

Legal Action of Wisconsin & Wisconsin Judicare Seek Proposals to Conduct Paid Research

Request for Proposals Issue Date: November 18, 2021

Proposals due: January 15, 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

Legal Action of Wisconsin (Legal Action) and Wisconsin Judicare (Judicare) are seeking proposals from academicians, researchers, evaluators, or others (“Researchers”), who are interested in gathering information about the concerns low-income people have with their civil legal problems. Legal Action and Judicare will provide funding to, and will contract with, one or more Researchers to partner with us in a creative and thoughtful assessment of the landscape in which our legal service programs are operating.

II. AREAS OF INQUIRY

The Researcher(s) will conduct surveys, interviews, and focus groups to identify:

1. The *areas of concern* about civil legal matters for low-income people.¹ See Attachment A for background on this area of inquiry.
2. *Strengths and assets* of low-income people who are eligible for our services. See Attachment A for background on this area of inquiry.

III. INFORMATION ABOUT LEGAL ACTION AND JUDICARE

Legal Action and Judicare are funded by the Legal Services Corporation and other sources to provide free civil legal services to people who otherwise could not find, access, or afford legal help. Legal Action primarily serves the southern 39 counties of Wisconsin. Judicare primarily serves the northern 33 counties of Wisconsin. Judicare also serves the 11 Native American tribes of Wisconsin. Legal Action serves agricultural workers statewide. Our work is grounded in the understanding that many low-income people face historical, structural, and intentional barriers that make it difficult for them to access legal services or take advantage of alternative methods of obtaining justice. These barriers undermine their meaningful participation in our communities.

IV. SERVICES SOUGHT WITH THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

This RfP seeks the following services from Researchers: surveys, interviews, and facilitated meetings/focus groups of low-income people who live in one or more of the geographic regions identified in this RfP (VI. A. – **REGIONS**), ensuring that certain sub-groups (VI. B. – **SUBGROUPS**) are well-represented in those regions. Note: We are issuing a total of three RfPs for services related to the entire assessment project. Each RfP seeks proposals for distinct services. This (November 18, 2021) RfP seeks survey, interview, and facilitated meetings/focus group services. The subsequent RfPs – to be issued later – will seek the following services: (1) a trend analysis of circuit court and administrative proceedings and (2) demographic analysis of Wisconsin’s low-income population in relation to availability of existing civil legal services. Researchers may respond to one, two, or all three RfPs.

¹ For purposes of this RfP, “low-income people” refers to individuals or households who have incomes below 200% of federal poverty levels. As legal services providers funded by the federal Legal Services Corporation, Legal Action and Judicare use income eligibility as one of several eligibility criteria when determining whether potential clients are eligible for our services.

V. USE OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

Legal Action and Judicare will use the Researcher’s findings, along with findings from the trend analysis and the demographic analysis (separate RfPs) to assist with our strategic planning and evaluation. See Attachment B for more information about our strategic planning and evaluation.

VI. REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

We expect that the most pressing areas of concern of low-income people will vary by geography and that the methodology for data collection will likely need to vary as well. Therefore, we are dividing the state into regions for purpose of conceptualizing this research project. In addition, we expect that the most pressing areas of concern of low-income people will vary for certain sub-groups (see **B – SUBGROUPS**) and we are requiring Researchers to ensure that these groups are well-represented. Therefore, we are seeking non-randomized research.

We invite Researchers to submit a proposal for as many regions (see **A - REGIONS** below) as they are capable of successfully undertaking. We also invite Researchers to discuss alternative ideas about completing this research, including anticipated challenges to successful competition of the research. These challenges may include an alternative geographic breakdown, revised timelines for the research, or partnering with other Researchers to reach certain regions or to ensure that the sub-groups are well-represented. Legal Action and Judicare will consider conducting a partial assessment if we cannot identify a Researcher with capacity to cover all geographic areas or provide well-represented samples of the sub-groups. The Researchers are the experts and are most aware of their own capacity and expertise and we welcome their input and suggestions.

