



# STRATEGIC PLAN



Legal Aid of  
Arkansas

2016-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Committee, and Staff

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# STRATEGIC PLAN

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arkansas is on the cusp of a crisis in how we respond to the need for equal access to justice for the poor. The most humble among us should be the peer of the most affluent when seeking justice. This concept cannot come to fruition absent a strong legal aid presence. A widening justice gap has implications beyond economic and social inequities. It undermines the very fabric on which our country is built.

Legal Aid of Arkansas is charged with providing legal services to low-income and indigent individuals and families, but the world does not provide us with sufficient resources to accomplish this mission, requiring a thoughtful and deliberate allocation of assets available. This Strategic Plan expresses how Legal Aid will respond to this challenge, being mindful of resource limitations and that some parts of the plan may remain aspirational as priorities are set moving forward.

By focusing on six strategic changes, this Plan will provide concrete help on the legal issues of clients while it also seeks to alter some of the fundamental underpinnings that support such conditions. These strategies will impact access to safe and affordable housing, reduce barriers to employment, enhance protection from domestic violence, expand service delivery to marginalized communities, protect consumer rights, and improve access to public benefits, health care and education. The entire plan is designed to improve measures in these areas.

Goals, Objectives, and Key Strategies are identified which will move Legal Aid toward achieving six strategic changes.

Legal Aid's first goal is to **increase access** to civil legal services and the civil justice system. To achieve this goal, Legal Aid will pursue five main objectives: (1) increasing the efficiencies of organizational processes; (2) ensuring that the organization is inclusive for all clients; (3) utilizing alternate service delivery models; (4) supporting partner efforts to increase *pro se* resources; and (5) increasing *pro bono* or moderate means representation.

Legal Aid's second goal is to **provide high quality, impactful legal services**. Organizational resources will be allocated to meet client needs across all civil legal areas. Advocates will utilize a broad range of advocacy strategies to meet client needs. A focus on developing legal expertise and identifying and measuring key legal outcomes will help Legal Aid's impact grow over the next five years.

Legal Aid's third goal is to **strengthen engagement and collaboration** with community stakeholders, partners, and client communities. This goal includes increasing intentional communication strategies for all key audiences, as well as strategies for targeting legal outreach and education for the greatest impact.

Legal Aid's fourth goal is to **strengthen the recruitment, retention, and professional development** of all staff. The organization will continue to be a preferred public interest employer, ensuring that all staff receive meaningful orientation and training, professional development opportunities, and performance reviews.

Legal Aid's fifth goal is to **provide for the organization's long-term financial stability**. This includes continuing to grow the diversity of Legal Aid's funding, as well as building an operational reserve fund.

Legal Aid's final goal is to **maintain a well-governed and well-administered organization**. This goal includes strategies to increase organization infrastructure; address human resources, administration, and logistical considerations; and strengthen the Board of Directors.

The Legal Aid which emerges at the end of this strategic plan will be more effective in addressing client and community needs; more comprehensive in its advocacy role; and bend the arc of history toward a society with more equitable access to justice.

THE PLAN

**Mission: The mission of Legal Aid of Arkansas is to champion equal justice for low-income individuals and communities and to remedy the conditions that burden and marginalize them.**

**Vision: *Fighting poverty. Maintaining dignity. Assuring justice.***

Goal One: Increase Access

- Efficient and accessible intake and office systems
- Culturally competent, inclusive staff and policies
- Accessible pro se materials and client communications

Goal Two: High quality, impactful legal services

- Substantive legal expertise
- Services prioritized across all civil legal needs
- Multi-forum advocacy strategies
- Growing impact on individuals and communities

Goal Three: Community engagement and collaboration

- Strong communication with stakeholders & client community
- Targeted outreach and legal education

Goal Four: Strong recruitment, retention, & professional development of all staff

- Continuing to be a preferred public interest employer
- Training, professional development, & performance reviews

Goal Five: Long-term financial stability

- Diverse and growing funding sources
- A well-funded operational reserve fund

Goal Six: Well-governed and well-administered organization

- Organizational infrastructure
- Strong, involved board

## INTRODUCTION

For the next five years, Legal Aid of Arkansas (Legal Aid) will be guided by this Plan, which represents a strategic approach to fulfilling our mission within the limited resources available. The Plan represents hours of research, thinking and decision-making about the future direction of Legal Aid and reflects the fundamental concept that strategic planning must be an integral part of management. The Plan outlines our goals and objectives to implement our mission to enhance access to justice for low-income Arkansans.

This Plan will continue the organization’s efforts to align its priorities and resource allocations with its mission and goals. The Plan reflects Legal Aid’s role in efforts to fight poverty and ensure equal access to justice.

