

**Strategic and Business Plan
Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania
2011 – 2014**

Executive Summary:

Legal Aid of Southeastern Pennsylvania (LASP) was formed in 2001 as a new regional nonprofit provider of legal services for low-income, vulnerable individuals living in Bucks, Montgomery, Chester and Delaware Counties. It replaced four long standing single county programs through merger and reorganization. LASP is the primary provider of civil legal services in these counties, each year representing more than 11,000 individuals and providing legal education to many more. It handles a range of civil legal cases including Landlord-Tenant and Housing Law, Elder Law, Public Benefits and Employment Law, Domestic Abuse, Child Custody and Child Dependency, and Consumer Credit and Bankruptcy issues.

LASP has an experienced management team led by two Co-Executive Directors who together have more than forty years of experience in Legal Services. They have established an effective partnership and share responsibility for important management decisions while separately managing discrete sets of responsibilities. They are assisted by a Financial Manager with nearly 40 years of experience in Legal Services, a Development Director, a Technical Director and Managing Attorneys assigned to each office and the Helpline.

LASP's 2010-2011 budget of \$4.7 million represented growth of more than double its earliest operating budgets, achieved through increased support from the private bar as well as new revenue streams from the State of Pennsylvania, private foundations, local government and United Ways. LASP's growth in funding has enabled it to expand the state's first regional telephone intake unit, improve staff compensation, upgrade facilities, upgrade communications and outreach materials, and add needed staff positions and programs.

Since 2008, however, LASP has been challenged by dramatic decreases in funding of all types due to the effects of the economic downturn. We are currently projecting a deficit for 2011-2012 and do not anticipate significant growth over the next three years given the weak economy.

Over the next three years we will strengthen and diversify fundraising in order to maintain services; work with existing staff to improve skills, job satisfaction, and retention; expand community legal education activities; and increase Board knowledge of programs and participation in governance and fundraising activities. By 2014 LASP will have a more secure and diverse funding base, so that we can maintain our well-qualified and skilled staff, strong community and client relationships, active and informed board, and effective management team to implement its mission.

Introduction

Underlying all of our strategic goals is our client-centered mission... *to provide quality legal representation to low-income and vulnerable people in Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery County, to empower them to solve problems without legal representation through legal education and increased access to the courts, and to change community practices and systems that cause or aggravate poverty.*

The strategies we use to realize our mission are based in a philosophy that places clients at the center of all of our efforts. We believe that our clients deserve the very best from us, that each and every client is entitled to high quality representation, respectful treatment, and successful outcomes. Our approach to working with clients is therefore pro-active, consistently of high quality, and dependent upon highly skilled and dedicated staff. We also believe that we have a responsibility to provide legal education to the larger community of low income and vulnerable people living in our region to equip them to avoid and resolve potentially serious problems.

The vision and goals articulated in this plan highlight the most critical areas on which to focus in order to best meet the needs of our clients over the next three years. These areas, identified by staff and Board and leadership, are: Service to the Client Community, Staff Development, Board Development, Resource Development and Effective Management. By turning our attention to these five areas we will ensure that clients' needs remain the focus of our efforts, and that they receive the best possible service from LASP at a time when sources of funding may be in decline.

I. Vision for Service to the Client Community :

We are proactive in reaching out to and developing relationships with the communities we serve. We educate the community about the law and ways to prevent legal problems. We are creative in developing new methods of delivering services to the client community. We are responsive to feedback from clients about our services and the needs of their communities

Goal A : Provide effective community legal education and outreach which informs client eligible groups and service providers about legal issues, eligibility guidelines and how to access our services on local and regional level.

Objectives:

1. In each county, between 6 and 12 community legal education activities will be conducted across a variety of Legal Aid issue areas to diverse demographic and geographic communities. (2011 -2014).
2. County outreach plans, (with specific numerical goals of outreach sessions to be held and numbers of individuals to be reached), will be completed and integrated into staff work plans (2011-2014),
3. A regional media/marketing plan will be developed and updated annually to inform various constituencies, including potential clients, service providers, the private bar and others, about how to access LASP's services and program priorities (2011 – 2014)

Strategies:

- Maintain a staff person in each office in charge of overseeing education activities
- Develop plans in local offices for engaging in community education which address
 - Local needs and opportunities
 - Effective methods of delivery
 - Learning outcomes and the means to assess them
- Hold periodic meetings of designated education/outreach staff from each county to share best practices, materials, etc.
- Include community education and participation in community initiatives, coalitions and collaborations in staff development expectations and goals (work plans)
- Develop and oversee implementation of regional media and marketing plan through work of Community Impact Coordinator who, in consultation with local staff and administration, will identify multiple marketing channels and establish a calendar of outreach and marketing communications including media advisories and press releases, editorial responses, and other regional strategies.

Responsibility: Management Team

Resources Needed: Printed materials, postage, travel reimbursement and time away from case representation for outreach and planning.

Goal B: Develop creative ways to reach out and provide services to clients through collaborations with community partners and increased use of technology.

Objectives:

1. Between 2011 and 2014, implement 1-3 new community partnerships or collaborations targeted to improving and expanding client services
2. Between 2011 and 2014, implement 1-3 technology-based service delivery projects to improve and expand client services
3. Where possible, replicate successful projects in additional local office sites.

Strategies:

- Look for best practices from other legal aid and human services organizations in Pennsylvania and nationally;
- Identify opportunities for collaborative and technology-based service delivery projects at the state, county, local office, and regional level;
- Identify and seek resources to pilot new service delivery models, evaluate their success in improving and expanding client services, and where possible, integrate models into ongoing practice and replicate at additional sites.

Responsibility: Managing Attorneys, Technology Director, Development Staff and Co-Executive Directors

Goal C: Through regular communications with clients, continue to be responsive to changing community and client legal needs.

Objective:

Use feedback from clients to review and update priorities on an annual basis.

Strategies:

- Distribute client satisfaction surveys quarterly to 4% of clients whose cases were closed
- Review surveys semi-annually at management meetings
- Elicit client feedback through verbal or written evaluations at community legal education events.

Responsibility: Co-Executive Directors and Managing Attorneys

Resources Needed: Time for training and review of Program Priorities and expense of the quarterly client satisfaction surveys.

II. Vision for Highly Qualified, Skilled and Dedicated Staff:

Our staff is our most important resource and the key to successfully achieving our mission. We are deeply committed to nurturing and developing staff in both formal and informal ways. In turn, LASP staff is highly skilled, dedicated and motivated to provide the best possible service to our clients. We operate with a well thought-out, structured and ongoing staff development program that emphasizes high quality work, retention and professionalism.

Goal A: Staff are recruited and hired to assure that LASP has a qualified and diverse staff.

Objectives:

1. LASP will continue to follow its recruitments practices and procedures set forth in its personnel policies manual.

Goal B : Staff are oriented and trained for their work and recognized for their accomplishments with emphasis on the following priority areas: Customer Service, Communication and Team Skills, Expertise on Legal Substantive Issues and Compliance with Program Standards.

Objectives:

1. All new and recently hired staff will be oriented to the agency, have a mentor in their area of work assigned, and have a work plan which incorporates training and development goals.
2. All staff will receive at least one job-related training per year and will review training and education needs and goals at annual review.
3. Each year, staff members will be recognized for their exemplary job performance at the local, regional and statewide levels

Strategies:

- By December 31, 2011, develop orientation materials including a new hire checklist covering review of staff manual, personnel policies, staff WIKI, appointment of mentor and work plan. When appropriate, conduct group orientation meetings
- By December 31, 2011, develop guidelines for the appointment of mentors and the responsibilities of mentors and mentees.
- At Management Team meetings, share opportunities for local and program-wide staff training and recognition.

Responsibility: Co-Executive Directors and Managing Attorneys

Resources Needed: Possible funding for expanded training and recognition activities; possible redistribution of workload for mentors to be available to mentees.

II. Vision for Highly Qualified, Skilled and Dedicated Staff (*continued*):

Goal C : Develop individual work plans for all staff and institute a goal-based performance review program based on these work plans.

