



**Memphis Area Legal
Services, Inc.**

**2018 Strategy
Implementation Plan**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Memphis Area Legal Services (MALS) is the primary provider of civil legal representation for low income, disadvantaged, and disenfranchised individuals and families in Shelby, Fayette, Lauderdale and Tipton counties in western Tennessee. Our Metropolitan Statistical Area has one of the highest poverty rates in the country,¹ and according to a recent study² by the Legal Services Corporation, 71% of low-income households experienced at least one civil legal problem during the past year, including life threatening issues of survival and barriers to economic security; 86% of the problems reported received inadequate or no legal help due to a lack of resources.

Recognizing the widening justice gap for low-income people, MALS embarked on a strategic planning process in 2016 to help make critical choices about where to focus our limited resources and how to increase our overall impact on the constituents and community we serve. The process included board, staff and other stakeholders and included a survey on perceived critical issues and opportunities, an assessment of the 2016 financials, a planning retreat with board and staff members, and the use of a matrix map to guide board and staff in analyzing challenges and opportunities, making strategic decisions integrating mission impact and financial profitability, and setting the organization on a path to greater sustainability.

Our three-year plan represents a strategic approach to: 1) fulfilling our mission, 2) expanding our role in impact advocacy, 3) building our capacity to deliver greater outcomes for our clients and the community, and 4) enhancing MALS' financial sustainability to increase the number of people served and our flexibility to pursue innovative opportunities. MALS is seeking to be recognized as a "Community Law Firm" that is representative of the low-income communities we serve.

This strategy implementation work plan was developed at a full-staff retreat in November 2017 and a management team retreat in February 2018, and two additional strategic priorities were added to the original plan. The work plan includes the goals, objectives, strategies/timeline, assignments and key performance indicators for each strategic priority area.

Our six strategic priorities include:

