**American Bar Endowment**

**Opportunity Grant Program Eligibility and Guidelines**

**Opportunity Grant Program Goal and Purpose**

Through the ABE Opportunity Grants program, the ABE supports new, boots-on-the-ground, innovative programs and projects that serve the immediate and critical legal needs of the public and are of importance to the legal profession and its concerns for access to justice. Accordingly, ABE Opportunity Grant Program funding focus areas include:

* Access to justice, especially for vulnerable and underserved populations, through innovations to legal services delivery, including maximizing pro bono service delivery;
* The rule of law and improvement of the justice system, including ensuring equal justice and elimination of bias; and
* Increased public understanding of the law and the legal system to foster greater civic engagement.

This grant program favors programs and projects new to the providers and underserved communities that address immediate and on-going urgent needs in innovative ways taking advantage of existing and emerging technologies and other opportunities that might not otherwise be able to obtain timely funding from alternative sources. 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 replicated by other service providers.

**Organizational Eligibility**

An organization is eligible to apply for an ABE Opportunity Grant if it is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the 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. Eligible organizations must be incorporated in the United States or a U.S. Territory. 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 its impact on local communities.

Organizations that have previously been funded by the ABE may apply for a new 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 needs assessment/best practice demonstration projects/programs. Eligible projects must take place in and impact the United States or a U.S. territory. The ABE does not fund international projects.

ABE Opportunity Grants only support new and innovative projects. The ABE does not fund projects and programs that your organization is already doing or services it is already providing. To be considered new and innovative, the project 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 challenge 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 that, for example:

* build organizational capacity to serve clients better (examples include, upgrading or adding 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 that seek funding to support the direct provision of legal services without a new or innovative component.

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 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 (e.g., purchase the van to deliver mobile services). The ABE will also consider seed funding (except for staff costs) 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 staff expenses. You can use ABE grant funds to help the costs of consultants; interns; and short-term, project-specific contractual workers. Opportunity grants do not support the following:

* personnel costs (salaries and benefits) of staff. Your project budget may include the time of staff people, but you cannot use ABE Opportunity Grant funds 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**

To apply for an Opportunity Grant, you must complete this [application form](https://abendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/Opportunity-Grant-Application-Form-2021-Grant-Cycle-Replacement.docx). [Instructions](https://abendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/Opportunity-Grant-Application-Instructions-2021-Cycle-AF.docx) for completing the form will assist you. 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).

For the 2021 grant cycle, the ABE is also adding an OPTIONAL letter of inquiry. By completing the [letter of inquiry form](https://abendowment.org/wp-content/uploads/Opportunity-Grant-OPTIONAL-Letter-of-Inquiry-Form-2021-Grant-Cycle-F.docx), you can obtain feedback about your proposed project, including to determine if it fits the ABE guidelines as previously described.

To receive feedback before your application, you can submit your letter of inquiry form to the ABE 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. Positive feedback about your letter of inquiry should not be interpreted as a promise of funding.

The letter of inquiry process is OPTIONAL. Organizations can bypass the letter of inquiry and submit a full proposal to be considered for funding. 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.

**ABE Opportunity Grant Program Contact Information**

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