I. Project Goals and Objectives.

The goal of this project was to replicate LiveHelp on the LawHelp New York website, with a particular focus on facilitating access to legal information for New York’s Spanish-speaking and limited English proficiency (LEP) residents. Developed by Montana Legal Services Association and Pro Bono Net under a 2004 Technology Initiative Grant, LiveHelp allows website visitors to obtain online, real-time chat assistance from trained website navigators. Navigators assist website visitors in finding appropriate resources to address civil legal needs; the resources on LawHelp/NY include thousands of informational documents, referral information for hundreds of free legal service projects throughout New York State, and interactive interviews to help unrepresented people prepare court documents for several different types of cases.

While LiveHelp was launched in Montana and Iowa in 2006, New York’s LiveHelp Project covers new ground in several respects. It was the first project to be bilingual from the outset, with full content in English and Spanish, to enhance the usability of LawHelp/NY’s full Spanish mirror site and to address the substantial unmet legal needs of New York’s immigrant, Latino and limited English proficiency communities. Along with Illinois Legal Aid Online, LawHelp/NY has shown that LiveHelp can be a cost-effective tool even for high-traffic websites in larger states: New York accounted for nearly half of the LiveHelp usage of Pro Bono Net’s nine LiveHelp partners during the first half of 2010. LawHelp/NY is also one of the first programs to staff LiveHelp primarily with volunteers, leveraging the large reserves of pro bono capacity in New York.

Building on Pro Bono Net’s experiences in launching LiveHelp in Iowa, Montana and several other states, LawHelp/NY launched LiveHelp in February of 2010 following a successful trial period. Our evaluation shows that LiveHelp has made significant contributions to LawHelp/NY’s ability to serve low-income New Yorkers. The project has achieved each of the objectives identified in the grant:

- Implementing LiveHelp in English on the LawHelp.org/NY website;
- Establishing and formalizing institutional and on-going relationships to develop the pool of pro bono volunteers to serve as navigators for LiveHelp assistance;
• Piloting the provision of LiveHelp to low-income persons in Spanish, and to limited English proficient users in general; and
• Conducting an outreach campaign to maximize the use of LiveHelp.

Finally, the successful implementation of this project benefited enormously from the ongoing staffing partnership between the New York LawHelp Consortium and Legal Assistance of Western NY. As a result of this relationship, LawHelp/NY was able to recruit an Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Legal Fellow from 2009-2010 to help launch the project. The second Equal Justice AmeriCorps Fellow (one of four LawNY Legal Fellows) started in August of 2010, and continues to fulfill the function of LiveHelp Coordinator, reporting to the Project Manager, LawHelp/NY’s Project Director. The current legal fellow has significant clinic experience and two years of work experience as a paralegal doing public benefits work in the Brooklyn Neighborhood Office of the Legal Aid Society, and she is knowledgeable about the fundamentals of relevant New York law. Given the way our LiveHelp Project is staffed, this function is critical to our continued success.

There have been no significant changes to the goals and objectives of TIG #08057.

II. Evaluation Data and Methodologies.

LawHelp/NY and Pro Bono Net used several survey instruments, data sets and other methods to assess the project’s accomplishments; the evaluation methods do not deviate significantly from those set out in the approved TIG evaluation plan, attached as Appendix A.

Website and LiveHelp usage data
LawHelp/NY staff reviewed usage data for the LawHelp.org/NY website as well as for LiveHelp. Website usage data reflect the number of visitors and page views, allowing us to gauge the proportion of site visitors making use of LiveHelp. LiveHelp usage data reflect the number of visitors accessing LiveHelp from both the English- and Spanish-language LawHelp.org/NY websites.

LiveHelp User Survey Data
To access LiveHelp, visitors must complete a brief survey soliciting their preferred language (English or Spanish), place of residence and type of problem, broken down by area of law; a total of 2,177 visitors completed the pre-chat survey from January 2010 through September 2010. LiveHelp users are also offered an exit survey; LawHelp/NY staff reviewed each of the 135 exit surveys in which visitors answered our evaluation questions.1

Specialist Surveys

1 The New York LiveHelp exit survey also gave visitors the option of requesting a chat transcript via email; a number of visitors filled out the survey to request a transcript, but did not respond to the substantive evaluation questions. We elected not to require answers to the evaluation questions because we did not want to deter visitors from receiving a transcript, if needed.
LiveHelp operators are asked to complete a brief survey at the end of each chat, soliciting narrative suggestions for website content and training changes. LawHelp/NY staff review the operator surveys on an ongoing basis; for purposes of this evaluation, we also revisited a sample of 100 such surveys.

