

**QUALITY.  
ACCESS.  
ACCOUNTABILITY.**

LEGAL AID ALBERTA'S PATH FORWARD



## ABOUT LEGAL AID ALBERTA

Legal Aid Alberta protects the rights of all Albertans – especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged among us.

We provide equal access to justice in every corner of the province, with nine locations, 300 staff members, and a roster of 1,200 private practice lawyers. Focusing on family law, child welfare, domestic violence, immigration, and youth and adult criminal defence, our lawyers play an important role in the lives of vulnerable Albertans. We deliver independent, equal access to justice for all Albertans.

Established in 1973, we are a publicly funded non-profit organization accountable to the public through the Ministry of Justice and the Law Society of Alberta.



## QUALITY. ACCESS. ACCOUNTABILITY. LEGAL AID ALBERTA'S PATH FORWARD

Legal Aid Alberta has made tremendous strides in serving disadvantaged Albertans and the justice system in the three years since our organization published its last strategic plan.

We have established a Criminal Trial Group that provides full-spectrum legal services in the most demanding circumstances. Three new lawyer panels have been formed to focus on children in high-conflict parenting matters, to focus on youths facing criminal charges, and to represent complainants and witnesses who have the right to respond in criminal prosecutions (providing counsel, for example, for complainants in sexual assault cases).

We are removing barriers to justice so all Albertans can connect with us regardless of geographic location or access to technology, and providing clients with greater choices in selecting or changing counsel.

Importantly, we completed a review of the LAA Tariff to help our organization and roster lawyers work together more efficiently, and enacted a roster agreement that defines conditions of our working relationship.

Internally, our organization has implemented new practices and tools to improve client service and operational efficiency.

Some of these innovations were sparked by the global COVID-19 pandemic. We responded quickly, developing innovative ways to serve the justice system and protect our clients – families, youths and individuals already struggling with difficult life circumstances, now also faced with legal challenges that could change their lives forever.

The circumstances our clients and the courts faced brought our essential role in the justice system and our impact on the lives of our clients into sharp focus. It underscored that demand for Legal Aid Alberta's services never stops. Fifty years after helping our first clients we are still here, connecting with thousands of disadvantaged Albertans every year, in big cities and small towns all across the province.

It is in this context, as we prepare to celebrate our 50th anniversary this year, that we've set our priorities for the next three years in a new strategic plan called Quality. Access. Accountability. Legal Aid Alberta's Path Forward.

With a new mission – "We resolve legal problems for disadvantaged Albertans, and in doing so, protect the Rule of Law for the benefit of everyone." – we commit to the fact that we are all equal in the eyes of the law and are guaranteed the right to quality legal representation that ensures fair treatment. We live by the Rule of Law. Albertans value the rights and freedoms we are guaranteed as Canadians.

The strategic plan is our guiding document – everything we do is tied to it. The plan sets out our goals, actions we will take to achieve them, and measures of success. We're proud to share these goals, to be held accountable for them and to be part of the change they will bring about in the coming years.



