



Indigent Defense Improvement Grant Program FY2026/FY2027

Supplemental Request for Applications

Temporary or One-Time Assistance for Existing Indigent Defense Programs Serving Rural Texas

The Texas Indigent Defense Commission (TIDC) provides financial and technical support to develop and maintain quality, cost-effective indigent defense systems. TIDC offers annual Improvement Grant opportunities to create and sustain indigent defense programs. This FY26/FY27 Supplemental Request for Applications (RFA) is issued to provide additional grants from a specific legislative appropriation as detailed in the following budget rider in the FY26-FY27 General Appropriations Act:

Unexpended Balance Authority. Out of amounts appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Texas Indigent Defense Commission under strategy D.1.1, Texas Indigent Defense Commission, for the 2024-25 biennium for Operation Lonestar, any unobligated or unexpended balances remaining as of August 31, 2025 (not to exceed \$10,000,000), are appropriated for the fiscal biennium beginning September 1, 2025, for **programs in rural counties, created on or before September 1, 2025. The use of any remaining balances may only be used for programs with one-time expenses or temporary assistance.**

All grants awarded through this special funding opportunity shall be for temporary or one-time assistance only and are not renewable. Counties or other applicants are under no obligation to continue the one-time funding provided under this special program.

Actual amounts available for this grant opportunity will depend on final accounting of actual expenditures in FY2025 and may be less than \$10 million.

Eligible Programs

To be eligible for this grant, applicants must operate programs that:

- Provide indigent defense services for rural counties, defined as counties of population of 100,000 or less, or counties that operate rural regional defender programs for which TIDC has previously waived the 100,000-population limit.
- Be established on or before September 1, 2025, which includes programs that were approved for TIDC grant funding but are not operational before September 1, 2025.

Examples of eligible programs include:

- Public defender programs serving rural counties
- Managed assigned counsel programs serving rural counties
- Indigent defense coordinator¹ programs serving rural counties

¹ IDC programs must operate consistent with TIDC's IDC Required Program Elements as published in the TIDC FY2026 (regular) Request for Applications to be eligible.

Eligible uses of funds include, but are not limited to, the following one-time or temporary purposes:

- Indigent defense internships and/or fellowships
- Equipment
- Technology projects
- Recruiting assistance
- Training
- Temporary reduction of required sustainability program cash match
- Family Protection Representation pilot programs to provide legal representation to children and/or parents involved in child protective services cases. Examples of possible pilot projects are the creation of a family protection representation division at an existing public defender office, adding family protection representation to an existing managed assigned counsel program, or adding family protection representation to the responsibilities of the indigent defense coordinator. Legal representation can occur in the pre-petition phase, post-petition phase, or both.

Eligible Entities

The following entities are eligible to apply if they are, or serve, a rural county:

- Texas counties. Counties may apply jointly for funding but must designate one county as the grant recipient.
- A law school's legal clinic or program that provides indigent defense services for Texas counties as described in Section 79.037, Texas Gov't Code.
- A regional public defender formed under Article 26.044, Code of Criminal Procedure that provides indigent defense services for Texas counties and meets the requirements of Texas Gov't Code Section 79.037.
- An entity described by Section 791.013, Texas Gov't Code that provides to a county administrative services under an interlocal contract entered for the purpose of providing or improving the provision of indigent defense services in the county.
- A nonprofit corporation that provides indigent defense services or indigent defense support services for a Texas county or counties. Nonprofit applicants must document support from and coordination with the county or counties and courts served. Nonprofit applications should contact TIDC staff early in the process for online grant application account setup and for guidance on documentation of county support and coordination.

Programs operated by non-profits that operate under contracts with counties are advised that the contracting county should apply.

Period for Funding and Program Operation: September 1, 2025 to September 30, 2027.

Minimum Grant Budget: \$5,000.

Applications Open Now, Considered on a Rolling Basis: Applications for projects eligible under the special funding opportunities described above may be submitted any time and will be considered for funding on a rolling basis as long as funds are available. To be considered at the August 28, 2025 TIDC Board meeting, applications must be received by **August 7, 2025**. For consideration at subsequent board meetings, applications **must be received at least 30 days prior to a scheduled TIDC Board meeting to be considered at that meeting.** See dates below for meetings and applicable deadlines.