**Volunteer Surveys and Semi-Structured Interviews**
LawHelp/NY asked LiveHelp’s 25 spring 2010 volunteers to complete a brief, anonymous survey at the end of the semester; 9 volunteers completed the survey. A staff member not connected with LiveHelp conducted six semi-structured evaluation interviews with outgoing volunteers to obtain more in-depth feedback about supervision and training needs as well as the structure of the program.

**Review of Chat Transcripts**
LiveHelp transcripts are archived for 13 months. For purposes of this evaluation, LawHelp/NY conducted a detailed qualitative review of 15 randomly-selected English-language chats and 10 randomly-selected Spanish-language chats; a summary of the chats is attached as Appendix A.

**Administrative Documentation**
LawHelp/NY also reviewed project documentation, including records from project meetings, trainings and outreach efforts.

### III. Summary of Major Accomplishments, Recommendations and Future Steps

LawHelp/NY’s successful launch has demonstrated that the LiveHelp model can scale up to meet the needs of populous states and high-traffic, mature LawHelp websites. During the first nine months of 2010, traffic from New York doubled the total number of users served by the LiveHelp programs under Pro Bono Net’s umbrella. LawHelp/NY served 2,177 LiveHelp visitors during that period; the website itself is on track to serve approximately 425,000 visitors over the course of 2010.

LawHelp/NY’s LiveHelp evaluation shows that the service made a significant impact on visitors’ access to potentially life-changing legal resources. Visitors reported high levels of satisfaction with the help provided, with 88% rating the service with a 7, 8 or 9 on a 9-point scale. 95% said the service made their use of LawHelp/NY faster. Chat assistance appears to have significantly limited the number of visitors unable to find the information they need: only 6% of LiveHelp survey respondents reported not finding the information they sought.

Drawing on resources shared by Pro Bono Net and its LiveHelp partner programs, LawHelp/NY was able to develop rich content and hands-on training materials that, in turn, allowed us to competently serve visitors affected by potentially devastating legal problems. We were able to develop a fine-tuned set of tools to screen and direct visitors with eviction and foreclosure cases, leveraging existing interactive interviews and informational materials in those areas. We developed a domestic violence protocol, allowing us to screen for safety problems and to refer domestic violence survivors to appropriate, comprehensive legal and social services. Transcript reviews and semi-structured interviews with LiveHelp volunteers bear out the value of real-time
support: LiveHelp visitors left the service better informed, more confident and better prepared to address challenging legal problems in a wide range of areas of law.

LawHelp/NY’s LiveHelp launch was strengthened by an outpouring of support from volunteers. During the planning phase of our recruitment efforts, LawHelp/NY set a goal of recruiting and training 10-12 law student and attorney volunteers for the spring semester of 2010. We hoped to staff the service for one to two evenings per week. Our recruitment surpassed expectations by a large margin. More than 70 law students attended an informational event at one law school; we recruited, trained and retained 25 law students for the spring 2010 semester. This support allowed us to staff the site four evenings per week, and to minimize downtime by scheduling multiple navigators for busy shifts. While the precise effect of this increased uptime is difficult to quantify, we believe it allowed us to serve hundreds more visitors than would have otherwise been able to make use of LiveHelp. Evening hours alone have accounted for around 150 visitors to date.

LiveHelp has proven a valuable model for delivering legal information in large and small states alike. LawHelp/NY’s experience has shown that volunteer support can be a valuable and reliable staffing option that can help minimize the cost of rolling out new LiveHelp services. The LiveHelp model can significantly reduce barriers to finding legal information. Other LSC grantees should consider building on the LiveHelp model to expand existing pro se resources and programs providing more in-depth assistance in specific areas of law, such as in housing courts, family courts and consumer debt litigation.

IV. In-Depth Analysis of Accomplishments

As discussed in Section I, the overarching purpose of this grant was to implement LiveHelp on the LawHelp/NY website to increase access to legal resources for low-income New Yorkers in general and Spanish-speaking or low English proficiency communities in particular. The approved TIG evaluation plan set out four objectives to help LawHelp/NY meet this goal:

- Implementing LiveHelp in English on the LawHelp.org/NY website;
- Establishing and formalizing institutional and on-going relationships to develop the pool of pro bono volunteers to serve as navigators for LiveHelp assistance;
- Piloting the provision of LiveHelp to low-income persons in Spanish, and to limited English proficient users in general; and
- Conducting an outreach campaign to maximize the use of LiveHelp.

Each objective is discussed below.