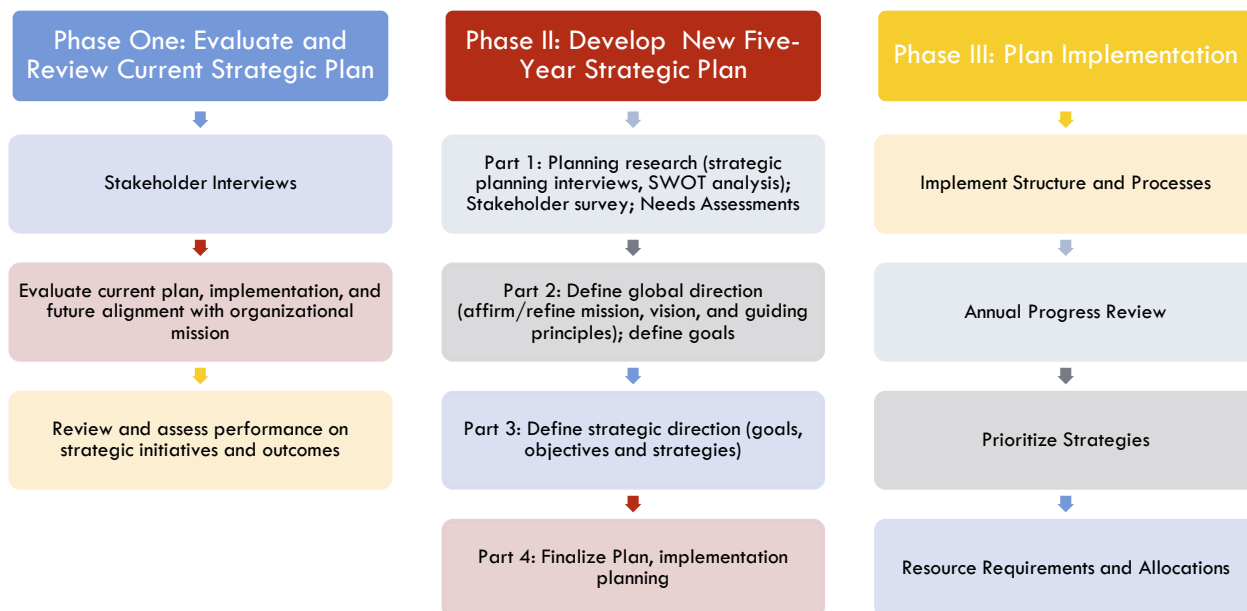
## OUR PROCESS

This Plan builds on Legal Aid’s successful 2011-2015 Strategic Plan and over a decade of organizational reflection and intentional planning. The 2011-2015 Plan led to an organizational restructuring which fundamentally changed the organization’s intake processes; increased the number of outreach, education, and alternative service delivery programs; increased the impact of services across all civil legal needs; and expanded and diversity of program funding.

In the winter of 2015, a strategic planning committee was formed consisting of board members Helen Jenkins, John Deitenbeck, Lori Chumbler, & Bev Claunch; and Legal Aid staff members Jason Auer, Shea Crosby, Barbara Griffin, Heather Hersh, Kevin De Liban, Heidi Jamison, Beth Shoupe, & Maria Tommey.

Throughout the process, the committee has worked closely with leaders from Legal Aid and partner organization, including Lee Richardson, Elizabeth King, Marshall Prettyman, and Margaret Reger of Legal Aid; Val Price of the Legal Aid Board of Directors; Jean Carter and Dustin Duke of the Center for Arkansas Legal Services (CALC); Vince Morris and Victor Richardson of the Arkansas Legal Services Partnership (ALSP); and Amy Johnson and Chuck Goldner of the Arkansas Access to Justice Commission (ATJC). Part-time Legal Aid staff member Amy Pritchard served as a facilitator in the process of developing a new strategic plan.

### STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS



Phase One of the committee's work was to evaluate and review the success of the current strategic plan. This included collecting and reviewing data on outcomes since the implementation of the plan.

Phase Two of the process was developing a new five-year strategic plan. The committee began by reviewing organizational feedback collected through interviews, staff meetings, and surveys, including an analysis of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The committee reviewed the 2012 LSC performance evaluation report; performance data including annual LSC grant reports and Legal Server data; and client needs data and stakeholder feedback in the 2013 Legal Needs report created by the Clinton School of Public Service. After reviewing this research, the committee reviewed its mission, vision, and guiding principles; and developed goals, objectives, and strategic approaches for the coming five years.

Phase Three will be implementing and evaluating the Strategic Plan. This is an ongoing process to ensure the Plan becomes the blueprint through which Legal Aid can grow and change over the next five years.

## MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

### A. Mission Statement

The mission of Legal Aid of Arkansas is to champion equal justice for low-income individuals and communities and to remedy the conditions that burden and marginalize them.

### B. Vision Statement

Fighting poverty. Maintaining dignity. Assuring justice.

### C. Core Values

Legal Aid believes that as a high quality legal aid program, we will:

- Zealously represent clients.
- Treat clients with respect and dignity.
- Respect the goals and outcomes desired by each client.
- Promote understanding of and sensitivity to the circumstances of those living in poverty.
- Focus on advocacy that responds to underlying conditions and practices that adversely affect low-income communities or disproportionately affect people who are marginalized and made vulnerable by race, religion, disability, national origin, sexual identification and other factors.
- Work in collaboration with community partners to identify and address the most pressing needs of the low-income community.
- Maintain an active involvement in eligible-client communities.
- Assure awareness, visibility, and accessibility of Legal Aid's services.
- Provide a healthy and fulfilling work environment for staff, encouraging open communication and collective decision making.
- Create strong relationships and partnerships with the legal and client-eligible communities.
- Foster effective and thoughtful leadership, administration, and board governance and involvement.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

Legal Aid of Arkansas provides legal representation for low-income residents in thirty-one Arkansas counties. While the need for legal representation is great nationwide, with low-income households facing up to three legal problems each year,<sup>1</sup> Arkansans face greater challenges accessing the legal system as they experience poverty at the one of the highest rates nationally,<sup>2</sup> while having access to one of the lowest rates of legal representation per capita.<sup>3</sup>

Individuals living in poverty struggle to afford basic necessities, including food, housing, or transportation. Unmet basic needs are often compounded by systemic barriers, such as an inefficient government benefits application or recertification process; or unscrupulous third parties, such as a landlord engaging in self-help evictions or discrimination. As a result, individuals often need legal representation to escape domestic violence; alleviate food insecurity; access health or educational services; address abuses by employers or creditors; or ensure safe and stable housing.

Arkansas has some of the worst poverty-related social indicators nationwide: Arkansas ranks highest in food insecurity;<sup>4</sup> has the nation's second highest divorce rate;<sup>5</sup> ranks third lowest in higher education attainment, and fourth highest in teen birth rates.<sup>6</sup> Arkansas's landlord-tenant laws are also nationally notorious, as Arkansas is the only state without a warranty of habitability and that criminalizes a tenant's failure to vacate a rental unit after missing a rent payment.

A 2013 survey of low-income Arkansan families found that in the two years prior to the survey, 38 percent had experienced family law issues, 21 percent had problems with their government benefits, 21 percent had consumer law issues, 15 percent had health law issues, 15 percent needed assistance with wills and related matters, 13 percent had housing law issues, 9 percent had education issues, and 7 percent had legal problems with their employment.<sup>7</sup>

One-third of the counties served by Legal Aid experience persistent poverty, which is defined as having - poverty rates of at least 20 percent in each of the U.S. Censuses 1980, 1990, and 2000, and American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2007-11.<sup>8</sup> Sixty-seven percent (21) of the counties in the Legal Aid service area also have experienced persistent child poverty over the past three decades.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Legal Services Corporation. (2009). *Documenting the Justice Gap In America: The Current Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*. Washington, D.C. Retrieved from [http://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/LSC/pdfs/documenting\\_the\\_justice\\_gap\\_in\\_america\\_2009.pdf](http://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/LSC/pdfs/documenting_the_justice_gap_in_america_2009.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> In 2013, Arkansas had the fourth highest rate nationally of individuals living in poverty (19.4 percent), with 28.3 percent of children being raised in poverty. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2013). Available from County-level Data Sets.

<sup>3</sup> While the national per capita average of attorneys is 4.11 per 1,000 residents, with the overall Arkansas average is 2.04 per 1,000. Lisa Pruitt et al. (2015). *Access to Justice in Rural Arkansas*. UC Davis Legal Studies Research Paper Series, Davis, CA.

<sup>4</sup> Talk Poverty. (2014). *Half in Ten Year Report*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <http://talkpoverty.org/state-year-report/arkansas-2014-report/>

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Glass and Philip Levchak's (Feb. 2014). *Red States, Blue States, and Divorce: Understanding Regional Variation in Divorce Rates*. American Journal of Sociology.

<sup>6</sup> Talk Poverty.

