

Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan – 2023-2024

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------|
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FRAMEWORK

Mission

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid's mission is to advocate for the legal rights of disadvantaged people to have safe, healthy, and independent lives in strong communities.

Vision

Currently, MMLA has no Vision Statement. A vision statement provides a clear direction and focus for the organization. It defines the purpose of the organization and helps guide its decision-making, goal-setting, and strategic planning. MMLA and its Board of Directors will work to articulate its vision as part of the next strategic planning. This process should include revisions to the Racial Justice Values Statement (below) to ensure more internal accountability.

Scope

This plan is primarily focused on racial equity. However, other identities including disability, gender, religious background, sexual orientation, and immigration status are important identities to value and welcome within MMLA and the clients we serve. We encourage a thorough and thoughtful discussion about data collection and diversity, equity and inclusion efforts related to these identities.

Racial Justice Values Statement

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values for Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, and it is critical that we incorporate these values into all aspects of our work. We recognize the particular and highly detrimental impact of racism — and Minnesota's racial disparities — on MMLA's clients and staff. We will therefore devote special attention to issues of racial justice. We commit to:

- Ensuring our work is rooted in communities which we serve.
- Strengthening our organizational capacity through increased racial diversity, inclusion, and equity.
- Developing and applying a racial equity lens to our work with clients.
- Advancing the cause of racial justice in our client representation and policy advocacy work.

Background

In 2016, following its decision to make investments in racial equity training through the Shriver Center's Racial Justice Institute for the benefit of MMLA's organizational health, MMLA's Management Committee convened two committees to advance this work: [1] a racial equity committee to develop plans and activities to ensure that MMLA's commitment is shared by all staff and realized in work performed on behalf of clients, and [2] a racial justice committee to focus on MMLA's internal policies and practices, with a broad goal of strengthening MMLA's organizational capacity through increased racial diversity, equity, and inclusion. At this same time, MMLA signed the National Legal Aid and Defenders Association (NLADA)'s Fight Against Implicit Bias and Racial Inequality (FAIR) pledge.

In 2019 Legal Aid continued its commitment with the hiring of a DEI Officer. Soon thereafter, a BIPOC Advisory Group and an Allyship group were formed. The BIPOC Advisory Group provided space for employees to support each other and discuss concerns and articulate them to executive leadership. The Allyship group was formed to support BIPOC employees directly and through education about their role in supporting racist systems.

Over the next several years, Legal Aid also brought in a consultant who introduced staff to DEI tools, facilitated equity training workshops, held trauma and healing sessions, and presented in-house learning opportunities. Under the guidance of the previous consultant, all staff, at that time, were administered the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Legal Aid engaged two additional consultants for additional training on bias and healing. As a result, MMLA began to make recruiting, hiring, legal work management, and other policy and procedure changes using the tools learned through the consulting groups.

Our Commitments

Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid fully commits to the long-term work of becoming culturally competent, welcoming, and inclusive of all people both within and outside our organization, as well as in the range of issues and challenges that we engage in. This includes (but is not limited to):

- Supporting, engaging, and including people with different racial, cultural, economic, ages, and religious backgrounds, those with varying physical abilities, neurodiversity, gender identities, and sexual orientations.
- Reaching beyond our traditional allies and constituencies.
- Entering intercultural relationships with humility, prepared to listen, learn, follow their lead, and adapt our methods and practices to achieve mutual benefit.
- Recruiting, hiring, retaining, and developing culturally competent staff whose demographics more closely mirror those of our service area.
- Recruiting, retaining, and developing culturally competent board members and other volunteers whose demographics more closely mirror those of the communities we serve.
- Apply principles of equity and inclusion when seeking/contracting with consultants, vendors and paid partners employed to further our work and mission. (RFP process requirement.)

Definitions

Bias

A tendency or preference that inhibits impartial judgment, such as a bias toward or against a person or group. A concentration on or interest in one area or subject, such as a bias toward action. Bias occurs unconsciously (implicit) and consciously (explicit).

BIPOC

BIPOC is the acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. It is used to undo Native invisibility, and anti-Blackness with the intention of dismantling white supremacy and advancing racial justice.

“Pronounced "bye-pock," this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.”¹

The term may be used by CultureBrokers as shorthand to describe people who identify as member(s) of at least one of the following racial and ethnic census categories: Black or African American, Asian, American Indian, and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race², and Hispanic or Latino³. **We recognize the problems inherent in using such a broad term. However, we use it to increase document readability.**

BIPOC may be used interchangeably with People of Color and Indigenous “POCI”.

