

Iowa Legal Aid Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

When Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors decided to undertake strategic planning in late 2008, they did so with two overall goals: 1) to have a process that involved Board and staff of Iowa Legal Aid, and 2) to make sure that the plan adopted would be used and implemented.

The plan that was developed meets both of these criteria. Board members, members of Advisory Councils for regional offices and staff worked together for over a year to take a hard look at the program's work and identify areas where improvements could be made. They did so with the commitment to build a stronger Iowa Legal Aid that would have a lasting impact on clients served.

As a part of this process, Iowa Legal Aid adopted new Mission, Vision and Core Value Statements. They can be found on page 7. These statements emphasize the importance of high quality services to our clients, to the justice system and to the state as a whole. The commitment to provide high quality services involves many factors, including the manner in which we work with clients, the training and dedication of our staff and the involvement of our Board of Directors and other volunteers.

How well we provide services to clients also involves how we interact with the community, including others whose mission is to improve the lives of low-income Iowans. This plan recommits Iowa Legal Aid to strengthening our collaborative relationships with others to provide hope, dignity and justice to our most vulnerable neighbors. It also commits us to reexamine how we communicate the value of those services to the public at large.

I am proud of the work that was done by Board members, Advisory Council members and staff. I am committed to work with Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors, staff and volunteers to implement the plan. This plan will make Iowa Legal Aid a more effective and stronger organization, continuing and building on the interactions between the Board and staff. Many individuals helped make this plan possible. I am grateful for their work in developing the plan and the leadership that they will provide in the future as Iowa Legal Aid works to implement the plan.

Dennis Groenenboom
Executive Director

Iowa Legal Aid Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009, Iowa Legal Aid Board and staff launched a strategic planning process, intended to establish clear objectives for (1) delivering high quality, effective services tailored to meeting the most pressing needs of clients and low-income communities; (2) strengthening its current internal capacity and systems; (3) enlisting volunteer resources; and (4) recruiting, retaining and developing talented, creative and committed staff. A Board-staff Steering Committee met to help define the structure and focus of the effort. They selected five work groups to address different aspects of Iowa Legal Aid's work and operations, each of which was chaired by Planning Committee members: Board Governance and Resource Development; Client and Community Services; Core Values and Communications; Staffing; and Volunteer Resources.

At Iowa Legal Aid's May 2009 Work Group Training Day, Planning Committee members led staff in discussions designed to provide content for development of new mission, vision and core values statements and to explain and engage staff in the forthcoming planning process. Staff explored what they valued about program work, their aspirations for the program and the attributes of Iowa Legal Aid that are most important to them. The Core Values and Communications Work Group took the information from the Work Group Day and distilled it into mission, vision and core value statements for recommendation to Iowa Legal Aid's Executive Director and its Board. At its meeting on February 20, 2010, the Board adopted these statements.

Between the time they were formed in May 2009, and January 2010, each group followed a process that produced goals to be accomplished during the next four years in their subject areas. For each goal they identified strategies and initial action steps to move the program toward achievement of the goal.¹ Twenty-three goals with associated strategies and action steps emerged from this process and fell within four major areas: Responding to Client Needs With High Quality, High Impact Services; Ensuring A Supportive and Challenging Work Environment; Maintaining a Well-Governed and Well-Administered Organization; and Increasing Financial Security and Resources.

Planning Committee members individually reviewed the goals and "scored" them according to the importance of the goal for the program or clients. After the scores were tallied, the Committee reviewed the draft Plan, discussed each of the goals in depth, and revised the goals

¹ The action steps and timelines are recommended starting points and general guidelines which may change as the program implements the Plan.

for clarity and achievability. While the group recognized that all of the proposed goals are important to the organization, members also concurred that all of the goals could not be achieved in the next four years. Several goals were combined or narrowed in scope; others were designated as “second tier.” Although meritorious, it was not anticipated that “second tier” goals would be dealt with in the immediate future due to limited staff time and resources.

The goals, strategies and action steps that comprise Iowa Legal Aid’s 2010 – 2014 Strategic Plan are set forth in detail below, and each strategy is accompanied by a deadline and identification of responsible persons. Because attention to and effective use of technology is integral to service delivery and program management, and a part of all program work, the Committee decided not to isolate use of technology as a stand-alone goal. Rather, the Committee sought to include technology in most strategies or action steps and expects that Iowa Legal Aid will continue its history of creative and responsible uses of emerging technology.

Based on the foregoing analysis, Iowa Legal Aid has identified the following goals to which its staff and Board will work over the course of the next four years:

GOALS

RESPONDING TO CLIENT NEEDS WITH HIGH-QUALITY, HIGH-IMPACT SERVICES

Goal 1 (High Quality Casework): Iowa Legal Aid will establish, implement and periodically review standards that define expectations for high quality work, so that all advocate staff will provide high quality casework in 100% of cases.

Goal 2 (Target Services to Achieve Lasting Results): Iowa Legal Aid will consistently strive to achieve lasting results for clients and low-income communities in all of its services. Iowa Legal Aid will identify and effectively address systemic issues and pervasive barriers that negatively affect low-income Iowans. Using a variety of tools, including strategic handling of individual cases, collaborations with other providers and community groups, multi-forum advocacy, “community lawyering” and non-litigation strategies, Iowa Legal Aid will seek to improve the likelihood of long term success for clients and address conditions that the community has determined to be of importance to improving the lives of low-income and vulnerable residents.

Goal 3 (Intake): Iowa Legal Aid will provide prompt, accurate service to people who seek legal assistance and ensure statewide consistency in the service provided to clients.

ENSURING A SUPPORTIVE AND CHALLENGING WORK ENVIRONMENT

Goal 4 (Staff Retention): Iowa Legal Aid will 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.

Goal 5 (Training): Iowa Legal Aid staff will maintain its on-going efforts to provide comprehensive training to staff. Reinforcing these training efforts, Iowa Legal Aid staff will have ready access to well organized program management, substantive law and practice related resources in an electronic format. These resources will set forth best practices and will be updated and made available program-wide.

Goal 6 (Internal Communications) Iowa Legal Aid will keep staff informed about issues and events affecting the program, their work, colleagues and program policies through regular internal communications.

MAINTAINING A WELL-GOVERNED AND WELL-ADMINISTERED ORGANIZATION

Goal 7 (Public Communications): Iowa Legal Aid will provide regular communications about its activities, services to clients and the importance of access to justice to the community/state as a whole and to key constituencies (including funders, other agencies working with low-income Iowans, the bar and the courts).

Goal 8 (Succession Planning): Iowa Legal Aid will undertake research and analysis for the development of a succession planning strategy. 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.

Goal 9 (Non-Attorney Volunteers): Iowa Legal Aid will increase the number of non-attorney volunteers who contribute to each office's internal operations and will involve former clients in supporting Iowa Legal Aid's work.

Goal 10 (Strengthening the Roles of the Board of Directors and Regional Advisory Councils): Iowa Legal Aid will improve training, access to information, communication and working relationships among the members of Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors and Advisory Councils to (1) support the program's work and mission; and (2) develop new approaches in communicating the work of the Board and Advisory Councils to staff. The success of this goal will be measured by the extent to which the Board and Advisory Council members effectively share information, work collaboratively and demonstrate increased understanding and

appreciation for the roles of Board, Advisory Council members and staff in contributing to the effectiveness of Iowa Legal Aid.

Goal 11 (Going Green): Iowa Legal Aid will reduce the use of resources, achieve energy savings, implement effective and comprehensive recycling systems and increase the use of recycled materials.

INCREASING FINANCIAL SECURITY AND RESOURCES

Goal 12 (Resource Development): Iowa Legal Aid, working in conjunction with the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation², will achieve greater financial security through further diversification of its funding and new fundraising initiatives. It will achieve this goal through multiple strategies designed to increase: (1) funding from the General Assembly; (2) funding from local governments; (3) support received through the annual Campaign for Equal Justice; (4) donations from staff; (5) staff participation in fundraising efforts; (6) funding from community foundations; and (7) support and assistance from state and local bar associations to raise funds for Iowa Legal Aid.

SECOND TIER (T2 - __) GOALS

Second tier goals are those which Committee members concluded were meritorious, but could be set aside until the organization had additional staff time, resources or opportunities that would enable it to address them. They remain in the plan, however, to serve as guidance for more discrete projects that staff may decide to undertake or if program circumstances change. They should also be reviewed in future planning efforts because they reflect current aspirations or needs and include thoughtful strategies for moving forward.

CLIENT SERVICE GOALS

Goal T2-1 (Targeted Outreach): Iowa Legal Aid will have a consistent outreach plan to disseminate information about the program's mission, services and the law. The plan will enable Iowa Legal Aid to identify and reach low-income persons in its service areas consistently and effectively, particularly those who are most isolated or vulnerable or who have been

² In February 2005, Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors created the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation. In July 2006, it was approved as a 401(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Under IRS regulations, the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation is a supporting organization. The Iowa Legal Aid Board of Directors appoints the Board of Directors for the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation and the Foundation operates as a separate entity to raise support for Iowa Legal Aid. Given that the Foundation is a separate entity, this Strategic Plan will not address specific activities of the Foundation, and acknowledges that the Foundation undertakes primary responsibility for the annual Campaign for Equal Justice. Certain aspects of the Campaign for Equal Justice are also undertaken by the Iowa Legal Aid Board of Directors and to the extent that they are, they are incorporated into this aspect of Iowa Legal Aid's Strategic Plan.

disproportionately underserved, including but not limited to those of limited English proficiency, individuals from different cultures, and individuals who have cognitive, mental health or physical disabilities.

Goal T2-2 (Pro Bono Attorney Engagement): Iowa Legal Aid will increase the effective use of pro bono lawyers. The number of attorneys who sign up to accept case referrals will increase by 10%. They will be distributed throughout the state and 40% of those signed up will accept at least one pro bono case annually. There will be at least one in-house attorney volunteer in each office on a regular basis.

WORK ENVIRONMENT GOALS

Goal T2-3: (Use of Paralegals) Iowa Legal Aid will determine whether increased use of para-professionals would improve the program's ability to deliver effective and efficient services.

Goal T2-4 (Remote Work Opportunities): Iowa Legal Aid will provide staff with the technology (including mobile computing and telecommunications) and related training to enable them to (1) work from remote locations; (2) provide better, faster and more accessible services to clients; and (3) to engage effectively with other stakeholders who use such technology, including the courts³.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Goal T2-5 (HELP Connection): Iowa Legal Aid will increase the mutual sharing of information between the program and HELP Legal Assistance to enhance the services, administration and support of both organizations and facilitate effective communications between them.

Goal T2-6 (Social Networking): Iowa Legal Aid will have developed and implemented program policies on the application of social networking to client service, program outreach and resource development.

³ For purposes of this Goal, mobile computing refers to the use of small digital devices that are capable of providing wireless access to telecommunications networks and the Internet and have computing features for word processing, spreadsheets and other software applications. Examples of current products include mini-notebooks, smart phones and PDAs.

