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2025 CIVIL LEGAL COUNSEL PROJECTS PROGRAM

Program Overview and Application Instructions

I. About the DC Bar Foundation

Since its inception in 1977, the DC Bar Foundation (DCBF) has invested more than \$196 million into DC’s legal aid network to ensure every District resident has access to justice regardless of income. The Foundation makes strategic investments in legal services providers and the critical issues facing District residents to strengthen and expand our civil legal aid network and improve our community. As the largest funder of civil legal aid in the District, the Foundation is a steadfast community partner committed to protecting access to justice in life’s most pivotal moments.

In addition to our grant programs, the Foundation administers loan repayment assistance programs for attorneys working at DC legal aid organizations and provides training and technical assistance to these organizations. Learn more by visiting our website: www.dcbarfoundation.org.

II. Overview of the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program

DCBF is pleased to announce it will award grant funding to DC-based nonprofit legal services providers to make available eviction prevention services to District residents with low income or who are underserved through the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program (CLCPP).

Thanks to a grant from the District of Columbia Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, eligible civil legal services providers and their nonprofit partners can apply for a grant that covers January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025. Organizations may apply for funding for one project, multiple projects, and/or joint projects, by submitting one project per application. Nonprofit organizations applying in partnership with civil legal services providers **can** submit their own grant application for the services proposed by the organization.

III. Eligibility for Funding

A. Eligibility for Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program Funding

Qualified recipients under the [*statutory provisions governing the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program*](#) must:

1. Be a not-for-profit DC corporation located and operating primarily within the District of Columbia;
2. Have tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
3. Possess expertise in housing law, landlord-tenant law, or related experience in representing eligible individuals or groups in covered proceedings;
4. Engage only in “covered proceedings” with these funds;
5. Have adequate infrastructure and expertise to provide consistent, high- quality, oversight, training, evaluation, and strategic responses to emerging or changing needs in the client communities served; and
6. Demonstrate expertise in recognizing and responding to multiple legal issues facing low-income or under-served DC residents; or
7. Be a nonprofit organization that applies jointly with a legal services provider that meets the requirements above.

B. Definitions

DCBF defines the following terms to determine eligibility for the Grants Program:

1. **“Civil legal services”** **must** include the individual representation of District residents. It may also include the supervision of such representation.
 - (A) A Licensed Legal Professional must perform representation. A “Licensed Legal Professional” is (1) a member of the District of Columbia Bar; (2) a law student participating in an authorized, attorney supervised clinical program through an accredited law school in the District of Columbia; or (3) a member of the bar of another jurisdiction who is legally permitted to appear and represent a specific client in a particular proceeding.
2. **“Covered proceedings,”** as defined by the DC statute governing the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program, means an actual or reasonably anticipated administrative or judicial proceeding in the District of Columbia:
 - (A) To evict an eligible individual or group;
 - (B) To increase an eligible individual’s or group’s current rent;
 - (C) Initiated by an eligible individual or group and relating to the current rent for that eligible individual or group;
 - (D) Initiated by an eligible individual or group and relating to one or more housing code violations under Chapters 4 through 9 of Title 14 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (14 DCMR §§ 400 to 999), Title 12-G of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (12-G DCMR § 101 et seq.), or Title III of the Air Quality Amendment Act of 2014, effective September 9, 2014 (D.C. Law 20-135, D.C. Official Code § 8-241.01 et seq.);
 - (E) To terminate an eligible individual from participation in any housing subsidy program; or

(F) Initiated by an eligible individual or group and relating to the eligible individual's or group's rights under the Human Rights Act of 1977, effective December 13, 1977 (D.C. Law 2- 38; D.C. Official Code § 2-1401.01 et seq.), or the Rental Housing Act of 1985, effective July 17, 1985 (D.C. Law 6-10; D.C. Official Code § 42-3501.01 et seq.).

3. **“Eligible individual or group”** means a:

- (A) tenant or occupant with low income residing in the District of Columbia; or
- (B) Group of tenants or occupants with low income residing in the District of Columbia; provided, that the majority of the group are tenants or occupants with low-income.

IV. Funding Principles, Standards and Priorities

A. Principles to Guide Allocation of Funds

The primary purpose of the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program is to fund civil legal services to DC residents with low income or who are underserved facing any of the covered proceedings in DC. Thus, funding will be provided:

1. ONLY for free civil legal services;
2. ONLY for services to District residents with low income or who are underserved; and
3. ONLY for projects that provide eviction-related proceedings and adjacent services to prevent evictions.

