**American Bar Endowment**

**Opportunity Grant Program**
**Letter of Inquiry and Application Instructions**

## Instructions Overview

The ABE Opportunity Grant Program supports 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. Please carefully review the eligibility requirements below and in the FAQ document:

- Your organization must be a 501(c)(3) or in a fiscal relationship with such an entity
- Your project must be law-related
- Your project must be new and innovative

The Opportunity Grant Program dollars are limited – the ABE awards up to a total of $300,000 each year. Grant proposals requesting support of $25,000 or less are typical and viewed more favorably by the Grants Committee as this award range makes it possible to fund more projects and programs. The ABE occasionally makes larger grants when the proposed project or program addresses immediate and critical needs in a uniquely innovative way, with tools or resources that can be used or replicated by other service providers.

In the Opportunity Grant Program's short existence, between 80 and 160 organizations have applied for funds each year. Knowing that competition for the dollars is considerable, the application is straightforward, and brief answers are encouraged. Narrative questions have stated word limits that should not be exceeded.

## What makes a project or program new and innovative?

ABE Opportunity Grants support only new AND innovative projects and programs. The ABE developed this grant program to provide funds for activities organizations often put on the back burner because dollars are not readily available or that build an organization's capacity to work better and improve outcomes. An Opportunity Grant does not support general or existing operations.

To be considered new and innovative, the proposed project or program must, for example:

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

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

- build organizational capacity to serve clients better (funded projects include efforts focused on upgrading or adding a client online intake system and creating on-demand
- training for pro bono lawyers so services can expand);
- develop tools, technology, or approaches that the broader legal community could use (funded proposals include those involving translation of immigration forms and instructions into multiple languages, development of an app to assist disaster survivors and pro bono lawyers in gathering needed paperwork for legal claims, and the addition of a petition generator to a client online service portal); or
- document/prove a best practice (funded projects include the examination of public defense best practices and reporting results, and the analysis of eviction data in rural areas to drive better prevention programming).

## Submission Details

### Letters of Inquiry
Submission of a Letter of Inquiry (LOI) in advance of an application is mandatory and must include a copy of the organization's 501(c)(3) determination letter. Doing so results in valuable feedback, including whether the proposed project is eligible for an ABE Opportunity Grant.

Letters of Inquiry and IRS determination letters are due by September 1.

The *LOI Form* and a copy of the organization's IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter provided to the contact person listed as the principal contact along with an invitation to submit a full application for qualifying applicants. Positive feedback about the *Letter of Inquiry* should not be interpreted as a promise of funding.

**Applications**

Applications are due by October 6<sup>th</sup>. To submit a completed application, combine the following items into one PDF document:

- The Application Form where all questions are answered completely and accurately
- all additional documents required, a list of which can be found on the Application Form.

Email a completed application to [grants@abenet.org](mailto:grants@abenet.org). All documents should be combined into one PDF, with the cover letter, application form, and project budget in the front of the packet.

The American Bar Endowment may request additional information and documentation to review the application. A timely response to questions and information requests will ensure that the proposal is included in the review process.

Proposals that are not funded will receive notification by the end of February. Funded proposals will receive notification by email on or before the end of February (but not before February 1). Once funded proposals are notified, they will receive the ABE Grant Agreement and Activities and Objectives worksheet. This agreement must be signed, and this worksheet filled out and both returned to ABE before grant funding can be released.

Pending the required documents, grants awards will be paid in full on or before April 1.

**The Application Form**

The Application Form includes several narrative questions about the proposed project or program. The following provide instructions about answering questions.

Section I. – Summary of the *Application*

Applicant Organization (Application Question #1) Provide the name of the applicant organization that holds the 501(c)(3) designation that makes the 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). If the organization is using a fiscal agent, put that organization's name in parenthesis.

A Short Project Description (Application Question #3) Should not exceed 200 words. It should include a brief description of the problem, need, or issue the projector program addresses, main activities that will be conducted to address the need, what the ABE is being asked to fund, and the desired impact of the project or program. More detail can be provided about the problem, project or program objectives, and proposed activities in response to later questions. The descriptions of previously funded organizations on the ABE website can provide good guidance about the statement for this question.

Geographic Scope of Project (Application Question #9) List where the proposed project or program will have an impact. If the organization is national, note this and describe where the project or program will have a local impact.

 Section II. – Project Information

Need/Problem/Issue (Application Question #11) In more detail, using no more than 750 words, describe the problem the proposed project or program addresses or the need it intends to meet. Explain why it is urgent:

- to the organization to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and success;
- to those served for improved outcomes; or
- to the broader community for increased impact.

Whenever possible, use data to make the case and describe how the proposed activities are known or expected to address this critical need or problem. For example, if the project or program plans to implement a best practice, note it here.

