

Quality and Productivity Commission
32nd Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
"Innovating for Impact"

2018 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: WEB PORTAL FOR INTERPRETER REQUESTS (WPIR)

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: JULY 2016

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2017)

PROJECT STATUS: Ongoing One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? Yes No



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. State clearly and concisely what difference the project has made.

1 The Web Portal for Interpreter Requests (WPIR) is a language access initiative
 2 available through the Los Angeles Superior Court's (LASC) website. WPIR developed
 3 as a result of the Court's expansion of language access services. The demand for these
 4 services raised awareness of the importance of adequately addressing the needs of
 5 limited English proficiency (LEP) litigants. Any party or witness in a civil, family law,
 6 traffic, or probate can now request an interpreter in advance of hearing via WPIR. In
 7 addition to English, the online interpreter request form is also available in Eastern
 8 Armenian, Simplified Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese. The Language Access
 9 Services Department processes requests submitted through WPIR. Court interpreter
 10 coordinators can then locate and schedule interpreters for the court dates and locations
 11 requested. WPIR reduces operational delays in the Court by minimizing the need to
 12 continue cases, or order parties to return to court later. The early identification of LEP
 13 needs that is possible through WPIR not only increases litigant satisfaction; it instills
 14 increased trust in the judicial system though prompt and equal access to justice.

BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) = TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$ N/A	\$ N/A	\$ N/A	\$ N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

ANNUAL = 12 MONTHS ONLY

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles 111 North Hill Street, Room 105 E Los Angeles, CA 90012		TELEPHONE NUMBER (213) 633-0112
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Kathie O'Connell, Director, Courtroom Support		TELEPHONE NUMBER (213) 633-0688 EMAIL koconnel@lacourt.org
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE <small>(PLEASE CALL (213) 693-6322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME)</small> Sylvia White-Irby 		TELEPHONE NUMBER (213) 633-0127 EMAIL swirby@lacourt.org
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Sherril R. Carter, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court 		TELEPHONE NUMBER (213) 633-0112

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1st FACT SHEET – LIMITED UP TO 3 PAGES ONLY: Describe the **challenge(s), solution(s), and benefit(s)** of the project to the County. What quality and/or productivity-related outcome(s) has the project achieved? Provide measures of success and specify assessment time frame. Use Arial 12 point font.

Challenge:

The Court hears cases ranging from simple traffic infractions to murders; landlord/tenant disputes to multi-million dollar lawsuits; guardianships to involuntary commitments. LASC is comprised of more than 500 courtrooms in 40 courthouses located throughout Los Angeles County. Los Angeles' incredible diversity is one of its greatest assets, representing one of the most linguistically diverse regions in the world. According to the University of California, Los Angeles Professor Vyacheslav Ivanov, there are at least 224 identified languages spoken in Los Angeles County. LASC provides interpreter services for parties and witnesses in 89 languages, including rare and indigenous dialects.

More than 25,000 people come to LASC courthouses each day; their language needs unknown until they request service. Without proper language assistance, LEP court users may experience exclusion from meaningful participation in the court process. Many LEP litigants appear without attorneys. Often they depend upon friends or family members to operate as unofficial interpreters. However, these well-meaning individuals can only explain what happened in court after the proceedings are concluded. Further, even English-fluent friends and family will have difficulty comprehending legal terminology and court procedures. The use of untrained and unqualified interpreters can result in misleading and confusing consequences. The state constitution requires that courts provide interpreting services for litigants involved in criminal and some juvenile cases, and according to section 68092.1 of California Government Code; *the Legislature finds and declares that it is imperative that courts provide interpreters to all parties who require one, and that both the legislative and judicial branches of government continue in their joint commitment to carry out this shared goal.*

The Court provides Spanish language interpreters in all locations and all case types on a regular basis. However, failure to identify LEP litigants that require services in languages other than Spanish impacts access and efficiency negatively across all case types and locations. Only a limited number of number of qualified court interpreters are available statewide – especially in languages other than Spanish. Recognizing this, the Court must coordinate, schedule and utilize these services prudently. When the need for a court interpreter is not identified in advance of a court appearance, and a qualified interpreter is not available, the case may be continued to locate a qualified interpreter. As a result, all parties in an action experience additional, unnecessary delay in the progress of their court business.

