

Legal Aid BC

**2024/25 – 2026/27
Service Plan**

February 2024



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Board Chair's Accountability Statement

The 2024/25 – 2026/27 Legal Aid BC Service Plan was prepared under the Board's direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. This plan is consistent with government's strategic priorities and fiscal plan. The Board is accountable for the contents of this plan and is responsible for the validity and reliability of the information presented.



All significant assumptions, policy decisions, events and identified risks, as of February 08, 2024, have been considered in preparing the plan. The performance measures presented are consistent with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*, Legal Aid BC's mandate and goals, and focus on aspects critical to the organization's performance. The targets in this plan have been determined based on an assessment of Legal Aid BC's operating environment, forecast conditions, risk assessment and past performance.

Signed on behalf of the Board by:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Allan Seckel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allan Seckel, KC
Board Chair, Legal Aid BC
February 08, 2024

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Strategic Direction

In 2024/25, public sector organizations will remain focused on providing the services and infrastructure that people depend on to build a good life. Public sector organizations will continue to support Government in delivering results that matter to British Columbians including helping people with costs, attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean and fair economy. Public sector organizations will also continue to work closely with Government as it works collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples to implement the Action Plan for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and delivers initiatives that advance reconciliation in ways that make a difference in communities throughout the province.

This 2024/25 service plan outlines how Legal Aid BC will support the government's priorities and selected action items identified in the most recent Legal Aid BC [Mandate Letter](#).

Purpose of the Organization and Alignment with Government Priorities

Legal Aid BC (LABC) provides legal aid in British Columbia. Our mission is to strengthen client-centred legal help for British Columbians experiencing barriers accessing the legal system. Our clients' barriers to exercising their legal rights include things like low income, addictions, and mental health. Each year, tens of thousands of British Columbians rely on us for legal advice, representation and information services in the areas of criminal, family, child protection and immigration law.

Created by the [Legal Services Society Act](#) in 1979, we are a provincial Crown Corporation with a mandate to assist individuals to resolve their legal problems, administer an effective and efficient system for providing legal aid, and to advise the Attorney General respecting legal aid and access to justice. We're funded by the Ministry of Attorney General (the Ministry), with additional support of the Department of Justice Canada, the Law Foundation of BC and the Notary Foundation of BC.

Our vision is aspirational: BC's legal system transformed, by the way LABC represents our clients, into one more equitable and inclusive. Our core beliefs reflect our employees' compassion, and have equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at their centre. These beliefs guide us to be client-focused, advance truth and reconciliation, find strength in EDI, and demonstrate leadership that supports positive changes to the legal system.

In 2024/25, we will support key priorities identified by the Ministry for LABC: working with the Ministry and stakeholders to identify the best ways and tools to improve access to justice for low income families; aligning legal aid service delivery approaches with transformative changes in the justice sector focussed on efficient, timely and accessible legal services; and continuing to work towards lasting and meaningful Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

LABC will also advance another government priority: ensuring that equity is reflected in our operations and programs by adopting the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens, by developing and delivering a GBA+ approach to guide how we plan, implement, evaluate and continuously improve our policies, programs and initiatives and their impact on equity-denied genders.

Operating Environment

In 2024/25 LABC faces new opportunities and challenges to advance our strategic framework, which is reflected in this Service Plan. Our strategic goals, objectives, key strategies and performance measures are designed to promote the best outcomes possible for legal aid clients, and to embed equity, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.

To increase the equality of outcomes for all legal aid clients, this service plan includes strategies to embed Truth and Reconciliation and equity, diversity and inclusion in our organizational policies and processes, led by the Truth and Reconciliation and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion department, the Indigenous Services department, and our EDI Council. These initiatives build organizational capacity to tackle the systemic barriers faced by our clients and employees when engaging with LABC. In 2024/25 LABC will begin to implement recommendations of a third party gender equity assessment of our policies, programs, practices, and behaviours. We will also initiate collection of expanded disaggregated demographic data to enable us to measure client and employee outcome equity.

LABC will continue to prioritize working with Indigenous leadership, organizations and communities to support implementation of Indigenous justice initiatives and strategies. In particular, we will continue to share information with the BC First Nations Justice Council (BCFNJC) to support the ongoing implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy (FNJS), including the transition of legal aid services for Indigenous people to the BCFNJC. As well, we will continue to liaise with Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) to explore how LABC can support the implementation of the Métis Justice Strategy.

This service plan includes strategies – like our new Legal Aid Navigator program – to strengthen LABC’s ability to support clients facing intersecting challenges such as housing, addictions, mental health and other social issues, and contribute to safer, healthier communities.

With the removal of pandemic-era public health measures and resumption of more regular justice system operations, albeit in a hybrid form that combines in-person and virtual processes, LABC case volumes now approach or exceed pre-pandemic levels. We will continue to monitor case volumes as the year progresses.

The demand for family law services increased significantly during the pandemic and is anticipated to remain high in 2024/25. A focus this year will be collaborating with key stakeholders to design and deliver high-quality legal representation services to our family law clients facing intimate partner violence.

