

Connecticut Bar Foundation

Connecticut Right to Counsel Program Evaluation REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

SUMMARY

Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, approximately 20,000 evictions were filed in Connecticut courts annually. On average, 32% of Connecticut tenants facing court execution of an eviction do not file or make an appearance in court and only 7-8% of tenants appearing in court on an eviction matter were represented by an attorney. During the 2021 legislative session, the Connecticut General Assembly enacted [Public Act 21-34](#), establishing one of the first in the nation, statewide right to counsel programs for the purpose of providing eligible tenants, lessees and occupants who are at risk of eviction with access to legal representation at no cost, for matters initiated on or after July 1, 2021. To implement the right to counsel program, an "administering entity" will fund legal aid organizations ("designated organizations") to provide legal representation to eligible individuals across the state through the Connecticut Right to Counsel program (CT-RTC). The CBF is submitting a proposal to the Connecticut Judicial Branch to be designated as the administering entity of CT-RTC. It is anticipated that an entity will be designated by October 1, 2021.

As the "administering entity" of CT-RTC, the Connecticut Bar Foundation (CBF) would oversee the administration of grants to legal aid organizations for the provision of legal representation to covered individuals and would be mandated to determine, in consultation with a Right to Counsel Advisory Working Group and the Designated Organizations, how to phase in the right to counsel program based on the following factors:

- The prioritization of certain groups of individuals by income, zip codes, census tracts or other priority criteria developed in consultation with the designated organizations and the working group;
- the availability of program funding;
- the number of trained legal services attorneys available to provide legal representation; and
- the scope of the need for legal representation.

The CBF is collaborating with stakeholders to develop an implementation plan that addresses program structure and operations, outcome measurements, support services, community outreach and training procedures. The Working Group, chaired by the Commissioner of Housing, will provide guidance to support the implementation of CT-RTC. In addition, the CBF will be collaborating with representatives from the public and private sectors including philanthropy, local government, nonprofits, etc.

The Connecticut Bar Foundation is accepting proposals from organizations or individual(s) to conduct an evaluation of CT-RTC. The CBF is interested in measuring and reporting on quantitative and qualitative housing outcomes, housing stability, and well-being of tenants who receive legal representation in eviction proceedings compared to tenants who do not. Because evictions disproportionately impact black and brown families, especially African American women and single-headed households with children, CBF is looking for a firm or individual(s) with a demonstrated ability to work within marginalized communities. All activities and deliverables including the evaluation design, instruments, data collection, analysis, and reporting are expected to be framed through this lens.

The selected organization or individual(s) will work with the CBF and Designated Organization(s) to (1) Technical Assistance: provide technical assistance during the development and implementation of the program based on lessons gleaned from RTC implemented efforts in other jurisdictions to maximize the value of the evaluation process, (2) Process Evaluation: to identify and implement opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness for CT-RTC, over the initial two (2) year period, and (3) Outcomes Evaluation: to study, evaluate, and report on the program's effectiveness in:

- Preventing evictions;
- Reducing the impact of evictions;
- Reducing the need for other interventions and supports;
- Achieving social return on investment;
- Achieving the program purpose identified in the enacting legislation;
- Identifying and implementing opportunities for increased program efficacy and/or efficiency.

The selected consultant must welcome participation from the Connecticut Bar Foundation and legal aid staff throughout the project. Feedback and flexibility on deliverables, the approach to the evaluation, among other areas, are anticipated in a team-oriented evaluation. The CT-RTC program will require consistent collaboration between legal aid funders, providers, and evaluators as well as community-based partners.

(See Appendix for organizational backgrounds of CBF and the Connecticut legal aid system.)

DELIVERABLES

By November 15, 2021, the Evaluator will develop and share with Connecticut Bar Foundation and Designated Organizations a proposed package of outcomes to be measured and data that will inform those outcomes. This shall include data the Designated Organizations will be required to track and share with the Evaluator and CBF as part of the evaluative process, as well as data the Evaluator will gather from other sources, including publicly available information and information that will require data-sharing agreements.

