



Strategic Plan

2019 - 2024

**Recommended by the Strategic Planning Committee
for review by the Board of Directors**

Mission

LAFLA achieves equal justice for people living in poverty in Greater Los Angeles. We change lives through direct representation, systems change, and community education and empowerment.

Vision

Our vision is for communities where everyone has access to justice that protects their home, livelihood, health, freedom and equality.

Values

<i>Justice</i>	Justice must be equal. We fight barriers to justice and fairness.
<i>Responsiveness</i>	We listen. The strengths and priorities of individuals and communities living in poverty define and inspire our work.
<i>Collaboration</i>	We engage clients, communities and partners to create permanent change.
<i>Dignity</i>	We are respectful, compassionate, and accountable to the diverse individuals and communities we serve.
<i>Excellence</i>	We deliver high quality services with dedication and professionalism.

**Approved by the Board of Directors:
June 20, 2019**



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Executive Director
Silvia R. Argueta, Esq.

June, 2019

Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA) is celebrating 90 years of delivering our unique model of free community lawyering across Los Angeles County. Today, our clients face tremendous legal challenges that threaten their housing, jobs and income, and families. LAFLA is here to help.

The landscape of poverty in Los Angeles has changed with a dramatic increase in homelessness, along with growing awareness and related funding. Our clients are strong and resilient people who continue to struggle with a crippling lack of affordable housing, wage theft, domestic violence, health insurance issues, and challenges accessing benefits for which they are eligible. They often face discrimination and other unlawful abuses of power. Access to free, high-quality, accessible legal services is as important now as it has been during our 90 years of service.

LAFLA responds with a redoubled commitment to our clients as agents of change, guided by the voice and leadership from the community. We distinguish ourselves with nine locations directly in communities with the greatest needs, offering broad access to over 100,000 clients annually through language, location, and types of service. Going forward, we will remain nimble, with a responsive combination of direct services that in turn inform full representation and policy advocacy.

This Strategic Plan establishes seven key priorities through which LAFLA will continue to expand and deepen our client impact through 2024. The strong staff team delivers critical **legal services** with the support of **staff development** and **technology**. Board committees develop and expand key resources of **governance, community, pro bono, financial and fund development**. All strategic priorities are interconnected, grounded in community, and aimed at client impact.

Through this five-year strategic plan, LAFLA boldly envisions that we will expand our reach through a larger board, increase pro bono activity, and expand private giving. We will embed our services directly in more communities with the greatest needs, delivering quality services in our clients' languages, where they live.

LAFLA will continue to be here for our clients, as we have been for 90 years. Please join us.

Thank you,

Amy Lerner-Hill
Chair, Strategic Planning

Jim Burgess
President, Board of Directors

Silvia Argueta
Executive Director

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LSC | America's Partner
for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA)

Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024

Our unique approach to services:

- LAFLA provides a broad range of free legal services to people living in poverty
- The majority of our work is delivering legal services that meet individuals' most basic needs
- When we see patterns of injustice through our direct service to individuals, we seek change through impact litigation, advocacy, and public policy to improve lives for larger numbers of people
- We increase our impact by partnering with volunteer attorneys and community-based organizations
- Our legal staff are specialists who collaborate to address a broad range of needs
- Our culturally sensitive staff deliver legal services regardless of what language a client speaks or where they live, using a variety of methods including referrals to address their full range of needs
- We take an active role in the communities we serve

External Forces

Powerful and often unpredictable forces will impact LAFLA, our clients, and the communities we serve in the coming years.