Mission Statement

Iowa Legal Aid makes hope, dignity and justice available to low-income Iowans through legal assistance and education that protects fundamental rights, basic necessities and access to the judicial system; challenges policies and practices that harm low-income persons; and empowers clients to advocate effectively for themselves and their communities.

Vision Statement

Iowa Legal Aid envisions a state where low-income people have access to services and resources to meet their basic needs and where all residents can vindicate their legal rights and be treated fairly throughout the civil justice system.

Core Values Statement

Iowa Legal Aid is dedicated to:

- High quality work, which includes responding quickly to new circumstances, developing creative solutions for client problems, tenacity and professionalism.
- Clients, who deserve respect, dignity, compassion, fairness, hope and unwavering commitment.
- All Iowa Legal Aid staff, because the best solutions come from effective teamwork.
- A system of civil justice that provides meaningful opportunities to resolve disputes fairly for all persons, irrespective of income.
- A legal system that affords protections for the least powerful.
- Ensuring that low-income Iowans have access to the services they need, including legal assistance, and to information that enables them to advocate successfully for their own goals.
- Actively engaging volunteer attorneys in the delivery of legal services, and
- Ensuring that the organization is administered with integrity, competence and efficiency, through an engaged and effective Board of Directors and management team.

Adopted by Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors on February 20, 2010

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Plan was approved by Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors at its meeting on May 1, 2010. The Plan was approved with the understanding that the timelines would be adjusted by staff as circumstances demanded within the framework of completion of the plan by 2014.

The implementation will be overseen by three oversight committees. The Strategic Plan goals will be assigned to each oversight committee as follows:

- Oversight Committee A: Committee on client services and public communication. Chaired by Chris Luzzie. (Goals 1, 2, 3, 7).
 - Goal 1 (High Quality Work)
 - Goal 2 (Target Services to Achieve Lasting Results)
 - Goal 3 (Intake)
 - Goal 7 (Public Communications) (Some strategies/action steps likely to go to Committee C)

- Oversight Committee B: Committee on employee training, retention, internal communications and volunteers. Chaired by Liz Norris. (Goals 4, 5, 6, 9).
 - Goal 4 (Staff Retention)
 - Goal 5 (Training)
 - Goal 6 (Internal Communications)
 - Goal 9 (Non-Attorney Volunteers)

- Oversight Committee C: Committee on Program development, infrastructure and Board and Advisory Council governance. Chaired by Pat McClintock. (Goals 8, 10, 11 and 12).
 - Goal 8 (Succession Planning)
 - Goal 10 (Strengthening the Roles of Board of Directors and Regional Advisory Councils)
 - Goal 11 (Going Green)
 - Goal 12 (Resource Development)

Staff from throughout the state will be asked to volunteer to work and provide leadership on the oversight committees, as well as the subgroups that will be developed and assigned responsibility for specific goals, and strategies and action steps related to the goals. Board members, Advisory Council members 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 Advisory Council members 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 Iowa Legal Aid's Executive Director and the Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director.

Iowa Legal Aid Strategic Plan⁴ 2010 – 2014

RESPONDING TO CLIENT NEEDS WITH HIGH-QUALITY, HIGH-IMPACT SERVICES

Goal 1 (High Quality Casework): Iowa Legal Aid will establish, implement and periodically review standards that define expectations for high quality work, so that all advocate staff will provide high quality casework in 100% of cases.

Strategy 1.1: Iowa Legal Aid will have comprehensive standards of practice for all of its practice areas that reflect “best practices.”

Action Steps:

- Compile standards from other programs and law firms.
- Develop clear, written outline for practice standards based on the information collected, the ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid, the Performance Criteria of the Legal Services Corporation and its knowledge of its own practices.
- Assign small groups of advocates to draft proposed standards in specific areas, using information and materials gathered. Advocates will consider how effective use of technology can help achieve practice expectations.

Deadline: November 2011

Responsible Persons: Litigation Director, Senior Staff Attorneys, technology staff as needed. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 1.2: Iowa Legal Aid will achieve effective and consistent implementation of its standards of practice.

Action Steps:

- Develop or adapt written expectations for Managing Attorneys regarding case reviews, case closing, evaluations and professional development plans.
- Develop processes for periodic review of outcomes and continued appropriateness of standards.
- Review client outcomes periodically to determine if successfully addressing client needs.

Deadline: May 2012

Responsible persons: Litigation Director, Senior Staff Attorneys. **(Oversight Committee A)**

⁴ The action steps and timelines are recommended starting points and general guidelines which may change as the program implements the Plan.

Goal 2 (Target Services to Achieve Lasting Results): Iowa Legal Aid will consistently strive to achieve lasting results for clients and low-income communities in all of its services. Iowa Legal Aid will identify and effectively address systemic issues and pervasive barriers that negatively affect low-income lowans. Using a variety of tools, including strategic handling of individual cases, collaborations with other providers and community groups, multi-forum advocacy, “community lawyering” and non-litigation strategies, Iowa Legal Aid will seek to improve the likelihood of long term success for clients and address conditions that the community has determined to be of importance to improving the lives of low-income and vulnerable residents.

Strategy 2.1: Iowa Legal Aid will identify and build relationships with community partners who share the goal of improving the lives of low-income and other vulnerable lowans.

Action Steps:

- Iowa Legal Aid will assess the effectiveness of current projects that are most extensively involved with community collaborations (Iowa Legal Aid Health and Law Project, Equal Justice Project, Foreclosure Defense Project) and issue a report on the nature of Iowa Legal Aid’s existing collaborative successes and challenges.
- Each office will review existing and potential collaborative partnerships that could be useful in furthering the goal of achieving lasting change for low-income lowans. A list of such existing and potential collaborative partners will be prepared.
- Iowa Legal Aid regional offices will become involved with United Way community impact agendas and become collaborative partners in the groups managed by United Way or other similar local groups organized to address systemic problems in communities or regions, and assess the best manner in which Iowa Legal Aid can become a partner in these efforts.
- Each regional office will encourage staff to be involved with local boards and organizations, such as providers of services to domestic violence survivors, homeless coordinating boards, continuum of care organizations and central point service coordinators.
- Offices will review the scope and effectiveness of staff’s community engagement annually.

Deadline: May 2011

Responsible persons: A committee will be formed of the Executive Director, Litigation Director, staff from current projects with extensive community collaborations and staff volunteers to guide this effort. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 2.2: Iowa Legal Aid will routinely identify systemic issues that affect the low-income clients and communities it serves through its case acceptance and review procedures, as well as through other sources of information.

Action Steps:

- Identify and meet training needs of staff to facilitate identification of systemic or recurrent issues.
- Develop procedures for examining requests for service to identify underlying systemic issues or opportunities for achieving broad-based objectives while advocating for the client's goals.
- Develop guidelines to be utilized by each Iowa Legal Aid regional office and unit for regular analyses of internal data (including information from intake, Pika, staff and clients) and external sources (information from census and mapping, legal literature, formal and informal discussions with other legal and service providers and community members) to identify recurrent problems facing clients and client communities. The analyses will include examination of patterns involving disproportionately underserved communities (such as those identified in Goal T2-1).
- Evaluate, develop and "mine" external data sources, including mapping, legal resources, and other critical information stores to facilitate the first analysis contemplated in the preceding action step.
- Review the current structure of work groups and the tools used by these groups, such as listservs, blogs or other type of mechanism, to improve communication and provide support and coordination.
- Develop a "clearinghouse" process within Iowa Legal Aid to share information about new issues, laws or problems affecting low-income Iowans, to enable the organization to develop timely and effective responses.

Deadline: June 2011

Responsible Persons: Training Committee; Administrative Assistant, Legal Assistant, Litigation Directors, Work Group Chairs, technology staff as needed. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 2.3: Iowa Legal Aid will be able to analyze the recurrent or systemic issues it identifies, determine whether they are amenable to Iowa Legal Aid advocacy (alone or with partners) and develop plans that enable it to implement systemic advocacy while maintaining an appropriate and defined balance of direct and other services.

Action Steps:

- Provide guidelines for offices to enable them to achieve a manageable balance in their work and effectively make choices that will allow them to integrate systemic/broad-based efforts with direct services work.
- Train staff to understand the range of tools available to advocates to address recurrent or systemic issues and the variety of ways (litigation and non-litigation) broad-based outcomes can be achieved.
- Provide training needed to develop and maintain the skills to implement advocacy strategies (litigation, coalition-building, community education, strategic use of media, permissible policy advocacy, etc.)

- Integrate broad-based advocacy objectives into work through deliberate and clearly articulated plans. These objectives should be reflected in individual professional goals as well as office-based plans.
- Provide managers with appropriate training to enable them to develop, plan and lead broad-based advocacy efforts.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible Persons: Training Committee, Litigation Director, Managing Attorneys, Senior Staff Attorneys. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 2.4: Iowa Legal Aid will develop a pilot “community lawyering” project to build its capacity to work with low-income community-based groups and leaders to overcome problems affecting the community and to build advocacy capacity within those communities.⁵

Action Steps:

- Determine and evaluate the effectiveness of Iowa Legal Aid’s past and current “community lawyering” programs.
- Determine the resources Iowa Legal Aid will dedicate to a community lawyering effort.
- Provide appropriate “community lawyering” training to persons who will be expected to lead community lawyering efforts.
- Develop a work plan for starting a community lawyering effort by December 2013.

Deadline: December 2013

Responsible Persons: Deputy Director, Managing Attorney, Staff Attorney. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 2.5: Iowa Legal Aid will work with the courts and other stakeholders to reduce barriers to court access and achieve fair resolution of legal problems for pro se litigants, including: (1) 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.); and (2) less time-intensive ways to offer the same level of assistance (e.g., using technology, leveraging non-Iowa Legal Aid resources including volunteers, law students or others).

Action Steps:

- Compile information from Iowa Legal Aid’s own experiences with pro se and that of other stakeholders and identify areas where changes would be helpful.

⁵ “Community lawyering” refers to a multi-faceted approach to helping low-income communities overcome barriers to economic growth and achieve goals to benefit members of the community. It often involves representing community-based organizations (either established or ad hoc) and serving their interests through a variety of advocacy tools including counseling, negotiation, training and, at times, litigation. Some of the skills for effective community lawyering are additional to traditional legal aid lawyering skills, including relationship building, strategic planning, effective use of media, transactional assistance and strengthening organizational capacities.

- Review pro se projects to determine whether there are less time-intensive ways to offer the same level of assistance (e.g. using technology, leveraging non-Iowa Legal Aid resources including volunteers, law students or others).
- Work with the courts to develop forms, possible rules changes and other tools that raise the likelihood that unrepresented persons will be able to achieve fair results.
- Identify and mentor staff who may be interested in replacing current Iowa Legal Aid staff members on court committees.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible persons: Staff on current Court committees, staff involved in pro se projects, and other interested individuals such as Advisory Council or Board members. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Goal 3 (Intake): Iowa Legal Aid will provide prompt, accurate service to people who seek legal assistance and ensure statewide consistency in the service provided to clients.