Objectives:

1. Continue to conduct an annual performance appraisal of all employees to assess and document success at meeting expected results, meeting performance standards, progress toward achieving work plans, recognize special achievements; provide suggestions to improve performance; identify training needs; and develop work plan for the next year.
2. All staff will have annual work plans that are updated during annual performance reviews. Management staff plans will include time specifically designated for management activities. (See also Vision V – Vision for an Effective and Well Managed Organization)

Strategies:

Annual performance reviews are scheduled in the fall and completed by December 31.

Responsibility: Co-Executive Directors and Managing Attorneys

Resources Needed: Time to conduct evaluations and develop plans,

Goal D: Retain skilled and high-performing staff.

Objectives:

1. Learn why staff voluntarily leave LASP and identify issues among current and departing staff affecting job satisfaction and desire to stay with LASP
2. Evaluate retention as measured by tenure of newer staff and number of voluntary resignations each year. (to be monitored through 2014)
3. Review results to identify steps that can be taken to increase the retention of experience staff.

Strategies:

- Conduct exit interviews with departing staff, continue staff meeting discussions about staff development issues and other strategies to better understand reasons for turnover
- Review results of exit interviews and retention assessments at Managing Attorney meetings, at least annually, and identify steps that can be taken to retain skilled and high-performing staff.
- Assess all other staff development goals and strategies with retention as a key goal

Responsibility: Co-Executive Directors and Managing Attorneys

Resources Needed: Targeted funding for training and compensation improvements, time for coaching and development of leadership opportunities.

III Vision for an Involved and Knowledgeable Board:

Our Board of Directors is knowledgeable about LASP, its work, structure, funding and policies. It is committed to its program goals is active in developing resources, promotes awareness of LASP in the community and the bar, and enhances organizational effectiveness.

Goal A: Increase Board involvement in the organization through participation with board and sub-committees, and through financial support.

Objectives:

1. Each year, all Board members make personal financial contributions and/or facilitate financial contributions from others
2. Board members will actively participate through attendance at meetings and involvement in program related activities.

Strategies:

- Invite more board member participation in governance of Board by providing transportation to meetings for client-eligible members, meeting with them in their home communities; assigning experienced board members to mentor newer board members; use of teleconferencing and other communications strategies for all board members who have difficulty with regular attendance. (Plan some board and committee meetings to be held at county offices or meeting sites other than Norristown.)
- Inform Executive Committee members of current members' financial contributions and the Committee will encourage compliance with the board contribution policy.

Responsibility: Co-Executive Directors and Board Members

Resources Needed: Technology, transportation, some funding for meetings.

Goal B: Increase Board members' knowledge of LASP services and work

Objective: Board receives regular communication about LASP staff and services

Strategies:

- Devote a segment of each Board meeting to education about LASP's work, delivered by staff and clients
- Make information available to the Board about program work and activities through a variety of means, including summary reports of client feedback, case numbers and stories, publications and email communications.
- Encourage board members to become knowable about and actively support staff and services in their local counties.

Responsibility: Co-Executive Directors and Management Staff

Resources Needed: Time to assemble summaries and for staff and clients to plan for and travel to Board meetings and events.

IV. Vision for Abundant Resources:

We strive for abundant funding and resources to succeed and excel in meeting our goals. Both staff and Board are involved in, and aware of, the resource development efforts, and each contributes willingly and effectively to this effort in appropriate ways.

Goal A: Develop and implement a broad-based resource development plan to sustain the work of LASP and meet emerging needs in times of economic growth or downturn

Objectives:

1. Among all types of donors, increase multi-year commitments, size of donations and frequency of donations.
2. Continue LASP's recent success in increasing the diversity and number of locally raised funding sources.

Strategies:

- Each year, document growth in funding sources, using 2010 data as the baseline;
- Set a target of 10% - 20% growth between 2011 and 2014 in numbers of sources in each category and where possible identify new categories of funding to be developed (e.g. major gifts; planned gifts; competitive state and federal grants etc.) and track results.
- Conduct meetings of county groups comprised of members of Board of Directors, in partnership with LASP management and local staff, to identify fund development activities to be implemented on the county level to support LASP operations.
- Set a target of increasing funds raised in county bar campaigns (which includes direct mail appeals, fundraising events, corporate solicitations and other strategies) by 10-20% over 2010 baseline between 2011 and 2014.