Immigration and refugee case volumes spiked to unprecedented levels in 2023/24 and are also expected to remain high in the coming year. LABC will work closely with the federal government to ensure sustainable delivery of immigration and refugee law services.

LABC will complete its lawyer roster, recruitment and retention review this year and implement recommendations to increase timely access to quality legal aid services for our clients. This review is a priority for LABC given rising demand for service, and labour market challenges.

LABC continues to work with its justice system partners to modernize the court system, building on and extending technical and process innovations adopted during the pandemic. While working with

others to expand the digital delivery of services, LABC is also supporting modified forms of service delivery that reflect the increasingly hybrid nature of justice system processes. To ensure LABC is best able to support ministries, the judiciary and other partners in court modernization, we will continue to invest in our IT infrastructure. We also continue to work with the Ministry and stakeholders to implement the Justice Recovery Initiative, and the Early Resolution Model (ERM) pursuant to the Provincial Court Family Rules.

Performance Planning

2024/25 marks the second year that our new strategic framework is set out in LABC's Service Plan. This strategic framework will help us achieve our renewed vision of BC's legal system transformed, by the way LABC represents our clients, into one more equitable and inclusive. It will also guide us in carrying out our renewed mission, which is to strengthen client-centred legal help for British Columbians experiencing barriers accessing the legal system. Our strategic framework reflects our current environment and priorities, and is intended to guide LABC through and beyond the three-year period of this plan. We have retained most of the new performance measures that were introduced in 2023/24 to track progress on our new goals, and this year we introduce two new performance measures to track our progress on Goal 5. We will continue to refine our key strategies and performance measures as we implement this plan.

Goal 1: LABC clients achieve better outcomes

Improving outcomes for our clients is LABC's over-arching goal, and we will focus on delivering high quality core services to advance that goal. Recognizing that a client could receive excellent services but not be satisfied with an outcome, we will work with service providers and clients to define service quality measures that consider multiple perspectives and track our performance over time against concrete targets.

Objective 1.1: Provide high-quality legal services

High-quality legal services are essential to clients achieving better outcomes. Continuous improvement in service quality, linked to outcomes, will lead to better results for our clients.

Key Strategies

- Design and implement enhanced services for clients facing intimate partner violence
- Operationalize and assess the new Legal Aid Navigators program that focuses on in-person assistance to connect clients with services to help them achieve better outcomes
- Develop and implement a lawyer quality assurance framework and implement recommendations from a lawyer roster, recruitment and retention review to ensure accessible high-quality legal services for our clients

Discussion

LABC provides legal advice and representation services, but equally importantly, we help clients navigate the legal system – which is complex, and overwhelming to anyone in a legal crisis. Our key strategies focus on both of those service dimensions, which together provide clients with the services they need to address their legal problems. Navigator services are also key to connecting clients to supports for interrelated issues, such as health, housing or debt, that can arise from or lead to legal issues. Help for interrelated needs can improve client outcomes and reduce clients' use of legal, health and social services over the long term. In 2024/25, we will assess the impact of the Navigator services on client outcomes, and make recommended adjustments to those services resulting from that assessment.

Providing high-quality legal representation to clients facing intimate partner violence is central not only to the disposition of their legal matter but also to ensuring their physical safety. In collaboration with key service providers, we will develop and implement an Intimate Partner Violence strategy that is expected to provide enhanced levels of service while reducing barriers to access.

Lawyers are integral to our advice and representation services. It is crucial that LABC build a sustainable supply of skilled and committed lawyers who can deliver high-quality legal services to our clients over the long term. In 2023/24, LABC expanded the scope of work for its lawyer roster, recruitment and retention review to include quality assurance. The review identified quality assurance as both central to, and an extension of roster management and the recruitment and retention process. In 2024/25, LABC will develop and implement a lawyer quality assurance framework, and implement recommendations from the review's final report (to be completed in 2023/24).

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2018/19 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
1a Percent of clients provided LABC services for interrelated needs, or referred to other services for interrelated needs ^{1,2}	21%	24%	32%	34%	36%

Data source: LABC client information system and other operational data (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ In 2023/24, LABC shifted this metric from a raw number to a percentage to provide a better picture of LABC's performance. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of unique individuals who received an LABC service to address an interrelated need or were referred to another service for an interrelated need (as previously reported), by the total number of people who applied for or received LABC services for which information is recorded for support provided or referrals made for interrelated needs. This includes the total number of applicants for representation services, approved or not, plus the total number of PLC clients, expanded family duty counsel clients, and Family LawLINE clients.

² Performance measure restated for clarity.

Discussion

This is a composite measure across different LABC service types. It reports the percent of applicants for LABC representation services, Parents Legal Centres (PLCs), expanded family duty counsel services and the Family LawLINE who were given information or referrals to other service providers to assist with their interrelated needs. It also includes support for interrelated issues provided directly to PLC clients by advocates and Indigenous Community Legal Workers at the PLCs. With the introduction of 11 Legal Aid Navigators in October 2023, we anticipate a significant increase in the percent of clients who get information or referrals to other service providers to assist with their interrelated issues. This expected increase is reflected in the forecast and targets. LABC considers increasing our clients' access to wrap-around services an important measure of quality. A higher number of clients being referred indicates that more clients are getting the help they need to get better outcomes.

Performance Measure	2022/23 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
1b Percent of clients who say LABC made it easy for them to deal with their issues ¹	60%	62%	64%	66%	68%

Data source: LABC client information system with corresponding LABC client survey (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. This is a new question not asked in past survey years. Baseline set using results from the biennial LABC client survey conducted in Q4 of 2022/23, as that was the data available at the time of drafting this plan.

Performance Measure	2020/21 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
1c Percent of clients who say their legal aid lawyer explained things in a way they understood ¹	70%	72%	74%	74%	74%

Data source: LABC client information system with corresponding LABC client survey (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. Baseline set using results from the biennial LABC client survey conducted in 2020/21.

Discussion

PM 1b – Clients’ experience of LABC: This measures clients’ perception of how easy LABC made it for them to deal with their issues. This is a widely used metric in multiple sectors; outside benchmarks are available in other service industries. Data for this performance measure is being captured on an ongoing basis at the close of specific key interactions with various LABC services, including intake, duty counsel and PLCs. This ensures recency of recall, thereby a more accurate response. The survey is issued by email. LABC will report a weighted score from different types of interactions annually. Supporting metrics will provide results by service type and by area of law.

PM 1c: Clients’ experience with their lawyer: LABC has included this measure in its biennial client survey since 2018 but had not reported on it in service plans prior to 2023/24. Previous surveys identified this measure as one of the top drivers of performance. Data for this measure is being captured on a more frequent, ongoing basis, and at key milestones in a client’s case. The online survey captures data from clients who receive representation services from lawyers (including PLC lawyers) and clients who receive advice services from expanded duty counsel and [Family LawLINE](#) lawyers. Future years’ targets may be revised once we have results from the new survey methodology.

Improvements in these measures will indicate an increase in service quality – key to achieving better client outcomes.

Goal 2: LABC employees are engaged

Goal 2 recognizes that LABC needs engaged staff to deliver high-quality, client-centred services. While our dedicated employees are our strength, high turnover and retirements make recruitment and retention a growing priority. Objectives 2.1 and 2.2 will ensure we are innovative in our

recruitment, foster equitable opportunities for training and advancement, and work to build the inclusive culture that creates a diverse, skilled and committed team.

Objective 2.1: Create a work environment that strengthens employee commitment

Organization commitment is a key driver of employee engagement. Creating a work environment that strengthens employee commitment will promote Goal 2.

Key Strategies

- Enhance our flexible workplace model
- Identify and implement changes required to become a Top 100 Employer
- Develop and implement EDI-focused recruitment and retention strategies

Discussion

LABC now has a permanent flexible workplace policy, and will further enhance the flexible workplace model in 2024/25 to optimize LABC office space through shared workspaces and hotelling. In addition, implementing the workplace enhancements needed to qualify as a top 100 employer should strengthen the commitment of current employees while supporting recruitment. LABC will work with our EDI council to ensure that our recruitment and retention strategies are aligned with our core beliefs and help us achieve our targeted Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks.

Objective 2.2: Develop future leaders

Job satisfaction and organization satisfaction are two key drivers of employee engagement. Creating equitable opportunities for training, leadership development and advancement within LABC will increase job and organization satisfaction, and promote Goal 2.

Key Strategies

- Plan for and manage succession.
- Collaborate with employees to build opportunities for career advancement and leadership development.

Discussion

LABC needs strong and committed leaders to deliver high quality services. A new succession plan is in place to develop individual leaders and strengthen LABC's overall leadership capacity now and into the future. In 2024/25 LABC will also collaborate with employees to create employee-led leadership opportunities that drive engagement.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2022/23 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2a Employee retention rate ¹	86%	87%	88%	88%	88%

Data source: Operational data (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. The metric calculation was determined during 2023/24 and the baseline was set in 2023/24 using 2022/23 data.

Discussion

Employee retention rate is an objective and highly reliable measure of employee engagement. The retention calculation follows best practices. We've set our targets at a high retention rate of 88%, exceeding standard rates in the mid-70s for western Canada and recognizing that some turnover is healthy for continuous organizational renewal. We will monitor industry standards and adjust future targets accordingly.

A key feature of this metric is the ability to disaggregate the data. The results on this measure will be reported overall, but LABC will track retention rates for employee groups including by departments, managers compared to non-managerial staff, client-facing roles and non-client-facing roles, and staff self-identifying as inequity experiencing. Analysis of results will consider the range of internal and external factors that might affect retention rates.

Performance Measure	2020 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2b Employee engagement score ¹	66 ²	67% ³	68% ³	69% ³	70% ³

Data source: Semi-annual LABC Employee Survey (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ Revised performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. The first semi-annual LABC Employee Survey will be conducted in Q4 of 2023/24.

² Baseline set using "overall employee engagement" results from the LABC Workplace Environment Survey conducted in 2020, which uses a 5-point survey scale and produces "average score" results.

³ The new survey methodology will produce a percentage score.

