



**2024**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**  
OCTOBER 1, 2023 to  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

DC BAR FOUNDATION

WE INVEST IN JUSTICE

**DCBF**



## What We Do

The DC Bar Foundation is dedicated to cultivating a robust civil legal aid network in the District of Columbia. We collaborate with all stakeholders across all sectors to eliminate the barriers DC residents face when trying to access legal services.

Through targeted funding and innovative initiatives, we support a wide range of programs that provide legal services and outreach to those who need it most. Guided by our strategic framework, we strive to create a legal aid system that is accessible to all DC residents regardless of income, knowledge, or power.

## Grants

Through the Access to Justice Grants program, the Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program, and General Support Grants, the DC Bar Foundation is able to fund critical legal aid across the District. In 2024, we awarded \$28.05 million in grants. Some of the services these grants support include helping individuals secure employment benefits, gain custody of a minor child, or maintain safe and secure housing. Since 1977, the Foundation has awarded nearly \$207 million in grants.

## Loan Repayment Assistance Program

The Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP) makes it more possible for DC legal services providers to hire and retain top-notch legal talent to better serve their clients in need. LRAP provides eligible attorneys a forgivable loan to help pay their significant educational debt. LRAP allows legal aid attorneys to manage their student debt without compromising their desire to work in the civil legal aid sector.

## Training and Technical Assistance

The DC Bar Foundation invests in the capacity and vitality of the civil legal aid network through ongoing individual and organizational training on such topics as eviction defense, trial advocacy, and supervision skills.





# Dear Friends,

**The DC Bar Foundation continues to prioritize collaboration both internally and externally to help transform access to justice for all District residents. In the pages ahead, you will read more about the work we accomplished in FY24, but we want to highlight some of our key moments.**

To start, we hit a significant milestone with Coordinated Intake and Referral (CIR) when we launched the pilot in June 2024. Once fully launched, the system will make it easier for DC residents to access legal aid. After decades of discussion within our community about a system of this nature, the Foundation spearheaded this project in 2020. Today, it stands as one of our most collaborative efforts to date, bringing together legal aid and key stakeholders from other sectors, DC residents, researchers, and technology experts. The evaluation data from the pilot will inform future decision-making as we prepare for a full launch in 2025.

In addition, the DC Social Justice Transformations Network (DCSJTN) celebrated its third year. Formerly known as the DC Legal Aid Transformations Network, a key benefit of the Network is that, since its founding, it has welcomed individuals and organizations from various sectors, including legal aid, social services,

health services, government, and education. Members have the opportunity to make broader connections, build deeper relationships, and align their efforts in order to serve clients more efficiently and effectively. One Network member shared, “The Network remains a strong pillar for all of us, helping us navigate ongoing challenges while continuing our mission of advancing justice and equality. I am proud to be part of such an inspiring and impactful community in DC.”

DCBF also held its inaugural DC Walk for Justice 5K. We welcomed more than 300 people to Nationals Park and raised over \$162,000. While this was a fundraising event, it served as so much more. It was a family-friendly event filled with community-building and knowledge-sharing. With 41 law firms and 17 legal aid organizations participating, this event again proved that our partners and dedicated stakeholders are committed to an equitable justice system.

These accomplishments would not have been possible without your support. We are grateful for the generous funding we receive from the District and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants, the Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program revenue, and private donors. We deeply value our volunteers, community partners, and DC residents who continue to engage us as we build systems that support vulnerable communities. Thank you for joining us in this work.



**Kirra L. Jarratt**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Benjamin Wilson**  
Board President





# 2024

## DONATIONS

**\$28.05 million**  
awarded in grants to 35  
organizations providing  
free civil legal services  
to DC residents with  
low incomes.

**11 generous  
donors**  
joined the 77 Society's  
Class of 2024.

**\$1 million  
raised**  
from individual and  
corporate donors  
supporting civil legal  
aid (the highest  
amount to date).

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**47 law firms, 17 legal aid organizations, and 320 walkers**  
participated in the DC Walk for Justice 5K at Nationals Park.

