**American Bar Endowment**

**Opportunity Grant Program**

**Application and Letter of Inquiry Instructions**

**Instructions Overview**

The ABE Opportunity Grant Program provides support to 501(c)(3) organizations to address law-related issues of importance to the public and the legal profession with new and innovative projects and programs. Thank you for your interest in applying for an ABE Opportunity Grant. Please carefully review the ABE Opportunity Grant Guidelines and these instructions to ensure your organization and your project are eligible to apply for an Opportunity Grant.

The Opportunity Grant Program is small – the ABE awards up to $300,000 each year. Grant proposals requesting support of $25,000 or less are typical and viewed more favorably by the Grants Committee as it makes it possible to fund more projects. Requests for larger amounts will be considered if the proposed project addresses immediate and critical needs in a particularly innovative fashion with tools or resources that can be used or replicated by other service providers.

In its short existence, between 80 and 120 organizations have applied for funds each year. Knowing that competition for the dollars is considerable, the application is straightforward, and you can answer narrative questions briefly.

If you have questions about the Opportunity Grants Program or about the application, please contact Jackie Casey at 312-988-6402 or [jcasey@abenet.org](mailto:jcasey@abenet.org).

**What makes a project new and innovative?**

ABE Opportunity Grants only support new and innovative projects. The ABE developed this grant program to provide dollars for activities organizations often put on the back burner because funds aren’t available or to build an organization’s capacity to do its work better. An Opportunity Grant cannot be used to support general or existing operations.

To be considered new and innovative, the project/program you propose must, for example:

* create or utilize a tool, technology or program delivery approach that is new to your organization or community or to the field of law (examples include, adding a walk-in clinic to your delivery model for survivors of domestic violence; launching a new medical-legal partnership to serve a previously unserved population; adding a mobile clinic to your service delivery model to serve rural clients; automating Miranda warnings in multiple languages);
* address a new and urgent need or problem (examples include, pro se representation training to take advantage of a new law); or
* identify or document a new problem or need (examples include, developing a legal framework for representing human trafficking survivors; conducting a needs assessment of medical clinic patients’ legal needs).

The ABE will consider projects/programs that, for example:

* build organizational capacity to serve clients better (examples include, upgrading a client online intake system or creating on-demand training for pro bono lawyers so services can expand)
* develop tools, technology or approaches that could be used by the broader legal community (examples include, translating immigration forms and instructions into multiple languages, developing an app to assist disaster survivors and pro bono lawyers gather needed paperwork for legal claims or adding a petition generator to a client online service portal)
* document/prove a best practice (examples include, studying public defense best practices and reporting results, analyzing eviction data in rural areas to drive better prevention programming).

The ABE will not consider projects/programs that seek funding to support the direct provision of legal services without a new or innovative component.

**The Application Form**

The application form is divided into six sections and consists of 31 items, including only four substantive questions about your project and one substantive question about your organization’s overall programming. The following guide will help you answer questions. This document does not discuss straightforward questions.

Section I. – Summary of the Application

1. Applicant Organization. Please provide the name of the applicant organization that holds the 501(c)(3) designation that makes your organization eligible to apply. If that organization is applying for an entity within the larger organization, put that entity in parenthesis as follows – ABC University Foundation (applying on behalf of the XYZ School of Law) or the Justice County Bar Foundation (applying on behalf of the Young Lawyers Division).
2. Short Project Description.

Your short project description should be no longer than 250 words. It should include a brief description of the problem, need or issue the project/program addresses, main activities you will conduct to address the need, what you are asking the ABE to fund, and the desired impact of the project/program.

9. Geographic Scope of Project. Please list where your project will have an impact. If your organization is national, please note this and let us know if your project will have a local impact and where.

Section II. – Project Information

11. Need/Problem/Issue. For this question, describe in more detail than in the short description the problem you seek to solve or the need you are trying to meet. Explain how it is urgent:

* to your organization to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and success;
* to those you serve for improved outcomes; or
* to the broader community for increased impact.

Whenever possible, you should use data to make your case. You should describe how the activities you will do in your project are known to address this critical need or problem. For example, if what you plan to do is a demonstrated best practice that has worked in other organizations or communities, you should note that here.

12. Measurable Objectives. Here you will want to describe how your project is new and innovative – an entirely new approach/solution to a problem that your organization will develop, implement and test or an existing approach that your organization will implement for the first time.

This section should also list your measurable objectives. If you receive funding, the ABE will ask for an interim and final report tied to the accomplishment of your stated objectives in the timeframe you propose. Your objectives can be strategic (describing the overarching desired outcome from implementing your project, outcome-oriented (specific results of your project), or tactical/process-oriented (such as the number of people impacted).

13. Activities. In question 12, you will have listed your project’s main activities. In this answer, describe the steps you will take to accomplish those activities.

14. Evaluation. Describe how you will know that your project was a success. Your evaluation plans can include client/participant satisfaction surveys, continued analysis of community trends, etc. Your evaluation plans should tie to your objectives.

15. Future funding. If you are seeking funds to start a program or service that will become part of your organization’s ongoing operations, please explain how you plan to secure funding for the future. You do not need to provide an exhaustive explanation of plans. Provide a sense of methods you will use to secure funding and from what kinds of sources (grants, individual giving campaigns, government funding, corporate partners, etc.).

