



## Eviction Response Grant Guidelines

### Background

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (IEJF) is a not-for-profit corporation established in 1999, pursuant to the [Illinois Equal Justice Act](#) (30 ILCS 765/1 et. seq.). The IEJF supports initiatives to increase Illinois residents' access to the legal system. The IEJF provides grants to nonprofit legal aid providers through three state appropriations housed in the Illinois Attorney General's Office.

This current Eviction Response Grant funding has been provided by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). IEJF has been charged with distributing the grant funding to civil legal aid and mediation organizations to assist Illinois residents facing eviction in accessing legal assistance and mediation services. This funding was provided in response to the current eviction crisis which has been heightened by the public health pandemic. These funds are intended to develop state-wide eviction mitigation services and are not to duplicate grants for services funded under the Cook County Legal Aid for Housing and Debt (CCLAHD).

### Availability of Funds

Funding is provided by the State of Illinois to support eviction response legal and mediation services through the end of State's fiscal year (June 30, 2021). The budget for FY 21 grants is approximately \$1,800,000. Any funding directed toward Cook County is subject to availability and will not duplicate services being funded.

### Purposes

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation will make grants in the following two categories:

- [Civil Legal Assistance](#)
- [Mediation Services](#)

At its discretion, the Board may also request proposals from non-profit organizations to conduct training and technical assistance regarding mediation, telephone advice and referral services and/or civil legal assistance.

## Eligibility

Organizations are eligible to apply for a grant from the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation if they:

- **Are certified and in compliance with the Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) requirements;**
- Have a demonstrated track record in providing legal assistance or mediation services to individuals impacted by housing insecurity;
- Are tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- Provide services to Illinois residents set forth in the “Purposes” section. ***To determine if a particular project qualifies for a grant, see the specific guidelines for the categories noted above.***
- Provide services to low-income people free of charge. Low-income is defined as a household income of up to 80% Area Median Income (AMI). Current AMI can be found [here](#).

## Limitations

- Funds provided by the State of Illinois, including funds distributed by the IEJF, may not be spent on a sectarian purpose.
- Said funds may not be used for the purpose of lobbying; encouraging political activities, labor or anti-labor activities, boycotts, picketing, strikes or demonstrations; or investigative or legal compliance activities related to a pending dispute.
- No more than 10% of grants awarded by the IEJF can be used for indirect costs. Failure to abide by this may jeopardize future funding from the IEJF.

## Timeline for Application & Review

The grant period will be March 15, 2021 – June 30, 2021, and the application and review process will follow this schedule:

<b>02/22/2021</b>	Applications available at <a href="http://www.iejf.org">www.iejf.org</a> .
<b>03/05/2021</b>	Completed applications & proposals due
<b>03/05-03/12/2021</b>	Grant review & virtual site visits
<b>03/15/2021</b>	Board decisions announced

## Grant Disbursement

Grant payments will be disbursed monthly following receipt of program service and financial reports for **actual costs incurred** during that preceding month. Payments are dependent on receipt of funds from the State of Illinois. Grantees may request advance payments for implementation of the Eviction Response Program. The process and approval for advance funds will be determined by IEJF. Subsequent monthly payments will be based on monthly financial invoices to reconcile payments previously advanced.

## IL Grant Funds Recovery Act

Please note these funds are subject to the [IL Grant Funds Recovery Act](#). Please familiarize yourself before submitting an application.

## General Evaluation Criteria

Grant requests will be evaluated on the factors listed below and the criteria listed under each funding category.

- Demonstrated need for the proposed services and location of applicant's service-delivery to ensure geographical reach throughout the State of Illinois.
- Applicant's experience in providing said service, as indicated by the experience levels and qualifications of key staff and the numbers of persons served in prior years.
- Commitment to services for vulnerable and underserved populations.
- Efficient service delivery which takes into consideration factors such as the relative costs of the applicant's services; cooperation and coordination with other entities to avoid duplication of effort; the use of volunteers; and the use of technology to increase access to services and to maximize productivity.
- Sound organizational management, including indices such as the fiscal health of the sponsoring organization; realistic income and expense budgets for the project; evidence of active involvement and oversight by a qualified advisory board and/or board of directors; and demonstrated technical efficiency and protection of client data.
- Use of evaluative and measurement techniques that measure success, effectiveness, and efficiency as it relates to organizational mission, learning, and improvement are encouraged.
- Use of Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) objectives are encouraged.
- Service projections should be proposed with the initial application and progress toward those goals will be reported on monthly.

The IEJF is committed to equitable salaries for legal aid providers and encourages applicants to develop a reasonable pay scale, training and support program for its personnel to ensure that client services are not interrupted by unplanned staff turnover.

The IEJF subscribes to *Illinois Nonprofit Principles and Best Practices* and encourages applicants to strive to adopt the *Best Practices* pertinent to their organization. The *Best Practices* were developed by Forefront Illinois, endorsed by the Illinois Attorney General and available at <https://myforefront.org/publictrust>.

## Application and Reporting Requirements

***Applications must be submitted electronically by March 5, 2021.***

Application procedures and forms will be available by February 22, 2021 at [www.iejf.org](http://www.iejf.org) under the **Eviction Response** tab. From there, you can login to the grant portal. The "Apply" button on the top left will allow you to select your funding category and apply.

***Grant reports must be submitted via the online portal as well.***

All grantees must submit **monthly program service reports and financial invoices by the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month** for services provided and actual costs incurred in the preceding month. Failure to submit reports in a timely manner may jeopardize distribution of grant funds, as well as future IEJF funding.