## ENGAGEMENT

**2,028 tenants**  
served by Civil Legal Counsel Project  
Program (**CLCPP**) network partners from  
January to June 2024 (a 31% increase  
over the same period last year).

**61% of the 2,028 tenants**  
served by **CLCPP** connected with them  
through the Landlord-Tenant Legal  
Assistance Network.

**56% of individuals**  
who responded to the DC Social Justice  
Transformations Network's (**DCSJTN**)  
most recent survey reported that they  
are connecting with more organizations  
within their scope of work as a result of  
participating in the **DCSJTN**.

**77% of individuals**  
in the **DCSJTN** considered DCBF's role to  
be either very effective or effective in the  
organizational and logistical aspects of  
the Network.



# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 1

### Engage All Stakeholders in the Work



**DCBF will work with existing and identify new partners to support the civil legal aid network by providing data, identifying needs, sharing observations, serving as a sounding board, and developing solutions to meet the community's civil legal aid needs.**

Last year, when faced with a 67% cut to the Access to Justice Initiative budget, DCBF and the civil legal aid community worked collaboratively to secure level funding for FY25. Together, we implemented an advocacy campaign that included amplifying community members' voices, developing messaging to the DC Council, and sharing stories of impact on social platforms.

In the same spirit of collaboration, the DC Social Justice Transformations Network (DCSJTN), which was formerly the DC Legal Aid Transformations Network, continued to work with stakeholders across all sectors, including legal aid, social services, health services, education, advocacy, and the DC Government, to discuss ways to transform the delivery of civil legal aid in the District. Through quarterly Convenings, which average approximately 80 attendees per meeting, participants built new and deepened previous relationships. One Network member said: "Participating in DCSJTN has been my greatest reward because I feel excited when meeting new people outside my usual legal and social services circles."

Finally, the DC Bar Foundation continued to manage two Loan Repayment Assistance Programs, which provide student loan assistance for legal aid attorneys who work in DC. In FY24, 35 legal aid organizations participated in the program, and more than 100 attorneys—combined between both programs—received the LRAP benefit. LRAP enables organizations to retain more staff, increase their client capacity, and reach more residents in need.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2

# Identify the Unmet Civil Legal Needs

The civil legal aid needs of District residents are vast. DCBF will identify barriers to accessing services by those who need them most and support the development and launch of a Coordinated Intake and Referral System to improve access to civil legal aid services. DCBF will also work with its stakeholders to use data generated by this System and engage the larger community to identify community priorities.

DCBF hit significant milestones with Coordinated Intake and Referral (CIR)—a single phone line system and website that will connect residents to a legal aid provider. In FY24, we remained committed to collaboration and community engagement. This included (1) working with the CIR pilot working group—comprised of individuals from the legal aid community—to make decisions and prepare for the CIR pilot launch; (2) hosting an Intake Town Hall with the Intake Network to discuss plans for the CIR System; and (3) hiring a new marketing firm to help with branding and ongoing community engagement.

These efforts helped us launch the CIR System pilot in June 2024. The pilot, which was hosted by Neighborhood Legal Services Program, included nine legal aid organizations and focused solely on family law. The pilot tested the CIR System’s workflows and technology, with the aim of supporting the full-scale launch in 2025.

Finally, we worked with our marketing partner to survey over 400 DC residents to get their perspectives on potential names for the CIR System, ensuring the final choice reflects the needs and perspectives of those most likely to benefit from the System.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 3

# Infuse Racial Justice and Racial Equity in Our Work

DCBF will evolve its practices and culture to learn, reflect, unlearn, and change its practices to pursue justice. Initially, DCBF will study best practices to learn about racial justice and equity initiatives. DCBF will also explore local partnerships where there are opportunities to align efforts to develop a plan to integrate racial justice and equity initiatives.

In FY24, DCBF surveyed grantee partners to learn what would be most beneficial for them in their efforts to advance racial equity to better work with and respond to the communities they serve. Findings showed they are seeking practical tools and individualized approaches. In response, and with the help of a consultant, we will launch a Community of Practice, which will include 1-on-1 coaching for participants and larger group discussions. The Foundation is also working on developing a resource bank of racial equity tools, trainings, and resources to support the broader community.

