

## **Legal Services of Northern California 2012 Technology Plan**

This technology plan mirrors the twelve principal categories in “Technologies That Should be in Place in a Legal Aid Office Today,” commonly known as the 2008 Baseline Technologies Report, published by LSC in May 2008. The LSC instructions require, at a minimum, identification of any capacities the organization lacks, but encourage submission of a plan that describes “current and planned uses of technology.”

Description of the technology planning process at Legal Services of Northern California (LSNC) is included in Section 1 regarding “Overall Program Activity.”

In most respects, LSNC meets or exceeds the LSC baseline technology requirements. LSNC has demonstrable strengths in its technology planning and implementation, including its leadership role in the use of the web-based Pika case management system, the expansive development of web-accessible advocate content, the implementation of organization-wide enterprise search, the adoption and effective promotion of the Google Apps platform and its exceptional collaborative features, and reliably implemented security and backup protocols.

There are four elements in the baseline report which LSNC currently identifies as major areas requiring particular attention during 2012. These include:

- Clarification and more formal statements of the expectations and protocols for retention and disposal of specific types of electronic records.
- Better telephone metrics and standardization of telephone systems to improve overall functionality.
- Adoption of more current, comprehensive policies addressing how data and documents are stored and secured while remaining widely and remotely accessible, and the potential risks of intrusion into the confidential and sensitive information they contain.

- Updating of technology policies to address specifically the personal and collaborative use of the Google Apps.

## **1. Overall Program Activity**

All technology planning, budgeting and personnel decisions within LSNC have a singular context: the effective, consistent, reliable provision of an appropriate range and varied levels of legal services to the low-income communities within LSNC's 23-county, 50,000 square-mile service area. In all instances, the evaluation, development, and implementation of technology within LSNC is targeted at accomplishing the daily work done on behalf of its individual clients and the larger client communities it serves.

In its selection and implementation of technologies, LSNC favors the following principles, all of which are viewed as inter-related:

- The technology should meet a demonstrated need.
- Implementation of the technology must be practical.
- Simplicity should be favored over complexity of design and maintainability of the technology.
- Decisions about technology should be informed by sensible UX (user experience) and accessibility design.
- The user path to functions and features of the technology should be simplified and shortened as much as is practical.
- Standardized, regularized, and reliable security protocols are essential and mission-critical.

These are principles of technology planning and implementation at the core of the organization's decisions about what technologies best advance service to its clients.

Technology within LSNC has very strong, direct management support. LSNC has long had formal planning and budgeting structures, well integrated within its overall program planning and management, for affirmative identification and advancement of

those technologies it concludes are essential to accomplishing the work of the organization. That work, at whatever level, is what the varied LSNC offices determine best meets the needs of its target client communities.

Technology issues have long been a familiar, required agenda item for all major planning and budget processes within LSNC. No technology work within LSNC occurs apart from the program as a whole. LSNC has had a technology working group for over 15 years, and a formal technology committee process for assessment and planning technology for over 10 years. Formally known as the “LSNC Tech” committee, it conducts formal, day-long meetings twice a year in Sacramento, participates regularly at quarterly office manager meetings held at varied LSNC locations, and participates in special presentations at LSNC annual staff events. All LSNC offices and special programs are represented and participate in the LSNC Tech committee. All LSNC office managers are required to be members and participation by others within LSNC across all positions is encouraged. The LSNC Tech committee regularly shares information as a group through two LSNC private discussion groups hosted at Google Apps Groups: a management-specific "LSNC Office Manger" discussion group and a broader "Tech Solutions" discussion group inclusive of all LSNC staff.

Direct technology management includes a regional counsel, a practicing attorney, who supervises two full-time IT staff – an IT manager who has worked for LSNC since 1999 and an additional IT support person added in 2008 – and an office manager designated to work part-time to support specific technology projects. All office managers in LSNC local offices have a responsibility to maintain the basic technologies in use within their particular locations, and to train their staff to use those technologies.

The designated regional counsel has overall responsibility for technology management within LSNC, reports to the executive director, and works directly with the deputy director, one other regional counsel, and all managing attorneys on technology issues.

## **2. Management of Client and Case Data**

LSNC adopted the Pika Case Management System in 2005. Pika is a real-time, web-based, database-driven application specifically designed for use by legal services programs. Pika's native capabilities and functionality comply with all stated LSC baseline expectations, i.e., it has the ability to accept, analyze, report, and export data within the case system; assign all required values to any client record; screen for eligibility, case type, and other case-elements; and so on. Specifically, it also meets the 2008 LSC grant assurance requirement that the CMS be able to do real-time conflict checking.