Strategy 3.1: Iowa Legal Aid will ensure that clients across the state are given accurate and consistent advice.

Action Steps:

- Work groups and senior staff attorneys shall review current tool kits or roadmaps being used by advocates on intake, evaluate the usefulness and efficiency of the tools and identify needed supplementation.
- Based on staff review, supplement current intake tool kits.
- Evaluate the adequacy and quality of the tool kits six months after supplementation is complete and in use.

Deadline: December 2010 with annual reviews thereafter.

Responsible Persons: Intake Managers, staff (cross-section from across program; Work Group members, Senior Staff Attorneys, Staff Attorneys). **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 3.2: Iowa Legal Aid will evaluate the efficiency of the intake screening process and revise protocols to strengthen intake in light of the evaluation.

Action Steps:

- Collect intake evaluation tools and develop intake evaluation tool for program. Include assessment of the efficiency and accuracy of conflict checks.
- Compile data to conduct the evaluation, including current wait times for phone and walk-in intakes and client preferences for telephone, walk-in and web-based intake.
- Analyze the results of the evaluation and develop recommendations for strengthening intake.
- Collect “best intake practices.”

- On the basis of the evaluation and information collected, review and, where necessary, revise intake protocols. Include examination of:
 - criteria for how walk-ins should be handled;
 - benefits and drawbacks of automated reception;
 - standardization of intake information;
 - conflict checking;
 - criteria for assignment of advocate, including regional office affiliation and/or advocate specialization
- Train intake staff on any revised protocols.
- Evaluate the benefits associated with revised intake protocols after they have been in use for 6 months.

Deadline: June 2011

Responsible Persons: Intake and Hotline staff along with other staff who represent a cross section of Iowa Legal Aid geographically and by work responsibilities. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 3.3: Iowa Legal Aid will implement web-based intake.

Action Steps:

- Assess the target populations that might best use the remote intake system and undertake outreach and promotion of the web-based intake tool among those target groups.
- Determine what additional steps need to be taken to implement a web-based intake system.
- Identify and overcome any barriers to successful implementation of web-based intake.

Deadline: December 2010

Responsible Persons: Staff currently involved in effort – technology staff, coordinators of web-based intake project. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Strategy 3.4 Building on the efforts of its EEO and LEP Committees, Iowa Legal Aid staff, including all staff who conduct intake, will be able to communicate effectively with non-English speakers, persons with cognitive, mental health or physical disabilities and individuals from different cultures.

Action Steps:

- Review the work of the EEO and LEP Committees to determine whether there are additional “best practices” or other strategies to be explored or researched to achieve effective communication with the identified categories of persons.

- Ensure that staff receives consistent, comprehensive training to implement the policies and best practices.
- Ensure that critical community education materials, including those about Iowa Legal Aid’s services and mission, as well as those that address legal rights, are available in plain English and in languages other than English that are spoken by significant subsets of the poverty population.
 - Identify a threshold for “significant subsets” and identify language groups in Iowa communities that meet the threshold.
 - Develop/adopt a “plain English” test.
 - Identify the community education materials that provide critical information for non-English speaking, low-income persons, arrange to have them translated and provide them to relevant offices and have them available for outreach.
 - Develop a system that reviews new community education materials to determine whether the materials should be translated into languages other than English
 - Develop a process to ensure that materials are translated reliably and accurately
 - Provide regular, periodic training to staff who deal with the public regarding effective communication with non-English speaking persons, persons who have other communications challenges and people in crisis.
- Focus recruitment on staff, AmeriCorps members and volunteers who may have LEP language skills.

Deadline: October 2013

Responsible Persons: EEO and LEP Committees; Intake Supervisors. (**Oversight Committee A**)

ENSURING A SUPPORTIVE AND CHALLENGING WORK ENVIRONMENT

Goal 4 (Staff Retention): Iowa Legal Aid will 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.

Strategy 4.1: Iowa Legal Aid will regularly examine why employees leave the program and, to the extent possible, address those within the program’s control.

Action Steps:

- Conduct surveys every two years to ascertain what staff members think is working well and ways they believe the organization could improve its work environment.
- Review and, if necessary, revise the existing exit survey form to capture data regarding reasons employees leave the program.

- Review the survey data at regular intervals to determine whether it reflects recurrent problems or concerns.
- Review legal aid-focused studies for ideas to enhance retention of attorneys.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible Persons: Executive Director, Deputy Director, staff. **(Oversight Committee B)**

Strategy 4.2: Iowa Legal Aid will review and, to the extent necessary, clarify or amplify its work management systems and expectations, including those that relate to case acceptance, case handling, case review and supervision. The purpose of the review is to ensure that both managers and supervisees have clear guidelines for assessing workloads and work mix, developing appropriate strategies and opportunities for professional development and making sure that employees remain challenged and motivated by their work.

Action Steps:

- Through inquiries of staff and research into the practices of other programs, identify the areas in which guidelines regarding workloads and job performance can be developed or amplified to ensure that staff members have an appropriate and challenging mix of work.
- Develop any additional guidance that research indicates would help staff.
- Develop a pilot project to test the utility of work plans, which will include systemic advocacy objectives.⁶ Development of the project is likely to entail the following steps:
 - Research and identify “best practices” regarding the use of work plans by other legal aid programs.
 - Include strategic work planning in the training it provides to supervisors.
 - Select office for the pilot project. Office will implement those “best practices” for office-wide and/or individual work plans to achieve clear advocacy objectives.
 - Evaluate the pilot.
- Provide training on efficiency strategies, time management strategies and how staff members can manage their daily workloads in a manner that allows them to retain a focus on the goals and mission of Iowa Legal Aid.
- Provide staff with clear guidelines about the extent to which “numbers” need to be considered in articulating advocacy objectives. Often maximizing the number of cases handled is perceived to be a goal or requirement when that may not be the case.

Deadline: December 2011

⁶ See Target Services to Achieve Lasting Results, action steps for Strategy 2.

Responsible Persons: (Oversight Committee B to appoint)

Strategy 4.3: Iowa Legal Aid will provide support for employees to help them address work-related stress and find a manageable balance between their work and personal lives. It will do so by further developing its mentoring program to address work-related issues and exploring options for an Employee Assistance Program that might help employees with personal problems that affect their work performance.

Action steps:

- The Executive Director and Litigation Director(s), with input solicited from current and past participants in the mentoring program, will evaluate the current mentoring program to determine whether significant changes to the program are needed to increase its effectiveness.
- Formalize (and set forth in writing) the current mentor-mentee program to provide less experienced staff members with a consistent “go-to” person in the same job category from whom the mentee can seek confidential guidance. Mentors will periodically check-in with their mentees, confer with them upon request and address, at a minimum, designated issues culled from the information elicited in the surveys.
- Identify and provide necessary training to enable mentors to be effective.
- Expand the current mentoring program to include support staff and confidential staff.
- Encourage mentees to discuss workload concerns and other similar issues with their mentors.
- Research different options for Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and assess whether any could or should be developed, considering program resources.
- Provide all managers with supervisory skills training.
- Review program guidelines and expectations for managers to ensure that the guidelines address appropriate procedures for responding to supervisees whose work performance or behavior is substandard or incompatible with the workplace environment.

Deadline: May 2011

Responsible Persons: Executive Director, management staff, prior mentors/mentees

Goal 5 (Training): Iowa Legal Aid staff will maintain its on-going efforts to provide comprehensive training to staff. Reinforcing these training efforts, Iowa Legal Aid staff will have ready access to well organized program management, substantive law and practice related resources in an electronic format. These resources will set forth best practices and will be updated and made available program-wide.

Strategy 5.1: Iowa Legal Aid will create a centralized database and uniform method of sharing form letters, pleadings, pro se kits, and other documents that are currently shared within offices but not necessarily shared program-wide.

Action Steps:

- The development of a centralized electronic database will be overseen by a committee that includes Iowa Legal Aid staff members and possibly experts from outside Iowa Legal Aid. Committee members will include Senior Staff Attorneys, support staff, intake attorneys, and technology staff. The committee will give particular attention to the mechanisms for indexing and adding materials to the centralized database.
- All staff will receive training in the existence and use of the centralized database.

Deadline: July 2012

Responsible Persons: Senior Staff Attorneys, intake staff, support staff, technology staff.
(Oversight Committee B)

Strategy 5.2: New attorneys will have ready access to information and guidance in all of Iowa Legal Aid's practice areas.

Action Steps:

- New attorneys will be trained in the substance of common practice areas and will be taught how to access additional information about these topics, including through shared resources, knowledgeable program personnel (intake attorneys, area specialists, senior staff attorneys, mentors) and purchased resources (books, newsletters, etc).
- Develop rosters of shared resources, knowledgeable personnel and purchased resources and establish a process to ensure timely updating of the rosters.

Deadline: Annually

Responsible Persons: Staff responsible for planning New Advocate Training. **(Oversight Committee B)**

Strategy 5.3: Iowa Legal Aid will ensure that staff members are provided with the training contemplated in all Strategic Plan goals.

Action Steps:

- Iowa Legal Aid will assess the current mechanism for overseeing training in the program and determine whether modifications in the current structure are needed.
- Training needs identified in the Strategic Plan will be reviewed to determine how, and with what frequency, they will be met.
- A periodic review will be conducted to determine how effectively Iowa Legal Aid is meeting staff training needs.
- Timely and effective training on the use of technology will be developed for all staff.

Deadline: Initially by May 2011 with other deadlines established based on the work of the individuals involved in training oversight

Responsible Persons: Training responsible person and others appointed by Oversight Committee B

Goal 6 (Internal Communications): Iowa Legal Aid will keep staff informed about issues and events affecting the program, their work, colleagues and program policies through regular internal communications.

Strategy 6.1: Iowa Legal Aid will review and assess the effectiveness of the program's current methods of communication including its intake manual, administrative memo, wiki, email and other devices to ensure that the system of internal communication is effective in disseminating program information as well as changes to program systems and operation.

Action Steps:

- Examine how program policies are maintained and assess whether there are ways to make them more readily accessible to staff.
- Recommend changes to methods of communicating and updating program policies.

Deadline: January 31, 2011

Responsible Persons: Existing internal communication work group. **(Oversight Committee B)**

Strategy 6.2: Iowa Legal Aid will regularly distribute an internal newsletter that keeps staff informed about program staff and achievements.

Deadline: January 31, 2011

Responsible Persons: Existing internal communication work group. **(Oversight Committee B)**

MAINTAINING A WELL-GOVERNED AND WELL-ADMINISTERED ORGANIZATION

Goal 7 (Public Communications): Iowa Legal Aid will provide regular communications about its activities, services to clients and the importance of access to justice to the community/state as a whole and to key constituencies (including funders, other agencies working with low-income Iowans, the bar and the courts).

