07/10/2026

ONLINE GRANTS PORTAL USER GUIDE

A guide for organizations using the Online Grants Portal to apply for grants from the Lawyers Trust Fund.

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I. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The **Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois (LTF)** uses an online portal to accept grant applications. This guide will take you through the process of creating a user account, starting an application, and applying for a grant.

When you login to online grants portal, you will see a list of grant opportunities that are currently open.

GETTING STARTED

You will need to create a user account to submit an application.

II. ESTABLISHING A USER ACCOUNT

REGISTRATION

Click “Create a new account” on the login screen (depicted on the next page). You will be prompted to enter a Tax ID/EIN. You can register either with your Tax ID or through Manual Entry (if you do not have your Tax ID/EIN available). We recommend that you register with your Tax ID.

Organizations applying for a grant for the first time must create a user account. New users will need approval from LTF before accessing the application. LTF will make every effort to approve new users frequently (i.e. two or more times a day) to ensure applicants can move forward without delay.

Enter Tax ID (Recommended)

Enter your Tax ID/EIN or organization name in the search bar, then click Search. If you do not know your Tax ID/EIN, click on the *US IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search Tool* to find it.

After clicking Search, the system will search for your organization. If your organization is correctly displayed, click Select. If not, you can choose to Search Again. (Clicking “Skip” will bring you to the Manual Entry option.)

(The organization information in the example below is included for illustration purposes only.)

The next page will be a form that requests additional information about your organization. Your organization's information as registered with the IRS will autofill, but you will need to enter additional contact and login information for the user. The email address you enter will be used to log in. Click Register.

New applicants registering as new users will need to wait for approval from LTF before proceeding with the application. LTF will make every effort to approve new users frequently (i.e. two or more times a day) to ensure applicants can move forward without delay. You will be notified via email when your registration has been approved and you have access to the system.

Manual Entry (Not Recommended)

If you choose to register manually, you will be taken directly to a form that requests information about your organization and additional contact and login information for the user. Fill in the form with the organization's information. The email address you enter will be used to log in. Click Register.

New applicants registering as new users will need to wait for approval from LTF before proceeding with the application. LTF will make every effort to approve new users frequently (i.e. two or more times a day) to ensure applicants can move forward without delay. You will be notified via email when your registration has been approved and you have access to the system.

PASSWORD ASSISTANCE

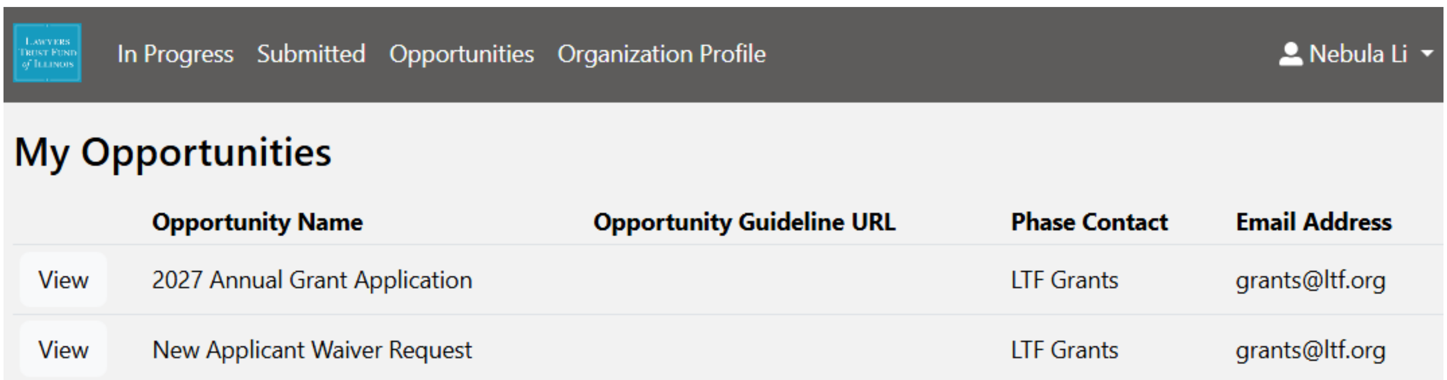
If you forget your password, click Forgot Password from the log in screen and follow the steps to reset.

Once you have access to the system, you can also reset your password within the portal at any time by clicking on the dropdown next to your name in the top right and going to User Settings.

III. PORTAL PAGES AND NAVIGATION

PAGES

Once your registration is complete and you are logged into the portal, you will be on the home page, which is titled **My Opportunities**.