Discussion

LABC needs engaged staff to deliver high-quality, client-centred services. High employee engagement in the public sector is linked to increased staff retention and improved services for clients. LABC has included "overall employee engagement" as a performance measure in past service plans using results from the LABC Workplace Environment Survey (WES). The WES uses a composite of job satisfaction, organization commitment, and organization satisfaction to produce an employee engagement "average score." In 2023/24, LABC changed survey methodology and increased frequency. Results will be reported overall, but LABC will track results by employee groups including by department, management/non-managerial staff, and staff self-identifying as inequity experiencing. These changes will enable LABC to target responses when and where they are most needed.

Performance Measure	2022/23 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
2c Percentage of internal promotions or lateral changes ¹	37%	40%	42%	42% ²	42% ²

Data source: Operational data (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan and modified during 2023/24. The metric calculation was determined during 2023/24 and the baseline was set in 2023/24 using 2022/23 data. The metric calculation is 'number of new hires who were existing LABC employees' divided by 'total number of hires'.

² Future years' targets will be reviewed and refined in 2024/25 based on performance to date on this new metric.

Discussion

Tracking internal promotions or lateral changes is an objective measure that will be strongly influenced by leadership training, internal communications, and employee engagement. A "lateral change" for this metric is when an employee was successful in their application for another LABC position that is not considered a "higher" job class. Originally expressed as "Percentage of internal promotions compared to external hires", we expanded the metric to include lateral position changes. Hiring will continue to be conducted on a merit basis considering both internal and external candidates; nevertheless, internal advancement is an important measure to track as improvement on this measure will demonstrate that LABC is rewarding performance and creating the career paths that boost engagement. In addition to this quantitative measure, LABC will assess employees' perceptions about opportunities for advancement and reasons for lateral moves to capture the full picture of employee engagement and commitment.

Goal 3: LABC has strong collaborative relationships

People in need of LABC services benefit from client-focussed collaboration across legal service organizations. LABC is one of many providers of legal services to people facing barriers to accessing the legal system in British Columbia. Goal 3 recognizes that strong collaborative relationships with service providers and stronger partnerships with others in the legal system will enable LABC to deliver sustainable, comprehensive client-centred legal services – with fewer gaps and overlaps.

Lawyers are key providers of quality legal aid services to clients and one of LABC's primary service provider relationships, which is reflected in two of the performance measures related to this Goal.

Objective 3.1: Collaborate with service providers to benefit our clients

Lawyers are a primary provider of legal aid services. At the same time, many LABC clients must navigate a complex, multi-provider environment to get the services they need to address their legal issues. More client-focussed collaboration should enable clients to move between legal and other service providers with greater ease and efficiency – increasing the likelihood of a better outcome.

Key Strategies

- Share data across justice and other sectors

Discussion

LABC engages with a range of service providers across BC to improve service delivery to our shared clients. These service providers include agencies providing legal and advocacy services, as well as agencies providing health and social services. In 2024/25 LABC's strategic project implementation is designed to engage stakeholders both in the project implementation and in the ongoing service delivery, to enhance internal and cross-agency coordination of these efforts to close gaps and reduce duplication. LABC will develop data sharing agreements with other service providers to better

serve our mutual clients to support more efficient collaborative service delivery and to track outcomes – such as warm referrals. LABC is committed to the protection of personal information and to maintaining client privacy and confidentiality. These data sharing agreements will comply with all applicable privacy legislation and maintain appropriate security and privacy practices.

Objective 3.2: Strengthen our relationships with partners in the legal system

Our partners in the legal system include government ministries, Indigenous leadership, organizations and communities, justice system participants, and a variety of other organizations and professionals, including the Association of Legal Aid Lawyers. By strengthening these relationships and working together, we can help clients achieve better outcomes.

Key Strategies

- Support the implementation of Indigenous justice strategies

Discussion

During 2024/25, LABC will continue working with the Attorney General, and with Indigenous leadership, organizations and communities to support implementation of Indigenous justice strategies, such as the FNJS and the Métis Justice Strategy. Providing timely and effective support as requested will build the strong, collaborative relationships needed to deliver better outcomes for clients. Information sharing will be central to the successful transition of services and supporting better client outcomes.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2022/23 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3a LABC tariff lawyer retention rate ¹	84%	84%	85%	85% ²	85% ²

Data source: LABC client information system (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. The metric calculation was determined during 2023/24 and the baseline was set in 2023/24 using 2022/23 data. Tariff lawyers are lawyers in private practice who (1) accept contracts from LABC to represent clients with court cases involving criminal, family, child protection and/or immigration law and/or (2) accept contracts from LABC to provide legal advice services to clients.

² LABC will review and refine targets for future years based on findings from the lawyer roster, recruitment and retention review.

Discussion

A higher retention rate for tariff lawyers is an objective and reliable measure that LABC is building the strong relationships that will support lawyers to continue as key providers of quality legal aid services to clients. Beyond reporting the aggregated retention rate, LABC will track retention by categories like area of law, lawyer gender and lawyer age. This will generate deeper insights into targeted tactics that will help us drive higher retention where we need it most. Analysis of results will consider the range of internal and external factors that might affect retention rates. LABC is not aware of any industry standard for this metric. The lawyer roster, recruitment and retention review (see Goal 1), scheduled to be completed in 2024/25, is expected to provide insights into the optimal

rates of retention needed to ensure a sustainable supply of skilled lawyers to deliver better outcomes for clients.