Strategy 7.1: Iowa Legal Aid will regularly distribute information about its activities, emerging issues and other relevant matters to identified, key segments of the public.

Action Steps:

- Assess Iowa Legal Aid's current methods of communication including the *Equal Justice Journal*, the *Equal Justice Update*, and websites (public and pro bono) for both Iowa

Legal Aid and the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation, and make recommendations concerning any modifications necessary in order to effectively meet public communication goals.

- Implement decisions made regarding effective communications and begin regular dissemination of a newsletter(s)(electronic and hard copy as appropriate) about Iowa Legal Aid's activities, emerging issues, how meaningful access to the justice system makes a difference for low-income Iowans and all Iowa communities, and other relevant matters, to an identified and well-maintained list of recipients.
- Communicate the information that is the subject of public communications to staff, utilizing appropriate internal communication methods and any social media tools that are developed pursuant to Goal T2-6.
- Iowa Legal Aid will utilize communications experts and resources from other legal aid organizations to ensure that Iowa Legal Aid is taking advantage of best and innovative practices and that it evaluates the success of its efforts.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible persons: Development, Equal Justice Journal staff, Executive Director.
(Oversight Committee A)

Strategy 7.2: Iowa Legal Aid will institute processes to elicit appropriate referrals from social service providers and other organizations that have contact with low-income individuals. The efforts will place particular emphasis on collaborative partners identified in strategies and action steps that implement Goal 2. Those procedures will include the regular provision of information about Iowa Legal Aid's services to court personnel, including how unrepresented, low-income litigants can contact Iowa Legal Aid.

Action Steps

- Develop and oversee processes designed to elicit and provide appropriate referrals on an on-going basis.
- Establish a process to ensure that the program has an up-to-date roster of organizations that have contact with low-income Iowans.
- Iowa Legal Aid will launch its new web-based Legal Assessment tool which will enable individuals to find current information about the agencies that can help them with their legal or social services need. The launch will include outreach and promotion of the new tool and focus on having other organizations include a link to the tool on their website.
- Establish procedures to ensure that Iowa Legal Aid keeps the identified organizations updated about its services and that it remains informed about the services the organizations provide. The procedures will include guidelines about establishing and maintaining links between and among the organizations to foster regular exchange of

information about emerging trends, unmet needs, and other problems affecting low-income persons in the state.

- Each office will establish and follow a system for periodically contacting the clerk(s) of court and/or other relevant court personnel in each county they serve to ensure that the clerks understand the scope of Iowa Legal Aid's services and to develop methods of referring cases and communicating about the legal needs of low-income clients.
- Determine the best method by which information can be distributed to agencies and collaborative partners. Send either electronic or hard copy brochures and other materials to agencies on Iowa Legal Aid's wiki to provide guidance on referral processes. Consider asking each agency to link Iowa's website to their own.
- Develop procedures to update the wiki every six months and send materials to newly added agencies.
- Development/marketing unit will draft a plan to ensure regular updating of Iowa Legal Aid's website and the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation website so that the public is informed timely about issues and events affecting clients or related to program services.

Deadline: July 2011

Responsible Persons: AmeriCorps Project Director, AmeriCorps Project members; Development/marketing unit; Executive Director; technology staff. **(Oversight Committee A)**

Goal 8 (Succession Planning): Iowa Legal Aid will undertake research and analysis for the development of a succession planning strategy. 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.

Strategy 8.1: Iowa Legal Aid will identify and catalogue the duties of the positions critical to the operation of the organization so that the Board and Executive Director have information about the potential impact and needs caused by the departure of a key employee.

Action Steps:

- Research what other organizations have done in terms of identifying and cataloguing of key positions.
- Determine which positions within Iowa Legal Aid should be designated as key positions for succession planning purposes, taking into account any known factors regarding the projected tenure of the staff person(s) filling those positions.
- Develop detailed job descriptions for each such position and include descriptions of the core functions, skill sets, potential candidate pools and other necessary characteristics of the individual(s) best suited to fill the positions(s).

Deadline: May 2012

Responsible persons: Staff and Board committee to be determined. (**Oversight Committee C**)

Strategy 8.2: Iowa Legal Aid will develop a protocol for a smooth replacement process for key positions, including expectations for persons considering retirement, transition planning, training and other guidance for the person stepping into the job.

Action Step:

- A committee of persons in the affected key positions will develop policies and expectations to guide persons who are considering retirement and set forth a transition process. Such expectations would include desired advance notice and the establishment of a transition and training plan for their successors or temporary replacements.

Deadline: December 2012.

Responsible persons: Committee of persons in affected key positions. (**Oversight Committee C**)

Strategy 8.3: The Executive Director and Deputy Directors will determine which of the persons who have expressed an interest in assuming more senior positions could assume at least temporary roles in the case of an unexpected vacancy.

Action Steps:

- Assess whether there are issues related to the collective bargaining agreement related to implementation of strategy 8.3.

Deadline: December 2010

Responsible Persons: Executive Director in consultation with union president and bargaining counsel. (**Oversight Committee C**)

- Maintain a roster of persons interested in performing more senior roles on a temporary basis. If there are roles for which no staff members have expressed an interest, examine whether there are structural or institutional reasons for the lack of interest and develop strategies to generate interest.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible Persons: Executive Director, Administrative Assistant, in consultation with managers. (**Oversight Committee C**)

Strategy 8.4: Iowa Legal Aid will develop a succession-focused professional development process. The process would include, at a minimum, identifying managerial interests and goals at every evaluation after a new attorney has been with the program for two years. The professional development planning would include identification of training or opportunities to gain experience with relevant activities.

Action Steps:

- Research succession-planning approaches taken by other legal aid and non-profit organizations. Identify “best practices” and consider incorporating them into a succession plan for Iowa Legal Aid, in conjunction with the steps listed below
 - For Executive Director research to be completed by Executive Committee of the Board and Executive Director.
 - For other management positions – to be appointed by Oversight Committee C.
- Develop a process for eliciting staff and Managing Attorney interest in taking a management or Senior Staff Attorney/subject matter expert position.
 - Evaluation instrument will be modified by Executive Director and Administrative Assistant.
- Staff members who express an interest in being a more senior manager or program expert would work with their supervisor to develop a plan to acquire necessary skills to succeed in the position.
- Develop a process that enables an individual to assess progress toward attaining identified managerial or substantive skills to advance in the program.
- Include in the mentoring program taking someone on as an “understudy.” The Executive Director or his designee(s) will periodically seek staff feedback about, and evaluate the effectiveness of, leadership-development efforts.
 - Final three action steps will be implemented by a committee appointed by the Executive Director based on volunteers representing various staff positions with geographical balance.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible Persons: (Oversight Committee C)

GOAL 9 (Non-attorney Volunteers): Iowa Legal Aid will increase the number of non-attorney volunteers who contribute to each office’s internal operations and will involve former clients in supporting Iowa Legal Aid’s work.

Strategy 9.1: Iowa Legal Aid will have comprehensive, written protocols for the recruitment, management, supervision, support, retention, training and evaluation of volunteers.

Action Steps:

- Complete a comprehensive review of what each office is currently doing and their experience about (1) what works and what does not with respect to recruiting and retaining valuable volunteer help; (2) problems associated with recruiting and retaining valuable volunteer help; and (3) the resources required for those volunteers to work effectively.
- Survey staff to determine where offices could most use assistance (not just volunteer assistance); what they need to attract and retain volunteer help; where volunteer assistance could provide most value to clients and the program; ideas about how recruiting, training, supervision and evaluation of volunteers can be best supported.
- Gather information from other sources, including LSC, the ABA and other programs regarding ideas and “best practices” for recruiting, retaining and using volunteers.
- Determine the scope of the protocols. At a minimum, the protocols will address:
 - Expectations about level and types of volunteer activities to be supported that allow flexibility for significant differences in needs and opportunities across the state
 - Guidelines and responsibilities for volunteer activities
 - Volunteer recruitment
 - Volunteer training
 - Substantive law
 - Iowa Legal Aid policies, procedures, technology and case management requirements
 - Volunteer supervision
 - Volunteer recognition
 - Evaluation of volunteer services
 - Consistently applied methods for expressing appreciation and bringing media attention to successful and significant volunteer efforts
 - Procedures for enlisting volunteers for specific projects
- Develop a template for the protocols
- Assign responsibilities for portions of the protocols
- Draft, review, adopt and disseminate the protocols

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible persons: AmeriCorps Project Director will coordinate a group which will include AmeriCorps members and Public Information Coordinator. **(Oversight Committee B)**

Strategy 9.2: Iowa Legal Aid will increase the number of volunteers who assist with Advisory Councils and community outreach.

Action Steps:

- Review and revise the written procedures that are used for identifying clients who may be interested in volunteering with Iowa Legal Aid.
- Develop a system that will ensure that there is appropriate follow-up with potential volunteers and that the system is implemented in each regional office.

Deadline: September 2011

Responsible persons: AmeriCorps Project Director and AmeriCorps members.
(Oversight Committee B)

Strategy 9.3: Iowa Legal Aid will consistently identify and utilize former clients for communicating the program's mission and services to the public.

Action Steps:

- Ask each regional office Advisory Council to identify ways former client and other non-attorney volunteers can support Iowa Legal Aid's activities.
- Research and compile ways to engage former clients in providing information about Iowa Legal Aid's services, purpose and importance to designated communities.

Deadline: December 2010

Responsible persons: AmeriCorps Project Director and AmeriCorps members. **(Oversight Committee B)**

Strategy 9.4: Iowa Legal Aid will increase its effective use of law school and undergraduate students.

Action Steps:

- Review LSC materials, publications and other information from legal services programs regarding ways legal services programs can effectively engage with law schools and law students.
- On the basis of its review, develop a plan for the ongoing, effective use of law student volunteers.
- Survey regional offices to determine their current connections with community and four-year colleges in Iowa to ascertain their success in attracting and retaining volunteers.
- Contact colleges and law schools for information about volunteer initiatives involving college and law students, including campus contact information for each regional office.
- Draft recommendations for use of potential student volunteers and prepare materials to be used in recruitment and retention of these volunteers.

Deadline: January 2011

Responsible Persons: AmeriCorps Project Director and AmeriCorps members. **(Oversight Committee B)**

Strategy 9.5: Iowa Legal Aid will coordinate with volunteer recruitment entities in communities throughout the state to identify volunteers who would assist with office functions including walk-in traffic, copying, support to attorneys, etc.