At regular periodic intervals established with the Connecticut Bar Foundation and in consultation with the Designated Organizations, the Evaluator will provide a dashboard of indicators based on data collected to date and an analysis of trends measured against program goals to inform the iterative implementation and evaluation processes.

The following deliverables should be provided to the CBF in the form of a full report, executive summary, and deployable white papers or dashboards for ease of use by Connecticut Bar Foundation and legal aid field staff in the first instance, and ultimately for reporting to the RTC Advisory Working Group, Connecticut General Assembly, and Judicial Department.

After the first year of the program, the Evaluator will provide CBF with an interim evaluation that address the following:

- An evaluation of challenges and successes in implementation to inform efforts to improve the services delivered. This should include personal stories and qualitative information directly from clients;
- Significant findings based on identified outcomes; and
- The following information, required to be reported pursuant to Public Act 21-34 annually, beginning January 1, 2023:
 - (1) The number of covered individuals provided legal representation pursuant to this section;
 - (2) The extent of legal representation provided;
 - (3) Any outcomes achieved, such as the rates of tenant representation, tenant retention of housing or other appropriate outcome measures; and
 - (4) The engagement and education of tenants under the program

At the conclusion of the second year of the program, the Evaluator will provide CBF with a final evaluation addressing the following:

- An analysis of the data and key research findings;
- Significant outcomes of the CT-RTC program, including a social return on investment analysis;
- Outputs and outcomes information required pursuant to Public Act 21-34;
- Recommendations for future process and outcomes indicators at the program and participant levels;
- Challenges of and strategic considerations for future implementation to inform changes to the delivery of services to improve outcomes;
- Three – five client narratives or vignettes regarding successes and challenges of CT-RTC.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES/CONTENT

Maximum proposal length, including title page, cover letter, proposal, qualifications, and budget, should not exceed 12 pages, although shorter proposals are welcome. Please use fonts no smaller than 12 point. A lens of race, diversity, equity, and inclusion is critical to successful evaluative work for CT-RTC. If a team of collaborators employed by different agencies, organizations, or institutions submit a collaborative proposal, a lead organization or individual must be identified.

Proposals should address the following:

- **Consultant Profile**
 - Names, qualifications, education, and experience of person(s) assigned to the project
 - Individual/organization experience and types of clients and projects
 - Any other vendor(s) or collaborator(s) the Evaluator intends to engage to assist with any portion of the planning or evaluation process – including the vendor/collaborator's specific role and/or service to be provided
- **Process**
 - Describe the process proposed for this project
 - Address how the Evaluator will collaborate with the CBF and legal aid to identify areas for increased effectiveness and/or efficiency and to inform an iterative implementation of the program
 - Describe how the Evaluator addresses equity concerns in their approach to program evaluation including: (1) Unconscious/implicit bias, (2) Cultural responsiveness, and (3) Power dynamics within communities and groups.
 - Address how collaboration with other identified or proposed researchers will inform the process and final product(s)
 - Provide at least one example deliverable (e.g. final report, white paper, dashboard, etc.) provided to a previous client, preferably on a similar project.
- **Experience**
 - Description of relevant evaluation experience, especially involving:
 - working with non-profit organizations that serve low-income communities
 - return on investment analysis
 - the delivery of legal aid services or evaluation of right to counsel initiatives
 - process evaluation that informs the iterative implementation of a program
 - ongoing collaboration with a funder and/or service delivery organizations
 - preparation and reporting of findings for the purpose of informing policymakers and influencing policy
 - engagement of low-income individuals to determine and analyze outcomes
 - data-sharing agreements
 - Description of comparable work done by you or by others which can serve as models for the project
 - Names and contact information for three (3) references, preferably other legal aid funders or providers or other housing stability or related nonprofit organizations.
- **Timeline**
 - An anticipated two (2) year timeline with identified benchmarks and deliverables, noting any important assumptions about workflow given the iterative nature of the program implementation.
- **Product**
 - A description of the product(s) Connecticut Bar Foundation will have at the end of the process.

