

## **Montana Justice Foundation Grant Program Policy**

I. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Montana Justice Foundation (MJF) Grant Program is to provide funding to qualified non-profit organizations committed to one or more of the charitable objectives of the MJF including:

- (a) supporting and encouraging the availability, accessibility, and quality of legal services, especially services to the vulnerable and underserved;
- (b) increasing public understanding of the law and the legal system through education;
- (c) promoting the effective administration of justice; and
- (d) increasing public understanding of and access to alternative dispute resolution.

II. **Focus.** The MJF Grant Program makes three types of grants: Program Grants, Special Project Grants, and Law-Related Education Grants.

(a) Program Grants will provide general operating support for well-established programs that have a strong history of success in meeting the MJF's charitable objectives. Priority will be given to organizations that provide legal services to low-income or disadvantaged Montanans. Additional weight may be given to programs impacting communities or areas of law with high levels of unmet legal needs. Organizations receiving Program Grants must demonstrate potential for strong leadership, well-defined organizational vision, sound fiscal management, and strong partnerships within their communities.

(b) The MJF will work to identify and nurture projects that would be a good fit for Special Project Grant support. Special Project Grants will be made on an individual basis to support discrete, innovative projects targeting specific areas of need. Examples of eligible Special Projects include:

- projects designed to educate communities about the law or the legal community about access to justice,
- establishment of new legal aid or self-help law clinics,
- advocacy efforts surrounding specific legal issues affecting low-income or disadvantaged Montanans,
- revision or creation of pro se legal forms,
- promotion of increased pro bono service among the legal community,
- projects designed to make judicial processes more accessible or consistent, or
- any other project designed to further the MJF's charitable objectives.

Priority will be given to project proposals that demonstrate a strong likelihood of having a lasting, sustainable impact in underserved communities.

(c) Law-Related Education Grants may be made throughout the year to support projects that promote a knowledge and awareness of the law. No Law-Related Education Grant will exceed \$2,000. Examples of projects that may qualify for a Law-Related Education Grant include:

- We The People;
- mock trial or courtroom events for high school students,
- Constitution in the Classroom events,

- Girls/Boys State projects,
- staff or community training on a law-related topic or area of law, or
- any other project designed to enhance public knowledge or awareness of the law.

Recipients of Law-Related Education Grants must submit an application that meets the substantive requirements of the MJF Grants Program in any given grant year.

III. **Budget Allocation.** The MJF's annual grants budget consists of funds derived from one or more of the following sources:

- the Montana IOLTA Program,
- private donations,
- investment income,
- cy pres funds, and
- other available sources.

The Grants Committee of the MJF will designate a percentage of its annual grants budget for Special Projects and Law-Related Education grants. If Special Projects or Law-Related Education funds remain after a consideration of all qualifying projects, the unawarded funds may be awarded as Program Grants.

IV. **Eligibility for Assistance.** The MJF may make grants to any organization or entity that is qualified to carry out the charitable objectives of the MJF. A qualifying organization may apply for and be awarded one or more Program, Special Project, and/or Law-Related Education grants in any grant making year.

V. **Application Process.**

(a) At least 60 days prior to the spring meeting of the MJF Board, a notice must be placed in *The Montana Lawyer* advising prospective grantees that grant applications must be received by the MJF at a specified date, no later than 30 days prior to the spring meeting of the MJF Board.

(b) The notice must indicate the purpose for which a grant may be awarded.

(c) An application must include:

- (i) a reasonably detailed description of the project,
- (ii) a reasonably detailed budget for the project,
- (iii) a timetable for the implementation of the project,
- (iv) identification of the source or sources of funds to be used in addition to the funds granted by the MJF, and
- (v) such other information as the MJF may request in the notice.

VI. **Evaluation of Projects and Applications.** All grants are discretionary. Any grant award by the MJF must be in furtherance of the MJF's charitable objectives. The award of grants is subject to availability of funds and any restrictions created by the reserve fund provision of the MJF by-laws or policies.

**Approved by the Board of Directors on 5/14/04.**

**Revised: 5/08/09.**

**Revised: 9/20/2012**