

# Application: DRC, Building Capacity for Restorative Justice Programs with Legal Partners

The Dispute Resolution Center  
Administration of Justice Grant Program

## Summary

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## Administration of Justice Grant Application

Completed - May 8 2026

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Organizational Overview

1. Describe how you learned of this grant opportunity:

As a Community Dispute Resolution Center, we are connected to our local and state bar associations so, have been aware of funding opportunities around conflict resolution.

2. If you are not an annual grantee of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, please briefly describe your organization's mission:

The Dispute Resolution Center offers affordable, constructive, restorative and healing approaches to conflict resolution for the residents of Washtenaw and Livingston counties.

3. If you are not an annual grantee of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, please briefly describe your organization's history:

The DRC was founded in 1983 and was the first pilot CDRP before the program was established statewide. Originally, the DRC only served residents of Ann Arbor, but has gradually expanded Washtenaw and Livingston Counties over the last 25 years.

4. If you are not an annual grantee of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, please briefly describe your organization's major achievements:

Our center is unique in that we have very close partnerships with our Circuit, District, and Trial Courts, and most currently with the Washtenaw County Juvenile Court in December 2025. We were also a part of establishing the first Peacemaking Court in the State of Michigan about 15 years ago under former presiding Judge, The Honorable Timothy P. Connors. Our court contracts include: 14-A1, 14-A2, 14-A4 14B, & 15th District Courts, and the Peacemaking Court (which resides under the Trial Court). We also have a partnership with our Prosecutor and Public Defender's Offices regarding our Restorative Justice Deflection and Diversion Programs that serves adults, juveniles, and families, which began in 2021. Additionally, in 2023 we were able to secure a Local Administrative Order, supported by 99% of Washtenaw County Judges, for the Restorative Justice Program in Washtenaw County that protects privilege for all parties participating in the program.

5. List the dates, purposes and outcomes of any prior applications for Michigan State Bar Foundation funds submitted within the last six years. (Date, Title of Project/Purpose, Approved/Denied/Pending)

The DRC originally applied in February 2026 and was not awarded due to not including other centers regarding regional systemic issues/barriers. The scope of the work and proposal has not changed, except that it is focused on emerging Restorative Justice Programs through South Michigan CDRP's that include, The Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center and the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan.

#### Project Overview

1. Title of project:

Building Capacity for Restorative Justice Deflection and Diversion Programs with Legal Partners

2. Amount Requested:

\$ 75,000

3. Anticipated beginning date (mm/dd/yyyy):

08/01/2026

4. Anticipated completion date (mm/dd/yyyy):

8/1/2027

5. In 125 words or less, describe a brief summary of the grant request covering the needs to be addressed, methods, target audience and anticipated outcomes.

The Dispute Resolution Center of Washtenaw & Livingston Counties, The Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center, and The Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan humbly request \$75,000 for a one year grant period to support the development of: a robust volunteer management program, cross center comparative data evaluation, and an outreach campaign to help expand and build capacity for their Restorative Justice Programs. While we envision this as a two-year process to compile more data and fully realize substantial outcomes - with this grant, we will be able to establish the aforementioned initiatives to help strengthen our Restorative Justice Programs.

6. List names/titles and describe the qualifications of key staff members or volunteers responsible for the project.

	Name/Title of Key Staff or Volunteer	Function/Qualifications
1	Germaine Smith, Assistant Director	DRC Development, Grants Manager, and Special Projects Lead
2	Sue Wilson, Executive Director	WCDRC - oversees operations of the entire center
3	Christine Gillman, Executive Director	DRCWM - oversees operations of the entire center
4	Belinda Dulin, Executive Director	DRC - oversees operations of the entire center and program management

