RFP: Court Recruitment System Portal & Database

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Deadline: May 9, 2025

Contact & Submission: Grace Spulak gspulak@ncsc.org

Budget Range: $150,000 - $250,000

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Background

The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) is an independent, non-profit organization that provides research, information services, education, and consulting focused on helping courts plan, make decisions, and implement improvements that save time and money, while ensuring judicial administration that supports fair and impartial decision-making.

NCSC will make a selection based on a combination of factors, including the content of the proposal; the history, mission, and past performance of the organization; the proposal cost; the fulfillment of NCSC's goals; and its desire to select a firm that will be a good partner and offer a collaborative working relationship. Respondents are advised that NCSC will not pay any costs associated with responding to this RFP; those costs are borne by the respondent. Proposals must be submitted by **May 9, 2025**. Services must be delivered by **June 30, 2026**. NCSC reserves the right to reject all bids/proposals. NCSC may, in its sole discretion, choose to terminate the RFP process at any point.   NCSC is not obligated to select a vendor following submission of bids/proposals. Selection of a vendor is subject to availability of funds and entering into a binding agreement to provide goods or services. All bids/proposals once submitted become the sole property of NCSC.

Current Court Recruitment System Platform

NCSC's Court Recruitment System is a free online common application portal that allows all state and local courts to post internship, externship, and judicial clerkship opportunities in one place. The Court Recruitment System allows interested students and potential applicants to review posted opportunities, add their information, and apply to any opportunity of interest from across the country.

State court clerkships offer law students and young lawyers critical opportunities to learn about the day-to-day work of courts and build professional networks. The Court Recruitment System aims to ensure state courts have an outstanding pool of applicants for clerkships from a variety of backgrounds, law schools, and geographic regions, who can support the work of the courts and become judges and leaders in the legal profession.

The current Court Recruitment System platform is built using an off-the-shelf scholarship platform called [Foundant](). Current court and applicant users use the Foundant platform to submit information about clerkship postings and apply for open positions. The portal uses a common application form that requires a letter of interest, writing sample, transcripts, and letters of recommendation from all applicants. Courts upload information about a position through the current portal, using a webform. This information includes information about the position location, duration, salary, and application deadline. Once a posting is live in the portal, applicants can upload application documents in Word or PDF through the portal, and third parties can upload requested letters of recommendation and transcripts in PDF for a particular application using a link generated by the portal and emailed to the third party. Once an application is submitted, court staff can retrieve the application through the portal but must reach out to the applicant outside of the portal to schedule interviews and communicate with applicants about the position. While Foundant allows courts to post clerkship, externship, and internship positions within the platform and to accept applications through the platform, because it was not designed specifically for clerkship applications with the court and law school users in mind, it has a number

of limitations that cannot be rectified with the current software. These limitations include the following:

- The platform does not allow for distinct account types with distinct functionalities for the following users: NCSC administrators, court users, applicants, and career counselors.
- The platform does not allow NCSC administrators to collect data about applicant demographics and whether an applicant was ultimately hired through the portal.
- The platform does not allow applicants to search and filter opportunities; provide basic application information that can autofill in applications either by pulling information from a previous application submitted by a user or by pulling information from uploaded PDF or Word resumes; and save documents such as writing samples, resumes, and unofficial transcripts in a dashboard for seamless upload when applying for opportunities.
- The platform does not allow court users to easily view applications on a customizable dashboard and communicate with applicants through the platform for the following purposes: extending invitations for interviews, requesting additional information, and sending rejection letters and offer letters.
- The platform does not allow law school career counselors distinct user accounts to use the platform to track student application progress; upload letters of recommendation and transcripts when appropriate; and certify information about student applicants.

Overview of the Desired Court Recruitment System Portal & Database

NCSC seeks the development of a modern and secure portal and database to facilitate state and local courts posting for candidates for internships, externships, and law clerkships, for students to apply for these internships, externships, and law clerkships directly through the portal, for career counseling staff to support interested students with access to the portal, and for ease of use for people providing letters of recommendation to submit through the portal.

RFP respondents must demonstrate that they are a SOC 2 Compliant organization (or have similar security measures), must utilize a Secure Software Development Lifecycle (SDLC), and follow secure coding practices (e.g. OWASP Top 10). NCSC will retain the right to have a third-party security audit performed on the portal application once complete.

