

# Regional Housing Legal Services

**Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021**

## Table of Contents

<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II. History .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. RHLS Environmental Assessment .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Internal Assessment .....</i>	<i>6</i>
Strengths .....	6
Weaknesses.....	7
<i>External Assessment.....</i>	<i>8</i>
Opportunities .....	8
Threats.....	8
<b>IV. Strategic Priorities.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Program Direction .....</i>	<i>9</i>
Retain RHLS's Four Program Areas .....	9
Concentrate RHLS Efforts in Three Issue Areas .....	9
<i>Achieve Sustainability through Diverse Funding.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Communications and Branding .....</i>	<i>10</i>
Mission, Vision, and Possible Name Change .....	10
Articulate a Clear Vision of What RHLS is Trying to Accomplish and How .....	11
<i>Internal Operations.....</i>	<i>12</i>
Succession Preparation .....	12
Diversity & Inclusion .....	12
Network Building.....	13
Develop Program Plans (Logic Models) .....	13
Oversight & Management .....	14
<b>V. Financial Sustainability Plan .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<i>Three-Year Planning Budget .....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Develop Program-Specific Financial Plans; Individual Goals .....</i>	<i>15</i>
Fund Development Priorities .....	16

Equal Justice Center.....17

Financial Reserve.....17

**VI. Implementation Outline & Timeline .....17**

## I. Introduction

Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS)<sup>1</sup> began this strategic planning process, its third in its 45-year history, with a renewed sense of urgency. Over the next five years, RHLS anticipates the retirement of three of its most senior staff members. At the same time, RHLS is facing uncertainty about whether future revenues will rise at the same rate as expenses. RHLS's Board of Directors (the "Board"), staff (the "Staff"), and management (the "Management Team") are all focused on the need to take steps now to position RHLS to move confidently through the upcoming changes and challenges.

At the beginning of this planning process, the Board's Strategic Planning Committee and the Management Team defined a successful outcome of the process as the production of a Strategic Plan (the "Plan") that contained: *"a mix of high-level organizational direction (without being too confining) and some decisions on key details (especially re: succession planning and resources) -- finding a balance between being proactive and reactive."* This statement of success reflects the fact that RHLS has been led for most of its existence by Mark Schwartz, who proved time and again to be a master at identifying and taking advantage of windows of opportunity. Mark rightly notes that these windows often cannot be predicted or planned for. This Plan embraces that point of view, while also allowing for the introduction of more proactive organizational planning and goal-setting activities intended to strengthen RHLS' longer-term sustainability.

This Plan contains a clear set of directions for growing RHLS's expertise, its funding, and its impact. This Plan captures the collective insights and wisdom of the Staff, the Board, and the Management Team -- who have made it clear through countless conversations and online surveys, a Board retreat, and a Staff retreat, that their passion for their work, their desire to improve the lives of low-income persons, and their love for the organization are RHLS's greatest assets.

While this Plan does provide clear directions for future growth, it does not (and cannot) fully answer all the "how" questions related to RHLS' further development. Strategic plans are not meant to be implementation checklists, but they should provide sufficient clarity to inform how Staff is to implement the plan. The gap between an aspirational plan and what happens in an organization day-to-day is what often leads many plans to begin to gather dust soon after they are completed. RHLS's acknowledged "adhocratic" culture and its relative newness to strategic

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Plan, RHLS does not include the operations and management of the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP), unless indicated otherwise.

planning also pose potential implementation challenges. In an effort to address these challenges, this Plan includes preliminary Implementation Actions and a Timeline to provide a bridge from strategic priorities to implementation steps. RHLS's Staff, Board, and Management Team should expect the work of implementing this Plan to be iterative and to provide the entire organization with opportunities to learn about how it works and how it can be more effective.