Priority Area #1: Effective Governance

Priority Area #2: Brand Identity and Outreach

Priority Area #3: Community Partnerships and Alliances

Priority Area #4: Financial Sustainability

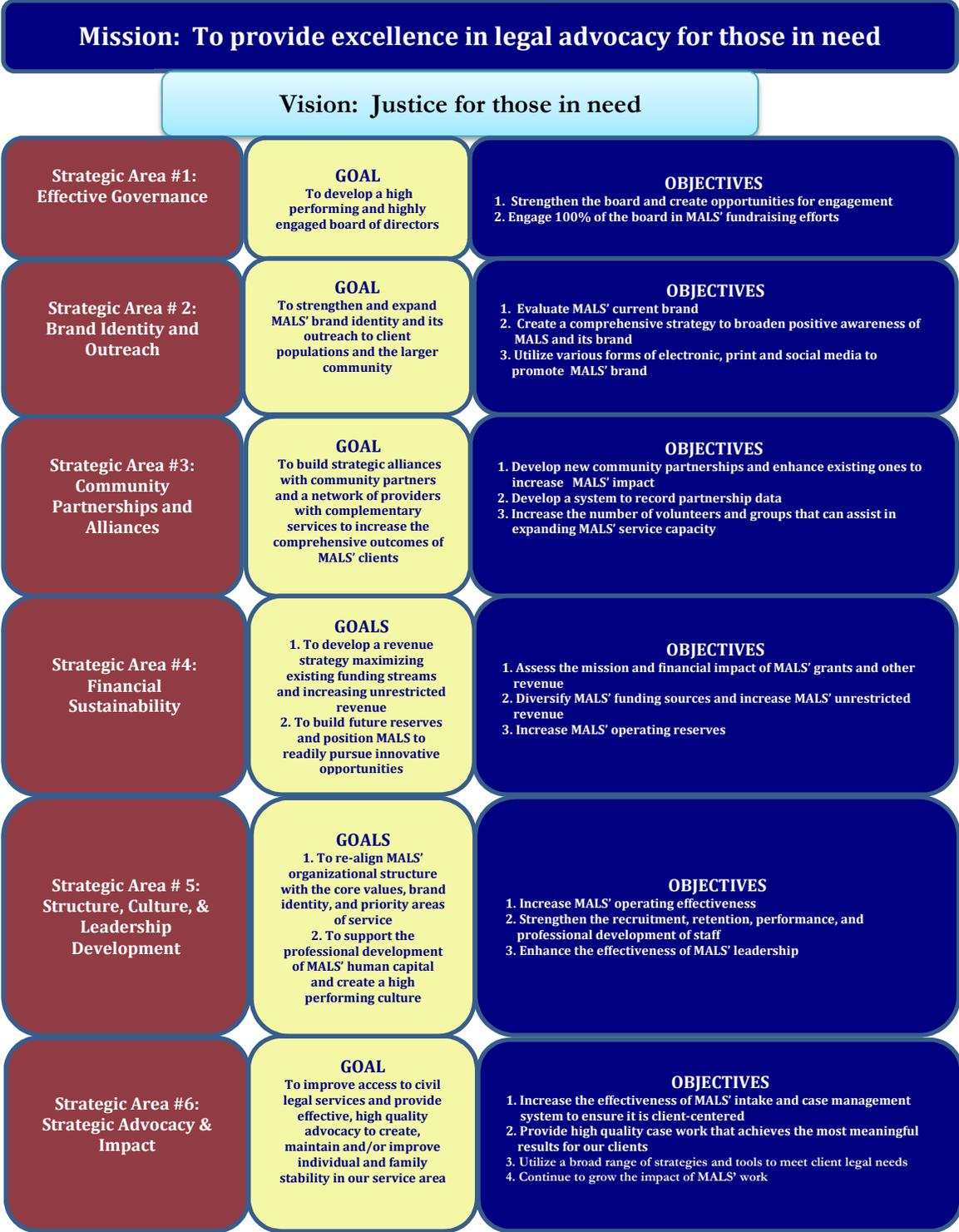
¹ Delavega, Elena, PhD, MSW. University of Memphis Department of Social Work and Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change. (2017). Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet: 2017.

² Legal Services Corporation. *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*. June 2017.

