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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Development of a Strategic Plan for Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ)

This Request for Proposal (RFP) solicits written proposals from professionally qualified consultants to provide services to Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ) for the development of a 3-year strategic plan. All proposals should clearly define how the consultant will work with VLJ to assist in a comprehensive, participatory planning process.

Issue Date: January 15, 2019

Closing Date: Close of business February 12, 2019

Project Budget: Up to \$20,000

Submission: Email your proposal to: Cathy Keenan, Executive Director at ckeenan@vljinj.org. Please put "Strategic Planning Proposal" in your subject line.

Mission and Background

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ) is a statewide legal services organization headquartered in Newark, NJ. VLJ's mission is to improve the lives of economically disadvantaged adults, children, and families in New Jersey by empowering them with tools, advice and pro bono representation with the goal of securing fair and equal treatment within the legal system. In 18 years, VLJ has grown from a small program with 1 staff person and 30 volunteer attorneys to an award-winning program with 15 staff members, including 8 lawyers, and 1,700 volunteers.

The service model employed by VLJ leverages scarce resources by utilizing the talents and skills of a vast network of volunteers, ranging from leaders at large law firms and corporations to law students just starting their legal careers. VLJ prioritizes legal services to low-income New Jersey residents and screens all applicants for financial eligibility.

VLJ's 11 programs fall within four areas: aiding women, children and families; working through financial crisis; advocating for veterans; and responding to disaster. VLJ provides free legal aid to clients with divorce, child support, special education, bullying, estate planning, human trafficking victims' legal issues, bankruptcy, consumer law, criminal record expungement, driver's license restoration, tenancy, Superstorm Sandy legal issues, and veterans' legal issues. VLJ also provides legal services to families in Newark's South Ward through a grant awarded to South Ward Promise Neighborhood. While some of VLJ's programs have statewide reach and impact, VLJ legal services have always had an emphasis on low-income residents of Essex County. In 2017, VLJ services impacted 4,400 people and VLJ's

volunteers contributed over \$2.3 million in free legal services. VLJ's organizational budget is approximately \$1.3 million.

Budget and Expectations

As VLJ enters its 19th year, the organization has grown substantially in terms of programming, service area, staffing, and budget. VLJ is seeking to develop and implement a strategic plan that will forward the mission of the organization. As the budget for the strategic plan is a concern, VLJ would like to see proposals that provide an overall price and that break the budget into modules. To stay within budget, VLJ board and staff are prepared to assist with the internal/external scan and other activities, with guidance from the consultant.

VLJ expects the strategic planning consultant to work with its Strategic Planning Committee (comprised of VLJ staff and board members) to:

- Design and establish a comprehensive strategic planning process to include:
 - A detailed work breakdown with timeframes of the steps that will be taken to develop a strategic plan
 - Check-in points for VLJ to be provided with project status updates, including setting up meetings/calls, preparing background material, preparing agendas and drafting minutes of meetings/calls
 - Design, conduct and analyze comprehensive internal/external scan examining the organization's ability to achieve its mission
 - Review of VLJ's printed material, publications, and website
 - A thorough assessment of VLJ's infrastructure, including but not limited to space, technology, human capital, and financial resources

- Facilitate all meetings and provide leadership, direction, and expert consultation and advice related to the development of an effective strategic plan, including advice for successful implementation

Project Deliverables

- Develop a 3-year plan in written electronic format that includes:
 - Updated/reconfirmed mission statement
 - Core values of VLJ
 - Strategic goals and objectives
 - Detailed recommendations for VLJ board/staff to implement the plan, including suggestions for benchmarks, objectives, and tasks
 - Model for evaluating implementation
 - Recommendations for additional board/staff planning that may arise from the strategic plan, including succession planning for executive and board leadership and fundraising strategies needed to implement the plan

- Present a status update with preliminary findings and recommendations prior to writing the final strategic plan

- Present findings and plan to VLJ's Board of Trustees, along with an executive summary

- While VLJ recognizes that completing this project requires significant and active board and staff involvement, it is important to note that the consultant selected will be responsible for completing all project work products, including both draft and final plans
- Copies of all instruments used to gather information, draft plans, and the final plans will become the property of VLJ

Components of a Proposal: Replies to this RFP should include:

- An executive summary of the work to be performed by the consultant
- A description of the applicant's general approach to strategic planning consultation, including methodology, perspective, or philosophy that guides your work with organizations comparable to VLJ
- Scope of work and estimated time line, including a clear description of the project components, the order in which each stage will be completed and how long each stage will take
- A clear indication of check-in points for project status updates
- An indication of which aspects of the project will require board and/or staff involvement and include anticipated time requirements for each activity involving their participation
- A detailed budget that breaks out expenses by module
- Credentials and qualifications of key personnel who will take responsibility for working directly on this project
- References from 3 past clients for comparable work

Timeframe: VLJ wishes to begin the strategic planning process by April 2019 and complete the process within 6-9 months, so the plan is ready to be implemented by the start of 2020.

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer.