

Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois CY 2026 Annual Grant Opportunity

July 2025

The logo for the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois is a blue square with a white border. Inside the square, the words "LAWYERS", "TRUST FUND", and "of ILLINOIS" are stacked vertically in a white serif font. Small white dots are positioned at the top and bottom center of the square, just inside the border.

The [Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois](#) is a charitable foundation that provides grants to support the provision of free, direct civil legal services to low-income Illinois residents. To pursue this mission, LTF makes annual grants to support services that help low-income people meet critical legal needs through a variety of delivery methods. LTF's grantmaking goals recognize the importance of funding legal services to meet critical needs that otherwise would not be addressed due to geographic location, area of the law, and/or client characteristics.

2026 Annual Grant Application Now Available

LTF awards annual grants on a calendar year basis. The application window for CY 2026 (January 1 – December 31, 2026) Annual Grants is now open. The application is open to both current grantees and new applicants and is the only opportunity to seek annual support funding from LTF for 2026. More information is available online regarding LTF's [annual grants and grant guidelines](#), as well as [instructions for applying](#) for an annual grant.

Grantee Profile

LTF currently funds 55 non-profit organizations located across Illinois that provide civil legal services. This total includes free-standing agencies focused solely on legal services, as well as legal programs housed within larger non-profit organizations (such as social services providers). On an annual basis, the largest of these legal programs closed thousands of cases, employed more than 200 staff members, and had an annual budget in excess of \$25 million. However, LTF also makes grants to many smaller organizations. During the past several grant cycles, LTF has made initial grants to more than 20 new grantees. More detailed information about LTF grantees and their work is available in LTF's report on its [2025 Legal Aid Grantees & Services](#). A list of [current 2025 grantees](#) also is available on the LTF website.

2026 Funding Outlook

LTF's board currently anticipates awarding \$31 million in annual grants in 2026. LTF awarded more than \$26 million in grants for 2025. It is expected that the increased CY 2026 funding will support:

- Requests from current grantees to maintain or increase service delivery as well as to support organizational needs (such as staffing, technology, and infrastructure), and
- New grants to meritorious first-time applicants.

The CY 2026 application cycle is expected to be very competitive due to the loss and threat of loss of legal aid funding from federal and other sources.

Minimum Grant Amount

In recognition of the extensive effort and resources required to complete an application for an annual grant, the LTF board of directors has established \$25,000 as the minimum annual grant award.

Application Due Date

Completed applications are due before 6:00pm on **Monday, September 15, 2025**.

Online Grant Application Portal

All applicants must use LTF's [application portal](#) to complete and submit applications for 2026. New applicants must register and receive approval from LTF as new users before accessing the application.

New & Emerging Organizations

LTF welcomes applications from emerging legal aid organizations and/or programs that meet its eligibility criteria. To be eligible an organization must:

- Be an Illinois-based non-profit organization that is tax-exempt under §501(c)(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.
- Provide services without charge to the client. [Note: This does not mean applicants 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.]
- Employ at least one (1) paid, full-time equivalent staff attorney who has been licensed to practice for a minimum of three years at the time the application is due. (*September 15, 2025 for CY 2026 applications.*)

Waiver of the One-Attorney Requirement

LTF's grantmaking focuses on organizations and programs that use attorneys to deliver and/or supervise the delivery of legal services. This is the basis of the requirement that applicants employ at least one (1) paid, full-time equivalent staff attorney who has been licensed to practice for a minimum of three years. The LTF board of directors will consider granting a temporary, one-year waiver of the one FTE attorney requirement for emerging legal aid organizations/programs that meet certain criteria. Read pages 9 and 10 of the Grant Guidelines for more information about requesting a waiver.

Information Sessions

LTF will hold four sessions via Zoom to provide information about LTF grants and the CY 2026 application process. Both current grantees and prospective new applicants are welcome to attend any of these sessions, but participation is optional. The sessions are scheduled for the following dates:

- **July 17** at 10:00am - New applicant information session (*This session will explain LTF's grant guidelines, eligibility criteria, and factors in grant awards*)
- **July 24** at 2:00pm - General grant application information session
- **July 29** at 2:00pm - New applicant information session (*Repeats July 17 session*)
- **August 4** at 10:00am - General grant application information session (*Repeats July 24 session*)

To register for an information session email Nebula Li, Program Officer for Legal Services, at nebula@ltf.org.

Questions?

LTF staff are available to answer questions about the Lawyers Trust Fund, eligibility for a grant, and/or the application process. Please contact David Holtermann, Deputy Executive Director for Grants & Legal Affairs (david@ltf.org or 312-938-3076).