



**Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis  
Investment Connection Proposal**

Proposal title	Fresh Start for Community Development
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Organization name/address	Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc. Lee Richardson 714 S. Main St. Jonesboro, Arkansas 72401
Mission statement	Legal Aid of Arkansas, Inc. (Legal Aid) is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit law firm whose mission is to champion equal justice for low-income individuals and communities and to remedy the conditions that burden and marginalize them. Legal Aid provides free legal services to low-income individuals residing in 31 of the 75 counties in Arkansas, a service area that extends from the Mississippi River Delta in Eastern Arkansas to the Ozark Mountains in the northwestern part of the state. For over fifty years, Legal Aid serves over 6,500 low-income individuals annually; helping secure their economic stability, removing barriers to affordable and safe housing, providing protection against domestic violence, and safeguarding consumer rights. In providing legal interventions to address poverty-related economic, social and health outcomes, Legal Aid is a pillar among a group of like-hearted community service providers, united in the mission of community development.
History of organization	The federal government started a legal services program in 1965 to encourage lawyers to find solutions for the causes and effects of poverty which was funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity. In 1974, Congress

	<p>created the Legal Services Corporation Act. The first legal services programs in Arkansas began in 1965 in Pulaski County and 1967 in Jackson County. Through the years individual offices opened all across the state. In January of 2002, there was a merger that combined six Legal Aid programs into two, one of which is Legal Aid of Arkansas. Legal Aid serves 31 of the 75 Arkansas counties, while the other counties are served by Center for Arkansas Legal Services. Together, these two public interest law firms serve the entire state, ensuring access to justice to low-income citizens. Legal Aid is currently the 5th largest law firm in Arkansas and celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2017.</p>
Organization’s current programs and activities	<p>Legal Aid of Arkansas provides a variety of civil legal services to low-income clients in areas concerning housing, consumer rights, domestic violence, family, and economic justice. For example, our housing department works to fight housing discrimination under a variety of federal, state, and local laws. It also works to defend tenants facing civil eviction, foreclosure suits, wills and estates, and much more. Affordable housing is one of the most pressing issues we fight for our low-income clients. Considering the financial characteristics of our clients, when working on a housing case we are often helping to avoid homelessness due to the denial of rights, discrimination, and the rights of those residing in federal housing. Legal Aid’s services impact the lives of Arkansans every day. In 2018, we helped and closed 6,421 cases. Our impacts grow each year and we constantly look for ways to expand and/or create efforts to help low-income individuals and communities.</p>
Website	<p><a href="http://www.arlegalaid.org">http://www.arlegalaid.org</a></p>
Support request	<p>Grant</p>
Requested dollar amount	<p>\$303,646.49</p>
Proposal summary	<p>For the past five years, applicants for Legal Aid with the lowest household poverty percentage have consistently been seeking assistance with sealing or clearing a criminal record. In 2018, over 70% of these applicants were from households living below 100% of poverty. Criminal records restrict opportunities for housing, education, and employment. The two-year project provides free criminal record sealing to its client community removing a significant barrier to their financial stability and independence. A grant of \$303,646.49 will allow us to support a team of two</p>

	attorneys and a paralegal to serve 750 additional primary clients, impacting 17,015 household members.
Issues addressed	Affordable housing Community development finance Economic/workforce development Financial access, capability and empowerment Neighborhood revitalization and stabilization
Target population/geography	Legal Aid’s service area includes the counties of Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Clay, Cleburne, Craighead, Crittenden, Cross, Fulton, Greene, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Lawrence, Lee, Madison, Marion, Mississippi, Monroe, Newton, Phillips, Poinsett, Randolph, St. Francis, Searcy, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, Washington, and Woodruff.  Legal Aid’s statewide Low-income Tax Clinic, medical-legal partnership with Arkansas Children’s Hospital and Fair Housing Enforcement programs cover all 75 counties within the state of Arkansas.
Population served including income	This services under this project is open to all of Legal Aid’s eligible clients with a special pipeline for families impacted by opioid use disorder.
Anticipated outcomes/impact	The goals of this project to seal criminal records that get in the way of low-income families in securing financial stability and all negative outcomes that flow from the lack of financial security. The project targets highly vulnerable families such as families that are financially insecure and suffering through the devastating impact of opioid use disorder within the family.
How will the program be evaluated	The primary means of evaluation will be through data stored on Legal Aid’s case management system, Legal Server. Each individual client will have an intake completed, which will contain exhaustive demographic data, the specific type of problem being addressed, inputs, and specific outcomes. This data will allow for GIS mapping to identify areas of significant service penetration and areas where more intense outreach/education efforts may be required. All clients are asked to complete a customer satisfaction survey at the end of their case, and Legal Aid managers use the data collected for service improvement and quality control. For this specific project, follow up surveys will be sent to clients from six months to one year after the services are completed to determine impact.
Project time frame	10/01/2019 through 9/30/2021
Other significant partners in the proposal	Legal Aid works closely with more than a dozen domestic violence shelters, public defenders, workforce services,

	<p>non-profit organizations focused on reentry services and recidivism prevention, six local United Way agencies, and a plethora of other partners to provide holistic legal aid to vulnerable individuals and populations. The consortium partners within the Opioid project will provide better access to the most vulnerable target population of this project.</p>
<p>Other funding secured or potential funding</p>	<p>The United Way of Northeast Arkansas has allocated \$1,250 in 2020 for this project. Legal Aid will receive approximately \$198,887 from, the Arkansas Administration of Justice Fund in 2019 and approximately \$253,000 in 2020. We will allocate \$38,000 of these funds to this project. The Access to Justice Foundation grants funds from the Bank of America Settlement to Legal Aid for Foreclosure Prevention and Community Development. We will receive \$564,746 from this source during the period and use \$100,000 for this project for a total of \$139,250 committed funding. The balance of \$539.94 in contributions as pending.</p>
<p>Time/Date Received</p>	<p>6/20/2019 11:56:34 PM</p>