

SECOND AMENDED PARAMETERS
FOR USE OF BENCH BAR FUNDS

The Bench Bar Fund¹ is intended to support matters that involve the interests of this Court, the federal courts in general, and the Bar, and for which appropriated funds are not available. As noted in the Guide to Judicial Policy “[a]ttorney admission funds must be used only for purposes that benefit the members of the bench and the bar in the administration of justice.” Guide, Vol. 4, Chapter 6, § 670.20. These second amended parameters are intended to clarify and supplement the examples of proper common uses of attorney admission funds found in Section IV of the Tenth Amended Plan for Administration of Non-Appropriated Funds, also known as the Bench Bar Fund Plan. These parameters provide guidance when making requests for funding and to the Bench Bar Fund Committee when evaluating requests. The Committee is free to consider each request on its own merit.

In general

1. Ordinarily, the Committee will not approve expenditures for events that have already occurred or for which approval is sought with insufficient time for the Committee to properly consider the request. Funding requests to the Committee should be made as early as possible and at least 60 days before the scheduled expenditure. Requests for expenditures exceeding

¹ Also known as the Middle District of Florida Non-Appropriated Fund. See Tenth Amended Guidelines and Plan for Administration of Non-Appropriated Funds.

\$35,000 and therefore requiring approval by the Board of Judges, in addition to the Committee, should be made 90 days in advance of the scheduled expenditure.

2. An approved Request for Funding is strictly limited to the amount specified. The need for additional funding over the approved amount requires approval of a supplemental Request for Funding before the event or purchase. The Committee may decline a Request for Funding seeking reimbursement of funds expended without prior approval.

3. Expenses paid with Bench Bar funds are not tax-exempt. The Court's Consumer's Certificate of Exemption for Florida Sales and Use Tax cannot be used. Applicable sales tax must be included in the total sum requested.

4. Bench Bar funds may be used for travel expenses for invited speakers or dignitaries incident to an official function of the Court, or appropriate programs, including CLE presentations. Ordinarily, the Committee will not approve funding requests for travel or for events that occur outside of the Middle District of Florida.

5. Bench Bar funded events may include the service of alcohol but no Bench Bar funds can be used for the purchase or service of alcoholic beverages.

6. If the Committee approves a funding request in special circumstances, the Committee will so note and will state that the approval is not intended to set a precedent for future funding requests.

7. Bench Bar funds also may be used in conjunction with educational programs sponsored by the Court, including for food, beverages, and educational materials, as well as for programs or receptions for naturalization ceremonies and events commemorating Constitution Day, Law Day, or other similar occasions.

8. Attendance at events funded by Bench Bar funds shall be open to all members of the Bar of the Middle District, subject to venue capacity restrictions.

Bar Association Events

9. Bar association events that are incident to an official function of the Court are appropriately funded by the Bench Bar Fund. These events include but are not limited to: investitures, portrait ceremony receptions, and retirement receptions for judicial officers; receptions upon the opening of a courthouse or exhibit within a courthouse; receptions, programs, or meals in connection with courthouse visits by legislative leaders or visiting judicial delegations from other jurisdictions or countries; receptions in connection with naturalization ceremonies; and community outreach programs.

11. Bar associations (or other lawyer groups) may seek Bench Bar funding for other activities or events that benefit the bench and the Bar in advancing the administration of justice in the Federal Courts and comport with the Bench Bar Fund Plan.

12. The Bench Bar Fund will not ordinarily support a program that is co-sponsored by a private entity.

13. Events sponsored by bar associations, which have traditionally been supported by membership dues, such as lunches or dinners honoring judges or other officials, and member-only events, generally will not qualify for Bench Bar funding.

14. Requests for pre-approval must include a proposed expense budget along with any supporting documentation (e.g., vendor quotes, prices, sales tax estimates, shipping estimates, etc.). Requests for reimbursement must include a receipt showing payment for each expense for which reimbursement is sought. Requests for reimbursement that are not accompanied by a receipt or that are in excess of the pre-approval amount will not be approved.

15. For events in a courthouse, bar associations may use the Bench Bar Fund's event equipment, but the bar association should not expect assistance from court staff. Bar associations must ensure that any court space used for an event is returned to its court-operation status afterward. For

additional information, see the attached tip sheet on Bench Bar Fund event equipment.

Investiture, Senior Portrait, and Retirement Receptions

16. Bench Bar funds will be provided for investitures, portrait ceremony receptions, and retirement receptions for judicial officers. No private solicitation from the Bar, attorneys, or other businesses or persons may be made to augment the Bench Bar funding, except that the judge may personally pay any excess amount.

17. Notwithstanding a judge's use of Bench Bar funds for an investiture, senior status celebration, or retirement event, the judge may accept an offer or offers to pay for the costs of service of alcoholic beverages, from a voluntary bar association, member of the judge's family, or the judge's former law firm from which the judge is recused. The amount to be contributed must be agreed upon in advance, and in the event the alcoholic beverage costs exceed the amount agreed upon, the judge must pay the excess.

**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.

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FAQS FOR USING BBF EVENT EQUIPMENT

For the convenience of sponsors of Bench Bar funded events held at a Middle District courthouse, the Bench Bar Fund has basic event equipment including tables, chairs, linens, et cetera. For a list of available items, please email FLMD_Bench_Bar_Fund_Request@flmd.uscourts.gov.

- **How do I reserve and access the borrowed event equipment?** The event equipment is stored in a secure location in the courthouse. Please contact the division manager in advance to reserve the event equipment, to coordinate a time to retrieve equipment from storage before the event, and to learn how to return the equipment after the event.
- **How do I setup and break down the event equipment?** Please arrive to your event with sufficient volunteers to retrieve the equipment from storage and to setup the room. For an average-sized event, we recommend arriving one hour before the event to ensure space and technology needs are met. At the conclusion of your event, please break down and return the equipment to storage. If you need to set up the room a day or more before the event, please request permission to do so from the division manager.
- **What if the items I need are not available?** Please contact an event rental equipment company to rent items that are not available in BBF storage and include that cost on the preapproval request.
- **What do I do with borrowed linens?** Please ensure that the linens are dry cleaned and returned to the Division Manager. Include dry cleaning expenses in your preapproval request.