Internally, DCBF continued to prioritize anti-racism. This year, the DC Bar Foundation sponsored and attended Leadership Greater Washington’s Anti-Racist Leadership Series. The six-month training program allowed nearly 100 individuals from different industries to learn more about race, conscious and unconscious biases, advocacy, allyship, and what it takes to be an anti-racist leader. We also continued to use racial equity recruiting efforts to hire staff and recruit board and committee members to ensure diverse representation across the organization.



## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 4

# Fund With Intention

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 5

# Demonstrate How People Who Need Services Are Getting Them

DCBF will identify and articulate what it wants to achieve through its grantmaking. By working with its stakeholders and piloting a few interventions that address the most significant needs, DCBF will better understand effective strategies and make more strategic grantmaking decisions. DCBF will adapt its investments as additional data and feedback are gathered, and experience dictates what can and should be scaled.

The Foundation continues to prioritize our investments in the availability and reach of legal services for DC residents in Wards 5, 7, and 8. The latest semiannual grantee reports show that for FY24, over 8,300 DC residents in these Wards received free legal aid.

Additionally, expanding on our existing work to support our legal services provider community beyond grantmaking, the Foundation developed a roadmap for a capacity-building program to address organizational sustainability and resilience. The roadmap resulted from an extensive outreach process to our grantee partners to understand the challenges and goals a capacity-building program should address. The roadmap centers around supporting leaders, investing in the talent pipeline, understanding and promoting nonprofit best practices, and fostering trust and connections within the community. As the program evolves, we will continue to listen to the needs and priorities expressed by the legal services community.

By integrating evaluation into every aspect of its work, DCBF will position itself to describe how it is changing and improving the lives of District residents and identify areas in need of improvement. DCBF will generate data on program delivery, measure the effectiveness of services, study outcomes, determine the level of impact, and share those findings with our partners and stakeholders.

This year, in partnership with our grantee partners, we embarked on a project to standardize the metrics (outcomes data) for our largest grant program, Access to Justice. Through an evaluation process with select grantee partners, we learned about key challenges and their willingness to engage in this process. This multi-phase project will continue to work with grantee partners in each area of law to refine metrics and better understand the capacity of their existing systems to collect and submit new data. This ambitious project will ultimately provide the Foundation and our grantee partners with an important tool that will reflect and demonstrate the impact of their work.

We also continued to evaluate our programs to gauge their impact and effectiveness. As part of that, we released the biannual Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program evaluation report, which compiles data about the work on housing and eviction cases. Remarkably, from January through June 2024, partners closed 30% (2,241) more cases than the same period in 2023.

# CLIENT STORIES

## Education Advocacy Leads to New Opportunities

When DCBF grantee partner School Justice Project (SJP) first met with James in June 2024, he had been incarcerated at the DC Jail for several weeks. At the time, he was an 18-year-old navigating a difficult court situation and a student with special needs who had not yet graduated high school. His defense attorney suggested he reach out to SJP. Through the SJP intake process, they learned about his past difficulties in school due to multiple disabilities. Despite these difficulties, it was clear that James was eager to return to school, graduate, and eventually go to college to pursue social work.

James's defense attorney planned to advocate for his release and believed education advocacy would play a significant role in getting him home. After his attorney contacted SJP for assistance, they created a community-based

education plan for James. In less than a week, staff at SJP initiated enrollment at two different charter schools to ensure that James had the appropriate options. The judge decided in James's favor, and he was released and reunited with his family.

Within a week of his release, SJP worked with James to complete his school enrollment. SJP was also able to help him submit his application for DC's Mayor Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program. After being accepted into the program, he excelled in his summer job as a camp counselor. He now looks forward to finishing school and his future.



## Family Advocacy Prioritizes Safety and Security

Ms. C went to DC Affordable Law Firm (DCALF)—a DCBF grantee partner—because she was deeply concerned about her husband's erratic behavior and feared for her safety and that of her two children due to his history of physical and verbal abuse.

