



### **Making the Best Case for the Equal Justice Conference Attendance**

In turbulent economic times, training and professional development expenditures often unfairly bear the brunt of tightened budgets. But, it is in this time of foreclosed mortgages and rapidly deteriorating legal access for low-income communities that the training and resources offered by the Equal Justice Conference (EJC) will make the most difference for those in need. As equal justice professionals, we are no strangers to creative methods to stretch money. Make your attendance at EJC a practice of the dedicated and efficient way in which you serve your clients every day. Through EJC's trainings and resources, you will be able to learn about, engage in and share ideas and techniques at the conference that will make it possible for you to become more efficient, thus saving funds for training, as well as serving increased numbers of clients. Of course, efficiency is not the only reason to invest in attending EJC, the conference will also help to vastly improve skills and provide the latest information in providing clients fair and adequate legal services. Now is not the time to skimp on the great opportunities offered by EJC, it is the time to go, learn and share about how to make equal justice a reality for everyone.

For potential EJC attendees who need to seek permission or funding to attend this year's conference, we have pulled together some information that should help you make the strongest case for your attendance at the conference.

Make your strongest case for attending EJC by requesting support or authorization in writing. This often proves to be the most effective way to outline the benefits of attendance, both to you and to your organization. Review the conference registration brochure before you submit your request, to ensure you can share the important specifics you may need to support your request to attend the conference. As you pull together your best case for you or other staff members to attend the annual conference, here are some things to keep in mind:

- ❑ **Costs:** There are a number of ways in which you can reduce the cost of attending the Equal Justice Conference. Travel – if you plan early enough, there are a number of discounted travel options available to you. Generally, the train is less expensive than flying; however, with airlines feeling the pinch as well, there are a number of discounted flights you can get if you spend a little time checking various search engines as well as the individual airline web sites. Additionally, if you plan to rent a car or take the train, check out what discounts they offer, i.e. AAA or AARP. In terms of meals and incidentals, remember that the conference includes some meal options, which should be deducted from your per diem amount. You may also want to consider whether paying for individual meals and then getting reimbursed will be less expensive than taking the full M&I per diem amount.
- ❑ **Overview of who attends the conference:** Often times the value of networking at a conference is overlooked. Providing an overview of who attends the conference may present opportunities to partner with other organizations. The Equal Justice Conference brings together all components of the legal community to discuss equal justice issues as they relate to the delivery

of legal services to the poor and low-income individuals in need of legal assistance. The emphasis of this Conference is on strengthening partnerships among the key players in the civil justice system. Through plenary sessions, workshops, networking opportunities and special programming, the Conference provides a wide range of learning and sharing experiences for all attendees. Pro bono and legal services program staff, judges, corporate counsel, court administrators, private lawyers, paralegals, and many others attend this event. The main Conference will celebrate the ongoing collaboration between pro bono and legal services; explore additional partnerships that must be created, the resources that must be tapped, and the new issues facing clients.

- ❑ **Benefits to your organization:** In making a case to attend the Equal Justice Conference, you should be as specific as you can about the benefits to you as a professional and to your organization. With pre-conferences targeted to new directors and experienced directors that go beyond the basics and a session on working with volunteer law firms and a Litigation Network Strategies Meeting, there are a multitude of opportunities to increase your value to your program. There are also approximately 80 workshops that focus on management and diversity; information management and technology; pro bono services; substantive law; resource development; delivery innovations; and partnerships. Identifying specific sessions that you plan to attend in advance of the conference allows you to develop a plan that integrates these sessions with your current work. The same hold true for networking opportunities. It would be beneficial to you to highlight some opportunities that you think would help your organization strengthen ties with other organizations.
- ❑ **Professional Development for You:** If you are an attorney, the conference is an excellent way to obtain CLE credit, even ethics requirements. The conference provides substantive training on multiple areas of law, skills development to enhance job performance, and a variety of networking opportunities. For non-lawyers, the conference provides an introduction to different areas of law, networking opportunities, and an opportunity to understand the legal needs of the poor in America and how to best meet these needs.
- ❑ **After the Conference:** When you return from the Conference, you will have a wealth of information to share with your colleagues, as there are over 80 substantive sessions from which to choose. Not only will you have information from the particular sessions you attended, but you will subsequently have access to the entire electronic library of materials distributed. You will also be able to utilize the networking relationships that you developed at the conference for ongoing support and continuing professional development opportunities.