In Progress Submitted Opportunities Organization Profile
Nebula Li

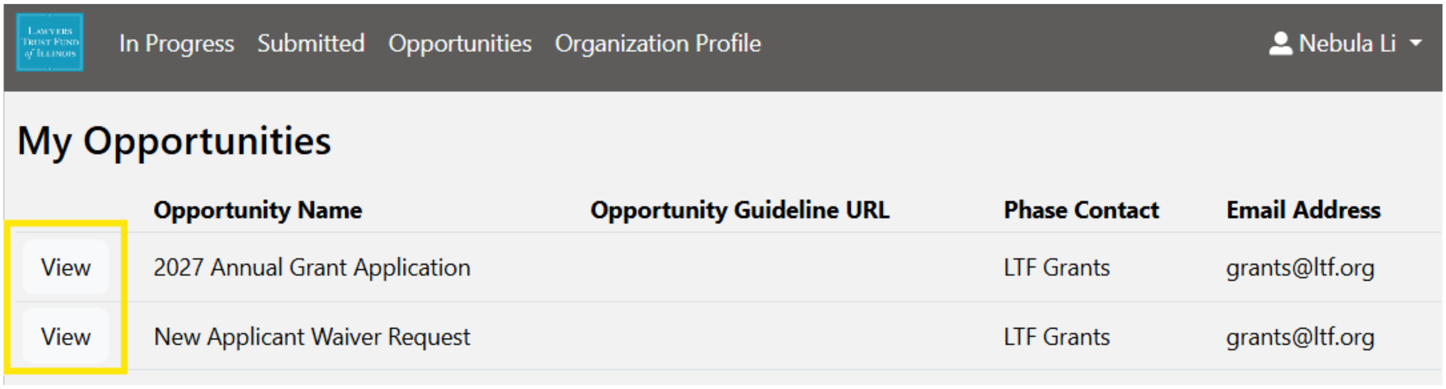
My Opportunities

	Opportunity Name	Opportunity Guideline URL	Phase Contact	Email Address
View	2027 Annual Grant Application		LTF Grants	grants@ltf.org
View	New Applicant Waiver Request		LTF Grants	grants@ltf.org

At the top of the page, you will see a header with four tabs: **In Progress, Submitted, Opportunities,** and **Organization Profile**.

Opportunities

- **Opportunities:** This page shows which applications are available to you. Click View to see details about the application, including a summary, description, and contact information.

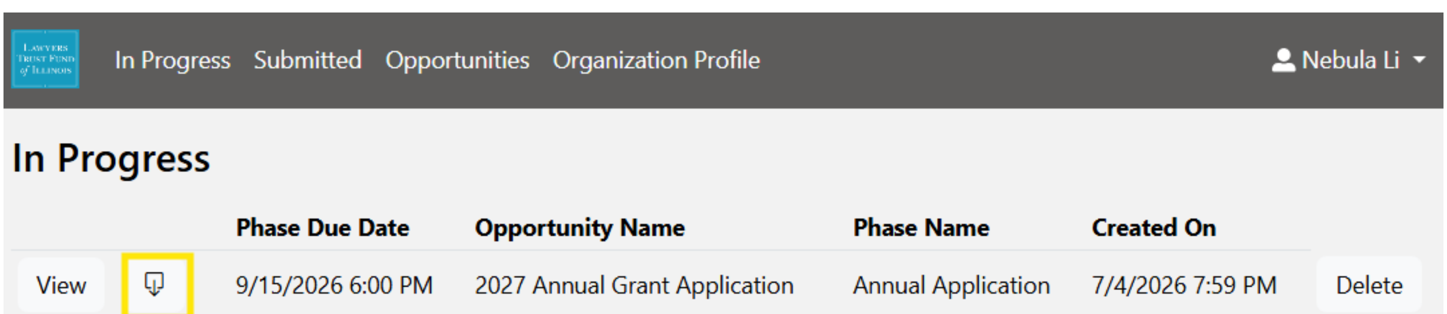


To apply for a **CY 2027 Annual Grant**, you will need to visit the **Opportunities** page and click on View for the **2027 Annual Grant Application**.

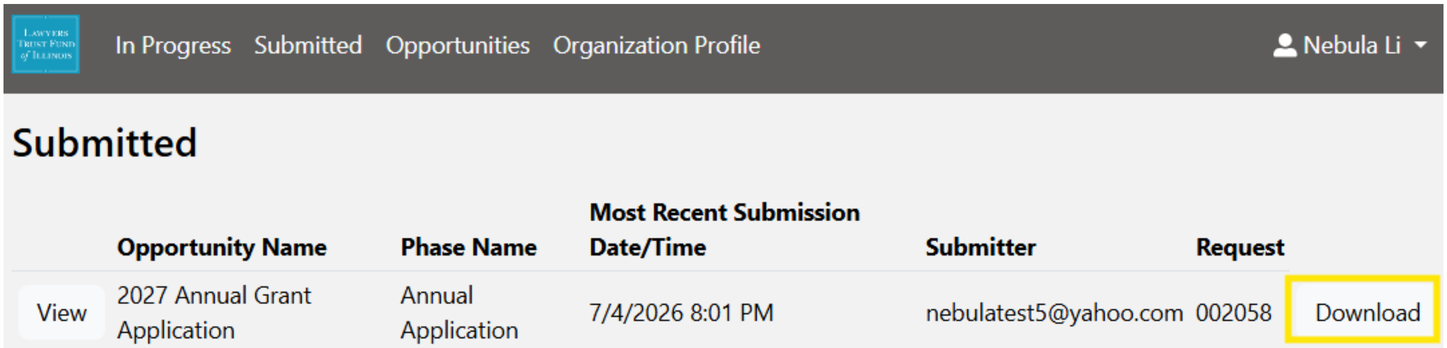
The **New Applicant Waiver Request** will be discussed in the **Waiver of Attorney Staffing Requirement** section below.

