

Legal Aid BC

**2023/24 – 2025/26
Service Plan**

February 2023



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Published by Legal Aid BC

Board Chair's Accountability Statement



The 2023/24 – 2025/26 Legal Aid BC Service Plan was prepared under the Board's direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. The plan is consistent with government's strategic priorities and fiscal plan. The Board is accountable for the contents of the plan, including what has been included in the plan and how it has been reported. The Board is responsible for the validity and reliability of the information included in the plan.

All significant assumptions, policy decisions, events and identified risks, as of February 2023 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 black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Christiansen', written over a light grey background.

Karen Christiansen, FCPA, FCA
Board Chair, Legal Aid BC
February 8, 2023

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Strategic Direction

In 2023/24, public sector organizations will continue working to make life better for people in B.C., improve the services we all rely on, and ensure a sustainable province for future generations. Government will focus on building a secure, clean, and fair economy, and a province where everyone can find a good home – whether in a rural area, in a city, or in an Indigenous community. B.C. will continue working toward true and meaningful reconciliation by supporting opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to be full partners in an inclusive and sustainable province. The policies, programs and projects developed over the course of this service plan period will focus on results that people can see and feel in four key areas: attainable and affordable housing, strengthened health care, safer communities, and a secure, clean and fair economy that can withstand global economic headwinds.

This 2023/24 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](#).

In 2023/24, LABC will develop and implement strategies to help clients achieve better outcomes, with a focus on in-person navigation support for clients needing assistance with interrelated issues, and on enhanced services for clients facing intimate partner violence. These strategies will make it easier for people to navigate the legal, health and social services systems and will better support victims and families, and they support one of the government’s key priorities: safer communities.

LABC will also support other key government priorities identified in LABC’s most recent [mandate letter](#) and in the [Attorney General’s December 2022 Mandate Letter](#): continuing to advance the First Nations Justice Strategy, and continuing to support the modernization of BC’s courts and legal processes. To support that modernization work, LABC will continue to redesign legal aid processes and front line services such as duty counsel, as well as invest in our IT infrastructure. By leveraging technology to optimize our operations and service delivery, LABC will be better able to advance the shared objectives of government ministries, the judiciary, and other partners in the legal system.

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 provide advice to the Attorney General respecting legal aid and access to justice. We're funded by the Ministry of Attorney General, with additional support of the Law Foundation of BC and Notary Foundation of BC.

Our vision is aspirational, which is 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.

Operating Environment

Our operating environment is one of change. Legal Aid BC undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process in 2022/23, resulting in a new strategic framework reflected in this year's Service Plan. New goals, objectives, key strategies and performance measures (with some continuing from previous Service Plans), are designed to result in the best outcomes possible for legal aid clients. We are undergoing internal structural changes to support carrying out our new goals. The new framework also embeds equity, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.

In 2023/24, LABC will continue to prioritize working with Indigenous leadership and organizations 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) and the transition of Indigenous justice services 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.

The easing of COVID restrictions and resumption of more regular justice system operations, albeit in a hybrid form that combines in-person and virtual processes, has seen case volumes in some areas gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. However, the scale and pace of these changes remain both uneven and uncertain.

LABC continues to work with its justice system partners to modernize the court system, which began as a result of 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.

We also continue to work with the Ministry and stakeholders to address staffing capacity and labour market challenges following the pandemic, the Justice Recovery Initiative, and the new Provincial Court Family Rules.

Performance Planning

The 2023/24 Service Plan sets out five new goals, and supporting objectives, strategies and performance measures. This new 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 new strategic framework reflects our current environment and priorities, and is intended to guide LABC through and beyond the three-year period of this plan. The new goals, objectives and strategies replace those in our 2022/23 service plan. We have retained some performance measures for continuity where they remain relevant and have introduced some new measures to track progress on new goals. We will continue to refine the strategies and performance measures as we implement this new plan.