Many resources are available on the internet for additional insights, including The BIPOC Project⁴ and the YWCA⁵.

As MMLA continues our journey toward greater diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice we will routinely evaluate which term and use are most appropriate and respectful of the people to whom it refers.

Culture

Culture is a social and value system, to assure its adaptation and survival.⁶ It’s an accumulation (but not necessarily an acculturation) of knowledge; experience; beliefs; attitudes; language; meanings; habits; hierarchies; arts; ways of thinking; reactions; and notions of time acquired by a group of people through personal and professional influences often passed down over time and generations.

Everyone individual has and is an active participant in a culture whereby an individual learns the norms and values of their culture through unconscious repetition, called

¹ <https://www.ywcaworks.org/blogs/ywca/fri-01152021-1332/why-we-use-bipoc>

² U.S. Census. <https://bit.ly/3D2GOIX>

³ <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/hispanic-origin/about.html>

⁴ <https://www.thebipocproject.org/>

⁵ <https://www.ywcaworks.org/blogs/ywca/fri-01152021-1332/why-we-use-bipoc>

⁶ [Glossary | Racial Equity Tools](#)

Enculturation. Examples include how to eat in our culture, how to handle conflict, how to relate to people of different genders, how to dress, how to express emotions etc...⁷

MMLA believes that in order to nurture a collaborative and inclusive environment where people have the freedom and autonomy to do their best work and bring their authentic self, each employee is responsible for understanding and knowing their own culture and the effects of it on themselves and others. Each individual is responsible for learning about the cultures of their colleagues, and how to bridge any perceived cultural divides.

Constituents/Constituency

An actual or potential user of MMLA products, programs, services, or efforts, as well as a person or persons who support or do the actual work of MMLA.

MMLA's constituents are clients, donors, funders, staff-members, advocates, volunteers, community volunteers, and community members. Among these constituents, the interests of our clients are paramount.

Disparity

A condition of inequality in which services or resources allocated to one segment of the community, relative to other segments, are disproportionately provided or inadequate in addressing underlying needs. It also refers to differences—often social political, economic, and attitudinal in nature—that are not justifiable based on identified need, available agency resources, or other objective criteria. Disparities warrant concern to MMLA because individuals, families, and institutions that do not get the help they need are at increased risk of experiencing negative outcomes and disparate treatment at multiple points throughout relationships with the broader society and at increased social and economic costs to all.

Diversity

The presence of variety in one place. For humans, variety is often measured quantitatively as differences in age, communication style, class, culture, disability, education, ethnicity, familial status, gender, neurodiversity, intelligence, language, learning style, marital status, national origin, occupation, physical appearance, physical and mental health, politics, race, regional origin, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, thinking style, viewpoints, etc. The benefit of diversity is in providing the components for adapting or constructing novel combinations; the value of diversity is that major innovations might be generated.

Therefore, the term "Diversity" shall not, nor is it intended to be used as code for BIPOC/POCI persons or groups. Nor shall the term be used primarily or exclusively to BIPOC/POCI persons or groups.

It is common to find people using the word "diversity" to also describe a set of actions geared to accommodating variety (i.e., acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing, and celebrating differences). As the pool of knowledge and experience of diversity work continues to evolve,

⁷ [You Have a Culture: 5 Ways to Understand Your Own Better — seebeyond](#)

professionals are increasingly differentiating between activities that increase variety (diversity) and behaviors that leverage variety to create belonging (inclusion).

Effective

How well a process or a measure addresses or accomplishes a desired or intended purpose. Determining effectiveness requires (1) evaluating how well the process is aligned with the organization's needs and how well it is deployed, or (2) evaluating the outcome of the measure as an indicator of process or product performance.⁸

Ethnicity

Describes a group of people who share a distinct culture, religion, language, or place of origin. It is a category independent of race. Therefore, in the U.S., people of the same *ethnicity* may be members of different *rac*es, such as Black Hispanics (such as people from Cuba, Brazil, or Dominican Republic).

Equity

Performance results that do not vary across meaningful socio-economic differences, particularly across racial/ethnic groups. Results are described by data around: Opportunity, Accessibility, Quality, Fairness, Outcomes, Impact, Repair, and Restoration.

Freedom from systemic bias or favoritism. Parity across differences.

Evaluate

To judge, calculate and perceive the quality, value, or importance of something.

Interactions

Occasion(s) when two or more people communicate with one another by verbal and non-verbal means.

