

## Illinois Equal Justice Foundation Grant Guidelines FY 11

### 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 is funded through a state appropriation housed in the Illinois Attorney General's Office.

### Availability of Funds

The IEJF has been included for **\$1.75 million** in the budget bill passed by the General Assembly in late May. At this writing, the legislative session is not over and the bill has not been forwarded to the Governor for his signature. **It should be noted that the IEJF has not received any of its FY 10 appropriation and may not receive it until December 2010. We cannot provide an accurate timeline for the distribution of FY 10 or FY 11 grant awards.**

### Purposes

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation makes grants in five categories:

- **Legal Information for the Public**
- **Self Help Legal Assistance Projects**
- **Mediation Services**
- **Telephone Advice & Referral Services**
- **Civil Legal Assistance**

***An organization may apply for funds in more than one category. Organizations seeking support for more than one of the five purposes must submit a separate application for each category.***

At its discretion, the Board may also request proposals from non-profit organizations to conduct research, training and technical assistance regarding legal information for the public, 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 tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- Provide services to Illinois residents in one or more of the five areas set forth in the "Purposes" section. ***To determine if a particular project qualifies for a grant, see the specific guidelines for each of the five categories noted above.***
- Provide services to low-income people free of charge or on a sliding scale based on income. Low-income is defined as a household income of up to 150% of the federal poverty guidelines. Applicants who charge fees for their legal services are required to provide the IEJF with a copy of their fee schedule. Mediation services, however, must be provided free of charge.

### Limitations

- Funds appropriated by the Illinois General Assembly, 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.
- A recipient may not use funds received under the Illinois Equal Justice Act to file an individual action or class action under the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act or other labor laws.
- No more than 10% of grants awarded by the IEJF can be used for overhead costs. Failure to abide by this may jeopardize future funding from the IEJF.

**Timeline for Application & Review**

The grant period will be September 1, 2010 – August 31, 2011, and the application and review process will follow this schedule:

<b>June 21, 2010</b>	Applications available at <a href="http://www.iejf.org">www.iejf.org</a> . There is a separate application for each funding category.
<b>August 13, 2010</b>	Completed Applications & Proposals Due
<b>September – October 2010</b>	Grant review & site visits
<b>December 2010</b>	Board decisions announced
<b>December 2011*</b>	Grant funds released by state for fiscal year June 30, 2011.

**Grant Disbursement**

Ideally, grant payments will be disbursed in December, March and June. However, distribution of funds is contingent on the timely receipt of the funds from the state by the IEJF. The state has experienced severe cash flow difficulties the past two years which has negatively impacted IEJF grant distribution. The FY 11 budget includes a provision that extends the lapse period for the state to pay overdue bills from August 31 to December 31. It is very likely that these grants will not be paid out until December 2011, four months after the close of the grant year. Applicants must assess whether their organization can accept a grant under such payment timeline uncertainty.

**General Evaluation Criteria (see funding category for more specific criteria)**

- Demonstrated need for the proposed services.
- 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.
- 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; and evidence of active involvement and oversight by a qualified advisory board and/or board of directors.
- Performance under previous Illinois Equal Justice Foundation grants. For organizations that received grants in fiscal year 2010 and are seeking a renewal, information on how the grant is

being used, what services are being provided and if/how the funds increased the capacity of the organization.

Grant requests will be evaluated on the factors listed above, the criteria listed under each funding category as well as those outlined in the Illinois Equal Justice Act.

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 the Donors Forum of Illinois, endorsed by the Illinois Attorney General and available at <http://www.donorsforum.org/publictrust/principles.html>.

#### **Application and Reporting Requirements**

All grantees must submit a brief mid-term report on their activities on or by **March 31, 2011**. The IEJF will provide a report form. Grantees must state whether or not they can spend the grant funds in the time and manner allocated in this report. All funds must be expended by August 31, 2011. The IEJF reserves the right to re-grant funds if deemed necessary.

A detailed final report will be due on or by **September 30, 2011**. The IEJF will provide a report form. Failure to submit reports in a timely manner may jeopardize future IEJF funding.

#### **Applications – including the cover page, proposal narrative, summary and all attachments – must be submitted electronically by August 13, 2010.**

- Application procedures and forms will be available by June 21, 2010 at [www.iejf.org](http://www.iejf.org) under the Grants tab.
- All submissions should be directed to Leslie Corbett at [lcorbett@iejf.org](mailto:lcorbett@iejf.org).
- A second copy of the full application(s) should be sent to Vlad Dovijarov at [vlad@lhf.org](mailto:vlad@lhf.org).
- If for some reason you cannot submit everything electronically, please notify us and we will work with you.

