



Student Legal Assistance
Strategic Plan 2025 – 2028

Our Strategic Plan

Student Legal Assistance (SLA) is a non-profit pro bono legal clinic that serves low-income Calgary and area residents, and students at the University of Calgary. SLA has provided legal services in Calgary and region since 1979 and celebrated its 45th anniversary in 2024.

Legal Services are delivered by volunteer law student caseworkers from the University of Calgary's Faculty of Law, SLA articling students, and summer law student caseworkers. These student caseworkers provide legal information and representation to University of Calgary students and clients who cannot afford legal assistance. Acting as agents, SLA caseworkers represent clients in court proceedings before the Alberta Court of Justice in criminal, family, civil, by-law, and traffic matters, within the scope of representation allowed for law students permitted by law and pursuant to the Rules of the Law Society of Alberta. They also assist clients in administrative hearings, including the Residential Tenancies Dispute Resolution Service and University of Calgary academic appeals.

At Student Legal Assistance we believe that law students play an important role in providing access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalized groups who otherwise would be left unrepresented.

Vision

Student Legal Assistance is recognized as a trusted organization leading with excellence in the delivery of pro-bono legal services and for promoting access to justice for low income and disadvantaged clients in Calgary and area.

Mission

Student Legal Assistance, through its student caseworkers at the UCalgary Faculty of Law, provides legal information and representation to low-income Calgarians, area residents, and UCalgary students who would otherwise go unrepresented, while offering law students a unique experiential learning opportunity to develop practical skills, serve the community and advance access to justice.

Values

- **Access to Justice** - We are an organization that promotes and enhances access to justice for low-income, disadvantaged and marginalized groups in Calgary and area residents.
- **Reconciliation** - We continue to work towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples within Calgary and surrounding area.
- **Collaboration** – We seek opportunities to lead, share knowledge and resources with those in the community and legal profession working towards access to justice for disadvantaged and marginalized communities.
- **Respect** - We foster a respectful environment and promote inclusion, diversity and equality in our workplace and with the clients we serve.
- **Transparency** – We are open and clear in our processes and communications.
- **Integrity** - We are ethical and conduct ourselves professionally and honestly.

Our Strategic Priorities

- **Excellence in Legal Service Delivery** – to provide excellence in legal service delivery to our clients within the scope allowed for law students.
- **Law Student Growth and Experiential Learning** – to provide law students, in partnership with UCalgary Faculty of Law, an opportunity to learn and to develop their legal skills and knowledge in a clinical practice environment.
- **Financial Stability** – to be prudent stewards of the funding that we receive and to proactively seek out sustainable sources of funding.
- **Governance and Organizational Excellence** – create a responsive and innovative organizational culture that uses best practices in non-profit governance and management of the delivery of pro bono legal services by law student caseworkers.

Strategic Priorities – Desired Outcomes and Strategies

The following desired outcomes and strategies will assist SLA in achieving each of our strategic priorities.

- **Excellence in Legal Service Delivery** - to provide excellence in legal service delivery to our clients within the scope allowed for law students.

Desired Outcomes: Our clients receive the legal services they need to resolve their legal matters. Our partners in the access to justice community are aware of the scope of services provided by SLA and refer appropriate clients to our clinic.

Strategies:

- **Client service** - to develop, implement, evaluate and maintain quality standards for practice management and client service systems.
 - **Communications** – to develop a communications strategy that informs the stakeholders in the access to justice community and the public about the scope of services delivered by law student caseworkers at SLA.
 - **Collaboration and Partnerships** – to work with and collaborate with justice-sector stakeholders to develop projects and to share best practices with like-minded organizations.
 - **Innovation** – to pursue the effective use of current and innovative technology and system design to facilitate the delivery of legal services to meet the needs of our clients and to be adaptable to changing circumstances.
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- **Law Student Growth and Experiential Learning** – to provide law students, in partnership with UCalgary Faculty of Law, an opportunity to learn and develop diverse legal skills and knowledge in a clinical practice environment.

Desired Outcomes: Law students working as caseworkers are well trained and develop competence in the legal services provided to clients and understand the

principles of restorative justice. Advising lawyers are available to meet with law student caseworkers to provide them with the guidance and direction to be confident in their representation of our clients. We provide comprehensive training materials and training sessions for law student caseworkers. Group leaders and mentors have the resources they need to be of support to incoming student caseworkers.

Strategies:

- **Teaching and Learning** -To develop, implement and maintain high quality training programs and materials for SLA student caseworkers, group leaders and mentors and in conjunction with the clinical legal education course at the University of Calgary.
 - **Engage lawyers and the legal profession** - To effectively engage lawyers and SLA Alumni to act as advising and volunteer lawyers to establish mentorship opportunities, and to provide guidance and direction to law student caseworkers within the scope of services delivered by SLA.
 - **Clinical Education** – to participate in the clinical education community across Canada and thereby enhance the clinical program and clinical experience for law students attending the UCalgary Faculty of Law.
- **Financial Stability** – to be prudent stewards of the funding that we receive and to proactively seek out sustainable sources of funding.

Desired Outcomes: Student Legal Assistance as a non-profit organization inspires confidence with its core funders so that ongoing sustainable funding for core programming is maintained and enhanced. Donors and sponsors of SLA events are confident that the funds they provide are supporting the core mandate of SLA and that they will donate year over year.

Strategies:

- **Accountability** - To continue to provide effective and transparent financial accounting and reporting to the Board and our funders.
- **Fundraising** -To review the fundraising landscape for legal non-profit pro bono organizations and be creative in obtaining new and diverse sources of funding.
- **Leveraging Resources** - To communicate to our funders the work that SLA does in leveraging and sharing resources with other organizations in the pro bono community in pursuing access to justice for marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

- **Governance and Organizational Excellence** – to create a responsive and innovative organizational culture that uses best practices in non-profit governance and management of the delivery of pro bono legal services by law student caseworkers.

Desired Outcomes: The Board sets the strategic direction for SLA consistent with governance best practices and its Strategic Plan. The ED of SLA manages the organization and engages in research and outreach to achieve the goals, desired outcomes and strategies identified by the Strategic Plan.

Strategies:

- **Organizational Effectiveness** - To continue our priority on streamlining processes and the committee structure with a view to increasing operational effectiveness, enhanced communications and to manage risk.
- **Performance Measures and Evaluation** -To develop and implement performance measures and evaluation strategies that inform the SLA Board, our funders and staff of the effectiveness of SLA in meeting its priorities and goals.

- **Strategic Planning** - To annually review the Strategic Plan to assess whether the strategic priorities and the strategies implemented are meeting the desired outcomes.