

LEF Pre-application webinar script

14th July 2026

SLIDE THREE

Over the next hour we will cover:

- LEF's grantmaking
- Strengthening Justice fund
- Emerging Justice fund
- Our grants in numbers
- Key criteria: **accountability to communities** and **using or shaping the law for change**
- What else we look for and what we don't fund
- Application process and decision making
- Q&A

Part of the reason for this webinar is to ensure that we are as open and transparent as possible about our funding programmes and decision making – we don't want to waste anyone's time. To this end we need to be upfront that we always receive more applications than we have funds available. The purpose of this webinar is to assist you in making the decision as to whether or not LEF is good fit for your work and whether to invest the time in applying.

We know that probably the key question for many of you will be 'will LEF fund our work?' – and unfortunately we won't have time today to give detailed one-to-one advice or feedback. However we do hope that by the end of this session you will have a clearer idea of our criteria, what we are looking for; and how our application process and decision-making works. And if you still have queries or questions, you can book a pre-application guidance call with one of our team.

SLIDE FOUR: LEF's grant making

- We want to create new connections between the law and communities facing injustice.
- We are looking to fund organisations that:
 - prioritise accountability to their communities
 - use and shape the law (or want to) to influence wider change.
- We have two funds within our open grant programme:
 - Emerging Justice

We are a social justice funder, with a focus on shaping and using the law.

We want to create a society where everyone receives the help they need; where our rights are respected and grown; and where we can all actively shape the systems that affect our lives. We believe that the law is an essential tool to help realise these social justice goals.

However, we are also aware that the law is often used to oppress too. and equally that funders have a lot of power than can be used carelessly and harmfully. We have been working over the past 3 years to understand and address the power and privilege we hold as an organisation and as individuals. We call this work 'power, culture and inclusion' and this underpins everything in our new strategy. We have made progress but know we still have lots to do.

And in terms of our organisation, to help give a sense of who we are, we are 27 staff, which includes the grants team, as well as learning, policy, communications and operations. There are 7 of us who work on open grants, not all full time.

Our funding aims to build the long-term resilience and impact of organisations who are using, or would like to use, the law to drive a wider movement for justice.

SLIDE FIVE

I'm going to give you an overview of our open grants programme.

Key criteria/framework

So as Rachael has said, our aim is to create new connections between the law and communities facing injustice. To do this, we are looking to fund organisations that meet two key criteria as outlined:

1. They prioritise accountability to their communities (and we'll talk a bit more about this) and
2. They are either already committed to using the law to influence change or would like to explore using the law towards their wider influencing goals.

By influencing wider change, what we mean is that the work has a broader impact than individual outcomes. We will talk more about this in a moment.

We have two funds in the programme: **Emerging Justice** and **Strengthening Justice**. The two funds recognise that organisations are at different stages in their journey. Some are just beginning to explore how legal approaches can help in their change work. Others already have a significant track record in using or shaping the law for change and in working with their communities and want to deepen or strengthen that work.

SLIDE SIX

Emerging Justice

Emerging Justice: is specifically designed for 'by and for' organisations working towards change on human rights and equalities issues. There are two routes to funding under Emerging Justice – scoping grants and multi-year grants – depending at what stage you are at in developing a legal element to your campaigning or change work.

So, we can fund organisations that would like to explore how to add legal tools or a legal approach to their campaign work but maybe don't quite know how to start that work or what it might look like, as well as organisations who have done that scoping or research phase and now want to test these methods out over a longer term.

The **scoping grants** are for short term or exploratory work for those who haven't used the law before. This could be for example to:

- Find a legal partner
- Work with a law firm to develop a legal strategy for a campaign goal
- Understand the law around your campaign goals and identify potential changes or influencing opportunities.

In this funding stream you might have some understanding of the law as it relates to the issues you work on and will be working on a campaign or change goal, but you may not have used the **law as a tool for change**.

So for example you may already provide advice to individuals through casework, or you might share legal information. This fund can support you to explore how the law could help you to influence change more broadly. You may not know exactly what this could look like and that's OK, there is support through the fund to help you work that out.