A. REGIONS

We expect that the most pressing areas of concern will vary by geographic region and that the methodology for data collection may need to vary by region. Therefore, we are dividing the State into the following eight regions:²

1. Southern Cities/Commercial Centers and Hubs
2. Northern Cities/Commercial Centers and Hubs
3. South Central Counties
4. Southwestern Counties
5. Southeastern Counties
6. Northwestern Counties
7. Northeastern Counties
8. Statewide Native Americans and Indigenous people

B. SUBGROUPS

Legal Action and Judicare seek non-randomized research. Rather, Researchers should design their work to assure that the following sub-groups of low-income people (below 200% of federal poverty line) are well-represented in their surveys, interviews, and focus groups for the regions they are proposing:

1. Agricultural workers
2. Black people
3. Elderly people

² See Attachment C for a list of cities and counties included in these regions.

4. Homeless or housing insecure people
5. Immigrants and refugees
6. LGBTQ people
7. People with Limited English Proficiency
8. People of Color (other than Black or Indigenous or Native American)
9. People who have different physical and mental capabilities
10. People who are re-entering communities after incarceration
11. People who have conviction and/or arrest records
12. Students
13. Veterans
14. Victims of crime, including domestic abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking victims

C. DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCHERS' SERVICES AND DELIVERABLES

The selected Researcher will:

1. Design and Implement a research project that will:
 - a. Survey, interview, and conduct focus groups in numbers sufficient to ensure that the sub-groups are well-represented in the identified geographic area, considering benchmarks from Legal Action's 2016 Needs Assessment and Legal Action's 2021 analysis of outreach, intake, and service analysis. (These reports will be available at our 12/1/21 and our 12/3/21 RfP presentations. Researchers may also request them immediately from Nicole Zimmer nmz@legalaction.org.)
 - b. Design and administer all surveys, interview questionnaires, and facilitation guides that are necessary for assessing a representative sample of low-income people in the identified geographic area(s);
 - c. Collect and analyze data from the surveys, interviews, and focus groups; and
 - d. Present the data and analysis to Legal Action and Judicare.
2. Produce a comprehensive, written report that describes the Researcher's specific scope of work and that follows, at a minimum, the following outline:
 - a. An Executive Summary
 - b. Description of Design and Methods Used
 - c. Results, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection from surveys, interviews, and focus groups and considers benchmarks from Legal Action's 2016 Needs Assessment and Legal Action's 2021 outreach, intake, and service analysis.
 - d. Analysis of the results
 - e. Recommendations, based on the results and analysis, that reference our areas of inquiry (Section II and Attachment A). Recommendations shall include suggestions for baseline measures of the findings and frequency for conducting assessments moving forward.³
 - f. Supporting Appendices, including raw data sets
3. In-Person Presentation of Results: The Researcher(s) shall provide at least one in-person presentation to Legal Action, Judicare, and other stakeholders at the end of the engagement. The presentation shall highlight the assessment process, findings, and recommendations and shall leave ample opportunity to respond to questions.

³ All recommendations made by Researchers during this engagement will be documented by the Researcher and reviewed with Legal Action's and Judicare's Executive Directors. Legal Action and Judicare are under no obligation to implement the Researcher's recommendations.

D. ESTIMATED TIMELINE

Step #	Step	Date
1	RFP Release Date	11/18/2021
2	Legal Action and Judicare present RfP in online forums and answer questions	Presentation #1: 12/1/21 @ 10 a.m. Presentation #2: 12/3/21 @ 1 p.m.
3	Legal Action and Judicare staff availability for consultation and discussion (contact Nicole Zimmer nmz@legalaction.org to schedule)	Between 11/18/21 and 12/1/21 and between 12/6/21 and 12/23/21
4	Letter of Interest (LOI) Due	12/23/2021 @ 5 p.m. (central time)
5	Follow-up Meetings Held with LOI submitters	Between 12/27/21 and 1/7/22
6	FAQs emailed to all LOI Submitters	1/10/2022
7	Proposals Due to Legal Action and Judicare	1/17/2022, 5 p.m. (central time)
8	Interviews and follow-up between Researchers and Legal Action and Judicare, if necessary	Between 1/17/22 and 2/4/22
9	Notice of Acceptance of Proposal(s) Released	2/14/2022
10	Draft Report Submitted to Legal Action and Judicare ⁴	8/19/2022
11	Final Report Submitted to Legal Action and Judicare	8/31/2022
12	Researcher Presentation to Legal Action and Judicare and Invited Stakeholders	10/7/2022

The LOI due date, proposal due date, and final report due date are final unless we issue a revised RfP. In addition, Legal Action and Judicare must undertake a review process with our primary funding source and our Boards of Directors before we execute a contract with the selected Researcher(s). Should announcement of the award or a contract be delayed due to this process, all Researchers will be advised about the delay and the anticipated release of Notice of Award and Contract for Services.

E. REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Legal Action and Judicare recognize that the activities undertaken as part of this assessment may constitute human subjects research and be subject to the Department of Justice's Human Subjects Protection. Therefore, the selected applicant must agree to determine whether this assessment requires submission to relevant Institutional Review Boards. If it is determined that submission is required, the selected applicant must complete the necessary steps for assessment to receive Institutional Review Board approval.

⁴ Milestones and regular communication methods and channels will be developed and implemented for the period between notice of award and (2/14/22) and the draft report (8/19/22).

F. OVERSIGHT AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Legal Action and Judicare will oversee the Researcher(s) performance by developing and implementing a milestone-driven services agreement and payment schedule and by holding regular meetings on project status and coordination issues. The Researcher(s) will work closely with the Assessment Project Managers (Nicole Zimmer, Director of Legal Services at Legal Action, and Kristin Slonski, Director of Advocacy & Legal Services at Judicare) and shall promptly notify the Project Managers of any delays or concerns that may arise during the project.

G. COSTS

Researchers shall bear all costs associated with the proposal meeting(s), interview(s), preparing, and submitting their bids. Legal Action and Judicare shall in no event be responsible or liable for those costs.

H. AWARD OF CONTRACT

Award of the contract resulting from this RFP will be based on the Researcher whose offer will be most advantageous to Legal Action and Judicare and the client population in terms of cost, functionality, experience, quality of past work, and other factors specified elsewhere in this RFP. Legal Action and Judicare reserve the right to: 1) consider proposals based on their relative merit, risk, and values to the organization; 2) negotiate with all Researchers; 3) change the RFP Schedule or issue amendments to this RFP at any time; 4) reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential contractor when it is in the organizations' best interests; and 5) accept other than the lowest-priced response. Legal Action and Judicare reserve the right to allow corrections of errors or omissions. In addition, Researchers may be asked to revise their proposal based on negotiations after submission. This document represents an initial request for proposals only and in no way should be construed as a contract or intent to contract with the Researcher. Researcher(s) selected to provide services will be expected to sign a written, milestone-based contract before any payments are made.

Proposals received will be evaluated by a team of Legal Action and Judicare staff members. As part of the evaluation process, Researchers may be asked to provide additional information or clarify aspects of their proposal or be invited to an informational interview. Evaluation of proposals will be based on the following:

1. Researcher's demonstrated experience with community assessments and similar projects and facility with skill sets commonly used in community needs assessments.
2. Researcher's prioritization and integration of social justice principles, including a racial equity lens, into all facets of their work.
3. Description of Researcher's plan for assessing a well-represented sample of individuals from the sub-groups.
4. Results of communications with the Researcher's references.
5. Researcher's familiarity with the legal aid, human services, or social/equal justice landscape.
6. Researcher's familiarity with the Region(s) it is proposing to cover.
7. Price, and the Researcher's willingness to help the team find cost-effective solutions to complete the services.
8. Quality of Researcher's communications and responsiveness during the RfP process.

I. CONTRACT PAYMENT LIMITATIONS

Applicants should anticipate payment at the end of the invoice period in which they provide services or after they submit any deliverable for which a payment is due.

J. CONFIDENTIALITY

Unless otherwise required by law, all information disclosed by Legal Action and Judicare during the proposal process shall be considered confidential and should not be released to outside parties. Likewise, all proposals from Researchers will only be reviewed by Legal Action and Judicare staff and/or Boards as necessary for the fair selection of the Researcher and will not be shared with outside parties unless otherwise required by law.

K. PROJECT DELIVERABLES

All deliverables produced during the engagement are the property of Legal Action and Judicare. Legal Action and Judicare will work with Researchers who wish to publish in academic or other journals and publications.

L. MULTIPLE RESEARCHERS

Because of the complexity of these two areas of inquiry, the statewide scope, and the diversity of low-income people and communities, Legal Action and Judicare are prepared to hire multiple Researchers if necessary. If multiple Researchers are needed, regular communication between the Researchers will be required.

VII. LETTER OF INTEREST INSTRUCTIONS

Letter(s) of interest (LOI) are required but not binding. The LOI should include a brief description of the Researcher's interest in proposing to provide the services and background.