Inclusion

Interactions among diverse people and objects that create opportunities for diversity, mutual learning, benefit, and growth. The benefit of inclusion is reciprocity; the value of inclusion is increased trust, cooperation, and effectiveness. Inclusion has generally been measured through surveys asking subjective questions about an individual's feelings of belonging, respect, support, and engagement. Inclusion can also be measured more objectively by observing the patterns of interaction and their results.

⁸ 2021-2022 Baldrige Excellence Framework

Language and multilingual

How we communicate and connect through spoken words, written language and hand/signed language honoring the rich and varied "world languages" of all people, while honoring dialects and lingual heritage (meaning language, words and communication styles that reflect community and familial history).

Network

Interconnected relationships among people and/or organizations.

Formal Network: Interconnected relationships among people and/or organizations that is centralized, managed, and involves a process for engagement.

Race

In the U.S., race is a construct that established various categories of people and a hierarchy of their value to society. In that worldview, people have, according to their physical characteristics, innate qualities that define them as different. Race has the express purpose of establishing and perpetuating caste (superiority and dominance for the group at the top of the hierarchy. In the U.S. that group is the collection of people determined to be White).

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) sets the standards on race which guide the Census Bureau in classifying written responses to the race question. The main race categories are:

White – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. It includes people who report race entries such as Irish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Arab, Moroccan, or Caucasian.

Black or African American – A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. It includes people who report entries such as Negro, African American, Kenyan, Nigerian, or Haitian.

American Indian or Alaska Native – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America) and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment. This category includes people who report entries such as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yupik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups.

Asian – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. It includes people who report other detailed Asian responses.

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands. It includes people who report entries such as Chamorro and other detailed responses.

Some Other Race - Includes all other responses not covered above.

Racism is any act, system, attitude, practice, process, or policy that reinforces and maintains inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race to uphold white supremacy dominance, whether or not the result is intentional.

Results

Outputs and outcomes achieved. Results should be evaluated based on current performance; performance relative to appropriate comparisons; the rate, breadth, and importance of performance improvements; and the relationship of results measures to key organizational performance requirements.

Senior Leaders

Persons who hold executive or upper management positions and provide high-level leadership and direction for an organization's essential day-to-day operations. Senior leaders include but are not limited to:

Executive Director-Executive Leadership

Deputy Directors-Executive Leadership

Litigation Directors-Executive Leadership

Development Director-Executive Leadership

Finance Controller and IT Director

Managing Attorneys

Supervisors

White Centering

The centering of whiteness or white people, values, history, norms, feelings, expectations, and comfort over: the values, history, norms, feelings, expectations, and comfort of everything and everyone else who does not appear white or conform to white [patriarchal, heterosexual, cisgender, Christian &c.] norms.

MMLA will not white center its SREAP or concurrent, or subsequent DEI work now or in the future.

Whiteness

The way in which white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America's history have created a culture where non white persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.⁹

Whiteness is thus conceptualized as a constellation of processes and practices rather than as a discrete entity (i.e. skin color alone). Whiteness is dynamic, relational, and operating at all times

⁹ [Whiteness | National Museum of African American History and Culture \(si.edu\)](#)

and on myriad levels. These processes and practices include basic rights, values, beliefs, perspectives, and experiences purported to be commonly shared by all but which are actually only consistently afforded to white people.¹⁰

White Supremacy

The idea (ideology) that white people and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, norms, and actions are superior to BIPOC ideas, thoughts, beliefs, norms, and actions. White supremacy is ever present in institutional and cultural assumptions that assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white people while casting people and communities of color as worth less or worthless, immoral, bad, and inhuman and “undeserving.”¹¹

White Supremacy Culture

Drawing from critical race theory, the term “white supremacy” also refers to a normalized political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantage and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.

White supremacy culture defines what is “normal” – and likewise, what “professional,” “effective,” or even “good” is through whiteness. In turn, whiteness defines what is not good, “at risk,” or “unsustainable,” and values some ways of thinking, behaving, deciding, and knowing – ways that are more familiar and come more naturally to those from a white, western tradition – while devaluing or rendering invisible other ways. And it does this without ever having to explicitly say so...¹²

Workforce

All people actively supervised by our organization and involved in accomplishing our work, including paid staff, volunteers, and interns (paid or unpaid).

¹⁰ [Glossary | Racial Equity Tools](#)

¹¹ [Glossary | Racial Equity Tools](#)

¹² [Glossary | Racial Equity Tools](#)

Principles

The following principles must be front and center when executing this SREAP.

