

WSBA Powerful Communities Projects

To deliver on its mission to serve the public and members of the Bar, ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and champion justice, the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) is seeking organizations to partner on a Powerful Communities Project, to be funded with a grant from the Washington State Bar Foundation. In 2021, the Powerful Communities Project will be offering **nine \$3,000** grants.

These partnerships further the following WSBA purposes expressed in General Rule 12.2(a):

- Promote an effective legal system, accessible to all (GR 12.2(a)(2)).
- Provide services to its members and the public (GR 12.2(a)(3)).

These partnerships fall within the following activities specifically authorized by General Rule 12.2(b):

- Encourage public service by members and support programs providing legal services to those in need (GR 12.2(b)(18)).
- Maintain and foster programs of public information and education about the law and the legal system (GR 12.2(b)(19)).

Background

As a member of the [Alliance for Equal Justice](#), the WSBA is working toward implementing the [State Plan](#) for the Coordinated Delivery of Civil Legal Aid to Low-Income People (“State Plan”), which guides the Alliance’s collective efforts to expand access to justice and eliminate barriers that perpetuate poverty and deny justice. Goal Three of the State Plan focuses on ensuring that low-income members of underserved and underrepresented communities get legal assistance regardless of geographic and/or demographic circumstances.

By partnering on a Powerful Communities Project, the WSBA intends to support organizations implementing strategies of Goal Three by helping them jumpstart new community-based projects and/or expand existing projects that benefit and provide services to low-income people.

Examples of underserved and underrepresented communities for the purposes of *Powerful Communities Projects* include people who experience poverty **and** are:

- People with disabilities
- People experiencing homelessness
- Juveniles and young adults (15-21 years old), including people in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems.
- Veterans and military service members

- Incarcerated/formerly incarcerated persons, people in the criminal legal system, and people with criminal records and/or Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs)
- Immigrants of any status
- LGBTQIA+ identifying persons
- Black, Indigenous, and/or Persons of Color (BIPOC)
- People living in rural regions, especially areas with little to no access to local pro bono, free, or other affordable legal services
- Survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual violence

Vision for Success

Our vision of success for the *Powerful Communities Projects* is that by collaborating with organizations who are working with underserved and underrepresented communities:

- More people who experience poverty and injustice will have equitable access to free or affordable, quality legal services;
- Collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations serving underrepresented communities will be created or deepened; and
- More pro bono opportunities for bar members to serve underserved and underrepresented communities.

Eligibility

We encourage applicants to consider collaborating on (a) joint proposal(s). WSBA Public Service staff can assist interested applicants to connect with each other to explore collaboration. The following entities or organizations are invited to apply:

- Washington State Minority Bar Associations ([MBAs](#));
- Legal nonprofits, including Qualified Legal Service Providers ([QLSPs](#)); and
- Organizations directly serving the above-mentioned communities may apply with a fiscal sponsor.

Selection Criteria and Priorities

Although application materials will be reviewed holistically, this year, top priority will be given to proposals that:

- Uplift, center, and compensate members from marginalized communities who share their expertise or perspectives based on their lived experience through assisting with program development, attending listening sessions, workshops or trainings, providing facilitation, etc.

Additional priorities include:

- Advance Goal Three of the [State Plan](#) which aims to ensure that low income members of underserved and underrepresented communities get legal assistance regardless of geographic and/or demographic circumstances.

- Involve developing or deepening partnerships with community organizations based in a geographic area(s) that do not have access to locally-based legal services.
- Involve developing or deepening partnerships with community organizations who are led by or work directly with underrepresented or underserved communities.
- Anticipate a sustainable, longer term, and ongoing relationship with an underrepresented or underserved community.
- Create a collaboration between two or more community-based organizations that are serving and centering client communities.
- Help smaller organizations who may not have access to funding sources.