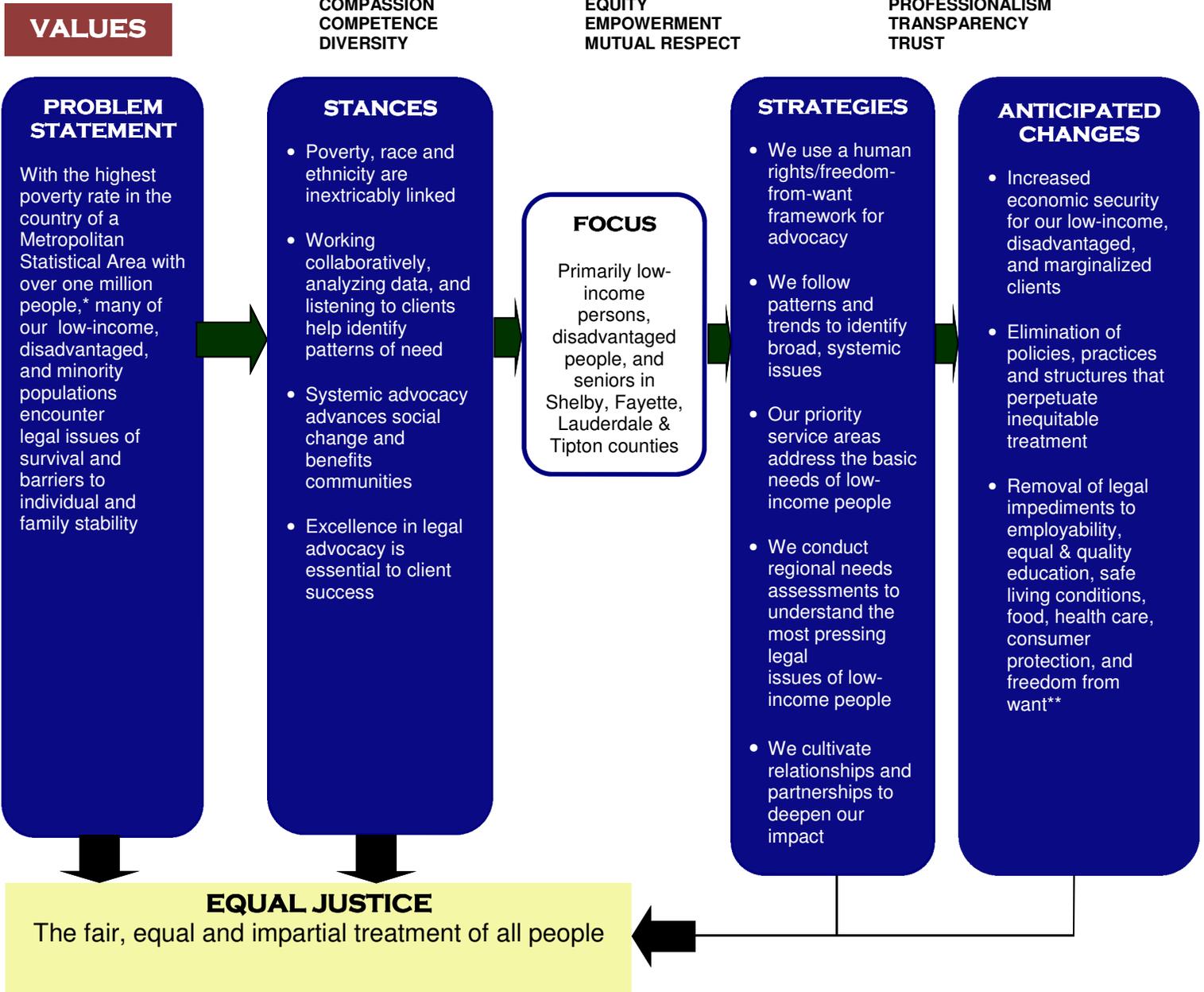
Priority Area #5: Structure, Culture, and Leadership Development

Priority Area #6: Strategic Advocacy and Impact

The Strategic Plan



MALS THEORY OF CHANGE



*Delavega, Elena, PhD, MSW. University of Memphis Department of Social Work and Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change. (2017). Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet: 2017.
 **Roosevelt, Franklin D. "Four Freedoms." President of the U.S.A.'s State of the Union Speech to the U.S.A. Congress, 6 January 1941, Washington, D.C.

Priority Area #1: Effective Governance

Goal

1. To develop a high performing and highly engaged board of directors

Key Performance Indicators

1. MALS board members are acting as effective ambassadors and strongly supporting the organization’s mission and services
2. MALS board members have a deep understanding of how the organization effects change, its programs and services, and the local nonprofit environment
3. MALS board members are investing time, energy, and resources in the organization; they are actively engaged in fundraising on behalf of the organization, and 100% are making a personal gift to the organization annually
4. MALS board members are aware of potential conflicts of interest and make those known; they are making decisions in the best interest of the organization and community
5. MALS board members have a positive can-do attitude with the ability to see the big picture and think strategically
6. MALS board members understand the differences between the role of the board and the role of the CEO
7. The MALS board of directors sets goals for the board and assesses and measures its own performance
8. Board leadership succession is an integral part of the board culture