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Solution:

In 2015, the California Language Access Plan heralded the expansion of free language access services to all case types. As a result, the Court began providing full-time employee Spanish language interpreters in every courthouse, for every case type. The Court also recognized that identifying other-than-Spanish language needs in advance of hearings was critical to providing interpreter services consistently and sustainably. WPIR's early identification capacities result in the efficient allocation of interpreters in the case calendaring process. In May 2015, a project team composed of managers from Language Access Services and Court Technology Services began planning and developing a pilot that would eventually become WPIR. The pilot was launched for unlawful detainer (eviction) proceedings. WPIR succeeded in enabling litigants to self-identify their needs for language services well in advance of courtroom hearings. Within the first month of operation, the project team developed a business process, built a prototype web portal and drafted revisions to ancillary notices and forms. Only then could the availability of WPIR be publicized for legal documents served in eviction matters.

The next phase of development included the translation of the announcement notice, instruction forms, and the electronic interpreter request form into the most requested languages, including; Armenian, Korean, Simplified Chinese and Vietnamese. Then an email resource account was created to direct online interpreter requests to a generic email account. This account was monitored by assignment coordinators office staff.

WPIR was formally launched on September 15, 2015. A press release provided information about how the portal could be accessed from various points of the Court's website. More than 100 requests in 20 languages were received within the first 6 months. The success of the pilot created time-saving opportunities for assignment coordinators to allocate interpreter services in advance of hearings. Based upon this success, WPIR was adopted as an official business practice in July 2016. Throughout 2016 and 2017 the project expanded to other case types. WPIR has operated successfully since 2017. WPIR has since been linked to the Court's automated traffic hearing date scheduling system. This development enables litigants to coordinate their court dates with interpreter's requests in a manner never before possible. Perhaps most importantly, the ease of use and convenience of services available through WPIR now allows litigants greater control and confidence in their court experiences. The Court also benefits from decreased repetition of staff actions and the corresponding, cumulative efficiencies available as a result of this innovation.

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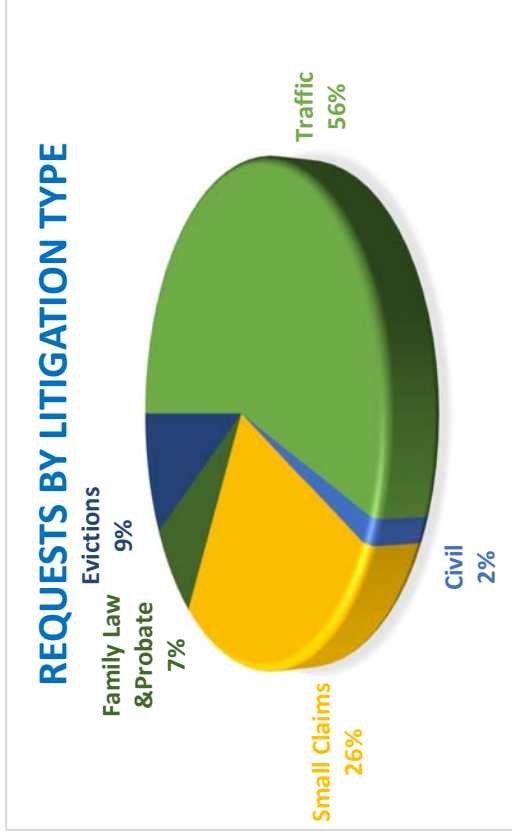
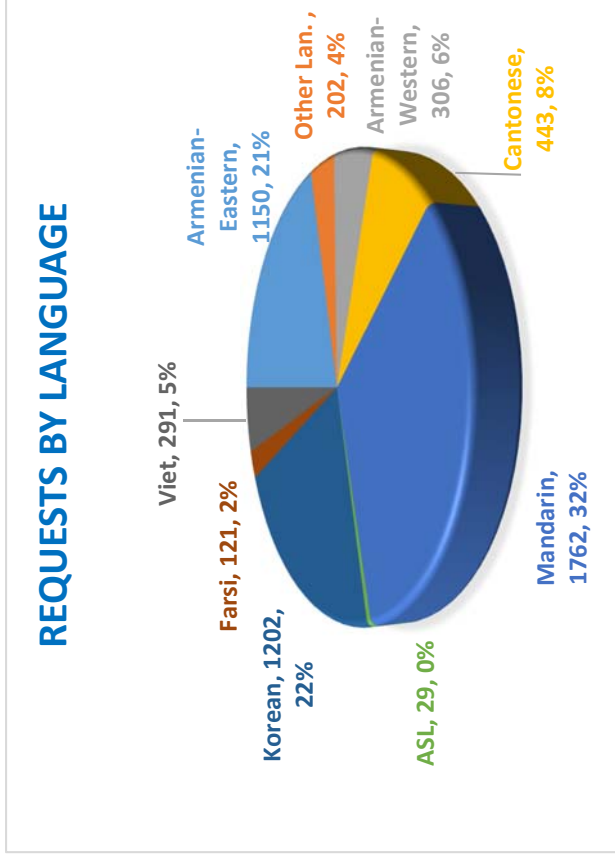
Benefits:

