

# Eviction Tsunami Grant Background

## BACKGROUND

To address the impending housing crisis, the California Access to Justice Commission is excited to announce that The California Endowment has provided funding to strengthen the legal aid community's capacity to represent and assist low-income BIPOC families and individuals in jeopardy of losing their housing because of back-rent due to COVID-19. It is anticipated that these grant funds will be available by October 1 to help legal aid programs jump start their capacity to assist clients in maintaining their housing and preventing homelessness.

## GRANT FUNDS

- \$637,500 is available to fund grants ranging from \$65,000 to \$125,000.
- The grant period is October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022.

## ELIGIBILITY

- Grants are available to applicants operating in the following counties: Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, Sacramento, and the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Available to IOLTA-funded and non-IOLTA funded 501(c)(3) and other organizations that provide legal services. (See FAQs below.)
- Applicant should generally assist clients in BIPOC communities living at or below 200% FPL who face a disproportionate impact from the resumption of evictions in California.
- Applicant must collaborate with tenant rights or other community-based groups who are part of, and can demonstrate a connection to, a broader power building ecosystem.
- Special consideration will go to programs that could not otherwise fund this urgent work.

## GRANT GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. Increased capacity among legal aid organizations in the counties of Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, Sacramento, and the San Francisco Bay Area to respond to the growing demand from low-income BIPOC families and individuals for assistance related to housing matters exacerbated by COVID.

- Grants awarded to legal aid organizations for services focused on low-income BIPOC communities most impacted by COVID; collaboration with community-based organizations including tenant's rights groups focused on leadership development and ecosystem shifts that will rebalance the relationships between low-income BIPOC communities and the power structure; innovative ways of delivering services to ensure better client outcomes given the ongoing access barriers during COVID; and commitment to racial equity.
- Legal aid organizations have expanded infrastructure to work with community-based partners and use this expanded capacity to effectively jump start the use of anticipated additional state funding to support legal aid housing.

2. Increased capacity among tenants in low-income BIPOC communities to: (1) navigate and access federal and state resources for rent relief; and, (2) achieve better outcomes through settlement or at trial, e.g., court record of eviction filing avoided, rent waiver or other cost reduction, greater time to move out to find transitional or other housing and thereby avoid homelessness

- People in low-income BIPOC communities receive information and are empowered to successfully complete paperwork for rent relief, resulting in rent relief awards and reducing evictions in low-income communities.
- People in low-income BIPOC communities receive advice and coaching about eviction and/or back rent proceedings and are empowered to use this advice to make the best decisions for their circumstances.
- People in BIPOC and other low-income communities are represented by legal counsel and get better outcomes through settlement or in court.
- Innovations which increase access are tested e.g., with respect to remote court access, providing community-based remote hearing sites, or loaning technology to court users.

3. Enhanced collaboration between legal aid organizations and community-based organizations, including but not limited to tenant rights organizations, that are working to keep people in housing.

- Legal aid and low-income BIPOC community organizations will have strengthened relationships and understanding of each of their relative strengths and connections to the work to foster effective client referrals.
- Legal aid and community organizations will improve client outcomes through better outreach and connectivity of BIPOC communities to services.
- Successful partnerships through these grants will lead to further collaborations in the future.
- Legal aid and community-based organizations will increase their individual capacities because of cross-fertilization of best practices, joint trainings, and implementation of coordinated strategies.

## **LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY COMPONENT**

As a leadership and capacity-building component, all recipients (including grant partners) will commit to participating in at least two mandatory webinars during the grant period, to share best practices and learnings, and/or receive training based on needs communicated by recipients.

## **APPLICANT TIPS**

- Funding can support legal workers, social workers, attorneys, technology, remote housing clinics, law students, and other relevant staff members.
- In recognition that collaboration and partnerships often need financial support, applicants can, and are encouraged, to include sub-grants to partners. (An optional template for sub-grant agreements will be provided to grant recipients.)
- Selection will be based on criteria such as:
  - Demonstrated ability to support Grant Goals and Objectives stated above
  - Service is to low-income/underserved BIPOC communities in areas of great need
  - Grantee's readiness to provide services on or close to October 1st
  - Extent to which the funding supports programs that otherwise do not have funding for this work
  - Any other factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the grant program as a whole, e.g., innovation, replicability, sustainability, evaluation

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Q1: Can funds be used to provide commercial eviction defense for BIPOC and low-income small business owners?

A: While we recognize this is a critical issue, the California Endowment funds are specifically tied to anticipated housing evictions after the moratorium against evictions is lifted in California. These grant funds are to strengthen the legal aid capacity to assist low-income people in California who are in immediate jeopardy of losing their housing, and do not extend to commercial evictions.

Q2: Can funds be used to help secure veterans benefits?

A: While we recognize that access to any benefits, including veteran benefits, will provide low-income persons with needed resources to stay in their homes, these grant funds are specifically tied to housing legal services, including to help tenants to access federal and state dollars available to pay their back rent. Of course, helping low income veterans in danger of losing their homes due to lifting of the eviction moratorium would be permissible.

Q3: Which counties are included in the San Francisco Bay Area?

A: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma.

Q4: Can grants be spent down before the grant period concludes?

A: Yes. The grant period is October 1, 2021 to September 30, 2022 and funds may be spent down before September 30, 2022.

Q5: Are entities other than 501(c)(3) organizations eligible for grant funds?

A: Yes. Eligible entities include: (a) a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code (“the Code”) that is not a private foundation as defined in Section 509(a) of the Code, (b) a governmental unit referred to in Section 170(c)(1) of the Code, or (c) a college or university that is an agency or instrumentality of a government or political subdivision of a government, or owned or operated by the same, within the meaning of Section 511(a)(2)(B) of the Code.