Objectives	Strategies
1. Strengthen the board and create opportunities for engagement	A. Review and assess the current level of participation of each board member
	B. Identify assessment tools and evaluate the performance of the board (both current and future performance)
	C. Based on the results of the assessment of participation and performance, create a board development plan as a prerequisite for each board member to remain in good standing and as a means to fully engage the board
	D. Update the board roles/responsibilities form
	E. Recruit potential board members for MALS’ board committees and/or task forces to assess how they perform and if they are a good fit for the board
	F. Review, assess and modify the current board orientation process; add a mentoring component
	G. Make an annual training program available for board members, including appropriate training on fiduciary liability and employment practices liability; create a board development curriculum to be used at board meetings focused on board responsibilities, making meetings count, financial management, and

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Objectives	Strategies
	planning/strategy
	H. Develop annual board goals and assess progress made against goals
2. Engage 100% of the board in MALS' fundraising efforts	A. Train board members in soliciting donations
	B. Solicit and obtain pledges from each board member
	C. Obtain the names of at least five potential donors from each board member
	D. Provide the board with fundraising packets and set up appointments with potential donors
	E. Develop a dashboard to show progress on board fundraising efforts and share monthly with the board

Priority Area #2: Brand Identity & Outreach

Goal

1. To strengthen and expand MALS' brand identity and its outreach to client populations and the larger community

Key Performance Indicators

1. MALS is considered an "expert" within its substantive priority areas
2. MALS has an enhanced reputation and strong brand recognition evidenced by increased referrals, partnerships, and service outcomes
3. MALS is generating donations from outside the legal community
4. MALS is recognized as an essential community resource and viewed as compassionate, respectful and delivering high quality services to its clients
5. MALS is increasing awareness and building relationships with individuals, organizations and others inside and outside the legal community

Objectives	Strategies
1. Evaluate MALS' current brand	A. Create an electronic survey to the legal community to determine how MALS is perceived
	B. Convene focus groups of affinity organizations in Shelby, Fayette, Lauderdale & Tipton Counties
	C. Develop a survey targeting clients after services received to obtain perceptions of services rendered
	D. Compile and synthesize data from surveys and focus groups; use in the creation of the communications & marketing plan
2. Create a comprehensive strategy to broaden positive awareness of MALS and its brand	A. Engage a consultant/firm to assist in developing a communications & marketing plan to help ensure regular communication about MALS' activities, client services, outcomes, and the importance of equal justice
	B. Implement the communications & marketing plan
3. Utilize various forms of electronic, print and social media to promote MALS' brand	A. Publish an annual report that highlights MALS' impact and supports its fundraising efforts
	B. Develop and implement a "roadshow" presentation for public speaking engagements (e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis, Chamber, faith communities)
	C. Create additional videos about MALS' legal assistance and its impact on clients
	D. Publish bi-monthly e-newsletter to highlight MALS' accomplishments, to educate stakeholders, and to solicit financial support
	E. Target communications to community-based organizations, government, and entities outside the client base and the legal community
	F. Build relationships with key members of the media by getting to know the reporters covering nonprofits and legal work, the local TV news desks, and the local talk show radio DJs
	G. Develop a press kit, including media-ready contact, background information on MALS, stats and facts

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Objectives	Strategies
	about systemic issues, services and programs and offering MALS as an expert on issues of poverty, justice and legal aid; place kit on website/ send copies to the press

Priority Area #3: Community Partnerships & Alliances

Goal

1. To build strategic alliances with community partners and a network of providers with complementary services to increase the comprehensive outcomes of MALS' clients

Key Performance Indicators

1. MALS is increasing awareness and strengthening its current reputation among peers and potential partners
2. MALS is reducing duplication of services by providers of complementary services and receiving better quality referrals
3. MALS is increasing the number of trained community volunteers and partners
4. MALS is reaching more people and increasing its collective impact through collaboration
5. MALS is considered highly trustworthy by supporters and partner organizations