- **Poverty:** All of the greatest issues identified in the community needs assessment are grounded in or exacerbated by poverty, including housing and homelessness, domestic violence, health, immigration, and discrimination. LAFLA is dedicated to addressing clients' income and employment legal needs in combination with other impacted aspects of their lives.
- **Discrimination and Racial Justice:** LAFLA is committed to fighting for justice for communities of color. LAFLA serves a majority-minority community of clients who speak over 20 languages with the full diversity of backgrounds, beliefs, genders, and documentation status in an environment rife with discrimination. LAFLA is dedicated to achieving racial justice and ensuring broad access to legal services and remedies for all members of the Los Angeles community, with a clear understanding of the unique and historic discrimination and challenges that different people of color have faced and continue to encounter in Los Angeles.
- **Housing and Homelessness:** Los Angeles lacks over 500,000 units of affordable housing. Rents continue to grow while real wages stagnate or decline, resulting in extreme rent burden, overcrowded housing, and increasingly homelessness. LAFLA proactively addresses housing needs, the crisis of homelessness, and related policy change.
- **Technology:** Continuously changing technology impacts the demand for legal information and accessibility for clients, while also providing new tools and opportunities for delivery of legal services. LAFLA wants to remain current in technological interface with clients, donors, among staff, and in its community organizing.
- **Funding:** Though federal LSC funding has been sustained in recent years, and support for LSC continues to grow, LAFLA continuously faces uncertainty from this primary funding source. Effective private fundraising, in an increasingly competitive field, requires that LAFLA articulates when and how its services align with private philanthropic interests.



**LEGAL AID
FOUNDATION
OF LOS ANGELES**

WHAT WE DO

EVICTION DEFENSE CENTER

Provides free direct representation for low-income individuals and families facing eviction

Prepares pleadings for tenants to avoid a default in an eviction action and prepares tenants for trial

Defends residents of public housing and Section 8 voucher holders against losing their housing or housing subsidy

Helps clients living in uninhabitable conditions to get reductions in rent and get necessary repairs made through outreach, advocacy, and litigation

Preserves Rent Stabilized Ordinance tenancies and prevents Rent Stabilization Ordinance violations

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Assists vulnerable populations in getting benefits to fulfill basic needs: food, shelter, medical care and services to attain self-sufficiency

Fights wage theft, wrongful terminations and discriminatory employment practices

Removes barriers to employment by expunging criminal convictions and reducing sentences post-conviction, so that individuals can become or stay employed and gain access to housing

Discharges student loans based on disability or school fraud

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

Works toward systems change through litigation, policy and education aimed at creating and preserving quality affordable housing and homeownership opportunities

Protects civil rights

Seeks environmental justice on behalf of poor and low-income residents

Partners with community-based organizations to build healthy, economically vibrant neighborhoods

SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Helps survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault get restraining orders, divorces, child custody, visitation and support

Secures the return of concealed and abducted children

Represents survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assaults and other serious crimes to obtain protection and permanent residency

Supports torture victims seeking asylum and other immigration relief in the United States with the immigration process

Provides comprehensive case management to survivors of torture

Represents children and adults who are in removal proceedings to obtain immigration relief

VETERANS JUSTICE CENTER

Obtains life-sustaining income, health, and housing benefits so veterans can thrive

Prevents veteran homelessness by fighting wrongful evictions and preserving housing vouchers

Removes barriers to employment to promote self-sufficiency

Advocates to upgrade unjust less-than-honorable military discharges

Works with hundreds of pro bono legal volunteers annually to hold large-scale legal clinics for homeless veterans

ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT

Advocates for language services in civil courts, administrative proceedings, and other government agencies for limited-English proficient clients

Provides linguistically and culturally appropriate services on all substantive areas LAFLA handles in Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese, Japanese, Khmer, Vietnamese, Thai, Tagalog and other requested languages

MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS

Offering two MLPs in Long Beach at The Children's Clinic and in Los Angeles at Martin Luther King Jr. Outpatient Center

Provides clients with access to legal services as they seek medical attention from their trusted health care provider

Enables lawyers to address systemic barriers to healthcare for those who are low-income

PROJECT IMPACT - REENTRY ASSISTANCE

Provide legal assistance to individuals with criminal justice involvement to remove legal barriers to employment through a partnership with employment service and behavioral health providers.

Assists individuals in obtaining resources such as public benefits.

