



The State Bar of California

Legal Services Trust Fund Commission (LSTFC) Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grants Committee Meeting Teleconference

Open Session Minutes
Monday, December 9, 2024
12:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

Time Meeting Commenced: The LSTFC Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grants Committee meeting commenced in open session at 12:02 p.m.

Time Meeting Adjourned: 12:39 p.m.

Chair: Venetta Campbell

Committee Coordinator: Elizabeth Hom

Members Present: Komal Chokshi, Toni Hoang, Judge Michael Rhoads

Members Absent: None

Liaisons Present: Salena Copeland, LAAC

Liaisons Absent: Melanie Snider, Judicial Council

Staff Present: Christal Bundang, Shannon Crossley, Abraham Gutierrez, Colleen Seto, Mara Vejby

OPEN SESSION

ROLL CALL

The LSTFC Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grants Committee meeting was called to order by Chair Campbell. Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Campbell called for public comment, inquiring as to if there were person(s) who wished to comment on any agenda item. The following comments were provided:

1. Arati Vasan, Senior Managing Attorney, Family Violence Appellate Project (FVAP)
Ms. Vasan provided a brief background of FVAP and expressed how important the LALF grant funding was for their organization this past summer.
2. Salena Copeland, Executive Director, Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC)
Ms. Copeland expressed strong support of State Bar staff's recommendation of funding scenario two which is the most responsive to the needs of the community. She further asked the LALF committee to consider funding the final organization that is not currently recommended for funding, should any declined grant funds become available.

3. Rebecca Oyama, Clinical Director, East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC)
Ms. Oyama shared a brief background of EBCLC and expressed strong support of the LALF grant program.
4. Martin Gauto, Director of Capacity Building, Immigrant Defenders Law Center (IDLC)
Mr. Gauto expressed gratitude for LALF committee's consideration of IDLC's application and encouraged support of funding scenario two as recommended by State Bar staff.
5. Open Door Legal (ODL)
The ODL speaker provided comments in support for equitable funding for legal fellows.

1. Chair's Report

1.1 Oral Report

Chair Campbell welcomed and thanked committee members for participating in the LALF grant review process.

2. Director's Report

2.1 Oral Report

Prior to today's meeting, Program Director Elizabeth Hom notified committee members of several public comments received by email and expressed hope that the members had the opportunity to review them.

3. Staff Report

3.1 Update on Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grants Administration

Program Director Hom announced that Mara Vejby, Senior Program Analyst, will be assume the role of staff lead for the Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship (LALF) grant going forward.

3.2 Presentation on 2024 Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grant Evaluations

Presenter: Abraham Gutierrez, Program Analyst, Office of Access & Inclusion

Program Analyst Gutierrez provided an overview and the key findings from the 2024 Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship (LALF) Grants evaluations.

The 2024 LALF grantees were required to submit a final evaluation report at the end of the grant period. The evaluation covers the LALF funding period from May to September 2024. The 2024 LALF grant awards of \$752,000 provided funding for 34 organization to host 88 total fellows. Seventy-seven of these fellows were funded through the State Bar and 11 were funded through California ChangeLawyers.

Key findings from the evaluations included:

- Grantees reported that the fellows significantly increased their organizations' service capacity. The fellows handled more cases, participated in clinics, and addressed complex legal issues, enabling the organizations to reach a greater number of clients and expand their operations.
- Grantees recruited fellows with diverse backgrounds and fresh perspectives that enriched organizational practices and fostered innovative solutions.
- Grantees expressed that the fellowship cultivates future legal aid professionals by enhancing the organization's reputation among law schools and inspiring volunteers to return as staff or pro bono attorneys, thereby ensuring a lasting impact on the workforce.
- Grantees highlighted key lessons learned, emphasizing the critical role of consistent mentorship, fellows' need for practical exposure, the value of collaborative learning spaces, and the benefits of offering enrichment activities such as speaker series, court visits, and professional networking events.

4. Open Session Minutes

4.1 Approval of October 4, 2024, Open Session Minutes

RESOLVED, that the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grant Committee approves the Open Session Minutes from the October 4, 2024, meeting, as posted on the agenda.

Moved by Rhoads, seconded by Hoang.

Ayes – (4) Chokshi, Hoang, Rhoads, Campbell

Noes – (0)

Abstain – (0)

Absent – (0)

Motion carries.

5. Business

5.1 Approval of Tentative Funding Recommendations for 2025 Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grants

Presenter: Mara Vejby, Senior Program Analyst, Office of Access & Inclusion

Senior Program Analyst Vejby presented an overview and recommendations for the 2025 Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship (LALF) grant awards. Vejby shared that there were 58 applicant organizations, requesting 273 fellows for a total of \$2.68 million for the 2025 LALF grant.

Vejby presented the overall funding standards. Applicants would receive funding up to five-fellow maximum with five being the average number requested by all applicants and allows for a statewide distribution of fellows by avoiding concentrated funding in one region. Applicants would need to meet an overall score threshold of 60 percent which ensures sufficient application strength and aligns with a natural break in score distribution.

Two funding scenarios were presented. Funding scenario #1 would fund applicants up to the requested number of fellows or five-fellow maximum, whichever is lower. Funding would be distributed based on the overall application score, starting with the highest score, and continuing down the list towards 60 percent, until the available funding is depleted. This approach maximizes the competitiveness of the grant and fund 167 fellows at 53 applicant organizations. Five organizations with scores between 73.3 and 48.7 percent would not receive funding. Funding scenario #2 is a three-step method. The first step would fund applications with above average overall scores (84.7 percent or higher) for requested fellows or five-fellow maximum, whichever is lower. The second step would fund applications with above average Funding Preferences scores (66.7 percent or higher) for requested fellows or five-fellow maximum, whichever is lower. The third step would distribute remaining funds to unfunded applications with overall scores above 60 percent (from 84.6 to 63.6 percent), allocating one fellow each until either reaching the five-fellow maximum or fully funding applicant's request. This process would repeat until funds are depleted. Funding scenario #2 offers the greatest potential awards to organizations with the strongest applications, emphasizes the statutory priorities of the grant program, and ensures all qualified application benefit from the grant funding. Funding scenario #2 would fund 167 fellows at 57 applicant organizations. Only one organization, with an application score below 60 percent, would not receive funding.

Staff recommends funding scenario #2. Committee members discussed the two funding scenarios and expressed support for funding scenario #2.

RESOLVED, that the Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grants Committee recommends the Legal Services Trust Fund Executive Committee approve the tentative funding recommendations described herein as Funding Scenario #2, including Attachment B, for the 2025 Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship Grants.

Moved by Hoang, seconded by Chokshi.

Ayes – (4) Chokshi, Hoang, Rhoads, Campbell

Noes – (0)

Abstain – (0)

Absent – (0)

Motion carries.

ADJOURNMENT