Objectives	Strategies
1. Develop new community partnerships and enhance existing ones to increase MALS' impact	A. Identify advocates' existing community partnerships
	B. Identify potential new community partners, including community groups, issue/advocacy organizations, nonprofits, government, national/state organizations, attorneys and professional legal associations
	C. Create and send a survey to existing potential new partners to help identify issues and/or litigation in which they have been or would like to be involved, who would be the "go-to" resource for different issues, and clients who may need legal assistance
	D. Communicate regularly with partners about systemic issues affecting their target populations and opportunities for impact litigation
	E. Develop a Strategic Community Outreach Plan for MALS
2. Develop a system to record partnership data	A. Analyze capabilities of Kemps or other potential software
	B. Define enhancements to Kemps (or what is needed in new software) to record: contact, purpose/mission, issues/services MALS to provide, referral from/to agency; agency record to link to associated problem codes, cases and advocates
	C. Build and test system
	D. Create and utilize Outreach Calendar to be shared by all
3. Increase the number of volunteers and groups that can assist in expanding MALS'	A. Recruit at least five (5) firms to serve as Pillar Firms; recruit 30 new attorneys/firms who have not

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Objectives	Strategies
service capacity	previously volunteered; recruit other professional volunteers to meet the needs of our clients, including at least one social worker to attend each clinic
	B. Develop community outreach materials and educate volunteers on MALS' client population

Priority Area #4: Financial Sustainability

Goals

1. To develop a revenue strategy maximizing existing funding streams and increasing unrestricted revenue
2. To build future reserves and position MALS to readily pursue innovative opportunities

Key Performance Indicators

1. MALS is significantly increasing unrestricted funding with \$500,000 generated by its 50th anniversary in 2020
2. MALS is increasing its reserves on an annual basis by 10%
3. MALS is maximizing revenue potential and covering its overhead costs from all grants and contracts
4. MALS is maintaining existing revenue streams

Objectives	Strategies
1. Assess the mission and financial impact of MALS' grants and other revenue	A. Conduct a true cost analysis for each grant to determine what costs are covered and what is being supplemented by other funding sources
	B. Assess how each grant drives the mission of MALS
2. Diversify MALS' funding sources and increase MALS' unrestricted revenue	A. Develop and implement a business plan identifying what resources are needed to operate and what new, potential resources are a good fit for MALS' mission
	B. Develop a comprehensive fundraising plan with strategies for soliciting unrestricted revenue from individuals, businesses, corporations and foundations
	C. Solicit and generate an additional \$50,000 per year toward the goal of \$500,000 in unrestricted support
3. Increase MALS' operating reserve	A. Research and review nonprofit reserve policies
	B. Develop a reserve and investment policy for MALS setting goals, investment strategies, what circumstances funds can be withdrawn, and when funds should be replenished

Priority Area #5: Structure, Culture & Leadership Development

Goals

1. To re-align MALS' organizational structure with the core values, brand identity, and priority areas of service
2. To support the professional development of MALS' human capital and create a high performing culture

Key Performance Indicators

1. MALS has an organizational structure that is aligned with priority areas, enhances communication, and promotes operating efficiency
2. MALS staff leadership reflects diversity representative of the community it serves
3. MALS has a salary structure and benefits package that is competitive with the public sector
4. MALS maintains a high performing staff that receives ongoing training and learning opportunities
5. MALS staff exhibits improved morale and effectiveness
6. MALS has increased operating efficiency as evidenced by better output numbers that outpace cost increases

Objectives	Strategies
1. Increase MALS' operating effectiveness	A. Evaluate MALS' current organizational structure and what changes are needed to better align the operations with the core values and a culture that promotes team work, openness and impact advocacy
	B. Re-align organizational structure in light of evaluation results
	C. Update job descriptions throughout the organization
2. Strengthen the recruitment, retention, performance and professional development of staff	A. Develop and implement a professional development plan for MALS that promotes high performance, cultural competency, and cross training
	B. Develop a mentoring program that includes both internal, seasoned attorneys and experienced attorneys in private practice
	C. Develop and implement a system for creating annual individual, team and unit performance goals, professional development plans, and performance measurement
	D. Conduct a workplace satisfaction survey to determine what is working well and how the work environment could be improved
	E. Develop and implement a Salary Administration Plan with a system of advancement and incentives consistent with study's findings and available resources
3. Enhance the effectiveness of MALS' leadership	A. Create a professional development plan for senior leadership that includes training in nonprofit management and leadership development

