

Quality and Productivity Commission
34th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
“Leading with Excellence”

2021 APPLICATION

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

NAME OF PROJECT: LACOURTCONNECT – REMOTE APPEARANCES

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: JUNE 2020

(Must have been fully implemented for a minimum of at least one year - on or before July 1, 2020)

CHECK HERE IF THIS PROJECT IS BEING SUBMITTED FOR THE COVID-19 IMPACT AWARD ONLY. (Projects must be implemented on or before December 31, 2020. **Note:** Projects implemented less than one year ago will not be eligible for any other PQA awards. In addition, once a project is submitted, you cannot submit the same project for awards consideration in subsequent years).

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.

1 LACourtConnect (LACC) is a remote appearance solution that allows case participants
 2 (litigants, attorneys, witnesses, interpreters, court reporters and judicial officers) to
 3 engage in court proceedings from any location through access to an internet or audio
 4 connection. LACC is unique from other remote meeting platforms in that it fully
 5 integrates with the Court’s case management system to provide a more secure meeting
 6 experience, automates scheduling and recovers significant operating costs. LACC
 7 creates a unique link for every courtroom hearing and emails it to the parties for secure
 8 access to the hearing. LACC is available for civil (including small claims), family law,
 9 probate, and traffic cases in over 250 courtrooms. LACC handles between 2,500 –
 10 2,800 remote participants every day. Finally, since this is a cost-recovery program,
 11 revenues generated by LACC are funneled into licensing fees and the rapid upgrade of
 12 new technologies, including video cameras, audio upgrades, and monitors to connect
 13 in-person participants with remote users.
 14
 15

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 105E | | TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-633-0126 |
| PROGRAM MANAGER’S NAME Snorri Ogata, Chief Information Officer EMAIL sogata@lacourt.org | | TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-633-0126 |
| PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME) Sylvia White-Irby  | DATE 6/17/21 | TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-633-0127 EMAIL: swirby@lacourt.org |
| DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE Sherri R. Carter  | DATE 6/23/2021 | TELEPHONE NUMBER 213-633-0112 |

****ELECTRONIC, WET, OR SCANNED SIGNATURES ARE ACCEPTABLE****

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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/Solution: While telephonic appearances had been available in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles (Court) on a limited basis for many years, the Court recognized the need for a more efficient and robust remote hearing platform in 2016. The Court envisioned an in-house platform that could adapt to changing internal and external business needs – LACourtConnect – Remote Appearances (LACC).

One challenge addressed by LACC was how to present evidence remotely. LACC approached this challenge by using the Digital Evidence Presentation Systems (DEPS), which enables LACC to display evidence on more than one monitor if needed. DEPS monitors enable parties to connect in real time whether the parties are physically located at the Court or at remote locations.

Another challenge was integrating remote appearance systems with established court applications such as the Case Management System (CMS), the Identity Management System (IMS), and the LA Attorney Portal system (LAAP). This integration was required for the continuity of accurate and official court services that could be delivered with maximized convenience and security. The Court’s in-house Court Technology Services Department (CTS) accomplished integration of these important applications

As CTS accomplished technological goals such as application integration, it became apparent that significant training and education would be essential to successful effective user experiences. Not only would training be required for court staff, but also for external users. Training over 250 Judicial Officers and Judicial Assistants, thousands of external agency representatives, and tens of thousands of litigants presented a significant challenge. To meet it, the Court created a variety of training materials and methods to accommodate a range of user learning styles. In addition to user manuals and quick reference guides, comprehensive training programs were developed for court staff to teach Judicial Officers and Judicial Assistants how to conduct remote or partially remote (hybrid) hearings through LACC.

Attorney and litigant training and user support are administered through hard copy materials, video vignettes, telephonic and live chat support services and, more recently, chatbots. LACC assists approximately 1 in every 12 remote participants every day.

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Prior remote appearance capabilities at the Court were almost entirely telephonic. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the rapid adoption of video conferencing across the country, required the Court to expedite LACC’s implementation. This accelerated implementation did not negatively impact the far-reaching scope and quality of the project. To ensure functionality and reliability, the Court implemented LACC in scheduled phases by litigation area:

- Probate connectivity - moved up by 1 month;
- Traffic connectivity - moved up by 6 months;
- Family Law connectivity - moved up by 10 months; and
- Civil connectivity - moved up by 18 months.

LACC’s video features are supported through the installation of dedicated cameras within courtrooms. Now in-court participants can communicate with remote participants throughout Los Angeles County and beyond.

Benefits: The primary benefit of LACC is to preserve and promote timely access to justice for Los Angeles County’s large and diverse population. Its remote access capabilities have been especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling thousands of court hearings to go forward safely and without delay. LACC continues to operate as a key court service for 2,500 to 2,800 remote participants daily. Since April 30, 2021, 416,257 people participated in LACC remote hearings.