7. Describe how this project furthers the mission of your organization

Accessibility, equity, and healing is at the core of our center's values so, having volunteers who reflect and live those same values is imperative. Due to the CDRP model, Volunteer Mediators and Facilitators are crucial and at the heart of our work so, retention, recruitment, quality control, and continuing education are critical to our daily operations. Like many organizations, our volunteer group reflects an aging and homogeneous demographic/population. Since our legal system partners are expanding, we need more volunteer diversity that also have the ability to facilitate more complex cases. Thus, trauma informed trainings, conflict coaching, continuing education and developing a formalized evaluative process is critical to ensuring that we are providing compassionate, culturally competent, and inclusive services to the community. We also work with the Peacemaking Court regarding youth aging out of the foster care system, so Facilitators need to have the confidence working with youth, multiple agencies and complex issues that may extend months to years. Additionally, we are just in discussion with Peacemaking Court regarding emerging young adults to participate in a new Support and Accountability Circle Program, in lieu of serving time, participating in this program would be a requirement of probation. This would prevent many emerging young adults entering the adult prison system and getting the support and wrap-around services they may need.

8. Describe how this project advances the stated priorities of the Michigan State Bar Foundation

Access to justice is inherent to the CDRP program. While the Mediation Program has been central to our services for decades, the need and ask for restorative approaches in our community has grown over the last ten years - which is why we have been building relationships with schools, organizations, businesses, and our local legal system.

9. What will happen to this project if the Michigan State Bar Foundation denies the grant request?

We will continue to look for more opportunities that will help strengthen and grow our restorative justice programs with our legal system partners. Our centers have relationships with local legislators, elected officials, and other foundations that have been integral in the foundation and development of our restorative justice programs.

Needs to be Addressed

1. What are the needs to be addressed?

A growing complexity of cases means a growing need for diverse skills that are centered around recognizing trauma and behavior. Offering more trainings that deepen Volunteers understanding conflict and behavior is critical to the work we do, not just with participants, but as well as within ourselves. The introspective work of recognizing our own bias and triggers is just a crucial to being compassionate and effective Facilitators.

2. What is the target audience?

Due to an aging volunteer population, we are focused on recruiting younger populations from diverse backgrounds. Many of our cases represent black and brown communities. Only about 10-15% of our volunteer base are from communities of color. We know it is important and critical to have diverse community representation. Additionally, we recognize the cost is a barrier for training and advance training for many community members, especially in our current economic climate. We have had to substantially decrease our registration fees and include more full scholarships to accommodate those where financial resources are a barrier.

3. What outreach will be undertaken to inform the audience of this project?

Our center has developed an outreach plan for 2026 that prioritizes volunteer recruitment, retention, and engagement. This is also a pillar in our three year strategic plan. However, all three centers within this proposal will build an on Staff outreach/marketing team to develop a statewide campaign that targets various audiences. In our experience, public awareness and education has been the biggest barrier to informing our communities of an option/alternative to the traditional legal system.

4. List the counties in which services will be provided or indicate statewide.

Kent, Ionia, Lake, Livingston, Mecosta, Montcalm, Newaygo, Osceola, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties

Project Activities

1. How many people will be served?

1500+

2. Described any services in this project that will be provided by pro bono attorneys.

Due to the nature of the CDRP program, some of our centers have Attorney Mediators and Restorative Justice Facilitators that complete their pro-bono hours through our centers.

3. Describe any services to be done by other volunteers.

The only other volunteer opportunities or types that our centers have are for fundraising events and internships. Since the DRC is located in a college town, we frequently have students looking for internships so, may include them on more meaningful projects that are resume building. It is possible that we may bring in a few student interns to assist with these initiatives.

4. Describe the timeline for major activities in this project.

We anticipate this to be a two year endeavor to fully realize meaningful outcomes:

Year 1 -

Volunteer Management - Establishing the program with SOP's, forms, documents, and evaluation metrics, and expand training opportunities which would include: Introduction to Restorative Justice Facilitation, Advanced RJ facilitation training (criminal court case referrals, juvenile case referrals, and group facilitation), Continuing Education, Refresher trainings for Volunteers who want to re-engage, Conflict Coaching - skill specific, and trauma informed trainings. Establish an onboarding and orientation process for new volunteers. For continued engagement we will include volunteer Check-ins, 1:1 meetings/debriefs with volunteers, group check-ins.

Recruitment - Part of outreach strategy and campaign.

Data Evaluation - Developing a cross center comparative data model, gathering and analyzing the data, creating a findings and recommendations report.

Outreach Campaign - All three centers will have established an outreach team and developed a strategic outreach campaign for public awareness and education.

Year 2 -

Volunteer Management -

Engaging Staff - Implementation and execution into Staff workplans that handle cases.

All Staff that handle cases should be trained and able to include volunteer management program protocols as needed.

Data Evaluation - Continuation of data analysis to see if new protocols and strategies are having an impact with our restorative justice programs.

Outreach - Continuation of campaign - monitor increase in volunteer recruitment, new donors, and case referrals.

5. Describe any technology used to undertake this project.

Currently, no new technology is anticipated at this time. However, SCAO-ODR will be implementing a new database starting July 1 and we hope that there will be more features that can be utilized in more in-depth ways.

6. Describe supervision for the project.

All three initiatives will be overseen by the Executive Directors, Assistant Directors, and identified Key Staff. The DRC has Administrative meetings weekly and full Staff meetings monthly. However, because we're relatively small organizations, we always make space for additional support for Staff.

7. If applicable, list up to three materials that will result from this project.

Volunteer Management - SOP(s), debrief and peer feedback forms, surveys  
 Data Evaluation - Findings and Recommendations Report  
 Outreach - Restorative Justice Campaign Strategy content should include both print and digital forms.

8. If applicable, how many people will be served? Complete chart below. (Enter numbers without punctuation: 1000 rather than 1,000.00)

Type of legal problem	Cases closed after limited service	Cases closed after extended service	Total projected cases closed
Consumer/finance			
Education			
Employment			
Family			500
Juvenile			500
Health			
Housing			
Income maintenance			
Individual rights			
Other*			500
<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1500.0</b>

Collaboration/Coordination

1. Describe the support this project has from other individuals or organizations in your community.

	Organization/Individual	Describe Support	Upload Letter of Support
1	Washtenaw County Prosecutor, Eli Savit	System Partner	✓
2	Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan, Christine Gillman	CDRP	✓
3	Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center, Sue Wilson	CDRP	✓
4	City of Detroit, Teferi Brent Senior Director, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood and Community Safety City of Detroit, Mayor's Office	System Partner	✓
5	Kent County Prosecuting Attorney, Chris Becker	System Partner	✓

2. If other organizations in your area perform services or meet needs in a way similar to those you have proposed, describe how your proposed project avoids duplication with other organizations.

We are the only CDRP's in our respective counties that offer mediation/RJ facilitation, aside from law firms or private Mediators. However, we serve very different populations. CDRP's are meant to be more accessible to people in the low-income household bracket range. Most of our services are free to the public and we never turn anyone away for lack of payment. Additionally, we are the only CDRP's that have deflection and diversion program with our County Prosecutor's.

3. Describe how you will coordinate activities with other organizations.

We plan to work with two outside consultants who are Mediators and have worked with other CDRP's so, their knowledge and expertise will be needed to develop a formalized volunteer engagement program and develop an evaluation system that will help with quality control and strengthen skills building. Additionally, all three CDRP's will share the administrative costs needed for oversight, coordination, meeting, feedback and implementation.

4. Have you researched and utilized the information from other similar projects in developing this project? If so, describe.

We frequently partner with the Southeastern Dispute Resolution Center in Jackson and recognize that they have a robust and strong volunteer engagement program. The Consultant we hope to work with was a former Staff Member there and spent five years building their volunteer engagement program.

Regarding data evaluation, we have been working with the same Evaluator from Wayne State University during the development of the Peacemaking Court in Washtenaw County and currently over the last four years on two other grants that includes both short term and long term outcomes.

As for outreach, part of the process will be looking into successful statewide campaigns like the Raise the Age and Expungement Campaigns.

Developed in 2019, the Juvenile Division partnered with the Wayne County Dispute Resolution Center (WCDRC) to create Talk It Out (TIO). The goal of TIO is to provide an alternative to formal prosecution that gives delinquent youth an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions and make amends, while also giving the victims a forum to be heard and healed. TIO is only open to first-time offenders who have committed minor property offenses, petty shoplifting, and simple assaults with minor or no injury. Both the juvenile and their family, along with the victim, must agree to participate in TIO. Participation in TIO is completely voluntary. This program falls under the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office Right TRAC program is an alternative to traditional juvenile court adjudication.

The Kent County Restorative Justice Conferencing Committee created the RJC diversion program in 2017.[TM1.1] The original committee was composed of representatives from the Dispute Resolution Center of West Michigan, Juvenile Bar, Kent County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Restorative Justice Coalition of West Michigan, Victim Witness, and Juvenile Probation. Anyone can suggest that a case goes through conferencing, but the Prosecuting Attorney's Office must consent.RJC in Kent County began in 2018. Many different case types have gone through the program, but the bulk involve assault, assault and battery, malicious destruction of property, automobile accidents, and theft. Since its inception, 95 conferences have been held: 91 reached agreement and 4 did not. Of the 91 agreements, 85 have been fulfilled,2 are in progress, and 4 were not fulfilled. Of those who successfully completed the process, 91% have not reoffended.



1. List three anticipated outcomes of the project.

1	<p>A sustainable volunteer management system is established and functioning effectively. As a result of implementing a structured volunteer management program, the Dispute Resolution Center will demonstrate increased capacity to recruit, train, supervise, and retain volunteers in support of organizational operations and restorative programming. By the end of the 12-month period, the DRC will maintain an active volunteer pool of at least 30 individuals, with 75% retained and 90% completing onboarding within 60 days. These outcomes will indicate that systems are in place to support consistent volunteer engagement and long-term program sustainability.</p> <p>Volunteers deliver high-quality, trauma-informed restorative and mediation services. Volunteers participating in restorative practices, peacemaking circles, and mediation will demonstrate competency and readiness to support service delivery, resulting in consistent and effective programming. Outcomes include 100% of volunteers completing required training and at least 80% meeting established competency benchmarks through observation and evaluation. As a result of volunteer involvement, participants in restorative and mediation services will report high levels of satisfaction (80%) and meaningful gains in conflict resolution skills, communication, and accountability. Increased access to dispute resolution services with positive resolution outcomes. The engagement of trained and supervised volunteers will result in expanded access to services and improved efficiency. Volunteers will contribute a minimum of 2,400 service hours annually, supporting at least 50 restorative or mediation cases and contributing to a 65% resolution or partial agreement rate in mediation cases. These outcomes will reflect the DRC's ability to meet community demand while maintaining service quality and positive participant experiences.</p>
2	<p>In the state of Michigan as Restorative Justice deflection and diversion programs are emerging with legal system partners, it's still not without its challenges. While we are acutely aware of the transformational impact of the restorative justice process because we</p>

witness it every-day, it continues to be misunderstood as “soft on crime” and doesn’t hold people accountable for wrong- doing or harm, within both the legal community and public at large. We feel that building a cross-center outreach campaign for South Michigan will bring higher visibility and understanding about restorative justice and increase support for these programs. Through an comprehensive outreach strategy, we hope that this will increase public awareness, volunteer recruitment, and new donorship/support. Depending the the success of the campaign, we are happy to share and be a resource to other CDRP's exploring partnerships with their local system partners through restorative justice programming.

3

Another key component that we have identified as crucial to supporting and demonstrating impact, is to have an outside Data Evaluator do a cross-center comparative data analysis with a final report that hopefully demonstrates the effectiveness and support for more restorative justice programs. Our hope is that this leads to a comprehensive report that identifies a larger need for restorative justice and what these programs need to be well resourced.

2. Describe how you will evaluate the effectiveness of the project and include how you will measure the number of people impacted.

Quantitative Measures (SMART-friendly):

80–85% of volunteers report overall satisfaction with their volunteer experience (annual survey)

75% of volunteers report feeling adequately trained and prepared for their role

80% of volunteers report that expectations and responsibilities are clear

70% of volunteers indicate they are likely to continue volunteering the following year

60% of volunteers increase their level of engagement (e.g., hours served or roles assumed) over time

Qualitative / Perception-Based Measures:

Volunteers report feeling supported by staff and supervisors

Volunteers report that their contributions are valued and impactful

Volunteers report increased confidence in facilitation or conflict resolution skills

Open-ended survey responses identify strengths and areas for improvement in volunteer management

Data Collection Methods:

Annual or biannual volunteer satisfaction surveys

Exit surveys for departing volunteers

Focus groups or structured check-ins

Retention and engagement trend analysis

3. Describe to whom dissemination of project information or results will be made and how such dissemination will occur.

Any report findings should be included in the outreach campaign being developed so, information would be shared publicly via digital content and annual reports. The DRC of Washtenaw is also under a five year county grant that requires us to also report other awards and purpose/goals/outcomes of those awards as a measure of building financial capacity and support of our programs and center.

4. If this project can be replicated, describe the ways you will assist others in the process.

As a collaborative organization, we would be happy to support other CDRP's and other organizations, locally or nationally, that have similar models and may be working with legal system partners. In fact, we have loosely consulted other organizations at the national level regarding our Restorative Justice program.

## Administration of Justice Grant Financial Information

# Form for "Administration of Justice Grant Financial Information"

1. Describe how the project will be funded after these grant funds are spent.

This grant will allow the program to be developed, implemented and integrated into daily operations so, the Directors can continue overseeing the program and find other training opportunities for our Volunteers. As a non-profit, development and fundraising are at the core of revenue building. Our annual development plan helps guide us to seek innovative ways for revenue to diversify our financial portfolio, which is also part of our strategic plans.

2. Describe any matching funds requirements from other sources for this project.

The funds from the Washtenaw County New Human Services Partnership grant aren't necessarily matching funds, but as a capacity building grant, they want to see growth in various areas, including fund development. Due to this partnership, we have been able to make our trainings financially accessible to the community in an effort to recruit more volunteers in the areas that we need. Additionally, this county grant has made it possible for us to financially build and fund the Michigan Restorative Justice Summit as an opportunity to invite, meet, and collaborate with practitioners, partners, and stakeholders of restorative practice in all its forms. The Summit also strives to continue to create spaces of dialogue, explore and expand how we practice this work, as well as, disrupting systems of colonization and oppression, building more restorative spaces, advocating for criminal legal reform in our communities, and what the future holds for RJ.

3. Complete the chart below to reflect the project's estimated budget detailed by major line items. Include only what you are requesting for this project under the MSBF funds column. (Enter numbers without punctuation – for example, 1000 rather than \$1,000.00. In addition, you will need to manually total rows, but columns will total)

Category	MSBF Funds	Other Funds	In-kind Support	Total
Personnel - Existing	25000			25000
Personnel - New				
Employee benefits				
Consultant fees	40000			40000
Travel				
Space				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Telephone				
Postage				
Printing/copies	2000			2000
Audit				
Other	8000			8000
<b>Total</b>	<b>75000.0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>75000.0</b>

4. Please describe the personnel costs above, including positions, whether or not it is a new position and projected percentage of time that the staff will spend on this project.

The personnel costs are administrative costs between all three centers so, appx \$8300 to each center. If the consultant fees add up to the anticipated cost of \$40,000, that would be for developing the volunteer management program Consultant and Data Evaluator. The print and other cost is anticipated for merchandise and print materials for the outreach campaign.

5. If you requested funding for consultant fees, space, equipment or other expenses, please describe.

See above for consultant fees.

6. Please list any funding sources that have changed in the last year, including source of funding and amount.

This is for the DRC of Washtenaw only -

-New contract with the Washtenaw County Juvenile Court - \$30,000 annual and anticipated contractual renewal - October 1, 2025 - Sept 30, 2026

-Awarded Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation EmpowerMENT Grant - \$15,000 - Youth Circles Program - June 1, 2025 - June 1, 2026

7. List the other anticipated funding sources for this project by name and amount.

	Source	Amount Requested	Amount Committed
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

8. Comments

Please add any comments you wish to provide.

(No response)