As good as the native data tools are in Pika, from the outset in 2005 LSNC has placed a premium on the training in and use of Microsoft Access by all office managers. LSNC does so via ODBC to the Pika MySQL database to provide greater power and flexibility in filtering and reporting client data. All office managers are well trained and familiar with how to query, filter and report Pika data using Access. During 2011 LSNC conducted two program-wide refresher courses for all office managers on use of Access with Pika.

LSNC has been a national leader in open source Pika development and customization. In 2010 LSNC completed an upgrade and further customization of its Pika installation from version 3.04 to version 4.0. Among other innovations over the years, LSNC customizations have included creation of a new shared user portal for accessing Pika, as well as various Google Enterprise services (principally, the Google Apps platform and Google Search Appliance enterprise search features), discussed below. With assistance from the LSC Technology Initiative Grant (TIG) program, during 2Q 2012 LSNC will submit its final report on the LSNC Google API Project, its integrations of Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Docs, and Google Groups with the Pika CMS.

### **3. Production and Supervision of Legal Work**

LSNC has a standardized desktop configuration and office-wide standards that provide all the basic productivity tools specified by the LSC technology baselines, including word

processing, spreadsheets, and presentation applications; PDF creation, printability, and conversion; automated document assembly; and project management.

All LSNC locations have T1 connections, and its flagship office in Sacramento has two. This translates into universal, high-quality web access for all LSNC offices, and all LSNC web-based applications are universally accessible via secure authentication and login. To assure all staff can readily use web-enabled mobile devices, LSNC has installed highly secure WiFi connectivity in its Sacramento and four other office locations. By the end of 2012, WiFi connectivity will be available in all LSNC office locations.

With adoption of Pika, LSNC has a web-based CMS that affords secure, universal remote access to client case records, for both direct advocacy and supervisory work. Pika includes integrated reporting features and basic case-related document production (e.g., form letters). Pika also includes calendaring and time keeping features that comply with the basic LSC technology baselines. All LSNC personnel maintain all time records using Pika.

LSNC has relied on the Google Apps platform since 2006. Google Apps provides all LSNC staff with universal web access to Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Docs, Google Sites, Google Groups and Google Contacts. Google Calendar, specifically, is now the required application for use by individual staff for maintaining their personal work calendars, and is used universally for maintaining office-wide calendars. As part of a current TIG grant, LSNC has supplemented the "tickler" functionality within Pika with a Google Calendar integration, such that Pika case-related tickler events are automatically synced and appear in the personal Google Calendars of all advocates associated with the particular case, as well as the office-specific tickler calendar of the office to which the case has been assigned.

In addition to already standard desktop applications - like WordPerfect, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint - Google Docs provides LSNC staff with universal web access for creation, storage, and sharing of documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and PDF files. In early 2012 Google began making changes to the underlying architecture of its Google

Docs application to offer an enhanced feature set for the creation, editing, sharing, storage, and local-device file synchronization of documents and files. “Google Docs” has been renamed “Google Drive.” Google Drive is currently available to all LSNC staff. The new Google Drive features enable users to upload any file of any kind, without conversion, such that users can rely on Google Drive as a virtual folder for web-accessible, Dropbox-like storage and retrieval of any document or other file. Google Drive currently provides LSNC users a default storage capacity of 5GB, a five-fold increase over the prior Google Docs storage limit. LSNC is able to provide greater Google Drive storage to LSNC users on an individual basis, as needed.

All Google Calendars, Google Drive, and Google Sites content is universally shareable with granulated control of permissions for viewing and editing.

All LSNC staff has universal remote legal research access via Westlaw. They also have web access to a wide range of public and private advocate content created by LSNC and widely used by other legal services advocates in California, including: the LSNC.net Advocate Feed; Regulation Summaries; the Race Equity Project; and the California Food Stamp Guide.

LSNC also maintains eleven private Google Groups discussion groups for propagating and sharing information within the organization. Most are substantive lists (housing, welfare, etc.) and all advocates are required to be on such lists. Membership by LSNC advocates in relevant external discussion groups is both expected and ubiquitous.

LSNC maintains all its official organizational intranet content (financial and human resources information, forms, policies, etc.) at a dedicated Google Sites location called the “Secured Private Network” (SPN). In addition to the SPN, the Google Sites application is used by staff as a solid, practical project management application and special project intranet platform. LSNC currently also relies on MandyMoon, a well-designed project management application that integrates seamlessly with Gmail, Google Calendar, and Google Docs. Google Sites and MandyMoon are used by LSNC staff for internal work as well as advocacy projects involving outside law firms, organizations,

and advocates. (Recently purchased by Salesforce, the Manymoon platform as of December 2011 is no longer available to new subscribers, although existing accounts like ours are still honored. Manymoon is expected to be phased out during 2012 and all existing Manymoon accounts will be transitioned over to Salesforce's new, comparable service called "Do.com". LSNC will be re-evaluating this successor product once the transition is made and may consider adoption of an alternate platform for project management.)

