

Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois
Guidelines for Community Redevelopment Funding
Ready to Work Initiative
July 2016

Introduction

The Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois has received \$13,037,872 from a national settlement between Bank of America and the U.S. Department of Justice. Under the terms of the settlement, LTF must distribute the funds *“for the sole purpose of providing funds to legal aid organizations in the state of Illinois to be used for foreclosure prevention legal assistance and community redevelopment assistance.”* Accordingly, LTF will award grants for **mortgage foreclosure legal assistance** (covered by separate grant guidelines) as well as for **community economic development legal assistance**, which are the subject of these guidelines.

In response to this opportunity to make grants to legal aid agencies for community redevelopment purposes, the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois seeks to fund a new project – called the **Ready to Work (“R2W”) Initiative** – to focus on addressing legal barriers to employment.

Purpose

Grants under the R2W Initiative are to be used to help individuals overcome legal obstacles to getting and/or keeping a job.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a grant under the R2W Initiative, an organization must:

- 1) Be a legal aid agency that received a grant from the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2016;
- 2) Employ at least three full-time equivalent attorneys licensed to practice in Illinois;
- 3) Maintain not-for-profit status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Legal Issues to be Addressed

Applicants may propose to use R2W Initiative grants to address two tiers of legal issues. Successful applicants **must** provide legal assistance regarding Tier 1 issues, while assistance regarding Tier 2 issues may be provided at the discretion of the organization:

- **Tier 1: Barriers to Employment:** Tier 1 issues are legal matters that directly limit an individual’s ability to get or keep a job for which they are otherwise qualified. Examples include the expungement and sealing of criminal records; access to/reinstatement of driver’s licenses or other state-issued identification; other credentialing or occupational licensing issues; identity theft; credit repair; child care or child custody issues to accommodate work schedules; wage theft; and/or access to transportation, including consumer issues related to a vehicle needed to get to or perform a job.

- **Tier 2: Life Stability Issues:** Tier 2 issues are legal issues that affect the general life stability of an individual or family and can have a disruptive effect on an individual's ability to seek or perform a job. Examples include housing issues, health care issues, access to public benefits, domestic violence, consumer debt issues, and access to educational/vocational training services.

Because the purpose of the R2W Initiative is to assist individuals who face barriers to employment, RW2 Initiative funding only will support services to clients who present Tier 1 issues. For these clients, the legal aid organization may provide direct legal assistance and/or referrals to address Tier 2 issues, as well. (For example, initiative funds could be used to support services to an unemployed client seeking reinstatement of a driver's license (Tier 1) and help regarding a debt collection issue (Tier 2). In contrast, funds could not be used to assist a client with a debt collection issue only.)

Each applicant will have some latitude to identify the Tier 1 and Tier 2 legal issues on which it will focus the majority of its efforts. The applicant will be required to submit a list of proposed priorities in its grant request. This list will be subject to LTF approval.

Comprehensive Legal Services

The R2W Initiative seeks to support comprehensive assistance to help individuals address legal barriers to employment. Therefore, the applicant organization must have the capacity to:

- Screen all R2W clients for Tier 1 and Tier 2 legal issues using a checklist system;
- Provide direct, comprehensive legal assistance to address Tier 1 issues, as defined by the legal aid organization in its application for funding;
- Provide legal assistance to address Tier 2, as defined by the legal aid organization in its application for funding, through direct assistance, self-help resources, and referrals.

Collaborative Relationships & Referrals

A legal aid organization receiving funds under the R2W Initiative is expected to provide legal assistance through formal partnership and referral arrangements with **workforce development agencies** in order to identify potential clients who are actively seeking employment and who are motivated to address the legal barriers they face. **It is LTF's expectation that the majority of clients who receive services under the R2W Initiative will be referred by a workforce development agency.** For the purposes of these guidelines, a workforce development agency is a not-for-profit or governmental entity that provides training, education, guidance, and support for job seekers. Many of these entities are funded under the federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act ("WIOA") and organized under statewide and regional workforce boards. These include one or more "One-Stop Centers" that offer comprehensive services to job seekers in each of the 26 Local Workforce Investment Areas ("LWIAs") throughout Illinois.

Each applicant for funding under the R2W Initiative must identify the collaborative workforce development agency relationships it will establish under the initiative. Successful applicants are expected to enter into at least one formal project partnership, and may also establish less formal referral relationships:

- ***Project Partners:*** Legal aid agencies funded under the R2W Initiative should enter into formal partnerships with one or more workforce development agencies. These relationships should be based on regular, ongoing interaction throughout the course of the R2W Initiative grant period and may include features such as embedded legal staff, regularly scheduled on-site client intake, regularly scheduled on-site legal seminars/clinics for job seekers; on-site training for workforce development staff; and protocols for referrals.
- ***Referral Network Members:*** Legal aid agencies may establish less formal referral relationships with one or more other workforce development agencies in the targeted service area. These relationships may include periodic contact/information sharing with workforce development staff, occasional on-site legal seminars/clinics, and protocols for referrals.

Each legal aid organization funded under the R2W Initiative must set up a direct intake mechanism for clients referred by Project Partners and Referral Network Members to allow such clients to bypass the legal aid organization's regular intake system.

Service Delivery Mechanisms

Legal aid organizations may use some combination of the following to provide legal services under the R2W Initiative:

- Direct assistance by staff attorneys or paralegals;
- Direct assistance by volunteer attorneys or paralegals;
- Direct assistance by contract attorneys or paralegals;
- Telephone advice services;
- Legal advice/document preparation services provided through clinics or help desks;
- Legal information materials;
- Legal information seminars;
- Other service delivery mechanisms as proposed in the application for R2W funds and approved by LTF.

Target Population & Special Populations

The target population for the R2W Initiative consists of individuals who seek to find or keep a job. The initiative is intended to address the legal needs of lower-income persons who do not have the resources to pay market rates for legal services.

A legal aid organization that is applying for funds may want to direct some portion of its services to address the needs of special populations who may face significant barriers to employment. Examples include youth, homeless individuals, people with disabilities, or victims of domestic violence. Please note that services focused on a specific population must be in conjunction with services provided to a broader population of job seekers.

Duration of Initiative and Timeframe for Initial Grants

The Lawyers Trust Fund anticipates that the R2W Initiative will be awarded over a period of four to five years, based on factors such as the size/number of grants and the return on invested funds. Initial grants will be made for a two-year period (*January 1, 2017 – December 31, 2018*).

Amounts Available

The amount available for the R2W Initiative will be determined by the LTF board of directors based on the number and quality of the applications received and the amounts requested. For planning purposes, the LTF board has designated a range of \$900,000 to \$1,250,000 per year for the Initiative.

In order to support comprehensive and coordinated services, grants to each legal services organization will be generally **not less than \$200,000 per year**.

Geographic Coverage

The Lawyers Trust Fund's expectation is that R2W Initiative funding will support legal services in multiple areas of the state.

Grants under the R2W Initiative will be made on a regional basis for **Cook County; Northern Illinois/Collar Counties; and Central/Southern Illinois**. In Cook County, LTF may make more than one R2W Initiative grant. For other regions, LTF will make a single grant to a regional provider.

Legal Aid Partners/Sub-Grantees

Applicant legal aid programs may partner with other legal aid grantees and provide them with R2W Initiative funding through sub-grants, in order to provide comprehensive, cost-effective services.

Applying for an R2W Initiative Grant

Applicants must complete and submit the grant application form by 5:00pm September 30, 2016. Completed applications should be submitted by email to apply@ltf.org.