

**Request For Proposals For One-Year Public Interest Law Projects
Starting In 2026**

October 17, 2025

The Berkeley Law Foundation (BLF) is now soliciting proposals for one-year public interest legal projects to begin in 2026. To be considered, proposals must be received electronically by **11:59 p.m. on Friday, January 16, 2026.**

BLF traditionally awards one to two grants per year to individuals undertaking public interest law projects that will serve legally disadvantaged or politically under-represented groups and promote systemic change.

This document consists of a request for proposals and grant application instructions. For a list of our previous grantees, their project titles and sponsoring organizations, please visit the BLF website at <http://www.berkeleylawfoundation.org/post-graduate-fellowships/past-fellows/>. Although many of our grantees have been located in the San Francisco Bay Area, we fund projects throughout the country. Past projects have been located in New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Southern California, California's Central Valley, Florida, Washington, and Arizona, among other locales.

Each year's grant amounts depend on the availability of funds. Proposals received by January 16, 2026 will be reviewed over several weeks. Finalists will be selected in March 2026 and interviewed via teleconference or videoconference in April 2026. BLF will select its 2026-2027 grantees by early May 2026.

The end of this document includes contact information for queries and instructions on how to submit your proposal, which we look forward to receiving.

Audrey Barron and Lisa Ells
BLF Grants Co-Chairs

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Berkeley Law Foundation (BLF) is to fund new lawyers and innovative public interest law projects that serve disadvantaged people. BLF members invest directly in the public interest work of our peers, emphasizing a shared-income approach to social change. We make this choice because we recognize that lawyers have a personal and professional responsibility to dismantle inequalities and to improve access to justice. Recognizing that the responsibility to challenge systemic inequality applies equally to the structure of our organization, BLF incorporates diversity as a core value.

Our approach to funding public interest law, first established by BLF in 1976, empowers lawyers to pursue careers in the public interest, launches creative public interest projects and organizations, provides legal services to thousands of disadvantaged people, and deploys the power of the law in the service of social justice.

How To Apply For A Grant

BLF now invites applications for grants for the 2026-2027 funding year. After reviewing the funding criteria described below, please email your proposal in the format specified to:

Berkeley Law Foundation
Email: blfgrants@gmail.com

PROPOSALS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 11:59 PM ON JANUARY 16, 2026

Criteria For Funding

What BLF Will Fund

BLF seeks to fund projects that include the following components: legal advocacy, community education, and/or policy change in areas affecting groups of people who generally lack access to the legal system.

Because grants are for one year only, proposed projects must be designed so that they can achieve results within that time. BLF will make grants that provide seed money for new projects or that advance the work of established, ongoing projects. While we understand that administrative or overhead costs may be a part of a project's expenses, BLF will not fund grants primarily or exclusively targeted toward administrative or overhead costs. BLF also will not fund projects where the principal purpose is to conduct research. BLF also will not fund projects that are to be hosted by governmental agencies, such as public defender offices, unless the hosting entity is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Finally, BLF will not fund projects that are to be hosted by universities or colleges, whether public or private.

Factors also considered in awarding grants include:

- Need for the proposed project
- Impact of the proposed project
- Availability or lack of other funding sources
- Level of existing legal services that address the project's identified problem
- Quality of the proposal
- Applicant's connection to the community served
- Diversity of the applicant
- Stability of sponsoring organization
- Date of graduation
- Applicant's demonstrated commitment to public service
- Qualification of the applicant

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Visit <http://www.berkeleylawfoundation.org/post-graduate-fellowships/past-fellows/> for a list of programs that BLF has previously funded. BLF encourages proposals that address needs and issues not addressed by previous BLF projects.

Earlier in our history, BLF funded individuals who established organizations that have since changed the face of legal services, e.g., the East Bay Community Law Center, the Homeless Action Center, Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, the National Center for LGBTQ Rights, and the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. BLF currently prefers funding projects that will be affiliated with an established organization. Association with a public interest group helps grantees secure supplemental funding (either financial or in-kind) to cover the full cost of the project, establish connections with the client community, and obtain supervision from more experienced attorneys. Today, BLF is open to funding either new projects supported by an existing organization, or projects advancing a particular goal of an existing organization.

Regarding International Projects:

BLF has not previously funded an international project, but if you wish to propose an international project, please address these following considerations:

- How is your proposed project a *legal* project?
- How is a U.S. legal education necessary to your project?
- How will your work on the project be supervised adequately?
- Where does the project require you to be licensed? Will you be filing lawsuits in U.S. courts or international tribunals? How long will you reside outside of the U.S.?

The Applicant

BLF seeks to fund original projects developed by individual applicants, not organizations. The applicant must have a leadership role in developing, writing and submitting the grant proposal.

In recognition of the Berkeley community's history of strong support for the fellowship, if BLF awards more than one fellowship this year, it will plan to award one of the fellowships to a Berkeley Law student or recent alum. If only one fellowship is awarded, BLF will consider a "plus" factor for Berkeley Law students and alums, to be considered in conjunction with the list of factors identified above. In recent years, BLF has awarded fellowships to students from Seton Hall Law School, American University Washington College of Law, Berkeley Law, the University of Washington School of Law, Seattle University School of Law, and Harvard Law School.