WPIR achieves several quality and productivity-related outcomes. Measures of success include service utilization rates and public response to the system. During the period of May 2016 through May 2018, a total of 6,614 requests for interpreters in more than 50 languages were received through WPIR. The portal has proven to be a user-friendly mechanism for identifying litigant language needs. The data collected from the program provides insight into language needs at early stages in the court process. Early identification of the need for interpreters allows the Court to secure interpreter services in advance, and to avoid the kind of last minute requests that too often result in hearing continuances. With limited resources in many languages, WPIR coordinates interpreter availability where and when they are needed the most. Litigants now benefit from the equalizing impact of trained, well-qualified interpreter on their cases.

Linkage to the County Strategic Plan – 1 page only. Which County Strategic Plan goal does this project address? Explain how. Use Arial 12 point font.

WPIR addresses County Strategic Plan Goal I: to ‘Make Investments That Transform Lives.’ Litigants lacking adequate interpreter services can experience court events as confusing and overwhelming. Lack of fluency in English further decreases the likelihood that they will succeed in representing their best interests in court. Even if they muster the courage to express themselves, without qualified interpretation, there is no guarantee they will be understood. The resulting frustration translates quite understandably to perceptions of disinterest or unfairness. The Court’s investment in WPIR combats these undesirable outcomes through the fair and efficient allocation of effective assistance. Understanding proceedings that may impact their lives significantly can transform these negative perceptions into a more neutral comprehension of processes that operate the same for everyone. Even if litigants do not prevail in their matters, they are more likely to experience American justice as a fair and hopeful system.

Web Portal for Interpreter Requests May 2016 through May 2018 6,614 Total Requests



	Armenian-Eastern	Armenian-Western	Cantonese	Mandarin	Korean	Vietnamese	Farsi	ASL	Other Languages	Total Request per Litigation
Small Claims	183	14	94	319	492	90	53	6	488	1739
Evictions	27	5	41	160	144	20	21	5	185	608
Civil	11	2	1	28	26	2	3	0	33	106
Traffic	913	284	290	1134	455	154	33	13	402	3678
Family Law & Probate	16	1	17	121	85	25	11	5	202	483
Total Request per Language	1150	306	443	1762	1202	291	121		1310	6614

** Other Languages includes: Tagalog, Russian, Thai, Arabic, etc...

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFITS TO THE COUNTY): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. Please indicate whether these benefits apply in total or on a per unit basis, e.g., per capita, per transaction, per case, etc. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation. Use Arial 12 point font

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these are costs to the County or to other entities.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes. Please indicate whether these were expenditures by the County or by other entities.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

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