Although DCALF couldn't immediately represent her, they advised Ms. C to request exclusive use of the marital home during their pending divorce case. The judge agreed to set an evidentiary hearing to determine which party would have exclusive use of the home, warning that the other party would need to move out within a week. The potential outcome left Ms. C anxious because she and her children would have nowhere else to go.

Ms. C returned to DCALF, and they were able to represent her at the evidentiary hearing. During the preparation, she revealed the full extent

of the domestic abuse she endured, including hospitalizations, arson, and property damage caused by her husband.

At the hearing, Ms. C detailed the abuse and constant fear she lived in, knowing her husband could enter the house at any time, and her financial struggles, including paying significant marital debts.

At the time, the pendente lite (temporary) exclusive use of the marital home remedy was relatively new to DC law, having been added as a remedy only a couple of months prior. Although DCALF had never argued under this new law before, they were determined to advocate for Ms. C. The DC Superior Court ultimately granted her request for the exclusive use of the marital home pending trial. For Ms. C, this outcome was a huge step toward obtaining safety and security for herself and her children. DCALF said it was fulfilling to know that their advocacy provided Ms. C with the outcome that she desperately needed.



# EVENTS & AWARDS

## Avenues to Justice

The Foundation's Young Lawyers Network Leadership Council (YLN LC) hosted its annual Avenues to Justice event on June 26, 2024, at Arnold & Porter LLP. Avenues to Justice 2024 focused on demystifying the estate planning and probate process through comprehensive community education, advocacy for streamlined legal procedures, and direct help and advice.

The event included video remarks from the 82nd United States Attorney General Eric Holder and a panel discussion. Expert panelists included: The Honorable Laura Cordero, Presiding Judge of the Probate and Tax Division for the DC Superior Court, Rhonda Cunningham Holmes, Executive Director of Legal Counsel for the Elderly (DCBF grantee partner), and Murray Scheel, Managing Attorney, Future Planning and Probate Division at the DC Bar Pro Bono Center (DCBF grantee partner). The event was moderated by Jessie Sarkis, YLN LC member.

The YLN LC once again exceeded its fundraising goal for the event, impressively raising over \$77,000 from corporate and individual sponsors for civil legal services in DC.

## Inaugural DC Walk for Justice 5K

The DC Bar Foundation hosted the inaugural DC Walk for Justice 5K at Nationals Park on October 24, 2024. The Walk brought together over 300 participants—including walkers from 41 law firms and 17 legal aid organizations—and raised over \$163,000 from corporate sponsors and individual fundraisers for civil legal services in DC.

In addition to raising funds for the Foundation's work, the Walk increased community awareness about the pressing civil legal aid issues faced by many District residents. After DC Superior Court Chief Judge Milton Lee Jr. gave the Walk to its start, participants followed a 5K course that offered views of the Nationals Park stadium and the scenic Anacostia Riverwalk Trail, as well as signage sharing facts about civil legal aid. The course concluded at the stadium's Centerfield Plaza, where walkers and their families enjoyed food, music, face painting, and a visit from Racing President Teddy Roosevelt.

## Fall Reception and Scoutt Prize

The DC Bar Foundation held its annual Fall Reception on November 20, 2024, generously hosted by Regan Zambri Long PLLC. The reception brought together members of DC's civil legal aid community to highlight the Foundation's FY24 successes, including piloting the Coordinated Intake and Referral System, hosting the inaugural DC Walk for Justice 5K, and running a successful advocacy campaign to maintain level funding for the Access to Justice Initiative amid a second year of historic budget cut threats.

CEO Kirra Jarratt presented the 2024 Jerrold Scoutt Prize to Tina Smith Nelson, Senior Manager at Legal Counsel for the Elderly, where she supervises, manages, and oversees civil litigation in their Economic & Healthcare Security Practice. The Scoutt Prize is awarded annually to an attorney who has worked a significant portion of their career at a nonprofit organization providing direct hands-on legal services to financially disenfranchised residents of the District of Columbia.



