

Government of India
Ministry of Law and Justice
Department of Legal Affairs
(Judicial Section)

Kartavya Bhawan 2, New Delhi.
Dated: 20th August, 2026

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

**SUB: GUIDELINES FOR EMPANELMENT OF ADVOCATES AS PANEL COUNSEL
REPRESENTING UNION OF INDIA BEFORE THE HON'BLE SUPREME COURT AND
VARIOUS HIGH COURTS/DISTRICT & SUBORDINATE COURTS AND
TRIBUNALS/FORUMS.**

The Department of Legal Affairs has been given the mandate for the conduct of litigation on behalf of the Union of India before various Courts, Tribunals and Forums. For this purpose, the Department empanels Advocates as 'Panel Counsel' generally for a period of three years.

Empanelment

1. Essential Qualifications

- 1.1** The Applicant should have a Bachelor's degree in law from a university/college recognized by the Bar Council of India.
- 1.2** The Applicant must be enrolled with the respective State Bar Council in accordance with the Advocates Act, 1961.
- 1.3** The Applicant must have qualified the All-India Bar Examination (AIBE) and obtained Certificate of Practice (CoP).

2. Eligibility and Experience

- 2.1** The Advocates may be considered for empanelment subject to the fulfillment of experience of legal practice as per **Annexure-I**. Consideration will be given to the nature, complexity, and category of cases handled, level of responsibility, and the advocate's ability to conduct high-stakes matters.
- 2.2** The Advocates with experience in Special Laws (Income Tax, Customs, GST, PMLA etc.) may be considered for specialized panels representing the Union before Courts, Tribunals and quasi-judicial fora.
- 2.3** The Advocates having previous experience of legal work of 10 years during the Government Service may be considered for empanelment based on their area of expertise.
- 2.4** The overall performance track record, conduct and integrity of an Advocate during the empanelment process will also be considered.

3. Process of Empanelment: Application Process and Documents to be submitted

3.1 Applications for empanelment shall be submitted in the prescribed format as provided in **Annexure-II (Application for Empanelment)** and addressed to the Deputy Secretary, Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice. The application for empanelment may be sent by email at **panelcounsel-dla@gov.in**

3.2 The applications shall be scrutinized by the officers of the Department to verify compliance with the prescribed eligibility criteria, completeness of the application, authenticity of the documents submitted, and suitability of the applicant for empanelment. On scrutiny, any Application not found in desired format/illegible/ incomplete/not containing clear information, or failing to fulfill the eligibility criteria shall be summarily rejected.

4. Documents to be submitted: The application shall be accompanied by the following documents and information:

4.1 Name of the Court/Tribunal for which empanelment is sought.

4.2 Duly signed application in the prescribed format (**Annexure-II**), including the applicant's bio-data containing contact details, educational qualifications, professional experience, and Bar Council Enrolment Number.

4.3 Self-attested copies of certificates and testimonials in support of educational qualifications and other relevant credentials.

4.4 Copies of empanelment orders issued by any other Government Department, Public Sector Undertaking, statutory body, or other organization, if applicable.

4.5 A signed undertaking expressing willingness to abide by all the terms and conditions, including the fee structure and other instructions, as may be sought by the Department of Legal Affairs from time to time.

4.6 A declaration stating that the applicant has not been convicted of any criminal offence, including an offence involving moral turpitude, and is not disqualified, debarred, or otherwise prohibited from practice by any Court, Bar Council, or other competent authority.

5. Disqualification

An Advocate shall be disqualified for empanelment, if he suffers from any disqualification prescribed under Section 24A of the Advocate's Act, 1961, or/and has been subject to any professional disqualification by the Bar Council or/and if they have previously abused their position as an advocate in a manner detrimental to the interests of the Union of India.

6. Tenure and Performance review

The tenure of empanelment shall be for a period of three years or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Performance of empaneled advocates shall be reviewed on annual basis.

7. Professional fees

Professional fees will be admissible to the Panel Counsel for the conduct of litigation assigned to them.

8. De- empanelment and Resignation

8.1 The Advocates may be de-empanelled as Panel Counsel at any time by the Central Government for acting against instructions, failing to return briefs, misappropriation of money (court fees/costs etc.), contempt of court, professional misconduct, or conviction by a court of Law.

8.2 An empanelled advocate may resign by giving at least one month's prior notice in writing to the Central Government. During the notice period in the event of resignation, and also upon expiry, termination, or non-renewal of empanelment, the advocate shall return all original case files, records, documents, briefs, and any other property belonging to the Ministry/Department/Organization to the competent authority or to an officer duly authorized by the competent authority, and shall ensure the orderly handover of all pending matters within a period of 15 days from the date of commencement of the notice period or, as the case may be, from the date of expiry, termination, or non-renewal of the empanelment.

8.3 The one month prior notice may be relaxed with the approval of Competent Authority.

9. Other terms and conditions

9.1 The empanelled advocate shall not assign, transfer, or delegate any case, brief, or matter entrusted to them to any other advocate without the prior written approval of the competent authority.

9.2 The empanelled advocate shall maintain strict confidentiality with respect to all information, records, documents, and matters relating to the Ministry/Department/Organization and shall not disclose any such information to any unauthorized person.

9.3 The allocation of cases, briefs, or legal matters to an empanelled advocate shall be entirely at the discretion of the Department of Legal Affairs. Empanelment shall not confer any right or guarantee to receive a minimum number of assignments.

9.4 The professional fees payable to the empanelled advocate shall be governed by the fee schedule approved by the Department of Legal Affairs, as amended or revised from time to time.

9.5 The empanelled advocate shall comply with all instructions, guidelines, and directions issued by the Department of Legal Affairs from time to time in connection with their empanelment and the conduct of legal matters.

9.6 By accepting empanelment, the advocate agrees to abide by all the terms and conditions of empanelment, including any amendments or additional conditions that may be prescribed by the Central Government from time to time.

10. Implementation of Guidelines

These guidelines are effective from the date of issuance. All previous empanelment of Advocates as Panel Counsel notified by the Department of Legal Affairs shall continue to remain valid and in operation till the completion of the respective tenure.