Use Disaggregated Data and Information

One of the drivers of disparity is the inability or unwillingness to examine results of policies and activities for segmented racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. To achieve equity, therefore, we must collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative information in this way. Collect data segmented (at minimum) by census-based racial and ethnic categories and use that data to create options and make decisions.

Make Data-Driven Decisions

Another driver of disparity is the unwillingness to use segmented data to make decisions that ensure parity. Consider racial and ethnic information as we work. Compare results for each group against their presence in our service areas and against results of the other groups. Provide these analyses when making recommendations.

Leverage Existing Assets

We have valuable assets at our fingertips: knowledgeable staff, board members, partners, community members, technical experts and professional services, state agencies and more. Tap into these institutional resources at all phases of your work.

Use Existing Authority

All members of our workforce and the Board of Directors have individual powers within their jobs and roles. Explore and utilize these authorities as necessary to deliver on this Equity Plan.

Make Policy Changes

We have dozens of policies – those with an external focus and those with an internal focus. While delivering on this Equity Plan, uphold or strengthen policies that will deliver strong equity results. Be ready to change policies that create barriers.

Use Equity to Balance Decisions

When making decisions, give equity sufficient weight. Use segmented data, historical information, and quality comparisons. Develop a method for considering equity results balanced against financial and other business results, such as a decision matrix¹³ or balanced scorecard¹⁴. This will ensure Black, Indigenous, and People of Color get due consideration and that their interests are respected.

¹³ <http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/decision-making-tools/overview/decision-matrix.html>

¹⁴ <http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/balanced-scorecard/overview/overview.html>

Improvement Plan Purpose

We Will Deliver Results

MMLA served 16,650 adults and children in 7,200 households in 2022¹⁵. Fifty-two percent (52%)¹⁶ of them identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (16% African American, 12% African Born, 2% Indigenous, 2% Asian, Hispanic/Latinx 17%, Multi-Racial 3%, and 1% Other Racial Identity. Thirty-two percent (32%)¹⁷ of our employees do as well (2%, American Indian or Alaska Native, 5% Asian, 11% Black or African American, 8% Hispanic or Latino, and 6% Two or More Races).

MMLA serves 20 counties in Minnesota, including metropolitan, micropolitan, and rural counties. We provide additional services statewide. In Minnesota, 19% of residents are People of Color and Indigenous, and 6% are Hispanic/Latinx regardless of race.¹⁸ In cities where our three main offices are located, resident demographics are as follows: Minneapolis: 37% BIPOC, 10% Hispanic/Latinx; St. Cloud: 28% BIPOC, 4% Hispanic/Latinx; and Willmar: 26% BIPOC, 23% Hispanic/Latinx.¹⁹ We must ensure every group is receiving full consideration, quality service, and positive results from our activities.

The main purpose of this SREAP is to help us measure and significantly improve our results with racially and culturally diverse customers, staff, and other key constituents. Such results include, but are not limited to, improvements in:

- Budgeting and work planning for diversity, inclusion, and equity results
- Staff diversity and cultural competency development
- Board diversity and cultural competency development
- Social network diversity and quality improvement

We have chosen two high-impact areas in which to make measurable improvements over the next year. By the end of the second quarter 2024 (specifically June 30, 2024), we will know what we are doing to achieve our goals, why we are doing those things, what the results should be, and how well we are doing compared to our own past results and the results of others. We will have processes in place to ensure our resources are sufficient and being appropriately applied to get results. Finally, we will analyze our new results and revise our plan as needed.

¹⁵ Legal Aid Annual Report 2022

¹⁶ Legal Aid Annual Report 2022

¹⁷ Paycom Report, March 22, 2023 - data taken from New Hire forms that ask to self-disclose race and gender. Responses are taken and matched to the category in the Paycom (now ADP) system. If there is not an exact match, staff match the response to the closest category.

¹⁸ [Minnesota Compass | Tracking trends & progress \(mncompass.org\)](https://mncompass.org)

¹⁹ Id

Improvement Plan Development

This SREAP is the next logical step toward operationalizing our commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. It is based on results from the 2022 Diamond Inclusiveness™ Assessment (DIA) (Appendix I), feedback and lessons learned over the last few years, as well as efforts of other organizations seeking to improve diversity, inclusiveness, and racial equity.

We believe this plan shows careful consideration of high-impact actions, understanding of individual and organizational capacities, a desire to authentically engage people from culturally diverse backgrounds as key assets, and a commitment to getting measurable results from our chosen activities.