For these scoping grants we aim to make decisions more quickly, so within up to 14 weeks, as the fund is aimed at shorter term pieces of work. While the maximum available under this fund is £50,000 over a 12-month period, it is worth noting that they may be for less, as these are really just to give you the time and space to explore or test ideas.

Although smaller in size and length, these grants may lead to a longer-term flexible grant through a subsequent application to our other funds.

The second funding route under Emerging Justice is to apply for **flexible funding of up to three years to test or further develop a legal approach or partnership**.

Funding examples could include:

- *Using the law for change e.g. complaints to ombudsmen or public sector equality duty challenges to hold institutions to account or using evidence from FOI requests to challenge poor practice.*
- *Influencing draft legislation on your campaign issue to improve the law.*
- *Contributing to strategic litigation by supporting or intervening in a case to establish better protections for your community*

We are also really open to hearing your other ideas of how you could use the law for change.

We can offer longer grants under this funding strand, up to three years, and of 50,000 to 75,000 a year. We would not normally fund more than 50% of your organisation's income. You can apply at any time, but decisions are made twice a year and these dates are on our website, along with a full range of what we can fund under Emerging Justice is in the guidance but it does cover a wide range of costs, including overheads.

Under both strands of Emerging Justice, we can also offer support in accessing a legal advisor if you do not already have one in mind. So far we have partnered with PILC, PLP and are exploring other partners

For organisations that are by and for or community-led and who are already using the law for change, the Strengthening Justice fund may be a better option for you.

SLIDE SEVEN

Emerging Justice examples

Now that we are one year into our programmes, we can give some examples of the types of work that has been supported. Some organisations are using funding simply to understand the legal context around an issue for the first time. Others are moving further into pre-litigation work, strategic challenges or legal advocacy. What connects them is that the work starts with community priorities and uses legal tools in service of wider social justice change objectives.

Examples of scoping grants:

- A 'by and for' organisation working to address the discrimination faced by people with experience of the criminal legal system. The grant enables them to work with a human rights lawyer to identify how using the law might help achieve their influencing goals.
- A DDPO campaigning for the rights and entitlements of Disabled people. The grant provides them the scope to work with a law firm to explore how they might leverage the Equality Act 2010 in their work to tackle discrimination.

Example of multi-year grants:

- A black-led racial justice organisation working to dismantle systemic racial inequality through pre litigation work, research and policy. The grant will help them build on this work by exploring strategic cases for litigation.
- A community organisation of Black and racialised women survivors of domestic and sexual violence, which had started working with a law firm to strengthen advocacy for their clients. The grant provides them capacity to develop this work more systematically to strengthen their wider influencing work.

SLIDE EIGHT

Strengthening Justice Fund

Moving on to our Strengthening Justice Fund. This fund aims to connect organisations already using and shaping the law more closely with communities facing injustice and to create the space for these organisations to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Our funding decisions will be guided by those two factors we mentioned before –

How accountable your organisation is to the communities you serve. For example, under this criteria we will consider:

- **Do you work closely with the communities you serve, and seek to increase your accountability to them?** (for example, at a minimum this would be organisations that regularly consult with communities about their priorities and share their power to help communities. It could also mean being a by and for organisation, or operating as a membership organisation where strategy is developed and delivered with members)
- **Do you ensure that those with least power in your communities are heard, and do you adapt your work to reflect their needs and views?** (for example sharing legal knowledge with partner organisations, co-creating strategies or programmes with communities)
- Are you already **working effectively in solidarity** with your communities?

We know that this work is a long-term process for many, and that you may be at different stages of this journey, as are we, and we very much recognise that and acknowledge that we are not perfect and that we are learning ourselves.

We see learning as an important part of accountability, and what this fund can do is support you as you work towards these goals. So we want to work with organisations who acknowledge where they are and take a reflective approach to building and sharing their power.

It is worth noting that for organisations who are on a journey towards accountability, we are more likely to fund you if we have previously supported you.

The second key factor is **how your organisation uses the law to drive wider change.** For example:

- Are you actively using the law to build power in communities
- Are you challenging and reshaping the law and policy to promote social justice?
- Are you collaborating with sector partners in your influencing and campaigning work?

