LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION
Technology Initiative Grant Program
Web Site Evaluation System

CLIENT WEBSITE USER INTERVIEW

INSTRUCTIONS

All grantees should complete the Client User Interview as part of their renewal (2nd year) web site grant evaluations.

The Client Website User Interview seeks website users' views on the usability and usefulness of the website. This interview comprises an essential component of a program's website evaluation strategy because it generates in-depth information from client users of the Web site. Program staff will conduct this in-person interview immediately after a user has tested the website. We estimate that a user's test of the web site will take 20-30 minutes and that the interview will take 10-15 minutes.

As noted in the general instructions and guidelines for using the LSC evaluation instruments, LSC seeks to compile aggregate data that provide a clear picture of the effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of TIG-funded websites across the country. To accomplish this, LSC must obtain data that are generated and reported as consistently as possible. Consequently, grantees must adhere to the same standards in producing and submitting this information. The methodology and reporting formats grantees should employ when using the Client Website User Interview are discussed below.

The LSC Client User Interview combines elements of the Client Website User Interview and the Client Website User Survey that were developed by the Management and Information Exchange (MIE) Technology Evaluation Project (TEP). We urge grantees to refer to the TEP instructional materials for those instruments. Those materials provide valuable guidance and additional information about survey and interview methodologies. (http://www.lstech.org/TIG/eval/eval_docs/.) We also drew from the client website usability study conducted by the Illinois Technology Center. The report on that study also is very useful. http://www.lstech.org/resource_lib/web_dev/evaluating/20030523-4133-1911.

LSC plans to use the data it receives in the initial round of Web site evaluations (which will cover some eight to ten Web sites) to revise the Client Website User Interview instrument for use in subsequent evaluation rounds. It particular, LSC plans to develop more specific response options and coding categories that will simplify the interviewing and data analysis processes.

<u>The Use of Close-Ended and Open-Ended Questions</u>

The LSC User Interview includes both open-ended and close-ended questions to capitalize on the strengths and minimize the shortcomings inherent in the use of each type of question. Close-ended questions provide a finite number of (usually) mutually exclusive answers, thus limiting the number and range of possible responses. By their nature, closed-ended questions are relatively easy to administer and can generate broad, quantitative data that are simple to analyze. However, these data are rather superficial. In contrast, open-ended questions solicit interviewees' unstructured answers, and thereby provide richer, more detailed information about respondents' views and opinions. Open-ended questions are more difficult to administer, however, since they require more effort from both the interviewer and the interviewee. Moreover, the qualitative data generated from open-ended questions can be difficult to analyze.

In the LSC Client Website User Interview the open-ended questions typically follow-up close-ended questions. These paired questions will provide grantees and LSC with broad, quantitative data about users' experiences with specific Website features – e.g., whether they could find the information they were looking for – as well as more in-depth explanatory data about these respective experiences – e.g., reasons why users could or could not locate this information.

The use of paired of closed- and open-ended questions (which will provide concrete and contextual information that can help respondents provide more focused, discrete open-ended answers) should mitigate some of the difficulties involved in conducting the interviews and analyzing the qualitative data generated by the open-ended questions. The directions, scripts and prompts provided interviewers should also prove helpful in these respects.

<u>Identifying & Recruiting Interviewees</u>

Grantees can identify interviewees in various locations, such as legal services programs' waiting rooms; the waiting rooms of other legal and social services providers and community groups; and work stations and kiosks at courts, libraries, community technology centers, or other public access points.

Identifying interviewees at different sites can pose different challenges. For example, the Illinois Technology Project recruited clients for website usability tests in a waiting room of a legal service program. Some advocates have raised concerns about this approach, noting that because clients may be in crisis situations and in dire need of legal services, they may feel unstated pressure to cooperate regardless of their desire to do so. These advocates suggest that an alternative approach consists of recruiting interviewees from clients who have already received program services. Yet another approach is working with staff of other service providers and community groups to identify interviewees. Compared to the recruitment of users in waiting rooms, these last two approaches will require more staff time to identify, contact and schedule user tests and interviews.

Irrespective of the method(s) used to locate and recruit interviewees, when recruiting prospective interviewees program staff must emphasize that: the interviewee's feedback will help the program ensure its website meets community members' needs as effectively as possible; it is perfectly okay if they do not want to participate and need not provide any reason for declining to do so; and (if the program chooses to provide it), they will receive nominal compensation for their participation. Appendix A provides a script for recruiting users. (**Note:** this is in a separate file.)

Interviewees must meet a threshold criterion: they must have experience using a computer and a mouse. If users do not meet this criterion, they will not be able to effectively test the system.

In their recruitment efforts, program staff should compile data on the number of clients in the following categories:

- Those willing to participate and with experience using a computer and a mouse.
- Those willing to participate but without experience using a computer and a mouse.
- Those not interested in or willing to participate.

These data should then be entered into the online reporting system.

Instructions for Administering the LSC Client Website User Interview

Grantees should follow specific procedures when administering this interview. In particular, grantees should:

1. Include as interviewees only those individuals directly recruited for this purpose.

2. Employ one of two methods (or a combination of both) to allow interviewees to test the website. First, users can use the website to seek the information they need to address their specific legal problem. Second, users can test the website by using hypothetical scenarios suggested by the program. Specific scenarios available for this purpose are provided in Appendix B. (**Note:** this is in a separate file.)