Portal System Requirements

GOAL
A web-based clerkship/externship/internship opportunity platform that collects information in a single interface from different sources (NCSC admin, court, applicant, career counselor) and presents the most relevant information to each user depending on their role with the goal of becoming the primary way students find professional positions in U.S. state courts. Anticipated users and roles include: courts (to post opportunities), students/graduates (to apply for opportunities), career counselors/educators (to help students find opportunities and upload letters of recommendations/transcripts/other requested materials), and NCSC (back-end

administration and data analysis). This is envisioned as the state court equivalent to the Federal Court's OSCAR platform.

DESIGN
- System must allow for the posting of supplemental training, instruction, social media toolkits, and informational materials from the main page for all of the above envisioned user types. This includes guides/videos/instructions on how to post opportunities, how to apply, and how to manage opportunities that a court has posted.
- System must allow all end users to create an account from the same starting point on the main page (e.g. click "create an account" and then select role to differentiate account type). System must allow OaUTH authentication or social login to allow users to authenticate using an existing gmail, Microsoft, GitHub or Facebook account.
- When new court opportunities are posted, their location and a link to details are posted on an interactive map viewable on the system (e.g. who's hiring section).
- Users can browse opportunities from the homepage without logging in; opportunities can be sorted/filtered on the homepage by due date of application, location, target qualifications (i.e. eligibility), opportunity type (i.e. clerkship, externship, internship), court type, date opportunity begins/ends, in person/remote/hybrid opportunity type.

FUNCTION
- System must be user-friendly and should not require any proprietary equipment or software to access.
- Must not have a capacity limit for the number of users in portal.
- System has the ability and capacity for the upload, download, and storage of files in various formats and file sizes (i.e., PDF, Excel, .mp3, Word).
- System allows for key word integration on the backend to improve SEO.
- System must be able to generate emails, notifications of form submissions, file uploads, file downloads, reminders, including text/SMS notifications, and calendar events, subject to user roles and permissions.
- System includes an integrated project management/outreach/communications feature that sends and tracks bulk emails/updates about CORA to partner courts and other end users.

REPORTING
- System to maintain history logs and ability to run reports of logins, uploads, downloads, and file access by users, demographic information, location, and other data points TBD.
- System allows for aggregated data collection and information related to use by all account holders.
- System gathers data on applicant demographics and placement.
- System has ability to export data into commonly used formats and utilize API or other integrations to allow for data visualization in platforms like Tableau.

ACCESSIBILITY
- System must scale and be easy to view and navigate on a mobile phone.

- Must meet high level of accessibility requirements (color contrast, alt text, screen reader accessible, etc.) or at a minimum, meets WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards.
- System information can be presented in English as well as other commonly spoken languages, like Spanish.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
- System must be compatible with commonly used browsers, PC and Mac.
- System to establish different levels of security, permissions, and dashboard views depending on the user (NCSC admin, court, applicant, career counselor).
- System to allow seamless data migration and integration/carry-over from old platform to new platform.
- System is created in a common programing language.
- System is owned and maintained by NCSC. NCSC will own the final code and the vendor will deliver the code to NCSC.

SECURITY AND MAINTENANCE
- Information provided by end-users is securely stored on servers (TBD whether internal or external servers) and destroyed after a placement is made or an opportunity expires.
- System must adequately secure data that could be considered Personally identifiable information (PII).
- The vendor must build the site using best practice security protocols and provide documentation.
- System to be available at all times. In the event system is down, Vendor must provide immediate tech support.
- Vendor must provide an ongoing support pricing quote, detailing levels of support and response times with critical issues resolved within 24 hours and general questions responded to within two business days.

User Type NCSC Administrator: Security, Permissions, and Dashboard Requirements

Use Case: NCSC Administrators oversee the use of the platform and use the platform to approve court-submitted opportunities for posting to ensure that opportunities are appropriate for the platform; to gather information about opportunities and applications; and to run reports that track data about opportunities and applicants as specified below, including information about dates and locations of postings, types of positions posted, demographic data about applicants, and number of placed applicants. NCSC Administrators also manage portal user permissions. There will be between 5-10 NCSC Administrator users.

- Allow for dashboard customization showing courts opportunities pending approval, incoming applications arranged by date, expired opportunities, aggregate demographic data, number of placed applicants each month and year, and portal analytics.
- Must have the ability to add or delete users, reset passwords (if applicable), and revoke permissions.

- Must have the ability to approve a court posting before it is posted on the website.
- Allows for the viewing of aggregate data on applicant demographics and placement.
- Allow administrator to view and manage email/newsletter distribution to courts and schools.
- Auto flag test accounts so they are not included in reports.