#### **For More Information**

For more information about the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation's grant guidelines and procedures, contact Leslie Corbett, IEJF 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, please see [www.iejf.org](http://www.iejf.org).

**Illinois Equal Justice Foundation**  
**Purposes/Funding Categories**

**I) Legal Information for the Public**

**Purpose**

The Illinois Equal Justice Foundation (IEJF) makes grants to help Illinois residents understand how to use the legal system to resolve a problem.

In the Legal Information for the Public category, the IEJF will consider support for two types of projects:

- **Legal Information Centers:** Legal information centers are designed to operate as a “starting point” for people who are considering the use of the legal system to resolve a problem. A legal information center will offer printed, video and/or Internet -based materials on topics such as the operation of the court system; how to obtain legal representation; legal rights and responsibilities in various substantive areas of the law; and alternatives to litigation. Legal information centers will be located in libraries, courthouses, or other locations that are accessible to the public. A goal of the IEJF is to support the development of Legal Information Centers throughout Illinois.
- **Legal Information Projects:** Legal Information projects are efforts that complement legal information centers by helping Illinois residents who are unable to obtain or do not have legal representation to understand and resolve their legal problems in accordance with applicable law and court procedures. Legal information projects can include: the preparation and distribution of self-help packets that include legal information, forms and instructions; pro se classes taught by attorneys; and/or other creative efforts to help give Illinois residents the information and resources to resolve their legal problems on their own when appropriate.

**Use of Grant Funds**

In the Legal Information for the Public category, the IEJF will make grants to support:

- Operating costs for legal information centers and legal information projects, including personnel costs.
- The creation and distribution of legal information and self-help materials;
- **Planning Grants:** In judicial circuits and/or counties where there are currently no legal information centers, the IEJF will consider applications for planning grants of up to **\$10,000**. The planning grants will be given to a not-for-profit organization for the purposes of assessing community need and support for a legal information center and putting together a plan to create one. (See Evaluation Criteria for Planning Grants, below.)

**Eligibility**

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

- Provide legal information as described in the Purpose section of these guidelines under the ***supervision of a licensed attorney, the court***, or for legal matters where accredited non-attorney representatives are permitted to provide services (e.g., immigration and tax matters), **a**

**representative accredited by the appropriate administrative agency** to provide services in matters pending before that agency.

- Provide legal information in areas of the law that include problems commonly faced by members of the public (e.g., family law, consumer and credit issues, housing), including areas of the law that affect lower-income Illinois residents.
- Provide legal information in a location that is accessible to the public.

In the Legal Information for the Public category, the IEJF **will not** consider proposals for:

- Telephone-based services;
- Civil legal services programs' efforts to provide legal information and self-help assistance as part of their screening and intake systems;
- General efforts to inform the public about the law, such as Law Day activities; the development and dissemination of law-related curricula to schools; essay contests; or other community legal education initiatives that are not designed to help people address specific legal problems; and
- Legal information and self-help projects involving issues of criminal law.

**Evaluation Criteria (see criteria listed in Overview Section as well)**

Applications in the Legal Information for the Public category will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated need for the proposed services, as reflected by factors such as the number of pro se filings in the applicant's service area, and evidence of support for the project from judges, court clerks, legal services providers, bar leaders, librarians, local government officials and others who deal with members of the public who are seeking legal information.
- Preference will be given for efforts to establish new legal information centers in counties where none exist.
- Preference will be given to projects that are either statewide or are developing materials or models that can be replicated by other legal information centers in Illinois.
- Preference will be given for efforts to provide legal information to vulnerable populations such as immigrants, physically and mentally disabled people, homeless people and senior citizens.

**Evaluation Criteria for Planning Grants**

To receive a planning grant of up to \$10,000, a not-for-profit organization must demonstrate that the planning process is likely to result in the creation of a legal information center or self-help assistance project. Indicators of the likelihood of success include the:

- Track record of the applicant organization in launching and managing new initiatives;
- Interest and support of potential referral sources for cases, including judges, legal services providers, social service agencies and local government officials;
- Potential to receive funding from other sources such as the county, the court, etc. to sustain such an effort.