Action Steps:

- Identify volunteer recruitment entities where Iowa Legal Aid has a regional office to identify potential volunteers to assist with office activities.
- Utilize volunteers recruited through local recruitment centers. The use will be guided by the protocols and policies adopted for attorneys as a part of Strategy 8.1.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible Persons: AmeriCorps Project Director and AmeriCorps members. **(Oversight Committee B)**

Goal 10 (Strengthening the Roles of the Board of Directors and Regional Advisory Councils):

Iowa Legal Aid will improve training, access to information, communication and working relationships among the members of Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors and Advisory Councils to: (1) support the program's work and mission; and (2) develop new approaches in communicating the work of the Board and Advisory Councils to staff. The success of this goal will be measured by the extent to which the Board and Advisory Council members effectively share information, work collaboratively and demonstrate increased understanding and appreciation for the roles of Board, Advisory Council members and staff in contributing to the effectiveness of Iowa Legal Aid.

Strategy 10.1: Iowa Legal Aid will provide initial and periodic training to all Board members, Advisory Council members and staff about the role and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and Advisory Councils and will provide the Board and Advisory Councils for each regional office or project with information about the staff and work of the office or project.

Action Steps:

- By the end of 2011, Iowa Legal Aid will complete the Board/Advisory Council website project funded by the Legal Services Corporation "TIG" grant. The website will include information on the structure and role of the Board and Advisory Councils, the expectations of Board and Advisory Council members, biographical information on members of the Board and Advisory Councils and news on projects involving the Board, Advisory Council and staff.

- The website will include orientation and training resources for Board and Advisory Council members.
- The website project will develop and promote the use of collaborative tools such as blogs and listservs to facilitate collaboration among Board and Advisory Council members and staff.
- New Advocate Trainings will include an overview of the structure and purpose of the Board of Directors and Advisory Councils.
- Staff will have the opportunity to participate in a workshop on the structure and role of the Board and Advisory Councils. The training will provide an opportunity for staff to explore ways to strengthen staff engagement with, and the benefits of, Advisory Councils.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible persons: Deputy Director for Program Administration, Legal Assistant, Training Committee members appropriate to the tasks identified. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Strategy 10.2: Iowa Legal Aid will create opportunities for increased communication and interaction among staff, Board members and Advisory Council members.

Action Steps:

- Iowa Legal Aid will plan and conduct a web-based or ICN presentation for all of the program's Board and Advisory Council members announcing the new website and providing information about Iowa Legal Aid's mission and work.
- A diverse cross-section of staff members will provide presentations about program projects or litigation at Board and Advisory Council meetings.
- Through the calendar on the new website, Board and Advisory Council members will be provided information that will allow them the opportunity to attend program events (including VLP and Work Group training).

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible persons: Executive Director, Managing Attorneys, website manager. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Strategy 10.3: Iowa Legal Aid will develop expectations that each office will implement regarding the engagement of Advisory Councils in the work of the program. Expectations will include:

- Managing Attorneys will meet with new Advisory Council members to review the orientation materials, provide specific information about the staff and work of the office and meet with office staff.

- Each office and its Advisory Council will undertake one project annually designed to support the program’s work.
- Each office will conduct an annual “listening session” with its Advisory Council to share information and perspectives on client needs and program work.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible persons: Managing Attorneys, Advisory Council members. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Goal 11 (Going Green): Iowa Legal Aid will reduce the use of resources, achieve energy savings, implement effective and comprehensive recycling systems and increase the use of recycled materials.

Strategy 11.1: Iowa Legal Aid will research best practices for achieving energy savings and will establish and implement practices for offices to follow to reduce energy consumption with respect to utilities and use of electronic devices.

Action Steps:

- Office Managers will survey the program’s current utility use.
- Obtain information from other organizations about their energy savings practices, including investigation into the current and evolving best practices for saving energy in an office environment from organizations such as www.thegreenoffice.com.
- Based on research and surveys, prepare a summary of findings and develop an energy saving policy.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible persons: Volunteers will be solicited from across the state under the initial direction of the Deputy Director for Program Administration. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Strategy 11.2: Iowa Legal Aid will develop and implement a plan for a comprehensive recycling program in each regional office that will take into account the recycling systems and resources available in the community. To the extent that it is feasible and the best or only option, the recycling of some items will be managed on a program-wide basis.

Action Steps:

- Research the availability of recycling services and resources in each region and statewide. Include investigation of current and evolving best recycling practices.
- Based on the research, survey offices to obtain information about the current recycling efforts in the office.
- Based on the research and surveys, prepare a summary of the findings and develop a proposed statewide and regional office recycling policy.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible persons: To be appointed by Oversight Committee C

Strategy 11.3: Iowa Legal Aid will reduce the use of paper in copying and printing by establishing standards and practices for electronic recordkeeping.

Action Steps:

- Research and recommend protocols for maintaining electronic records as an alternative to paper files and records. The research will take into account the practices of other legal aid programs and law offices.
- Train staff in the new protocols at a Work Group Day.
- Within six months after the training, regional offices will evaluate their recordkeeping systems to determine whether the new protocol is working or whether new policies or training is necessary.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible persons: Volunteers will be solicited from across the state under the initial direction of the Deputy Director for Program Administration. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Strategy 11.4: Iowa Legal Aid will reduce the use of non-reusable supplies and increase the purchase of supplies that have been made from recycled materials.

Action Steps:

- Research with Iowa Legal Aid's bulk supply vendors regarding the availability of reusable supply items (toner cartridges, pens, folders, other commonly used office supplies).
- Offices will purchase reusable kitchen utensils and discontinue the use whenever possible of plastic ware and paper plates.
- Research with Iowa Legal Aid's bulk supply vendors regarding the availability of "environmentally friendly" products, including cleaning supplies, and products made from recycled content.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible persons: Volunteers will be solicited from across the state under the initial direction of the Deputy Director for Program Administration. **(Oversight Committee C)**

INCREASING FINANCIAL SECURITY AND RESOURCES

GOAL 12 (Resource Development): Iowa Legal Aid, working in conjunction with the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation⁷, will achieve greater financial security through further diversification of its

⁷ In February 2005, Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors created the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation. In July 2006, it was approved as a 401(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Under IRS regulations, the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation is a

funding and new fundraising initiatives. It will achieve this goal through multiple strategies designed to increase: (1) funding from the General Assembly; (2) funding from local governments; (3) support received through the annual Campaign for Equal Justice; (4) donations from staff; (5) staff participation in fundraising efforts; (6) funding from community foundations; and (7) support and assistance from state and local bar associations to raise funds for Iowa Legal Aid.

Strategy 12.1 (Iowa General Assembly): Under the leadership of Iowa Legal Aid’s Board, members of the Board, Advisory Council members and staff will develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to provide members of the Iowa General Assembly with information about the program, its importance in meeting the needs of low-income Iowans, the services provided to clients in their district, how they can make referrals and access the resources of Iowa Legal Aid and how state funding is critical to the program’s ability to provide these services. Consistent with Legal Services Corporation regulations, the strategy will incorporate the efforts of other organizations that support civil legal aid and work with Iowa Legal Aid in serving the legal needs of low-income Iowans.

Action Steps:

- For the 2011 legislative session, develop informational packets for legislators that include information about the program and the services provided in their district. Staff will coordinate the development of the packets.
- Staff and Board members will arrange for a Board or Advisory Council member and staff person and/or other volunteer to personally deliver the packet to the member and attempt to meet with him/her.
- Meet with legislators and solicit input from them about the needs of low-income people in their district. Staff will provide legislators with information about how Iowa Legal Aid’s work helps their constituents overcome barriers that keep them in poverty. The Board’s Development, Finance and Audit Committee will coordinate the involvement of Board and Advisory Council members and other volunteers.
- Develop resources and implement systems for encouraging former clients to send thank you letters and communicate with their elected officials about the services they received from Iowa Legal Aid. Activities to be coordinated by Executive Director’s Administrative Assistant and AmeriCorps members.

supporting organization. The Iowa Legal Aid Board of Directors appoints the Board of Directors for the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation and the Foundation operates as a separate entity to raise support for Iowa Legal Aid. Given that the Foundation is a separate entity, this Strategic Plan will not address specific activities of the Foundation, and acknowledges that the Foundation undertakes primary responsibility for the annual Campaign for Equal Justice. Certain aspects of the Campaign for Equal Justice are also undertaken by the Iowa Legal Aid Board of Directors and to the extent that they are, they are incorporated into this aspect of Iowa Legal Aid’s Strategic Plan.

Deadline: Phased in over three years

Responsible Parties: Board of Directors Development, Finance and Audit Committee and Executive Director, working with the full Board, Managing Attorneys and Advisory Councils.
(Oversight Committee C)

Strategy 12.2 (County boards of supervisors): Iowa Legal Aid's Board, Advisory Councils and staff will develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for reaching every county board of supervisors to (1) provide them with information about the program and the services provided to clients in their county; (2) provide information on how the supervisors and their staff can make referrals and use the resources of Iowa Legal Aid; (3) explain how Iowa Legal Aid's work helps their constituents overcome barriers that keep them in poverty; and (4) seek county funding to help expand services to residents of their county.

Action Steps:

- The Executive Director and Managing Attorneys will assess whether it would be helpful to contact the supervisors in the counties currently providing funding to discuss approaches to supervisors in other counties.
- The Managing Attorney, Advisory Council and Board Member(s) from each service area will identify at least one county in each Iowa Legal Aid service area as a priority for a focused fundraising effort. The Managing Attorney will be responsible for coordinating the contact.
- Consistent with Legal Services Corporation regulations, the Advisory Council and the local Board Member(s) will identify and create relationships with individuals who have contacts with the local supervisors and who are willing to advocate to the supervisors on behalf of Iowa Legal Aid.
- Develop informational packets for the selected county board of supervisors that include information about the program and the services provided in their county and arrange for staff to personally deliver the packets and to arrange for a meeting with the board. Materials to be developed as Part of Goal 6 (Public Communications).
- Iowa Legal Aid Board and Advisory Council members will accompany staff to meetings and/or presentations before the board of supervisors.
- Facilitate an event(s) to which members of the board of supervisors will be invited to meet with Iowa Legal Aid Board, Advisory Council and staff to hear experiences of clients served by the program.
- Encourage former clients to send thank you letters and to otherwise communicate with their elected officials about the services they received from Iowa Legal Aid. Activities to be coordinated by Executive Director's Administrative Assistant and AmeriCorps members.
- Develop methods for ensuring that established and new relationships with members of boards of supervisors are maintained and cultivated to build strong connections

between the officials and Iowa Legal Aid offices. Such methods could include providing periodic reports or holding occasional informational meetings with members of the boards or their staffs.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible persons: Executive Director, Administrative Assistant to the Executive Director, AmeriCorps members, Development/marketing unit; Managing Attorneys.

(Oversight Committee C)

Strategy 12.3 (Annual Campaign for Equal Justice): Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors and Advisory Councils will be involved in the annual Campaign for Equal Justice, consistent with requests from the Iowa Legal Aid Foundation, to help generate increased revenue to Iowa Legal Aid through the annual campaign.