B. The Foundation's Standards for Funding

1. Standards for Organizations

Funding will be provided to civil legal services organizations and their nonprofit partners that have systems in place that align with widely accepted industry standards for promoting quality, efficiency, and effectiveness in the delivery of services, including methods for self-assessment to provide feedback regarding the extent to which those systems are achieving their desired purpose.

A strong application will demonstrate that the applying organization:

- a. Seeks to identify and respond to the most pressing civil legal needs of the people with low incomes it serves;
- b. Has systems in place to ensure appropriate supervision, training, and development of its staff, applies feedback obtained from stakeholders and clients to evaluate and improve organization effectiveness and

quality;

- c. Integrates pro bono attorneys and others to supplement and increase the effectiveness of its representation and other services;
- d. Provides other services designed to increase the accessibility of legal services to DC residents with low incomes, such as assistance with self-help strategies, legal information through its website or other channels, community legal education; and
- e. Engages with other important stakeholders working on behalf of or serving its targeted client population, such as the judiciary, government agencies, and social services agencies.

2. Standards for Projects

Funding will be provided only to projects that measure and report to DCBF their performance against stated goals with respect to legal services to be delivered, pre-court intervention and collaboration, pro bono development, and any other activities to be funded under the requested grant.

A strong application will demonstrate that the project:

- a. **Has ambitious yet realistic goals for delivering significant amounts of eviction-related legal services**, as measured by the volume and type of legal services to be provided, the number of DC residents to be assisted, the number of cases to be accepted, the DC wards from which the majority of clients are anticipated, and other measures.
- b. **Seeks to increase access to eviction-related legal services to residents in underserved areas of the District**, as measured by the percentage of the total proposed legal services that will be provided in areas containing the greatest concentrations of residents who are low income.
- c. **Has high goals for providing significant amounts of pre-court intervention and collaboration**, as measured by the number of outreach efforts and/or trainings directed to tenants who are low income particularly threatened by eviction-related “covered proceedings”, the number of individuals to whom outreach will be conducted, the number of trainings to be held, the number of DC residents who will attend, the volume of materials distributed (literature, website accesses, etc.), and other relevant measures.
- d. **Seeks to increase engagement of pro bono attorneys and law firms in the provision of legal services to DC residents who are low income or under-served**, as measured by the number of pro bono attorneys recruited, the number of attorneys trained, growth in the total number of attorneys and firms participating, and other

relevant measures.

- e. **Has adequate capacity for delivering the services that are proposed**, while at the same time **maintaining high service quality**, as indicated by experience in providing services similar to those being proposed, related current work that will be supported or enhanced by the proposed services, and other factors.
- f. **Has a high likelihood of sustainability**, taking into account such factors as potential funding sources beyond DCBF, a longer-term service delivery strategy, and other factors.

C. The Foundation's Priorities for Funding

Additionally, in allocating available funding, the Foundation will give priority to applications that seek to address the most pressing legal needs of District residents with low income or who are underserved and make legal services accessible to this population. Applications that address one or more of the following criteria will be given priority (all other factors being equal):

1. Addresses the most critical legal needs of DC residents with low income or underserved who are threatened with any of the "covered proceedings," as defined in the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program in the DC Code.
2. Is likely to expand the number of DC residents who are provided with effective legal assistance in eviction-related matters.
3. Seeks to avoid duplication of services being provided in the District, in the same issue area, or to the same special population segments as those being proposed.
4. Is likely to make effective legal assistance aimed at preventing eviction more accessible to DC residents.
5. Is likely to expand pro bono participation by recruiting, training, and supervising law firm attorneys to help deliver free legal assistance to DC residents.
6. Is likely to leverage DCBF resources by applying them strategically to expand efforts by other service providers.
7. Is likely to provide services that are NOT supported by other funding sources.
8. Will test innovative approaches for achieving the above priorities.