Our new goals and objectives reflect and incorporate LABC's mandated priorities. Goal 1 and Objective 1.1 align with our mandated priority relating to Family Law: to work with our partners to identify best ways and tools to improve access to justice for low income families. In particular, the related key strategies (enhanced services for clients facing intimate partner violence, and a new Public Legal Education and Information strategy) will support clients to navigate the legal system and improve access to needed legal, health and social services.

Goal 3, Objective 3.2 and Goal 5, Objective 5.1 align with our mandated priority relating to Indigenous Justice: to work with the BCFNJC and government ministries on the FNJS and related initiatives. Goal 3, Objective 3.1 and Goal 4, Objective 4.2 align with our mandated priority relating to the Justice Recovery Initiative: to align legal aid service delivery with transformative changes in the justice sector, deliver core services digitally, and develop systems to support online mobile access to legal aid services.

Making substantive progress on our mandated priorities would not be possible without our dedicated LABC staff across the province. Goal 2 and its related objectives recognize this and will ensure that we build and maintain a skilled and committed team of diverse professionals to deliver essential legal aid services and provide advice and analysis to the Attorney General respecting legal aid and access to justice.

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.
- Develop and implement a new Public Legal Education and Information strategy that focuses on in-person assistance to connect clients with services to help them achieve better outcomes.
- Develop a tariff lawyer recruitment and retention strategy to ensure accessible high-quality legal services for our clients.

Discussion

LABC provides legal advice and representation services, but equally importantly, we help our 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 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.

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 pool of tariff lawyers who are skilled and committed to our clients to deliver high-quality legal services over the long term.

Performance Measures

| Performance Measure | 2018/19 Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1a Number of clients provided LABC services, or referred to other services, for interrelated needs ^{1, 2} | 7,656 | 7,630 | 8,000 | TBD | TBD |

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

¹ LABC plans to review this measure and anticipates shifting the methodology for calculating results in future to the percent of clients instead of the number of clients.

² This measure includes results for all services where client information is recorded for support provided, or referrals made, for interrelated needs.

Discussion

This performance measure reports on people who receive direct services from LABC for interrelated issues, or whom LABC referred to outside services for help with these issues. 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. LABC will set targets for 2024/25 and beyond after we finalize the new methodology and assess the initial impact of introducing new services that should increase our impact.

| Performance Measures | 2020/21 Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1b Percent of clients who say LABC made it easy for them to deal with their issues ¹ | — | Baseline set | TBD ² | TBD ² | TBD ² |
| 1c Percent of clients who say their legal aid lawyer explained things in a way they understood ³ | 70% | 72% | 74% | TBD ⁴ | TBD ⁴ |

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. LABC does not have historical data for this measure as this is a new question not asked in past survey years. Baseline will be set using results from the biennial LABC client survey conducted in Q4 of 2022/23.
- ² Targets will be set once the baseline is set in 2022/23.
- ³ New performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. Baseline set using results from the biennial LABC client survey conducted in 2020/21. 2022/23 forecast and 2023/24 target set as percentage improvement over baseline.
- ⁴ Targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 will be determined once we have results using the new survey methodology being introduced in 2023/24.

Discussion

PM 1b – Clients’ experience of LABC: This measure identifies the level of effort clients experience in dealing with their legal issues. This is a widely used metric in multiple sectors; outside benchmarks are available in other service industries. Data for this performance measure will be 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 can be issued by email or text message. 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 has not reported on it in past service plans. Previous surveys identified this measure as one of the top drivers of performance. During 2023/24 and future years, data for this measure will be captured on a more frequent, ongoing basis, such as after a client's case is closed. The survey can be issued by email or text message, and will capture data from clients who receive services from tariff lawyers, duty counsel, PLC lawyers, and [Family LawLINE](#) lawyers.

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, create 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

Interim results of an evaluation of the pilot flexible workplace policy LABC implemented in March 2022 indicate that a flexible workplace is an important driver of employee engagement. LABC employees' job satisfaction and self-assessed productivity levels have increased since the implementation of flexible workplace agreements. Based on evaluation findings, LABC will enhance the flexible workplace model in 2023/24 to address employee needs while sustaining the accessibility and quality of legal aid services across the province. In addition, implementing the workplace enhancements needed to qualify as a top BC 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

- Develop and implement a succession plan.
- Collaborate with employees to build opportunities for career advancement and leadership development.