TIDC Board Meetings	Application Deadline
August 28, 2025	August 7, 2025
December 5, 2025	November 5, 2025
March/April 2026 Meeting TBD	30 days prior to meeting
June 2026 Meeting TBD	30 days prior to meeting

Applications must be submitted online through the Commission's [Grant and Plan Management Website](http://tidc.tamu.edu) (<http://tidc.tamu.edu>).

No Matching Funds Required

Applicants may request up to 100% grant funding for up to two years for programs eligible under the special appropriations described above. TIDC may award a grant that funds less than requested based on consideration of applications submitted in light of available resources.

Applications May Include More than One Component

Applicants may include more than one project or component in a single application. For example, an application may include both a request for funding internships and a request for temporary reduction in required sustainability grant matching funds. Applications that include multiple requests must thoroughly address each element of the request in all applicable application sections.

Application Process & Requirements

Full Application Requirements

Applicants must log into the TIDC [Grants, Reporting, and Plan Management Website](https://tidc.tamu.edu), (<https://tidc.tamu.edu>), to complete an application. The narrative portion of the application consists of seven sections that must be completed except as noted below. Additionally, an online budget form must be completed. Each of these elements must be completed for the application to receive full consideration. Carefully review any formatted content pasted into the online system, which will only accept basic formatting. Due to the nature of this special grant opportunity, some sections may not be applicable to the grant request, which may be noted by the applicant in the section. The sections of the grant application are:

- a. **Introduction (Executive Summary)**— In one hundred (100) words or less, describe the program and its main goals. This paragraph will be the abstract of the project. Clearly state what the program will do and the broad goals that will be met if the program is funded. The summary will be most useful if it is prepared after the application itself has been developed in order to summarize effectively the key elements of the project.
- b. **Problem Statement**—Describe the issue or problem the proposed activity is intended to improve or correct. Make a clear, concise, and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed. Provide any formal or informal data related to the problem. Include information about the affected populations, social and economic costs of the issue, and resources currently used.
- c. **Objectives**—Develop clear targets and goals for the program to accomplish. State how the objectives address the problem stated above.
 - i. Objectives must be directly related to the program in this application and the funds requested.

- ii. Objectives must be time and date specific and measurable.
 - iii. Objectives are the basis for the evaluation and progress reports.
 - iv. Objectives must be consistent with the Problem Statement.
 - v. Technical Support Applications should also identify research questions in this section.
- d. **Activities**—Describe the specific activities the applicant will conduct if awarded a grant. The activities should support the objectives.
 - i. Include detailed instructions of step-by-step procedures that will take place to implement the program and the resources needed to complete each task.
 - ii. Include start-up tasks and the ongoing program activities that staff will perform to implement the program.
 - iii. Write this section so that outsiders know exactly what the applicant plans to do.
 - iv. Provide justification related to effectiveness and/or economy of the activity proposed. Include supporting research on this activity if available.
 - v. Describe whether existing staff and/or contractors will perform tasks, reports, etc. or if new staff positions will be created to implement the program. If the program will be implemented through a contract, include information on the selection process.
 - vi. If the proposed program implements a new component into an existing process or program, clarify how the new process is different from existing programs.
- e. **Evaluation**—Describe the process that will be used to determine whether the program has met the stated objectives and the measures that will be used to demonstrate the program's impact.
 - i. Evaluation must be linked directly to the objectives and activities. The evaluation must measure both the progress made toward implementing the grant-funded activity and the effect of the program once it is in operation.
 - ii. Measure the attainment of objectives in a specific and tangible manner (e.g., "Applications of indigence and requests for appointed counsel will be accepted electronically and maintained in an online data management system").
 - iii. Measures must be quantifiable (e.g., count the number of requests for counsel received).
 - iv. Measures must be time-specific (e.g., requests for counsel will be counted from February to January and reported monthly).
 - v. Measures must identify the manner in which they will be recorded for future review (e.g., a case management system report). Data collection cooperation agreements with county offices and departments are strongly recommended so that the applicant can demonstrate it will be able to meet data collection and evaluation goals.
 - vi. The measure of success is determined by the goals and objectives of the proposed activity. Describe how milestones, accomplishments, and timelines will be tracked and recorded.
 - vii. Evaluations must demonstrate how the program impacts other county processes when applicable. Evaluations of program success should be considered from both fiscal and programmatic perspectives.
 - viii. Technical Support Grant applications should also use this section to outline the required project paper that will describe implementation, benefits the county may have received, commentary from participants, and implications or suggestions for other similar projects.
- f. **Future Funding**—This section is NOT REQUIRED for this special funding opportunity.
- g. **Budget Narrative and Budget Form (a narrative is required in addition to completing the form)**—Applicants must submit the online budget form. Budgets must clearly state the costs to implement and operate the program for the one-time or temporary time frame. The budget narrative should justify all expenses and must be consistent with the activities and objectives.