<sup>7</sup> Amelia Lafont et al. (2013). *Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Arkansans: 2013 Needs Assessment Final Report*. University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, Little Rock, AR. Retrieved at <http://www.arlegalservices.org/system/files/LAA-CALS%20Needs%20Assessment%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> These counties are: Crittenden, Lee, Mississippi, Monroe, Newton, Phillips, Poinsett, St. Francis, Searcy, and Woodruff. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. (2014). Persistent Poverty County dataset. Retrieved at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-poverty-well-being/geography-of-poverty.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

In addition to high rates of poverty, rural Arkansans also face an extremely low rate of attorneys per capita. Nine of the counties in the Legal Aid service area have less than one private attorney per 1,000 residents.<sup>10</sup> Despite the great number of eligible Arkansans needing legal assistance, resource constraints greatly limit Legal Aid's ability to provide representation. In 2013, 720,259 Arkansans were financially eligible to receive services from Legal Aid.

## OUR APPROACH

### *As a public interest law firm, Legal Aid:*

- Pursues its mission through legal advice and representation, community partnerships, and education to empower clients and combat injustice.
- Provides high quality legal services to low-income families and individuals facing serious threats to their personal, economic, or family stability.
- Works in collaboration with community partners to identify and respond to problems faced by low-income communities.

Legal Aid services center on supporting families; preserving the home; maintaining economic stability; ensuring safety, stability, and health; and addressing the needs of populations with special vulnerabilities, always being mindful of problems that uniquely or disproportionately affect distinct and significant segments of the eligible client population. Legal Aid takes care to implement a holistic approach to developing the capacities and fostering self-sufficiency of clients and client communities.

Legal Aid staff is grouped into four substantive-focus workgroups—consumer law, protection from domestic violence, economic justice, and housing law—that are responsible for providing legal representation for cases in their substantive focus area, as well as:

- developing case acceptance priorities and making case acceptance decisions;
- identifying potential impact issues to be addressed;
- distributing statewide and national legal and legislative updates;
- developing educational, outreach, interviewing, and litigation tools;
- training all staff to increase understanding and identification of legal issues; and
- partnering with other community groups and taskforces working on these issues.

In order to meet the legal needs of clients and client communities, Legal Aid employs a full-range of advocacy strategies, including but not limited to providing legal information, advice, and referrals; limited or full legal representation; self-help and pro se clinics, tools, and materials; utilization of pro bono assets; community legal education; individual, affirmative, and strategic litigation; administrative advocacy; community economic development, and other methods.

As set forth in Criterion 2 of the LSC Performance Criteria, Legal Aid has and will continue to consider the need for legal assistance in all types of civil legal cases and all types of representation. Further, Legal Aid intentionally allocates its limited resources to meet the most pressing legal needs of the eligible-client population. Legal Aid engages in a periodic comprehensive assessment of the most pressing legal problems of the low income-population as outlined in Performance Area One of the LSC Performance Criteria, being flexible and responsive in adjusting to needs in the population that emerge or develop.

<sup>10</sup> Fulton (0.16 per 1,000); Izard (0.51 per 1,000); Lee (0.77 per 1,000); Madison (0.38 per 1,000); Monroe (0.98 per 1,000); Newton (0.12 per 1,000); Searcy (0.61 per 1,000); Stone (0.32 per 1,000); and Woodruff (0.83 per 1,000). Pruitt et. al.



As certain client communities face particular barriers to accessing legal services or may need additional non-legal resources to address their issues, Legal Aid employs a number of targeted initiatives to provide meaningful services to underserved and vulnerable communities, such as immigrants, veterans, individuals with criminal records, and individuals facing homelessness. These initiatives, often developed or staffed by legal fellows, feature strong partnerships with community organizations.

Legal Aid will be mindful of an underlying goal to alleviate poverty, ameliorate the impact of poverty, and protect basic human rights. This plan is cognizant of the decades of research in eliminating poverty. As a result, this plan focuses on the key issues of combating generational poverty in an effort to provide the framework for families in our community to make the transition out of poverty. The plan contemplates an approach focusing on the legal factors that keep families in generational poverty, such as barriers to accessing income supports and employment, lack of appropriate educational services, and barriers to accessing healthcare. In addition, the plan will strive to focus assets on issues that cause situational poverty, to ensure the downtrodden are able to rebound and rebuild when hit by unforeseen tragedy.

This plan is centered on Legal Aid's clients and client communities and is grounded in the American Bar Association Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid, the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) Performance Criteria, and Legal Work Standards for Legal Aid adopted in 2009.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Plan was approved by the Legal Aid of Arkansas board of directors on September 26, 2015. This Plan outlines the overall goals for the next five years, as well as general strategies for reaching these strategies.

The Plan will be implemented through the use of annual plans that prioritize the most important goals and objectives and include specific measurable objectives, action items with individual assignments, and timelines. These plans include: (1) action plan and yearly objectives; (2) workgroup plans; (3) development plan; (4) technology plan; (5) communications plan; (6) board development plan; (7) outreach and community education plans; and (8) development of an annual work plan for the ALSA. Legal Aid will also actively participate in the statewide website stakeholders committee and assist with development of an annual work/development plan for the website. By 2017, all annual plans will be integrated into a yearly business plan. The Plan also relies on the use of data to measure the impact of given strategies and changes.

