This workshop was held at the 2018 Equal Justice Conference in San Diego, California.

Title:

Developing Partnerships for Legal Field Research

Presenters:

April Faith-Slaker, Access to Justice Lab, Harvard Law School, Cambridge, MA


Developing and launching field research in the legal profession requires significant coordination between service providers and investigators. Mutual understanding of each partner’s internal processes and objectives is vital to a successful operation. Learn from panelists representing three varied institutions about their experiences collaborating to improve empirical research in the law.
Directions for completing this form: Place the title of your workshop in the space indicated, followed by the name and contact information for each of the presenters. Provide a brief description of your workshop by placing the cursor on the line below “Brief Description” and commence typing. You must include program goals, like what was requested on the EJC RFP. To complete the “Topical Outline”, place cursor next to each Roman numeral and begin typing. Then place the cursor next to the “a.” to begin listing sub-topics. To list more than one sub-topic, push “Enter” and “b.” should appear on the next line, and so on. Place the cursor on the line under “Notes” to begin providing your notes. To list bibliographic information, place the cursor next to “1.” and start typing. Push “Enter” to move on to “2.” and etc.

ABA / NLADA 2018 Equal Justice Conference

Developing Partnerships for Legal Field Research
Ellen Lawton, Amy Johnson, and April Faith-Slaker

Brief Description:

Developing and launching field research in the legal profession requires significant coordination between service providers and investigators. Mutual understanding of each partner’s internal processes and objectives is vital to a successful operation. Learn from panelists representing three varied institutions about their experiences collaborating to improve empirical research in the law.

Program Goals (what you will learn):

1. Identify the biggest challenges related to designing and implementing research in the legal services field
2. Discuss various solutions to the presented challenges
3. Gain clarity on how to think about and pursue collaborative research studies in your state

Topical Outline:

I. Introductions and brief overview of the session – April Faith-Slaker
   a. Designing and implementing research often involves coordination and partnership with individuals and entities either in your state or occasionally outside of your state. More often than not, legal service providers do not have the resources or expertise to carry out research internally without engaging some other individual or organization. Yet, these partnerships and collaborations inevitably have their challenges.
   b. What are some of the challenges in doing this? How do you identify and coordinate with research partners? What are some of the technological, professional, and other barriers faced and how are these addressed?

II. A2J Lab Presentation – April Faith-Slaker
   a. Discussion of the University setting and how academic researchers approach partnership with field sites
   b. Partnership and coordination challenges the Lab has faced
III. Medical Legal Partnerships Research – Ellen Lawton  
   a. Overview of research happening in the MLP world  
   b. Discussion of the challenges and barriers of working in this kind of interdisciplinary arena  

IV. Access to Justice Commission Research – Amy Johnson  
   a. Overview of evaluation and research in Arkansas and the Commission’s role  
   b. Discussion of the value and need for this research, how it has been used, etc  

V. Facilitated Questions and Panelist Discussion (will also open these questions up to the audience)  
   a. How does one identify and approach research partners in the first place?  
   b. When should legal service providers pay a consultant or researcher? When should you write them into a grant?  
   c. Who owns the final research/data/report?  
   d. What happens with a study reveals something undesirable? How should one manage communicating about the findings, especially considering different research partners’ perspectives/motivations?  
   e. What is the difference between evaluation and research?  
   f. What are some of the confidentiality and professional ethics differences between the legal profession and other professions (medical, social workers, etc)? How do you navigate these differences?  
   g. What are some of the technology issues with sharing data between different entities? How do you deal with these?  
   h. What are some of the political issues you’ve faced in trying to push forward research?  

Bibliography & Website Links:  

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Ellen Lawton, JD is a Principal Investigator and Lead Research Scientist at the George Washington University where she co-leads the University’s National Center for Medical-Legal Partnership in the Department of Health Policy and Management. An expert in poverty law generally, Ms. Lawton is a lead editor of the 2011 textbook, Poverty, Health & Law: Readings from Medical-Legal Partnership. Ms. Lawton is internationally recognized for her leadership in developing the medical-legal partnership approach, and has published an array of articles describing this work in both clinical and legal journals. Ms. Lawton received the 2011 Innovations in Legal Services Award from the National Legal Aid and
Defender Association, is chair of the board of directors at Health Imperatives and is a member of the board of directors of Community Resources for Justice. She also serves on the national advisory committee for the Primary Care Leadership Program.

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As the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission’s Executive Director, Amy Johnson coordinates statewide efforts to address the civil legal needs of low-income Arkansans through policy initiatives, resource development, public education, and legislative advocacy. Amy also staffs the Arkansas Access to Justice Foundation and Arkansas IOLTA Program, which engage in resource development and grantmaking initiatives to support the objective of increasing access to justice. During her time with Arkansas Access to Justice, Amy has overseen a number of major initiatives, including development of a statewide strategy for the delivery of services to self-represented litigants, implementation of a statewide resource development plan, completion of a study of the economic impact of civil legal aid, and court rule changes to increase access to justice and funding for legal aid.

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April Faith-Slaker is the Associate Director of Research Innovations at Harvard’s Access to Justice Lab. Prior to working at the Lab, she served as Director of the Resource Center for Access to Justice Initiatives at the American Bar Association, where she worked to support the creation and expansion of state access to justice commissions. She also conducted research on pro bono legal services for the ABA’s Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service. She also served as the managing editor for the Political and Legal Anthropology Review from 2007-2016. In a prior life, she lived in Nebraska, where she conducted program evaluation at Legal aid of Nebraska and was a researcher at the University of Nebraska’s Center on Children, Families and the Law.

Please submit outlines no later than April 6, 2018 to ejcmaterials@nlada.org