- i. Include all costs necessary to implement the proposed activity.
- ii. Provide a narrative to detail and justify all budgeted expenses. This narrative must correspond to the activities section.
- iii. Indirect costs are allowable, but the application will not be considered competitive if above 10%. Preferred applications will include little or no indirect cost requirements.
- iv. The equipment line requires a list of equipment to be purchased.
- v. Budget line items must include detailed basis of cost explanations in the budget narrative.

In addition to the full grant application narrative and budget described above, applicants must submit the following:

1. **Resolution/Internet Submission Form**—Counties applying for grants must also submit the Resolution/Internet Submission Form (See Attachment A) for the Commission to consider the application. The resolution must be adopted by the County Commissioners Court, signed by the applicant's authorized official, and uploaded to the online grant application. Nonprofit organization applicants should submit a resolution adopted by their governing board authorizing the application and additional documentation of county support and coordination.
 - a. The adopted resolution is the official authorization for the grant request. It names the grant officials required in Texas Administrative Code § 173.301. It is also a pledge to take legal responsibility for the appropriate expenditure of grant funds. Finally, it certifies that the applicant will abide by all relevant rules, policies, and procedures if TIDC awards grant funds to the applicant.
 - The Internet Submission Form is a separate form located on the bottom of the Resolution Form. The Internet Submission Form must contain the confirmation number that will be generated when the application is submitted. The confirmation number may be completed by hand after the Resolution Form is approved by Commissioners Court and the application is submitted.
2. **Judicial Support**—Documentation of judicial support is required for TIDC grants. Applications must include letter(s) of support from the judges who will participate in, benefit from, or implement the program (See Attachment B). Attachment B is a sample form and must be edited to describe the level and type of commitment the judges will provide to the specific program in the application.
3. **Other Supporting Documents**—Additional material such as timelines, data collection cooperation agreements, letters of support, additional budget detail, or other supporting documents must be uploaded in the online application form before the application due date. Nonprofit applicants must also submit organizational information, including articles of incorporation, documentation of current nonprofit status, and list of members of the governing board, and documentation of county support and coordination.
4. **Additional Requirements for Technology Grant Requests**—Budget narratives for technology projects must include detailed basis of cost information. In addition, TIDC has issued [Functionality and Data Guidelines for Indigent Defense Technology Projects](#) that should be carefully reviewed when preparing software-related grant applications. Applications should address the extent to which the proposed project is consistent with the guidelines, as well as the reasons for any departures from the guidelines.

General Application Requirements

- a. **Existing Programs**—Only existing programs as of September 1, 2025, are eligible under this special grant program. This may include adding new temporary projects, positions, or elements to existing programs.
- b. **Grant Officials**— Each grant application must designate the following:
 - i. **Program Director**. This person must be the officer or employee responsible for program operation or monitoring and will serve as the point-of-contact regarding the program’s day-to-day operations.
 - ii. **Financial Officer**. For counties, this person must be the county auditor or county treasurer if the applicant does not have a county auditor. Other applicants must designate the chief financial officer.
 - iii. **Authorized Official**. This person must be authorized by the commissioners court or governing board to apply for, accept, decline, modify, or cancel the grant for the applicant. A county judge or a designee authorized by the governing body in its resolution may serve as the authorized official.
 - iv. The program director and the authorized official may be the same person. The financial officer may not serve as the program director or the authorized official.