Plan implementation will be overseen by the Legal Aid management team, which includes the executive director, regional managers, workgroup leaders, and human resources manager. Board members, community partners and others will be involved as appropriate. The success of the Plan and its various goals will be very much dependent on a wide range of staff, Board members and community partners providing leadership, contributing their time and taking ownership of the goals, strategies and action steps. Overall monitoring of the implementation will be the responsibility of Legal Aid of Arkansas's executive director, with periodic reports to the board of directors.

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## STRATEGIC PLAN

### Goal One: Increase Access to Civil Legal Services and the Civil Justice System

**Objective 1.1: Legal Aid's intake and case management processes will become more efficient and effective.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **1.1.1:** Utilize a business process analysis model to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of intake and case management processes. As part of this process, Legal Aid will compile organizational data; outline and evaluate current processes; research best practices; develop recommendations for improvement; revise processes; train staff on revisions; and evaluate results.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team, all case handlers
- **Measurable Outcomes:** case processing times, numbers of cases closed as unreportable, case outcomes, client survey feedback

**Objective 1.2: All staff will be able to communicate effectively with non-English speakers; persons with cognitive, mental health, or other disabilities; and individuals from different cultures.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **1.2.1:** Review and revise Legal Aid's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan, as needed.
  - **1.2.2:** Train all new employees on LEP and nondiscrimination policies.
  - **1.2.3:** Train all staff periodically on working with interpreters, including Language Line, culturally competent client representation, working with individuals with disabilities, and working with people in crisis.
  - **1.2.4:** Develop and implement a system for determining which materials are most important to LEP communities and ensuring that they are translated and updated.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team, ALSP
- **Measurable Outcomes:** client satisfaction survey results, staff survey results, case outcome data, numbers of translated documents

**Objective 1.3: A growing number of low-income Arkansans will access legal services and the justice system through alternate service delivery models.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **1.3.1:** Target outreach sites to offer alternate access points for clients who face barriers in accessing telephone and internet services, such as residents of underserved rural counties, immigrants, and the elderly.
  - **1.3.2:** As external funding is available, continue existing successful helpdesk model in Washington County; support efforts to expand and fund new *pro se* help desk(s) throughout service area.
  - **1.3.3:** Utilize collaborative outreach partnerships such as medical-legal partnerships (MLPs), drug court partnerships, etc.; developing new partnership programs when they are budget neutral or when partner, grant, or fellowship funding is available.

- **1.3.4:** Explore the use of technology, such as video conferencing, to connect staff and pro bono resources to individuals in remote, underserved, or hard-to-reach communities.
- **Persons Responsible:** Helpline manager, ATJC, executive director
- **Measurable Outcomes:** outreach contacts and applications, helpdesk contacts, number and impact of collaborative partnership programs

**Objective 1.4: The number of accurate, up-to-date, and quality pro se resources will increase annually.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **1.4.1:** Support partners' efforts to develop and implement processes to ensure pro se educational materials and forms are created and updated regularly.
  - **1.4.2:** Ensure that each staff member helps to develop, update or review for currency at least one legal education tool (article, fact sheet, legal form) quarterly.
  - **1.4.3:** Support partners' efforts with the courts and other stakeholders to reduce barriers to court access and achieve fair resolution of legal problems for pro se litigants, including system changes that would reduce the need for pro se assistance (judicial rules or process changes, advocating for changes in the way the courts address family law issues, etc.).
- **Persons Responsible:** ATJC, ALSP, workgroup leaders, executive director
- **Measurable Outcomes:** numbers of pro se website materials

**Objective 1.5: The combined number of cases served through pro bono or moderate means panels will increase.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **1.5.1:** Actively develop alternatives for non-priority family law applicants, such as supporting the development of moderate means panels statewide.
  - **1.5.2:** Work with statewide partners to identify best practices to increase the number of pro bono attorneys and pro bono participation.
  - **1.5.3:** Work with partners to determine whether pro bono processes could be further streamlined statewide.
  - **1.5.4:** Work with statewide partners to determine whether rules changes, such as mandatory pro bono reporting, would improve pro bono participation.
  - **1.5.5:** Provide training to pro bono attorneys on poverty and substantive legal issues
  - **1.5.6:** Develop and implement a system to collect and report outcomes achieved by pro bono attorneys.
- **Persons Responsible:** domestic violence workgroup, ALSP, ATJC, PAI coordinator(s)
- **Measurable Outcomes:** numbers of pro bono and moderate means panel members and cases