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION (MEASURE H)

Provides legal services to individuals living in the South Bay/Harbor area and Southeast areas of Los Angeles County

Provides legal representation to those households facing eviction and are in imminent risk of homelessness

Assists homeless individuals by removing legal barriers for housing and income benefits

SANTA MONICA COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Serving the needs of this client community, especially in the areas of housing and homelessness, employment and tenant harassment

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CLINICS

(Downtown LA, Santa Monica and Long Beach) Provides holistic help to survivors of domestic violence, including restraining orders, custody arrangements and property control orders

SELF-HELP LEGAL ACCESS CENTERS

(Inglewood, Torrance, Santa Monica and Long Beach) Assists self-represented litigants regardless of income or immigration status by completing and reviewing court forms with issues involving family law, evictions and a limited range of other civil legal matters

Provides legal referrals for other areas of law

Provides legal education workshops on family law, evictions and other civil matters

PRO BONO

Coordinates volunteers to provide comprehensive, free legal services to low-income clients through direct representation, legal projects and clinics

Provides legal training to volunteer attorneys, law students, law school graduates, paralegals, undergraduate students, social workers and translators to assist in providing legal services to expand the number of clients that can be helped

Strategic Framework

The board approves seven strategic priorities with associated goals and metrics in this plan. Staff will develop annual plans to continue progress toward the Priorities and Goals. Recognizing the five-year nature of the plan, not all Goals will be active at all times; phasing will be appropriate.

Priorities – strategic areas for attention and transformation in the next five years

Goals – for each Priority, a small number of desired changes that may take more than one year to accomplish

Metrics – measures that are reported to the board annually to monitor progress

Objectives – specific actions identified by staff in annual plans

2019 - 2024 Priorities

Client impact is at the center of all of LAFLA’s work, and at the heart of this strategic plan. In response to community needs, over the next five years LAFLA aims to expand and deepen our client impact. All staff, board activities, and strategic priorities contribute essential resources to our shared effort to deliver that impact. Success in any one of these priorities is deeply interconnected with other priorities.



For example, pro bono services double the capacity of our staff, directly increasing the number of clients we can reach, while also expanding opportunities for board leadership (governance) and unrestricted funding. Our legal teams maximize their impact with the support of effective technology. Overall efficiency increases when our staff have clear roles that tap their expertise, partnered with a strong understanding of the diverse services provided across the organization.

The plan identifies specific leadership for each priority. The lead(s) are responsible for ensuring progress against the goals, not required to execute the work independently or solely within their department or committee. All staff across teams contribute to progress toward all priorities.

Priority 1. Legal Services

Staff lead: Deputy Director with Director of Litigation and Policy

LAFLA's work is grounded in our deep and lasting dedication to community lawyering. We receive our mandate and cases directly from the community, contributing our legal knowledge and skills to support community-led endeavors to improve our clients' lives. Our teams respond nimbly, getting to root causes to solve a client's legal problems, recognizing the interconnectedness and complexity of issues, and providing referrals to address nonlegal issues. Projects and work groups align their efforts with community need in an ongoing, responsive process.

Reflecting our dedication to broad accessibility, clients can connect to our services through a variety of methods (phone, office, online, clinics, courthouses), in locations across Los Angeles County, with diverse language skills among the staff.

Each client served by LAFLA benefits from the broad diversity of legal expertise held by advocates across the organization. The 2019 needs assessment affirmed that the current programmatic emphasis on Housing, Economic Stability, and Supporting Families are aligned with community needs. We increase our reach and impact by partnering with community-based organizations that deliver services that are outside of our legal expertise. Going forward, we remain flexible to respond individually and programmatically to shifting needs and issues.