In Progress & Submitted

- **In Progress**: This page shows you any application you have in progress and allows you to view your draft application before submission. Click In Progress to view applications in progress to continue working on the application. You can review your draft application either by clicking View and advancing through the pages or by clicking on the button with the downward arrow inside the square.



- **Submitted**: This page shows you your submitted applications. Click Submitted to view your submitted application in the portal or download the submitted application in PDF by clicking the download button all the way to the right.



Organization Profile

- **Organization Profile**: This page shows you information about your organization. On the Organization Profile page, your Organization Name, Tax ID, and address will automatically fill in based upon the information you entered when you registered.

IV. STARTING AN APPLICATION

APPLICATIONS

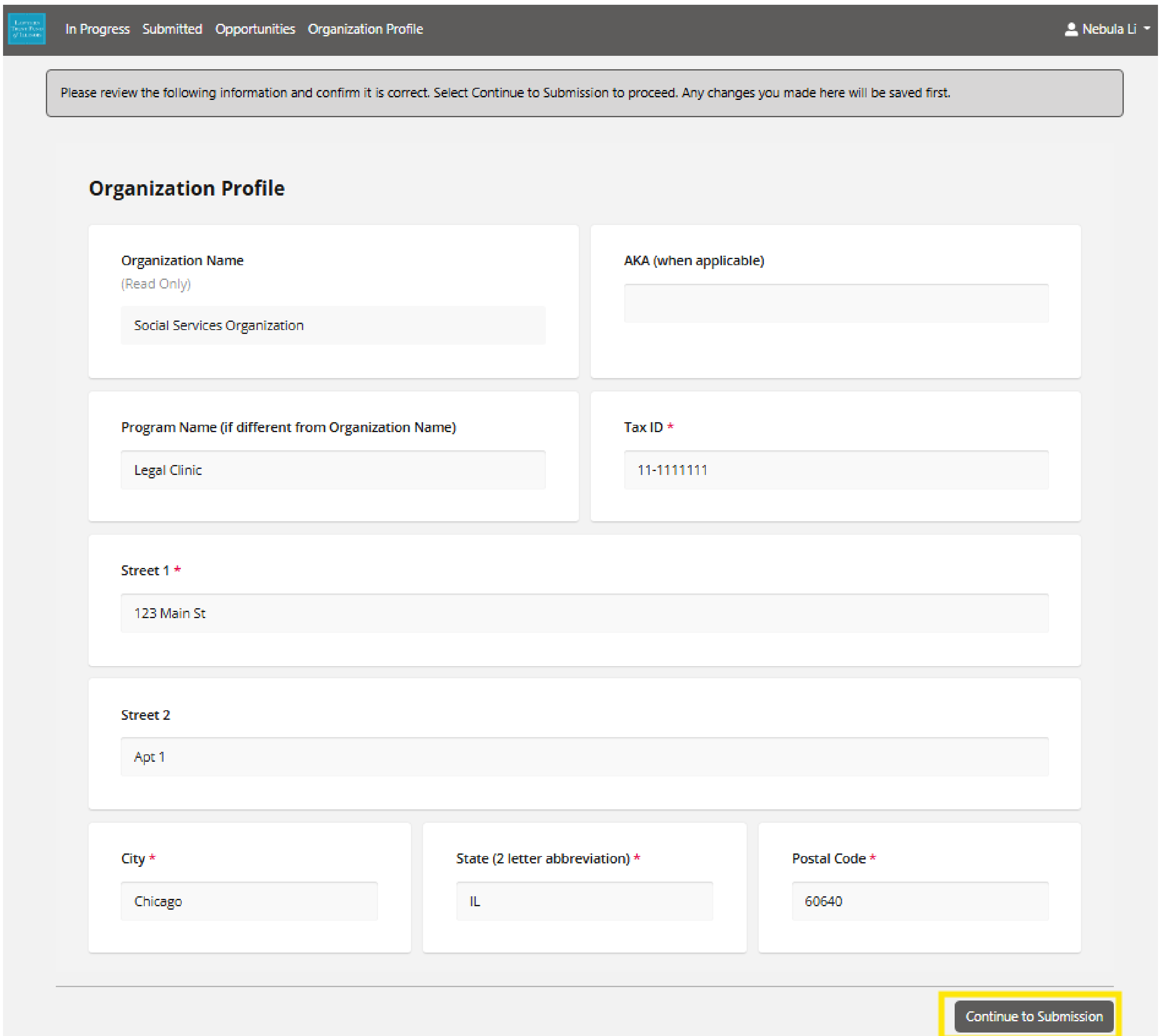
To begin, choose an application from your Opportunities page. (For most applicants, this will be the 2027 Annual Grant Application. From the application home page, click View, then Start Request.

