

UNLOCAL

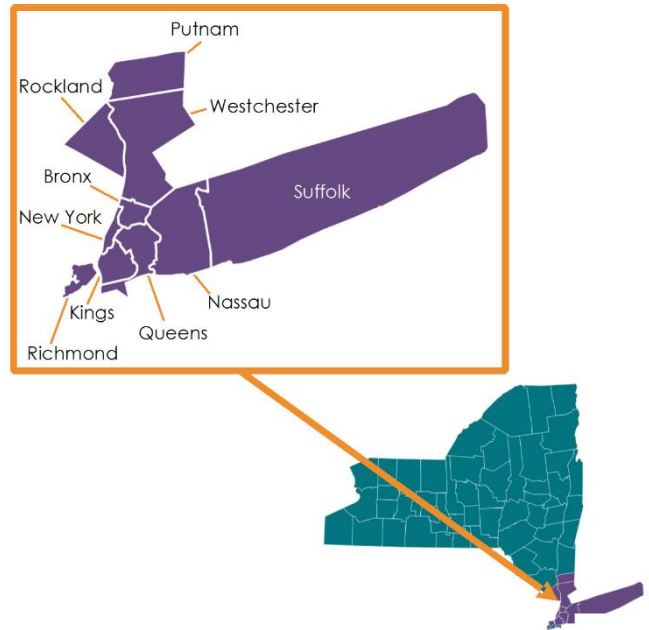
2023 – 2024
Report

OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS

During the grant period spanning from April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024, UnLocal diligently served low-income immigrants in New York, our primary focus demographic, by offering a spectrum of vital services including legal aid, educational initiatives, community outreach, and advocacy efforts. Throughout this period, we successfully resolved 408 cases for immigrant New Yorkers, facilitating essential outcomes such as securing 99 employment authorization documents, facilitating 24 DACA renewals, obtaining 33 asylum orders, and assisting with 22 adjustments of status (leading to lawful permanent residency).

In addition to our casework, we played a pivotal role in disseminating crucial information pertaining to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and immigration court proceedings. We achieved this through a comprehensive approach, hosting over 24 community legal presentations, both in-person and virtually, which collectively reached more than 2,079 individuals. These presentations covered a wide array of topics, including but not limited to, the fundamental workings of the immigration system, guidance on filing for DACA and advance parole, insights into asylum processes, and elucidation on the eligibility criteria for the New York State Dream Act (NYSDA).

Our Queer Immigrant Justice Project (QIJP) provided identity-affirming legal services and community education to queer immigrant communities, including representation for asylum, employment authorization, SIJS, and adjustment of status. In response to increased asylum seeker numbers, QIJP offered pro se assistance to LGBTQIA+ immigrants, ensuring timely filing.



Service Area: New York City Metropolitan Area

Population Served: Low-Income Immigrant Populations

Staffing Full Time Equivalents:

Total Staff: 19	Lawyers: 6
Paralegals: 4	Others: 9

Our Post-Order Defense (POD) team represented detained immigrants with final removal orders, aiming to halt deportation and secure release. They are part of the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative, a one of a kind program in the country along with Make The Road New York (MTRNY) and New York Legal Assistance Group.

Our Immigrant Wellness Team, comprising a full-time social worker, social work intern, and part-time off-site supervisor, collaborated closely with our staff attorneys to link clients with additional resources and therapeutic services. Throughout the reporting period, our team facilitated access to therapy, identified food pantries, assisted with medical insurance applications, and facilitated connections with community support groups for our clients.

In partnership with the Pro Se Plus Project (PSPP), we addressed the pressing needs of numerous new asylum seekers in New York City by bolstering the capacity of legal service providers to support immigrants. PSPP has been instrumental in guiding clients through the intricate immigration system, empowering them to advocate for themselves, while also training community members to provide crucial assistance throughout the asylum process. Through PSPP's initiatives, immigrant community members have been safeguarded from in absentia removal orders, notario fraud, missed deadlines, and exploitation. In total, UnLocal aided 384 individuals in successfully submitting their asylum and employment authorization applications pro se. Furthermore, our self-guided presentations have continued to reach and benefit community members, accumulating 1,050 views across our social media platforms. Lastly, PSPP has conducted comprehensive training sessions for applicants, volunteers, pro bono attorneys, partners, and community members, equipping them with a thorough understanding of the screening and filing requirements for asylum, relief under the Convention Against Torture (CAT), employment authorization, prosecutorial discretion, and certain motions in immigration court.

