**American Bar Endowment**

**Opportunity Grant Program Eligibility, Guidelines and Application**

**Opportunity Grant Program Goal and Purpose**

Through the ABE Opportunity Grants program, the ABE supports the development or expansion of new, boots-on-the-ground, innovative programs and projects that serve the immediate and critical needs of the public and the legal profession. ABE Opportunity Grant Program funding focus areas include:

* Enhancement of access to justice, especially for vulnerable and underserved populations, through innovative legal services delivery, including maximizing pro bono service delivery;
* Promotion of the rule of law and improvement of the justice system, including ensuring equal justice and elimination of bias, through research and policy advocacy; and
* Growth of the public’s understanding of the law and the legal system, including increased civic engagement.

This grant program favors programs and projects that address urgent needs and emerging opportunities, and that might not otherwise be able to obtain timely funding from alternative sources.

**Organizational Eligibility**

An organization is eligible to apply for an ABE Opportunity Grant if it is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) and classified as a public charity under section 509 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code or if it has a written fiscal agency relationship with such an organization. This grant program does not fund governmental regulatory agencies.

Potential grantees include (but are not limited to):

* bar associations and bar foundations;
* law schools and law school legal clinics;
* Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funded organizations;
* legal service delivery organizations;
* human service organizations with legal service or law-related programming; and
* other non-profits or civic organizations with law-related programming.

ABE is particularly interested in supporting programs and projects that have a direct effect on the needs of individuals and communities. National organizations that apply should carefully draw the connection between their proposed work and it how it will impact local communities.

Organizations that have previously been funded by the ABE may apply for a new project/program or critical expansion or evaluation of an existing project/program.

The ABE can only consider additional funding to an organization after a final grant report is submitted and accepted.

**Project/Program Eligibility**

ABE Opportunity Grants support law-related public service, education, and research projects/programs. The ABE will give the most favorable review to projects/programs with one or more of the following characteristics:

* with programmatic strategies and direct delivery of services, meets a pressing need/problem or serves a vulnerable or underserved population;
* critically expands an existing successful program/project to offer more components, help more people, or serve additional geographic communities;
* through training and coordination, expands the number of lawyers available to serve these pressing needs or vulnerable populations, including maximizing pro bono delivery of services;
* through evaluation, documents an existing or emerging need and proves the efficacy of the program/project to solve that identified need/problem;
* through research, policy development or systemic advocacy and reform, increases understanding of a need/problem or identifies best practice solutions; or
* through community education, increases knowledge of the law, legal rights, or encourages civic engagement.

Generally, an ABE Opportunity Grant is a one-time award with a grant period of one year or less. The ABE Opportunity Grant Program favors projects/programs that are new and time-limited (i.e., do not involve long term general operating costs such as salaries and rent). The ABE will consider grants in support of one-time costs of a longer-term program (for example – funding to purchase the bus that will become the mobile legal services delivery vehicle) or to support seed funding for a longer-term initiative if the organization can demonstrate firm plans to secure continued funding. Organizations applying to start a program that will become part of the annual programming of the organization will need to answer a question in the application about their specific plans to ensure continued funding for the effort.

The ABE Opportunity Grant Program does not support ongoing current general operating or existing staff expenses. These grant dollars do not support existing projects or programs (unless for critical expansion). Opportunity grants do not support the following:

* personnel costs (salaries and benefits) of existing staff. Your project budget may include the time of current staff people, but ABE Opportunity Grant funds cannot be used to support these line items;
* portions of salary for individuals who are supervising direct project staff (these are considered indirect costs);
* capital expenditures unless they are one-time costs directly related to the implementation of the project (e.g., software or other technology to launch a project or a vehicle needed to provide mobile legal services delivery);
* indirect expenses and administrative overhead;
* fundraising expenses;
* sponsorships of fundraising or awards events;
* programs or projects that are intended to influence legislation or elect candidates; and
* operating deficits.

**Application Process and Deadlines**

Please use this application form and budget template to submit your request. Prospective applicants can contact Jackie Casey at 312-988-6402 or jcasey@abenet.org with questions about applying or for more information and assistance.

To be considered, applicants must submit their proposals to the ABE by 5:00 Central Standard Time on Monday, September 30, 2019. To be considered, applications must be complete. Announcement of grant awards will take place on or before February 28, 2020. Grants awards will be paid by April 1, 2020.

Applicants are asked to read and sign this Grant Agreement and submit it with their application.

ABE Opportunity Grant Program Contact Information

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American Bar Endowment

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Attention: Opportunity Grants

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