

# Request for Proposals

## Reducing Barriers to Meaningful Participation in Court Grant 2025-2026

*Proposals Due February 18, 2025*

### Program Overview

The Illinois Supreme Court created the Commission on Access to Justice (ATJ Commission) in 2012 to develop policies and programs to reduce barriers to the court system for self-represented court users, court users who do not speak English as a first language, court users with a disability, and other court users who may struggle to utilize the court system to address their legal issue. The Access to Justice Division of the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts (ATJ Division) staffs the ATJ Commission.

### Reducing Barriers to Meaningful Participation in Court Grant

Reducing Barriers to Meaningful Participation in Court Grants (Grant) can be used for any program that increases a court user's ability to meaningfully participate in the court system. Organizations such as administrative agencies, universities, foundations, legal aid organizations, community-based organizations, and social service organizations are eligible to apply.

Examples of projects include, but are not limited to:

- Courthouse help desks or early resolution programs;
- Call centers or hotlines giving legal advice;
- Community-based legal centers (clinics, lawyer in the library, summits);
- Limited scope representation outreach;
- Document drafting workshops; and
- Remote appearance programs for rural counties.

Each grant will be for a one-year period from May 1, 2025-April 30, 2026, and the funds will be paid at the beginning of the grant year. All award amounts are based on the funds which are available for the grant year.

### Requirements & Expectations

Each application for grant funding must be submitted by a point person at an administrative agency, university, foundation, legal aid organization, community-based organization, or social service organization.

Each Point Person is expected to:

- Submit mid-year and year-end reports to the ATJ Division about project activities, opportunities and challenges, number of individuals served, and grant expenditures;
- Communicate with the ATJ Division of any changes in the project or staffing.

The ATJ Commission and Division will:

- Provide support to the grant point person to further the Grant Purpose; and
- Disburse funds to support the Grantee upon execution by the parties of a Grant Agreement.

➤ **Grant Proposal Requirements**

Each proposal for grant funds must include the following three components. The questions are listed here for your assistance in preparing to submit the proposal online via the link below.

- Section I Applicant's Information
  - Organization, Organization's Leader, and Project Point Person Information
- Section II Program Narrative (including partnership letters of support if applicable)
  - Short summary of project (1-2 sentences)
  - What is your proposed project or program? Please describe the project or program for which you are requesting grant funds, why it is necessary, and how it increases court users' ability to meaningfully participate in the court system. How does it connect court users with self-help resources, legal advice, and/or legal representation, including limited scope representation services or in a legal desert?
  - Who will you partner with to achieve these goals? (not applicable to every project) Please describe any proposed partnerships involved in your project. This may include court-based partners (*e.g.*, circuit clerks, chief/presiding judge's office, IL JusticeCorps) and other partners (*e.g.*, legal aid organizations, bar associations, public libraries). If there are any such partnerships, please provide a letter of support from each partner confirming their commitment to the project.
  - How will you evaluate the effectiveness of the project? Please include a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives. Evaluations should consider the impact on litigants, court staff, and court processes.
  - Why are you seeking funding from the ATJ Commission rather than from other viable sources? Please describe whether the proposal fits the criteria for other funding opportunities such as through The Chicago Bar Foundation, Illinois Bar Foundation, Illinois Equal Justice Foundation, and Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, public sources of funding, or private foundations. If it does fit the criteria, please explain why you are seeking a grant award from the ATJ Commission.
- Section III Grant Amount Request
  - NOTE: Our entire budget is \$300,000 for this program year. Although we have not set a specific agency limit, please tailor your requests appropriately.
  - Please provide a budget summary explaining (1) how much grant money the applicant is requesting and (2) how the grant money will be spent.
  - List the total amount requested (for example, \$15,000)
  - Then itemize the request (for example \$10,000 for salary, \$5,000 for a copy machine, and \$1000 for office supplies) in the format of the online application

➤ **Grant Award Decision Process & Due Date**

Completed grant proposals must be submitted before 5:00 pm on **Tuesday, February 18, 2025** by online application at <https://forms.office.com/g/Szytm7mMMq> or via this QR code:



All award decisions will be made by the ATJ Commission's Reducing Barriers to Meaningful Participation in Court Grant Selection Committee (Committee). The Committee will review all grant applications and make awards based on several criteria including demonstrated need, potential impact of project, long-term sustainability, and willingness to innovate and think creatively.

The Committee anticipates that the grant recipients will be announced mid-April 2025 with grant monies to be disbursed shortly thereafter. Grants will be paid to the person or entity designated by the recipient after selection. The program year will begin May 1, 2025.

*Questions about the grant program should be directed to Jill Roberts, Deputy Director, Access to Justice Division, AOIC at [jroberts@illinoiscourts.gov](mailto:jroberts@illinoiscourts.gov).*