Other Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Activities

Diversity and inclusion work are happening in many ways throughout the organization. This plan is not intended to restrict that work, but rather identify MMLA's required minimum efforts necessary to achieve key diversity and inclusion goals over the next year and beyond. Senior Leaders and supervisors are welcome to support additional opportunities to deliver equity results as their resources allow if the enclosed strategic improvements are accomplished on time.

Main Audience

This plan is written specifically to guide staff and the governance board in:

- Deciding how to allocate organizational resources;
- Supervising others to ensure our plans are executed; and/or
- Supporting our equity work.

The target audience for this plan are senior leaders, supervisors, and special teams. If we fall into these groups, we will refer to this SREAP as we make decisions about where and how to assign people, money, materials, time, energy, and attention. We will also help hold our direct reports accountable to achieving these equity goals.

Other Audiences

For general transparency, this plan will be easily accessible to all staff, board, volunteers, vendors, partners, and other key constituents so they are knowledgeable about our path forward.

Plan Management

Plan Coordination

The Executive Leadership Team is responsible for managing this SREAP. However, all Senior Leaders (as defined above) will model desirable behaviors, ensure consistent application of this plan and its principles, and manage for equity results. They will also coordinate with special teams and functional units. Their roles are to provide excellent leadership and support to others as they execute the plan.

Responsibilities include:

- Track work plan progress regularly.
- Brief staff, board, and other key constituents regularly on work plan progress.
- Coordinate regular meetings with designated individuals and teams who are “on point” for certain activities.
- Collectively make SREAP decisions.
- Provide regular internal communications to introduce this plan to the staff and report its results.
- Identify and address resource gaps in the plan, including working with those ‘on point’ to put forward proposals for additional organizational resources, where needed.
- Track and celebrate accomplishments.

Plan Oversight

The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring governance and workforce accountability to this SREAP.

I. ACTION PLAN

Strategic Improvements

1. The demographics of employees mirror the demographics of its service area. (Financial Investment Dimension)

Guidance:

- Compare the racial breakdown of our staff to the service area to determine the success of our equitable hiring efforts.
- When considering whether employee demographics mirror service area, the service area is whatever area/location served by the office in which the job is located.
- For attorney applicants we require that they are barred in Minnesota, eligible for reciprocity, or able to take the bar in Minnesota. For non-attorney jobs, a license is not typically a requirement. We will look at the demographics of currently barred attorneys in Minnesota and the law students in Minnesota to determine demographics of attorney candidate pool. We will look at general workforce demographic data to determine what our potential candidate pool demographics are. We will use this demographic data along with our service area demographic compared against demographics of current staff, to set realistic goals.
- Set a timeline for what is achieved in a year, by year 2, year 5, etc.
- Within one year we will get the numbers and data.
- Within one year we will assess and diversify/improve where we advertise openings.
- Once we have the numbers, we can decide the rest of the timeline.
- Once we have determined the best way to reach diverse candidates, we will work to diversify our recruiting sources to increase our internal diversity. We will assess where we are posting, how we use social media, which career and recruiting events we are attending, which post-graduate fellowships we are pursuing and how.
- The employment goals will be determined by the current staff and service area demographics of each individual office and division.
- We will work to mirror demographics across the entire organization in all locations and at all position levels.

Criteria/Definitions:

- Service area for the Disability Law Center will be statewide.
- Service area for St. Paul, Minneapolis, St. Cloud, and Willmar offices will be the counties each office serves, with workforce demographic goals being set based upon demographic of the individual city in which the office is located.
- Demographics will consider race/ethnicity measures for now. In the future, we would like to expand our definition to include gender and disability status.
- “Workforce” means any paid staff along with any volunteers and law clerks

SMART²⁰ Goal:

We will work towards employee demographics matching service area demographics within the next 5 years.²¹

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Identifying and taking steps to correct racial disparities helps achieve our racial justice values statement.
- By having more members of our client communities employed as staff we are helping to bridge employment and access gaps in furtherance of our racial justice values statement.
- By having staff better match the demographics of our service area we as an organization are demonstrating our commitment to having all staff better understand and relate to our clients.

Oversight for the Improvement: Executive Leadership, DEI Officer/Director, Supervisory Team

Responsible for the Improvement/Process Owner: Finance, Deputy Offices, DEI Supervisory Team, Hiring and Recruiting Committee, and HR Specialist (also DEI Specialist if one hired)

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|----------|--------------------|
| <u>PLAN: Measure and Plan</u> | | | |

²⁰ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

²¹ Once MMLA has disaggregated staff demographic data-base line data to compare how closely staff demographics mirror service area demographics, MMLA will be able to provide this percentage.