How Much BLF Will Fund

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In 2025, BLF expects to award one grant for full-time work for twelve months. The grant amount depends on available funds, however, for the last three years, our full-time grant has been approximately \$50,000, with prior years' grants totaling \$40,000 for multiple years.

The Selection Process

Committees made up of BLF directors and members initially review the proposals and then propose finalists to the Board of Directors, which selects the finalists after consulting with the BLF membership. Finalists are notified in mid-March and invited to interview with a committee of Board members. For the last several years we have interviewed all of our finalists via videoconference, and we anticipate doing the same this year.

The announcement of new grantees can be expected by early May 2026. New grantees generally begin their projects in the fall although contracts are negotiated individually to accommodate the specific needs of the grantees and their projects.

Format For Grant Proposals

Applications shall be submitted electronically. Please send a **single** email before 11:59 p.m. on Friday, January 16, 2026 to blfgrants@gmail.com, attaching the various documents described below.

The proposal shall include the following components:

1. The **cover or title page**, including the applicant's name, address, phone number, and email address, the title of the project, and the amount of funding requested.
2. A **one page summary of the application** (on an 8.5 x 11" page, one side only), giving:
 - (a) the name of the applicant
 - (b) project title
 - (c) brief description of the applicant and sponsoring organization, if any
 - (d) summary of the problem
 - (e) overall objectives
 - (f) the steps the project proposes to take to address the problem
 - (g) amount requested

NOTE: Your one-page summary should be able to stand on its own and give a complete description of you and your project.

3. A **description of the project** (4 to 6 double-spaced pages) should address the following points:
 - (a) *The need or problem the project addresses.* Include a discussion of what, if any, has already been done in the area of need and by whom, why past efforts have been inadequate, the target group, the geographical focus of the project, and other problems shared by the target group.

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- (b) *Project Goals*. Define and discuss the goals of your project, including a discussion of the intended impact of the project on the identified problem.
- (c) *Proposed Action Steps*. Discuss how the project will meet the goals identified above. Please include a timetable for the accomplishment of these steps.

- 4. **A description of the applicant** (up to 2 double spaced pages). Please describe your prior community service experience, your connection to the community that you propose to serve, how you would contribute to the diversity of the public interest legal profession, and any other reasons you are qualified to undertake your proposed project.

One of the goals of BLF is to diversify the legal profession. This portion of the application offers you the opportunity to describe how you would contribute to that goal. By “diversity” we mean individuals who are: people of color; gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender/queer; economically disadvantaged; mentally, developmentally or physically disabled; immigrants; non-native English speakers; and members of other disadvantaged groups.

- 5. **A description of the sponsoring organization** and how it can contribute to the success of the project.
- 6. **A list of the people involved** in the project, including respective roles and relevant experience.
- 7. The applicant’s **resume**.

You should also provide the following material supporting your proposal:

- 1. **One letter of support from your sponsoring organization.**
- 2. **Two letters of recommendation.** Submit letters only from those who either know your work well or who are very familiar with the proposed project. Letters from persons involved in the proposed project’s area would be particularly helpful. Do not ask persons currently serving on the BLF Board of Directors to write letters of recommendation.
- 3. **Overall Budget.** Please provide a budget, describing how you will fund your project’s expenses, including details on how you will cover salary, benefits (if any), payroll taxes and office overhead. Further details about project expenses such as travel, copying, translation, etc. should also be provided.
- 4. **Other Funding Information.** Please mention any other sources that you have approached for funding or may approach in the future. For each source of support, state whether the proposed project has a commitment from that source and/or if there are contingencies on such support. Please include a discussion of potential future sources of support. Applicants are responsible for keeping BLF informed on any updates to their funding sources that occur after applying.

You may also provide any other materials which you believe will support your proposal.

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Email Instructions

Please send your application documents in one email to blfgrants@gmail.com. Ideally, please combine the proposal and all supporting materials, in the above-listed order, in a single PDF. If you are not able to combine all of the application materials into a single PDF, you may send your proposal as a single DOC or PDF file, and then any supporting documents (including the letter of support, letters of recommendation, budget, and other funding information) may be sent in separate files attached to the same email.

If you include the supporting materials as separate documents, please use the following file naming convention: last name, first name, document type, and, if pertinent, number. For example:

González, Marc-Tizoc Proposal;
González, Marc-Tizoc Letter of Support 1;
González, Marc-Tizoc Recommendation 1;
González, Marc-Tizoc Recommendation 2;
González, Marc-Tizoc Overall Budget;
González, Marc-Tizoc Other Funding Information.

The subject of your email should include your name and the name of your project, e.g., Marc-Tizoc González, Multidimensional Social Justice Advocacy: Transformative Community Lawyering in Oakland, CA.

While ideally all application materials would be transmitted by the applicant in a single email, if necessary, a recommender may send a letter of recommendation directly to blfgrants@gmail.com.

Further Information

An example of a successful grant proposal is posted on BLF's website for review. If you have questions regarding the submission of a proposal, the criteria for funding, or related matters, please contact us at blfgrants@gmail.com.

Deadline

Your complete proposal, including all letters of support and other supporting materials, **must be received at blfgrants@gmail.com by 11:59 p.m. on Friday January 16, 2026.** *Late proposals will not be considered.*

Good luck! We look forward to reviewing your proposals.

Audrey Barron and Lisa Ells
BLF Grants Co-Chairs
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