Starting an application

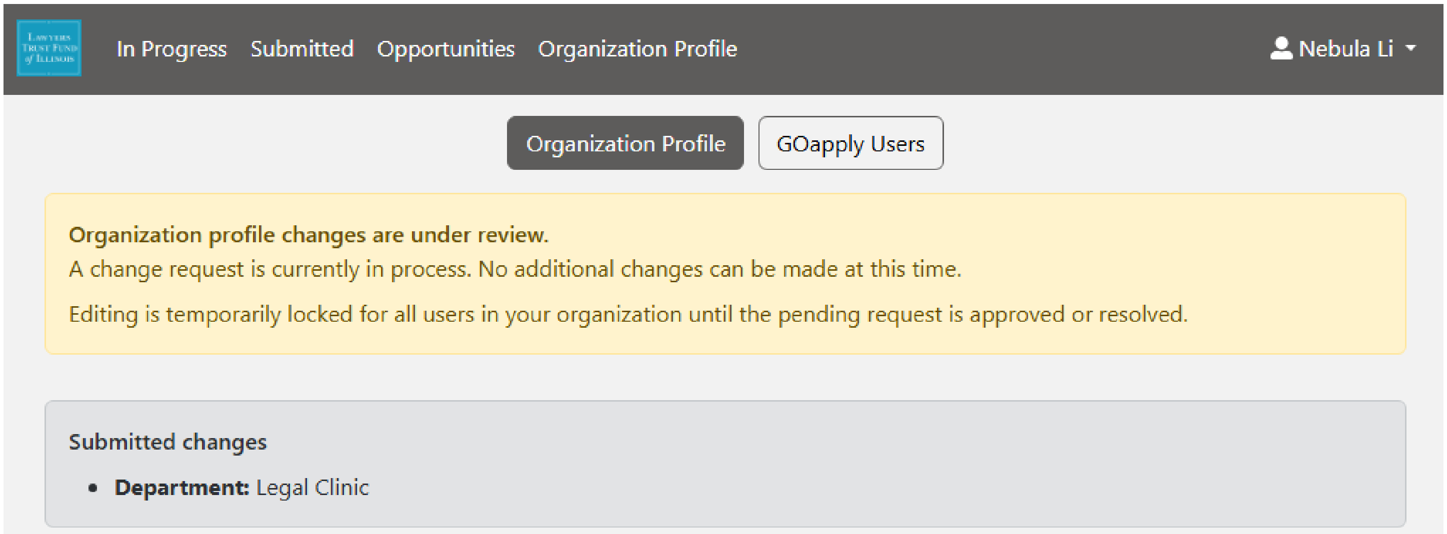
The application home page is where you can find the due date and a brief description of the application.

Every time you open an application – even one that you have already started working on – you will be taken to the **Organization Profile** page and prompted to review the information there.

- If your information is correct, click **Continue to Submission**. You will be taken to the application form where you can proceed to work on your application.
- If you would like to add or change any information, enter it, then click **Continue to Submission**.



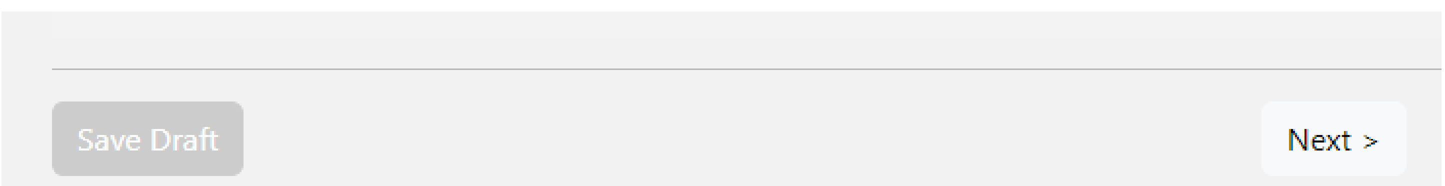
If you made changes to your Organization Profile, the Organization Profile page will update with a yellow banner notifying you that your request to change your Organization Profile was submitted and a summary of the submitted change(s).



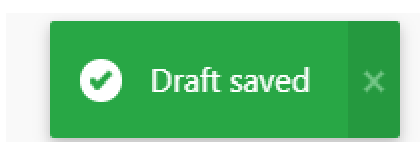
NOTE: A pending change request does not impact your ability to view, edit or submit your application. Once the submitted change is approved, you will receive email confirmation and the yellow banner will disappear from the page. Nonetheless, you can work on and submit your application even while the request to change your Organization Profile is pending.