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Obtain demographics of current staff | HR/Payroll Specialist | August 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Software access ● Supervisor input as needed ● List of demographics for staff of entire program ● List of demographics for attorney vs. non-attorney staff ● List of demographics for staff by location |
| Obtain and analyze demographics of service areas along with demographics of our clientele | Demographic Committee, IT | August 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Statistical analysis by staff ● Access to other demographic data – census and other ● Legal Server Attorney to run report on client demographics |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Collect data on where we post and how we advertise openings; Analyze and assess whether these locations are effective at attracting a sufficient level of diverse, talented job candidates.</p> | <p>HR/Payroll Specialist</p> | <p>August 2023 (data collection) September 2023 (analysis)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● List from HR Specialist of standard posting locations ● Staff survey of where individuals share job postings ● Staff survey of where they found out about the job (survey/email) ● List of additional job posting options for more diverse candidates with annotation of whether it costs to post in those locations |
| <p>Obtain demographics of the legal field and law schools to understand the demographic makeup of the pool of potential hires. Also, obtain general workforce demographic data to determine makeup of the pool of potential non-attorney hires.</p> | <p>Deputy Directors</p> | <p>August 2023</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Access to Dept. of Human Rights workforce demographics database ● Access to MSBA demographics data ● Access to law school data ● Access to Minority Bar Associations to gather data |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Implement Exit Interviews and Stay Interview. | HR/Payroll Specialist or ADP | December 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time – Staff to complete survey/interviews and HR Specialist to aggregate and review results ● Survey ● Survey software ● Team to develop the survey and targeted questions |
| Research nonprofits, firms, and government agencies that have stated racial justice values/goals similar to ours | Pro Bono Unit Supervisor | August 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time – maybe intern/volunteer (finding a list/article about companies that have these values) ● Staff time to recruit/hire appropriate volunteer to complete the task |
| Plan to maintain contact with law student volunteers throughout their law school career to encourage them to come to legal aid post-graduation | Pro Bono Unit Supervisor | September 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Executive Director approval ● Formal process developed to invite to future events, volunteer opportunities, etc. through Pro Bono Unit & Mentorship Program |
| Investigate fellowship opportunities for post-graduation | DEI Director | December 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff Time ● Funding to hire DEI coordinator |
| <u>DO: Execute Work Plan(s) and Measure Results</u> | | | |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Post Job Openings in more diverse places identified from collecting data on recruiting resources | HR/Payroll Specialist | January 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff Time ● Funding – if any of the sites require a membership to post |
| Analyze the staff demographic data – provide percentages of staff demographics for each position type, program, and office location | Executive Leadership | August 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● HR Specialist time to provide the data ● Management team time to review and analyze the data |
| <p>Reach out to a recruiter to see how they match diverse candidates to jobs.</p> <p>Reach out to organizations/firms/etc. that seem to be doing a good job in the area we want to improve to see how they're doing it and learn from their successes including BIPOC staff at these organizations.</p> | DEI Member, Executive Director, HR/Payroll Specialist | October 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Talk to government sector ● Talk to firm contacts ● Talk to fellow legal services providers ● Reach out to Twin Cities Diversity in Practice ● Committee needed – create a committee to identify who to contact and divide up which committee member will reach out to each of the identified contacts to break up amount of staff time needed |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Create a program of retention incentives | HR/Payroll Specialist, Finance, ADP | March 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Executive Director approval ● Perhaps Board approval ● Perhaps Deputy Director approval |
| Create a SharePoint Folder or Site to collect the data and reports – private to management team and Payroll/HR Specialist | IT | June 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IT Staff Time |
| Create a SharePoint Folder/Site or Teams Channel to share information with staff – survey results (anonymized), recordings of all staff meetings, graphs/resources shared from meetings, etc. | IT | June 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IT Staff Time |
| Apply for post-grad/lawyer fellowships | Managing Attorneys, Supervisors | May 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff Time ● Might need a firm partner ● Relationships with law schools and fellowship sponsors ● Funding to provide employee benefits to fellows ● Conversation about unit needs and resources |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>CHECK: Learn and Improve</u> | | | |
| Have annual review of staff and service area demographics to see whether we are meeting our goals and whether goals need to change | Executive Leadership | July 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time |
| Evaluate which strategies made a difference towards our goals of mirroring demographics and which did not impact the goal. | DEI Director | Annually for the next 5 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time |
| Share our learning across the organization | DEI Director | Ongoing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All Staff meeting to share action steps and progress ● Staff time to plan meeting and to attend the meeting |
| <u>ACT: Make it Habit</u> | | | |
| Make stay interviews an annual activity | ADP,HR/ Payroll Specialist | July 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minimal Staff time to complete survey ● Survey software (Microsoft Forms or other) ● Staff time to collect & analyze the data (supervisors remind the staff and then one person to analyze data and present it to management team) |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Implement forum for staff to share ideas on how to recruit, train, and retain diverse staff. (Perhaps through the Teams channel that is developed in the above step.) | DEI Director | May 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff Time |
| Create next year's SREAP. | DEI Director | April 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff Time |