Left to Right: Jessie Sarkis, Rhonda Cunningham Holmes, and Murray Scheel



DC Walk for Justice 5K held in October.



DCBF CEO Kirra Jarratt (right) with Tina Smith Nelson, 2024 Jerrold Scoutt Prize awardee.

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## Pro Bono Support and Special Thanks

Thank you to the DC government and the Office of Victim Services and Justice Grants for funding the Access to Justice Initiative.

We thank the following organizations for hosting various events throughout the year for the Foundation, and Morgan, Lewis & Brockius LLP for its general counsel support.

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(\$10,000 and above)

## Legacy Donors

The DC Bar Foundation has legacy giving tiers within its 77 Society to recognize donors who have reached significant lifetime giving thresholds of \$25,000, \$50,000, and \$100,000. These legacy tiers are named after historic African-American civil rights champions in the District whose work may not be widely known:

- **Charles T. Duncan Legacy Donor** (lifetime gifts totaling \$25,000 - \$49,999),
- **Charlotte E. Ray Legacy Donor** (lifetime gifts totaling \$50,000 - \$99,999), and
- **Charles Hamilton Houston Legacy Donor** (lifetime gifts totaling \$100,000 or more).

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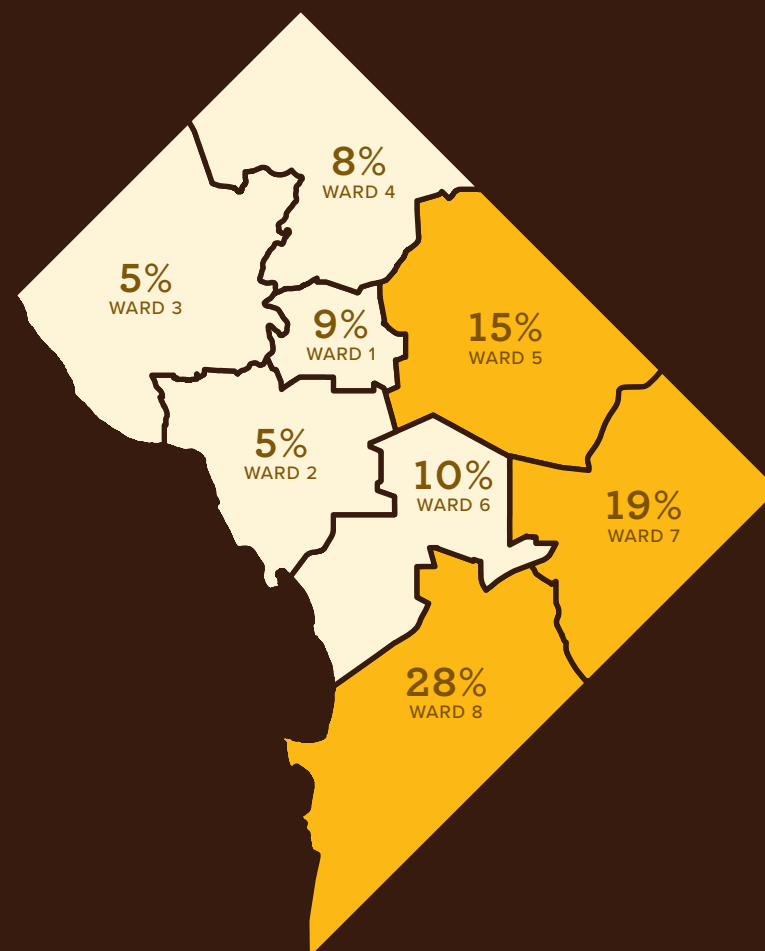
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## 2024 Grantee Partners

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Rising for Justice  
School Justice Project  
The Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless  
Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International  
Tzedek DC  
University Legal Services  
Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs  
Whitman-Walker Health