Action Steps:

- Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors and Advisory Councils will assist with the contacts with lapsed donors on an annual basis.
- Iowa Legal Aid's annual event, Equal Justice After Hours, as well as local events conducted by regional offices, will be supported by Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors and Advisory Council members through ticket sales, attendance and sponsorship opportunities wherever possible.
- Efforts to increase financial support for Iowa Legal Aid through the Foundation's efforts at enlisting major donors, reaching out to the business community, including support for the Musco Business Challenge, and other specific Foundation activities will be supported by the Iowa Legal Aid Board of Directors to the extent possible, at the request of the Foundation Board.

Deadline: Annually by December 31

Responsible persons: Development Unit staff, Iowa Legal Aid Board of Directors Development, Finance and Audit Committee. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Strategy 12.4 (Staff role in fundraising): Iowa Legal Aid will develop and implement a program to foster effective staff involvement in fundraising and development activities and increase staff donations to Iowa Legal Aid.

Action Steps:

- Iowa Legal Aid's Development Unit will create and implement a survey to be used to assess staff interest, relevant skills and connections that might benefit the program's development activities.
- The Development Unit, with assistance from Managing Attorneys and current staff who actively participate in development activities or who volunteer to be a part of the

planning effort, will develop and implement a two-track program for staff on fundraising and development activities. Track one will be geared toward staff who are not interested in participating in development activities. Track two will be geared to staff who have a greater interest in assisting with development activities.

- Staff in track one will be encouraged to do things that will support development activities including providing “good case stories” for grant applications, talking to friends and family about donations, becoming more aware of the impact of their contacts and relationships in the community, and donating themselves. These suggestions can be presented once a year as part of a Work Group Day or in any other way recommended by the planning group established above and approved by the Executive Director.
- Staff in track two will focus on recruiting donors by building relationships within the legal community and the community at-large. Staff interested in the second track will be asked to complete training that will be provided by the Development Unit. Staff who complete this training will be encouraged to assist in planning and carrying out fundraising activities including project development, grant writing, United Way campaigns, and local fundraising events as their time and interests permit.
- The Development Unit will produce informational packets for all employees and new hires that describe the benefits of employees making personal contributions to Iowa Legal Aid. A presentation on giving to the program will be made by co-workers from all classifications who are current donors.
- Development staff and staff volunteers from each job classification, who have completed the training provided by the Development Unit, will foster a new generation of donors by:
 - Creating a fundraising leadership team from among Iowa Legal Aid staff who have graduated from school in the last ten years to focus on building networks among young lawyers and professionals.
 - Developing a tiered system of recognition for recent law school graduates who donate at lower dollar amounts than those currently associated with the Campaign for Equal Justice, to allow younger lawyers to achieve levels of recognition for their contributions.

Deadline: December 2012

Responsible persons: Identified in each action step above. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Strategy 12.5 (Community Foundations): Iowa Legal Aid will increase the number of and amount of financial support from Iowa’s local community foundations.

Action Steps:

- Iowa Legal Aid's Development Unit will undertake research for each regional office that identifies the community foundations in their service area and will collect information about the foundation's giving characteristics, leadership, application process, and key decision-makers.
- Iowa Legal Aid's Development Unit will conduct surveys to identify staff, Board and Advisory Council members to determine who has contacts or relationships with foundations and their leaders and decision-makers.
- Iowa's Legal Aid's Development Unit will determine how staff, Board and Advisory Council members can help build relationships with community foundations.
- Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors will develop and implement a strategy to engender local community foundation interest, support and engagement in the mission of Iowa Legal Aid, through activities such as priority setting, legal education events and other public presentations.

Deadline: December 2011

Responsible Parties: Development Unit staff along with Board members from Development, Finance and Audit Committee. **(Oversight Committee C)**

Strategy 12.6 (Local and State Bar Associations): Iowa Legal Aid's and Iowa Legal Aid Foundation's Boards of Directors and staff will increase attorney financial support for the program through consistent, regular and recurring contact with the Iowa State Bar Association, local bar associations and other lawyer organizations. The Board's Development, Finance and Audit Committee will provide leadership on this initiative and will seek the assistance and support of bar leaders who support the work of Iowa Legal Aid.

Action Steps:

- Provide the Iowa State Bar Association President, President-Elect and Board of Governors with regular and updated information regarding the condition of the delivery of civil legal assistance to low-income Iowans. The information will be developed by staff in consultation with the Development, Finance and Audit Committee of the Board of Directors and will be provided to the ISBA leadership by the President of Iowa Legal Aid's Board or his/her Board designee.
- Develop and ensure the widespread distribution of materials that emphasize to lawyers that every lawyer has a professional responsibility to provide legal services to those unable to pay and should voluntarily contribute financial support to organizations that provide legal services to persons of limited means. Iowa Legal Aid will seek the assistance of members of the judiciary and legal community.
- Request a regular opportunity of the ISBA to promote Iowa Legal Aid's financial and pro bono volunteer needs in the *Iowa Lawyer* and on the ISBA's website. This will include a highly visible link to a donor page that will facilitate the on-line giving by attorneys as a

means of easily fulfilling their ethical obligations. Seek the ISBA's support for including in the *Iowa Lawyer* a regular column about pro bono successes/opportunities/clients and their circumstances.

- Explore whether the Iowa State Office of Professional Regulation could annually remind attorneys of their ethical obligations under Rule 32:6.1.

Deadline: January 2012.

Responsible Persons: Iowa Legal Aid's Board President, Ethics Counsel and Executive Director. **(Oversight Committee C)**

SECOND TIER (T2 - __) GOALS

Second tier goals are those that are important to the program, but have been set aside until the organization has additional staff time, resources or opportunities that will enable it to address them. They serve as guidance for more discrete projects that staff may decide to undertake or if program circumstances change. At the very least, second tier goals will be examined with care in the next strategic planning process.

TIER 2 – CLIENT SERVICE GOALS

Goal T2-1 (Targeted Outreach): Iowa Legal Aid will have a consistent outreach plan to disseminate information about the program's mission, services and the law. The plan will enable Iowa Legal Aid to identify and reach low-income persons throughout the state consistently and effectively, particularly those who are most isolated or vulnerable or who have been disproportionately underserved, including but not limited to those of limited English proficiency, individuals from different cultures, and individuals who have cognitive, mental health or physical disabilities.

Strategy T2-1.1: Building on the efforts of its EEO and LEP Committees, Iowa Legal Aid will ascertain whether there are disproportionately underserved low-income communities in the state and ascertain the reasons for such underservice.

Action Steps:

- Explore the merits of combining the EEO and LEP Committees
- Expand the analysis of program and other data currently conducted by the EEO and LEP Committees to determine whether offices are serving poor populations proportionately throughout the state.
- Identify barriers faced by those seeking Iowa Legal Aid services, in addition to those already identified by its EEO and LEP Committees. Examples of such barriers include lack of access to technology, lack of transportation, low literacy, and age.

- Develop criteria for assessing what constitutes “underserved” and identify those areas with poverty populations that are currently “underserved.”
- Review census and data collected by other organizations that serve low-income populations to examine population shifts or emerging trends, and to consider whether the information suggests that the program reexamine allocation of program resources.
- Examine other statewide services, such as judicial districts, DHS offices or other service providers and see how they divide their service areas or whether they have adopted strategies for reaching persons or enhancing accessibility of services tailored to particular population/demographic/geographic needs. Determine whether any of those approaches should be considered by Iowa Legal Aid to address any gaps or inequities Iowa Legal Aid identified from its analysis of its own data.

Strategy T2-1.2: The LEP and EEO Committees will gather information about and provide suggested protocols governing (1) outreach activities that will include steps to reach particularly isolated or underserved communities and (2) practices regarding effective and appropriate communication with specialized populations. At a minimum, the protocols will contain:

- Expectations for offices regarding the frequency and types of locations for conducting outreach.
- “Best practices” for conducting the outreach outlined in the expectations in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner in order to (1) increase awareness and accessibility of Iowa Legal Aid in those identified “underserved” communities; and (2) increase awareness and understanding of legal rights that are important to members of the communities.
- Expectations regarding the nature and level of office engagement in the community, including periodic efforts to meet with community leaders to discuss emerging trends, unmet needs and issues affecting low-income persons that individual clients may not present directly when they seek assistance.
- Procedures that each office will follow at specified intervals to assess whether the office appears to be visible in, and reaching the low-income communities in its service area effectively.

Action Steps:

- Gather “best practice” information from within and outside the program regarding outreach, including information from other statewide services, such as judicial districts, DHS offices or other service providers.
- Establish guidelines for offices to use in assessing the effectiveness and adequacy of outreach.
- Develop targeted (including linguistically and culturally appropriate) outreach strategies designed to (1) increase awareness of Iowa Legal Aid, the services it offers in those identified “underserved” communities and methods for reaching the program in those

communities; and (2) increase awareness and understanding of legal rights that are important to members of the communities.

- Ensure that staff receives consistent, comprehensive training to implement policies and best practices.

Strategy T2-1.3: Iowa Legal Aid will increase the assistance it provides to members of highly isolated, rural communities, urban communities with high populations of non-native English speakers, persons with cognitive, mental health or physical disabilities, and other underserved communities.

Action Step:

- The LEP and/or EEO Committee will examine periodically the extent to which Iowa Legal Aid's outreach has prompted requests for services from members of highly isolated rural communities, urban communities with high populations of non-native English speakers, persons with cognitive, mental health or physical disabilities, and other underserved communities and ensure that it is taking effective steps to address their needs.

Goal T-2-2 (Pro Bono Attorney Engagement): Iowa Legal Aid will increase the effective use of pro bono lawyers. The number of attorneys who sign up to accept case referrals will increase by 10%. The increase will be distributed across the state and 40% of those signed up will accept at least one case annually. There will be at least one in-house attorney volunteer in each office on a regular basis.

Strategy T2-2.1: Iowa Legal Aid will increase the number of pro bono attorneys who provide services to clients or assist Iowa Legal Aid in providing assistance in each region in the State.

Action Steps:

- Identify and meet with key members of the private bar, judiciary and others who are or could be important players in enlisting and retaining pro bono services to increase awareness of the need for pro bono assistance and to seek their input and collaboration in implementing specific strategies (including, but not limited to the ISBA Public Service Project, Polk County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project, Scott/Clinton Pro Se Project, Iowa Legal Aid Volunteer Lawyers Project and other on-going pro bono efforts).
- Assess whether additional types of cases should be referred to pro bono attorneys that are not currently part of Iowa Legal Aid's normal case acceptance/referral process.
- Work with the Iowa Supreme Court, the Iowa State Bar Association and other bar groups to develop effective means by which the Iowa Bar can support the efforts currently underway by Iowa Legal Aid and the Iowa Supreme Court to raise the awareness of pro bono activities.

- Identify, consider and, if appropriate, develop plans to pursue strategies that emerge from the discussions.
- With respect to the judiciary, explore whether there are ways to build on the Supreme Court’s resolution or otherwise put more teeth into the aspirational goals.

