The Berkeley Law Foundation Public Interest Fellowship
Applications for Post-Graduate Fellowships Starting in Fall 2027

The Berkeley Law Foundation (BLF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit independent of UC Berkeley Law School, works to ensure diversity in legal education and the profession. To further that mission, BLF funds one-year public interest law fellowships, and we are now accepting applications for fellowships beginning in Fall 2027. You do not need to be a Berkeley Law student or graduate to apply, and you do not need to be a recent graduate: attorneys up to five years out of law school, including those completing clerkships, are welcome.

Applications must be received electronically by **11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 12, 2027**. Finalists will be interviewed by videoconference in late March and early April 2027, and BLF will select its 2027-2028 fellow(s) by early May 2027.

Fellowship amounts depend each year on available funds; for the last four years, BLF's full-time award has been approximately $50,000.

Historically, BLF awards one fellowship per year to individuals whose public interest law work serves legally disadvantaged or politically underrepresented groups and promotes systemic change. Fellows have worked throughout the country, including New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Southern California, California's Central Valley, Florida, Washington, and Arizona. For a list of past fellows, their work, and their sponsoring organizations, visit http://www.berkeleylawfoundation.org/post-graduate-fellowships/past-fellows/.

Detailed submission instructions appear at the end of this document; please read them carefully before submitting. Please email blfgrants@gmail.com with any questions.

Sarah Williams, Marissa Ram, and Lisa Ells
BLF Grants Co-Chairs

Mission Statement

The Berkeley Law Foundation supports lawyers pursuing public interest work that expands access to justice and addresses systemic inequities affecting underserved communities.

BLF is sustained by a shared-income model: lawyers with greater earning power help fund their peers doing lower-paid public interest work. We also seek to diversify the legal profession and strengthen the pipeline of lawyers committed to public service.

Since 1976, BLF has supported generations of public interest lawyers, helped launch enduring legal organizations and new advocacy projects, strengthened ongoing work at established nonprofits, and expanded access to legal services for thousands of people.

How to Apply for a Fellowship

To apply for a 2027-2028 BLF fellowship, email your application in the format specified below to:

Berkeley Law Foundation
Email: blfgrants@gmail.com

DEADLINE: APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 11:59 P.M. ON FEBRUARY 12, 2027

Criteria for Funding

What BLF Will Fund

BLF funds projects and ongoing work that include legal advocacy, community education, and/or policy change in areas affecting groups of people who generally lack access to the legal system.

Fellowships are awarded for one year. Applicants should describe what they expect to accomplish during the fellowship year, though BLF recognizes that meaningful work often continues beyond the fellowship term. **BLF has funded fellows starting new projects as well as fellows advancing the established, ongoing work of an existing public interest organization.**

BLF will not fund: projects or ongoing work whose principal purpose is research; projects or ongoing work hosted by governmental agencies, such as public defender offices, unless the host is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit; or projects or ongoing work hosted by universities or colleges, whether public or private.

Factors considered in awarding fellowships include:

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

Visit http://www.berkeleylawfoundation.org/post-graduate-fellowships/past-fellows/ for a list of programs BLF has previously funded. We encourage applications addressing needs and issues not covered by previous BLF fellowships.

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. Today, BLF prefers funding work affiliated with an established organization, whether a new project supported by an existing organization or ongoing work advancing a particular goal of one. Affiliation helps fellows secure supplemental funding (financial or in-kind) to cover the full cost of the project, build connections with the client community, and obtain supervision from more experienced attorneys.

Regarding International Projects

BLF has not previously funded an international project or ongoing work at an organization based outside the United States. If you wish to propose one, please address the following:

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

The Applicant

BLF funds individual applicants, not organizations. Most fellows develop their projects or ongoing work in conjunction with a sponsoring organization — applicants often apply with an idea, which the organization then helps refine or reshape — but the applicant must have a leadership role in developing, writing, and submitting the application.

In conjunction with the factors listed above, BLF will consider it a “plus” if the applicant is a Berkeley Law student or alum. BLF has funded applicants from many different law schools.