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Objectives	Strategies
	B. Develop succession plans for the senior leadership positions
	C. Review and enhance communication between senior leadership and other staff throughout the organization

Priority Area #6: Strategic Advocacy & Impact

Goal

1. To improve access to civil legal services and provide effective, high quality advocacy to create, maintain and/or improve individual and family stability in our service area

Key Performance Indicators

1. Advocates are aware of key issues related to their substantive areas of work and understand the relationship between individual case issues and the broader issues affecting the community
2. Advocates are working across units in teams to share expertise and learn new areas of law to increase the capacity of MALS to achieve better outcomes for its clients
3. MALS is increasing the number of extended service cases to one third of all cases
4. MALS is increasing the number of complex, impact case filings by 10%
5. MALS is increasing media coverage of its legal work and/or systemic issues
6. MALS is engaging in co-counseling agreements with law firms and/or legal departments to enhance its advocates' skill sets and the effectiveness of its legal representation and to expose other attorneys to systemic issues in the community
7. MALS' legal representation is achieving as much as is reasonably attainable for its clients, given the extent of the representation, client's objectives, and case circumstances
8. MALS is seeing evidence of changed behaviors in pervasive practices by predators and other unscrupulous individuals and entities
9. MALS is improving the time and efficiency of its intake operations to better serve the needs of its clients
10. MALS is increasing its attorney fee awards to expand revenue.

Objectives	Strategies
1. Increase the effectiveness of MALS' intake and case management system to ensure it is client-centered	A. Examine the current intake process from start to finish and the length of time between initial call and each step in the process
	B. Review and assess legal aid intake models and helplines to determine which model would be the best fit for MALS
	C. Review and revise the case acceptance guidelines to include more specific criteria for the types of cases that will be accepted and those that will be rejected
	D. Create a pilot program within one unit to test the new intake model and the revised case acceptance guidelines
	E. Based on lessons learned from pilot, make any necessary changes to the new model and phase in other units
	F. Evaluate the effectiveness of the new intake model

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Objectives	Strategies
	in reducing the time to determine client eligibility, provide advice, and assign cases
2. Provide high quality case work that achieves the most meaningful results for our clients	A. Add high quality as an important factor in employee and team performance reviews, including legal observations, peer input and review, and other methods deems appropriate
	B. Develop and implement a system for evaluating the effectiveness of legal work, both at the program and individual advocate levels, examining results obtained and the quality of the methods utilized to produce those results
	C. Develop a centralized repository of learning resources, including published materials, website and internet sources, online advocate knowledge bases and updated practice guides
3. Utilize a broad range of strategies and tools to meet client legal needs	A. Periodically review available data for any changes in client legal needs such as surveys, interviews, web usage and document requests, analysis of other available and relevant data, and other emerging methods
	B. Develop unit goals that include strategies for addressing priority systemic issues, including developing tools for self-representation litigation, lawyering, substantive community legal education, administrative and agency advocacy
	C. Publicize and make use of more pro se assistance apart from clinics, particularly with health and income maintenance issues
	D. Active membership by each advocate in at least one state and/or local community taskforce or partnership project related to his/her substantive practice area
4. Continue to grow the impact of MALS' work	A. Identify at least three data points per unit to track the impact of unit work
	B. Classify cases based on complexity and time required in order to accurately assess caseloads, determine case assignments, and identify cases where support may be required
	C. Begin to design, develop and implement a comprehensive system for measuring program/organizational performance and continuous improvement; compare results actually achieved by strategies employed with the originally intended outcomes