2. The organization routinely taps into the different cultural assets of its employees to find better ways to serve them. (Cultural Capital Dimension)

Guidance:

- The focus of this initial SREAP is on the first step which is centered on learning/understanding and creating the framework for sharing and future action. Further, festivals/celebrations/holidays and cultural practices will serve as the starting point of these conversations and forums, with the intent that these efforts and actions expand to include broader cultural assets in future years.
- Questions we asked during this process:
 - Why are we doing this?
 - What behavior do we want to see changing?
 - What do we want individual people to do differently?
 - What do we want our organization to do differently?
 - What's the process to make sure this happens?
 - What support, or removing of barriers, is needed?
 - What resources already exist within MMLA? How can we get these in one place?
 - How do we engage staff in the way they want to be engaged?
 - What is the onus of White people (and the senior leadership as defined in the Glossary) to listen, understand, respond, and change themselves and the organization as they are exposed to more information about differences?
 - How do we ensure this work is not put on BIPOC/POCI staff?
 - How can we highlight cultures which aren't significantly represented by our organization, government, courts, etc.?
- We wanted to ensure this goal was:
 - Staff centered, focusing on serving staff.
 - Understand and express people's beliefs and attitudes.
 - Identify unique needs of staff and incorporate into work culture.
 - Open up channels of communication, creating opportunities for dialogue.
 - Create a more inclusive and supportive work environment where staff feel valued and heard.
- There is a lack of trust between staff and management regarding these topics. This SREAP acknowledges that part of the process requires building trust through incremental actions, and by engaging employees through surveys with a focus on learning and understanding.
- MMLA does not have systems for this in place. The closest was when staff reached out to discuss staff's cultural celebrations/holidays. This led to increased personal days.
- The goal is to obviously and directly shift organizational and individual behavior. This means action that leads to change beyond receiving information. Step 1 is collecting information and opening channels of communication, then Step 2 is converting information into action. MMLA must provide several platforms for BIPOC/POCI to share more of themselves and be safe doing it.

Criteria/Definitions:

- Taps - "Tap into" means to understand and express something, such as people's beliefs or attitudes. This is meant to acknowledge the value of cultural assets and differences. Importantly, this definition is not using "taps" in the sense of something being used or extracted for someone else's benefit.
- Cultural Assets – tangible and intangible elements that hold cultural, historical, or artistic value within a specific community, society, or region. These assets can include a wide range of cultural expressions and artifacts that are considered significant and meaningful to a particular group of people. Here are a few examples:
 - Tangible Cultural Assets: These include physical objects such as historic buildings, archaeological sites, artworks, artifacts, etc.
 - Intangible Cultural Assets: These encompass cultural practices, traditions, rituals, performances, languages, oral traditions, music, dance, folklore, culinary traditions, storytelling, etc.
 - Cultural Institutions: These are organizations or establishments dedicated to preserving, researching, and showcasing cultural assets. Museums, libraries, archives, cultural centers, greek societies, clubs, etc.
 - Cultural assets play a crucial role in fostering identity, preserving heritage, promoting cultural diversity, and enhancing community pride.
 - Everyone has culture. We don't want to exoticize people of color and we also want to ensure cultures not already highlighted within MMLA and the legal system are seen, understood, and respected - not just the dominant culture.
- Routinely – quarterly from organization, individuals share with increased frequency.
- Serve – focus on serving employees, make employees feel comfortable, safe, heard, understood – acknowledge and address unique needs of employees.
- Cultural practices – includes the observation of important days, holidays, rituals, celebrations, and events relating to one's culture. Can serve as a starting point for tapping into broader cultural assets.

SMART²² Goal:

GOAL: Organization to open up channels of communication and create opportunities for dialogue among staff to understand and express each other's unique cultural assets through dedicated Teams channel, quarterly email from communications director, hiring of DEI officer, implementation of a staff resource group, and other action steps identified through researching effective practices and adjusting as needed to achieve goal. This goal is to be completed by June 2024. We can measure this through feedback from anonymous surveys, reviewing data on usage/participation, and inviting voluntary qualitative feedback through conversations with staff.