Discussion

LABC needs strong and committed leaders to deliver high quality services. LABC believes that taking a deliberate approach to succession will help develop individual leaders and strengthen LABC’s overall leadership capacity now and into the future. In 2023/24 LABC will also collaborate with employees to create employee-led leadership opportunities that drive engagement.

Performance Measures

| Performance Measure[s] | Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|---|----------|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 2a Employee retention rate ¹ | — | — | Baseline set ² | TBD ² | TBD ² |

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

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

² Baseline to be established and targets to be set as percentage improvement over baseline.

Discussion

Employee retention rate is an objective and highly reliable measure of employee engagement. The retention calculation will be developed following best practices. 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[s] | 2020 Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|---|---------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 2b Employee engagement score ¹ | 66 | 71 | 73 | TBD ² | TBD ² |

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

¹ Revised performance measure introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. Proposed Semi-annual LABC Employee Survey is new and has not been administered before. 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.

² Targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 will be determined once we have scores using the new survey methodology being introduced in 2023/24.

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. The triennial LABC Workplace Environment Survey (WES) produces an engagement score that is a composite of three survey categories: job satisfaction, organization commitment, and organization satisfaction. WES uses a 5-point survey scale and produces “average score” results. LABC has included “overall employee engagement” (reporting triennial WES results) as a performance measure in past service plans. Beginning in 2023/24, LABC will change survey methodology and increase 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[s] | Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|--|----------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 2c Percentage of internal promotions compared to external hires ¹ | — | — | Baseline set | TBD ² | TBD ² |

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

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

² Targets will be set once the baseline is set in 2023/24.

Discussion

Tracking internal promotions is an objective and highly reliable measure that will be strongly influenced by leadership training, internal communications, and employee engagement. The metric calculation will be developed in 2023/24 and baseline and targets will be set. 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.

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

- Systematize LABC engagement activities and processes
- 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 2023/24 LABC will take steps to implement systems and processes that will enhance internal and cross-agency coordination of these efforts to close gaps and reduce duplication. LABC will also work with other service providers to better share data on our mutual clients to support more efficient collaborative service delivery and to track outcomes – such as warm referrals.

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

Our partners in the legal system include government ministries, Indigenous organizations and communities, 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 2023/24, LABC will continue working with the Attorney General, and with Indigenous leadership, organizations and communities to support implementation of Indigenous justice strategies. 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[s] | Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|---|----------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3a LABC tariff lawyer retention rate ¹ | — | — | Baseline set | TBD ² | TBD ² |

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

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

² Targets will be set once the baseline is set in 2023/24.

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.

| Performance Measure[s] | Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|---|----------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3b Percent of tariff lawyers who said LABC was easy to work with on behalf of the client ¹ | — | — | Baseline set | TBD ² | TBD ² |

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

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

² Targets will be set once the baseline is set in 2023/24.

Discussion

This measures lawyers' perception of how easy it is to work with LABC on behalf of their clients. This closely mirrors the measure of clients' experience of LABC (performance measure 1b). Data for this 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 reliable and timely.

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[s] | Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|--|----------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3c Percent of agencies who say that LABC was easy to work with on behalf of the client. ¹ | — | — | Baseline set | 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 Targets will be set once the baseline is set in 2023/24.

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 2023/24 LABC will begin 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. As first steps 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 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

- Automate LABC duty counsel scheduling
- Enhance lawyer portal to enable lawyer-initiated online criminal applications

- Integrate the Large Case Management and Watson databases into the main LABC client information system

Discussion

These three key strategies are the initial steps in executing LABC’s IT strategy roadmap which is a multi-year strategic initiative to achieve Goal 4.