Performance Measure	2023/24 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3b Percent of tariff lawyers who said LABC was easy to work with on behalf of the client ¹	Baseline set ²	N/A	TBD ²	TBD ²	TBD ²

Data source: Ongoing LABC Tariff Lawyer Survey (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. Tariff lawyers are lawyers in private practice who (1) accept contracts from LABC to represent clients with court cases involving criminal, family, child protection and/or immigration law and/or (2) accept contracts from LABC to provide legal advice services to clients.

² Baseline will be set using 2023/24 data at year end (March 31, 2024) and targets will be set at that time.

Discussion

LABC strives to make it as easy as possible for lawyers to administer their legal aid files so that they can focus on providing quality services to clients. This performance measure tracks lawyers' perception of our administrative efficiency and effectiveness, and closely mirrors the measure of clients' experience of LABC (performance measure 1b).

LABC previously used lawyer satisfaction surveys conducted every two to three years to track lawyer satisfaction with the support they receive from LABC. In comparison, data for this new performance measure will be captured on an ongoing basis at the close of a specific transaction (such as when a case is closed) making this metric more reliable and timely, and providing LABC with the information it needs to drive continuous service and process improvements. LABC will also track secondary measures that flag, for example, specific case types or areas of law where LABC is receiving low or high scores from both lawyers and clients.

Performance Measure	Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
3c Percent of agencies who say that LABC was easy to work with on behalf of the client ¹	—	—	Baseline set ²	TBD ²	TBD ²

Data source: Proposed annual survey of various agency stakeholders (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan.

² Proposed annual survey of agency stakeholders will be implemented in 2024/25 and baseline will be set during that year, with targets to be set once the baseline is set.

Discussion

An effective collaborative relationship is one with minimum friction. This measure identifies how easy it is for service providers and partners to work with LABC in support of their clients. It mirrors the similar measures that track clients' and lawyers' perceptions. This year, LABC will work with service providers and partners to develop and implement the survey instrument. Data reliability may be undermined by response rate and due to recency/recall, depending on survey methodology used.

Goal 4: LABC is a responsive organization

In a fast-changing environment, LABC must have agile systems and processes to deliver quality services to clients when and where they need them. We also need the right data to drive continuous improvement. We invest in direct client services and organizational infrastructure to achieve the best outcomes for our clients. Objectives 4.1 and 4.2 highlight modernization of our IT and data management as essential to serving our clients better over the long term.

Objective 4.1: Assess and demonstrate our impact to continuously improve our services

Reliable data on the impact of LABC services on client outcomes is essential to identify what's working, what isn't, and why. Assessing and sharing results with service providers, partners, and the public will build accountability, demonstrate value, and guide improvements.

Key Strategies

- Design and implement a continuous improvement framework to support LABC to deliver better client outcomes.

Discussion

In 2024/25 LABC will continue development of a continuous improvement framework focussed on client outcomes. This objective is closely linked to Goal 1 (better client outcomes) and focusses on the data-gathering and data-sharing required to assess the impact of LABC services on client outcomes and guide improvements to our services. Continuing the work that began in 2023/24, LABC will establish the key strategic and operational performance indicators that will drive improvements and gather the relevant data in LABC systems or from other sources. Measuring our impact on some client outcomes may require data sharing with partner organizations, as described under Goal 3. Executing the framework will enable LABC to use data to guide decision making and improve our overall organizational responsiveness.

Objective 4.2: Leverage technology to optimize our operations and service delivery

In an era of hybrid service delivery and flexible workplaces, the importance of technology to internal and external process efficacy as well as service quality has never been greater. By investing in our IT infrastructure, LABC will be better able to support our justice partners to modernize the court system and expand the digital delivery of services for clients.

Key Strategies

- Execute LABC's five year Digital Transformation Program

Discussion

LABC's Digital Transformation Program is a five year strategic initiative that will advance Goal 4. Through the program, LABC is investing in people, process and technology to improve our services and to help strengthen the digital capabilities of the justice sector as a whole. The program involves

rethinking and redesigning the delivery of legal aid services, such as online platforms, chatbots, artificial intelligence, and data analytics, to improve client service, reduce costs, and increase effectiveness. LABC launched the program in 2023/24 by establishing a centralized Program Management Office to manage Digital Transformation initiatives. As part of a high-level Business Intelligence Strategy, LABC also established an Information Governance Committee to provide oversight over business intelligence projects and the use of corporate data.

In 2024/25 LABC will migrate two on-premise relationship management systems into the main LABC client information system: the Large Case Management database and the Audit department's management system (Watson database). LABC will also roll out an internal call centre dashboard that will be used internally to provide an overview of our call centre's performance. Real time access to key indicators like wait times will enable call center employees to respond to changes in call volume or composition, ensuring consistent and timely access to LABC phone services including intake (application services), Legal Aid Navigators, and Family LawLINE. The internal dashboard will also provide insights into trends and patterns that can inform LABC's opportunities to improve efficiency. Ultimately it will lead to better equipped staff and a better client experience.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	2020/21 Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
4a Percent of clients who say the application process was straightforward. ¹	71%	66%	68%	70%	72%

Data source: Ongoing LABC Client Survey (reported by fiscal year as annual measure)

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. Baseline set using results from the biennial LABC client survey conducted in 2020/21.