How Much BLF Will Fund

In 2027, BLF expects to award one fellowship for twelve months of full-time work. The amount depends on available funds; for the last four years, the full-time award has been approximately $50,000. Award distribution is governed by a written agreement between BLF, the fellow, and the sponsoring organization.

The Application Process

Finalists are notified in late March and will be interviewed by videoconference with a committee of Board members. Interviews will take place from late March to early April 2027, and BLF will select its 2027-2028 fellow(s) by early May 2027.

Fellows generally begin work in the fall, with contracts negotiated individually to accommodate the specific needs of each fellow and their project or ongoing work.

Format for Applications

Applications must be submitted electronically. Please send a **single** email before 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 12, 2027 to blfgrants@gmail.com, attaching the documents described below.

The application must include:

1. A **cover or title page**: the applicant's name, address, phone number, and email address; and the title of the project or ongoing work.

2. A **one-page summary of the application** (8.5 x 11" page, one side only), giving:

   (a) the name of the applicant

   (b) the project or ongoing work title

   (c) a brief description of the applicant and sponsoring organization, if any

   (d) a summary of the problem

   (e) overall objectives

   (f) the steps the project or ongoing work proposes to take to address the problem

   NOTE: Your one-page summary should stand on its own as a complete description of you and your project or ongoing work.

3. A **description of the project or ongoing work** (4 to 6 double-spaced pages) addressing:

   (a) *The need or problem that the project or ongoing work addresses*, including what, if anything, has already been done in the area and by whom; why past efforts have been inadequate; the target group; the geographical focus of the project or ongoing work; and other problems shared by the target group.

   (b) *Goals*, including the project or ongoing work's intended impact on the identified problem.

   (c) *Proposed action steps* — how the project or ongoing work will meet those goals, with a timetable for accomplishing them.

4. A **description of the applicant** (up to 2 double-spaced pages): your prior community service experience, your connection to the community 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 the project or ongoing work.

One of BLF's goals is to diversify the legal profession, and this section is your opportunity to describe how you would contribute to that goal. By "diversity" we mean individuals who are: people of color; LGBTQ+; 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 or ongoing work.

6. A **list of the people involved** in the project or ongoing work, with their roles and relevant experience.

7. The applicant's **resume**.

We also require you to provide the following supporting materials:

1. **One letter of support from your sponsoring organization.**

2. **Two additional letters of recommendation.** Submit letters only from people who know your work well or are very familiar with the proposed project or ongoing work; letters from people involved in the field of the project or ongoing work are particularly helpful. Do not ask current members of the BLF Board of Directors.

3. **Additional funding from your sponsoring organization.** Include any additional funding (including benefits) that the organization has committed to you.

4. **Other funding information.** List all other fellowships or funding sources you have applied to or plan to apply to. For each, tell us the current status, including whether the funder has committed, whether any commitment is conditional, and, if a decision is still pending, the date by which you expect to receive a decision. Applicants are responsible for keeping BLF informed of any updates to their funding sources after applying.

Email Instructions

Send all application documents in one email to blfgrants@gmail.com. Ideally, combine the application and all supporting materials, in the order listed above, in a single PDF. If that is not possible, send the application as a single PDF file and attach the supporting documents (letter of support, letters of recommendation, sponsoring organization funding, and other funding information) as separate files in the same email, named by last name, first name, document type, and number if pertinent. For example:

González, Marc-Tizoc Application;
González, Marc-Tizoc Letter of Support 1;
González, Marc-Tizoc Recommendation 1;
González, Marc-Tizoc Recommendation 2;
González, Marc-Tizoc Sponsoring Organization Funding;
González, Marc-Tizoc Other Funding Information.

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

While ideally the applicant transmits all materials 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 application is posted on BLF's website for review and is linked here: https://berkeleylawfoundation.org/post-graduate-fellowships/. If you have questions about submitting an application, the criteria for funding, or related matters, contact us at blfgrants@gmail.com.

Good luck! We look forward to reviewing your applications.