## Percentage of Civil Legal Counsel Projects Program Clients Living in Each Ward\*



\* Data from January–December 2024

\* Ward Not Designated: 1%

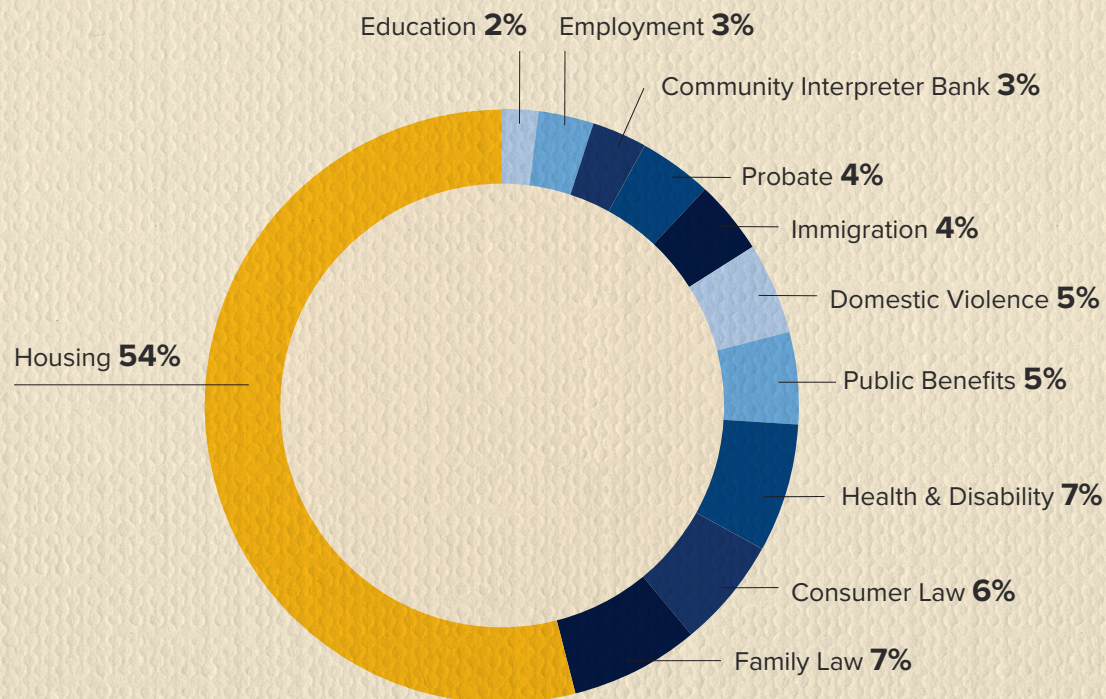


## Grants

DC Bar Foundation grants help support organizations that invest in District residents with the greatest need. Our goal is to ensure that residents are treated fairly in the workplace, they are staying in their homes, and our most vulnerable neighbors are receiving specialized outreach and support.

### \$28.5 million invested in legal assistance in DC

DCBF funds both general support and project-based grants in numerous categories. Examples of our project-based grants include medical-legal partnerships, court-based projects, and community law offices located in marginalized neighborhoods. For more detailed information about our grant programs and the legal aid services that our grantees provide to DC residents, please visit our website at [www.dcbfoundation.org](http://www.dcbfoundation.org).