The tangible benefits experienced by low-income individuals as a direct outcome of our services encompass a range of critical advancements. These include assisting our clients in obtaining employment authorization through asylum, facilitating the renewal of DACA status, securing Temporary Protected Status, and facilitating various other forms of immigration relief. Additionally, we facilitated numerous fee waiver requests, thereby enabling clients to attain employment authorization and legal status without financial barriers. Furthermore, we played a pivotal role in connecting clients with essential social services, including access to food pantries, therapeutic and emotional support services, and facilitating enrollment in housing assistance programs and ESL classes.

DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

UnLocal is an immigration legal service provider in New York. Using a multifaceted approach, we deliver holistic legal services by combining education, legal representation, and advocacy. We represent clients in an array of immigration case matters such as asylum, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS), U/V-Visas, Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA), and Naturalization. To illustrate the impact of our work, we share two case stories from clients we've represented:

Case Narrative #1: In each case we undertake, UnLocal meticulously evaluates all potential avenues for relief. A notable illustration of this approach is exemplified in a recent case involving a mother and her son from Nigeria. Initially, our attorney initiated the asylum process, recognizing its complexity and lengthy approval timelines. However, upon further review, our legal team identified a more streamlined path through Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). Subsequently, after submitting the SIJS claim, the court approved the case expeditiously within just three months. This successful outcome underscores our commitment to diligently exploring all available options to secure the best possible outcome for our clients.

Case Narrative #2: UnLocal celebrated a significant victory in securing asylum for a client we represented from Afghanistan. MA, a well-known presenter for a television show in her home country, faced grave danger as the Taliban ascended to power.



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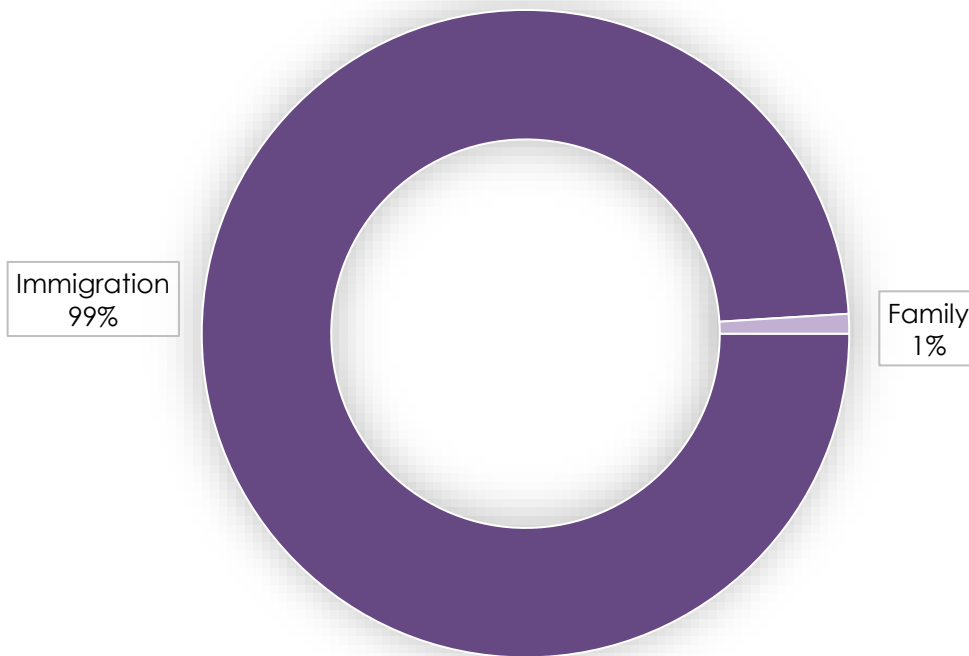
people
benefited
from

408

legal cases
closed

Following a menacing threat delivered to her doorstep, accusing her of promoting immorality and sex work and threatening her life, MA's fears were tragically realized when a colleague from the same TV station, also targeted by the Taliban, was killed in a car bombing. In the wake of this tragedy, MA sought refuge and reached out to UnLocal for assistance. In September, after enduring months of anticipation, MA underwent a crucial interview with immigration officials at the Asylum Office.