You will then be automatically taken to the application form where you can proceed to work on your application.

In the application form, make sure to click Save Draft at the bottom left of each page before clicking Next to ensure your responses are saved. Clicking Save Draft at the bottom of each page is important for saving your work and ensuring the system advances to the next appropriate application page based on your responses.



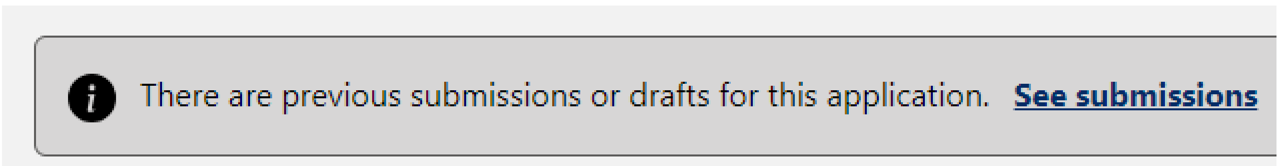
You will receive confirmation (pictured below) that the responses were saved.



Navigate through the application using Back and Next to move between pages. Do not use your web browser controls to navigate back and forth through the application pages.

NOTE: To prevent data conflicts, only one user from your organization should be in the online grants portal at the same time.

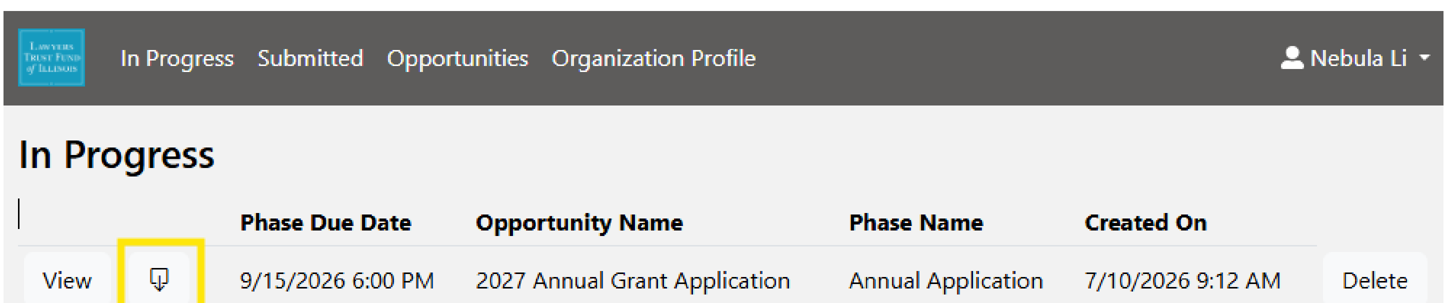
If you access an application from the **Opportunities** page and see the below message, it means you either already submitted an application or have a draft submission of the application, which can be accessed and then finished from the **In Progress** page.



Submitting

When you're finished with the application, click Submit.

Please review your application before clicking Submit. You can do this either by clicking back through the pages of the application, or by visiting the **In Progress** page and clicking on the button with the downward arrow inside the square, located to the right of the View button. **You cannot update your application via the portal after clicking Submit.**



IMPORTANT NOTE: Please click Submit only once. There may be a delay of several minutes before you receive your confirmation email. Clicking multiple times will cause errors in the data collection pages.

You will receive an email confirmation of the submission. You can view the submitted application and download a copy on the **Submitted** page.

V. COMPLETING THE CY 2027 APPLICATION

ANNUAL GRANT APPLICATION

The Annual Grant Application consists of the following:

- General and narrative questions;
- Data collection pages related to case data (including zip codes), staff and board demographics, client demographics, and organizational financial information (including the revenue and budget);
- Document requests including:
  - Required and optional documents listed on the **Supporting Documents**; and
  - Required Excel document (the Zip Code Data Report) for providing zip codes for clients in **Section 11: Data Collection: Zip Codes**.

IMPORTANT NOTE: We strongly recommend you review the requested data in advance of populating your application in the portal so that you can budget sufficient time to complete the application.

The CY 2027 Annual Grant Application Questions and Data Requests PDF and the Data Collection Help Document may be especially helpful to review early in the process so that once you have collected the necessary data, you are ready to submit your application. Additional resources can be found at the Applicant Support webpage.

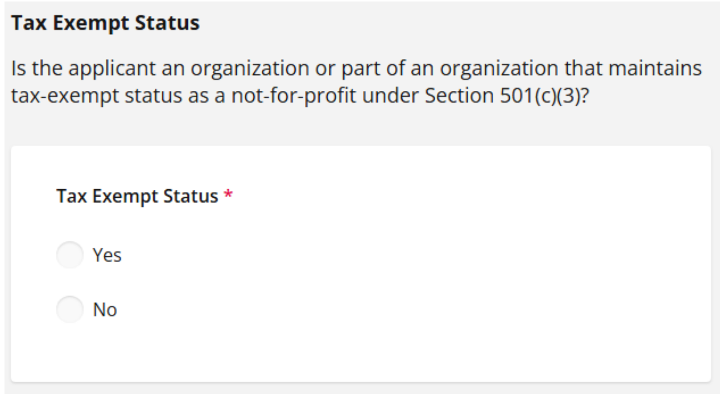
General and Narrative Questions

Sections 1-7 are comprised of general and narrative questions.

