

MLAC POLICY ON STATEWIDE FUNDING APPLICATION CRITERIA AND FACTORS

The MLAC Board adopts the following criteria and factors to be used when considering applications for statewide general support funding, statewide Disability Benefits Project (DBP) funding, and statewide Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project (DVLAP) funding.

Applicant Requirements

- The applicant must be a “Qualified legal services program” and meet the definition of “Statewide program”. MGL c.221A, Section 1.
- "Statewide program" is defined as a qualified legal services program serving eligible clients, or providing support services to regional programs throughout the Commonwealth. MGL c.221A, Section 1.
 - The MLAC board reaffirms that a statewide program may be funded to deliver legal services to eligible clients **and/or** support services to regional programs.
 - The MLAC board adopts the regularly understood meaning of “statewide”: Extending throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
 - As regards a Legal Aid Organization (LAO) proposing to provide statewide services to eligible clients, MLAC will only consider funding applicants who have [or will have with MLAC funding] the capacity to deliver substantially similar proposed services to every eligible person who seeks their services without regard to the eligible person’s location. Applications proposing to deliver statewide services to eligible clients in the form of impact advocacy (i.e. litigation with statewide eligible client impact, legislative advocacy with statewide eligible client impact, and administrative advocacy with statewide eligible client impact) would qualify as applications proposing to provide statewide services to eligible clients.
 - As regards an LAO proposing to provide statewide support services to MLAC-funded regional programs, MLAC only consider funding applicants who have [or will have with MLAC funding] the capacity to deliver substantially similar proposed services to every MLAC-funded regional program without regard to the regional program’s location.

Criteria and Factors

It is MLAC’s policy to consider the following criteria and factors when considering an application for statewide funding.

- The impact that funding, reducing funding, or ceasing to renew funding of the applicant will have on the scope of statewide services delivered and the stability of the statewide legal services delivery system.
- The need for the proposed client and/or support services.

- How the applicant obtains and incorporates input from the eligible client community in assessing the most pressing civil legal needs of the eligible client community, setting organizational goals, deciding on strategies, and measuring effectiveness and impact.
- Whether and how the applicant proposes to address current and emerging needs of eligible clients and/or MLAC-funded regional programs.
- The applicant's experience delivering the proposed client and/or support services.
- The expected direct impact of the proposed client services on the clients and communities they live in.
- The expected direct impact of the proposed support services on the MLAC-funded regional programs.
- The impact of the proposed client and/or support services beyond the direct impacts expected for the eligible clients served and/or legal aid organizations supported.
- The extent to which the applicant's services are substantially equivalent to and duplicative of services provided by currently MLAC-funded regional legal aid organizations or currently MLAC-funded statewide legal aid organizations. The fact that a currently un-funded applicant proposes to deliver duplicative services does not disqualify them if there is an unmet need and the currently MLAC-funded legal aid organizations (regional and/or statewide) are unable or unwilling to adjust their services sufficient to make the un-funded applicant's proposed services superfluous.
- The applicant's financials.
- The applicant's staffing.
- The applicant's board. It is MLAC's current practice that when it receives a statewide application on behalf of an LAO with a non-compliant board that the applicant not be disqualified on that ground alone and instead, if otherwise recommended for funding, be funded on the condition that they bring their board into compliance prior to the release of any funds. MLAC staff shall continue this practice.
- The applicant's reputation as a legal and policy expert on access to justice matters impacting low-income people.
- The applicant's litigation experience with emphasis on impact litigation and co-counseling with regional legal aid organizations.
- The applicant's demonstrated history of collaboration with legal aid organizations and community organizations.
- The applicant's history of delivering client and/or support services statewide.

- The applicant's history as an MLAC grantee.
- The applicant's history of improving access to legal services for disadvantaged communities of all kinds.