**Ryan Callioux, KC**  
Board Chair, Legal Aid Alberta

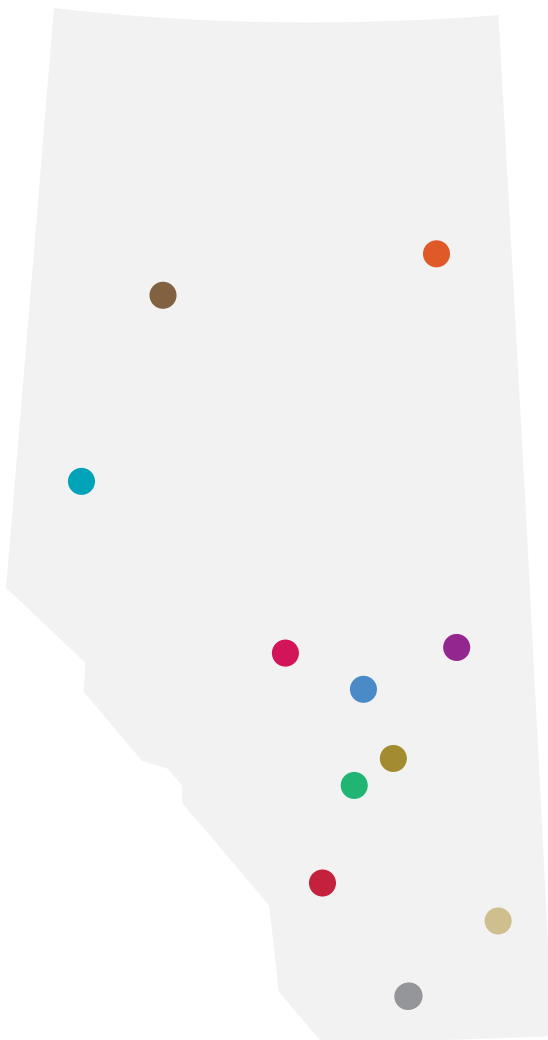


**John Panusa, KC**  
President and CEO, Legal Aid Alberta



## LEGAL AID ALBERTA SERVICE LOCATIONS

From downtown to small town, Legal Aid Alberta has provided essential legal support to Albertans in every corner of the province for 50 years.



### CALGARY

- Airdrie
- Canmore
- Cochrane
- Drumheller
- Hanna
- Okotoks
- Siksika Nation
- Strathmore
- Turner Valley
- Tsuut'ina Nation

### PEACE RIVER

- Falher
- Fairview
- Fort Vermilion
- High Level
- High Prairie
- Red Earth Creek
- Slave Lake
- Wabasca-Desmarais

### RED DEER

- Coronation
- Didsbury
- Red Deer
- Rimbey
- Rocky Mountain
- House
- Stettler

### EDMONTON

- Fort Saskatchewan
- Morinville
- Sherwood Park
- St. Albert
- Stony Plain

### MEDICINE HAT

- Brooks

### GRANDE PRAIRIE

- Fox Creek
- Valleyview

### WHITECOURT

- Alexis  
*(Heard in Mayerthorpe)*
- Barrhead
- Edson
- Evansburg
- Grande Cache
- Hinton
- Jasper
- Mayerthorpe
- Westlock

### FORT McMURRAY

- Fort Chipewyan

### LETHBRIDGE

- Cardston
- Fort Macleod
- Lethbridge
- Pincher Creek
- Taber

### WETASKIWIN

- Breton
- Camrose
- Drayton Valley
- Killam
- Leduc
- Ponoka

### ST. PAUL

- Athabasca
- Bonnyville
- Boyle
- Cold Lake
- Lac La Biche
- Lloydminster
- Vegreville
- Vermilion
- Wainwright



## OUR CLIENTS

At Legal Aid Alberta, we help some of Alberta's most disadvantaged citizens – many of whom are facing personal challenges such as mental health or addictions issues, houselessness and intergenerational trauma in addition to legal matters. Some facts about the people we serve:

**<\$10,000**

**MORE THAN 40% OF OUR CLIENTS EARN LESS THAN \$10,000 PER YEAR**

**21%**

**HAVE NO INCOME**

**80%**

**OF LEGAL AID ALBERTA CERTIFICATES ARE FOR CRIMINAL MATTERS**

The primary source of funding comes from the Government of Alberta through the Ministry of Justice. Funding from the Government of Canada is sent to the Government of Alberta and then distributed to Legal Aid Alberta through the budget process.

**Nearly 80 per cent of LAA's budget is allocated to Charter of Rights and Freedoms matters and Duty Counsel Services integral to the functioning of the justice system. Duty Counsel provide legal advice to all Albertans, regardless of income, at every court in the province.**

Our clients face a variety of unique circumstances in addition to their extremely limited financial resources.

### LEGAL AID ALBERTA HELPS:

- Clients with mental health and addictions issues
- Clients with high Adverse Childhood Experiences scores
- Clients who find themselves newly disadvantaged by sudden life events or changes
- Clients facing chronic homelessness
- Clients facing family breakdown and lack of family supports
- Indigenous clients affected by intergenerational trauma
- Youth involved in the justice system
- Clients with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder
- Clients with a history with child welfare, many of whom have been in care
- Victims of domestic violence
- Clients with previous involvement in the criminal justice system
- Clients who are incarcerated



## OUR GOALS

Legal Aid Alberta is marking 50 years of helping disadvantaged Albertans who are facing legal challenges. In doing so, we are upholding the Rule of Law for everyone. We've reflected on the role we play in the lives of Albertans and refreshed our strategic plan for the years ahead. It can be expressed in just three words: **Quality. Access. Accountability.**



## OUR VISION

An Alberta where everyone is able to understand and protect their legal rights.

