

# NCSC Eviction Diversion Initiative

## Request for Applications

### 2023-2025 Grant Cycle

#### Background Information

An average of over 3 million eviction cases are filed each year in state courts. Each eviction filing has the potential not just to disrupt a family's housing, but also the household members' ability to access and maintain employment, education, financial security, and health care with disproportionately destabilizing effects on communities of color. Housing providers also struggle with costly and time-consuming eviction proceedings that may threaten their ability to make mortgage payments and maintain their properties. The ripple effects of eviction reach far beyond the impacted parties and can also have a destabilizing effect on entire communities.

While evictions do not begin in state and local courts, they are finalized there. Tenants often fail to appear in eviction court, and when they do appear, they rarely have the assistance of a lawyer or the information and resources to navigate the court process. During the Covid-19 pandemic, increased federal funding created new opportunities for courts to restructure their court processes with a greater emphasis on connections to rental assistance, mediation, and legal aid programs. These improvements have shown what kind of change is possible, but they have also made very clear the level of investment and innovation necessary to permanently change the eviction process to better serve litigants and communities.

#### Program Overview

NCSC's Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI) is a four-year, \$11.5 million grant program that offers state and local courts an opportunity to learn from and improve upon pandemic-era best practices and to create permanent changes to their high-volume, high-impact eviction dockets. Participating jurisdictions will receive funding to hire dedicated court staff and ongoing technical assistance to update their eviction court procedures to emphasize holistic, sustainable, and community-driven resolutions to housing problems. Each EDI court will implement a new eviction

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*"The assistance provided by the National Center for State Courts has proven invaluable as we build a program from the ground up. NCSC supports a highly responsive network of EDI program leaders who further one another's success through shared experiences, research, learning, and materials."*

*- Sarah Hoskinson, Kansas Judicial Branch*

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diversion program or enhance an existing one with an emphasis on using the court process to connect litigants with the time, information, and community resources necessary to resolve their housing disputes in a less harmful manner.

NCSC invites applications from state and local courts to participate in the second round of funding for the EDI grant program. Two-year grants will be awarded to 7-10 jurisdictions. This funding will support the salaries of dedicated EDI facilitators who will play a key role in designing, implementing, and supporting the eviction diversion program, community partnerships, and related court reform efforts. Funding will support 100% of the salaries, benefits, and overhead costs of those staff in the first year of the program and 50% in the second year. Exact award amounts and payment schedules will be dependent on the number of EDI jurisdictions selected and the size of the individual grant requests.

## Program Goals

EDI jurisdictions will receive grant funding and technical assistance to hire program staff and reform their current eviction court practices through the following:

- (1) Establish or expand a court-based eviction diversion program with the goal of preventing avoidable evictions;
- (2) Identify and address barriers faced by litigants with the goal of redesigning and simplifying court processes to be more responsive to community needs;
- (3) Collaborate with legal aid agencies, mediation programs, social service agencies, rental assistance programs, local government partners, and community-based organizations to expand access and facilitate connections to legal and non-legal resources that can further stabilize litigants;
- (4) Strengthen data collection efforts to better understand the demographics and circumstances of court users and the impacts and outcomes of the diversion program; and
- (5) Other goals as identified by each local jurisdiction.

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*"The courtroom must be a place of fairness and impartial application of the law, but it can also be a place of innovation and collaboration. I am grateful for the Eviction Diversion Initiative, as it provides another fair and legal mechanism for property owners, tenants, and community partners to work together in constructive ways."*

*- Hon. Timothy McVeagh,  
Hamilton County General Sessions Court*

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Jurisdictions are encouraged to think creatively and innovatively about their strategies for reforming eviction court and accomplishing these goals. NCSC will regularly share new strategies, resources, and best practices with EDI jurisdictions and will provide the technical assistance and support necessary to successfully implement them.

## Requirements & Expectations

Applications must be submitted by state or local courts. The selected jurisdictions will receive grant funds to hire a program facilitator(s) and to fund other related project expenses as identified in the grant application. Facilitators will play a lead role in supporting the eviction diversion program and other court reform work within the jurisdiction. Facilitators will also receive extensive technical assistance and support from NCSC, will participate in a national cohort of facilitators from other participating EDI jurisdictions, and will attend an annual convening of EDI facilitators from all the grant-funded sites.

While the bulk of the funding should be allocated for the salary and benefits of the program facilitator(s), applications may also request additional funding necessary to support the jurisdiction's eviction reform work. This may include funding for the design and publication of public-facing outreach or educational materials, investments in program-related technology or communications tools, office equipment, improvements to an eviction courtroom or other space to enhance the operations of the diversion program and improve the litigant experience, or other costs related to establishing or maintaining an eviction diversion program.

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*"The Eviction Diversion Initiative has enabled us to take a step back to examine the issue of stable housing from a global perspective. We no longer have silos operating separately, as this grant has allowed many willing agencies to band together for a common goal."*

*- Tanya Todd, Michigan 61<sup>st</sup> District Court*

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All jurisdictions funded through EDI will be required to:

- Hire one or more full-time facilitator(s) to support the design and implementation of the jurisdiction's eviction diversion work and other court reform efforts;
- Collect and share program data monthly with NCSC and Stout Risius Ross, the advisory firm leading the program evaluation;
- Prepare and submit biannual grant reports to NCSC;
- Participate in ongoing peer learning opportunities with other EDI jurisdictions and attend the annual in-person convening of EDI facilitators;



- Meet regularly with NCSC staff and other EDI partners to share program updates and receive technical assistance and support; and
- Create a sustainability plan to ensure the continuation of the work at the conclusion of the grant period.

## Grant Submission Guidelines

The EDI application form is available [here](#). All applications and supporting materials should be submitted electronically by **Friday, April 21, 2023**. Applicants may also be asked to participate in a virtual site visit as part of the application process.

Final grant decisions will be made by the [EDI Advisory Council](#) in Summer 2023. Awards will be based on several criteria, including a demonstrated interest in eviction diversion and access to justice work, support from key stakeholders and community partners, a commitment to working collaboratively with NCSC staff, an openness to creative and innovative thinking about the future of courts, and the ability to collect and share requested data to inform both the local program design and the national EDI evaluation. The Advisory Council also seeks to fund a diverse group of jurisdictions from different geographic regions with courts of various sizes and structures.

## Grant Timeline

<b>January 2023</b>	RFA Released
<b>February 13, 2023</b>	RFA Q&A Session 1 ( <a href="#">registration link</a> )
<b>March, 15, 2023</b>	RFA Q&A Session 2 ( <a href="#">registration link</a> )
<b>April 21, 2023</b>	Application Deadline
<b>Summer 2023</b>	Grant Decisions Announced
<b>September 1, 2023</b>	Grant Term Begins
<b>August 31, 2025</b>	Grant Term End

## Additional Information

Please submit any questions about this Request for Applications to [EDI@ncsc.org](mailto:EDI@ncsc.org). FAQs will be regularly updated on [ncsc.org/eviction](https://ncsc.org/eviction). Please check back frequently for more information.