Strategy T2-2.2: Iowa Legal Aid will increase the number of pro bono attorneys who meet the 50 hour per year aspirational goal.

Action Steps

- Increase the involvement of the bar and the judiciary in local judicial district recognition events of attorneys who contribute at least 50 hours of pro bono services annually.
- Identify attorneys who are close to the 50 hour goal, to encourage them to achieve the 50 hour mark.

Strategy T2-2.3: Iowa Legal Aid will have comprehensive, written protocols for the recruitment, management, supervision, support, retention, training and evaluation of in-house volunteer attorneys.

Action Steps:

- Complete a comprehensive review of what each office is currently doing and their experience about (1) what works and what doesn’t with respect to recruiting and retaining in house volunteer attorneys; (2) problems associated with recruiting and retaining in-house volunteer attorneys; and (3) the resources required for those volunteers to work effectively.
- Survey staff to determine ideas about how recruiting, training, supervision and evaluation of volunteers can be best supported.
- Gather information from other sources, including LSC, the ABA and other programs regarding ideas and “best practices” for recruiting, retaining and using volunteers.
- Determine the scope of the protocols. At a minimum, the protocols will address:
 - Guidelines and responsibilities for volunteer activities
 - Volunteer recruitment
 - Volunteer training
 - Substantive law
 - Iowa Legal Aid policies, procedures, technology and case management requirements
 - Volunteer supervision
 - Volunteer recognition
 - Evaluation of volunteer services
 - Consistently applied methods for expressing appreciation and bringing media attention to successful and significant volunteer efforts

- Procedures for enlisting volunteers for specific projects
- Develop a template for the protocols
- Assign responsibilities for portions of the protocols
- Draft, review, adopt and disseminate the protocols

TIER 2 – WORK ENVIRONMENT GOALS

Goal T2-3: (Use of Paralegals) Iowa Legal Aid will determine whether increased use of para-professionals would improve the program’s ability to deliver effective and efficient services.

Strategy T2-3.1: Develop a cost-benefit analysis of the use of para-professionals in delivering services to clients.

- Analyze whether activities currently performed by attorneys could be done by paralegals (e.g., conducting fact interviews, putting together pleadings, representing clients in administrative hearings) and whether it would benefit the program or clients to reallocate any of such work from attorneys to paralegals.
- Research what it would cost to hire good paralegals and what responsibilities could or should be handled by the paralegals.
- Examine whether Iowa Legal Aid paralegals are being optimally utilized and whether there are opportunities to broaden, change or develop their work.

Goal T2-4 (Remote Work Opportunities): Iowa Legal Aid will provide staff with the technology (including mobile computing and telecommunications) and related training to enable them to (1) work from remote locations; (2) provide better, faster and more accessible services to clients; and (3) to engage effectively with other stakeholders who use such technology, including the courts⁸.

Strategy T2-4.1: Research and analyze the emerging capacities of mobile computing/telecommunications to determine which, if any, could be used to enhance program activities.

Action Steps:

- Research existing mobile computing options and develop a matrix for assessing advantages and disadvantages of each.

⁸ For purposes of this Goal, mobile computing refers to the use of small digital devices that are capable of providing wireless access to telecommunications networks and the Internet and have computing features for word processing, spreadsheets and other software applications. Examples of current products include mini-notebooks, smart phones and PDAs.

- Survey other legal services programs to determine the extent, applications and uses of mobile computing in other programs.
- Survey Iowa Legal Aid staff to determine awareness of, interest in and ideas about the application of mobile computing in the program.
- Revise, as necessary, Iowa Legal Aid’s technology use policy to address the use of mobile computing and working from remote sites.
- Develop ways to keep the program informed about the use of emerging technologies by other organizations with which the program or clients regularly engage.
- Determine whether Iowa Legal Aid should develop a pilot project as the initial step in implementing mobile computing within the program.

TIER 2 – ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

GOAL T2-5 (HELP Connection): Iowa Legal Aid will increase the mutual sharing of information between the program and HELP Legal Assistance to enhance the services, administration and support of both organizations and facilitate effective communications between them.

Strategy T2-5.1: The Boards of Directors for Iowa Legal Aid and HELP will develop and share information about their respective organizations to expand understanding between the two organizations.

Action Step:

- Management of Iowa Legal Aid and HELP will develop and exchange information that includes biographical information about board members, description of board operations, recent activities and decisions. This information will be posted on the Board/Advisory Council website.

Strategy T2-5.2: The Boards of Directors for Iowa Legal Aid and HELP will organize joint activities to exchange information and ideas and forge a stronger relationship between the organizations.

Action Steps:

- The Iowa Legal Aid and HELP Boards will have established a schedule and approach to meetings and trainings on topics of mutual interest and to afford the organizations regular and predictable opportunities to communicate about their work and areas for potential collaboration. The Boards will use the Board/Advisory Council website as a vehicle for communication and collaboration.
- The Iowa Legal Aid and HELP Boards will hold a joint training on topics of mutual interest, in-person or via web/telephone conference.

Goal T2-6 (Social Networking): Iowa Legal Aid will have developed and implemented program policies on the application of social networking to client service, program outreach and resource development.

Strategy T2-6.1: Iowa Legal Aid will undertake a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) (or similar) analysis of the issues raised by social networking, including but not limited to ethical challenges, evidentiary issues, privacy considerations, the nexus between professional and personal matters, fundraising questions and the use of such tools by clients. The analysis will enable the program to develop policies and practices to take advantage of the benefits of social networking tools and minimize potential risks to client service, program staff and the organization.

Action Steps:

- Expand the current ad hoc group that is exploring some social networking issues to address the remaining action steps. Their focus should be on the applications, features and utility of Facebook and Twitter.
- Examine the value of the social networking tools for intra-organizational communication, external communications, client outreach and communication, organizational promotion.
- Analyze the implications, including ethical and confidentiality considerations, regarding collection of e-mail addresses and social network pages of clients.
- Research how other law firms and legal services organizations are using social networking tools and the policies they may have adopted to address the issues they raise, including professional ethical obligations, maintenance of the attorney-client privilege and confidentiality.
- Develop program-wide policies once those implications are fully explored and train staff regarding them.
- Examine and develop policies to guide staff regarding the nexus of professional and personal networking and the obligations and boundaries required to protect professional obligations to clients and the program.
- Examine how social networking tools fit into the evolution of mobile computer technology and what the convergence of those technologies and tools means for Iowa Legal Aid.

CONCLUSION

Iowa Legal Aid's Strategic Plan is designed to position the organization to meet its challenges and opportunities over the next four years. The plan is intended to make what we all believe is already a strong program an even more effective organization.

The challenges that will confront low-income Iowans will become more complex and the numbers of clients eligible for assistance is likely to increase. This Plan will help Iowa Legal Aid in providing the most effective services possible to bring hope, dignity and justice to clients served.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The strategic planning process has involved many of the staff, Board members and volunteers associated with Iowa Legal Aid over the past year. It will bring together many more over the next four years as the plan is implemented. In particular, we would like to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of the following:

- Hannah Lieberman was the consultant who worked with Iowa Legal Aid's strategic planning process. Hannah's energy, dedication, hard work and creativity helped bring about the Plan adopted by Iowa Legal Aid's Board of Directors on May 1, 2010.
- The Joint Board and Staff Strategic Planning Steering Committee was composed of

Susan Barta	David Loetz	Liz Norris
Ana Bissell	Corey Luedeman	Evie Ocheltree
Dennis Groenenboom	Chris Luzzie	Frank Tenuta
Justin Gross	Pat McClintock	Deb Tharnish
	Sandie Nelson	

- In addition, five Work Groups were formed, Board members and volunteers who served on the Work Groups (in addition to the Steering Committee members listed above) included:

Tammy Abdulghani	Marty Diaz	Scott Hartsook
Terri Bennett	Jennifer Donovan	Bob Heimer
Norma Boge-Conyers	Steve Drahozal	Sandie Heinrichs-Koehler
Bill Boyd	Theresa Durst	Lee Heithoff
Angela Broughton-Romain	Lois Eichacker	Julie Hernandez
Andrea Buckley	Mark Elliott	Gary Hill
Emily Chafa	Carol Escovedo	Hattie Holmes
Brooke Chesney	Megan Fluharty	Douglas Ibaakee
Mary Jane Clauer	Lisa Gavin	Derek Johnson
Katie Colling	Bob Griffin	Lisa Jones
Andrea Covert	Susan Harris	Laura Jontz

Gail Klearman
Rod Kleitsch
Karen Kopitsky
Shellie Mackel
Paul McAndrew
Vivian Meyer-Betts
Linda Molyneaux
Peter Moyers
Bill Nassif
Fred Nelson
Andrew Nordstrom
Alan Olson
Nathan Peters

Cathy Reynolds
Elisabeth Reynoldson
Jan Rutledge
Todd Schmidt
Pat Schumacher
Lisa Schumacher
Tim Semelroth
Kim Shepherd
Kara Smith
Theresa Sosalla
Cathrine Soto
Suzan Stewart
Janelle Swanberg

Dee Swanger
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APPENDIX 1 – Strategic Planning Work Groups

BOARD GOVERNANCE & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Pat McClintock, Chair
Deb Tharnish, Vice Chair
Terri Bennett
Bill Boyd
Jennifer Donovan
Bob Griffin
Lisa Jones
Karen Kopitsky
Paul McAndrew
Peter Moyers
Nathan Peters
Cathy Reynolds
Janelle Swanberg
Tim Tripp

STAFFING

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David Loetz, Vice Chair
Tammy Abdulghani
Andrea Buckley
Brooke Chesney
Katie Colling
Marty Diaz
Carol Escovedo
Gary Hill
Linda Molyneaux
Bill Nassif
Jan Rutledge
Suzan Stewart
Dan Wilmoth

CORE VALUES & COMMUNICATIONS

Corey Luedeman, Chair
Justin Gross, Vice Chair
Norma Boge-Conyers
Andrea Covert
Mark Elliott
Scott Hartsook
Lee Heithoff
Hattie Holmes
Douglas Ibaakee
Derek Johnson
Laura Jontz
Rod Kleitsch
Pat Schumacher
Tim Semelroth
Kim Shepherd
Dee Swanger
Mark Zaiger

VOLUNTEER RESOURCES

Frank Tenuta, Chair
Ana Bissell, Vice Chair
Angela Broughton-Romain
Theresa Durst
Megan Fluharty
Bob Heimer
Sandie Heinrichs-Koehler
Julie Hernandez
Gail Klearman
Alan Olson
Elisabeth Reynoldson
Kara Smith
Cathrine Soto
Julie Walker
Judy Wymer

CLIENT & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Sandie Nelson, Co-Chair
Chris Luzzie, Co-Chair
Susan Barta, Vice Chair
Emily Chafa
Steve Drahozal
Lois Eichacker
Lisa Gavin
Susan Harris
Mary Jane Clauer
Shellie Mackel
Vivian Meyer-Betts
Fred Nelson
Andrew Nordstrom
Evie Ocheltree
Todd Schmidt
Lisa Schumacher
Theresa Sosalla
Michelle Hoyt Swanstrom
Michelle Synarong
Jessica Taylor
Mike Tulis
Ivan Webber

APPENDIX 2 – NOTES

Many considerations shaped the ultimate content of this Strategic Plan. Each committee examined Iowa Legal Aid’s current operations and practices in their designated area. They considered the challenges and opportunities facing clients as well as program capacity to respond to those challenges. Committee members demonstrated a commitment to excellence, innovation and making a lasting difference for Iowa’s low-income persons and communities. They were also mindful that, to be a useful guide for program efforts over the next several years, the Plan had to be clear and achievable within realistic resources. Tempering ambitious goals with a realistic view of resources became more difficult but more critical as the economic crisis unfolded – simultaneously increasing demand for service while threatening already limited program resources.