## OUR MISSION

We resolve legal problems for disadvantaged Albertans and, in doing so, protect the Rule of Law for the benefit of everyone.

Let's break it down:

### *"We resolve legal problems ..."*

This means that we do more than provide advice and a quick word of encouragement. We solve legal problems through negotiation, advocacy or at trial in our courts – whichever serves our clients best.

### *"... for disadvantaged Albertans ..."*

Legal representation is for everyone – not only those who can afford it. LAA is currently providing full-service representation to nearly 35,000 distinct clients across Alberta. LAA also administers Alberta's Emergency Protection Order, Justice of the Peace Bail and Duty Counsel programs, which provide free legal support to hundreds of thousands of Albertans every year. Our average client earns less than \$10,000 per year; 21 per cent have no income. Many are struggling with mental health issues, addictions, poverty and intergenerational trauma. We give them a voice in the justice system.

### *"... and, in doing so, protect the Rule of Law for the benefit of everyone."*

Albertans value the rights and freedoms we are guaranteed as Canadians. We live by the Rule of Law that balances power in the justice system, and acts as a constraint on the power of the state. The Rule of Law protects us from abuses of power and persecution and gives us equal footing in a system that is adversarial.

LAA protects the Rule of Law for the benefit of everyone.



## OUR VALUES

Our values guide our beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, and ultimately inform how we make difficult decisions.

### We are **ONE**

We work together in a collaborative and supportive manner to deliver unwavering and innovative services to our clients as one unified organization.

### We are **PROTECTORS**

We serve Albertans, often the most vulnerable of us, and work tirelessly to protect their rights and to ensure a fair process.

### We are **EXCEPTIONAL**

We are experts at what we do and we continually strive for improvement.

### We are **INDEPENDENT**

We operate and provide legal counsel free from outside involvement.





We carry out our mission in three ways:

## QUALITY

Our clients are always served by highly effective lawyers.

## ACCESS

We will create a highly accessible justice system by making it easy for Albertans to apply for LAA services, regardless of technical capacity or physical location.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

As a publicly funded organization, we administer the Legal Aid plan in a responsible, cost-effective manner, providing the best coverage within an affordable funding envelope.

Quality. Access. Accountability. Legal Aid Alberta's Path Forward guides every member of the LAA team as we serve disadvantaged Albertans for the benefit of everyone.