We want to partner with organisations that are using the law creatively and collaboratively, and recognise there could be a wide range of approaches within this.

We are particularly interested in organisations which take a long-term strategic approach, working collaboratively to help shape the law in local, regional, devolved or national government.

Funding under Strengthening Justice is via flexible grants of **£50k-£100k per year over 3-5 years** to support your work related to the law. We will not normally fund more than 35% of your organisation's annual income.

These grants can be used to fund any costs, including overheads.

SLIDE NINE

Strengthening Justice examples

As with EJ, we wanted to give you some practical examples of work that has been funded. All of these were three year grants.

- Member-led organisation working to hold the government to account and campaigning for public accountability and scrutiny through legal change
- Organisation using and reforming the law to secure human rights protections for survivors of human trafficking, slavery and exploitation
- Legal organisation working alongside grassroots groups to support communities in identifying and using legal tools to address issues they identify.
- By and for women's rights organisation working to address the gap in protection for migrant women who have experienced domestic or sexual violence

So those are the two funding programmes. Now I just want to give you a little bit of context around our grant making by giving some figures.

SLIDE 10

Go through the numbers

Applicants often ask how competitive the programmes are and what kinds of grants have been awarded. The figures here provide some early insight into the sizes and numbers of grants awarded. Demand has been high and there have been high thresholds across both criteria. However it is worth noting that the strongest applications tend to provide a clear and honest explanation of how their work aligns with our key priorities, rather than how professionally written it is or how polished.

As you can see - and as expected, given our prior networks - the majority of grants awarded so far have been under SJ, we would love to hear from organisations who have not yet used the law but would like to. Also worth noting that our scoping grants have been at the higher end of what is available but we are open to funding over shorter periods and for smaller amounts to enable that testing to happen.

SLIDE 11

We are often asked about our two key criteria and being as clear as we can about what we mean by it, and what we are looking for. So as well as the examples we've given under both programmes, I wanted to take a few minutes just to give a bit more detail on what we are looking for when we talk about accountability to communities or using the law for wider change.

In relation to accountability, it is really important to bear in mind that we recognise that accountability is very much a journey rather than an end point. Accountability is not a tick box exercise and there is no perfect model.

Emerging Justice is for organisations that are 'by and for', i.e. that are community led, whereas for Strengthening Justice it might help to just flag that we are really interested in hearing from organisations that can reflect with honesty on strengths and areas they want to improve.

A key consideration for us is where the power lies in the organisation – so are communities consulted for example on a key decision, or are they actively involved? Do communities set the priorities, strategy and direction of the work?

Where we've seen really interesting work it has been where organisations have developed a range of creative ways to ensure involvement is meaningful and shows how communities shape organisational priorities and decisions.

It is also important to note that for SJ, this may include lived experience representation but we are also interested in whether the organisation takes a broader approach to power sharing that includes those voices that are often excluded from decision making.

SLIDE 12

Using and shaping the law for change is also something that we are often asked about. Just as a reminder on 'change' and what we mean by this, this is change that goes beyond individual outcomes and tackles the root causes or systemic issues driving injustices.

In our first two rounds, where applications were strongest, were those that used a variety of legal tools and approaches used alongside organising, campaigning and advocacy for wider change.

We funded work that demonstrated how the law could be used in a range of ways, for example to hold institutions to account, influence legislation, challenge discrimination, increase transparency, strengthen rights, support strategic litigation, contribute to public inquiries or build evidence for change

The strongest applicants told us how their chosen legal tool or approach contributed to a strategy for change and where power was shared with communities.

So again that power sharing element coming through here also. The strongest applications were able to connect their legal work to a broader theory of change.

It's maybe worth noting that applications which focused on e.g. advice work, or improving individual outcomes, or which looked at legal education or training without those wider change elements were not funded.