**New and Innovative (Application Question #12)** The responses to questions 7 and 8 in the Letter of Inquiry form can be copy and pasted into Application questions 12.a. and 12.b.

Alternatively, in 150 words or less each, describe how the proposed project or program is new and innovative. Use the guidance provided earlier in this document or in the *FAQ* document, which can be found here to answer these questions.

**Objectives (Application Question #13)** Using no more than 500 words, describe the proposed project or program's objectives. Funded organizations will be expected to provide an interim and final report tied to achieving these stated objectives in the proposed timeframe. The objectives can be strategic (describing the overarching desired outcome from implementing the project or program), outcome- oriented (specific results of project or program), or tactical/process-oriented (such as the number of people impacted). Objectives can be stated in narrative or bullet format.

**Activities (Application Question #14)** Using no more than 750 words, describe the specific activities designed to achieve each objective. Provide a timeline if possible and appropriate, for each activity. Activities can be stated in narrative or bullet format.

**Evaluation (Application Question #15)** Using no more than 300 words, describe how the projects or program's success will be measured. The evaluation plan can include client/participant satisfaction surveys, continued analysis of community trends, etc. Evaluation plans should be tied to the objectives.

**Collaboration (Application Question #16)** If applicable, briefly describe the ways in which work on this project will involve collaboration or coordination with others in the community to extend its reach and to avoid duplication of services.

**Replication (Application Question #17)** If applicable, briefly describe how this project may be replicated by, or shared with, other organizations or communities.

**Future Funding (Application Question #18)** If funds are sought to start a program or project that will become part of the organization's ongoing operations, explain how future funding will be secured using no more than 150 words. A sense of fundraising methods the organization will use to secure funding and from what kinds of sources (grants, individual giving campaigns, government funding, corporate partners, etc.) will be sufficient. Grant periods are one year or less.

Project Start & End Date (Application Question #19) The grant period can begin before receipt of the grant but no sooner than January 1 and no later than July 1, 90 days after receipt of the grant funds (on or about April 1).

Section IV. Organizational Information

Mission/Vision Statement (Application Question #28) Using no more than 300 words, provide the organization's mission/vision statement as it appears on its website, in strategic planning documents, or incorporation documents. This will provide the ABE with an overall sense of the organization's purpose and its core work.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (Application Question #32) Using no more than 200 words, describe how your organization is addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion. This can include the diverse clients and communities served or the approach to Board and staff diversity and inclusion.

Section VI. Other Attachments

When an organization is awarded a grant, the ABE will ask the Grantee to sign the ABE Opportunity Grant Agreement. Questions about the *Grant Agreement* can be directed to grants@abenet.org.

The organizational budget (for the current fiscal year), including revenue and expenses, can be submitted in any format. A template is provided for your convenience but is by no means required - any format works.

Project Budget Instructions

Use the *Project Budget Form* to submit the project or program budget. The form has five budgeting columns – Line Item (for expense and revenue), Total Project Budget, ABE Request, Funds Spent (which will only be used if a grant is awarded), and Budget Narrative.

In some cases, the ABE is being asked to support all project expenses. If this is the case, only the ABE Request column and the Budget Narrative column need to be completed. If the ABE is being asked to support some costs within a larger project or program budget, then complete the Total Project Budget, ABE Request, and Budget Narrative columns. In the ABE Request column, fill in the allowable expenses the ABE grant would support.

Project Expenses. The first line item is Personnel. An ABE Opportunity Grant can be used to pay the consultants or contractual personnel who will work on the project or program activities. **ABE grant funds cannot be used to support existing or new staff salaries and fringe benefits (even if those positions will be working on the project or program).** If the proposed project or program has existing or new staff expenses, note them in the Total Project Budget column but do not assign ABE grant funds to those expenses in the ABE Request column. Please provide a narrative explanation for any personnel for which ABE funds are requested.

The next part of the Project Expense section is Other Direct Expenses. ABE grant funds can be used to support other direct expenses associated with the proposed project or program. A list of expenses that the grant can support appears in each line item. If execution of the proposed program or project will involve direct expenses that do not fit into the stated line items, add them up and include the total in the Other Direct Expenses line item. Provide a narrative explanation for any expense for which ABE support is requested.

Be sure that all listed direct expenses are directly related to the project. ABE grant funds cannot be used 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 the project or program 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.

ABE funds can be used to support staff, volunteers, and consultant/contractual personnel travel directly related to the project.

Provide detailed 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). 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. Complete the Project Revenue section if the ABE funds do not cover the proposed project or program's total cost. This section provides the ABE with a sense of how other funding needed to complete the project will be obtained.