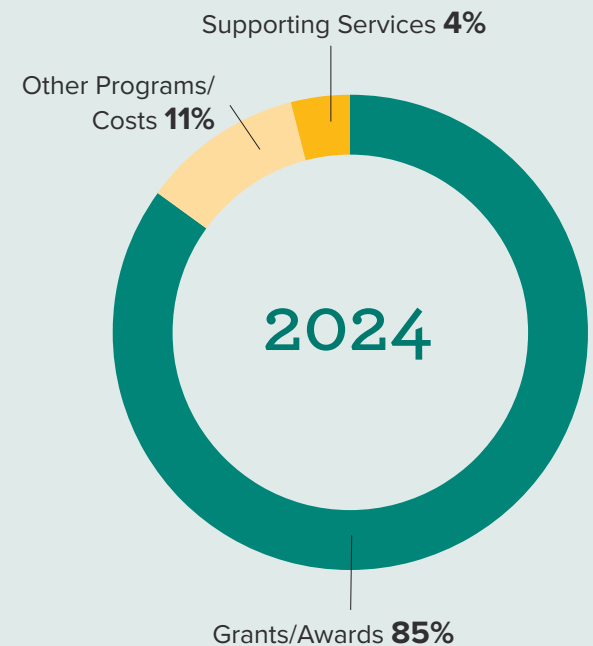
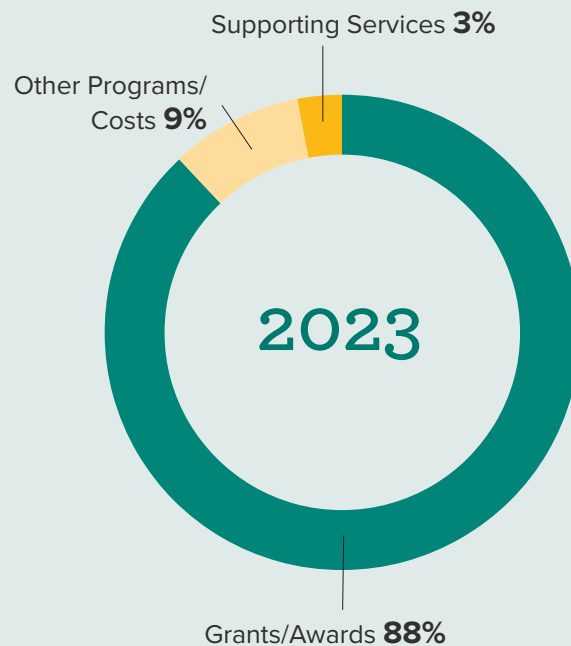
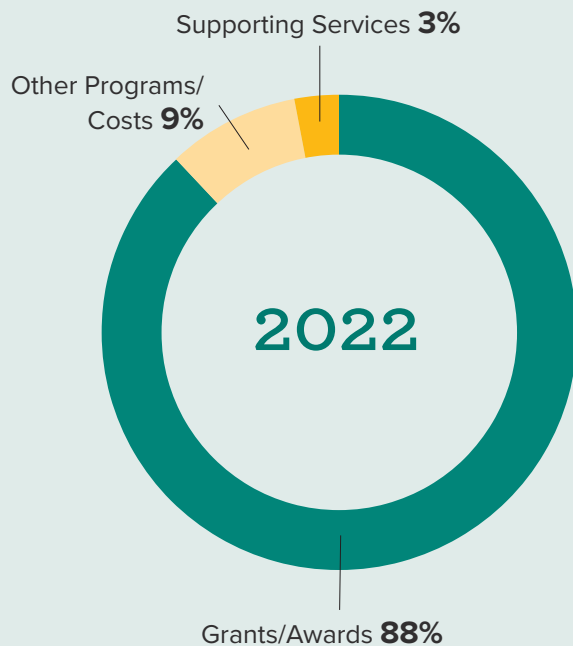




# FINANCIALS

The Foundation made a significant investment to diversify its fundraising streams, reflected in a small increase in supporting services. While maintaining a high level of grant support, we also invested in program development to enhance access to legal aid services through the DC Resource Bridge and have committed ongoing funding to support the rollout of the system.

## Program Expenses vs. Total Expenses





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“ The DC Bar Foundation is constantly innovating to make access to justice a reality for more DC residents. In 2024, after years of collaboration and community input, we launched the Coordinated Intake and Referral System pilot. When fully operational, this program will make it easier for District residents to connect with the legal services providers. We also hosted the inaugural DC Walk for Justice 5K, which brought together hundreds of members of DC’s legal and social services community to raise funds and awareness for civil legal aid in our city.

And this is just the beginning. When we combine bold, new initiatives with the core elements of our work – grantmaking, loan repayment assistance for legal aid attorneys, training and technical assistance, and Network facilitation – we are reminded of all that is possible, especially with your support. ”

–**KIRRA L. JARRATT**, CEO DC BAR FOUNDATION

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