Examples of Proposal Ideas

We recognize that the pandemic and need for social distancing has affected many service delivery models. We encourage applicants to explore creative ways to engage directly with the communities most disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

The following list is not exhaustive and serves only as inspiration:

- Convening underrepresented communities and organizations in underserved geographic areas to identify the legal needs of that community in order to organize targeted legal assistance.
- Funding staff or volunteer time to encourage relationship development with community-based organizations to integrate legal information in spaces where community members already access information and resources.
- Trainings for community-based organizations and agencies on how to issue spot legal matters and make appropriate legal referrals.
- Development of technology, which increases and expands the reach of pro bono legal assistance.
- Legal advice clinics where volunteers provide legal information, advice and/or limited or extensive services such as legal research, forms preparation, drafting correspondence, brief communication with opposing party, etc.
- “Know Your Rights” workshops and similar legal information sessions.
- Financial support for ongoing work that enables organizations to expand or improve legal information or assistance services.

Examples of Projects Previously Awarded

The following list is intended to serve as inspiration:

- The Olympia Free Clinic used funds to purchase technology, office supplies, and outreach materials to help launch their free, monthly legal clinic for trans and nonbinary community members in Thurston County as part of the Olympia Free Clinic’s Transgender and Nonbinary Gender Health Clinic. In response to the pandemic, the Olympia Free Clinic has made their legal clinic more remote-friendly, allowing for greater outreach and service to rural communities outside of Thurston County.

- The Unemployment Law Project used funds to translate their COVID-19 responsive, unemployment benefits information into numerous languages, including Spanish, Somali, Vietnamese, and Korean.
- The Latina/o Bar Association of Washington used grant funds to transition their legal clinic into a virtual format, allow the organization and its volunteer attorneys to provide legal advice to clients across Washington, including underserved, rural communities.

Partnership Benefits and Expectations

By partnering with the WSBA on a *Powerful Communities Project*, the WSBA expects the contracting organization to take responsibility for developing and implementing their *Powerful Communities Project*. As a partner to the *Powerful Communities Project*, the WSBA can provide \$3000 grants from the Washington State Bar Foundation for operation of the contracted project. Funds can be used for reasonable and necessary costs (excluding alcohol), that supports the goals and mission of the submitted project. Applicants that may have additional questions or seek guidance on funding related issues are encouraged to contact Laura Sanford at LauraS@wsba.org.

Proposal Requirements

- Malpractice insurance coverage for volunteers that are providing legal advice or brief services (partnering with another organization to provide insurance coverage is acceptable and encouraged).
- Secure an accessible venue location if the project involves any in-person activity when it's safe to do so.
- Organizations will be required to contract with the WSBA to develop and implement their *Powerful Communities Project*.
- Organizations will be required to submit a report detailing outcomes and how funds were used. Recipients may be asked to provide formal or informal reports to WSBA Board of Governors, the Washington State Bar Foundation, future potential *Powerful Communities Project* partners, or other community-based organizations.
- Signing a written contract with WSBA, including your agreement that WSBA may audit your use of the funds for the intended purpose.
- Funds must be used by September 30, 2021.
- Any unused portion of the funds not used by September 30, 2021, must be returned to WSBA.
- Report must be completed by October 29, 2021.

Proposal Review Process

A Proposal Review Committee will include representation from the Washington State Bar Foundation, the WSBA's Equity and Justice Team, and Alliance for Equal Justice partners in various geographic areas of the state, as well as others.

Fund Disbursement

For partners that are unable to initiate projects without receipt of funds may request funds up front full grant amount. If any portion of funds is unused by **September 30, 2021**, they must be returned to

WSBA. Entities that do not require up front funding must submit invoices for reimbursement by **October 15, 2021**.

All partners must submit W-9s with their request for funds or invoices.

Timeline

- Application will go live on Monday, December 7, 2020.
- Proposals are due by Monday, January 11, 2021.
- Partners will be notified by email by Monday, January 25, 2021.
- Funds **must** be used by Thursday, September 30, 2021.
- Invoices and W-9s must be submitted by Friday, October 15, 2021.
- Reports must be completed and submitted by Friday, October 29, 2021.

[Online application here.](#)

Please contact Laura Sanford with any questions or concerns by email at LauraS@wsba.org.