Discussion

Individuals seeking legal aid services can apply to LABC through our call centre, with the help of a third-party advocate or their lawyer, or at one of our in-person legal aid intake locations around the province. Intake personnel interview and assess each applicant to determine if they are eligible for legal aid services. In our 2020 client survey, the application process was identified as one of the top drivers of client satisfaction and a "top priority" metric. It serves as an indirect measure of the responsiveness of the systems and processes involved in obtaining legal services. Positive change in the client application experience offers a subjective measure of improvement in those systems and processes. In 2023/24, LABC changed our client survey methodology to track progress on this measure. Data is captured on an ongoing basis from clients after they initiate the application process. The survey is issued by email. Overall results are reported annually. Supporting metrics will show results by area of law and type of inquiry, to provide more detailed operational insights about where the application process causes friction for clients.

Goal 5: LABC has a culture of Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Building a culture of Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is integral to living our core beliefs, fulfilling our mission to strengthen client-centred legal help for British Columbians experiencing barriers accessing the legal system, and advancing our vision of BC's legal system transformed, by the way LABC represents our clients, into one more equitable and inclusive. LABC will advance this work by implementing initiatives and measuring our progress against Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) as prioritized by the Manager, Truth and Reconciliation and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, the Manager, Indigenous Services, and our EDI Council.

Objective 5.1: Embed Truth and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion throughout every aspect of LABC

Integrating Truth and Reconciliation and EDI throughout every aspect of the organization is critical to building that culture within LABC, and we prioritize ongoing resources to achieve that.

Key Strategies

- Progress to Proactive level in prioritized GDEIB categories
- Integrate Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) principles across LABC

Discussion

The GDEIB is a recognized international benchmarking system for organizations to identify their progress in making EDI an integral part of the organization. LABC's EDI Council has identified five GDEIB categories as first priorities:

1. Leadership and Accountability
2. Vision, Strategy, and Business Impact
3. EDI Structure and Implementation
4. Work-Life Integration, Flexibility, and Benefits
5. EDI Learning and Development

Guided by the Manager, Truth and Reconciliation and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, the Manager, Indigenous Services, and our EDI Council, LABC will identify and implement activities to meet GDEIB standards and achieve a "Proactive" level in those prioritized categories.

GBA+ is an analytical process used to plan for, implement and evaluate policies, programs and initiatives based on how different women, men and gender diverse people may experience them. In 2024/25 LABC will develop and deliver a GBA+ approach to guide how we plan, implement, evaluate and continuously improve LABC policies, programs and initiatives and their impact on equity-denied genders.

Performance Measures

Performance Measure	Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
5a Employee Equity Variance ¹	—	—	Baseline set ²	TBD	TBD

Data source: LABC HR System and employee survey conducted by a third-party research firm

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2024/25 Service Plan.

² In 2024/25 LABC will begin to collect the employee experience and demographic data needed to calculate the Employee Equity Variance and set the baseline.

Performance Measure	Baseline	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Target	2025/26 Target	2026/27 Target
5b Client Equity Variance ¹	—	—	Baseline set ²	TBD	TBD

Data source: LABC client information system

¹ New performance measure introduced in 2024/25 Service Plan.

² In 2024/25 LABC will begin to collect the client experience and demographic data needed to calculate the Client Equity Variance and set the baseline.

Discussion

To measure progress toward embedding Truth and Reconciliation, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion throughout every aspect of LABC, LABC will calculate the equity variance of employee and client outcomes based on race, Indigenous identity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and diverse abilities. The Employee Equity Variance measure is expected to include variances in hiring, retention, promotion, exits, organizational-level representation, and experience. The Client Equity Variance measure is expected to include variances in client experience and outcomes across different LABC services and client interactions. Zero variance would indicate equality of outcomes achieved through equitable service and workplace practices that mitigate individual inequities and bias in LABC policies, programs, practices, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.

LABC will initiate the collection of disaggregated demographic data in 2024/25 in accordance with privacy and confidentiality guidelines, building buy-in and trust from employees, and maintaining high rates of voluntary self-disclosure to enable collection of a complete data set for calculating the measures. Initial results may provide limited insights into the causes of or interventions to address a variance because of low rates of representation of certain groups, as well as exclusion of census or other data that may be included in later iterations.

