

Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois CY 2027 Annual Grant Opportunity

July 2026

The logo for the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois is a blue square with a thin white border. Inside the square, the words "LAWYERS", "TRUST FUND", and "of ILLINOIS" are stacked vertically in a white serif font. The word "of" is in a smaller, italicized font.

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.

2027 Annual Grant Application Now Available

LTF awards annual grants on a calendar year basis. The application window for CY 2027 Annual Grants (January 1 – December 31, 2027) 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 2027. 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 57 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 [2026 Legal Aid Grantees & Services](#). A list of [current grantees](#) also is available on the LTF website.

2027 Funding Outlook

LTF's board currently anticipates making \$31.5 million available for grants in CY 2027, a slight increase over the \$31,049,500 distributed in CY 2026. The increased CY 2027 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 2027 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 Deadline

Completed applications must be submitted before 6:00pm on **Tuesday, September 15, 2026**.

Online Grants Portal

All applicants must use LTF's [online grants portal](#) to complete and submit applications for 2027. 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. In summary, to be eligible for a grant an entity must:

- Be an Illinois non-profit organization that is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3).
- Serve Illinois residents who cannot secure private legal counsel (including individuals and families at or below 250% of the federal poverty level as well as other factors that substantially limit their ability to get legal help from a private attorney).
- Provide services without charge to the client. [Note: Entities may charge sliding-scale fees and require clients to pay court costs or related expenses that cannot be waived. However, LTF funds may only be used to support free legal services.]
- Meet LTF's Attorney Staffing Requirement (described in the next section).
- Provide legal services in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Interested applicants should read the complete, detailed list of eligibility criteria in the [grant guidelines](#).

Attorney Staffing Requirement

LTF grantees must employ at least one qualified attorney, which means an individual who:

- Is directly involved in providing the entity's legal services.
- Is a compensated, full-time employee of the entity.
- Will have been licensed to practice law for a minimum of three years as of January 1 of the year for which an applicant seeks grant funding (e.g., for the CY 2027 grant year, the reference date is January 1, 2027).

Under limited circumstances, the LTF board of directors will consider granting a temporary, one-year waiver of this requirement for emerging legal aid organizations/programs that meet certain criteria. To seek a waiver, new applicants must submit a pre-application request by August 4. See Part I of the guidelines for more details about seeking a waiver.

Information Sessions

LTF will hold four sessions via Zoom to provide information about LTF grants and the CY 2027 application process. 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 16** at 10:00am - New applicant information session (*This session will explain LTF's grant guidelines, eligibility criteria, and factors in grant awards*)
- **July 28** at 2:00pm - General grant application information session
- **July 30** at 2:00pm - New applicant information session (*Repeats July 16 session*)
- **August 5** at 10:00am - General grant application information session (*Repeats July 30 session*)

To attend an information session register in advance via email to Nebula Li, Program Officer for Legal Services (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).