# Table of Contents

1. Mission Statement
2. Message from the Board and the Executive Director
3. IOLTA and Statements of Financial Position
4. Grant Making
5. Equal Justice Coalition
6. LAW Fund and the Endowment for Equal Justice
7. Goldmark Award and Internship Program
The Legal Foundation of Washington is dedicated to equal justice for low-income persons. The Foundation funds programs and supports policies and initiatives which enable the poor and the most vulnerable to overcome barriers in the civil justice system.

“Luis” is deaf; he is learning to speak American Sign Language but does not read or write and communicates primarily through gestures. He was worried about being able to stay in his home after the dissolution of his marriage. A volunteer attorney with Community Action of Skagit County VLP worked with two different interpreters to represent Luis through the mediation process. The VLP also arranged for the mediation fees to be waived by the mediator due to Luis’ minimal income. Luis reached a settlement that allowed him to remain in his home. The volunteer attorney made sure that Luis fully understood his rights throughout the dissolution, giving him a voice in the process that would not have been possible without the assistance of an attorney.

~ Community Action of Skagit County VLP
Dear Friends of the Alliance for Equal Justice,

The Legal Foundation of Washington is honored to report on our annual grant making, fundraising, and technical support for the provision of legal services in 2014.

At the end of 2014, we were pleased to award over $12 million to 40+ organizations that support legal services in our state. $6.23 million was awarded in annual grants to legal aid organizations that provide high quality services to our state’s most vulnerable populations in the most common areas of need. Additionally, thanks to ongoing distributions from a grant received from the Washington State Attorney General’s Office in 2012, we were able to provide $3.3 million in third year-funding to ten organizations that helped low- and moderate income people prevent foreclosure or else alleviate the effects of losing their homes. And finally, 2014 was the first year of a multi-year Prison and Re-entry Grant Program to help support 17 community-based organizations (both legal aid and social services programs) serving people in prison, their families, and those recently released from prison.

In addition, LFW provided numerous forms of in-kind support to our grantees, including access to interpretation services, malpractice insurance for volunteer attorneys, our annual Goldmark Internship program that connects promising law students with legal aid programs that need their help, and leadership development to help grow the next generation of legal aid lawyers and social service providers.

At the 2014 Goldmark Award Luncheon, Jeffery Robinson of Schroeter Goldmark & Bender gave an inspired talk before presenting the 2014 Distinguished Service Award to the Task Force on Race & the Criminal Justice System co-chairs, Justice Steven C. González, Professor Robert S. Chang and Judge Nicole A. Gaines.

Lauren Berkowitz from UW was awarded the 2014 Goldmark Equal Justice Internship with Unemployment Law Project where she represented claimants in 24 hearings and 5 petitions for review in addition to performing intake interviews throughout the 10-week summer internship.

We are grateful to our partners at the Access to Justice Board, the Office of Civil Legal Aid, the Endowment for Equal Justice, and the Campaign for Equal Justice for their work and support in ensuring that funds are available to help our state’s most vulnerable populations achieve equal justice.

There is much work to be done, but we are making progress.
Interest on Lawyers’ Trust Account (IOLTA) programs were first established in Australia and Canada during the late 1960s to generate funds for legal services to the poor and other charitable purposes. In 1981, the Florida Bar Foundation created the first U.S. IOLTA program.

Three years later, in 1984, the Washington Supreme Court created the Legal Foundation of Washington (LFW). Today, IOLTA program exist in all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and the US Virgin Islands to help fund nonprofit organizations that provide civil legal aid for low-income people with nowhere else to turn.

The IOLTA program in our state serves two purposes. First, it helps ensure that legal professionals — lawyers and limited practice officers (LPOs)—appropriately manage funds that belong to their clients. Secondly, it allows interest to be earned on nominal or short term deposits held in client trust accounts, with the interest remitted directly to LFW for distribution to civil legal aid programs.

The Legal Foundation of Washington would like to thank the financial institutions that continue to offer IOLTA accounts to their customers. For a complete list of approved financial institutions, please visit to the LFW’s website, www.legalfoundation.org.

**Messages of appreciation from clients of Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services**

“Thank you for helping me with my legal problem, everything was so complete, and I do not need to be afraid, because you helped me so much.”