Goal B: Develop and implement a grants management reporting and communications system that supports LASP's development work

Objectives:

1. Communicate with funders the results of our legal services work, including qualitative and quantitative outcomes, in professional, accurate and timely ways. To the extent possible, manage reporting requirements centrally, while maintaining positive relationships with funders through efforts of local and central administrative staff.

Strategies:

- Continue to develop the role of the Compliance and Grants Manager, assisted and supervised by Development Director, to assume a greater share of grants reporting and oversight with a goal of freeing local staff for direct service activities.
- Monitor compliance with grants, providing training and individual feedback for legal and support staff on any issues affecting compliance with funder requirements.

Responsibility: Grants Management Committee, consisting of Co-Executive Directors, Compliance and Grants Manager, Development Director, Technology Manager and Financial Manager (and others as needed).

Resources: Access to technology and training

Goal C: Current and prospective donors are well informed about LASP and its mission

Objective:

1. Regularly communicate with donors through multiple channels to increase understanding and commitment to organization.

Strategies:

- Email – continue periodic email communications via Constant Contact or similar newsletter vehicle (1-3 e-communications to all donors per year)
- Website: Continue to update and enhance LASP and Don't Borrow Trouble websites: (minimum of 1 update on home page per month featuring LASP staff or topical issues relevant to Legal Aid and legal services in general)
- 2 Agency newsletters per year to all donors and community contacts
- 2 Fair Housing newsletters in Bucks County
- 1 annual report distributed via email blast, posting on website and to donors of \$225 per year or more
- In 2011, sponsor one donor recognition/10th anniversary celebration event per county
- Brochures: complete translation and publication of new agency brochure into Spanish in 2011.

Responsibility: Development Director, Compliance and Grants Manager, Co-Executive Directors

Resources: Sufficient technology and funding, access to consultants

V. Vision for an Effective and Well-Managed Organization

LASP is a well managed organization that employs sound non-profit practices to obtain results for clients and meet its mission.

Goal A: Utilize a management plan that incorporates best practices and supports LASP's mission, vision, and goals

Objectives:

1. Develop a management plan that includes sufficient staff to provide the needed leadership and management that is appropriate for the size of the organization, with understood assignments of responsibilities and clear lines of authority and accountability.

Strategies:

- Complete development or revision of job descriptions for management positions
- Review the draft of a management plan with the management team and the Board of Directors (to be completed by June 2011).

Responsibility: Co-executive Directors.

Resources needed: Time of all participants in the process as described.

Goal B: Hire, train, support, and retain the staff that is required to lead and manage the organization.

Objectives:

1. The Board of Directors will evaluate the Co-Executive Directors annually to assess their success at fulfilling the responsibilities and completing the tasks of their job description.
2. The Co-Executive Directors will annually evaluate the other members of the management staff to assess their success at fulfilling the responsibilities and completing the tasks of their job descriptions.
3. Management staff compensation will be reviewed regularly to encourage the best people to apply for these positions, and to retain effective management employees.

Strategies:

- Designate a committee to evaluate the Co-Executive Directors
- Obtain appropriate salary comparability data to help to assess what is reasonable and fair compensation.
- Conduct meetings of the management team no less than four times per year
- Regularly review announcements of training, conference, and other management education opportunities (including books, periodicals, and web-based information) and circulate that information as appropriate to other members of the management team.

Responsibility: Board of Directors, Co-Executive Directors, and Management Employees

Resources needed: Time of all participants in the process as described, funds for training, and funds to adequately compensate staff that perform management functions.

Goal C: LASP will have the strong leadership and management required to provide legal services to low-income residents of the four-county service area and meet its mission in the future.

Objectives:

1. In 2011 the Board of Directors will adopt a revised Succession Plan to prepare LASP for the planned or unplanned departure of the current Co-Executive Directors and for the temporary absence or unanticipated departure of any member of the Management Team.

Strategies:

- Prior to June 2011 Board of Directors meeting, circulate draft of proposed Succession Plan to the management team and to the Board of Directors for comment and consideration for adoption by the Board at June meeting.

Responsibility: Board of Directors, Co-Executive Directors, and Management Employees

Resources needed: Time and supplies.