Section III: Funding Conditions & Requirements

Conditions of Funding

- 1) **Indigent Defense Expenditure Report:** All counties are statutorily required (Texas Government Code Sec. 79.036 (e)) to submit an Indigent Defense Expenditure Report each year on November 1 in the form and manner prescribed by the Commission. Counties that do not complete the Indigent Defense Expense Report on or before November 1 of each year may have payments temporarily suspended by Commission staff until the report is submitted and reconciled by staff.
- 2) **Indigent Defense Plan Requirements:** The Local Administrative District Judges, the Local Statutory County Court Judges (or County Judge as applicable) and the Chairman of the Juvenile Board for each county must submit a copy of all formal and informal rules and forms that describe the procedures used in the county to provide indigent defendants with counsel in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure (Countywide Plans) to the Commission as required in Government Code §79.036. The Countywide Plans submitted must be in compliance with applicable statutes and rules and must meet the minimum requirements for each plan section as outlined in the Biennial Indigent Defense Countywide Plan Instructions. Plans were required to be submitted by **November 1, 2023**. Grant payments may be withheld until plans are submitted or meet the minimum requirements for each plan section set by Commission.
- 3) **Compliance with Monitoring Reports:** A county must respond within the required time, take corrective action for findings of non-compliance, and satisfactorily address all recommendations in a Commission fiscal or policy monitoring report.
- 4) **Court Activity Reports to the Office of Court Administration:** County and district clerks must be in compliance with monthly court activity reporting requirements promulgated by the Texas Judicial Council.

Governing Statutes, Rules and Standards

All Commission grant programs are governed by one or more of the following statutes, rules, and standards:

- Texas Government Code: [Chapter 79](#)
- Texas Administrative Code: Title 1, Part 8, [Chapter 173](#) and [Chapter 174](#)
- [Texas Grant Management Standards](#) (TxGMS) as promulgated by the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts.

Commission Funding Policies

- a. **Right of Refusal**—TIDC reserves the right to reject any or all of the applications submitted.
- b. **State Funds Availability**— All commitments are subject to availability of funds.
- c. **Awards**— Publishing the RFA does not obligate TIDC to fund any programs.
- d. **Partial Funding**— TIDC may choose to offer funds for all or any portion of a program submitted in the application.
- e. **Substitution**—TIDC may offer alternative funding sources, special conditions, or alternative program elements in response to submitted applications.
- f. **Competitive Application Process**—The application process for TIDC's Improvement Grant Program is competitive. Awards are based on a review of the grant application and supporting documentation. Receipt of a Notice to Proceed with Application does not guarantee funding by TIDC or alter the competitive nature of the process.
- g. **Review Criteria**—TIDC staff will review each grant using objective tools and comparative analysis. The weight given to each section or combination of sections is at the sole discretion of TIDC.
- h. **Final Selection**—TIDC may select and award programs that reflect geographic diversity, demographic diversity, and/or distinctive program elements at its own discretion.
- i. **Formula Grant**—Counties that receive Improvement Grants are encouraged to continue to apply for the Formula Grant. The county will submit its Indigent Defense Expenditure Report (IDER) on or before November 1 of each year. If the implementation of the grant program results in a reduction of the county's indigent defense expenditures below the baseline, the county may not be eligible for the formula grant.
- j. **Dual Use**— If an applicant applies for an indigent defense program that may be tied to a general government process, the applicant must provide documentation and rationale to establish a basis of costs to determine the portion of a program/project that is attributable to indigent defense.