“Without even having to ask, the lawyer opted to involve himself and provided me with a letter to use. Invaluable, thanks!”

“I have a great feeling of HOPE from the help of all the team members.”

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*Figures are excerpted from our audited financial statements. A complete copy of the original audit report is available from the Legal Foundation of Washington.

*Thanks to the Supreme Court’s adoption of the proposed amendment to Court Rule 23 eight years ago, cy pres awards have become an increasingly important, although unpredictable source of revenue for civil legal aid throughout Washington state."
In 2014, the Legal Foundation of Washington awarded $6.23 million in annual grants to 23 organizations. Using these funds, LFW grantees helped over 29,000 people facing urgent legal problems but unable to afford legal representation. And hundreds of thousands of people were positively affected by impact advocacy by grantees working on global solutions for clients in poverty.

In addition, LFW distributed $3.3 million in Home Justice grants to ten organizations to help people impacted by the foreclosure crisis. Home Justice providers helped hundreds of people whose homes were threatened and ensured that consumer protection laws are fairly applied to all.

2014 was the inaugural year of a multi-year Prison & Reentry grants program, which distributed $2.9 million to seventeen organizations working to improve lives impacted by incarceration. Projects include college level courses taught in prisons, safe housing for people rebuilding their lives in Walla Walla and legal challenges to unfair conditions of confinement for people with disabilities.
“[The attorney] was a wonderful person. He was like a million dollars to me and my family. I wish I had always had him as my attorney.”

~ Blue Mountain Action Council Client

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“Thank you for helping me with my legal problem, everything was so complete, and I do not need to be afraid, because you helped me so much.”

~ Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services
The Equal Justice Coalition (EJC) educates policymakers and the public about the significant positive impact of civil legal aid for low-income people and advocates for public funding for legal aid at the local, state, and federal levels. Established in 1995, the EJC serves as a non-partisan grassroots organization with more than 3,000 members who help promote the importance of civil legal aid in communities throughout Washington State.

**Local Efforts:**
King County financially supports six legal aid organizations in its annual budget: Eastside Legal Assistance Program, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, Seattle Community Law Center, Solid Ground Family Assistance Program, TeamChild, and Unemployment Law Project. The EJC coordinated an advocacy effort with these six organization to help secure funding in the King County budget for civil legal aid. As a result of this coordinated effort, legal aid funding was increased to $1.05 million among these six groups in the County’s first biennial budget (FY 2015-2016).

The county’s support helps maintain special programs designed to resolve the root causes of poverty and protect our most vulnerable low-income residents from injustice. The EJC is grateful for the continued financial investment the County and all of the advocacy efforts from its grassroots supporters.

**State Efforts:**
The Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA) provides state funding to civil legal aid programs in Washington, primarily to NJP and 17 local volunteer programs. In 2013, the EJC helped to maintain that critical funding at the level of $23.186 million for the FY 2014 – 2015 budget. During the 2014 supplemental legislative session, EJC efforts resulted in a one-time appropriation of $280,000 to replace and upgrade the antiquated technology of NJP’s statewide legal aid hotline – CLEAR. CLEAR serves as the gateway for thousands of low-income people to secure legal representation, advice, and referral.

**Federal Efforts:**
Established in 1974, Legal Services Corporation (LSC) promotes equal access to justice by providing federal funding grants to 134 non-profit legal aid programs across the United States – Northwest Justice Project is Washington State’s LSC grantee.

In 2010, LSC’s funding peaked at $420 million, which provided NJP with an annual grant of roughly $6.8 million. However, since 2010, LSC funding has decreased by nearly 11%, which has severely affected the legal aid services infrastructure in Washington State – significantly reducing NJP’s federal grant and the services they provide.

In April 2014, the EJC led a Washington State delegation to Washington, D.C. as part of the American Bar Association advocacy day. In two days, the group met with each Washington State Congress member and senator to convey the importance of LSC funding for Washington State and to ask for increased LSC funding. Thanks in part to these efforts, LSC received an increase in funding for FY 2015, which resulted in funding of $6.4 million for NJP. While this was not a substantial increase from the previous year’s funding ($6.276 million), this funding did allow NJP to preserve the valuable services that low-income people depend on to secure justice and address fundamental human needs.
Over 5000 individuals supported civil legal aid efforts for those in need last year through the Campaign for Equal Justice, the Endowment for Equal Justice, and the Laurel Rubin Farm Worker Justice Project.