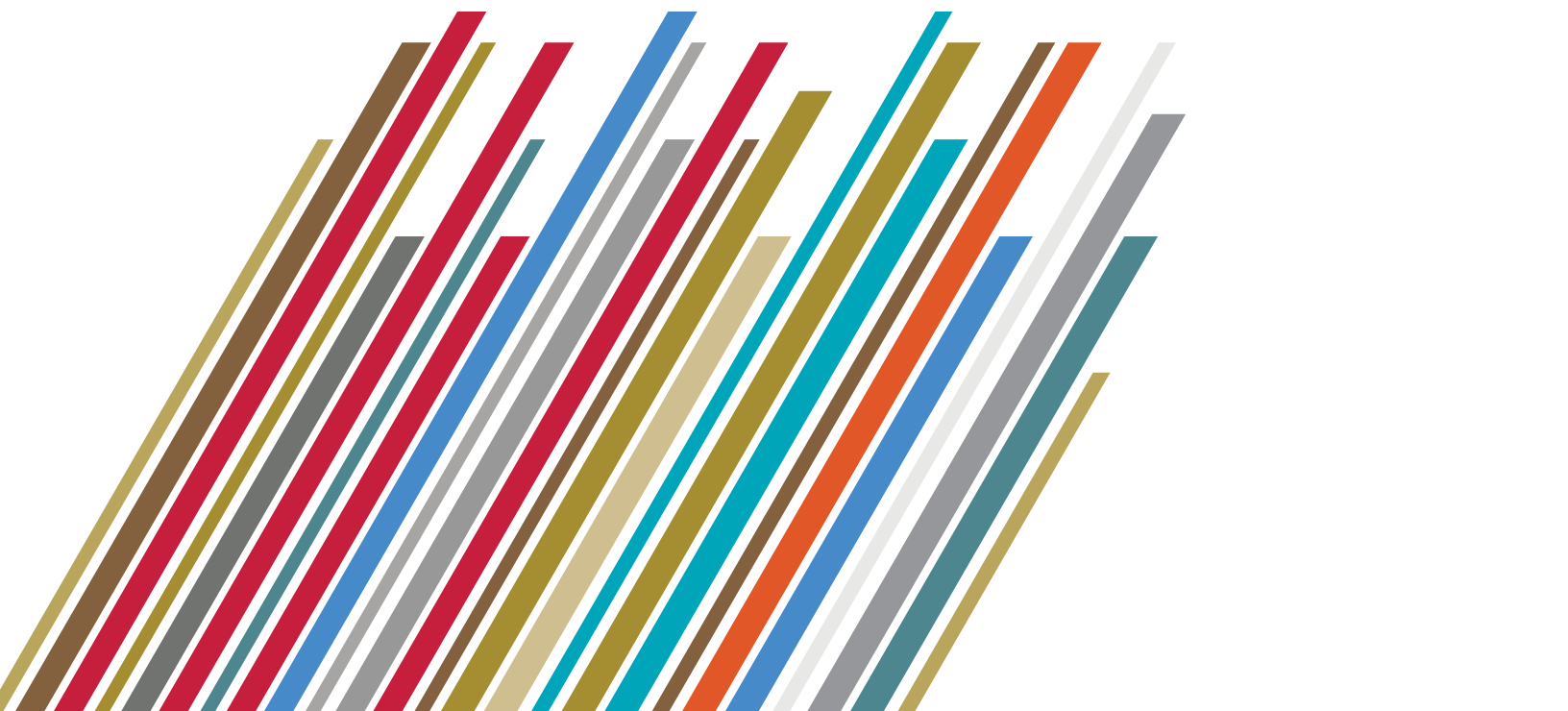




# QUALITY

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: PROVIDE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE COUNSEL

Our clients deserve strong legal representation. We enable capable, independent counsel by providing specialized development and support throughout our lawyers' tenure. We demonstrate our effectiveness by promoting lawyer accountability and measuring outcomes.



# WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When our clients receive quality legal representation, the Rule of Law is protected and all Albertans benefit.