Performance Measures

| Performance Measure[s] | 2020/21 Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|---|------------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 4a Percent of clients who say the application process was straightforward. ¹ | 71% | 73% | 75% | TBD ² | TBD ² |

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. 2022/23 forecast and 2023/24 target set as percentage improvement over baseline.

² Targets for 2024/25 and 2025/26 will be determined once we have results using the new survey methodology being introduced in 2023/24.

Discussion

In our 2020 client survey, the application process was identified as one of the top drivers of client satisfaction and a “top priority” metric. In this new plan it will serve as a client proxy for 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. Beginning in 2023/24, LABC will change our client survey methodology to track progress on this measure. Data will be captured on an ongoing basis from clients after they initiate the application process. The survey can be issued by email or text message. Overall results will be 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 begin this work by implementing initiatives and measuring our progress against Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks as prioritized by 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 Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) categories
- Implement priority actions in the LABC Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 – 2023

Discussion

The GDEIB is a recognized international benchmarking system for organizations to identify their progress in EDI being an integrated 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

In 2018, LABC began implementation of a five-year Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). For 2023/24 and future years, LABC has prioritized 11 out of the 20 strategies in the RAP. In conjunction with LABC's EDI Council, Indigenous Services will review those strategies and their associated actions and identify the priority actions to be implemented in 2023/24.

Performance Measures

| Performance Measure[s] | Baseline | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Target | 2024/25 Target | 2025/26 Target |
|---|----------|------------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 5a Percentage improvement of EDI perspectives integrated by LABC Leadership ¹ | — | — | Baseline set | TBD ² | TBD ² |
| 5b Percentage improvement of Truth & Reconciliation perspectives integrated by LABC Leadership ¹ | — | — | Baseline set | TBD ² | TBD ² |

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

¹ New performance measures introduced in 2023/24 Service Plan. Proposed Semi-annual LABC Employee Survey is new and has not been administered before.

² Targets will be set once the baseline is set in 2023/24.

Discussion

Guided by our EDI Council, LABC will identify and implement activities to meet GDEIB standards and achieve a “Proactive” level in prioritized categories, including leadership. To drive our progress, LABC will conduct a semi-annual employee survey to measure employee perceptions about whether LABC leadership is integrating EDI and Truth and Reconciliation perspectives. These two measures are composites of answers to multiple survey questions. Results for each measure will be reported overall, but LABC will track supporting metrics that provide results by employee groups including department, management/non-managerial staff, staff self-identifying as inequity experiencing, and Indigenous staff. Measuring the perspectives of inequity experiencing staff and Indigenous staff, and other groups, will help LABC uncover where and what actions to take to improve performance.

Leadership is the area of focus for the performance measure in 2023/24. The focus may shift to other areas in future years based on progress towards Goal 5 through EDI leadership initiatives.

Financial Plan

Financial Summary

| \$000s | 2022/23 Forecast | 2023/24 Budget ² | 2024/25 Plan ² | 2025/26 Plan ² |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Revenue | | | | |
| Government Revenue ¹ | 121,451 | 128,397 | 130,205 | 130,261 |
| Non-Government Revenue ³ | 3,440 | 12,014 | 6,632 | 6,632 |
| Total Revenue | 124,891 | 140,411 | 136,837 | 136,893 |
| Expenses | | | | |
| Criminal tariff ² | 61,700 | 68,838 | 67,927 | 67,927 |
| Family tariff ² | 26,799 | 31,829 | 31,460 | 31,460 |
| Child Protection tariff ² | 6,371 | 6,440 | 6,425 | 6,425 |
| Immigration and Refugee tariff | 7,521 | 8,199 | 8,110 | 8,110 |
| Justice Initiatives ⁴ | 6,750 | 7,102 | 7,124 | 7,124 |
| Community Engagement | 2,148 | 1,499 | 1,506 | 1,506 |
| Publications | 965 | 1,620 | 1,626 | 1,626 |
| Administration ⁵ | 12,637 | 14,884 | 12,659 | 12,715 |
| Total Expenses | 124,891 | 140,411 | 136,837 | 136,893 |
| Annual Surplus (Deficit) | - | - | - | - |
| Total Debt | - | - | - | - |
| Accumulated Surplus (Deficit) | 939 | 939 | 939 | 939 |
| Capital Expenditures | 543 | 2,025 | 1,094 | 1,094 |

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

¹ Government Revenue includes Provincial and Federal funding.