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**II) Self-Help Legal Assistance Projects**

**Purpose**

The IEJF makes grants to provide Illinois residents using the court system with legal advice and brief legal assistance to help them effectively navigate the legal system.

In the Self-Help Legal Assistance Project category, the IEJF will consider support for projects that meet the following definition:

**Self-help Legal Assistance Project:** Self-Help Legal Assistance Projects are programs based at or near courthouses or in other appropriate community spaces that provide legal advice and assistance about particular substantive areas of the law to litigants or potential litigants in non-criminal or traffic matters who are unable to obtain or do not have legal representation for a dispute involving one of those particular substantive areas of the law.

### **Use of Grant Funds**

In the Self-Help Legal Assistance category, the IEJF will make grants to support:

- Operating costs for self-help legal assistance projects, including personnel costs.
- **Planning Grants:** In judicial circuits and/or counties where there are currently no self-help legal assistance projects, the IEJF will consider applications for planning grants of up to **\$10,000**. The planning grants will be given to a not-for-profit organization for the purposes of assessing community need and self-help legal assistance project and putting together a plan to create one. (See Evaluation Criteria for Planning Grants, below.)

### **Eligibility**

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

- Provide legal advice or self-help assistance as described in the Purpose section of these guidelines.
- Provide legal advice or self-help assistance in areas of the law that include problems commonly faced by members of the public (e.g., family law, consumer and credit issues, housing), including areas of the law that affect lower-income Illinois residents.
- Provide legal advice or self-help assistance in a location that is accessible to the public, like a courthouse, library or community organization.
- ***Use licensed attorneys to provide services***, who can be supplemented by law-students or other non-attorneys acting under the supervision of licensed attorneys, or for legal matters where ***accredited non-attorney representatives*** are permitted to provide services (e.g., immigration and tax matters), a representative accredited by the appropriate administrative agency to provide services in matters pending before that agency.

In the Self-Help Legal Assistance category, the IEJF **will not** consider proposals for:

- Telephone-based services;
- Civil legal services programs' efforts to provide legal information and self-help assistance as part of their screening and intake systems;
- General efforts to inform the public about the law, such as Law Day activities; the development and dissemination of law-related curricula to schools; essay contests; or other community legal education initiatives that are not designed to help people address specific legal problems; and
- Legal information and self-help projects involving issues of criminal law.

### **Evaluation Criteria (see criteria listed in Overview Section as well)**

Applications in the Self-Help Legal Assistance category will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated need for the proposed services, as reflected by factors such as the number of pro se filings in the applicant's service area, and evidence of support for the project from judges,

court clerks, legal services providers, bar leaders, librarians, local government officials and others who deal with members of the public who are seeking legal assistance.

- Efficient service delivery, which takes into consideration factors such as the relative costs of the applicant's services; the use of volunteers; the availability of appropriate client self-help materials; and the use of technology to increase client access and streamline case-handling procedures.
- Preference will be given for efforts to establish new self-help assistance projects in counties, or divisions of the court within larger counties, where no self-help legal assistance projects currently exist.
- Preference will be given to projects that are developing materials or models that can be replicated by other self-help legal assistance projects in Illinois.

### **Evaluation Criteria for Planning Grants**

To receive a planning grant of up to \$10,000, a not-for-profit organization must demonstrate that the planning process is likely to result in the creation of a self-help legal assistance project. Indicators of the likelihood of success include the:

- Track record of the applicant organization in launching and managing new initiatives;
- Interest and support of potential referral sources for cases, including judges, legal services providers, social service agencies and local government officials.
- Potential to receive other funding to help sustain such an effort.

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## **III) 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. These operating expenses include staff salaries and benefits, as well as other costs directly related to providing mediation services.
- **Planning Grants:** In judicial circuits where there is currently no dispute resolution center, the IEJF will consider applications for planning grants of up to \$10,000. The planning grants will be given to a not-for-profit organization for the purposes of assessing community need and support for a dispute resolution center, and putting together a plan to create one. (See Evaluation Criteria for Planning Grants, below.)

### **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 volunteers who have received at least 30 hours of training as mediators.
- 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 (see criteria listed in Overview Section as well)**

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 volunteers and/or the ability to attract new volunteers; 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.

### **Evaluation Criteria for Planning Grants**

To receive a planning grant of up to \$10,000, a not-for-profit organization must demonstrate that the planning process is likely to result in the creation of a new not-for-profit dispute resolution center.