CASES BY LEGAL PROBLEM AREA



However, the process didn't end there. Despite the harrowing experience, MA remained composed as she faced a second, hostile re-interview, marked by aggressive accusations regarding her social media activity and alleged ties to "violent opposition groups." Displaying remarkable resilience, MA navigated the questioning with poise, offering her best responses.

Against formidable odds, our unwavering advocacy and MA's unwavering determination resulted in success! Just weeks after the grueling interview, MA received the long-awaited approval for asylum. This triumph exemplifies UnLocal's steadfast commitment to defending the rights and safety of individuals fleeing persecution and injustice.

OTHER LEGAL-RELATED SERVICES

Throughout the grant period, we conducted a robust series of over 26 community legal presentations, collectively engaging with more than 2,000 individuals. These sessions encompassed a diverse range of topics, including navigating tax filings with an ITIN, understanding the fundamentals of the US immigration system, providing training for volunteers on the asylum process, discussing immigration laws pertinent to LGBTQIA+ immigrants, and elucidating strategies for self-representation in immigration court.

Our target audience for these presentations spans across our vibrant immigrant communities, comprising undocumented youth, queer individuals, asylum seekers, and immigrant families. The overarching aim of our presentations is multifaceted: to furnish accurate and timely legal information pertinent to immigrant communities, to empower our clients with knowledge and resources, and to cultivate a culture of community engagement and collaboration. These sessions are hosted either at our office or partner sites, ensuring accessibility and convenience for attendees. Leveraging various online platforms such as Zoom and Instagram enables us to extend our reach to a broader audience, facilitating broader dissemination of critical information. Moreover, to enhance accessibility, presentations are frequently offered in Spanish, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for our Spanish-speaking community members. We are working on translating to other languages as the population of the target are French, Wolof, Mandarin, and Arabic speakers.

UnLocal conducted comprehensive legal training sessions for volunteers, equipping them with essential skills to support immigrants navigating the complexities of the immigration process. Throughout the reporting period, volunteers received training on key procedures, including filing for a change of immigration venue and employment authorization applications. These training sessions were captured in detailed videos, which are accessible on our YouTube channel. Since their release, these training videos have garnered significant traction, collectively amassing over 3,000 views, indicating their widespread reach and impact within our community.

1,434

people
benefited
from

**Pro Se
Assistance**

2,079

people
benefited
from

**Community
Legal
Education**

1,896

people
benefited
from

**Web-Based
Assistance**

TECHNOLOGY

Over the past six months, UnLocal has prioritized equipping all staff, especially our legal team, with high-quality equipment featuring HD cameras for seamless remote court appearances, client meetings, and other essential tasks. As we navigate the evolving landscape of a post-pandemic hybrid world, these resources have become indispensable for advancing our mission effectively. To this end, we have upgraded outdated laptops that have been in use for nearly a decade, ensuring that our team has access to modern tools that support their work efficiently. Additionally, we are streamlining our software systems to foster greater synergy and collaboration across our entire organization. By optimizing our technology infrastructure, we aim to enhance productivity and effectiveness in serving our community and fulfilling our organizational objectives.

IOLA TECHNOLOGY GRANT

UnLocal spent this additional funding on much needed laptop upgrades for our legal team, as well as data entry plus maintenance for our online case management system.

PRO BONO VOLUNTEERS

We recruit law students, volunteers, and high school and college students through our established partnerships, word of mouth, and recruitment events like the NYU Public Interest Legal Career Fair. We also create postings, which we circulate to local law schools and to our partners. During the summer, when we have the most interns, we organize a summer orientation series, during which we introduce them to the team, train them on how to file USCIS forms, how to represent families in immigration court, explain the life of a case, and introduce other legal-related topics. Interns receive support during our weekly legal team meetings and regular check-ins with advocates. Moreover, our pro se clinics rely on volunteers who are referred to us by our partners in the Pro Se Plus Project Collaborative. The clinic training includes an immigration overview and an in-depth application run-through.

3law students volunteered **7,320** hours**15**other volunteers volunteered **154** hours

SIGNIFICANT COLLABORATIONS

UnLocal engages in extensive collaborations with grassroots organizations to effectively deliver services and support to our community. Notably, our longstanding partnership with CBST (Congregation Beit Simchat Torah) exemplifies this commitment. Through this collaboration, the Queer Immigrant Justice Project (QIJP) team actively participates in CBST's monthly clinics, offering invaluable assistance to LGBTQIA+ individuals navigating asylum cases. At these clinics, our team provides free advice and counsel, while also training volunteers to prepare legal cases for potential full representation.