3. Recruit users that together comprise a diverse sample of the major segments of the state's client population (such as rural and urban populations and different racial, ethnic, language, or national origin groups). As noted in the general instructions and guidelines for using the LSC evaluation instruments, these samples should meet *practical* rather than *scientific* standards of representativeness.[1]

4. Ensure that at least 10-15 interviews are completed

5. Provide users with access to a work station that, to the maximum extent feasible, is insulated from the din and lack of privacy that characterize many waiting rooms. This might be an office or other room temporarily designated for this purpose, the interviewer's office, or a conference room.

6. Conduct the interviews in an area that affords privacy and ensures confidentiality.

7. Modify the interview instrument *only* to add questions. Questions required by LSC should not be modified or deleted. Also, grantees should include on the reporting form only the data generated by the LSC required-questions.

8. Use hard copies of this instrument to conduct the interviews and record interviewees' responses.

9. Interview website users *immediately* after the interviewees have used / tested the website. Individuals who have used the Web site at other locations or at other times *should not* be included in the interview sample.

[1] Legal Services Corporation, *Technology Innovation Grant Program, 2003 Website Evaluation Instruments, Introduction and General Instructions*.

LSC is *not* requiring grantees to develop scientifically valid samples. The costs of constructing scientific samples are much beyond the means of nearly all grantees. Rather, LSC expects grantees to develop *samples that yield practical validity*. Such samples reflect grantees' most diligent, thoughtful efforts to disseminate survey materials and obtain survey results from individuals that together are roughly representative of the programs' client populations in terms of criteria such as race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, rural-urban-suburban, literacy and English language proficiency. We are well aware that such samples can only be crudely representative of a program's client population. At the same time, however, if grantees rigorously and conscientiously construct and obtain information from such samples, the data generated can yield helpful insights into a particular website's strengths, weaknesses and areas for further improvement. Thus, even if the data produced from such samples cannot meet the requisite criteria for scientific reliability, they nonetheless can provide program managers with valuable practical knowledge with which to assess system design and operations and make appropriate adjustments.

10. Ensure interviewers use the following techniques to build and maintain necessary trust and effectively communicate with users:[2]
    (a) Be sensitive to respondents, their attitudes, and beliefs; do not offer reactions or your own views.
    (b) Do not show your own feelings about the question or expected response. Similarly, do not offer your own comments and views about their responses or demonstrate a value judgment on what interviewees say.
    (c) Show sincere interest in the person or people being interviewed beyond "just getting the information."
    (d) Try not to interrupt the respondents.
    (e) Keep eye contact with the respondents as much as possible.
    (f) Use active listening, observation, and unbiased recording skills.
    (g) Use prompts to clarify questions and make concrete the type of information sought.

11. To most effectively record the interviewees' responses to open-ended questions, we recommend that interviewers:
    (a) Record interviewee responses on the interview instrument. Interviewers may want to take notes for the open-ended responses on a separate sheet(s) and then transfer the data to the interview form after the interview, when the interviewer has had a chance to better organize and clarify the raw data.
    (b) Take careful and detailed notes to summarize the main ideas and key phrases. Then, immediately after the interview, fill in the details of the responses.
    (c) To the extent possible, record verbatim respondents' comments that capture and convey key points in the interviewees own words.
    (d) If desired, use an audio tape recorder;
    (e) Do not have use an interviewer assistant whose responsibility is taking notes. An additional person can undermine the interviewer's rapport with the interviewee and affect the quality of the information obtained;
    (f) Avoid reading read your viewpoints into what respondents say; ask for clarification if the answer is unclear.

Analyzing the Data

[2] Numerous volumes have been written that provide guidance for conducting interviews and surveys. The TEP materials provide a very useful review and discussion of this guidance. Many of the following points are drawn directly from the TEP Instructions for the TEP Client User Interview.

Analyzing the data for the close-ended questions is relatively simple and straightforward. These data can be readily aggregated in different ways and different types of trends and patterns identified.

Analyzing the qualitative data from open-ended questions poses more difficulties, however, since they require you to interpret and ascribe meaning to users' responses. The interview design seeks to mitigate some of this difficulty by focusing respondents' answers in discrete areas and limiting the range and volume of these answers and thus the amount and breadth of data that must later be analyzed.

The standard approach for analyzing qualitative data (in much simplified terms) consists of reviewing and re-reviewing responses to particular questions and through this "sifting" process developing major categories of responses to these questions. This process allows one to develop general conclusions about these data. Such conclusions should be illustrated by pertinent specific responses.

Reporting the data to LSC

As indicated above, interviewees should record interviewees' responses on a hard copy of interview form. These data from each individual interview – including the qualitative data generated by the open-ended questions – should then be input into the LSC on-line reporting form.

For questions or additional information, please contact Bristow Hardin, LSC, Office of Program Performance, 202-295-1553, hardinb@lsc.gov.

Compiling the Data and Submitting It to LSC

Grantees should submit disaggregated data from all of the surveys using the on-line reporting system. Grantees should submit the data from each survey on a separate report form. That is, if the grantee completes ten interviews, it should complete ten separate report forms. Each form should include all of the data contained on the corresponding completed interview instrument.

These disaggregated data will enable LSC to identify national trends and patterns that would not be possible if each grantee provided only aggregated data. For example, the disaggregated will allow us to identify the assessments of staff of domestic violence shelters (or other groups). If each grantee provides only aggregated data, LSC will not be able to identify the assessments of any group of providers.

TIG staff believe that obtaining and analyzing disaggregated data will be beneficial in two major ways. First, it will enable LSC to identify trends and obtain additional findings that will highlight best practices or areas for improvement. This could influence future technical assistance or other grant making strategies. Second, the data obtained could enhance the funding strategies of LSC and state justice partners.