

LAWYERS TRUST FUND OF ILLINOIS

Guidelines & Guiding Principles

Project & New Applicant Grants: 2020

(Grant Period: January 1 – December 31, 2020)

Background

The **Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois** is a private, not-for-profit foundation incorporated by the Illinois State Bar Association and The Chicago Bar Association in 1983. Under rules established by the Illinois Supreme Court, the Lawyers Trust Fund receives revenue from the Interest on Lawyer Trust Account (IOLTA) program and from a portion of the annual registration fee paid by Illinois attorneys. The Lawyers Trust Fund uses the income from these sources to support the provision of legal aid services throughout the state.

Eligibility for Grants

The Lawyers Trust Fund makes grants to organizations that provide civil legal aid to low-income individuals and families. The Lawyers Trust Fund will consider grant applications **only** from organizations that:

1. Are Illinois **not-for-profit organizations** that are tax-exempt under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
2. Have provided legal assistance to individual clients in civil matters for a **minimum of two years** at the time the application is submitted.
3. Serve Illinois residents who cannot afford to hire private legal counsel, which is generally defined as having incomes **below 150%** of the federal poverty guidelines.
4. **Provide services without charge** to the client. [Note: This does not mean programs cannot charge sliding-scale fees to clients with incomes above 150% of the federal poverty guidelines, nor does it mean that grantees cannot require clients to pay court costs or related expenses that cannot be waived. However, LTF funds can only be used to support free services.]
5. **Employ at least one (1) paid, full-time equivalent staff attorney** who has been licensed to practice for a minimum of three years on the date that the application is submitted.
6. **Law School Clinics:** The Lawyers Trust Fund will support law school clinics only if the LTF board determines that the legal aid services provided by the clinic are unique in terms of the types of services offered or the target population to whom services are

offered. (*i.e.*, no other legal aid entity is providing the same services or targeting the same population.)

7. **Mediation Services:** The Lawyers Trust Fund will not make grants to support the provision of mediation services.
8. **Exemption for Current Grantees:** Organizations that received LTF funding in 2019 are eligible to apply for a project grant in 2020 even if they do not meet all of the eligibility requirements in these guidelines.

Grantmaking Goals

In making its grant decisions, the Lawyers Trust Fund seeks to support:

- The provision of legal aid services in all areas of the state;
- An appropriate balance of delivery mechanisms;
- Legal services that address the most critical needs of low-income individuals and families, including health, personal safety, family stability, access to shelter, and economic security;
- Legal services to meet critical legal needs that would not be addressed – based on geographic location, area of the law, and/or client characteristics – without the applicant’s services.

Guiding Principles

- LTF will favor organizations that provide substantial amounts of direct legal assistance to low-income clients facing critical legal problems.
- LTF will favor organizations that leverage substantial additional resources to support and carry out their work.
- LTF will make funding decisions based on the idea that Illinois residents who live outside of Cook County should have equitable access to legal aid services.
- LTF will emphasize funding to organizations that serve the broadest possible constituency, in order to maintain maximum flexibility and coverage in the legal aid system.
- LTF will focus on preserving the capacity of strong organizations that serve large numbers of clients with efficient, effective services.

Criteria for Project Grants & New Applicants

In reviewing applications and making funding decisions regarding grants for Project Grants & New Applicants, LTF staff and directors will consider the following questions:

- **Scope of Work:** Is the work LTF is being asked to support clearly defined and focused on directly addressing critical civil legal needs of low-income Illinoisans?
- **Legal Needs Addressed:** What type of legal problem(s) and client need(s) does the applicant address? Are these critical needs for low-income individuals and families? Are these services unique or are they also addressed by other organizations serving the same client population and/or geographic area?
- **Efficient & Effective Service Delivery:** Does the applicant organization use delivery methods that appropriately balance efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility? Does the organization make appropriate use of technology to increase and improve services? Does the applicant make appropriate and adequate use of volunteers?
- **Quality:** Does the organization have systems of quality control in place? Do case-handlers and supervisory personnel have adequate levels of experience? Are training and mentoring opportunities available for staff and/or volunteers?
- **Track Record:** Does the organization have a history of providing legal services to low-income individuals and families?
- **Organizational Strength:** Does the organization have adequate systems and structures in place to oversee and support the proposed project, *i.e.*, staff-level management, board governance, fiscal management, fundraising, information technology, human resources?
- **Financial Viability:** Does the project for which funding is sought from LTF have other sources of financial support? Is there a plan in place to raise adequate resources to sustain the project in the future?
- **Strategic Vision:** Is there a clear vision for how the proposed work addresses a compelling need (or needs) and is consistent with the overall mission of the organization? Are the proposed activities reflected in a board-approved mission statement or strategic planning document?

A Note on Project Funding from LTF

Through the Project & New Applicant Grants cycle conducted each fall, LTF provides support for a variety of entities, ranging from small legal aid programs to law school clinics to legal aid programs that are a part of large social service organizations. That is why LTF asks applicants to define the scope of the “project” for which funding is sought.

“Projects” tend to fall into three main categories:

- For an organization whose primary focus is on providing legal aid services, the scope of the project can encompass support for the entire organization (*e.g.*, Neighborhood Legal Aid Services).
- For an entity that is a distinct unit focused exclusively on providing legal aid services and that is housed within a larger organization (*e.g.*, social service agency, law school), the “project” can be a request for support for that entity (*e.g.*, the Legal Aid Project of Neighborhood Social Services).
- Any organization or any unit of a larger organization *may*, at its discretion, request funding for a specific set of activities related to the provision of legal aid services, including those targeted at a discrete population and/or a defined set of legal issues (*e.g.*, the Eviction Project of Neighborhood Legal Aid Service or the Homeless Assistance Initiative of the Legal Aid Project of Neighborhood Social Services).

Applicants are free to define the scope of the “project” for which funding is sought, as long as the requested funds will be limited to supporting the provision of free legal assistance to individuals and families in civil cases.

Timeline

The Fall Cycle for funding in 2020 will follow the schedule below:

Grant applications available from LTF	July 19, 2019
Completed applications due	September 16, 2019
Grant decisions made by LTF	December 12, 2019
Applicants notified of grant decision	December 12-13, 2019
Initial grant payment	January 2, 2020

For More Information

We encourage applicants and potential applicants to call with any questions about the Lawyers Trust Fund’s guidelines, application procedures or funding criteria. Please feel free to contact Mark Marquardt, executive director (312.938.2133 or mark@ltf.org) or David Holtermann, associate director & general counsel (312.938.3076 or david@ltf.org).

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