Financial Plan

Financial Summary

\$000s	2023/24 Forecast	2024/25 Budget ²	2025/26 Plan ²	2026/27 Plan ²
Revenues				
Government Revenue ¹	136,523	149,897	151,989	153,556
Non-Government Revenue ³	6,141	5,847	5,847	5,847
Total Revenue	142,664	155,744	157,836	159,403
Expenses				
Criminal tariff ²	64,723	69,169	69,424	69,278
Family tariff ²	36,096	38,500	39,579	41,269
Child Protection tariff ²	6,400	6,598	6,622	6,608
Immigration and Refugee tariff	11,845	15,204	15,204	15,204
Justice Initiatives ⁴	6,278	9,650	10,275	10,312
Community Engagement	1,812	2,212	2,229	2,229
Publications	992	1,076	1,084	1,084
Administration ⁵	14,518	13,335	13,419	13,419
Total Expenses	142,664	155,744	157,836	159,403
Annual Surplus (Deficit)	-	-	-	-
Total Debt	-	-	-	-
Accumulated Surplus (Deficit)	939	939	939	939
Capital Expenditures	179	3,578	3,877	4,175

Note: The above financial information was prepared based on current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

¹ Government Revenue includes Provincial and Federal funding. The Government Revenue includes a forecast for Immigration & Refugee annual funding from the Federal Department of Justice of \$15.204 million for the fiscal years 2024/25 to 2026/27. The forecast is based on contract volumes for the period between December 2022 and November 2023. The forecast methodology is consistent with the other areas of law. Legal Aid BC has submitted the 2024/25 Immigration & Refugee Business Case to the Federal Department of Justice with a request for annual funding of \$22.7 million, which accounts for the expected trend in costs. The Federal Department of Justice has not confirmed the funding amount at the time of submission of this Service Plan.

² Cost pressures may arise if demand exceeds available funding; LABC will work with the Ministry of Attorney General to mitigate this risk and will provide services to the available funding.

³ Non-Government Revenue includes funding from the Law Foundation, the Notary Foundation, investment income, and Federally Funded Cases by the Department of Justice (DOJ) Canada.

⁴ Justice Initiatives include Family LawLINE, Parents Legal Centres and other justice services initiatives. Cost pressures may arise if demand exceeds available funding; LABC will work with the Ministry of Attorney General to mitigate this risk and will provide services to the available funding.

⁵ Commencing in 2020/21, all direct costs are allocated to the tariffs and direct service delivery categories based on budgeted figures. 2023/24 Administration costs include Federally Funded Initiatives costs of \$1,337,763.

Key Forecast Assumptions, Risks and Sensitivities

The tariff budget is based on tariff model projections of contract volumes, average case costs, and billing patterns taking into consideration any known changes to fees, policies, initiatives, and historical trends. The model also includes exogenous factors such as projected BC criminal charges, BC Stats population, and StatsCan offence/charge history.

External Risk Factors

1. Approximately 24.6 percent of 2024/25 Service Plan's non-government revenue (\$1.5 million) is interest-rate sensitive (i.e. revenue from the Notary Foundation, and investment income). This revenue is used to fund the Family LawLINE, public intake services, publishing, community engagement, information technology and support costs.
2. Material changes to forecasts may be caused by changes in government policies, the justice system, the economy, and the geopolitical situation.
3. Complex criminal trials are taking longer because of police investigation techniques, disclosure challenges, undercover operations, and gang-related prosecutions. These factors result in higher costs to LABC, including case preparation and court attendance. Fixed budgets mean LABC must allocate resources prudently, often impacting the level of service provided to other areas to manage these cost pressures.
4. Changes in service demand and billing patterns, including increases in contract volumes and cost per contract because of government policies and requirements, may result in higher costs. Changes to financial eligibility also impacts service demand and total cost of service.
5. A risk LABC continues to face is the recruitment and retention of key staff. LABC is exploring options with the Provincial government on ways to mitigate this risk.

Management's Perspective on Financial Outlook

LABC is dependent on provincial and federal government funding to finance most of its expenditures. LABC also receives revenue from non-government sources which are tied to interest rates. Due to those contingencies, LABC will provide services based on the available revenue.

Risk Mitigation Strategies

1. LABC will use models for budgeting and forecasting and revenue estimates.
2. LABC will monitor client demand, case costs and billing times to advise the Ministry of the Attorney General. In case of a projected deficit, LABC will request additional funding and/or deficit authorization with the Ministry. In case of a projected surplus, LABC will follow MOU protocols. LABC will consider revising policies related to annual billing caps, more stringent financial eligibility assessments, and other measures to contain costs.
3. LABC will use data analytics, trend analysis, and seek timely access to other justice system data (for example, government, courts, and judiciary).

4. With its Digital Transformation Program, LABC will invest in equipment and services to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our programs and services.
5. LABC will pursue increased collaboration and discussions with the Federal and Provincial governments, as well as other justice system stakeholders.
6. LABC has implemented a Management Succession Plan to ensure continuity of leadership.

Appendix A: Mandate Letter from the Minister Responsible



June 22, 2023

Allan Seckel, KC, Chair
Legal Aid BC
400 – 510 Burrard Street
Vancouver BC V6C 3A8

Dear Allan Seckel:

On behalf of Premier Eby and the Executive Council, I would like to extend my thanks to you, your board members and your organization's leadership for your dedication, expertise, and service to the people of British Columbia.

Public sector organizations – including Crowns, Health Authorities and Post Secondary Institution Boards – support British Columbians by delivering vital public services and are accountable to the public through their responsible Minister. Your leadership in advancing and protecting the public interest strengthens trust in public institutions.