## Goal Two: Provide High Quality Legal Services that Achieve the Most Meaningful Results Possible.

### Objective 2.1: Legal Aid will provide high quality casework in all cases.

- **Strategies:**
  - **2.1.1:** Ensure that all legal work is performed in accordance to the Legal Aid Legal Work Standards, reviewing and revising Standards as necessary.
  - **2.1.2:** Make legal quality an important factor in annual performance reviews. Factors will include file mooting, legal work observations, peer input and review, and any other methods as may be developed.
  - **2.1.3:** Identify substantive experts inside and outside legal services, including law schools, pro bono partners, and national support centers, who are willing to consult on individual cases and systemic projects. Consider developing substantive pro bono panels and including them in program workgroup meetings or statewide taskforces.
  - **2.1.4:** Develop and implement a process for sharing and updating standardized legal pleadings and legal research, as well as ensuring that standardized pleadings are legally sufficient and up-to-date.
  - **2.1.5:** Develop and maintain a centralized source of learning resources, including knowledgeable Legal Aid and pro bono advocates, published materials, websites and internet sources, online advocate knowledge bases, and regularly updated practice guides.
  - **2.1.6:** Prioritize the hiring of a litigation director or a statewide advocacy coordinator, as funding allows.
  - **2.1.7:** Support the development of statewide substantive taskforces.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team, ALSP
- **Measurable Outcomes:** legal work quality review results, advocate website usage

### Objective 2.2: Client needs will be prioritized across all civil legal areas, and staff resources will be allocated across all prioritized case types.

- **Strategies**
  - **2.2.1:** Annually prioritize case type acceptance and other workgroup priorities, ensuring to train all staff and management on case acceptance priorities and factors for case acceptance.
  - **2.2.2:** Collaborate with community partners and client communities to identify eligible client needs, impact issues, and potential clients and cases.
  - **2.2.3:** Support advocates to develop legal expertise in their substantive focus areas, ensuring that the number of cases accepted do not exceed the capacity of resources assigned to any given workgroup.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team
- **Measurable Outcomes:** case types and outcomes

**Objective 2.3: Advocates will utilize a broad range of advocacy strategies to meet client legal needs.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **2.3.1:** Periodically, review available data for any changes in client legal needs, such as surveys, interviews, web usage and document requests, analysis of any other available and relevant data, and other emerging methods; consider another comprehensive client needs study in 2018.
  - **2.3.2:** Annually, workgroups will develop work plans which include strategies for addressing priority systemic issues, including developing tools for self represented litigation, litigation, community lawyering, substantive community legal education, administrative agency advocacy, and media campaigns. As part of this process, the management team should consider what percentage of its resources should be devoted to intake and advice cases, pro se assistance, community education and outreach, individual representation, and impact projects or cases.
  - **2.3.3:** Each advocate should be an active member in at least one community taskforce or partnership project related to his or her substantive workgroup.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team
- **Measurable Outcomes:** number of “other services” reported

**Objective 2.4: The impact of Legal Aid’s work on client communities will continue to grow.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **2.4.1:** Each workgroup will identify at least three data points to track the impact of their work, such as number of people impacted or case outcomes. Legal Aid will also consider classifying cases based on complexity and time required in order to accurately assess caseloads, determine case assignments, and identify cases where support may be required.
  - **2.4.2:** Train staff to develop creative solutions to entrenched problems of poverty, including use of national resources, and to implement solutions.
  - **2.4.3:** Develop and implement initiative-specific metrics, to determine the effectiveness of population specific projects and fellowships. Provide regular data to management team.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team
- **Measurable Outcomes:** outcome data determined by workgroup and management teams

**Goal Three: Strengthen Engagement and Collaboration with Community Stakeholders, Partners, and Client Communities**

**Objective 3.1: Community awareness and support for Legal Aid’s mission and services will increase.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **3.1.1:** Develop an annual communications plan to ensure that Legal Aid provides regular communication about its activities, services to clients, and the importance of access to justice to the community as a whole and to key constituents (including funders, other agencies working with low-income Arkansans, the private bar, and the courts). This plan should include targeted advertising, outreach, media contacts, and social media plans.
  - **3.1.2:** Train workgroup leaders and regional managers on working with the media.

