



LEGAL EMPOWERMENT FUND

APPLICATION

Background

What is the Legal Empowerment Fund?

The Legal Empowerment Fund (LEF) is a 10-year, multimillion-dollar effort at the Fund for Global Human Rights to give frontline activists and grassroots groups the support they need to close the global justice gap. The LEF was created with the support of a constellation of funders and allies—including the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Namati, the International Development and Research Centre, and Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies—with the goal of strengthening grassroots justice groups to help communities access the law and secure justice.

The Fund for Global Human Rights (the Fund) is a public foundation that has raised and disbursed more than \$100 million in grants to frontline human rights groups since it was founded in 2002. The Fund is an intersectional grassroots funder with program staff embedded in activist communities where they accompany groups and facilitate technical assistance.

What is legal empowerment?

Legal empowerment combines law with organizing to build power among people affected by injustice. When people are able to *know*, *use*, and *shape* the law they can access justice. With the law on their side, people are able seek peaceful solutions, protect the lands and resources they depend on, and hold their governments and other perpetrators of injustice to account.

Focus of the Call

Supporting Grassroots Land and Environmental Justice as a Solution to the Climate Crisis

This call seeks to support grassroots justice advocates who use legal empowerment to pursue land and environmental justice. We are focusing on this issue because we know that by protecting the land they live from pollution, securing communities' right to land, and supporting community-driven solutions, grassroots justice advocates are a vital component in combatting the climate crisis.

Geography

This funding call will be limited to organizations in the Caribbean. Specifically, the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Eligibility Criteria

The funding will be focused on supporting grassroots land and environmental justice groups who are using legal empowerment strategies as a tool to pursue land and environmental justice. This would include groups that:

- Use legal empowerment techniques (helping communities/individuals know, use, or shape the law). Your organization must show at least some understanding of empowerment beyond individual case management.
- Demonstrate a deep connection/commitment to one or more communities. Special consideration will be given to groups that intentionally center historically excluded communities (e.g., African-descendant, Indigenous, rural, LGBTQ+).
- Demonstrate a use of legal empowerment to address climate, land or environmental justice challenges within one or more communities.
- Value reflection, learning, and transparency.
- Have an organization budget size of less than USD 200,000 annually.
- Request funding between USD 10,000-30,000 annually.

Process

- Applications will be evaluated by a Grants Selection Committee made up of Caribbean legal empowerment practitioners. We will also be reaching out to at least 2 of the references you provide below. You should expect to hear a response around November 2025. If your application is successful, you should expect to get the funds around January 2026 for a grant term start of 1 February 2026.
- LEF Staff will host office hours each Wednesday during the application period to answer any questions. During this time, you can meet with Aimee Seligstein (or another member of LEF staff) using [this Zoom link](#) to ask any questions about the application or process.
- We are offering the application in English, French and Spanish. If you would like to apply in another language, please reach out to Aimee Seligstein at lefsupport@globalhumanrights.org.

Criteria for evaluation

Part I (Questions 1-3) About your organization and Strategic Relevance

- Does the work advance legal empowerment or environmental justice in a structural way (litigation, movement building, advocacy, recognition of political resistance to imposed 'development' models)?

Part 2 (Questions 4-7) Part II – Rootedness

- Is the group led by those most affected? Does it represent or center historically excluded communities (e.g., African-descendant, Indigenous, rural, LGBTQ+)?

Part 3 (Questions 8-10) Learning & Accountability



- Is the group open to reflection, growth, and two-way learning? Are they transparent about challenges and adaptive in their approach?

Part 4 (Questions 11-13) Feasibility & Readiness

- Can the work be done with the resources and time available? Does the group have a clear sense of how to move forward, even with limited capacity?

Portfolio Fit (All Questions)

- Does the proposal add diversity to LEF's funding—by geography, community type, or strategy? Does it help balance risk and innovation?

Instructions

- For questions 1-13 (except 11-12), each answer should be about 1-2 paragraphs.
- The deadline for submitting the application is 29 September 2025.
- If you have any questions or need additional support, please contact Aimee Seligstein at lef-support@globalhumanrights.org.

Part I – About your organization and Strategic Relevance

1. Organization bio, vision, and mission
2. What type of climate, land or environmental justice problems are most important for the community you work in?
3. Which legal empowerment strategies does your organization use and how are they effective in addressing climate, land or environmental justice problems?

Part II – Rootedness

4. What populations do you serve in your legal empowerment work?
5. Is the organization led by people from the communities you serve or people with lived experience of the injustices you are addressing?
6. Describe how your organization engages the communities you serve in priority-setting, decision-making, or other types of feedback.
7. Tell us about a recent win - big or small - when your efforts resulted in change for the community where you work.



Part III – Learning & Accountability

8. How does your organization learn from its work?
9. Tell us about a time where you made adjustments to your work based on what went well or what didn't go well previously.
10. How does your organization work with other organizations in local, national, regional, and/or global networks?

Part IV – Feasibility & Readiness

11. In USD, what was your organization's budget in 2024 (or your most recent fiscal year)?
12. How much money (in USD) in annual support are you requesting?
Please note that requests should be between USD 10,000-30,000 annually.
13. How will you use the funding and what will it help you accomplish or change?
(This is general operating support. The money can be used for new or existing activities or for general organization expenses, such as salaries or benefits, office rent, supplies, staff training, etc.)

Part V – Due diligence and financial reporting

14. List the full legal names and job titles of the key members of your group or organization (including staff, officers, directors, and members of your governing body who will have oversight of the administration of funds and/or project implementation).
15. Does your organization have its own bank account?
☐ Yes
☐ No
16. If not, how does your organization intend to receive funds? If your organization has a fiscal sponsor*, please be sure to provide their name and contact details.
**Fiscal sponsors are typically registered nonprofit organizations that provide organizations, movements, projects, or other nontraditional civil society organizations with some combination of financial, banking, and administrative support.*
17. Is your organization operated exclusively for non-profit or charitable purposes?
☐ Yes
☐ No



18. Is your organization officially registered as a non-profit organization under the laws of your country?
☐ Yes
☐ No

19. Do any of the organization's officers or members have an ownership claim in the income or assets of the organization?
☐ Yes
☐ No

20. List your organization's funding sources and amounts in USD.

21. Provide a list of three individuals who are familiar with, but not part of, your organization. Please include their name, job title, organization, and email address.

Reference 1

Name

Job Title

Organization

Email

Reference 2

Name

Job Title

Organization

Email

Reference 3

Name

Job Title

Organization

Email