



NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS AND REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

FY25 Massachusetts Access to Counsel Pilot Project

I. INTRODUCTION

This overview is intended to assist applicants with the RFP process and introduce the focus of the Access to Counsel Pilot Project (ATCP). Please read this RFP carefully to determine whether your organization is eligible. All funding decisions are made based on the Evaluation Criteria outlined below.

The Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation has received funding to establish an Access to Counsel Pilot Project in Massachusetts to increase access to full legal representation to low-income tenants and low-income owner occupants in eviction proceedings in Massachusetts. MLAC is accepting proposals for funding in FY25. This is a competitive grant opportunity for non-profit, legal aid organizations to provide free legal assistance and full representation to eligible individuals in covered proceedings. The ATCP will provide legal assistance statewide to low-income tenants and low-income owner occupants who are at 125% or below the federal poverty level in eviction cases.

KEY DATES

Request for Proposals FY25 Massachusetts Access to Counsel Pilot Project	
Grant Period: December 2024 – June 2025	
RFP Available Online	October 24, 2024
Intent to Apply	By November 8, 2024
Proposal Submission Deadline	November 12, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.
Announcement of Grant Awards	December 2024

II. OVERVIEW

MLAC is pleased to announce the availability of funds to Massachusetts non-profit legal aid organizations to increase access to legal representation to low-income tenants and low-income owner occupants in eviction proceedings statewide in Massachusetts. Funds awarded to organizations selected will be utilized to provide full representation in evictions. Funding is intended to support full representations in evictions only, not limited representation or advice and counsel. The ATCP will have three areas of focus:

1. Represent tenants with vouchers facing eviction that could cause the termination of their voucher.

2. Represent tenants facing eviction living in a property managed by a housing authority or in a particular housing authority.
3. Represent tenants facing eviction by particularly problematic private landlords owning a large number of units.

III. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for ATCP funding:

- Organizations must qualify as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code that is a “Public Charity” as described by Section 509(a)(1) or (2) of the Code.
- Must be a non-profit legal aid organization.
- Be in good standing with both MLAC and the State of Massachusetts, have not been debarred by the federal government, State of Massachusetts, or any local government.
- Have a demonstrated commitment to homelessness prevention and housing stability.
- Have a minimum of five (5) years’ experience as a legal services provider in providing full scope legal representation to low-income tenants or owner occupants in eviction proceedings.
- Have substantial expertise in housing law and landlord/tenant law and substantial experience furnishing free legal assistance to low-income people and have a demonstrated track record of serving the low-income community.
- Demonstrated capacity to provide services in multiple languages to ensure equitable access to those who are limited or non-English proficient.
- Demonstrated capacity to provide robust data as required by funding, including but not limited to demographics, income, outputs, outcomes, cases opened, and cases closed.

IV. INTENT TO APPLY

1. Organizations are **required** to submit an **Intent to Apply** for ATCP funding by 11/08/2024 to access the application materials.
2. Submit an email to grantsupport@mlac.org with the organization name, address, and name/email for the primary contact for the funding application. The subject line should read “Intent to Apply for ATCP Funding”.
3. In response, organizations will receive an email providing access to the grant application and budget forms. These emails will be sent out on a rolling basis beginning on or about 10/29/24.
4. MLAC will continue to respond to **Intent to Apply** communications until 5:00 pm on 11/8/2024.
5. Alternative formats for submission of materials for persons with disabilities will be available upon request.

V. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Organizations submitting proposals will be asked to respond to the following:

1. **Organizational Overview** – Provide a description of your organization’s mission and core work. (300-word limit)
2. **Organizational Experience and Capacity** - Provide a brief description of the work your organization does to provide legal aid and other services provided for clients facing or experiencing eviction. How has your organization addressed organizational capacity and delivery of service to clients who have received an eviction notice or threat of an eviction and performance of other legal assistance for housing-related issues in the most recent year? (300-word limit)
3. **Proposal Description:** Funding will be available for up to three areas of focus as described in the introduction. Specify which areas of focus do you plan to serve. Provide an overall description of your

proposed work and desired impact. What are the key, immediate and long-term outcomes your organization aspires to achieve to benefit clients served? How would your organization propose to deliver services to eligible clients who have received an eviction notice or threat of an eviction? (600-word limit)

- **Geographic Service Area:** Please describe the geographic area your proposed services will cover. (200-word limit)
- **Description of Client Need:** State the unmet need for services in the areas of eviction you plan to address. (300-word limit)
- **Client Eligibility:** Describe how the organization would identify clients and verify tenant and landlord eligibility to participate in the program. (300-word limit)
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Describe your data collection and reporting strategies and capacities. (300-word limit)
- **COI:** Describe how the organization would handle any potential conflicts of interest, including all conflicts involving current, former, and organizational clients. (200-word limit)

4. **Questions Regarding the RFP:** All questions pertaining to this RFP are required to be made in writing and be emailed to Wendy Valentine at wvalentine@mlac.org. Respondents with a question related to this RFP are requested to cite the page number and section to which the inquiry refers.

5. **Required Documents:** If an organization is selected as a recipient of ATCP funding, the following documents will need to be uploaded as part of the contracting process to verify eligibility for ATCP funding. Award of funding is contingent on meeting all eligibility requirements. Do not submit these materials as part of the initial grant application process:

- Most recent IRS Form 990
- Organizational Chart
- List of Current Board of Directors and professional affiliations
- Detailed Proposal Budget – a template will be provided
- Organizational Budgets for the Last, Current, and Next Fiscal Years
- Most recent Audited Financial Statements
- Documentation of tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code

VI. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grantees are expected to submit quarterly reports and a final report on the grant in accordance with the reporting schedule and specific guidelines provided in advance of the reporting due dates. Reports shall include updated financials, a brief progress summary of programmatic goals, and case data collection.

Please Note: MLAC’s case data collection reporting requirements (including case narratives) will include all eviction cases opened during the grant period with funding by the ATCP. Grantees will be required to provide case record level data including a record for every ATCP case with fields to be determined by LAC sufficient to allow it to analyze the data and report matters such as:

- General case information
- Cases open at the start of the grant period, and cases opened and closed during the grant period
- Specific case-type information
- Client information and demographics; and
- Closed case information including the level of service provided and outcomes
- All other data as may be required by the grant.

VII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Grant proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria, as well as criteria in Section III and V above:

- The extent to which the overall response addresses the goals/objectives of the ATCP.
- Ability to address the funds goals in filling unmet needs.
- Respondents established track record and demonstrated expertise in providing the specified type of legal services they are proposing to provide.
- Clarity of program description and program activities, including steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes.
- Organizational capacity to implement the program – including staffing, leadership, operational and fiscal management, including language access services.
- Meaningful benchmarks and indicators to measure outputs, outcomes, and progress.

VIII. AWARD INFORMATION

The award period is through June 30, 2025. An average range of \$100,000 - \$300,000 per award is expected to be distributed during this FY25 grantmaking cycle. Full representation for purposes of this grant will include language access services for clients including translation and interpretation. Up to \$10,000 per award may be budgeted for community outreach and staffing recruitment. Funding will be provided on a cost reimbursement basis and monthly invoices will be submitted by grantees.

IX. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A review committee will evaluate all requests for proposals. In addition, applicants may receive a telephone call and/or other types of communication from MLAC staff as part of the proposal review process.

X. CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with this RFP, questions should be directed to Wendy Valentine, MLAC's Grants Director at wvalentine@mlac.org.