

LAWYERS TRUST FUND OF ILLINOIS

Guidelines & Guiding Principles

Project Grants & New Applicants: 2010

(January 1 – December 31, 2010)

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.

The Lawyers Trust Fund administers Illinois' *Interest on Lawyer Trust Account* (IOLTA) program. Pursuant to Rule 1.15 of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct, the Lawyers Trust Fund collects the interest earned on lawyers' and law firms' pooled client trust accounts. The Lawyers Trust Fund distributes these funds, and the proceeds of a \$42 add-on to the annual registration fee paid by Illinois attorneys, to support the provision of legal 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:

- ◆ Are Illinois **not-for-profit organizations** that are tax-exempt under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- ◆ **Provide legal assistance to individual clients** in civil matters.
- ◆ Serve Illinois residents who have no resources to obtain 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 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.*]
- ◆ LTF has a **strong preference** for funding organizations that employ a **minimum of one full-time attorney** (or full-time equivalent) licensed to practice in Illinois, who either provides or directly supervises the agency's legal services.

Additionally, the Lawyers Trust Fund will not make grants to organizations whose primary purpose is to provide mediation services.

July 2009

Overview of LTF 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 (*e.g.*, advice & referral hotlines, advice & “brief service” projects, representation by staff and *pro bono* attorneys);
- 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 for 2010

Because of a sharp decline in IOLTA revenue, LTF will be forced to reduce total grants in 2010. As a framework for the difficult decisions that lie ahead, the directors of LTF have adopted the following 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.

LTF Grant Cycles

The Lawyers Trust Fund accepts and reviews grant applications **two times per year**:

		Application Available	Application Due	Decision Made	Funding Period
FALL CYCLE	Project Grants & New Applicants	<i>July</i>	<i>September</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>January 1 – December 31</i>
SPRING CYCLE	General Operating Support	<i>December</i>	<i>February</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>July 1 – June 30</i>

Fall Cycle 2010: Eligibility & Timeline

The **Fall Cycle** is open to:

- **Project Grantees** – Organizations currently receiving funding from the Lawyers Trust Fund that provide civil legal assistance as a part of their organization’s overall mission;
- **New Applicants** – Organizations that meet the eligibility criteria listed above on the cover page and are not current recipients of LTF support.

Proposals received in the Fall Cycle are evaluated based on the “**Criteria for Project Grants and New Applicants**” set forth below.

The next round of grant applications will be the Fall Cycle for funding in 2010, which will follow the schedule below:

Grant applications available from LTF	July 27, 2009
Completed applications due	September 18, 2009
Grant decisions made by LTF	Late November/ early December 2009
Applicants notified of grant decision	December 2009
Initial grant payment	January 1, 2010

Grants of \$15,000 or more are paid in quarterly installments.

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, deputy director (312.938.2133 or mark@ltf.org) or David Holtermann, counsel (312.938.3076 or david@ltf.org).

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 criteria:

- **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, both as case-handlers and in other capacities?
- **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 FINAL NOTE ON WHAT LTF MEANS BY “PROJECTS”

The Lawyers Trust Fund created the Project Grantee category in part because many LTF-funded organizations provide legal assistance to individual clients as one part of a broader mission. These organizations include law schools, social service agencies, community-based organizations and advocacy groups.

An organization that has received LTF support in the past is not required to take on new or additional work, nor should it feel compelled to repackage its current activities into an artificial “project” (e.g., “The ABC Legal Clinic’s Special Education and Suburban Debt Relief Project”) that does not accurately reflect the way services are delivered.

However, we do ask that all Project Grantees AND New Applicants define the scope of the work for which they seek LTF to support in a clear and thoughtful way. This should include information about the population(s) that will be served, the type(s) of legal needs that will be addressed, and the specific activities that the applicant organization will undertake with the funds requested from LTF.

Please feel free to contact deputy director Mark Marquardt (312.938.2133) or counsel David Holtermann (312.938.3076) with any questions about defining the scope of the proposed project.