LACC mitigates participant costs through free remote appearances with approved fee waivers and/or ADA accommodations. The project also integrates with court financial systems for the convenience of participants. LACC enables remote participants to schedule and cancel court dates, as well as to access their case activity through the Court’s website 24-hours a day.

As COVID-19 continues to recede, the success of LACC inspires ongoing investment and development. LACC continues to function as a primary and essential court component of the Court’s services, providing court participants:

- the reduction of time traveling to and attending proceedings physically;
- the elimination of costs and inconveniences associated with driving, parking and appearing in person;
- the increased efficiency and organization of functions implemented by court staff that were previously only possible on-site;
- the enhanced service of email reminders at the time of scheduling, and 24 hours before the court hearing;
- the ability to schedule – and cancel – appearances up to two hours before the court hearing; and
- the option to view a record of all past and upcoming hearings for calendaring and client billing reconciliation.

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Ongoing development of LACC generates the following benefits:

- minimal cost-recovery fee of \$15;
- free remote appearances for participants with approved fee waivers and ADA accommodations;
- fee waivers are automatically validated against the case management system;
- user attendance and cost-recovery fees paid are automatically recorded in the case management systems and financial system;
- live agent technical support through phone and live chat during business hours to help participants with issues signing up or connecting to their hearing;
- over 30,000 phone calls and 3,600 live chats completed through April 30, 2021;
- extended support services through chatbots (over 10,600 customers received support from a chatbot from June 2020 to April 2021);
- integration with the Court’s Case Management Systems enable remote participants to participate in hearings independently of any staff involvement for scheduling or fee collection;
- the ability of attorneys to use the same identification credentials for both LACC and the Court’s Attorney Portal service; and
- the ability to schedule or cancel remote appearances at any time via the Court website.

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

LACC addresses all of the Los Angeles County Strategic Plan goals.

It supports Goal I: **“Make Investments That Transform Lives”** in that it aggressively addresses society’s most complicated social, health, and public safety challenges. The project reflects a highly responsive organization capable of responding to complex societal problems – one person at a time. LACC accomplishes this by reforming service delivery within the justice system. It reconceptualizes civic service by ensuring access to justice through a remote platform that prioritizes public safety in an economically equitable manner.

LACC supports Goal II: **“Foster Vibrant and Resilient Communities”** in that it invests in the lives of County residents sustainably and is grounded in the realization of an ever-strengthening community. LACC operates as a hub of public-private partnering with other agencies to support vibrant communities. LACC accomplishes this by supporting the wellness of our communities. Not only are court staff trained to operate the system; they in turn educate and support external users. Through both their efforts and system enhancements, LACC provides 24-hour assistance to the community and associated justice agencies that play a central role in court cases.

LACC supports Goal III: **“Realize Tomorrow’s Government Today”** in that it responds to increasingly dynamic and complex challenges to the collective abilities of all government agencies to respond to public needs and expectations. The project reinforces the Court’s role in the community as an innovative and flexible partner that is focused on advancing the common good by enhancing digital government for the benefit of the community. Court recognizes that providing these services at the lowest possible cost will encourage remote participation across a wide spectrum of court users, especially among vulnerable populations; and the availability of an integrated video platform will allow participation in hearing types otherwise impracticable by telephone or other means.

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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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|---|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| \$ N/A | \$N/A | \$ N/A | \$ 0 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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LACC operates as a cost-recovery model. While the Court does not profit directly from operating LACC, revenue generated through the project’s convenience fees is rededicated to supporting and extending the project’s functionalities. Costs neutralized through the convenience fees include:

- courtroom technology (computers, web cameras, microphones, audio integration, display screens);
- software licensing fees to vendors for facilitating the registration, cancelation, and payment processes;
- software licensing fees to finance LACC remote meeting platform; and
- staff requirements to operate LACC, such as:
 - four full-time staff members to provide technology implementation and support services for courtrooms, and
 - six full-time staff members to provide customer support, and
 - one staff member to track and balance revenues and costs associated with the program.

The Court recently announced the cost for video appearances will be reduced from \$23 to \$15 – the same price as audio participation.

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FOR COLLABORATING DEPARTMENTS ONLY

(For single department submissions, do not include this page)

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|---|---|
| DEPARTMENT NO. 2 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS | |
| PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE | DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE |
| EMAIL: _____ | EMAIL: _____ |
| DEPARTMENT NO. 3 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS | |
| PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER’S NAME AND SIGNATURE | DEPARTMENT HEAD’S NAME AND SIGNATURE |
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| DEPARTMENT NO. 7 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS | |
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