Legal Services Goals

- Nimbly address root causes of client problems in housing, economic stability, and family support, including through structured cross-organizational strategic dialogue
- Expand advocates' use of the full breadth of allowable legal services to address root causes of clients' legal issues
- Meet the wide range of clients' legal needs through effective internal communication and referrals for specialized services
- Analyze and strategically adjust use of staff resources to most deeply impact clients
- Embed services in the community to meet the greatest needs through co-location, satellite offices, popup clinics
- Deepen community-based organizations' ability to provide new services that meet the needs of client-eligible residents through training, technical assistance and/or coalition efforts
- Empower community members with knowledge and access to information
- Advocate for policy changes, as appropriate, that meet top community needs

Legal Services Five-Year Metrics

- Address five major impact matters through cross-workgroup collaboration, litigation, policy, and/or coalition efforts (cumulative)
- Deepen knowledge and services of at least five partner community-based organizations (cumulative)
- Each workgroup to develop an appropriate methodology to articulate and measure the impact of our work on individual clients' lives across multiple legal issues
- Each workgroup to develop an appropriate methodology to articulate and measure the collective impact of our work across a client community
- Limited action and extended services represent half of cases closed (2018 baseline = 28%)
- Embed legal services delivery in five new communities/neighborhoods currently without a community office (cumulative)

Priority 2: Staff Development

Staff lead: Deputy Director with Director of Human Resources

LAFLA sustains a team of 133 staff (as of February 2019) who share a deep commitment to our mission, and bring a broad mix of experiences and training to the organization's work. Distributed among nine locations across Los Angeles County, the team includes a large number of new staff members thanks to recent program growth.

Staff identified opportunities for improved administrative support across teams. During this plan period, LAFLA will expand support staff as funding allows. In addition, the process generated multiple approaches for better tapping the human resources already in place.

Staff from all departments and teams contribute to this priority as we tap our expertise, improve our connectedness, and increase our efficiency and effectiveness.

Staff Development Goals

- Expand and refresh staff understanding of the breadth of LAFLA services
- Sustain and honor staff diversity in a manner that reflects the community we serve
- Maximize opportunities for existing staff to bring their talents to the work
- Streamline staff recruitment and onboarding
- Review and continue to refine organizational structure to efficiently and effectively meet client needs in the near term and prepare for future growth
- Invest further in training and professional development
- Identify and encourage opportunities for self-care
- Expand administrative and support staffing, as funding permits
- Provide effective work spaces

Staff Development Five-Year Metrics

- One additional support staff per office
- Secretary to Advocate ratio of at least 1:6 across workgroups
- Vacancy time for key positions of no more than two months

Priority 3: Technology

Staff lead: Deputy Director with Director of Information Technology

As a modern law firm, LAFLA depends on technology to organize large amounts of data, manage complex cases and client services, and coordinate among staff. Technology also offers an increasing variety of powerful tools for connecting with clients, donors, staff, community organizations, and the general public. LAFLA must further develop its use of technology to streamline processes, support responsiveness, increase efficiency, and promote program integration.

Technology Goals

- Automate, including switch to Legal Server case management system, to streamline processes and services, reduce client wait time, and increase staff responsiveness
- Increase capacity for remote and virtual service delivery
- Ensure that our client's personal data is kept at the highest information security standards

Technology Five-Year Metrics

- Paperless office environment
- Connection speeds of 150 mbps at all offices
- Disruption in connectivity and data access averages no more than 15 minutes

Priority 4: Governance

Board lead: Governance Committee Chair

Staff lead: Executive Director

The LAFLA board of directors engages the skills and experiences of all of its members to provide effective leadership and governance that are rooted in the community and responsive to its needs. Regardless of background, training, and experiences, all board members serve as residents of Los Angeles, committed to justice in our shared community.

LAFLA's Articles of Incorporation allow up to 72 members of the board of directors; in April 2019 there are 36 members. LSC requires that one-third of board members are client eligible, that 60% are lawyers, and allows for a small number of public members. LAFLA's Associate Advisory group, with 66 members as of April 2019, hosts fundraising events and leadership development opportunities.

Governance Goals

- Identify, recruit, orient, and support a mix of new board members to fulfill strategic priorities
- Support board member engagement and effectiveness

Governance Five-Year Metrics

- Increase the board by 21 members to a total of 57
- 100% of board members attend at least two board meetings and two committee meetings in person each year
- 50% of board members volunteer with LAFLA beyond board service

Priority 5: Community

Board lead: Community Committee Chair

Staff lead: Executive Director

LAFLA sustains year-round connection with the community in order to share current information on our work and to learn about the changing needs and conditions clients and potential clients face. In 2018 LAFLA participated in 648 community outreach events reaching over 11,000 people. We will expand opportunities for board members to participate in existing activities, while also creating ways for other community leaders to share information.