Program Fiscal Requirements

- a. **Fund Use**—Funds must be used to pay for the direct and/or administrative costs of providing and/or improving indigent defense services.
- b. **Program Income**—Applicants must apply any program income to expenses prior to submitting reimbursement claims under the grant.
- c. **Allowable Costs**— Grants may be used for:
 - i. Attorney fees for indigent defendants accused of crimes or juvenile offenses;
 - ii. Expenses for licensed investigators, experts, forensic specialists, or mental health experts related to the criminal defense of indigent defendants; and
 - iii. Other approved expenses allowed by this grant program or necessary for the operation of a funded program and consistent with the approved budget.
- d. **Unallowable Costs**—TIDC has adopted the [Texas Grant Management Standards](#) (TxGMS) to determine unallowable costs. See TxGMS for a full list of unallowable costs. Specifically, in accordance with TxGMS and the grant rules the following conditions apply:
 - i. General government costs are unallowable;
 - ii. Costs of law enforcement, prosecution, supervision, and incarceration are unallowable;
- e. **Failure to Begin**— Failure to begin operating the program before the end of the grant award period may constitute a failure to meet performance measures unless authorized by TIDC.

Grantee Reporting Requirements

- a. **Maintain Official Contact Information**—All counties must maintain correct grant official contact information on TIDC's [Grant, Reporting, and Plan Management Website \(http://tidc.tamu.edu\)](http://tidc.tamu.edu). Counties must advise TIDC of changes in the authorized official, program director, financial officer, local administrative district judge, local statutory county judge and county judge by updating contact information. TIDC staff will use e-mail whenever possible to notify counties of required reports and funding opportunities.
- b. **Reports**—Online fiscal and program reports are required each quarter. All grants will require at least one follow-up report outside of the grant period. A reporting schedule will be provided in the Statement of Grant Award (SGA) if TIDC authorizes a grant award.

Program Records Requirements

- a. **Data Collection and Agreements**—Grantees must collect data to support the evaluation of the program's impact and compliance with the Fair Defense Act. This may require data collection agreements from county offices or departments to provide information to the program director on a regular basis.
- b. **Records Retention**—Grantees must maintain records related to the funded activity for at least three years after the end of the grant period. Records may be stored electronically.
- c. **Monitoring and Auditing**—Records must be made available to TIDC or its designees upon request. (See Texas Administrative Code § 173.401 for more details.)

Program Equipment and Purchasing Requirements

- a. **Use DIR State Contract**—Counties must purchase all technology, equipment and software under the Department of Information Resources (DIR) State Contract. A county may submit a written request for exception that demonstrates why the DIR contract cannot be used for this project or is not cost-effective. Entities not eligible to purchase under the DIR contract must adopt and follow procurement policies and document cost comparisons prior to making equipment purchases.
- b. **Inventory**—Equipment purchased with grant funds by a county is the property of the county. Non-county grantees must include in their proposal a plan for equipment purchased with grant funds when the program ends. TIDC requires each grantee to maintain an inventory record of all equipment purchased with grant funds. After the grant period expires, the grantee must complete a physical inventory of all grant-funded property and must reconcile the results with the existing property records. The inventory report must be submitted and reconcile with the final financial expenditure report.
- c. **Equipment and Software Maintenance**—All equipment purchased with grant funds may include up to three (3) years of maintenance to ensure the equipment will operate as intended during and beyond the grant period. **For multi-year grants, the cost of the actual equipment and other one-time costs will only be funded the first year of the grant and will not factor into the overall project costs in subsequent years of funding.**
- d. **Technology Standards**—Software developed with grant funds must conform to applicable industry information exchange standards including the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) and the Electronic Case File (ECF) 4 standards. Applications that include information technology projects must also address how the projects meet applicable technology standards adopted by the Texas Department of Information Resources (DIR) and Judicial Committee on Information Technology (JCIT) as applicable. If no relevant standards are available from DIR or JCIT, then the county must meet commonly accepted technology standards such as Open Data Base Compliant (ODBC) or Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) as applicable.