Benefits of achieving this goal:

- Increased engagement and happiness, optimism, and commitment for staff.

²² Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound

- Better ability to communicate needs.
- Creates an inclusive environment within the organization.
- Improved recruitment and retention.

Oversight for the Improvement: Executive Leadership, DEI Officer/Director

Responsible for the Improvement: Cultural Capital Group, Information Technology, DEI Officer, Development Director, Managing Attorneys, Supervisors

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>PLAN: Measure and Plan</u> | | | |
| Research effective practices from other organizations and settings (eg MOBE) | Cultural Capital Group, Culture Brokers | September 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time |
| Identify MMLA documents/resources already in existence that are being underutilized or that may be adapted for this SREAP | IT, Development Director | September 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time |
| Create and send a survey for staff about cultural assets | Create - HR/Payroll Specialist, Deputy Directors Send, Introduce Goal - Executive Director | August 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use email • Staff time • Survey tool - MS Forms |
| Determine best technology (DEI website/calendar/Teams) presence to execute goal | Deputy Directors, DEI Officer | September 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use email • Staff time • Create a calendar • Maintain resources |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Create a forum for discussion (virtual and in-person) | IT | December 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Microsoft Teams ● Create policies and practices ● Potentially need a moderator ● Staff time |
| Reach out as an organization to provide general information on cultural assets | DEI Officer, Support Staff, Managing Attorneys, Supervisors | November 2023 - and each month thereafter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use email ● Staff time ● Maintain a calendar |
| Hiring a DEI officer | Executive Leadership | December 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding ● HR resources |
| Explore employee resource groups - is there a need or interest, if so, which ones, and how are they used? | DEI Officer, HR/Payroll Specialist, Managing Attorneys, Supervisors | February 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research ● Staff Time ● Survey staff about interest/types and what kind of interaction |
| Institute guidance regarding oversight for ERGs (depending on data/feedback we receive on this and external sources) | Executive Leadership, HR/Payroll Specialist, ADP | February 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff Time ● External training/resources about best practices for ERGs |
| | | | |
| <u>DO: Execute Work Plan(s) and Measure Results</u> | | | |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Track usage data and follow-up survey on how staff are experiencing Teams forum | Create – DEI Director IT - Measure Usage | December 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use email ● Quantitative and qualitative information ● Report results to leaders/staff |
| Recruit and launch employee resource groups based on voiced interests, including culture | HR/Payroll Specialist, DEI Officer, ADP, Managing Attorneys, Supervisors | April 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Senior leader approval ● Organize groups |
| <u>CHECK: Learn and Improve</u> | | | |
| Share our learning across the organization: Year in review | DEI Officer, Executive Leadership | July 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use email |
| Evaluate forums | IT, DEI Officer, Deputy Directors | July 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff survey ● Staff time ● IT usage statistics |
| <u>ACT: Make it Habit</u> | | | |
| For what is proven to work over time, institutionalize the changes we made through formal policy and practice documentation. | Executive Leadership | June 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Data ● Staff Time ● Survey results |

| Milestones | Responsible | Deadline | Resources Required |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Create next year's SREAP. | Executive Leadership, DEI Officer, Staff | June 2024 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current SREAP• Evaluation/Staff survey |

Appendix I

Diamond Inclusiveness™ Assessment (DIA)

To get to our destination, we must first know where we are in relation to it. This requires us to know at the individual, team, and enterprise levels just what our current capacity is to engage in the level of intercultural knowledge and experience required to excel with culturally diverse constituents.

We used the Diamond Inclusiveness™ Assessment (DIA) to get a baseline understanding of how well our organization policies, practices, and situations support cultural inclusiveness, as perceived by a culturally diverse set of respondents. It identified our organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement. While not yet independently validated, at the time of our DIA, the tool has proven useful to more than 55 organizations, helping them make measurable improvements in their results with culturally diverse employees and customers.

A culturally diverse group of internal and external constituents participated in MMLA's DIA assessment and feedback sessions. The senior leadership team analyzed this information, selected two focus areas for improvement, and oversaw the development of this SREAP.

The 2023 MMLA DIA Gap Analysis Report is available at [MMLA-DIA-Gap-Report_FINAL-compressed.pdf \(mylegalaid.org\)](https://mylegalaid.org/files/2023/04/MMLA-DIA-Gap-Report_FINAL-compressed.pdf).