1. Grant periods are one year or less. It can begin before receipt of the grant but no later than July 1, which is 90 days after receipt of the grant funds (on or about April 1).

Section IV. Organizational Information

23. Mission/Vision Statement. Using less than 1250 characters, please provide your mission/vision statement as it appears on your website, in strategic planning documents or incorporation documents. We want to get an overall sense of the purpose of your organization.

24. Core Programming. We want to get an overall sense of your organization’s programming. You can cut and paste a summary of programs that you’ve already written for a brochure, your website, another grant proposal, etc.

Section VI. Other Attachments’

Please read the [***ABE Opportunity Grant Agreement***](https://abendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/ABE_Opportunity_Grant_Agreement.docx) before submitting your application. If awarded a grant, the ABE will ask you to sign this agreement. In your cover letter, you should note any challenges to signing it. You can contact Jackie Casey at [jcasey@abenet.org](mailto:jcasey@abenet.org) or

312-988-6402 if you have any questions about the agreement.

You can submit your total organizational budget (for your current fiscal year) in any format you choose. It should include both Expenses and Revenue.

Your project budget must be completed using the *ABE Opportunity Grant Project Budget* form and submitted as a separate Excel document.

Project Budget Instructions

You must use the [***Opportunity Grant Project Budget Template***](https://abendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/Copy-of-Project-Budget-Form-2021-Cycle-Replacement.xlsx) to your project budget. The form has four budgeting columns – *project expense/revenue categories, total project budget, ABE request, and budget narrative*. You will complete the highlighted portions of the form with information about your whole project budget and your specific request to the ABE.

In some cases, you are asking the ABE to support all project expenses. In this case, you only need to complete the *ABE Request* column. However, if the total project costs exceed your request to the ABE, you should complete the *Total Project Budget* column. In *the ABE Request* column, you will indicate what expenses the ABE grant would support.

Project Expenses. *Personnel* is the top section. You can use the ABE grant to pay the costs of consultants or contractual personnel who will work on the project activities. You cannot use ABE grant funds to support the salaries and fringe benefits of existing or new staff (even if they will be working on the project). If your project has existing or new staff expenses, you can note them in the *Total Project Budget* column, but you should not assign ABE grant funds to those expenses in the *ABE Request* column. Please provide a narrative explanation for any personnel for which you are requesting ABE funds.

The next part of the *Project Expense* section is *Other Direct Expenses*. You can use ABE grant funds to support other direct expenses associated with your project. A list of kinds of expenses that the grant can support appears in each line item. If you have other direct expenses that fall into other categories, add them up and put the total in the *Other Direct Expenses* line item. Please provide a narrative explanation for any expense for which you are requesting ABE support.

Please be sure that all listed direct expenses are directly related to the project. You cannot use ABE grant funds to support general operating expenses (e.g., rent, utilities) or indirect costs (e.g., administrative overhead, supervisory time, fundraising costs). If these expenses are part of your project budget, please put them in the *Total Indirect Expenses* line in the *Total Project Budget* column but do not assign any ABE funds in the ABE request column.

You can use ABE funds to support staff and consultant/contractual personnel travel that is directly related to the project.

You should detail meeting, training, and event expenses in the *Budget Narrative* column (e.g., facilities rental, food/beverage, AV, production, training materials, CLE, or other certification expenses). You should report trainer/speaker fees and honoraria; meeting planner fees, or additional personnel support such as consultants who develop the training in the personnel line items.

Project Revenue. If the ABE funds do not cover the total cost of your project, then please complete the *Project Revenue* section. This section provides the ABE a sense of how you will obtain the other funding needed to complete the project.

**Submitting Your Completed Application**

Starting with the 2021 grant cycle, you have the option of submitting a [**Letter of Inquiry**](https://abendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/Opportunity-Grant-OPTIONAL-Letter-of-Inquiry-Form-2021-Grant-Cycle-F.docx) form in advance of your proposal to obtain feedback, including whether your proposed project fits the ABE Opportunity Grant guidelines. The Letter of Inquiry is OPTIONAL. If you chose to submit a letter of inquiry, it is due by 5:00 Central Standard Time on Friday, August 21, 2020.

Feedback will be provided by email or telephone conversation by Friday, September 11, 2020. You should not interpret positive feedback about your letter of inquiry as a promise of funding.

You may bypass the letter of inquiry and apply for an Opportunity Grant. To apply, you must complete the [**application form**](https://abendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/Opportunity-Grant-Application-Form-2021-Grant-Cycle-Replacement.docx). If you have questions or need additional guidance, you can contact Jackie Casey at 312-988-6402 or [jcasey@abenet.org](mailto:jcasey@abenet.org).

Proposals are due by 5:00 Central Standard Time on Friday, October 2, 2020. Announcement of grant awards will take place on or before February 28, 2021. Grants awards will be paid by April 1, 2021.

To be reviewed, submit a completed application, which includes:

* the Application Form where you have answered all questions completely and accurately,
* an ABE Opportunity Grant Project Budget form, and
* all required additional documents, a list of which you can find on the application form.

Email your completed application to Jackie Casey at [jcasey@abenet.org](mailto:jcasey@abenet.org). The Application Form and Project Budget form should be submitted in their original Word and Excel formats, respectively. You can send all other documents in whatever format you choose either separately or as a single document.

The American Bar Endowment may request additional information and documentation from you to review your application. A timely response will ensure that we can include your proposal in the review process.