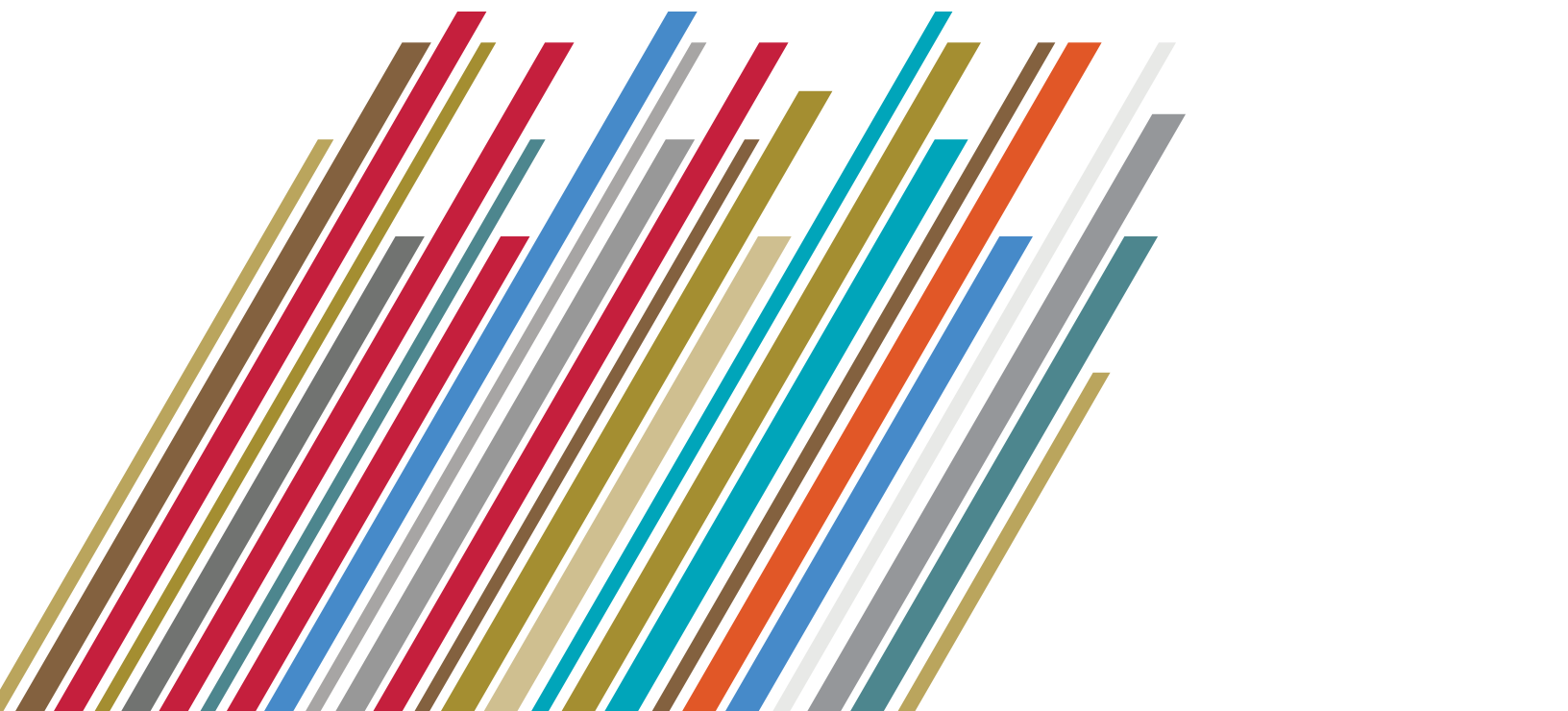
<p><b>ACTIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a strategy for positive roster engagement and continued provision of effective counsel</li> <li>• Leverage our internal expertise to develop special counsel-led training for our staff and roster lawyers</li> <li>• Establish panels to provide support for more areas of law (specializations)</li> <li>• Build a meaningful lawyer profile, including tracking and reporting mechanisms for training and performance</li> <li>• Continue to develop staff lawyer recruitment and talent pipeline</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced standards for roster lawyers</li> <li>• Continue to improve the relationship with Roster and develop the benefits of our partnership</li> <li>• Lawyers feel empowered and are enabled to represent their clients</li> <li>• Reduction in clients changing counsel</li> <li>• Quality private practice lawyers want to serve on the Roster</li> <li>• Offer 1 training session per area of law per year</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish standards and requirements for lawyers joining Roster</li> <li>• Refine measures for average time for priority areas of law certificate creation/offered</li> <li>• Establish a percentage of files in panel areas of law offered/accepted by panel lawyers</li> <li>• Establishing standards for lawyer performance</li> </ul>



# ACCESS

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: MAKE LEGAL SERVICES EASY TO ACCESS AND NAVIGATE

We want to make it easy to work with us. LAA's mandate is to provide effective, innovative and flexible intake, assessment and appointing processes. By continuing to review and improve our processes, we will create a highly accessible justice system.