All offices rely on the Essential Forms application for standardized production of court forms and pleadings.

Relying on Google Calendar, LSNC in 2009 implemented program-wide calendaring used by all offices. The program-wide calendar is viewable at the LSNC Portal, where it can be toggled in and out of view, along with a calendar feed at the Portal highlighting the next five upcoming events.

#### **4. Records Management**

LSNC has differing policies that vary by the type of electronic record.

Client electronic records in the Pika CMS are maintained in a highly secured MySQL database and can be created by and modified within Pika by any authenticated user. regular users cannot move or delete any client records - only authorized IT staff can do so. The Pika database is backed up daily on a system-independent server and then backed up again to removable encrypted media that is kept offsite. Pika database backups are maintained for 30 calendar days.

LSNC complies with the California State Bar requirement for retention of client case records for a minimum of five years from the date the case is closed. LSNC regularly deletes electronic records that exceed that time frame.

All electronic document files in user-designated directories on local office file servers are backed up daily for the last 10 calendar days. The same files are also backed up daily to a remote server in Sacramento, and then backed up again to removable encrypted media that is taken offsite each work day. Other documents created or imported to various LSNC Google Apps (Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Docs, Google Sites, and Google Contacts) are secured and maintained by Google itself.

While LSNC has the foregoing, well-established practices in place, it needs to thoroughly update, clarify, and formalize the expectations and specific protocols for retention and disposal of the full range of electronic records in use by the organization, including those stored within the Google Apps platform.

## **5. Knowledge Management**

With the benefit of a TIG grant, LSNC in 2008-2009 implemented enterprise search via a comprehensive, well organized, nutrient-dense knowledge content system that relies principally on the Google Search Appliance (GSA). The GSA can target any file for which there is access permission. All authenticated users throughout LSNC can search and/or navigate to all content that is targeted by this system. The system integrates all content in all designated LSNC public and private collections, including:

- All official LSNC intranet content (policies, protocols, forms, administrative, and case manuals, personnel and other human resources information; development and fundraising resources; technology-related information, etc.) maintained via Google Sites.
- Additional designated Google Sites project content created by LSNC staff.
- Integrated, universally searchable contact information for all LSNC personnel.
- A peer-reviewed collection of recommended pleadings, memoranda, and other types of commonly used advocacy documents.
- A comprehensive collection of documents related to all impact cases and projects.
- All content at all LSNC web locations, including the LSNC Advocate Feed, LSNC Regulatory Summaries, the Race Equity Project, the California Food Stamp Guide,

and all LSNC special program websites, including dedicated HICAP Services, Ombudsman Services, Health Rights, Senior Legal Hotline, and Voluntary Legal Services Program sites.

- Thousands of other user-generated, high-value text-based documents (WordPerfect, Word, PDF, PowerPoint, RTF, TXT and XLS) organized in a structured taxonomy in a shared document repository.

Over three million Pika activity records, from hundreds of thousands of Pika client case records, are now regularly indexed, searchable externally from Pika, and dynamically retrievable from it, via the LSNC enterprise search platform. LSNC staff, of course, can also rely on the Pika CMS native search functionality, a point solution enabling users to locate client records and related case files.

## **6. Intake and Telephonic Advice**

All LSNC offices have intake and telephone systems in place. LSNC's telephone systems have been upgraded to a standardized level of capacity and functionality to assure line capacity is adequate to handle the actual volume of telephone demand. That said, not all LSNC telephone systems yet have the capacity to review wait times, dropped calls, and similar metrics, nor have fully automated call-back functions been implemented. Although LSNC phone installations have the capacity to deliver recorded information to callers while waiting or after hours, the adequacy of those features warrants further evaluation.

In handling telephonic intake and advice, all LSNC offices rely on established protocols for routing clients based on language need, including use of translation services if language assistance is not directly available via a LSNC staff member. LSNC maintains a comprehensive, shared list, accessible via its intranet, of all languages other than English spoken by all LSNC staff.

Real-time intake using the Pika CMS is the norm within LSNC, and addresses all the baseline technology requirements for a case management system. Intake workers have

electronic access to the basic information they require to provide screened applicants with appropriate information, advice, and referrals. LSNC intake workers are purposefully trained on use of LawHelpCalifornia as a source for current, relevant referral and client resource information.