- **3.1.3:** Coordinate with statewide partners to ensure consistent branding of Legal Aid and to highlight legal aid in partner communications.
- **3.1.4:** Review website to determine how it can better inform public and potential donors about Legal Aid and its work.
- **Persons Responsible:** communications director, executive director, ALSP, ATJC
- **Measurable Outcomes:** communications data (“other services”)

**Objective 3.2: Outreach efforts will lead to a measurable increase in access for targeted and underserved clients.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **3.2.1:** Identify communities and special populations who are underserved and determine the most significant barriers to accessing Legal Aid’s services.
  - **3.2.2:** Develop an annual outreach plan that includes (1) each workgroup’s plan for outreach on priority legal issues, (2) plans for targeted outreach to isolated or underserved communities, and (3) strategies for addressing any identified barriers to access.
  - **3.2.3:** Align outreach around priority issues and cases so that community partners and client communities can assist with advocacy and case identification.
  - **3.2.4:** Identify and build relationships with community partners who share Legal Aid’s goal of improving the lives of low-income and other vulnerable Arkansans.
- **Persons Responsible:** communications director, workgroup leaders
- **Measurable Outcomes:** intake and outreach data

## Goal Four: Continually Strengthen the Recruitment, Retention, and Professional Development of All Staff

**Objective 4.1: Legal Aid will continue to be a preferred public interest employer, with staff and attorney longevity increasing**

- **Strategies:**
  - **4.1.1:** Continue to hire staff that reflects the eligible client community and continue to educate staff on culturally competent client representation.
  - **4.1.2:** Continue to develop partnerships with local law schools that expose law students to public interest law and increase public interest opportunities for legal graduates, such as the Road to Justice spring break program, legal externships and internships, and the AmeriCorps J.D. and Justice for Arkansans programs.
  - **4.1.3:** Determine whether there are recurrent reasons attributable to the program that cause employees to leave, and to the extent possible, will develop strategies to address any such issues and promote retention.
  - **4.1.4:** Conduct periodic salary and benefits reviews and implement recommendations as financially feasible.
  - **4.1.5:** Make all staff aware of available employee assistance programs and the organization will consider ways to identify and support employees experiencing compassion fatigue.
  - **4.1.6:** Evaluate opportunities to support remote worksites.
  - **4.1.7:** Conduct periodic workplace satisfaction surveys to ascertain what staff members think is working well and ways they believe the organization could improve its work environment.
- **Persons Responsible:** executive director, HR manager

- **Measurable Outcomes:** workplace satisfaction surveys, staff longevity

**Objective 4.2: 100% of all new staff will be trained according to new staff protocols.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **4.2.1:** Train new attorneys according to the New Attorney Training Protocol, which will be reviewed and revised, if needed.
  - **4.2.2:** Develop and implement a new non-attorney staff training protocol, or protocols that reflect specific job duties.
  - **4.2.3:** Continue to assign a legal mentor to new attorneys; form young attorney's focus group either program or statewide, which will meet quarterly to share ideas and knowledge and make suggestions and recommendations to management.
  - **4.2.4:** Develop and maintain standardized training materials on organizational policies and procedures.
  - **4.2.5:** Continue providing annual training to legal and administrative staff.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team, ALSP
- **Measurable Outcomes:** staff training data

**Objective 4.3: Ensure that all staff has professional development opportunities, performance reviews, and training relevant to their role with Legal aid and individual career goals.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **4.3.1:** Evaluate and strengthen the performance review instrument and process.
  - **4.3.2:** Periodically review and update job descriptions as necessary to accurately reflect staff roles and responsibilities. Incorporate strategic plan goals, objectives, and plans of action into performance reviews where practical.
  - **4.3.3:** Conduct performance reviews annually, including professional development goals as part of the review process.
  - **4.3.4:** Encourage staff interested in assuming leadership roles to incorporate appropriate activities in their professional development goals to support these aspirations.
  - **4.3.5:** Offer regular CLE and substantive training to all staff.
  - **4.3.6:** Train all staff regularly on organizational policies and procedures.
  - **4.3.7:** Develop guidelines for legal caseload volume with expectations for case mix and productivity based on best practice.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team, ALSP
- **Measurable Outcomes:** staff performance evaluation data, training data

## Goal Five: Provide for the Long-Term Financial Stability of Legal Aid

**Objective 5.1: Continue to grow the diversity of Legal Aid's funding, with no more than 50% of funding coming from LSC.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **5.1.1:** Create a resource development plan, with resource development focused on meeting program priorities and achieving program goals. Included in the resource development plan should be plans to develop relationships with foundation funders; plans for at least one specific community impact project per year; plans to cooperate with statewide efforts to increase state funding; plans to network and develop relationships with members of the legislative delegation; plans regarding postgraduate fellowships; and plans for aggressively pursuing attorneys' fees in appropriate situations.
  - **5.1.2:** Train involved staff on grant writing and resource development
  - **5.1.3:** Assist Arkansas Access to Justice Foundation in the continuation and expansion of the annual statewide fundraising campaign.
  - **5.1.4:** Annually, assess funding sources to ensure that they are consistent with program priorities and achieving strategic plan goals.
  - **5.1.5:** Consider a large-scale fundraising event to celebrate Legal Aid's fiftieth anniversary in 2017.
- **Persons Responsible:** executive director, Access to Justice Foundation
- **Measurable Outcomes:** Overall funding amounts, types, and sources; number of fundraising contacts and number and amount of donations