User Type Court: Security, Permissions, and Dashboard Requirements

Use Case: Court users will use the portal to upload clerkship, externship, and internship opportunities for posting; view applications for positions; and share information with NCSC and applicants when an opportunity closes, including information about whether the hired applicant applied through the portal. The system should support an anticipated 5,000 court users at a particular point in time.

- Allow for dashboard customization with list of applicants for each posted position.
- Allow court, within the system, to send an applicant an invitation for interview, request additional information, send a rejection letter and send an offer letter.
- Allow court to track an applicant's progress through the court's application process.
- Posted opportunities are posted in a consistent format.
- Must allow account access/portal for court personnel that would allow multiple users to upload opportunities *and* view and download applications.
- Must allow courts to "bulk upload" opportunities (auto-fill with remembered information) and to apply minor customizations on their own.
- When a court opportunity is closed (someone is hired or post expires) the system should send a notice to all who applied for the closed opportunity and notify NCSC Administrators of whether the person hired applied through the portal.
- Allow court to customize some options within the application.

User Type Applicant: Security, Permissions, and Dashboard Requirements

Use Case: Applicants use the portal to submit applications for externship, internship, and clerkship opportunities; track application progress; and search for available opportunities. The system should allow for an anticipated 5,000 applicant users at a particular point in time.

- Allow for dashboard customization.
- Allow applicants to create an account with their basic, common application information, and allow it to auto-fill once entered.
- Allow applicants to save documents such as writing samples, resumes, unofficial transcripts, etc. in their dashboard for seamless upload functionality when applying for opportunities.
- Allow applicants to easily send their information to open opportunities.
- Allow applicants to see their application progress.
- Allow applicants to invite career counselors to view and track their progress.

- When an applicant is hired, allow for the applicant to notify other courts and remove their application.
- Allow applicants to sign up to be notified when new opportunities that meet a define criteria (job title, location) are uploaded.

User Type Career Counselor: Security, Permissions, and Dashboard Requirements

Use Case: Career Counselors will use the portal to track student application progress; upload letters of recommendation and transcripts when appropriate; and certify student applicant information (e.g., that a student has the two full years of grades when required, certify class rank). The system should allow for an anticipated 5,000 applicant users at a particular point in time.

- Allow for dashboard to be customized (view all students in list view with snapshot of each student; allow to search student list based on needs like deadlines, grad year, form/transcript/letter rec status, courts applied to, pending recommendation).
- Includes "to-do" list for each linked student applicant.
- Allow career counselors to view all applicants from their school and track student process.
- Allow career counselors to customize the process for letter of recommendation collection and transcript submission for all applicants at their school.
- Allow career counselors to certify that a student has 2 full years of grades.
- Allow recommenders to select *auto attach* so that if the student applies for another position the letter will automatically be attached to their new application without *pinging* the recommender another time.
- Allow recommenders to fall into two categories: faculty recommender and outside recommender.
- Allow counselors to certify class rank with options: does not rank, rank, partial rank.
- Allow schools to have multiple user types: admin, manage recommender, view only.
- Allow schools to recall any uploads and upload new/corrected uploads.
- Allow authorized career counselors to login as a student/have a student view.

Proposal Requirements

In your proposal, please include the following:

- A brief history of your organization and relevant experience, to include experience working with secure systems and confidential materials.
- Examples of related work.
- References from past projects.
- A detailed description explaining how you will supply a solution that meets the requirements above. Mock-ups and/or links to demos appreciated.

- Evidence that the responding organization is a SOC 2 Compliant organization (or have similar security measures), utilizes a Secure Software Development Lifecycle (SDLC), and follows secure coding practices (e.g., OWASP Top 10).
- A timeline that includes the following deliverables: platform development, feedback and check-in sessions with NCSC, testing, launch, and post-launch support, troubleshooting, and refinement.
- Because this project is funded in part by federal funding, the awardee must register with sam.gov and have no federal exclusions. Respondents must indicate their ability to meet this requirement.
- A detailed budget and cost estimate.
- Please include a description of your ongoing support services for this solution.
- NCSC will schedule a collaboration session with select vendors whereby the vendor will demonstrate how certain requirements are met.

Proposal Submission and RFP Timeline
- Proposals must be submitted as a PDF file via email to Grace Spulak (gspulak@ncsc.org) by **11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 9, 2025**.
- Potential bidders may submit questions until **April 25, 2025**. All questions received will be answered and posted on NCSC's website.
- Proposals will scored based on responsiveness to RFP requirements outlined above.
- The selected vendor will be notified no later than **June 1, 2025.**
- All work must be completed by **June 30, 2026**.
- Payment for the selected vendor will be provided on a payment schedule to be developed with the vendor.