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 and Parents Legal Centre operations. 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. 2022/23 Administration costs include Federally Funded Initiatives costs of \$2,827,000.

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 8.3 percent of 2023/24 Service Plan's non-government revenue (\$11.6 million) is interest-rate sensitive (i.e. revenue from the Law Foundation, 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 caused by the uncertainty associated with the post-COVID-19 pandemic environment and justice system responses.
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. Non-COVID changes in demand, and expanded financial eligibility, may increase case volumes and costs, and may affect case billing times.
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, request additional funding and/or deficit authorization with the Ministry. In case of a projected surplus, 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 new Information Technology Strategy, 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



BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 20, 2021

Jean P. Whittow, QC
Chair, Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC
400 – 510 Burrard Street
Vancouver BC V6C 3A8

Dear Jean Whittow:

On behalf of Premier Horgan and the Executive Council, I would like to extend my thanks to you and your board members, as well as the staff of Legal Aid BC, for the dedication, expertise, and skills with which you serve the people of British Columbia.

Every public sector organization is accountable to the citizens of British Columbia. The expectations of British Columbians are identified through their elected representatives, the members of the Legislative Assembly. Your contributions advance and protect the public interest of all British Columbians and through your work, you are supporting a society in which the people of this province can exercise their democratic rights, trust and feel protected by their public institutions.

You are serving British Columbians at a time when people in our province face significant challenges as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Recovering from the pandemic will require focused direction, strong alignment and ongoing engagement between public sector organizations and government. It will require all Crowns to adapt to changing circumstances and follow Public Health orders and guidelines as you find ways to deliver your services to citizens. This mandate letter, which I am sending in my capacity as Minister responsible for Legal Aid British Columbia, on behalf of the Executive Council, communicates expectations for your organization. It sets out overarching principles relevant to the entire public sector and provides specific direction to Legal Aid BC (LABC) about priorities and expectations for the coming fiscal year.

I expect that the following five foundational principles will inform your agency's policies and programs:

- **Putting people first:** We are committed to working with you to put people first. You and your board are uniquely positioned to advance and protect the public interest and I expect that you will consider how your board's decisions maintain, protect and enhance the public services people rely on and make life more affordable for everyone.

.../2

- **Lasting and meaningful reconciliation:** Reconciliation is an ongoing process and a shared responsibility for us all. Government's unanimous passage of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* was a significant step forward in this journey – one that all Crown agencies are expected to support as we work in cooperation with Indigenous peoples to establish a clear and sustainable path to lasting reconciliation. True reconciliation will take time and ongoing commitment to work with Indigenous peoples as they move towards self-determination. Guiding these efforts, Crown agencies must also remain focused on creating opportunities that implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission through your mandate.
- **Equity and anti-racism:** 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. All Crowns are expected to adopt the Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens to ensure equity is reflected in your operations and programs. Similarly, appointments resulting in strong public sector boards that reflect the diversity of British Columbia will help achieve effective and citizen-centred governance.
- **A better future through fighting climate change:** Announced in December 2018, the CleanBC climate action plan puts our province on the path to a cleaner, better future by building a low-carbon economy with new clean energy jobs and opportunities, protecting our clean air, land and water and supporting communities to prepare for carbon impacts. As part of the accountability framework established in CleanBC, and consistent with the *Climate Change Accountability Act*, please ensure your organization aligns operations with targets and strategies for minimizing greenhouse gas emissions and managing climate change risk, including the CleanBC target of a 50 per cent 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.
- **A strong, sustainable economy that works for everyone:** I expect that you will identify new and flexible ways to achieve your mandate and serve the citizens of British Columbia within the guidelines established by the Provincial Health Officer and considering best practices for conducting business during the pandemic. Collectively, our public sector will continue to support British Columbians through the pandemic and economic recovery by investing in health care, getting people back to work, helping businesses and communities, and building the clean, innovative economy of the future. As a public sector organization, I expect that you will consider how your decisions and operations reflect environmental, social and governance factors and contribute to this future.