SLIDE 14

What else we look for

We've talked already about our two key overarching criteria, being

1. Being accountable to communities and
2. Using or shaping the law to drive wider change

We also consider **other criteria** that will influence our decision:

- **We prioritise funding small and medium sized organisations:** this means usually under 2m annual income. This is to prioritise our funding where it is most needed, for organisations that may struggle to find funding elsewhere.
- We are only able to fund organisations that are doing charitable work in the UK, but you do not have to be a registered charity. We support organisations that have **some structure** – for example a constitution that sets out how decisions are made – and have access to a bank account with two signatories, although this can be through a partner organisation. LEF wouldn't normally be your first funder. And while we don't require a minimum reserves level, we are unlikely to fund organisations that are insolvent.
- **We will take your wider context into consideration**, which will include opportunities for influencing, the number and geographic spread of people impacted by the issue you want to address, and who else may be already working or leading on an issue. Issues that are under represented by current work across the sector will also be prioritised. So this will be about weighing up different needs.

- **We will favour approaches that promote solidarity between different groups of people facing injustice, rather than division.** We do not want to advance the rights of one group of people at the expense of another, or fund work which may deepen existing divides or harm.

SLIDE 15

Eligibility and exclusions

So just briefly to touch on some exclusions:

We don't fund work on **Criminal Law**, but we do fund work which focuses on discrimination in the criminal legal system.

In relation to immigration, while we will fund work to strengthen migrant's rights for example on issues like housing or employment, we won't fund work on **improving access to justice for people in the immigration system** – our support for this is channelled through our contribution to Justice Together, a funder collaboration which we host. Since its creation in 2020, we have significantly increased our funding in this area. We also fund the training of new immigration lawyers through the Justice First Fellowship.

We don't fund projects to develop or manage pro bono legal advice. While we recognise there is a real need for legal services, we believe that this isn't a long term or sustainable solution to the lack of legal aid experienced around the country.

We don't fund projects where our funding would directly replace or subsidise government, the legal profession or university funding including the costs of law clinics.

And like many other funders there are some relatively common exclusions and eligibility criteria, some of which are on the slides here, but it is worth checking the full list on our website before making an application.

SLIDE 16

Application process

For all funding programmes, if you think this is the right funding opportunity for you, you will need to register on our portal and take our short eligibility quiz.

We've tried to make our grants application process as flexible as possible, but we do need to know how you meet our criteria. You can do this in one of these ways:

- Answer a few questions via our online application form
- Send us information you already have for example an application to another funder or sharing links to information on your website

- Tell us how you meet our criteria by sending us video content which can be pre-existing or recorded for us

For Strengthening Justice: as this is core/flexible funding, we will not ask you to request a specific amount or length of grant in your first stage application. If your application is shortlisted, we will discuss this with you as part of our assessment.

For Emerging Justice, we ask for an estimate of what the exploratory legal work will cost.

We will also ask for copies of your accounts and your governing document, in whatever form that takes, if they are not already publicly available.

For all programmes, you can apply at any time.

A reminder that for Emerging Justice short term or urgent grants (grants under 50k) you'll receive a decision within 12-14 weeks, and for the other grants we have two key decision points a year which will be on our website.

For the Emerging Justice short term grants, the grants team will review and then meet to make a collective decision on your application.

For all applications above £50,000, there will be a two stage decision process. Firstly, the grants team will discuss and agree which applications are the strongest against our criteria within the budget we have available.

We will let you know within 5 weeks of the deadline if we have been able to shortlist your application.

The second stage process will involve an in person or online meeting. If you didn't complete the four application questions at first stage we will discuss these when we meet, as well as any follow up questions we might have.

We will also ask for some more financial information at this stage.

All second stage applications are reviewed and final decisions are made by our Grants Committee. The Committee includes 3 Trustees and 3 external members with lived and learned experience of the issues we fund. One of the external members is here today.

At both first and second stage, we will tell you the reason if you are not successful and you can ask for more detailed feedback. If you have been unsuccessful, we ask that you wait a year before reapplying.

Access support is available for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people to help with applying – for example, some time from a Personal Assistant to help you complete the form or a Sign Language Interpreter to join the application call. You can request an Access Payment of up to **£500**.

In terms of key dates for this forthcoming round:

- Today's webinar
- Guidance calls – available until the 11th September
- Application deadline for multi-year grants is 17th September [no deadline for EJ]
- First stage outcome end of October
- Second stage assessments (visits) October and November
- Final outcome: end of December