2014 Results

In 2014, a record-setting $1.64 million was raised for civil legal aid through the Campaign for Equal Justice. Particularly successful were the two biggest law firm campaigns in King and Pierce Counties, where over 200 firms participated in the Campaign. We are also pleased to report a statewide legal community participation rate of 21% (based on the total number of WSBA members in Washington state) and look forward to growing that number in 2015.

Chelan–Douglas won the Rainier Cup for the highest participation of attorneys in the county for the second year in a row. Seventeen courts around the state were awarded the Baker Cup for outstanding judicial participation, including the Washington Supreme Court for the first time ever!

We are excited to report that, last year, the Endowment for Equal Justice, founded in 2000, not only made its first grant disbursement, but also continued to see rapid growth. In September 2014, the Endowment was the recipient of cy pres award of $3.2 million arising from a securities litigation case undertaken by the firm Zwerling Schachter Zwerling. This gift, along with other generous gifts from local donors, helped the Endowment surpass its goal of raising $15 million in principal by 2015. Thanks to this rapid growth, the Endowment will now generate upwards of $500,000 annually in interest income for our state’s civil legal aid network.

We continue to look to the Endowment as our civil legal aid network’s most promising source of stable funding for the future, and we will continue to foster commitments to the Endowment through planned and major gifts to keep the Endowment on its exciting path of growth.

The Laurel Rubin Fund also saw robust growth in 2014. On top of the $95,261.33 cy pres award received in June, the Laurel Rubin Fund raised $12,913 in other contributions, setting their total fundraising for 2014 at $108,174.

What’s Ahead in 2015

A very exciting development for our 2015 fundraising plan is that the update to the Washington State Civil Legal Needs Study will be published in upcoming months. This wellspring of fresh data about the needs of low-income residents of our state will completely revitalize our ability to communicate effectively about the need for civil legal aid and the critical role of private contributions in supporting it. We are working in concert with the Office of Civil Legal Aid and other stakeholders to determine the most effective use of the data and help translate knowledge into more support for legal services.
Following LFW President Elizabeth Thomas’ Welcome and a compelling Advocates video from TeamChild, Lucy Lee Helm, executive vice president, general counsel and secretary, Starbucks, called on the audience to give to the Campaign for Equal Justice. Jeffery Robinson of Schroeter Goldmark & Bender gave an inspiring talk, “Race and Criminal Justice - Like Déjà Vu All over Again,” before presenting the Charles A. Goldmark Distinguished Service Award to Task Force on Race & the Criminal Justice System co-chairs, Justice Steven C. González, Professor Robert S. Chang and Judge Nicole A. Gaines.

After the luncheon, members of the Washington Supreme Court participated in a discussion facilitated by Judge Anne Ellington that included audience questions.

The ATJ Leadership Academy reported on its inaugural class and LAW Fund presented the Rainier Cup to the Chelan Douglas County Volunteer Lawyer Program during the Celebration of Leadership reception that concluded the Goldmark program.

Thank You donors for funding this event.

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Goldmark Award Presentation (L-R): Chief Justice Barbara Madsen, LFW President Elizabeth Thomas, Judge Nicole A. Gaines, Keynote Speaker Jeffery Robinson, Professor Robert S. Chang, Justice Steven C. González, LFW Executive Director, Caitlin Davis Carlson

L: Justice Gonzalez, Shirley Bondin, Laurie Powers
R: ATJ Forum Supreme Court Panel
On March 23, 2015, following six months of planning, the Beyond Bars Conference on Prison and Reentry reform convened featuring a keynote from Theodore Shaw of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Stay tuned for more news about the conference and next steps, but for now, the Legal Foundation of Washington Board of Trustees wish to express our thanks and appreciation to the Associate Dean of Public Interest Law School, Michele Storms and the staff at University of Washington School of Law for hosting the event and providing so many supports to help make the day such a success.