# WHY DOES IT MATTER?

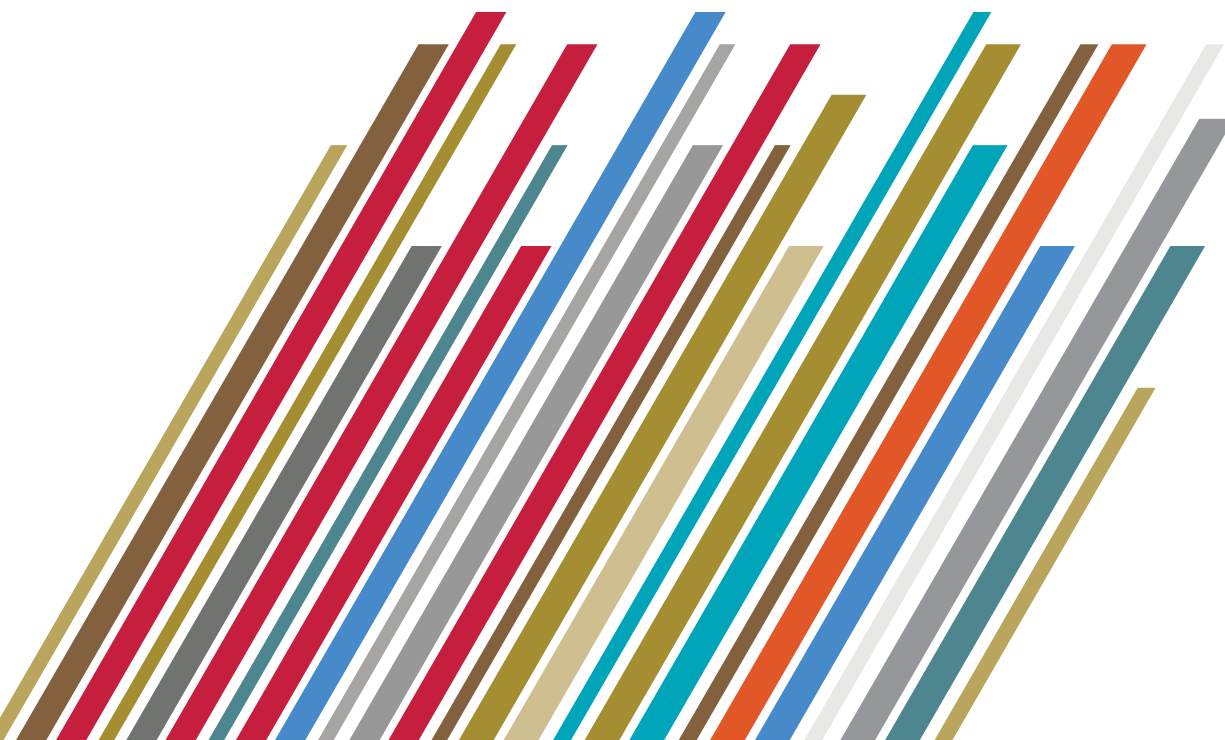
LAA is committed to delivering these services in an innovative and flexible manner – it is part of our core business for all employees.

<p><b>ACTIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the ability of Albertans to apply for LAA services. If needed, identify and create new access points available to all, regardless of technical capacity</li> <li>• Consult with our clients to identify and eliminate or reduce barriers to access</li> <li>• Continue to implement LAA's plan for improving service to Indigenous peoples</li> <li>• Continue to improve our existing processes, actively supported by technology and administration</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clients only need to tell their story once during interaction with LAA, through the application or duty counsel processes</li> <li>• Implement new innovative ways to access our services</li> <li>• Impact of barriers are eliminated or reduced with an emphasis on those that affect Indigenous peoples</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority matters (child welfare and serious criminal) are issued in a timely manner. (Target of 100% within 2 days for matters under our control.)</li> <li>• Increase variety of intake methods, aiming for 10% applications through a non-traditional intake method</li> <li>• Establish a methodology to obtain client feedback (voice) at specific points throughout the journey</li> <li>• Identify appropriate client survey points throughout the client journey</li> </ul>

# ACCOUNTABILITY

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: OPERATE WITH INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY

Good stewardship is good business. LAA will administer the legal aid plan in a cost-effective manner to maximize value for dollars, providing the best possible coverage within an affordable funding envelope. Efficiency means doing our best to make the best use of everyone's time, across our staff and our partners. We will achieve this by continuing to build "a great place to work" at LAA, developing a workforce of ambassadors who act with integrity and respect, reflecting our values to our clients and the broader community.



# WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Our mandate as a publicly funded organization requires that we demonstrate 'value for money' in all aspects of our operations. Doing so helps build and protect our reputation – the way we are perceived within the justice system – and improves our ability to negotiate and maintain funding. Operating efficiently and with integrity drives accountability, standards and value for all Albertans.

<p><b>ACTIONS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tariff and Financial Eligibility Guidelines modernization</li> <li>• Continuously improve our interaction and relationship with our Roster</li> <li>• Build and promote a workplace culture of engagement and empowerment in service of the mission</li> <li>• Continue to innovate and deliver business and service improvements that benefit our clients and our organization</li> </ul>
<p><b>EXPECTED RESULTS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tariff and Financial Eligibility Guidelines are perceived to work in a fair and equitable way</li> <li>• Our people are effective ambassadors for justice</li> <li>• Our people perceive LAA as a great place to work</li> <li>• Completion of business process optimization projects and initiatives</li> </ul>
<p><b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business optimization projects produce the intended results and benefits</li> <li>• Board continues to shift to a governance role</li> <li>• Engagement survey results, pulse checks and other stats (e.g., feedback, recruitment) trend positive</li> </ul>



Legal Aid Alberta