- **General Questions**

General questions may require that you select Yes or No.

Example: Tax Exempt Status


Tax Exempt Status

Is the applicant an organization or part of an organization that maintains tax-exempt status as a not-for-profit under Section 501(c)(3)?

Tax Exempt Status *

Yes

No

- **Narrative Questions**

Pages with narrative questions will present the question, provide additional instructions about the details sought in response to the question, and provide a text box for your response. You can compose your response in the box or draft it elsewhere and paste it in the box.

Character limits are displayed for all narrative questions and also appear when you click your cursor into the text field. Character limits include spaces. On average, there are about six characters per word.

The estimates below show the word counts that correspond to some of the character limits in the application.

6,000 characters = 1,000 words
4,000 characters = 750 words
2,500 characters = 400 words

Example: Organizational Background

Organizational Background

In the space below, provide a succinct description of your organization or program and a synopsis of its history, objectives, and experience in providing legal assistance. Your response can include significant landmarks in the development of your organization or program and other information you believe is significant, but please be aware of the character limit.

Organizational Background *

Character Limit: 2500

Document Upload Questions

Section 8 is comprised of document upload requests.
The system will accept only one upload per question. The maximum file size limit is displayed for each upload. If you have multiple documents, combine them into a single document (e.g., one PDF) and upload.

Example: Supporting Documents

Annual Budget

Upload a copy of your organization budget showing income and expenses for your current fiscal year. (If you are reporting for a program housed within a larger organization, this budget should reflect the income and expenses of the program, not the entire organization.) File Size Limit: 1 MB.

Annual Budget *

File Size Limit: 1 MB.

Drag and drop a file here or click the button below to select a file to upload.

Select File

Data Collection Questions

Sections 9-15 are comprised of data collection tables for reporting data. As you prepare to respond to these pages, you may find it helpful to maximize or minimize the view in your web browser to see more questions on the same page. Below are instructions for some of the more complicated data requests.

Section 10: Data Collection: Case Data

On this page, in the first and largest table, you will report the number of closed cases by the different categories of law (as indicated in the first column). For each category of law, you will report whether the cases were closed by a staff member or a volunteer (as indicated in the second column). For each closed case, you will report the level of service. Your options are listed in the third through sixth columns (Brief Service, Representation without Litigation, Administrative Hearing, or Full Representation). The seventh column (which is locked and automatically fills in) adds the total number of cases in each row.

For example, let's say that in the past Case Reporting Period, your organization closed 15 Advance Planning/Wills/Estates cases. Ten (10) were completed by a staff attorney, and five (5) were completed by a volunteer attorney. For level of service, the staff attorney provided full representation for each of her 10 cases, and the volunteer attorney provided legal advice and counsel for each of their five cases (Brief Services).

You would locate the category of law (Advance Planning/Wills/Estates cases) in the first column. Since you did not complete any other type of case, you would fill in "0" for all other data fields.

Category of Law	Staff or Volunteer	Brief Service *	Representation without Litigation *	Administrative Hearing *	Full Representation *	Total
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Staff	0	0	0	10	10
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Volunteer	5	0	0	0	5
Consumer/Utility	Staff	0	0	0	0	0
Consumer/Utility	Volunteer	0	0	0	0	0

You would report whether the case was closed by a staff member or volunteer by referencing the second column.

Category of Law	Staff or Volunteer	Brief Service *	Representation without Litigation *	Administrative Hearing *	Full Representation *	Total
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Staff	0	0	0	10	10
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Volunteer	5	0	0	0	5

You would enter the level of service in the third through sixth columns.

Category of Law	Staff or Volunteer	Brief Service *	Representation without Litigation *	Administrative Hearing *	Full Representation *	Total
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Staff	0	0	0	10	10
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Volunteer	5	0	0	0	5

A few data fields automatically add up case totals and are locked, so you do not have to fill them in.

The last column on the right automatically adds up the total number of closed cases (by staff member or volunteer) and is locked.

Category of Law	Staff or Volunteer	Brief Service *	Representation without Litigation *	Administrative Hearing *	Full Representation *	Total
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Staff	0	0	0	10	10
Advance Planning/Wills/Estates	Volunteer	5	0	0	0	5

The next three smaller tables automatically fill in and are locked based upon your entries to the first table with the total number of cases closed (across all categories) closed by staff, volunteers, then all cases, respectively.