Community Goals

- Increase understanding of LAFLA projects and workgroup services among partner organizations and community members (*link to Program Impact goals*)
- Develop a “Reach Out” program to tap the motivation and empowerment of community leaders to share information about resources that are available
- Sustain LAFLA responsiveness and accountability to the community

Community Five-Year Metrics

- 100% of board members participate in a community listening/ outreach event annually
- At least 15 community leaders engage in Reach Out activities
- Two-thirds of Community Committee meetings include guest speakers to explore current issues

Priority 6: Pro Bono

Board lead: Pro Bono Committee Chair

Staff lead: Pro Bono Director

Pro bono services are a key resource for LAFLA in delivering our mission. We develop and expand pro bono opportunities driven foremost by community need. LAFLA distinguishes ourselves among legal service organizations by establishing light co-counsel between staff advocates and pro bono attorneys, providing mentoring, supervision, quality training, and effective clinics and cases. As a result, the pro bono experience benefits the attorneys, their firms, LAFLA staff, and most importantly the number of clients helped.

LAFLA responds to recent trends in legal pro bono by offering limited scope representation through a wide variety of clinics, addressing legal needs related to domestic violence, expungement, veterans, and reaching people living in skid row. Full scope cases continue to hold an important position among pro bono activities, with deep and lasting impact for clients.

While our pro bono program involves law firm partners, associates, paralegals, and law students, the largest number of volunteers are college students and other volunteers. Over the next five years, LAFLA will expand our outreach to law firms along with efforts to engage non-legal volunteers.

Pro Bono Goals

- Develop internal culture and systems to integrate pro bono into work across the organization
- Expand outreach for relationship building and responsive partnering
- Target volunteers to meet leading LAFLA needs
- Expand the number and types of volunteer projects, while sustaining full scope cases
- Prepare and implement an emergency response plan to re-establish services, outreach, and mobilization following a disaster (*in conjunction with legal, technology, fund development, and finance*)

Pro Bono Five-Year Metrics

- 50 firms
- 2,000 volunteers
- The value of donated services is equal to or greater than overall staff costs
- 100% of advocates engage with pro bono

Priority 7: Financial and Fund Development

Board lead: Finance and Fund Development Committee Chairs

Staff lead: Chief Financial Officer and Chief Development and Marketing Director

Historically, LAFLA has received the large majority of our funding through public sources – primarily, the federal Legal Services Corporation, along with various federal, state, and local grants. Though these funds have allowed us to make a meaningful difference for large numbers of clients, the funding comes with restrictions and is not reliable during budget crises and political uncertainty, creating risk. Therefore, over the past ten years LAFLA has intentionally diversified funding among different public sources as well as grown private giving, for example growing private foundation gifts from 1% to 5% of a larger total budget. As a result, LSC Basic funding represents a third of the 2019 budgeted revenues, down from over half of our pre-recession budget in 2007.

While we anticipate that public funding will continue to provide a large portion of our funding, the Fund Development Committee will lead our efforts to grow and continue to diversify our revenue sources, with a particular emphasis on strengthening funding from expanded board members, their firms/ companies, and other private sources. By 2024 we anticipate generating over \$880,000 more in annual private giving through these efforts.

The Finance Committee leads stewardship of these funds, including long-term planning for financial resources for use in an emergency, to soften the transition of a sudden loss of funds, and for facility maintenance. The board intentionally grew reserves to over \$5 million over a ten-year period, which were tapped in 2018 to pay off debt related to the South and Long Beach offices. As of May 2019, reserves equal \$2 million, with an additional \$3.85 million line of credit, for a total equivalent of four months' operating expenses.

In this five-year plan period, LAFLA will maintain reserves plus line of credit at the equivalent of at least four months of operating expenses (growing as appropriate with the budget), on a path toward launching an endowment campaign associated with the 100th anniversary.

