



Strategic Plan

June 2022

MISSION & ROLE

The mission of the Lawyers Trust Fund is to support the provision of civil legal services to low-income Illinois residents throughout the state in an efficient, effective, and equitable manner. In furtherance of this mission, the Lawyers Trust Fund seeks to serve as:

- ❖ A stable source of funding for providers of legal aid services in Illinois;
- ❖ A force for accountability in terms of the quality, quantity, and equitable distribution of legal aid services; *and*
- ❖ A catalyst for innovation and improvement in the legal aid system.

VALUES: WHY AND HOW LTF DOES ITS WORK

Consistent with the role entrusted to it by the Supreme Court of Illinois, LTF contributes to making our society fairer and more equitable by providing resources to address legal problems – including problems stemming from past and present racial injustices and other systemic exclusions – and help people in need find legal solutions. We partner with lawyers and others working on the front lines to solve legal problems. We offer financial resources and other critical support to help legal assistance providers do their jobs effectively.

In carrying out its work, the Lawyers Trust Fund seeks to engage, think, and act in ways that:

- ✓ Keep low-income Illinoisans and the challenges they face at the forefront of our work;
- ✓ Understand and address the complex obstacles people encounter in solving legal problems, including those stemming from past and current racial discrimination;
- ✓ Recognize and balance the importance of stability in the legal aid system with the imperative for change, growth, and improvement;
- ✓ Embrace the possibility of new approaches to make legal aid services and legal solutions more widely available and accessible; take informed risks to put promising new approaches into practice;
- ✓ Respectfully challenge assumptions – our own and others’; maintain an open dialogue with legal aid providers and other relevant stakeholders.

STRATEGIES & GOALS

STRATEGY 1: Foster and invest in effective, accessible, free, and appropriate legal solutions for low-income people who need them.

Goals:

- ◆ Increase awareness of and confidence in legal solutions among people who do not know about them and/or may not trust the legal system.
- ◆ Increase the availability of legal solutions so that more people who have been historically excluded from the protections of the legal system receive the help they need.
- ◆ Create widely accessible entry points for people seeking to address problems that may have legal solutions, recognizing that people experience problems as “problems” and not as “legal issues.”
- ◆ Ensure that all available legal solutions respect the dignity, diversity, and experiences of the people they are designed to help, making them feel that they have been treated justly and that their voices have been heard.

STRATEGY 2: Serve as a force for stability, accountability, innovation, and improvement for legal aid in Illinois.

Goals:

- ◆ Remain committed to providing operating support for legal aid services and solutions.
- ◆ Use the annual grant review process to both identify and fund effective organizations that advance LTF’s mission and to identify critical gaps, deficiencies, and stresses in the Illinois legal aid system.
- ◆ Create expectations for grant recipients that balance maximizing the help available to people in need with the imperatives of staff well-being and organizational sustainability; provide resources to help legal aid providers achieve this.
- ◆ Support efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the Illinois legal aid system.
- ◆ Continue to explore and invest in technology that makes legal aid services and legal solutions more effective, efficient, and accessible.
- ◆ Remain open and responsive to emerging organizations and projects that reach underserved populations, address unmet needs, and/or offer new ways of helping people solve legal problems.

STRATEGY 3: Promote collaboration and coordination among legal aid providers and other stakeholders to maximize the availability of legal solutions for people who need them.

Goals:

- ◆ Ensure that the legal aid system's complex array of resources, tools, and services are organized in ways that minimize both duplication of effort and confusion for potential users.
- ◆ Create systems that guide people to the most appropriate solution(s) with the least possible delay, friction, and cost.
- ◆ Encourage partnerships between legal aid providers and trusted intermediary organizations (e.g., faith communities, social service agencies, community groups, health care providers) to ensure that solutions reach individuals who are not aware of their legal options or who do not trust the legal system.
- ◆ Partner with legal aid providers, legal aid funders, and other stakeholders to address gaps and challenges facing legal aid organizations and the legal aid system.
- ◆ Support the collection and dissemination of information about the services provided by the legal aid system and the availability of legal solutions.

STRATEGY 4: Cultivate relationships of mutual respect and trust within and beyond the legal system, serving as a thought partner and resource.

Goals:

- ◆ Maintain an informed perspective by creating more formal and informal channels to listen to legal aid providers and other stakeholders.
- ◆ In collaboration with other funders and stakeholders, identify and address common issues and needs faced by multiple legal aid organizations and/or the legal aid system as a whole, including research, training, and technical assistance.
- ◆ Ensure that LTF's culture and processes are based on understanding and supporting grantees, rather than regulating and penalizing them, consistent with appropriate standards of accountability.
- ◆ Serve as a resource and sounding board for grantees facing challenges related to service delivery, organizational development, and/or internal operations.
- ◆ Participate in state and national forums and initiatives related to access to justice, including those sponsored by the judicial branch, bar associations, civic groups, and philanthropy.

STRATEGY 5: Create a positive organizational culture at LTF, with alignment around values, goals, and processes among board members and staff.

Goals:

- ◆ Foster relationships of trust among the board and staff, based on mutual respect and a shared understanding of LTF's mission.
- ◆ Center LTF board meetings and other opportunities for board engagement around discussion and decision-making that is framed by LTF's values, strategies, and goals.
- ◆ Continue to emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the organization: board, staff, consultants, and vendors.
- ◆ Maintain high levels of communication among staff.
- ◆ Ensure that LTF's operations are streamlined, cost-effective, and sustainable.

*Approved by the LTF Board of Directors
June 28, 2022*