Additionally, as a member of the Rapid Response Legal Collaborative (RRLC), UnLocal convenes biweekly meetings with Make the Road New York (MRNY) and the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). Together, we review intakes, discuss caseloads, and address emerging issues. Furthermore, we collaborate on joint training sessions for attorneys and coordinate advocacy campaigns.

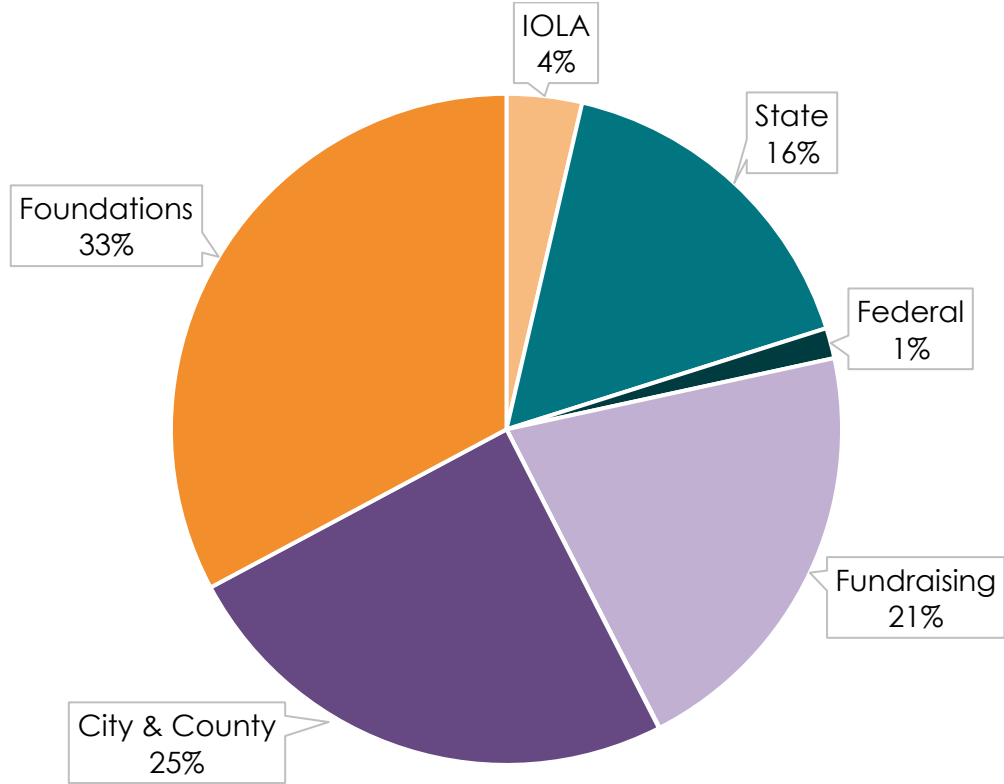
Moreover, UnLocal serves as a steering committee member of the Bronx Immigration Partnership (BIP), a coalition of community-based organizations offering legal and social services to Bronx residents. Through regular bimonthly meetings and collaborative events, we work alongside BIP partners to address immigration-related needs and provide support to the community.

Our partnerships extend to organizations such as African Communities Together, Central American Legal Assistance, Catholic Migration Services, MASA, and Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid Inc. as part of the Pro Se Plus Project. Through ongoing collaboration, we develop presentations, educational materials, and volunteer training sessions to enhance community support and facilitate the completion of asylum applications at Legal Clinics.

Furthermore, we collaborate with schools and grassroots organizations including Evergreen Middle School, D79 PS, El Puente in Williamsburg, Mixteca, BronxWorks, La Red de Pueblos Transnacionales, New Women New Yorkers, and RIF Asylum support to deliver community education initiatives. Our ongoing partnership with ImmSchools involves conducting workshops for educators, parents, and students to address the challenges faced by immigrant youth. Additionally, in collaboration with the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, we deliver presentations on the New York State Dream Act (NYSDA) to community members and organizations, promoting access to education and resources for immigrant communities.

CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES FUNDING

\$ 3,031,103



IOLA Funding	\$ 110,000
City & County Funding	\$ 748,679
State Funding	\$ 500,000
Federal Funding	\$ 44,444
Foundations	\$ 994,480
Fundraising	\$ 632,500
Other Funding	\$ 1,000