A detailed **final report** (including outcomes and demographic information) will be due on or by **July 23, 2021**.

### **For More Information**

For more information about the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation's grant guidelines and procedures, contact **Leslie Corbett, Executive Director**, at **312-938-2381**. You can also contact Ms. Corbett via e-mail at [lcorbett@iejf.org](mailto:lcorbett@iejf.org).

To learn more about the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, click [here](#).

## Civil Legal Assistance Grants

### Purpose

The IEJF makes grants to provide legal assistance to low-income Illinois residents who cannot afford to hire an attorney.

### Priority Areas

The IEJF Eviction Response grants will focus on two priority areas:

- **Eviction Response Legal Services:** This includes legal advice, consultations, limited services, and full representation in eviction matters.
- **Technological Infrastructure:** This includes technological infrastructure investments to enable Illinois residents to receive online legal information and referrals for Eviction Response legal and mediation services and available rental assistance.

### Use of Grant Funds

Grants will be made to support **staff or contract positions** at eligible legal services providers, including attorneys, paralegals, program staff, and/or pro bono coordinators. Grant funds can be used to pay for salaries, benefits, and other allowable costs directly related to supporting the positions. For technological infrastructure grants, funds may be used to support the purchase of technology, software, or other costs related to web design and content. Indirect costs are limited to no more than 10%. The applicant must demonstrate how the proposed staff or contract positions will help the organization provide efficient and effective legal assistance to persons in one or both of the priority areas.

### Eligibility

In the Civil Legal Assistance category, the IEJF will **only** consider applications from Illinois-based not-for-profit organizations that:

- Serve persons in one or both of the two priority areas listed above (Eviction Response Legal Services and Technological Infrastructure).
- For eviction response legal services, employ licensed attorneys to provide legal services, who can be supplemented by law students or other non-attorneys acting under the supervision of licensed attorneys.

### Evaluation Criteria

Grant applications in the Civil Legal Assistance category will be evaluated based on (*in addition to criteria listed in Overview Section*):

- Organizational capacity and experience in providing legal services in eviction cases.
- Organizational experience in facilitating referrals to non-legal organizations to address the legal crisis, such as housing or financial counselors, other social service providers, and rental assistance programs.

- Demonstrated need for the proposed services, as reflected in the number of eligible clients in the applicant’s service area; current unmet demand; and requests for assistance from other community agencies serving the target populations.

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## Mediation Services

### Purpose

The IEJF makes grants to provide mediation services to Illinois residents, as an efficient and cost-effective alternative to traditional legal processes. The IEJF will support selected mediation programs whose purpose is to improve access to just resolutions of disputes for those who might not otherwise have such access.

Grants to support mediation services will be made to dispute resolution centers, which are not-for-profit organizations that offer free mediation services to the public that are provided by trained volunteers.

For the purposes of these guidelines, mediation is defined as a voluntary process in which an impartial mediator actively assists disputants in identifying and clarifying issues of concern and in designing and agreeing to solutions for those issues. A mediator is defined as a person who has received at least 30 hours of training in the areas of negotiation, nonverbal communication, agreement writing, neutrality and ethics.

### Use of Grant Funds

In the Mediation Services category, the IEJF will consider support for:

- **New Dispute Resolution Centers:** To increase the availability of mediation services throughout Illinois, the IEJF will consider applications for “start-up” grants to new dispute resolution centers – including those that have begun operation and those that will begin offering services during the grant period – that can demonstrate the ability to provide mediation services in accordance with these guidelines.
- **Existing Dispute Resolution Centers:** The IEJF will consider applications for operating support from existing dispute resolution centers to expand services in response to the eviction crisis. These operating expenses include staff salaries and benefits, as well as other costs directly related to providing mediation services.
- **Mediator Training:** The IEJF will consider applications for operating support from existing dispute resolution centers aiming to increase the State’s capacity to provide mediation services through training of new mediators or Eviction Response training for existing mediators.

### Eligibility

In the Mediation Services category, the IEJF will only consider applications from Illinois-based not-for-profit organizations that:

- Provide **free** mediation services to disputants.
- Provide mediation services using mediators who have received at least 30 hours of training as mediators.
- Provide training for mediation services to increase the State’s capacity.
- Have operating procedures in place that demonstrate compliance with Section 5 of the Illinois Not-for-Profit Dispute Resolution Center Act (710 ILCS 20/5), including:
  - Operating an ongoing peer review program for mediators;
  - Scheduling mediations within 30 days of the commencement of a case;
  - Maintaining records on mediated cases;
  - Advising parties of the objectives of mediation, their roles and the mediator’s role;
  - Considering disputes resolved when there is a written agreement.

## Evaluation Criteria

Grant applications in the Mediation Services category will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated need for the proposed services, as reflected in the actual or anticipated demand for mediation services; the support of actual or potential referral sources, such as judges, legal services providers, social service agencies, and local government officials; and the extent to which mediation services are otherwise available in the program’s service area.
- Applicant’s ability to provide mediation services, as indicated by the experience levels and qualifications of key staff; the number of trained mediators and/or the ability to attract new mediators; the numbers of mediations held in prior years; the ability to provide the required training to potential volunteers.
- Efficient delivery of mediation services, which takes into consideration factors such as the methods for receiving case referrals; the number of cases referred to mediation compared to the number of cases actually mediated; and the relative costs of the applicant’s services.