The planning process initially produced 23 goals, accompanied by implementing strategies and action steps. Over the course of two conference calls, the Planning Committee reduced the number of primary goals from 23 to 12. Six of its original goals became secondary (or “Tier 2”) goals; others were whittled down and blended into the remaining 12.

These notes serve several functions. They provide additional information about various goals that Committee members thought were important to convey. They may explain aspects of the whittling process and retain for the program the ideas and aspirations that, of necessity, cannot be among those to which it first turns attention. They preserve strategies and action steps that did not make it into the final Plan but are worthy of consideration at a later time or if resources become available. They reflect highlights of Committee discussions. They are not a comprehensive record of the discussions about each goal.

The Committee intends for these Notes to guide the program as it continues to strengthen its infrastructure, expand its capacity and deepen the services it provides to low-income persons and communities. They should inform decisions about the use of new resources, assessment of funding opportunities and future planning efforts.

RESPONDING TO CLIENT NEEDS WITH HIGH QUALITY, HIGH IMPACT SERVICES

Goal 1: High Quality Casework

The practice standards envisioned in this goal are not intended to replicate either the ABA Standards for the Provision of Civil Legal Aid or the Legal Services Corporation Performance Criteria. Rather, they are intended to provide staff with best practice guidelines for handling a basic case so that practitioners in each substantive area meet clearly articulated indicia of quality. We expect that the guidelines for each practice area will be short and user-friendly.

Adhering to high quality standards will enable casehandlers to achieve the most they can for their clients throughout the course of the representation, from adequate investigation, pre-trial (or hearing) preparation (discovery), and complete presentation of a case to the decision-maker.

Goal 2: Target Services to Achieve Lasting Results

This goal recognizes that lasting results can and should be sought for individual clients and, when possible, for other similarly-situated persons who could not be served or did not seek the program's help. Lasting results include changes to the systems, practices and institutions that affect clients. They include resolving the cause of recurrent problems. The goal recognizes that lasting change for individual clients as well as broader-based change that benefits others with similar problems can be achieved through a variety of advocacy tools, including creative and zealous handling of individual cases and non-litigation strategies. The ability to achieve lasting results also includes the capacity to engage in affirmative litigation, permissible policy advocacy, strategically focused media advocacy, and an understanding of the importance of combining strategies.

This goal underscores that effective collaboration with others in the community – advocacy groups, providers, funders, and clients themselves – is critical for program efforts to achieve lasting results. Carefully developed relationships are a prerequisite to effective collaborations and embodied in the key strategies identified to achieve the goal.

Goal T2-1: Targeted Outreach

Although Iowa Legal Aid staff conducts extensive outreach throughout the state, both the Client Services and the Communications subcommittees felt that those efforts could benefit from a more strategic, systematic approach. Accordingly, both committees developed goals focused on targeted outreach, with an emphasis on processes that would enable the program to identify particularly underserved populations (including persons living in extremely rural communities) and develop strategies for reaching those populations.

The Planning Committee decided that the fact that offices were already engaged in outreach efforts, that much of the work contemplated under the goal has been undertaken by the LEP and EEO Committees, meant that the goal was not designed to fill a gap in service but to make those efforts more systematic. The Committee concluded that this would be desirable but not as pressing as addressing more serious gaps or needs and therefore placed it in the second tier. However, the portion of the goal that contemplated regular review of information available to the program about the demographics of Iowa's poverty population was incorporated into the related action steps to achieve Strategy 2 of Goal 2 – identification of recurrent problems affecting low-income Iowans.

The portions of the targeted outreach and draft communications goals that focused on effective communications (including those with significant non-English speaking populations and ensuring that materials for clients are written in “plain English”) have been added as a strategy (4) to the Intake goal. Much of the work contemplated by the strategy is already underway, but the inclusion in the Intake goal underscores its importance to effective client services.

The Planning Committee agreed that the LEP and EEO committees should review the remaining elements of the second tier goal and determine whether their current work can or should be expanded to include strategies to reach additional disproportionately underserved populations.

Goal T2- 2: Pro Bono

The Committee made “pro bono” a Tier 2 goal because much of the work contemplated by the goal is currently underway. It did so despite the fact that the Committee agreed to leave “non attorney” volunteers as a primary goal. The use of non-attorney volunteers was seen as a high priority because volunteers can be recruited from a number of sources (including former clients) and it is an area that, if developed, could provide significant and varied benefits to the program and to clients. More well-developed procedures to systematize the recruitment, training and use of volunteers could help make their integration into program work more efficient, standardized and consistent with best practices.

Changes to Other Initial Goals

Pro Se:

The Committee that focused on client services considered what proportion of program resources should be spent on pro se assistance. While the Committee acknowledged that pro se assistance is a necessary service for many who must navigate the judicial system without a lawyer, members also recognized that it takes staff time and must be carefully balanced against competing demands for extended representation. The Committee wanted to guard against having pro se assistance take up a disproportionate share of advocacy resources. It therefore developed a goal to circumscribe the amount of pro se work the program undertook, to ensure that pro se assistance was undertaken only after a rigorous analysis of its potential and to ensure regular evaluation of its effectiveness. The initial goal also sought to further systemic solutions for barriers facing unrepresented litigants.

During the winnowing process, the Committee retained the objectives of seeking systemic solutions for barriers facing unrepresented litigants and incorporated those objectives and related strategies into Goal 2 (Strategy 5). Since the remainder of the goal was essentially to limit the scope of pro se work the organization undertakes rather than to guide its future

development, the Committee decided to remove it as a goal and to use these notes to memorialize the intent that the program should take an extremely cautious approach to undertaking pro se assistance projects. The goal and associated strategy that did not get incorporated into the final Strategic Plan is set forth below and may provide a useful guide for the program to use in determining whether future pro se opportunities warrant dedicated resources:

Goal (Pro Se Assistance): Iowa Legal Aid will determine the extent to which pro se assistance should be a part of its overall service delivery system and will have a rigorous process for making decisions regarding allocation of resources for new opportunities for pro se assistance, based on clearly articulated objectives. Pro se assistance includes the use of forms, clinics or court-based pro se assistance projects.

Strategy: Iowa Legal Aid will develop a set of explicit outcomes that it will expect from any pro se delivery mechanism it supports (i.e., what would constitute a successful pro se project/type of assistance).

Action Steps:

- Compile information about other programs' experiences and review relevant evaluations (perhaps including those done for hotlines and other forms of brief assistance) to help determine "best practices" and the realistic benefits from and limitations of pro se delivery models.
- Use the information about best practices to prepare a set of explicit outcomes for a successful pro se project.
- Using its outcome measures as a guide, evaluate current pro se assistance projects. Examine the trade-offs the assistance requires in staff time and resources, the pressures to provide the assistance (i.e., the needs of the courts) and the extent to which it is possible to obtain funding for such services that would otherwise not be available to the organization. Include obtaining or reviewing feedback from clients, clerks of court and judges.
- Based on the outcome measures and information acquired during the evaluations, establish a set of written criteria to guide decisions about whether to include a pro se project or type of assistance into its spectrum of services.

Community Lawyering:

The Client Services committee recognized the importance of representing community groups to help them pursue their goals to strengthen their communities or develop advocacy capacity

within those communities. Committee members felt that building community lawyering capacity in the program would benefit low-income lowans. While the ultimate results of such engagement can provide lasting value to communities (e.g., building safe, affordable housing, bringing medical services into the community, helping small businesses, including day care establishments get off the ground, etc.) it is often time-consuming, long-term and requires legal aid lawyers to practice in complex and unfamiliar areas of law. Because developing such a practice requires an investment of time and resources (and, when resources are not expanding, a reduction in other services), the Planning Committee concluded that such a practice should be developed deliberately but slowly.

Accordingly, the Planning Committee included a more limited version of the original goal into Goal 2 (achieving lasting results). Its emphasis on developing collaborative, community-based relationships will help to create a platform for further community lawyering efforts as program resources permit.

ENSURING A SUPPORTIVE AND CHALLENGING WORK ENVIRONMENT

Goal 5 (Training):

The subcommittee that addressed staff needs started with the assumption that Iowa Legal Aid's current level of training will continue. Accordingly, they limited their goal-setting to filling gaps in the program's current training curriculum and focused on the provision of electronically accessible, high quality materials.

The subcommittee also expects that the training committee will work to include the additional trainings contemplated under the various Strategic Plan goals and listed in Appendix 2 in Iowa Legal Aid's regular training curriculum.

MAINTAINING A WELL-GOVERNED AND WELL-ADMINISTERED ORGANIZATION

Goal (Technology): The Board and Resource Development subcommittee originally developed a goal to ensure the security of the program's technology. However, the security-related work is well underway and it did not seem to be a necessary stand-alone goal. The Planning Committee decided that since effective use of technology undergirds all of the program's work and service delivery, it should be incorporated into individual goals, as appropriate. It was also noted that LSC requires the program to submit an annual technology plan, which encourages it to engage in regular technology planning and assessment. The Committee therefore eliminated Technology as a stand-alone goal.

The following is the narrow goal that the Planning Committee eliminated:

Goal (Technology): Iowa Legal Aid will implement, continuously examine and maintain best practices to maintain the security of its technology infrastructure.

Strategy: Iowa Legal Aid will continue its current efforts to protect the security of its system and data and will research, implement and train staff on new security policies and methods.

Action Steps:

- Complete testing and review of the PIKA password protocol under development.
- Implement the developed PIKA password protocol and train staff.
- Renew the program’s threat management software and ensure vendor training of staff.
- Research and implement best practices to protect (1) the program’s confidential information and (2) the system from “malware”. Include consultations with other law firms, as appropriate.
- Revise, as appropriate, policies pertaining to the use of technology, including practices to maintain the security of the system and confidential program and client information.
- Provide an initial staff training on maintaining technology security and include as part of new employee orientation.

Incorporate review of the program’s threat management software and strategies as part of the program’s ongoing technology planning process to ensure that the program is staying current with new developments and potential threats.

