

# Letter of Interest in Applying for MLSC New Applicant Pilot Grant

To be considered for FY26 funding, submit the information described below by 11:59 pm on Feb. 7, 2025.

## Background information for new applicants

The mission of MLSC is to ensure low-income Marylanders have access to stable, efficient and effective civil legal assistance through the distribution of funds to nonprofit legal services organizations. All MLSC grantees must be qualified under § 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The path to requesting an MLSC Operating Grant starts with applying to the New Applicant Pilot Grant Program.

The New Applicant Pilot provides one-time funding only and is envisioned as a two-year pilot program. MLSC provides approved funding for the first year, and absent serious concerns or grantee non-compliance, hopes to provide a second year of funding in the same amount, to the extent it is able. If the board projects a general operating increase percentage, the pilot grantee may request up to that amount, but not more. It is hoped that successful results within two years could lead to, and serve as, part of a later successful application for Operating funding, but the pilot grant is non-renewable. Participants will provide all the same reports as regular Operating grantees, including completing the regular grant application for year two. At the end of two years, participants may apply for regular Operating funding, and will be evaluated afresh, as a new applicant. Participants will report all cases as usual, but non-MLSC brief legal advice cases will not be considered in deciding future funding.

## How's your fit?

MLSC board and staff members consider the following factors for the New Applicant Pilot Grant Program.

- **Uneven services:** If applicant provides a new type of service, can they provide it statewide?
- **Spreading thin:** Is applicant providing a service that other grantees cannot or will not provide?
- **Fresh air:** Does applicant appear to be providing a needed service in a new or more efficient way, or at a higher service level?
- **Community-building:** How deep are applicant's connections to other Maryland institutions and Maryland lawyers, including pro bono lawyers?
- **Organizational track record:** MLSC tends to fund established, not new, programs.
- **Client Impact:** MLSC prefer to fund service models that do not charge clients.

## Next steps - Providing a LOI

Please provide a single Word or PDF document responding to the following items. Responses must be numbered as below.

### Program Basics

1. Name of Organization and web link to Maryland SDAT record.
2. IRS Determination Letter establishing proof of non-profit status.

### Community Need

3. What is your overall organizational mission statement?
4. Which organizations in the community do work similar or related to your work? (Who are your partners, and who are your peers?)
5. Which [MLSC-funded organizations](#) do you partner with on these issues?

### Program Description – service delivery

6. List and provide a brief description of the legal services your organization provides, with years in operation of each.
7. How many civil legal services cases did your program open, **and** how many did it close in the prior year?
  - a. In how many of the **closed** cases was your client MLSC eligible? ([See eligibility guidelines.](#))

- b. Please break out your **closed** cases by Maryland county.
  - c. Please break out your **closed** cases by legal issue.
  - d. Please break out your **closed** cases by level of service (Brief Legal Advice-less than 30 minutes; Full Representation; or Other). If Other, please describe.
8. Provide a list of legal services staff names, titles, tenure with the organization, and years of practice.

**Program Description – goals**

9. How would you use a \$50,000 operating grant?

**Financial Strength**

10. Provide your organizational budget for the current fiscal year

**Please attach a copy of your organization’s most recent financial audit, in PDF format.**

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MLSC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

I understand that MLSC funding may only be used for civil legal representation.

I understand that MLSC funding may only be used for income eligible clients.

I understand that MLSC funding may not be used for:

- (1) to provide legal assistance for a fee-generating case;
- (2) to provide legal assistance for the defense of a criminal prosecution;
- (3) to provide legal assistance in a civil action to a person who has been convicted of a criminal charge if the civil

action:

(i) arises out of an alleged act or failure to act; and

(ii) is brought against an official of the court or a law enforcement official to challenge the validity of the criminal conviction;

(4) to influence the issuance, amendment, or revocation of an executive order or similar promulgation by a federal, State, or local unit, or to influence the passage or defeat of legislation by the United States Congress, or by a State or local legislative body, or a State proposal by referendum or petition;

(5) to contribute to or be made available to a political party or association or the campaign of a candidate for public or party office; or

(6) to provide representation in a class action suit.

**I have read the above and understand the funding limitations for MLSC grants.**

Sign here – name, title, date: \_\_\_\_\_

**I further understand that any organization seeking new grant funding must attend or view the recording of MLSC’s January 30, 2025 [FY26 Grantee Webinar](#).**

Sign here – name, title, date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Submission**

Please submit this document; your LOI; and your organization’s most recent financial audit to [grants@mlsc.org](mailto:grants@mlsc.org) on or before February 7, 2025.