



PHILADELPHIA VIP

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2020



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Executive Summary

Philadelphia VIP embarked on a process to create a new strategic plan in April, 2016. While the organization's previous strategic plan was not due to conclude until December, 2016, VIP had already achieved the majority of the plan's goals. This success was due, in large part, to an extraordinary effort on behalf of the staff and board. In 2016, VIP is serving more clients than ever before and has earned its reputation as the hub of pro bono in Philadelphia.

Data gathered prior to and as a result of the strategic planning process confirmed that VIP is an efficient and effective organization. But VIP wants to do more – to reach the thousands of clients who need access to justice.

With data in hand and the help of strategic planning consultant Robin Bender Stevens, VIP staff and board developed a vision for VIP's future. This bold vision, which is also VIP's new mission statement, reflects hard work by the staff and board. It is a vision/mission that stays true to the core goals of VIP and that also looks to the future.

VIP is grateful to all of the stakeholders who participated in this process. Specific recognition is deserved for the hard work of the Strategic Planning Committee: Michael Reilly, Bob Scott, Michael Balent, Carmen Romano, Dylan Steinberg, Lee Zimmerman, Paul Bonney, and Eli Wolfe. Assisting the Strategic Planning Committee was consultant Robin Bender Stevens. Most importantly, a special thanks to the VIP staff and board of directors for their commitment to this process and to our clients, for whom VIP was created to serve.



About VIP

Philadelphia VIP is the hub of pro bono legal services in Philadelphia. Since 1981, we have provided legal services for low-income residents and families facing civil legal problems that threaten their basic human needs – shelter, employment, financial stability, education and health. VIP also assists microentrepreneurs and nonprofit organizations through its community economic development project, LawWorks.

VIP, by leveraging the resources of volunteers, serves more than 3,500 clients and their families who could not afford attorneys and whose cases could not be handled by other public interest organizations.

Our clients are among the poorest in the City and region and their numbers are growing. To be eligible for our services a client's income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines. Thus, our *most financially secure* clients earn approximately \$23,000, while a family of 4 lives on \$46,000.

VIP serves a multi-lingual population, principally Spanish speaking, but increasingly we see clients who speak Russian, Creole (Haitians), Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese and Cambodian, a reflection of growing and changing immigration patterns in the Greater Philadelphia area.

VIP handles any civil matter that is non-fee generating and for which there is no right to counsel. Our caseload has four priority areas:

- Maintaining family income
- Preventing homelessness
- Supporting family stability and
- Promoting community economic development.

The majority of VIP's cases are referred to us from our sister organizations, Community Legal Services and Philadelphia Legal Assistance; an additional number come from specialized legal services organizations throughout Philadelphia.

Plan Background

In early 2016, the Board of Directors and Senior Leadership of Philadelphia VIP initiated a series of conversations about how to ensure the organization's sustainable future.

Based on a review and synthesis of the current strategic plan, stakeholders were surveyed and interviewed to surface expectations and frame strategic issues to be addressed. A half-day workshop with the full Board and Staff and follow-up sessions with the Staff were conducted to accomplish the following goals:

- Develop and align around the organization's Operational Mission
- Identify key Strategic Priorities for the planning horizon
- Translate the Operational Mission into actionable steps
- Establish metrics to monitor the organization's progress toward its goals

Key Findings

Background research, surveys, and interviews revealed that the Board and Staff share a common view of the organization's achievements as well as concern for some of the hurdles it needs to overcome.

- There is strong belief that VIP has succeeded in achieving the specific goals established with the previous plan, with some notes of caution about the recruitment and retention of volunteers.
- All current areas of focus are important and there is little appetite for discontinuing activities. In fact, VIP seeks to grow several programs that would extend the organization's reach, including social media interactions, events, and volunteer training and outreach.
- There is strong interest in increasing the number of corporate attorneys who volunteer and in differentiating VIP from other legal services organizations. VIP also aspires to build effective partnerships with sources of volunteer referrals.
- Retention, recruitment, and new funding sources will be most impactful in helping ensure VIP achieves its mission in 2020.
- Recruitment, Retention and Fundraising remain among the top priorities for the Strategic Plan.
- VIP is committed to solidifying the foundation of its programs while investing in external promotion and visibility to enhance its reputation as the hub of pro bono in Philadelphia.

Vision/Mission Statement

Philadelphia VIP leverages the powerful resources of the community to provide quality volunteer legal services and ensure access to justice for low-income Philadelphians.

Values

- *We inspire volunteerism*
- *We empower our volunteers and clients*
- *We are committed to excellence*
- *We are collaborative*

Our BIG Goals

To say YES to every eligible client seeking assistance from Philadelphia VIP and successfully match them with a volunteer lawyer.

To be a model of excellence as a legal volunteer organization.

Operational Mission

Philadelphia VIP is a recognized leader in growing the power of volunteerism. As the premier hub for volunteer legal professionals in the Philadelphia region, we connect, empower, and unite volunteers to provide pro bono legal services to low-income residents, nonprofits, and small businesses. Through innovative programs and best practices, VIP recruits, retains, and supports volunteers to promote equal access to justice for all.

Strategic Priorities for 2017-2020

- Volunteer attraction and stewardship
- Staff capacity and process improvement
- Increased funding to achieve mission

Resources to Achieve Vision

In order to achieve this vision, VIP must have increased financial and in-kind resources to invest in new staff, programs, technology and administration. With those funds, VIP will efficiently and effectively steward its resources to achieve results.