Financial and Fund Development Goals

- Increase private fundraising to generate unrestricted funds
- Explore a funding strategy for renovations of the East LA office, including campaign feasibility, consideration of debt alternatives, and impact
- Establish policies to guide the use and replenishment of reserves
- Increase alignment between financial committees
- Assess viability of activating the affiliate

Financial and Fund Development Five-Year Metrics

- 120 firms/ companies contribute \$1.2 million (2018 baseline 75 firms, \$735,049, + 10% per year)
- 100% of law firms and companies represented on the board give at least \$10,000 annually (2018 baseline = 67%)
- 100% of board members make personal financial contributions
- Maintain four months operating expenses in reserves plus line of credit

Funding the Strategic Priorities: 2019 and 2020

Staff will use annual plans to move forward with low-cost and no-cost activities that advance the strategic goals. In addition, the board will seek and dedicate *cy pres* awards above the budgeted amount plus new unrestricted funds to the following strategic investments for 2019 and 2020:

Legal Services – expand work in our work group areas (housing, economic stability, supporting families) when the new opportunities are responsive to community needs and identified funding covers fully loaded costs, including administrative overhead

Technology – prioritize investments that will protect information security, streamline work processes, increase efficiencies, expand staff ability to meet client needs, and client ability to access legal resources

Support Staff – along with efforts to more effectively use existing staff, intentionally invest in new support staff to increase client services and impact

Over time, board development and outreach will lead to continued growth of unrestricted private giving. During each subsequent annual budgeting process, staff and board will work together to identify top strategic priorities for incremental expenditures.

Strategic Planning Process

The board launched the strategic planning process at a retreat in November, 2018 then formed a strategic planning committee made of board members and staff representatives from executive, management, and direct service roles. The committee met monthly from January – June 2019 to guide the process, review input, and prepare content for board consideration.

Input phase

The committee designed a comprehensive process for collecting stakeholder input, including:

- Community needs survey – sent four times to over 5,000 client emails, posted on LAFLA FaceBook page, distributed through partner organizations, shared by Managing Attorneys with staff to share with clients, resulting in 154 completed surveys
- Partner focus groups held twice, engaging 16 community partners
- Partner interviews with four additional community leaders to explore themes from the focus groups more deeply
- Board survey completed by 20 of 33 board members (61%)
- Staff survey completed by 76 of 133 staff members (57%)

Resource planning phase

The following board committees dedicated at least one meeting along with additional data collection and analysis to questions related to strategic planning: pro bono, community, governance, finance, fund development

Strategy groups

All staff were invited to participate in at least one of five strategy group sessions organized around: supporting families, housing, economic stability, self-help, and administration

Setting strategy

The board held a full-day retreat in April 2019 to integrate data from the input phase, and build alignment around the emerging strategic priorities.

Implementation and follow up

The Board has primary responsibility for setting and monitoring progress toward the strategic priorities. Board committees and staff, led by the Deputy Director, will report each year at the June annual meeting on progress during the previous calendar year on the metrics identified throughout this plan. A preliminary report in June 2020 will provide six months of data for activities from July – December 2019.

The role of the board in reviewing metrics is to ensure that annual plan activities move us toward the intended longer-term results. As needed, the board will revisit resource allocation, priorities, and conditions as warranted by shifting opportunities and community needs.

Throughout the year, board and staff leads identified for each priority will guide implementation of the associated goals. Committee and staff reports to the board will regularly reference which strategic goal is addressed through an action or decision. The Executive Committee, including the chairs of all other committees, will connect efforts and progress across the organization throughout the year.

LAFLA Planning Leadership

Strategic Planning Committee

Board members

Jim Burgess
Amber S. Finch
Amy Lerner-Hill (chair)
C. Cleo Ray

Staff members

Silvia Argueta
Lynn Etkins
Fernando Gaytan

Jessica Mark
Dominique Quevedo
Barbara Schultz

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Michael Maddigan, Vice President
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Kareen Sandoval
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