The Crown Agencies and Board Resourcing Office (CABRO), with the Ministry of Finance, will continue to support you and your board on recruitment and appointments as needed, and will be expanding professional development opportunities in 2021/22. This will include online training and information about provincial government initiatives to foster engaged and informed boards. As the Minister Responsible for LABC, I expect that you will make substantive progress on the following priorities and incorporate them in the goals, objectives, and performance measures in your 2021/22 Service Plan:

- Indigenous Justice – Work with the BC First Nations Justice Council, the Ministry of Attorney General, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General and affected ministries on the BC First Nations Justice Strategy and related initiatives such as the transition of Gladue services and future transition of other Indigenous justice services.
- Family Law – Work with the Ministry of Attorney General, affected ministries and stakeholders to identify the best ways and tools to improve access to justice for low income families. This includes support for the Early Resolution and Case Management Process (currently operating in Victoria and implemented in Surrey in December 2020), and new Provincial Court Family Rules (to be implemented in May 2021); and any related strategies, initiatives or additional early resolution sites.
- Justice Recovery Initiative – Align legal aid service delivery approaches with transformative changes in the justice sector focussed on efficient, timely and accessible legal services, leveraging technology and new efficiencies where possible. This includes working with Ministry of Attorney General, affected ministries and relevant stakeholders to deliver core services digitally and the development of systems to support online mobile access to legal aid services.
- Administration Costs – Set a goal for reducing administration costs as an amount of funding received from LABC funding partners, where administration costs are defined as all LABC costs that are not incurred in direct legal service delivery to LABC clients or the public, and where the goal for the amount of funding spent on administration costs is lower than current level. Include in your annual report or another public report your administration cost actuals and progress towards your administrative cost goals.

Each board member is required to sign the Mandate Letter to acknowledge government's direction to your organization. The signed Mandate Letter is to be posted publicly on your organization's website in spring 2021.

Jean P. Whittow, QC
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I look forward to continuing to work with you and your board colleagues to build a better British Columbia.

Yours truly,



David Eby, QC
Attorney General and
Minister Responsible for Housing

Date: April 20, 2021

Enclosure: LABC Mandate Letter signing sheet

pc: The Honourable John Horgan, Premier
Lori Wanamaker, 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
Douglas S. Scott, Deputy Minister, Crown Agencies Secretariat, Ministry of Finance
Richard J. M. Fyfe, QC, Deputy Attorney General, Attorney General
Jean P. Whittow, QC, Chair, LABC Board of Directors
Nathalie Baker, Member, LABC Board of Directors
Karen Christiansen, CPA, CA, FCA, FCPA, Member, LABC Board of Directors
Celeste Haldane, QC, Member, LABC Board of Directors
Nancy G. Merrill, QC, Member, LABC Board of Directors
Gisela Ruebsaat, Member, LABC Board of Directors
Allan P. Seckel, QC, Member, LABC Bords of Directors
Christine Smith-Martin, Member, LABC Board of Directors
Donna M. Turko, QC, Member, LABC Board of Director
Mark Benton, QC, Chief Executive Officer/President, Legal Aid BC

Legal Aid BC Mandate
Letter 2021/22 Board
Signature Sheet



Jean P. Whittow, QC
Chair
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC



Nathalie Baker
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC



Karen Christiansen, CPA,
CA, FCA, FCPA
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC



Celeste Haldane, QC
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC



Nancy G. Merrill, QC
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC



Gisela Ruebsaat
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC



Allan P. Seckel, QC
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC

Resigned: February 13, 2021

Christine Smith-Martin
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC



Donna M. Turko, QC
Member
Board of Directors
Legal Aid BC