Due Date: 5 p.m. (central time) on 12/23/22.

Submit to: Nicole Zimmer (nmz@legalaction.org), Legal Action, and Kristin Slonski (kslonski@judicare.org), Judicare.

VIII. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Due Date: 5 p.m. (central time) on 1/14/22.

Submit to: Nicole Zimmer (nmz@legalaction.org), Legal Action, and Kristin Slonski (kslonski@judicare.org), Judicare.

Formatting: Each page of the Proposal should be numbered and should include the Researcher's name.

Proposal Components: The proposal should include the following responses:

- A. Point person for the proposal response, including title, phone number, and email address;
- B. Description of your understanding of the projects' two areas of inquiry and deliverables.
- C. Identification of the region(s) you propose to cover and a description of your qualifications to cover the region(s).

- D. Description of the:
- work you will perform;
 - methodology you anticipate using to complete the surveys, interviews, and focus groups to obtain a well-represented sample of persons in the subgroups;
 - product(s) you will deliver; and
 - a proposed deliverable timeline, explaining any modifications to our estimated timeline.
- E. A work plan for carrying out the project that includes:
- project manager and other key personnel that are necessary to meet the proposed project schedule clearly identified;
 - regular communications to work collaboratively with Legal Action and Judicare; and
 - the projected hours anticipated to complete the project.
- F. Estimated cost and the proposed cost basis for you to complete your proposal. The cost shall include direct and indirect costs and expenses. Specify a maximum, all-inclusive cost for the representative sample for the region you are proposing to assess. Rates, whether fixed or hourly, must include all overhead costs and profit. (Legal Action and Judicare are 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations.) Include an explanation of your cost or efficiency suggestions for the project, if applicable;
- G. Samples or case studies of similar work projects that the Researcher has successfully completed or additional documentation of your experience with similar projects and of facility with skill sets commonly used in assessments (e.g. statistical analysis, data visualization, survey design, project management, community outreach and technical writing, etc.);
- H. List of all personnel that will work on the project;
- I. Biographies and/or resume/CVs of your key personnel;
- J. References: Contact name, title, affiliated organization, phone number and e-mail of three contacts for whom the Researcher has conducted similar work in the past five years;
- K. If applicable, description of your relationship with any existing Institutional Review Boards (“IRB”).
- L. If applicable, the resources you will need from outside of your organization to accomplish the deliverables of the project;
- M. If applicable, clear description of plans to utilize students or interns to complete the work; and
- N. Other – You may provide other information or material that you believe is relevant to our evaluation of your response.

IX. INQUIRES: Inquiries regarding this RFP may be submitted to Nicole Zimmer via email (nmz@legalaction.org) or Kristin Slonski (kslonski@judicare.org). A consolidated list of questions arising from the meetings and emailed inquiries will be emailed to all persons that provided valid contact information before the LOI deadline, as described in the estimated timeline.

X. SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Researchers may find it useful to review the following links before submitting a proposal. If there is additional information that Researchers would like to review prior to submission of a proposal, please notify us.

- Legal Services Corporation’s [section on Comprehensive Needs Assessment and Priority Setting](#).
- Legal Action of Wisconsin’s [website](#)
- Wisconsin Judicare’s [website](#)

The Researcher(s) will conduct surveys, interviews, and focus groups to identify:

1. The *areas of concern* about civil legal matters for low-income people.⁵ See Attachment A for background on this area of inquiry.

Background: In the past, many legal services providers – including Legal Action of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Judicare – have attempted to count “civil legal problems” as a way to understand the pressing needs of the people and communities they are charged with serving. This RFP replaces the term “civil legal needs” with “areas of concern” for three reasons. First, people who have a civil legal problem may not identify it as such. Second, this research process will provide us with a less filtered more unfiltered information about the interaction between the systematic causes of poverty and the emergence of civil legal problems. Third, many low-income people understand they have a problem created by or linked to the judicial system but prefer not to engage in the civil legal system or its adjacent systems to seek resolution for those problems. By framing our study as assessing “areas of concern” rather than “civil legal needs” or even “needs,” we are attempting to identify and understand our clients’ concerns rather than our characterization of “their problem.”

2. *Strengths and assets* of low-income people who are eligible for our services. See Attachment A for background on this area of inquiry.