V. Application Instructions and Timeline

A. Application Structure

There are three sections required for the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program application:

1. **PART ONE: ORGANIZATION PROFILE** describes the overall organization that is applying for DCBF funding. This is a description of your organization – not a description of your project/application (Part One). The Organization Profile consists of the following tabs: Additional Information, Mission Statement/Legal Services, Executive/Board Information, Demographic Survey, and Attachments (Nonprofit Status, Organizational Budget, Form 990, Audited Financial Statements, Client Eligibility Guidelines). You will enter this information into SmartSimple **one time**.
 - If your organization has multiple grant writers, they will have the option to search to see if your organization is registered in SmartSimple.
 - If you are applying for more than one grant, this information will be pre-loaded in all applications you submit for the ATJ, CLCPP, and General Support grant programs.

You can **work on several applications simultaneously**.

2. **PART TWO: APPLICATION** describes the proposed project or program for which funding is requested. The Application consists of the following tabs: Executive Summary, Budget & Funding, Application Narrative, and Proposed Performance Measures (specific to legal services provision). Each submitted application should be for a different project, which should be reflected in this section.
3. **PART THREE: APPLICATION ATTACHMENTS** include the following:
 - Data Packet
 - Data and Information requirements
 - Any Supplemental Documents (Resume, Job Descriptions, etc.)

B. Definitions of Application Terms

- **“Legal services”** include any activity designed to help an individual understand or resolve a legal problem. Please see below for definitions of legal services.

Service Level Definitions

For the purposes of the CLCPP evaluation, there five main levels of legal services that can be provided to tenants. These are defined below:

Level of Service	Definition for Evaluation
Legal Education	General guidance regarding legal rights and responsibilities or explanation of options (attorney-client privilege does not apply)
Advice and Counsel	Legal education and a recommendation for a course of action for the specific case, but no action on behalf of the tenant
Brief Services	Brief action on behalf of the tenant, such as drafting a letter or making a phone call; typically not more than 2 hours of time; does not include a court appearance
Limited Scope Representation	More involved action on behalf of the tenant, but less than full representation; typically more than 2 hours of time; may include court appearance
Full Representation	Committing to represent the tenant for the duration of the case; may involve negotiation, litigation, administrative representation, or other advocacy; becoming attorney of record

- **“Cases placed with pro bono attorneys”** are cases where the volunteer attorney has assumed responsibility for the representation. It does not include “co-counseling cases,” which is captured in the next question.

C. How to Apply

The application and all attachments must be submitted via SmartSimple. General information about the CLCPP Grants Program application is available on our website under the [Applicants section](#).

Log into the system using a previously created account **or** create a new account by clicking “Register Here.” and then following the steps as instructed on the screen.

All attachments for which the Foundation provides the template (e.g., Part Three), are available for download on our website [here](#). Templates will also be available in SmartSimple.

For technical questions on using our online application system, please refer to this [page](#).

1. To access an application you have begun or submitted, log in via the [main grantee portal](#) with the same username and password used to start or submit the application. Under “My Applications” on your user dashboard, select “In Progress” or “Submitted.”
2. If you are applying for multiple grants, you can submit multiple applications for your organization as long as the user is registered to the organization’s profile in SmartSimple.

D. Applying for a Joint Project

The Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program accepts applications for projects in collaboration with other civil legal aid organizations and/or non-legal service provider nonprofit organizations. Please follow the instructions below when applying for a joint project:

1. Each organization must submit an application for the joint project.
2. Each organization must submit a unique **Part One: Organization Profile**. This section should only include information about your organization. For example, do not include the partner organization's mission statement; only include your organization's mission statement.
3. For questions asked in **Part Two: Application**, include information on the roles, responsibilities, staffing pattern, activities, and expected results that **your organization** contributes to the joint project.

E. Timeline of Application Process

July 15, 2024	Application Samples (PDF and Word) released. Please use the application samples to prepare your answers to be entered into SmartSimple starting July 29, 2024.
July 29, 2024	Applicants can begin submitting grant applications in SmartSimple
August 30, 2024	Applications due by 11:59 pm
December 2024	Awards announced
January 1, 2025	Grant year begins

VI. Monitoring and Evaluation

If your application is approved, your organization must submit quarterly financial reports directly to the DC Bar Foundation and submit programmatic data directly to the third-party evaluator on an agreed-upon interval outlined in the grant award. Plus, your organization may be required to participate in a programmatic and/or a financial site visit. The Foundation will contact the grantee directly to schedule site visits.

VII. Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program, how to apply, or our monitoring and evaluation processes, please contact grants@dcbfoundation.org.