All Categories of Law	Staff	Brief Service	Representation without Litigation	Administrative Hearing	Full Representation	Total
Total	Staff	0	0	0	10	10

All Categories of Law	Volunteer	Brief Service	Representation without Litigation	Administrative Hearing	Full Representation	Total
Total	Volunteer	5	0	0	0	5

All Categories of Law	Staff and Volunteer	Brief Service	Representation without Litigation	Administrative Hearing	Full Representation	Total
Total	Total	5	0	0	10	15

For definitions of LTF case categories and levels of service, look for the Data Collection Help Document on the Applicant Support webpage.

Section 11: Data Collection: Zip Codes

Data collection regarding zip codes (for clients served by your organization) is the one instance where you will report data by uploading a document rather than entering the data directly into the system. Zip code reporting is accomplished by uploading an Excel spreadsheet according to the instructions in **Section 11: Data Collection: Zip Codes** in the portal. To report this data, download the blank Zip Code Data Report spreadsheet on the Applicant Support webpage and add your data. Save a local copy of the completed document, and then upload it.

Section 12: Data Collection: Staff and Board Data

Detailed instructions to complete this page are included on the Data Collection Help Document. For the staff data table, there are seven (7) roles to choose from. The # of New Hires column should report every staff member, full-time or part-time, who was hired from July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026, by role.

For example, if there is one full-time executive director, and 1 part-time paralegal who was hired on June 15, 2026 (a new hire), below is how that data would be reported in this table. The paralegal would be included in the first, second, and third column.

Category	Role	Total # Staff Members (include both full-time and part-time) *	# Part-Time Staff Members *	# New Hires (July 1 - June 30) *
Staff	Executive Director/CEO/Director of Legal Aid Project	1	0	0
Staff	Senior Management Staff	0	0	0
Staff	Managing/Supervising Attorney	0	0	0
Staff	Staff Attorney/Senior Staff Attorney	0	0	0
Staff	Paralegal/Legal Advocate	1	1	1
Staff	Operational/Administrative	0	0	0
Staff	Other Staff	0	0	0
		2	1	1

Section 13: Staff and Board Demographic Data

Detailed instructions to complete this page are included on the [Data Collection Help Document](#).

Each demographic topic (e.g., Racial/Ethnic Identity) is listed in the first column with its corresponding demographic categories (e.g., Asian/Asian American) in the second column. For the following columns, you must report one data point for each board member and staff member (note that you can report more than one data point for each board and staff member for Racial/Ethnic Identity), and the staff member must be categorized into one of the seven roles listed in the previous page (e.g., Executive Director/CEO/Director of Legal Aid Project).

Since there are seven (7) types of staff roles, each demographic topic has a pair of data tables. The first table reports data for board members and the first three staff roles, and the second reports data for the last four staff roles.

Each demographic topic includes the option for “not disclosed.” Each demographic topic also includes a data confirmation section to ensure that you report on each board and staff member.

The following example is how an organization with four (4) board members, one (1) executive director, and one (1) paralegal could report its racial/ethnic identity data.

Required Data

Demographic Topic	Demographic Category	Board Members *	Executive Director/CEO/Director of Legal Aid Project *	Senior Management Staff *	Managing/Supervising Attorney *
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Asian/Asian American	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Black/African American	1	1	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Native American/Alaska Native/Hawaiian/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Middle Eastern/North African	1	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Caucasian/White	2	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Racial/Ethnic identity not listed	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Not disclosed	0	0	0	0
		4	1	0	0

Demographic Topic	Demographic Category	Staff Attorney/Senior Staff Attorney *	Paralegal/Legal Advocate *	Operational/Administrative *	Other Staff *
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Asian/Asian American	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Black/African American	0	0	0	0
acial/Ethnic dentity	Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	0	1	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Native American/Alaska Native/Hawaiian/Indigenous	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Middle Eastern/North African	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Caucasian/White	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Racial/Ethnic identity not listed	0	0	0	0
Racial/Ethnic Identity	Not disclosed	0	0	0	0
		0	1	0	0

You provided data for the following total number of staff and board members:

6

You indicated on the Staff & Board Data page that you have the following total number of staff and board members:

6

Did you provide at least one data point for each staff and board member?

- [x] Yes
- [ ] No

If the number of data points for the data confirmation section and the number of data points from the Staff & Board data page do not meet the data confirmation requirements, review your data and update it accordingly.

Section 15: Financial Data

Detailed instructions for completing this page are included in the [Data Collection Help Document].