Implementing LiveHelp in English on the LawHelp.org/NY website

Drawing on resources produced by other LiveHelp projects, LawHelp/NY developed content to populate the LivePerson platform. This included pre-chat and post-chat surveys in English and Spanish, an operator survey and a “frequently asked questions” document in English and Spanish.
LawHelp/NY also developed more than 50 preconfigured responses to common questions or problems. Our approach to developing “canned chats” drew on conversations with project managers from Pro Bono Net’s other LiveHelp partner states. Some “canned chats” were intended to help volunteers manage difficulties, such as visitors asking for legal advice or other help beyond the scope of the service. Most, though, covered common areas of law, including family law/domestic violence, housing, foreclosure, debt and immigration. The canned chats were designed in part to help volunteers quickly direct users towards key resources in particular areas. For example, the housing “canned responses” distinguished between several different eviction resources. One canned response addressed evictions stemming from rent disputes in New York City, directing visitors to an informational pamphlet and an interactive interview to help the visitor prepare appropriate court paperwork. Other canned responses dealt with non-New York City eviction cases or New York City eviction cases not concerning rent. LawHelp/NY was able to offer volunteers a rich set of responses as a starting point for addressing particularly common legal questions. Additionally, navigators were instructed to use the canned chats as a starting point, one that could be modified depending on the particular legal question presented.

Another set of questions was developed to screen for, and respond appropriately to, domestic violence situations raising immediate safety concerns. Operators were trained to identify possible domestic violence situations—for example, any family law questions in which the visitor acted fearful or concerned over the other party’s anger—and to screen for whether the visitor was, in fact, suffering from abuse. In such cases, operators asked if the visitor had immediate safety concerns, or if she or he needed information on safe computer usage. Operators likewise made appropriate legal and social service referrals, and gave safety-planning information in addition to whatever other legal tools the visitor asked for. LawHelp/NY’s domestic violence protocol was reviewed by three attorneys with a background in representing abuse survivors. The safety screening question was used in at least seven interactions during the first half of 2010; LawHelp/NY volunteers and staff handled domestic violence questions concerning family law and related housing, immigration and public benefits issues.

Finally, our training model emphasizes being sympathetic with the plight of the visitors seeking LiveHelp; this led to a conclusion by Pro Bono Net staff that New York’s LiveHelp chats were more personal in tone than those of other states, which we believe contributes to a more positive experience for the user.

Following a successful trial launch starting in December 2009, LawHelp/NY conducted a full launch of LiveHelp in February 2010, bringing the service online ahead of schedule to coincide with the start of the academic term for our law student volunteers. Due to an outpouring of volunteer support, LawHelp/NY was able to staff LiveHelp for substantially more hours than originally anticipated: during the academic term, LiveHelp was generally available 9am-9pm Monday through Thursday and 9am-6pm Friday. Busy shifts were staffed with two volunteers to minimize downtime.

LiveHelp traffic in New York started out strong; the site quickly became the busiest of the nine sites hosted on Pro Bono Net’s LivePerson account, with 1,926 chat conversations from January through July 2010. Should LiveHelp traffic continue at the same pace as it has in recent months,
LiveHelp will likely serve approximately 3,700 people over the course of 2010. By way of comparison, in 2009, Pro Bono Net’s eight LiveHelp partner programs served a combined total of 3,843 visitors. For the first seven months of 2010, New York accounted for 49% of the LiveHelp chats handled by Pro Bono Net’s LiveHelp partner programs. The launch in New York has been a marked success in terms of bringing Pro Bono Net’s model to a very populous state with higher baseline LawHelp web traffic.

The available quantitative measures show that LiveHelp New York has also been a success in facilitating visitors’ searches for legal information. When asked to rate how satisfied they were with the service on a scale from 1 to 9, 58% chose the highest rating and 88% chose one of 7, 8 or 9. 49% reported they found all the information they were searching for; another 45% reported they found some of what they had hoped to find. By way of comparison, during the same period, only 16% of LawHelp/NY survey respondents found all the information they were looking for; only 36% found some; 45% did not find the information they needed. LiveHelp had a profound impact on visitors’ ability to find the information needed.
On a similar note, when asked if LiveHelp made their use of LawHelp/NY faster, 126 of the 133 respondents (95%) replied “yes.” These responses comport with volunteer survey data: of the nine volunteers surveyed, six described the service as “very helpful” to visitors, and the other three rated it “somewhat helpful.” None chose “a little helpful” or “not helpful.”

Narrative feedback was likewise favorable. Of the 46 visitors who supplied narrative responses when asked how LiveHelp could be improved, 31 suggested no changes or only complimented the service. Responses included:

- “Get more volunteers like Kevin F. He clarified every little detail for me. I'm very thankful.”
- “very helpful. I have no complaints.”
- “Excellent source of information. Please advertise more...”
- “Have great people like Jackie H.”
- “It should be faster, although the person helped me a great deal with resources. Thank you.”
- “keeping doing a good job.”
- “Thanks so much for this service; it is really very valuable to the community. I hope more people learn that it is available.”
- “Live chat is great.”
- “It’s fine as is.”
- “para mi todo esta perfecto” (“For me, everything is perfect”)
Of the comments offering specific feedback, most dealt with one of the structural limitations of the service—for example, several visitors indicated they would have preferred to receive legal advice. One indicated she or he needed help with a criminal matter not generally covered on LawHelp/NY.

A thorough qualitative review of randomly-selected transcripts bore out the conclusion that LiveHelp was valuable to searching for legal information. A number of the selected chats reflected emergency situations, in which timely access to legal information might have had a major impact on the visitor’s case or personal safety. For example, the selected chats included one detention case, one foreclosure, two domestic violence cases and two evictions. In each of these cases, the operator was able to provide free, local legal service providers alongside other resources. Many visitors reported problems related to the recent recession; LawHelp/NY’s general survey indicates that 75% of site visitors during 2010 describe their legal problems as related to the economic downturn.

In several of the selected chats, the operator was able to suggest resources or remedies the visitor had not considered—for example, one disabled woman, unable to pay off her debts with her government benefits, came to LiveHelp seeking bankruptcy assistance. In addition to referrals, the operator gave her information about protections she had not previously known about which might have allowed her to protect her savings and income from creditors. In other cases, operators were able to refer visitors to overlooked sources of assistance, such as pro se clinics for divorce and eviction cases, in case the visitor was not able to find full representation.

Semi-structured interviews with volunteers likewise suggested that LiveHelp was a valuable option for website visitors. While some volunteers acknowledged that the platform was somewhat impersonal, several pointed out how grateful users were: “more often than not people were thankful and expressed that I had been helpful.” One spoke of visitors going “from being very frustrated, writing [that] they need help immediately and they don’t know what to do, to feeling more confident about addressing their legal problem.”

Thanks to the wealth of institutional experience and support Pro Bono Net was able to offer, LawHelp/NY was able to implement LiveHelp effectively and ahead of schedule, with well-tested survey instruments and other content. Since the launch, LiveHelp has served nearly two thousand users; those surveyed were overwhelmingly satisfied with the service and with its impact on their search for legal resources.

Establishing and formalizing institutional and on-going relationships to develop the pool of pro bono volunteers to serve as navigators for LiveHelp assistance

Based on the experiences of other LiveHelp programs that had used pro bono work to staff the service, LawHelp/NY anticipated that staffing would be one of the major challenges in implementing LiveHelp in New York. LawHelp/NY had hoped to staff the service around 45 hours per week, primarily through law student and attorney volunteers. Our rough internal target was to engage 10-12 volunteers from area law schools, firms and other providers, with each working a 3-hour shift.
Early outreach efforts suggested that we would meet this target with little difficulty: at Columbia Law School, more than 70 students attended our presentation in January 2010. In the end, we were able to engage 25 volunteer law students during the spring 2010 semester. This allowed us to maintain “evening hours” four days per week and to minimize interruptions in the service by assigning more than one volunteer to busy shifts. Just as importantly, we retained all but two of the volunteers we trained for the bulk of the semester. Other projects have had considerable difficulty in holding students to their commitments; LawHelp/NY was able to partner with established pro bono programs at area law schools to ensure that most students remained engaged.

Our success in recruitment stemmed from targeted outreach to law school deans with public interest or career services portfolios. Following conversations with administrators at Columbia Law, Touro Law and CUNY School of Law, we arranged outreach events and subsequent trainings at each of those schools. While the bulk of LiveHelp’s volunteers came from Columbia, which has a pro bono graduation requirement, the well-developed public interest programs at Touro and CUNY allowed us to recruit a number of law students. Each school has committed to continue aiding our recruitment efforts in the coming term. Public interest administrators at Albany Law and Brooklyn Law have also invited LawHelp/NY to hold recruitment events or trainings at the start of the fall 2010 term. Pace Law and Syracuse Law have invited LawHelp/NY to conduct trainings for the spring 2011 term. LiveHelp also conducted a successful pilot training with LexisNexis, thanks to Pro Bono Net’s assistance, though we held back on additional outreach to corporate or firm partners because we were able to go well beyond our staffing needs by recruiting at law schools.

