal aid organizations

Initial Considerations for the Development of a Statewide Support Function in New York

Participants were asked to share their initial thoughts regarding the elements of development and implementation that require further analysis and consideration before a Statewide Support Function can be developed in New York. Provided below is a summary of the feedback shared during this session.

- Short- and long-term governance considerations, including centralized and decentralized service delivery, decision-making and community agreements
- Assessment of current resources, assets and processes used by the civil legal aid community in New York
- Development of an ecosystem that encourages collaboration and information sharing
- Development of norms and practices for collaborative participation
- Sustainable staffing, capacity and funding
- Assessment of staffing requirements for expected services
- Commitment to equity of participation (NYC and upstate, large organizations and small organizations, staff at all levels, etc.)
- Training for organizations learning to work in a collaborative ecosystem
- Strategies for engagement with organizations other than grantees
- Prioritization framework
- Plans for evaluation
- Coordination with other funders of civil legal aid
- Technology assessment for statewide support
- Statewide strategies and customized local strategies or support
- Ability to be nimble and respond to emerging needs
- Integrating lessons learned and best practices from other jurisdictions