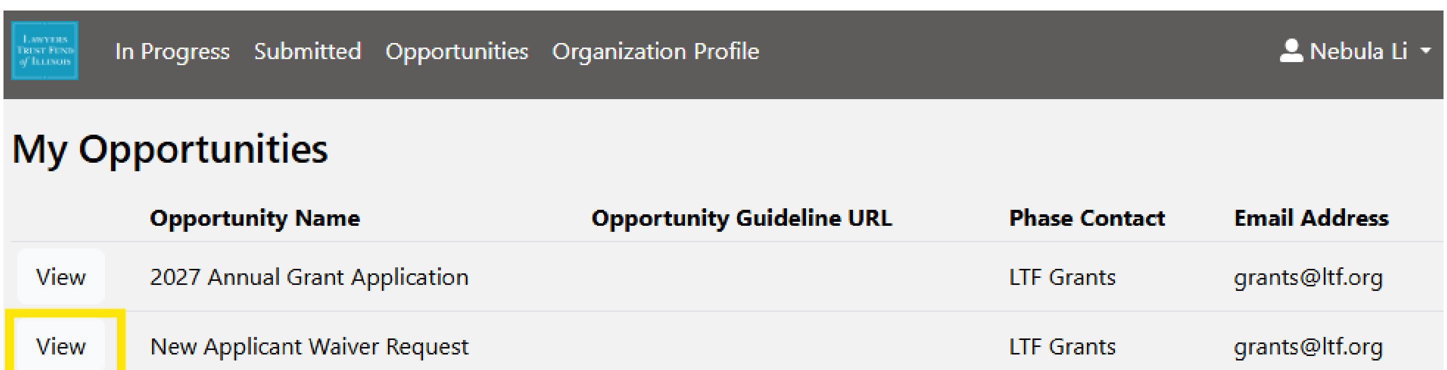
WAIVER OF ATTORNEY STAFFING REQUIREMENT

The [CY 2027 Annual Support Guidelines] include a new Attorney Staffing Requirement, detailed on page 4.

If your organization does not meet LTF's Attorney Staffing Requirement, you may be able request for a temporary, one-year waiver of that requirement. There are limits and conditions related to the opportunity to seek a waiver; please read pages 4-6 of the guidelines before proceeding with a waiver request.

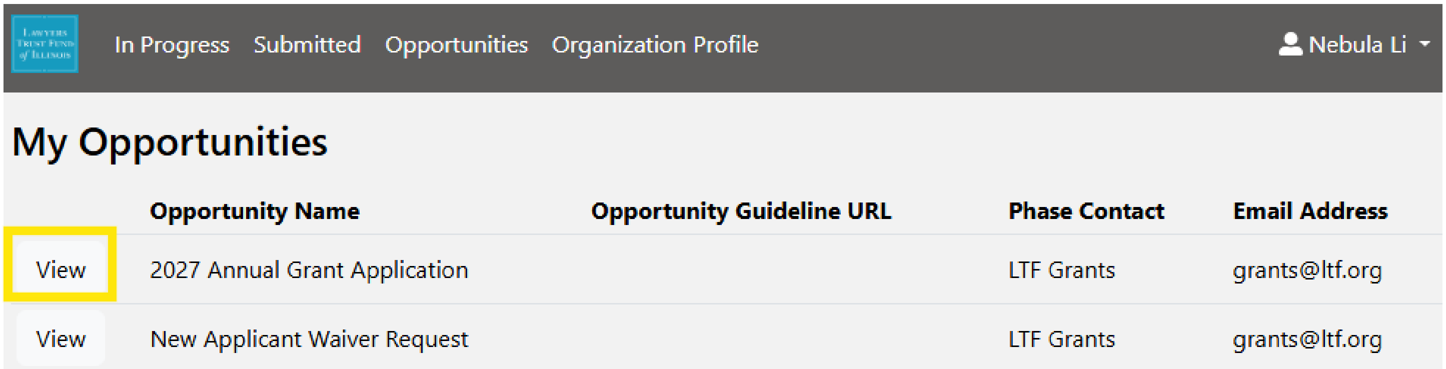
New applicants that decide to request a New Applicant Waiver must submit a separate application form by **August 4, 2026**, **prior to the CY 2027 Annual Grant Application deadline (September 15, 2026).**

To do so, you will need to visit the **Opportunities** page and click on **View**, to the left of the **New Applicant Waiver Request**.



Current grantees seeking the Current Grantee Waiver do not need to submit a separate application form. Instead, to request a Current Grantee Waiver, you must respond to the additional questions in **Section 5 (for Current Grantees)** of the 2027 Annual Grant Application form by the CY 2027 Annual Grant Application deadline **(September 15, 2026)**.

To do so, you will need to visit the **Opportunities** page and click on **View,** to the left of the **2027 Annual Grant Application**.



Applying for a waiver is applicable only to organizations that do not meet LTF's Attorney Staffing Requirement. **If you have questions about LTF's Attorney Staffing Requirement, the waiver policy, and how they impact your entity's ability to apply for an Annual Grant, contact LTF Deputy Executive Director for Grants & Legal Affairs David Holtermann (david@ltf.org/312-938-3076) before completing any application.**

If you have any questions about the online grants portal or completing the application, please contact us:

- *David Holtermann, Deputy Executive Director for Grants & Legal Affairs at david@ltf.org or 312-938-3076*
- *Nebula Li, Program Officer for Legal Services, at nebula@ltf.org or 312-938-2106*.