LawHelp/NY developed a number of training materials to bring volunteers up to speed, starting with a detailed manual and a three-hour interactive training, which can be done in person or via teleconference. The trainings covered the LivePerson platform, the setup of the LawHelp/NY website, best practices for assisting low-income and limited English proficiency visitors, working within the ethical limitations of LiveHelp and providing assistance in domestic violence cases. The trainings included several interactive modules. LawHelp/NY conducted six trainings during the spring 2010 semester—two at Columbia, one with LexisNexis staff, one at CUNY Law, one at Touro and one for LawHelp/NY staff. After the initial training, our Legal Fellow held individualized, remote practice sessions with each volunteer to reinforce best practices and issue-spotting skills and to make sure each volunteer understood the software platform.

LiveHelp volunteers worked off-site; the LivePerson software allowed our Legal Fellow to supervise volunteers in real time, and to intervene if problems arose in any user interactions. The Legal Fellow set up a Google Chat account, allowing volunteers to ask for assistance in real time; our Legal Fellow would intervene in difficult conversations, suggesting alternative resources to the volunteer as needed.

Ongoing supervision and training included regular “practice chats”: emails sent to all project volunteers with an example question intended to highlight key resources or common challenges. For example, after several volunteers had difficulty in identifying reentry problems or questions regarding the collateral consequences of criminal charges, we sent a training email with such a
question, followed by a model answer submitted by a volunteer. We also regularly reviewed operator surveys to spot problems and training needs.

Of the 9 volunteers responding to an anonymous survey, 78% rated the training “very helpful”; the same percentage rated the post-training supervision and support as “very helpful.” 100% rated the practice chats as “very helpful.” The LiveHelp manual received somewhat lower marks (a median score of “somewhat helpful”). Many of the narrative responses emphasized the value of hands-on practice as a training component; as such, the next class of volunteers, during the summer of 2010, conducted more practice chats before they began volunteering.

Semi-structured interviews with volunteers likewise suggested that LawHelp/NY’s interactive training and ongoing supervision were successful. One described being “nervous” at the outset but becoming “really comfortable” through hands-on training. Another cited “amazing support” and “excellent individualized ongoing training,” as well as the introductory discussions of best practices, which centered on providing sensitive and respectful help in a manner attentive to the fact that many LawHelp/NY visitors are experiencing crisis situations. As several volunteers suggested creating a volunteer listserv, we plan to implement one before training fall 2010 volunteers.

By leveraging relationships with established pro bono programs at area law schools, LawHelp/NY was able to more than double our staffing expectations; this, in turn, helped us to increase our hours and reliability substantially, which in turn helped us serve hundreds more visitors than would otherwise have been possible. (Evening hours have accounted for around 150 chats to date; staffing busy shifts with more than one volunteer likely accounted for more, though the impact of increased uptime is difficult to quantify.) Our successful training and supervision – 89% of surveyed volunteers found the experience “very satisfying” – appears to have contributed to strong volunteer retention, which in turn freed up program staff for other work on the LawHelp/NY website.

Recruitment efforts this fall:

To ensure adequate coverage of LiveHelp prior to the recruitment of law student volunteers, the LiveHelp coordinator recruited and trained two pro bono law graduates and one college graduate volunteer that learned about the New York LiveHelp project from a position posting online. She also retained one volunteer from the previous semester. In addition, Pro Bono Net offered the services of two AmeriCorps Vista volunteers for three hours a week of LiveHelp volunteering. This assured LiveHelp coverage while the Fall Semester got underway. As a result of already established collaborations with law schools, combined with newly developing relationships, the LiveHelp coordinator attended pro bono outreach events at Brooklyn Law School, Columbia Law School, and Touro Law School. She returned to Columbia Law School to conduct a LiveHelp training and as a result there will be at least 12 volunteers from Columbia for the Fall 2010 semester. At Touro, the LiveHelp coordinator spoke to a group of more than 25 students about LawHelp.org/NY and about volunteering as LiveHelp navigators; 20 students signed up to be trained and we expect at least 10 students to become regular volunteers. Finally, the LiveHelp coordinator will be attending an outreach event at Albany Law School on October 26, 2010. In preparation for the Spring 2011 semester, the LiveHelp coordinator has already connected with
several public interest offices at additional area law schools, including CUNY and Pace Law School, and she will be scheduling information sessions for the middle of January to meet with students as soon as they return from winter break. This will help to reduce the potential lull in volunteers between semesters. Four navigators are bilingual. This number of pro bono navigators, together with the bilingual LiveHelp Coordinator, assures LiveHelp coverage each weekday and many evening hours.

Piloting the provision of LiveHelp to low-income persons in Spanish, and to limited English proficient users in general

LawHelp/NY was able to launch LiveHelp simultaneously in English and Spanish; New York was the first project to do so, and the second to develop Spanish-language content, after Minnesota. LiveHelp was able to staff the Spanish site full time and during one evening per week, using pro bono work as well as backup from our Legal Fellow.

Our Legal Fellow translated key LiveHelp materials into Spanish; as such, our pre-chat survey, exit survey, and frequently asked questions document were available in Spanish at launch. Some of the canned chats were likewise translated into Spanish. During our initial media outreach efforts, LawHelp/NY sent our bilingual press release to every New York Spanish-language news outlet, along with other immigrant, ethnic and community newspapers statewide.

Qualitative review of randomly selected LiveHelp transcripts shows that LiveHelp is of even higher value to monolingual Spanish speakers. While LawHelp/NY has a full Spanish-language site, some of our materials are not translated, and some court websites are not available in Spanish at all. Further, regional differences in administrative or legal vocabulary may make it difficult for many visitors to navigate the mirror site. Anecdotal reports from LiveHelp operators suggest that Spanish-language visitors disproportionately used LiveHelp at an early stage in their search for legal information, perhaps suggesting that other aspects of the site were more challenging. In several of the reviewed transcripts, operators were able to walk the visitors through self-help documents covering unemployment, visitation, child support and consumer debt issues. Operators could clarify questions about the visitors’ legal rights and options. They were able to help with logistical questions—the locations of courts, whether legal services would have Spanish-speaking staff, etc.—and with visitors’ concerns over immigration status issues, where applicable.

While Spanish-language LawHelp/NY usage is low relative to the size of New York’s Spanish-speaking population, Spanish-speaking users of the website were disproportionately likely to use LiveHelp. Spanish-mirror page views amount to about 2% of the page views to the English-language site. In contrast, Spanish speakers accounted for 6% of the LiveHelp traffic in New York, indicating that LiveHelp is a draw for Spanish-speaking users.

Survey responses suggest that Spanish-language visitors found the service helpful, with 80% giving the program an 8 or 9 on a 9-point scale of helpfulness. 40% found all the information they needed; 60% found some but not all. 80% reported that LiveHelp made accessing LawHelp/NY easier. Operator surveys and informal feedback following LiveHelp conversations
both helped us substantially improve aspects of the LawHelp/NY Spanish mirror site, identifying confusing, mislabeled or missing Spanish-language resources.

LawHelp/NY is currently piloting search engine optimization and marketing (SEOM) and other efforts intended to establish the site as a central resource for Spanish-speaking New York residents. We expect that a combination of direct outreach, Spanish-language advertising and search engine optimization will allow us to bring up our Spanish-language usage substantially. As is, though, our bilingual launch has shown that LiveHelp can be a particularly valuable platform for limited English proficiency users, who may need additional guidance to access or understand the often confusing judicial, administrative and social-service structures affecting low-income and immigrant communities.

**Conducting an outreach campaign to maximize the use of LiveHelp**

After launch, LawHelp/NY worked with Pro Bono Net to increase LiveHelp’s visibility on our website. Drawing on Pro Bono Net’s earlier observation that LiveHelp traffic is closely related to the number, visibility and context of links to it throughout the site, LawHelp/NY created additional in-text links to ensure visitors did not overlook the service. For example, most directory pages now include the text “If you need help finding something, click here to ask for Live Help.” Average traffic in the months following the change was 60% higher than the prior months.

LawHelp/NY integrated LiveHelp in its training and outreach program in fall 2009. Since then, LawHelp/NY has conducted more than 100 trainings at partner organizations, ranging from community centers to public schools to elected officials to libraries. Training and fair attendance during this period was over 1,000, including many staff and managers at organizations serving low-income people. LawHelp/NY integrated LiveHelp into its existing English- and Spanish-language marketing materials.

LawHelp/NY has also begun a campaign to inform other legal service organizations about LiveHelp to ensure that they can refer clients to the service as needed. For example, LawHelp/NY staff presented LiveHelp at the NYSBA Pro Bono Coordinators Network meeting in early 2010, and at the LawHelp/NY Stakeholders Forum (at the 2010 Partnership conference), for representatives of dozens of legal service and pro bono projects statewide. At each, we conducted LiveHelp demonstrations; at the latter, high-level staff from several legal service organizations participated in simulated chats to demonstrate LiveHelp’s value in facilitating quick access to legal information. LawHelp/NY’s Project Director led a lively, in-depth discussion about LiveHelp’s progress at the September 30, 2010 Pro Bono Coordinators Network meeting.