Background: Legal Action and Judicare recognize that our potential clients and our clients bring strengths, assets, skills, and capacities to our relationship with them and to their communities. We seek to understand those strengths, assets, skills, and capacities so that we may build a meaningful partnership between our programs and our clients and their communities.

⁵ For purposes of this RfP, “low-income people” refers to individuals or households who have incomes below 200% of federal poverty levels. As legal services providers funded by the federal Legal Services Corporation, Legal Action and Judicare use income eligibility as one of several eligibility criteria when determining whether potential clients are eligible for our services.

Legal Action and Judicare will use the Researcher's findings, along with findings from the trend analysis and the demographic analysis (separate RfPs) to assist with our strategic planning and evaluation. See Attachment B for more information about our strategic planning and evaluation.

In our assessment, Legal Action and Judicare seek information about:

1. Predominant areas of concerns facing those persons who are eligible low-income
2. Strengths, assets, skills and capacities of low-income people and communities;
3. Ways that the civil legal system, adjacent and relevant systems, and our programs address – or don't address, – overserve, -- or underserve, -- the areas of concern of the low-income population and of specific groups within it;
4. Effects on low-income people when they don't have help with civil legal problems; and
5. Trends that are likely to affect the areas of concern of low-income communities in the foreseeable future.

Legal Action and Judicare will then apply that understanding to our programs' strategic planning for:

1. Outreach, screening, intake, and legal services;
2. Allocating our existing resources;
3. Identifying gaps where additional resources are needed;
4. Leveraging our legal expertise for the greatest impact on our clients and their communities and on the systems that our clients regularly encounter;
5. Ensuring that the assessment results inform our future performance by developing standardized data sets to use for regular evaluation; and
6. Educating key stakeholders about the areas of concerns faced by low-income people, their unmet need for help with civil legal problems, and the skills and assets they bring. (These stakeholders may include government officials and policymakers, the judiciary and others involved in the civil legal system and the adjacent criminal legal system, the State Bar of Wisconsin membership and leadership, the Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission, the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation, current and potential volunteer attorneys and other volunteers, the media, and donors and funding sources.)

**ATTACHMENT C
REGIONS**

1. **Southern Cities/Commercial Centers and Hubs:**
 - Beloit
 - Fond du Lac
 - Fox Cities (including Appleton, Kaukauna, Menasha, and Neenah)
 - Green Bay (and including Allouez, Ashwaubenon, De Pere)
 - Kenosha
 - La Crosse
 - Madison and Middleton
 - Milwaukee County (all municipalities)
 - Oshkosh
 - Sheboygan
 - Racine

2. **Northern Cities/Commercial Centers and Hubs:**
 - Eau Claire
 - Superior
 - Wausau

3. **South Central Counties:**
 - Adams
 - Columbia
 - Dane (not including cities of Madison and Middleton)
 - Dodge
 - Green
 - Green Lake
 - Iowa
 - Jefferson
 - Juneau
 - Lafayette
 - Marquette
 - Rock (not including Beloit)
 - Sauk
 - Walworth
 - Waushara

4. **Southwestern Counties:**

- Buffalo
- Crawford
- Grant
- Jackson
- Monroe
- La Crosse (not including City of La Crosse)
- Richland
- Trempealeau
- Vernon

5. **Southeastern Counties:**

- Brown (not including Villages or Cities of Allouez, Ashwaubenon, De Pere, and Green Bay)
- Calumet (not including Cities of Kaukauna, Menasha, and Neenah)
- Fond du Lac (not including City of Fond du Lac)
- Kenosha (not including City of Kenosha)
- Ozaukee
- Racine (not including City of Racine)
- Outagamie (not including Appleton)
- Sheboygan (not including City of Sheboygan)
- Washington
- Waukesha
- Winnebago (not including Oshkosh)

6. **Northeastern Counties:**

- Florence
- Forest
- Langlade
- Lincoln
- Marathon (except Wausau)
- Marinette
- Menominee
- Oconto
- Oneida
- Portage
- Shawano
- Vilas
- Waupaca
- Wood

7. **Northwestern Counties:**

- Ashland
- Barron
- Bayfield
- Burnett
- Chippewa
- Clark
- Douglas (except Superior)
- Dunn
- Eau Claire (except City of Eau Claire)
- Iron
- Pierce
- Polk
- Price
- Rusk
- St. Croix
- Sawyer
- Taylor
- Washburn

8. **Statewide: Wisconsin's 11 Native American Tribes and Indigenous Persons**