Indicators of the likelihood of success include the:

- Track record of the applicant organization in launching and managing new initiatives;
- Interest and support of potential referral sources for cases, including judges, legal services providers, social service agencies and local government officials;
- Potential to receive funding under the Illinois Not-for-Profit Dispute Resolution Center Act (710 ILCS 20).

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#### **IV) Telephone Advice and Referral Services**

##### **Purpose**

The IEJF makes grants to provide legal advice and referral services in civil matters to Illinois residents via regional legal services hotlines.

A regional legal services hotline is an Illinois-based not-for-profit organization that:

- Provides callers with general information on how to use the legal system;
- Offers free legal advice and self-help materials to low-income callers;
- Refers low-income callers to appropriate civil legal services providers.
- Provides coordinated intake and referral services.

##### **Use of Grant Funds**

Grants will be made to support the operating expenses of regional legal services hotlines. These operating expenses include staff salaries and benefits, as well as other costs directly related to providing advice and referral services to callers.

##### **Eligibility**

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

- Provide free legal advice and referral services to low-income persons.
- Serve Cook County or have a designated service area of at least 25 Illinois counties;
- Provide legal advice and referral services on one or more civil legal issues.
- Use licensed attorneys to provide legal services to callers.

The IEJF will not make grants to support the client screening and intake systems of individual legal services programs, unless those intake systems cover 25 or more Illinois counties and meet the other eligibility standards listed above.

##### **Evaluation Criteria (see criteria listed in Overview Section as well)**

Grant applications in the Telephone Advice and Referral Services category will be evaluated based on:

- Demonstrated need for the proposed services, as reflected in the number of eligible clients in the applicant's service area; the volume of calls received; and current unmet demand.
- Efficient service delivery, which takes into consideration factors such as the relative costs of the applicant's services; the use of volunteers; the availability of appropriate client self-help materials; and the use of technology to increase client access and streamline case-handling procedures.

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#### **V) Civil Legal Assistance**

##### **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 grants will focus on two priority areas:

- **Legal Assistance to Families in Crisis:** This includes civil legal assistance in cases involving *family law* (eg., orders of protection, child custody, guardianships, dissolution of marriage and post-decree matters), *housing law, consumer law as well as veteran's and disability benefits*.
- **Legal Assistance to Older Illinoisans:** This includes efforts to provide civil legal assistance *to protect people 65 and older from physical and financial abuse and financial hardship*. It includes civil legal assistance in cases involving orders of protection; guardianships; health care; consumer and credit issues; housing; and public benefits programs such as Social Security and Medicare.

### **Use of Grant Funds**

- Grants will be made to support **staff positions** at eligible legal services providers, including attorneys, paralegals and/or pro bono coordinators. Grant funds can be used to pay for salaries, benefits, and limited overhead costs (10%) directly related to supporting the position. The applicant must demonstrate how the proposed staff position will help the organization provide efficient and effective legal assistance to persons in one or both of the priority areas.
- **Planning Grants:** Planning grants of \$10,000 are available for organizations attempting to launch a new program in one of the topic areas listed above, particularly to address an emerging need/crisis situation.

### **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 (Legal Assistance to Families in Crisis and Legal Assistance to Older Illinoisans).
- Have been in continuous operation for at least two years prior to the date the application is submitted to the IEJF.
- Have received and expended at least \$200,000 for the provision of civil legal assistance to low-income persons in its most recently completed fiscal year.
- Employ four or more full-time, licensed attorneys who provide civil legal assistance to low-income persons at the time the application is submitted to the IEJF; or have provided legal representation to at least 200 low-income persons through the services of pro bono attorneys in their most recently completed fiscal year.

***Eligible organizations may submit more than one request under this category, but must submit a separate proposal for each request.***

### **Evaluation Criteria (see criteria listed in Overview Section as well)**

Grant applications in the Civil Legal Assistance category will be evaluated based on:

- 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.

### **Evaluation Criteria for Planning Grants**

To receive a planning grant of up to \$10,000, a not-for-profit organization must demonstrate that the planning process is likely to result in the creation of a new program designed to address an emerging need or crisis. Indicators of the likelihood of success include the:

- Track record of the applicant organization in launching, managing and sustaining new initiatives;
- Track record of the applicant organization in working in partnership with other stakeholders to address crisis issues;
- Interest and support of potential referral sources for cases, including judges, legal services providers, social service agencies and local government officials.

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*Approved by the Board of Directors, June 15, 2010.*