You are serving British Columbians at a time when people in our province continue to recover from and respond to the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, an ongoing toxic drug crisis, climate-related natural disasters, and while global inflation is driving up costs. Now more than ever, we need to focus on building a prosperous, low-carbon, sustainable economy, and a province where everyone can find a good home – in rural areas, in cities, and in Indigenous communities.

This mandate letter, which I am sending in my capacity as Minister responsible for Legal Aid BC (LABC), sets out overarching principles relevant to the entire public sector and specific direction on priorities and expectations for your organization for the remainder of Government's term.

Government and public sector organizations must continue to advance results that people can see and feel in these key areas: strengthened health care, safer communities, attainable and secure housing, and a clean and fair economy that delivers affordability and prosperity.

In doing so, you will continue working towards lasting and meaningful Reconciliation by supporting opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to be full partners in the province we are building together, and delivering on specific commitments as outlined in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* action plan.

As required by the *Climate Change Accountability Act*, please ensure your organization implements targets and strategies for minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and managing climate risk, including achieving carbon neutrality each year and aligning with the CleanBC target of a 50% reduction in public sector building emissions and a 40% reduction in public sector fleet emissions by 2030. Your organization is expected to work with government to report out on these plans and activities as required by legislation.

Our province's history, identity and strength are rooted in its diverse population. Yet racialized and marginalized people face historic and present-day barriers that limit their full participation in their communities, workplaces, government and their lives. The public sector has a moral and ethical responsibility to tackle systemic discrimination in all its forms – and every public sector organization has a role in this work. As part of this work, your organization is expected to adopt the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens to ensure gender equity is reflected in your operations and programs.

British Columbians expect that public sector organizations operate in a responsible manner to deliver quality services equitably in all regions of the province. This requires strategic stewardship of planning, operations, and policies in the areas of financial, risk, and human resource management including information security and privacy protection.

The protection of government data and networks is a priority, especially where it concerns personal information of British Columbians. Public sector organizations must maintain up to date systems and effective cybersecurity practices, including maintaining current information management and cybersecurity policies, guidelines and standards; evaluating your organization against industry standards; and maintaining appropriate security and privacy practices. The Office of the Chief Information Officer within the Ministry of Citizens Services is available to support and offer guidance to your organization in any of these areas.

Public sector organizations must also implement and maintain an effective fraud risk management strategy. The Office of the Comptroller General and the Risk Management Branch in the Ministry of Finance are available for consultation.

The Crown Agencies Secretariat (CAS) in the Ministry of Finance supports public sector organizations to operate effectively, in the public interest, and aligned with government's strategic direction and priorities. Within CAS, the Crown Agencies and Board Resourcing Office (CABRO) will continue to support you and your board on recruitment, appointments and professional development, as well ensuring Board composition and governance reflects the diversity of our province. CAS can support you in public sector governance best practices, policy and planning.

In addition to continuing to make progress on your [2021 mandate letter](#), I expect you to ensure the important priorities and areas of focus listed in this letter are incorporated into the practices of your organization.

Each board member is asked to sign this letter to acknowledge this direction from government to your organization. The signed letter is to be posted publicly on your website by summer 2023.

I look forward to continuing to work with you and your Board colleagues to meet the high standards set for us by all British Columbians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Niki Sharma', with a stylized, flowing script.

Niki Sharma, KC
Attorney General

Date: June 22, 2023

Enclosure

cc: Honourable David Eby, KC
Premier

Shannon Salter
Deputy Minister to the Premier, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service

Heather Wood
Deputy Minister and Secretary to Treasury Board
Ministry of Finance

Mary Sue Maloughney
Associate Deputy Minister, Crown Agencies Secretariat
Ministry of Finance

Barbara Carmichael, KC
Deputy Attorney General
Ministry of Attorney General

Karen Christiansen, FCPA, FCA
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Gisela Ruebsaat
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Donna M. Turko, KC
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Philip A. Riddell, KC
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Brad Daisley
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Tracy Porteous, OBC, LLD (h.c.)
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Brenda Knights
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Lisa Scott
Member
LABC Board of Directors

Michael Bryant
Chief Executive Officer/President
LABC

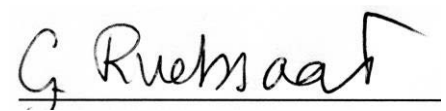
Legal Aid BC Mandate
Letter 2023/24 Board
Signature Sheet



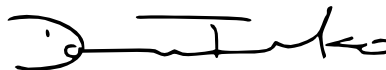
Allan P. Seckel, KC
Chair, Legal Aid BC
Date:



Karen Christiansen
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date:



Gisela Ruebsaat
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date:



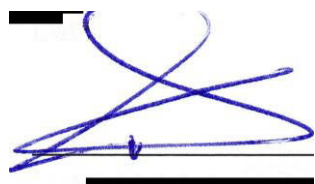
Donna M. Turko, KC
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date:



Philip A. Riddell, KC
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date:



Brad Daisley
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date:



Tracy Porteous, OBC, LLD (h.c)
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date:



Brenda Knights
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date:



Lisa Scott
Director, Legal Aid BC
Date: