

**United States District Court
Middle District of Florida
Bench Bar Fund**

REQUESTING BENCH BAR FUNDS FOR CLE EVENTS

The Bench Bar Fund Committee encourages funding requests from local federal bar associations to sponsor meaningful continuing legal education (CLE) events to benefit the members of the Middle District of Florida Bar. These guidelines highlight important requirements associated with requesting and using Bench Bar Funds for CLE events.¹ Please review the Court's Tenth Amended Plan for Administration of Non-Appropriated Funds (Plan) and the Second Amended Parameters for Use of Bench Bar Funds (Parameters) for additional guidance.

- **In general, Bench Bar Funds can be used to pay for the following items associated with a CLE event:**
 - Food and non-alcoholic beverages (including associated service charges, taxes, and gratuities)
 - Venue and room rental fees
 - Dry cleaning of linens
 - Videography, if the video can be posted on the Court's website
 - Broadcasting expenses, if the CLE event will be broadcasted to attorneys in other divisions
 - Reasonable speaker travel and accommodation costs
 - Printing costs for CLE event materials
 - CLE approval fees

- **Bench Bar Funds should not be requested for the following items associated with a CLE event:**
 - Photography
 - Speaker fees
 - Parking fees
 - Thank you gifts for speakers
 - Alcohol

¹ These guidelines apply to CLE events funded by the Bench Bar Fund and are not intended to apply to educational outreach.

- **Bench Bar Funds should not be requested for the following types of events:**
 - CLE events that are co-sponsored by private organizations and law firms
 - Events that do not offer CLE credit (unless they are educational outreach initiatives, such as school field trips and high school essay writing contests)
 - Non-court events honoring judges or other officials but lacking a significant educational component

- **Request Bench Bar Funds in advance.**

Funding requests should be made as early as possible. Absent extraordinary circumstances, requests for pre-approval should be submitted at least 60 days before the scheduled expenditure. Requests submitted less than 60 days before the scheduled expenditure may be denied if there is insufficient time for review.

- **The Bench Bar Fund does not provide funds in advance.**

Generally, the Bench Bar Fund Committee will not provide the funds needed to pay for an event in advance. Instead, you should request pre-approval of anticipated expenses well before the event and submit reimbursement for approved expenditures after you have made payment.

- **Use the Court-approved form to request funds.**

Use this [form](#) to request Bench Bar funding. The request should include the anticipated number of attendees and, if not obvious, how the proposed CLE topic addresses professionalism, ethics, or federal practice.

- **Support your request with documentation.**

When you request pre-approval of anticipated expenses, attach a proposed expense budget and any supporting documentation (e.g., vendor quotes, prices, sales tax estimates, shipping estimates, event flyers, etc.). When you request reimbursement, attach documentation (e.g., receipts, invoices, etc.) showing payment for each expense for which reimbursement is sought.

- **Overages are not reimbursed.**

An approved request for funding is strictly limited to the amount specified. If additional funding is needed, a supplemental request must be submitted before the event or purchase. Consider requesting slightly more than your event quote in case of increased attendance.

- **Bench Bar-funded CLE events must be open to all members of the Middle District of Florida.**

Attendance at Bench Bar-funded CLE events must be open to all members of the Bar of the Middle District, subject to physical capacity restrictions. CLE events funded by Bench Bar Funds must not be limited to members of the host association. When submitting a pre-approval request, provide a flyer to be posted on the Court's website to ensure sufficient notification to all members of the Bar of the Middle District.

- **No profit allowed.**

CLE events funded by Bench Bar Funds must not generate a profit to the host association.

- **Any event registration fee must be the same for all event attendees.**

Any event registration fee must be the same for all event attendees; i.e., members of the host association cannot be charged less than non-members.

- **Credit the Bench Bar Fund.**

A bar association should acknowledge in some way that an event is being funded or partially funded by the lawyers and judges of the Middle District of Florida through the Court's Bench Bar Fund.

- **Include sales tax.**

The Court's Consumer's Certificate of Exemption for Florida Sales and Use Tax does not apply to expenses paid with Bench Bar Funds. Applicable sales tax must be included in the total sum requested for reimbursement.