After launch, LawHelp/NY circulated a press release to daily and weekly papers statewide, focusing on community, ethnic and Spanish-language papers. LawHelp/NY is also running regular ads in El Correo, a Queens weekly newspaper serving the Spanish-speaking community; our first print ad highlights LiveHelp and other aspects of the site. We are also reaching out to radio stations in the hopes of producing English and Spanish PSAs to advertise the new feature.
Several elected officials have agreed to include LiveHelp information in their upcoming constituent newsletters.

V. Factors affecting project accomplishments and strategies implemented to address major challenges

Volunteer training and communication

Most of LawHelp/NY’s LiveHelp volunteers worked offsite; this setup posed unique training and supervision challenges which proved difficult at the outset, though LawHelp/NY was able to draw on suggestions from Pro Bono Net and its LiveHelp partner programs to resolve them. LiveHelp’s software platform, a proprietary program named LivePerson, does not allow for effective two-way communication between operators. At the outset, LawHelp/NY suggested that volunteers use Google Chat to allow for two-way communication between project staff and volunteers. While many students opted to use Google Chat, real-time supervision was more difficult with those who did not—volunteers could readily call for help when they needed it, but LivePerson did not have an easy mechanism for program staff to offer timely suggestions without taking over the chat. While these communication challenges did not substantially undercut LiveHelp’s ability to serve visitors—in the event of serious problems, program staff could take over a chat if needed—some volunteers did express frustration that they did not have more effective communication tools. As such, the second “class” of volunteers, during summer 2010, were required to use Google Chat to allow for side conversations. Subsequent volunteer feedback has suggested that Google Chat has made volunteers substantially more comfortable in handling LiveHelp inquiries.

LiveHelp’s training model emphasized hands-on practice from the outset: the group training involved three simulated LiveHelp questions, and each volunteer conducted a one-on-one practice chat with program staff before volunteering. Nevertheless, in initial subsequent surveys, seven out of nine volunteers said they had been only “somewhat prepared” at the start of their volunteer terms. Given that volunteers gave particularly high marks to the hands-on portions of the training, our new Legal Fellow plans to require more practice chats to help new volunteers develop their skills more quickly.

Survey Response Rate

Like other LiveHelp projects, LiveHelp in New York has had a relatively low exit survey response rate. While our high user volume has allowed us to collect a large survey dataset in spite of the low response rate, we hope to bring up the rate to allow us to better assess the service’s performance. Beginning in June, volunteers were informally asked to close each chat by asking the visitor to complete the exit survey. This change had a small but significant impact on the response rate. In April, only 5.8% of users responded to the first exit survey question used for data collection purposes. In July, after navigators began to routinely ask visitors to complete the survey, 7.7% did so. We hope to systematize the change by including in our next set of training materials a requirement that navigators close each chat by mentioning the exit survey.
VI. Major lessons and recommendations

The most prominent lesson that can be drawn from our launch is that the LiveHelp model scales well for populous states with mature and content-rich websites. While New York’s LiveHelp traffic has been high relative to other states, it has been manageable with sufficient volunteer support; indeed, given the level of volunteer support available, we suspect we could handle substantially higher traffic by placing additional volunteers on busy shifts.

LawHelp/NY’s experience also suggests several lessons for programs hoping to rely on volunteer contributions to staff similar services. LawHelp/NY’s recruitment success was entirely dependent upon the presence of supportive administrators. At law schools with responsive administrators, we were able to recruit a significant number of students and train them on site. We generally only reached a handful of students at other law schools. By partnering with well-developed pro bono and public interest programs at law schools, we were able to maintain high levels of volunteer commitment, avoiding one of the major staffing problems experienced by other LiveHelp programs. Narrative feedback suggests that using a hands-on training model contributed to volunteer confidence and satisfaction. Ultimately, 89% of volunteers surveyed described themselves as “very satisfied” with LiveHelp as a volunteer opportunity.

In terms of recommendations for future initiatives, LawHelp/NY is considering possible partnerships with pro se services in specific areas of law. LiveHelp navigators frequently refer visitors to Legal Information for Families Today and Housing Court Answers, services providing in-depth information in New York City’s family courts and housing courts, respectively. Given the number of family law and housing questions received from New York City residents alone, LiveHelp could potentially cross-train a smaller pool of navigators to be housing or family law specialists. While LiveHelp already offers many valuable resources in those areas, navigators are at present not always able to answer court-specific procedural questions; instead, navigators must frequently refer visitors out to LIFT or Housing Court Answers. LawHelp/NY may be able to equip navigators to answer such questions, or to strengthen our connection to LIFT and Housing Court Answers to ensure that LiveHelp visitors have ready access to support within New York City’s courts.