## **7. Direct Assistance to Low-income Persons**

LSNC is strongly supportive of LawHelpCalifornia, the statewide entity in California primarily responsible for assuring web-based legal information and self-help support is available to the low-income community. LSNC regularly provides content, updated contact and referral information, and multiple language translations of varied self-help materials to LawHelpCalifornia.

LSNC conducts a wide range of community legal education events, more specifically documented in its annual OSR report to LSC. For such events, all offices have available and exploit the same technologies available to them internally for educational purposes.

## **8. Support for Use of Private Attorneys**

LSNC has in place and utilizes all the basic technologies required by the baseline standards for private attorney involvement. These include the availability and use of web locations and applications for recruiting volunteer attorneys; the ability to securely and ethically transmit client and case data; and web-based case management (Pika) to track and handle all routine case-handling metrics.

As authenticated users, all LSNC volunteers, including volunteer attorneys, have both local and remote access to LSNC's knowledge management system described, above.

## **9. Security**

LSNC has well established policies and protocols to assure all public and private data and documents, including confidential or sensitive client and employee information, are

secure, backed up and archived at defined intervals, and protected against intrusion. LSNC complies with all data security requirements of all its varied funding sources, including LSC.

At the macro level, the entire LSNC enterprise and all local offices have a standardized, regularly updated complement of essential firewall, anti-virus, anti-spyware, backup, and archive software and protocols. LSNC protocols include storage of offsite backups and triple-location backup storage of all client electronic data, described above in the section on Records Management. Should one or all data components of the LSNC enterprise be compromised or corrupted, the Pika database could be restored as far back as thirty days, and all other electronic records on local office file servers as far back as 10 days. All content in Google Apps is secured and maintained by Google itself.

As stated above, LSNC has in place protocols for the retention and deletion of electronic (and non-electronic, for that matter) client data and records, in conformity with the requirements of the State Bar of California.

Although LSNC policies in this regard are well established, they should be updated to assure they are current and comprehensively address all types of electronic data, file, and document types. This includes a thorough review of how data and documents are stored and secured while remaining widely and remotely accessible, and the potential risks of intrusion into the confidential and sensitive information they contain. LSNC will do that re-evaluation and will adopt updated policies and protocols to address any gaps identified.

## **10. Training and Technology**

While adept at implementing and promoting the use of new technologies within the organization, LSNC recognizes that it needs to better formalize the structures and practice for technology training across all positions within the organization.

Like many field programs, it regularly conducts annual training events as part of larger program events, regularly conducts presentations and trainings for its technology committee members, and evaluates and assures appropriate training opportunities for its IT staff. LSNC also regularly promotes and makes available to all staff technologically supported skills and substantive trainings. Most notably, this occurs as a result of increasingly available internal and external webinar trainings. One example was a LSNC program-wide webinar entitled "Technology and Client Confidentiality," an MCLE-credited event addressing a recent California State Bar Formal Ethics Opinion about the duties of confidentiality and competence when using web-enabled devices.

During 2011, LSNC conducted a program-wide survey to evaluate the unmet technology training needs of all staff. In response to the results of that survey, in 2012 LSNC will be conducting a series of half-day, onsite technology trainings in all local offices. It will also formulate and adopt specific policies to assure the assessment of technology training needs are identified and responded to as part of all regular staff evaluations.

## **11. Communications**

LSNC has a very mature complement of communication tools available to all staff. Most of these tools are Google-based: Google Apps, already referenced above, provides web-based Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Docs (for document creation, storage and retrieval) and Google Sites (wiki-style content and project management). The content in Google Calendar, Documents, and Sites functions are all optionally viewable, editable, and shareable inside and outside of the organization, depending on the permissions selected by the individual user. Gmail also now provides integrated IM, SMS and VoIP features, all of which have been activated and are available for use by all LSNC staff. LSNC has also activated Gmail and Google Calendar features that allow staff to sync their email and calendars with their mobile devices.

LSNC has established policies regarding the use of the Internet generally, and email and discussion groups specifically. (As mentioned above, LSNC has long used Google Groups as the platform for its varied substantive and administrative discussion groups.

Currently, LSNC maintains eleven such discussion groups within its Google Apps Groups.) However, its policies do need to be updated to address more specifically the personal and collaborative use of the full range of applications and functionality available in the Google Apps platform.

## **12. Administration**

A full complement of technology tools to support accounting, human resources, and fundraising has always been among the highest priorities within LSNC, which meets all the technological needs and functions set forth in the baselines.

LSNC has adopted Sage Fund Accounting and Sage Fundraising as the core platform for its financial, human resources, and development offices. These applications address all the basic capacities and functions identified by the LSC baselines.

Other established technologies within LSNC already enable it to accomplish other functions listed in the baselines, such as the ability to advertise positions and accept applications electronically, and the ability to accept online donations.