SELECTION TIMELINE

1. Proposals are due by midnight (Eastern Time) on Friday, August 27, 2021.
2. Proposals will be evaluated, and finalists selected on or around September 10, 2021.
3. Finalists will be interviewed and with an anticipated selection by September 30, 2021.
4. The project will begin by October 15, 2021 and conclude by April 1, 2024.

EVALUATION BUDGET

Provide a budget that is all-inclusive (covering labor, expenses, travel, fees, overhead, and administration), including hourly rates for each member of the team, estimated hours for those team members assigned, and an estimated total cost for the entire project, along with any variables that may influence total costs.

Total costs for CT-RTC evaluation should not exceed \$500,000.

The Connecticut Bar Foundation is currently identifying funding for the evaluation and the final budget will be dependent on the amount of funding secured. Respondents are encouraged to highlight any assumptions made in preparing the proposed evaluation approach – including evaluation elements that could be scaled up or down – and identify any budget implications related to these assumptions.

Respondents are also encouraged to identify any potential funding partner(s) the respondent or a collaborator would pursue (independently or in collaboration with CBF) to fund any portion of the proposed evaluation, specifying any aspects of the evaluation budget (or extra-budgeted expenses) the respondent or a collaborator would pursue funding for.

INQUIRIES

Please direct questions regarding the RFP and submission to:

Natalie Wagner, Executive Director
Connecticut Bar Foundation

RTCEvictionDefense@ctbarfdn.org (preferred) or 860-722-2494

APPENDIX

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUNDS

Connecticut Bar Foundation

The CBF is a nonprofit organization, exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Founded in 1952, its mission is to further the rule of law and assist in efforts to improve the administration of justice in Connecticut. This mission is based on the fundamental premise that the rule of law is essential to an orderly and just society and must be available to all, regardless of power or resources. The Foundation serves this mission in part by working to secure and administer a reliable and sufficient flow of funds to support legal services and access to justice for persons of limited means. The Foundation also serves its mission by sponsoring programs that address matters concerning the legal profession, the administration of justice and the role of law in society.

The CBF is the primary funder of legal aid in the state of Connecticut, as the administrator of several grant programs legislatively enacted for this purpose. The CBF currently administers the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program which was established by the Connecticut Legislature in 1984 to fund the delivery of legal services to the poor. The CBF was designated by the judges of the Superior Court to administer the program. As the designated administering entity of the IOLTA program, the CBF also administers the Court Fees Grant-in-Aid (CFGIA) and Judicial Branch Grant-in-Aid (JBGIA) programs.

The CBF is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Connecticut Legal Aid System

Legal aid services in Connecticut are delivered by a system of provider organizations. The three largest organizations collectively provide an array of legal services to low-income residents statewide in collaboration with a partner organization that provides intake, referral, and short advice. A collection of smaller organizations additionally provide specialized services to targeted populations on a statewide basis.

Legal aid's activities include:

- **Legal Assistance**
Legal aid advises and represents clients in administrative hearings, negotiations, and litigation in a wide variety of matters including consumer rights, disability, domestic violence, education, employment, family law, health, housing, immigration, public benefits, and utilities. Legal aid partner with other service providers and community organization to ensure that the outcomes achieved through legal representation have a long-lasting impact on families.

- Community Education and Outreach

Legal aid attorneys are engaged in the community through proactive, preventative neighborhood-based work, providing people with the tools they need to handle, avoid, or resolve legal problems on their own, as well as to know when to contact legal aid or another service provider for assistance.

- Advocacy

Legal aid works to address underlying societal inequities by advocating for changes in local, state, and national policies and regulations. In addition, legal aid attorneys play leadership roles in statewide and national policy groups and participate in community coalitions and partnerships to improve shelter, safety, and economic security for low-income individuals, families, and communities.