

# Request For Applications NCSC Eviction Diversion Initiative (EDI) 2022-2026

## Background Information

The eviction crisis in America is not new, although the last year has highlighted its magnitude and far-reaching consequences. Since 2000, an average of over 3 million eviction cases have been filed each year in state courts. Each eviction filing has the potential not just to disrupt a family's housing, but also family members' ability to access and maintain employment, education, financial security, and health care with consequences that have a disproportionately destabilizing effect 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 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 almost never have the assistance of a lawyer or the information and resources necessary to successfully navigate the court process. A recent influx of federal funds has created new opportunities for courts to implement temporary changes connecting litigants to rental assistance and legal aid. Some of these projects have required rule changes to provide litigants with critical information and to create off-ramps to alternative dispute resolution. These diversion projects have shown what kind of change is possible, but they have also made very clear the level of investment and innovation necessary to permanently transform eviction court processes and 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 technical assistance and support to transform their eviction courts into problem-solving courts that emphasize holistic, sustainable, and community-driven resolutions to housing problems.

NCSC invites applications from state and local courts to participate in the grant program and will identify approximately 10 jurisdictions to receive EDI funding to be dispersed over a four-year period. This funding will support the salaries of dedicated EDI facilitators who will play a key role in implementing and supporting the eviction diversion program and related court reforms. Funding will support 100% of the salaries, benefits,



and overhead costs of those staff in the first year of the program. Grant funding will taper off in subsequent years with at least 50% of staff costs covered in the second year and further reductions in the third and fourth years of the program. 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 funded to provide housing services, social service agencies, rental assistance programs, 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 impact and outcomes of reform efforts, and
- (5) Other goals as identified by each local jurisdiction.

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 EDI convening in Washington, DC.

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 to make modifications to a case management system, to design or produce public-facing informational materials, to invest in program-related technology or communications



tools, to purchase equipment or make improvements to an eviction courtroom, or to fund other costs related to establishing or maintaining an eviction diversion program.

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 (this may include screening or triaging eviction cases, checking the status of rental assistance applications, working directly with self-represented litigants, creating self-help and referral resources, cultivating partnerships with community partners, and other tasks necessary to further the program goals),
- Collect and share eviction court data with NCSC and outside evaluators,
- Submit quarterly grant reports and program updates to NCSC,
- Participate in ongoing peer learning opportunities with other EDI jurisdictions and attend the annual in-person convening of EDI facilitators,
- Receive technical assistance and support from NCSC staff and other EDI partners, and
- Create a sustainability plan to ensure the continuation of the work after the grant.

### Grant Submission Guidelines

The EDI application form is available [here](#). All applications and supporting materials should be submitted electronically by **Friday, January 21, 2022**. 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 the first quarter of 2022 with grant funds to be awarded shortly after. Awards will be based on several criteria, including a demonstrated interest in eviction diversion and court reform work, support from key stakeholders and community partners, the ability to work collaboratively, an openness to creative and innovative thinking about the future of courts, and the ability to share requested data to evaluate EDI efforts. The Advisory Council also seeks to fund a diverse group of jurisdictions from different geographic regions, various court sizes and structures, and a range of proposed program models.

### Grant Timeline

<b>December 13, 2021</b>	RFA Released
<b>January 5, 2022</b>	RFA Q&A Session 1 ( <a href="#">registration link</a> )
<b>January 18, 2022</b>	RFA Q&A Session 2 ( <a href="#">registration link</a> )
<b>January 21, 2022</b>	Application Deadline
<b>Early 2022</b>	Grant Decisions Announced
<b>Spring 2022</b>	Grant Term Begins
<b>Spring 2026</b>	Grant Term End



## Additional Information

Please refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information about the Eviction Diversion Initiative and grant guidelines.

Additional questions may be submitted to [EDI@ncsc.org](mailto:EDI@ncsc.org). Questions will be answered during two informational webinars on Wednesday, January 5<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 EST ([register here](#)) and Tuesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 EST ([register here](#)). Both sessions will be recorded and posted on the EDI website.

