Media Relations
publicinfo@lacourt.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 19, 2024

STANFORD IMPACT LABS AWARDS GRANT TO STANFORD LAW SCHOOL RESEARCHERS TO FOSTER INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH SUPERIOR COURT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

A Two-year Grant by Stanford Impact Labs Will Support the Court's Partnership with Stanford Law to Reduce Barriers to Justice

Stanford Law School and the Superior Court of Los Angeles County announced that a team of researchers from the [Deborah L. Rhode Center on the Legal Profession](#) and the [Legal Design Lab](#) has been awarded a grant by [Stanford Impact Labs](#) (SIL) to support the center's new collaboration with the [Superior Court of Los Angeles County](#). Led by Stanford Law Professor David Freeman Engstrom, the Rhode Center's co-director, and Margaret Hagan, the Legal Design Lab's founder and executive director, an interdisciplinary research team composed of experts from law, policy, and technology, [launched the innovative collaboration](#) with the Superior Court of Los Angeles County in early 2024 under the auspices of Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner. The two-year [Stage 1 grant](#) from SIL will further the center's work to implement innovative, evidence-based approaches to reduce barriers to participation in the judicial process and to improve access to justice for all court users.

The project supported by SIL, "[Fortifying Families Through Digital Access to Justice](#)," seeks to deploy evidence-based digital innovation designed to make court processes more fair and accessible for all court users. The research team will first rigorously study and identify barriers to court user engagement, then co-design and implement new digital processes that will empower litigants facing

potentially life-altering legal problems, such as eviction and child support disputes, to more easily and effectively navigate complex legal proceedings.

"We are grateful for this Stanford Impact Labs grant, which further establishes our partnership with researchers from Stanford Law School's Deborah L. Rhode Center on the Legal Profession and the Legal Design Lab, to build on the Court's mission in providing equal access to justice through the fair, timely and efficient resolution of all cases," Presiding Judge Samantha P. Jessner said. "We look forward to working together to research and implement data-informed methods to reduce barriers and improve access to justice for all court users."

"We are honored to receive funding and support from Stanford Impact Labs, which will significantly enhance the critical work we are doing with the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, the largest trial court in the country," said David Freeman Engstrom. "The American civil justice system is in crisis, with millions of individuals and families lacking access to legal representation in critical matters. Through our partnership, we aim to develop innovative solutions that promote access to justice for all."

The project's goal is to drive toward a truly modern court system that leverages technology to enable people to meaningfully participate in court processes.

"The collaborative partnership with our court's judges, administrators and Stanford's researchers will ultimately empower all residents of Los Angeles County to more easily navigate complex legal proceedings," Executive Officer/Clerk of Court David W. Slayton said. "We look forward to implementing evidence-based best practices, including new digital self-help tools and approaches to people-centric customer service, to further expand the Court's accessibility for all users."

Hagan said, "Our team is committed to leveraging our collective expertise to generate actionable insights that can inform policymaking and drive positive change in Los Angeles communities. This initiative aims to increase meaningful participation in eviction and family law matters, bolstering housing and family stability while improving the fairness, efficiency, and accuracy of court processes."

Added Professor Nora Freeman Engstrom, who co-directs the Rhode Center: "This project represents Stanford Law School at its very best. David, Margaret, and their collaborators will bring the most rigorous evidence to bear to address a concrete and urgent problem. It's enormously exciting."

About Stanford Impact Labs

Stanford Impact Labs is a new university-wide model that trains and provides grants to teams of researchers working with leaders in government, business, and communities to design, test, and

scale interventions aimed at making progress against some of the world's most pressing and persistent social challenges. By supporting solutions-focused research projects like the one led by the Stanford Law School team, Stanford Impact Labs provides grants with the expectation of a return–not in money, but in terms of outcomes that improve people's lives. More information on Stanford Impact Labs' grants strategy can be found here.

About Stanford Law School

Stanford Law School is one of the nation's leading institutions for legal scholarship and education. Its alumni are among the most influential decision makers in law, politics, business and high technology. Faculty members argue before the Supreme Court, testify before Congress, produce outstanding legal scholarship and empirical analysis, and contribute regularly to the nation's press as legal and policy experts. Stanford Law School has established a new model for legal education that provides rigorous interdisciplinary training, hands-on experience, global perspective and focus on public service, spearheading a movement for change.

More information on Stanford Law School's Deborah L. Rhode Center on the Legal Profession and the Stanford Legal Design Lab can be found here and here. For information on the Superior Court of Los Angeles County's programs and services, follow the Court on X, formerly known as Twitter (@LASuperiorCourt) and visit the Court's website, www.lacourt.org.