**Objective 5.2: By 2020, an operative reserve fund of \$175,000 will be developed and at least one month's operating expenses will be maintained in rolling budgets.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **5.2.1:** Implement the 2014 board designated funds operating reserve fund policy
  - **5.2.2:** Add \$25,000 to the reserve fund annually.
  - **5.2.3:** An excess of at least one month's operating expenses will be maintained in the budget at all times. Legal Aid will strive to build the excess to two month's operating expenses by 2020.
- **Persons Responsible:** executive director, fiscal officer, Legal Aid board
- **Measurable Outcomes:** Reserve fund amounts and projected budget excess

## Goal Six: To Maintain a Well-Governed and Well-Administered Organization

**Objective 6.1: Legal Aid will continue to increase organizational infrastructure and address human resources, administration, and logistical considerations.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **6.1.1:** Review the location and service areas of offices to determine if the current locations promote or impede efficient and effective delivery and access to services. Consider possibility of embedding offices in or sharing space and resources with other services organizations with similar missions, such as Community Action Agencies or Federally Subsidized Health Clinics.



- **6.1.2:** Prioritize the hiring of a deputy director, if funds become available. Without such funds, the executive director should explore ways to further delegate to the existing management team and the team should utilize reporting and technology to increase overall infrastructure
- **6.1.3:** Research effective staffing structures and documented best practices. Consider adding support staff to supplement the support resources currently in place for advocate, if additional unrestricted funding is secured.
- **6.1.4:** Develop an annual technology plan using LSC Technology Baselines.
- **6.1.5:** Update and reevaluate the program disaster plan on an annual basis, and have disaster drills to assure continuity of client services through any eventuality.
- **6.1.6:** Maintain succession plans for key organizational positions, including updating the current succession plan by 2017. The centerpiece of this strategy will be to identify specific steps that can be undertaken to address the planned or unplanned vacancies of key positions within the organization. The strategy will include both short-term actions to address immediate needs caused by the departure of a key employee and staff development and recruitment strategies that will enhance the program's ability to fill key positions.
- **6.1.7:** Continue the recruitment of volunteers, interns, and fellows as resources allow and ensure that they have a quality experience in their role and are able to make a meaningful contribution to the organization's mission. Develop written protocols for recruitment, support, supervision, retention, training, evaluation, and recognition of volunteers, interns, and fellows. Establish clear roles to provide oversight for and support of volunteer, intern, and fellow activities.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team, ALSP

**Objective 6.2: The role of the Legal Aid Board of Directors will be strengthened within the guidelines set out by the Legal Services Corporation.**

- **Strategies:**
  - **6.2.1:** Provide orientation and board development for all board members, which would include, but not be limited to, financial literacy; LSC regulations; Legal Aid's strategic plan, priorities, and processes; community engagement; and resource development.
  - **6.2.2:** Continue including staff presentations about Legal Aid programs and workgroup activities at each board meeting.
  - **6.2.3:** Actively engage each Board member in the work of at least one Legal Aid committee or project throughout the year.
  - **6.2.4:** Work with statewide partners to develop regular board training opportunities. Explore sending a board member to a national training opportunity annually, such as the Equal Justice Conference and NLADA annual meeting.
  - **6.2.5:** Promote 100% board members' giving to the annual campaign.
- **Persons Responsible:** management team, ALSP

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## REFERENCES

All documents can be found on the advocate's page of the Legal Aid of Arkansas website at [www.arlegalaid.org/internaldocs](http://www.arlegalaid.org/internaldocs).

Each will be reviewed annually for currency, or more often as needed, with updates immediately distributed. Those responsible for review and update are listed.

### External Documents

- [American Bar Association Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid](#)
- [Legal Services Corporation Performance Criteria](#)
- [Legal Services Corporation Case Service Report Handbook](#)
- [Legal Services Technology Baselines](#)

### Legal Aid of Arkansas Documents

- Accounting Manual (Fiscal Officer)
- Case Acceptance Priorities (Legal Staff and Board)
- Disaster and Safety Plan (Human Resources Manager)
- Financial Eligibility Guidelines (Executive Director)
- Helpline Handbook (HelpLine Manager)
- Legal Work Standards and Comments (Management Team)
- Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP Coordinator)
- New Attorney Training Protocol (Management Team)
- Personnel Policy Manual (Human Resources Manager & Executive Director)
- Private Attorney Involvement Plan (Pro Bono Coordinator)
- Succession Plan (Executive Director)
- Technology Plan (Technology Director & Executive Director)
- Technology Use Plan (Technology Director)