Contracting Requirements

- a. Professional and Contractual Services**—Any contract or agreement entered by a grantee that obligates grant funds from TIDC must be in writing and consistent with Texas contract law. Grantees must establish a contract administration system to ensure that contract deliverables are provided as specified in the contract. Grantees must regularly and consistently document the results of their contract monitoring reviews and must maintain the files and results of all contract monitoring reviews in accordance with the record retention requirements described in this section of the RFA. A grantee's failure to monitor its contracts may result in disallowed costs.
- b. Commission Review**—Contracts with third parties for core services in funded programs must be provided to TIDC and approved prior to execution.
- c. Contract Performance Monitoring**—Grantees that use grant funds to contract for services must develop and include in the contract provisions to monitor each contract that is for more than \$10,000 per year. These provisions must include specific actions to be taken if the grantee discovers that the contractor's performance does not meet the operational or performance terms of the contract. In the case of contracts for public defender offices and managed assigned counsel programs, these provisions must include a review of utilization and activity, reporting of financial data to evaluate the contractor's performance within the budget required by statute for such programs. TIDC staff must review each contract at least once every two years and notify the grantee if it is not sufficient (See TAC § 173.311).
- d. Limit on Equipment for Third Party Contracting of Legal Services**—Counties that contract with third parties to provide direct client indigent defense services may have included one-time purchase of equipment in the grant application. Counties may not include in the contract with the third party the full costs of the equipment line item into future funding years.

Attachment A

Sample Resolution/Internet Submission Form **Indigent Defense Improvement Grant Program**

MUST BE PRINTED FROM ONLINE APPLICATION SYSTEM

WHEREAS, under the provisions of the Texas Government Code § 79.037 and Title 1 of the Texas Administrative Code Chapter 173, counties are eligible to receive grants from the Texas Indigent Defense Commission to provide improvements in indigent defense services in the county; and

WHEREAS, the commissioners court authorizes this grant program and application to assist the county in the implementation and the improvement of the indigent criminal defense services in this county; and

WHEREAS, _____ County Commissioners Court has agreed that in the event of loss or misuse of the funds, _____ County Commissioners assures that the funds will be returned in full to the Texas Indigent Defense Commission.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED and ordered that the **OFFICIAL DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT** of this county is designated as the Authorized Official to apply for, accept, decline, modify, or cancel the grant application for the Indigent Defense Improvement Grant Program and all other necessary documents to accept said grant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **OFFICIAL DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSIONERS' COURT** is designated as the Program Director for this grant and the **County Auditor or County Treasurer if the county does not have an auditor (per TAC § 173.301(a))** is designated as the Financial Officer for this grant.

Adopted this _____ day of _____, 20____.

This is a **Sample**. Submitted resolution submitted MUST BE PRINTED FROM ONLINE SYSTEM
County Judge

Attest:

County Clerk

Attachment B

Sample

INDIGENT DEFENSE TEMPORARY OR ONE-TIME IMPROVEMENT GRANT PROGRAM SAMPLE COOPERATION AGREEMENT

Instructions: Applicants can edit and complete this sample agreement to indicate the support or participation from the local judiciary. If the Board of Judges takes official action to approve or support the grant application, please provide the Commission with signed documentation in lieu of this form. All materials must be submitted to the Commission before the due date.

_____ County has applied for an improvement grant from the Texas Indigent Defense Commission (Commission) to assist in funding _____ program. Implementation of this program will affect the courts below. The undersigned judges agree to support and/or participate with the program pursuant to the county's improvement grant application to the Commission and any special conditions of the grant award to the county. This commitment includes participating in the data collection efforts required in the program, as well as utilization of the services to be provided by the program.

To be considered for funding this program cooperation agreement must be signed by the judges of all of the statutory county / district courts hearing criminal matters punishable by incarceration or juvenile matters in the county.

Acknowledged and Approved by all statutory county / district courts hearing criminal matters punishable by incarceration or juvenile matters in the county:

Signature of Local Administrative Date
District Judge

Printed Name and Title

Signature of Local Administrative Date
Statutory County Judge

Printed Name and Title

Signature of Judge serving as Date
Chair of the Juvenile Board

Printed Name and Title

Signature of Judge Date

Printed Name and Title

Signature of Judge Date

Printed Name and Title

Signature of Judge Date

Printed Name and Title

Signature of Judge Date

Printed Name and Title

Signature of Judge Date

Printed Name and Title