LawHelp/NY’s experience in conducting remote trainings also suggests possible directions for expanding LiveHelp nationwide. A major factor in LawHelp.org/NY’s successful LiveHelp replication was the targeted assistance provided by Pro Bono Net that allowed us to capitalize on the experience, resources and infrastructure developed thus far. Pro Bono Net has previously expressed an interest in setting up a framework for cross-jurisdictional LiveHelp deployment in the wake of disasters, to facilitate public access to information about post-disaster benefits or services. Just as Lone Star Legal Aid and the Houston Volunteer Attorney Program used LiveHelp to provide assistance following Hurricane Ike, Pro Bono Net or another project could set up infrastructure to launch a crisis-specific LiveHelp site and conduct remote volunteer trainings. Our experience suggests that such a project could count on several possible sources of volunteers nationwide, ranging from law school pro bono programs to corporate partners to bar associations to firm. LawHelp/NY conducted several successful remote trainings, and had few problems with a remote-supervision model. However, national coordination is critical for tapping into volunteer interest nationwide and developing a multi-state initiative. With sufficient
preparation, and strong centralized capacity, there are few barriers to providing cross-jurisdictional LiveHelp support.

Legal Services NYC and the LawHelp.org/NY Consortium appreciate the support LiveHelp has received from the LSC TIG program during its start-up phase. As this evaluation report has shown, LawHelp.org/NY has successfully implemented LiveHelp in English and Spanish on a high-volume statewide website, leveraging volunteer resources to make a significant impact on visitors’ access to potentially life-changing legal resources. We look forward to continuing to work with the TIG program to build on this success.
# Appendix A
## Summaries of Selected LiveHelp Chats
### January 2010-July 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem/Help Sought</th>
<th>Help Given</th>
<th>Language and Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modifying child support in light of lower cost of living</td>
<td>Child support guide and DIY Child Support Modification form</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>Information on grounds and custody; referral to organization that assists with uncontested divorce filings</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegal eviction</td>
<td>Illegal eviction guide; referral to Housing Court Answers and legal services office</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options for independent teenager hoping to attend college</td>
<td>Information on student loans, public assistance and emancipation; referral to youth services organization</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing termination case based on nonpayment of rent</td>
<td>Referrals to housing organizations</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankruptcy case already in progress</td>
<td>Referrals to legal aid providers</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical malpractice claim</td>
<td>Lawyer referral service</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardianship of a minor</td>
<td>Guide to guardianship of a minor</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence and child support issues (question asked by constituent services staff of elected official)</td>
<td>Referral to Safe Horizon</td>
<td>English. Visitor appeared to sign off before more operator could provide safety planning information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt collection; concerned that creditor will seek bank account freeze</td>
<td>Basic information on bank account freezes and defending creditor lawsuits</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosure action</td>
<td>Referral to City Bar Foreclosure Project</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seller concerned about possible suit by buyer of used car after private sale</td>
<td>Information on New York’s “Lemon Law”; Lawyer Referral Service</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence and custody; survivor hoping to leave state with child</td>
<td>Information on custody jurisdiction; referrals to domestic violence organizations and nationwide hotline; safety planning information</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expired student visa</td>
<td>Referrals to immigration</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming an administrator for deceased relative’s estate</strong></td>
<td>Lawyer Referral Service</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial help for unemployed families with children</strong></td>
<td>Information on unemployment insurance, public assistance and rental assistance; referral to Legal Aid and City Bar Legal Hotline</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bankruptcy and foreclosure</strong></td>
<td>Referral to pro se bankruptcy clinic and City Bar Foreclosure Project</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applying for a passport for a US-born child</strong></td>
<td>Contact information for local passport office</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unemployment insurance</strong></td>
<td>Unemployment benefits guide; referral to Unemployment Action Center</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visitation: father concerned about visitation rights</strong></td>
<td>Walked through guide to filing for visitation; referred to Legal Information for Families Today</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child support</strong></td>
<td>Guide to initiating child support cases; referral to Legal Information for Families Today</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bankruptcy for disabled SSI recipient</strong></td>
<td>Referrals to bankruptcy organizations; information on protecting government benefits from creditors</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out-of-country user hoping to find detained family member</strong></td>
<td>Phone number of jail; referrals to legal aid providers</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investigation into death of son in prison</strong></td>
<td>Referrals to legal assistance projects handling conditions-of-confinement cases; Lawyer Referral Service</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Judgment for back rent causing credit report problems</strong></td>
<td>Referral to Financial Justice Hotline; information on tenant blacklisting</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>