## II. History

It is helpful to remember the shifts that RHLS has made over the course of its development -- as context for how it understands its current situation and chooses where to place priority as it positions itself for future success. RHLS was formed in response to slum conditions in a large workforce housing project in the Philadelphia suburbs. Its early work included advocacy for tenants and underinvested communities -- litigation about the allocation of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, testimony about how CDBG funds were spent, and more. RHLS even had community organizers on staff for a time! Over the years, like the broader housing and community development world, RHLS has narrowed its focus. As the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) became the primary source of funding for affordable rental housing development, RHLS and its clients became expert in LIHTC transactional work. Both RHLS and its clients grew increasingly professionalized and institutional. RHLS's focus has shifted over time from the low-income communities with housing conditions or lack of access to funding to the nonprofits that seek to serve them. (The full history is attached at [Exhibit A.](#))

## III. RHLS Environmental Assessment

This section of the Plan contains an assessment of RHLS using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) framework. In the SWOT framework, Strengths and Weaknesses are internal to RHLS. The Opportunities and Threats are external to RHLS.

<h2>Strengths <b>S</b></h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expertise/effectiveness</li> <li>• relationships/networks</li> <li>• client base</li> <li>• reputation</li> <li>• longevity</li> <li>• flexibility</li> <li>• collegiality</li> </ul>	<h2>Weaknesses <b>W</b></h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of staff diversity</li> <li>• large number of staff nearing retirement</li> <li>• unclear mission</li> <li>• not enough direction; feedback</li> <li>• not enough administrative support</li> <li>• structural deficit (costs growing faster than revenue)</li> </ul>
<h2>Opportunities <b>O</b></h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interest rates are going up (if slowly) which will increase PLAN/IOLTA funding</li> <li>• CRLA/Bank of America work may be leveraged</li> <li>• foundations interested in "intersections" with housing as well as equity-focused work.</li> </ul>	<h2>Threats <b>T</b></h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key staff at client &amp; partner organizations will start retiring</li> <li>• PHFA leadership may change; may not be able to keep seat on PHFA board</li> <li>• foundations less interested in housing/community-development</li> </ul>

## Internal Assessment

### Strengths

RHLS has a long and successful history in Pennsylvania, and the relationships that come with that tenure and success. In addition, RHLS has a highly experienced and expert staff and the reputation and long-term clients that comes with those attributes. The hallmarks of RHLS's culture are collegiality and flexibility. Its flexibility has allowed RHLS to be nimble and pivot to address critical issues that might otherwise go unaddressed.

RHLS has two key organizational assets that it has not always explicitly considered: 1) time, and 2) networks. RHLS has a very significant asset in the time that its highly educated and experienced staff has to give. Thinking carefully about how to allocate staff time could afford RHLS with opportunities to better direct its work. In addition, during this planning process Staff, Board, and Management Team have all come to recognize the incredible resource that exists in personal and organizational networks. Given that those networks have already become broad and powerful without intentional organizational cultivation, a more intentional effort to grow and shape RHLS's networks should significantly amplify the RHLS's ability to positively affect the lives of low-income households.

Finally, participants in this planning process have affirmed the value of the Pennsylvania Utility Law Project (PULP) as an important part of RHLS. RHLS is committed to continuing to be a home for PULP, giving PULP's Executive Director ongoing latitude to operate PULP with a relatively high degree of independence, while working to increase opportunities for collaboration.

## Weaknesses

The internal assessment highlighted three primary weaknesses that informed the strategic plan – uncertain future revenues paired with almost certain increases in expenses, an impending transition in key senior leadership positions, and a lack of diversity in staffing and other aspects of RHLS programming and operations.

### *Revenue Uncertainty*

RHLS undertook an effort to project revenues and expenses for the next three years. The result of the exercise was strong evidence that RHLS's expenses will continue to increase each year at a steady rate. There is uncertainty about whether revenues will rise at the same rate.

RHLS's costs are increasing each year between 4% and 7% (the largest increase coming, as it is for many organizations, in the health insurance category). On the revenue side, RHLS has recently learned that it will receive at least \$150,000 more per year from a new filing fee. In addition, any number of events could take place that would significantly increase RHLS's revenue. For example, if interest rates increased, RHLS would expect to receive increased revenues from IOLTA. However, this additional revenue is not certain.

RHLS could conservatively expect to have a deficit of between \$75,000 and \$225,000 per year during the three years of this plan. These estimates also reflect some conservative staffing choices (not replacing Mark Levin at his retirement). A deficit of \$75,000 is well within the realm of the type of gap that RHLS fills over the course of an average year.

### *Leadership Transition*

The Executive Director in partnership with the Management Team (Mark Schwartz, Mark Levin, Dina Schlossberg, Rachel Blake, Phyllis Guillaume, and Patrick Cicero) currently manages RHLS. At the end of five years, with the anticipated retirement of Mark, Mark and Phyllis, RHLS expects that only half of the current team will still be working at RHLS -- Dina, Rachel, and Patrick. RHLS faces an challenge in replacing the expertise represented within these key positions and ensuring that Executive Director and the Management Team continue to provide effective leadership at the staff level as these key personnel changes happen.

### *Diversity and Inclusion Challenges*

RHLS currently lacks racial diversity among its professional and administrative support staff, a weakness widely acknowledged by both Staff and Board. Diversity challenges extend beyond personnel to include the organization's network of contractors, professional partners and client mix, as well as the relative lack of focus on issues of racial equity, despite the housing and community development field being deeply intertwined with racism. There is a growing desire to adopt a more explicit racial equity lens that informs key decisions at RHLS related to staffing, consultants and clients. In addition, there is recognition that advancing racial equity should become a more central theme of RHLS's overall work.

## External Assessment

### Opportunities

Interest rates, which determine RHLS funding from the Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program, have been slowly increasing. If that trend continues, it could significantly increase RHLS revenues. In addition, RHLS recognizes that foundations are increasingly interested in "intersectional work" (e.g. health & housing) as well as work focused on issues of equity (especially racial equity). RHLS has a natural interest in both of these areas and has been doing work in those spaces in an ad hoc way.

The five-year Community Redevelopment Legal Assistance (CRLA) grant presents unprecedented opportunities to learn from communities across Pennsylvania, think seriously about what community-focused lawyering might look like over the next decades, and bring all of its expertise and relationships to bear on significant challenges facing low-income neighborhoods across the state.

### Threats

As with all nonprofits, RHLS is subject to external factors that could affect its funding in significant ways. As RHLS learned during the recession, even a "sure" resource like IOLTA funding can change significantly in a short period of time. RHLS has moved to diversify its funding sources over the years, which is a clear strength of the organization. But, that means that RHLS must keep alert for external factors that may influence any of its funding sources in the future. Currently, there is little reason to expect any negative adjustment to funding from PLAN or IOLTA. There are, however, recurring issues at the federal level that could significantly impact LIHTC funding, which forms a significant portion of RHLS's budget (via contributions from RHLS's support organization, Commonwealth Housing Legal Services (CHLS), which performs some aspects of LIHTC transactions for a fee, making donations to RHLS from its proceeds). RHLS should continue to



monitor federal action that relates to LIHTC. In addition, RHLS sees foundations moving away from housing and community development work for its own sake. Foundations long ago turned away from funding legal services programs. Accordingly, RHLS will need to monitor foundation developments to make sure that its work is appropriately positioned to continue to receive foundation support. RHLS will likely need to be more intersectionally-focused and dynamic to remain successful in securing foundation funding going forward.

## IV. Strategic Priorities

This section lays out the key strategic decisions reached during the course of this planning process and highlights areas where additional steps are required. As noted earlier, the goal of this plan is not to include a full implementation plan, but to provide the framework that will guide implementation steps (see Implementation Outline and Timeline in Section VI).

Strategic priorities are identified in four main areas:

- Program direction
- Funding diversification
- Communications and branding
- Internal operations

### Program Direction

#### Retain RHLS's Four Program Areas

RHLS will continue to operate four program areas: Development Services, PULP, Policy, and CRLA. Because PULP and CRLA are constrained by factors outside the RHLS strategic planning process, this Plan focuses on creating plans and goals for Development Services and Policy only.

#### Concentrate RHLS Efforts in Three Issue Areas

RHLS will be focusing substantively on *housing affordability*, which is a clear continuation of its existing work (at both RHLS and PULP). In addition, RHLS is committing to work at the intersection of *health and housing*. RHLS also affirms that it has a critical role to play in addressing *equity in housing and community development* (especially racial equity). Each of these three areas cross the boundaries between Development Services and Policy – giving RHLS an opportunity to further extend its model of using its transactional legal experience to influence its policy work and vice versa. The fact that two of the areas are emerging areas may give RHLS an opportunity to revisit the internal mechanisms at RHLS that facilitate communication between

Development Services and Policy – potentially identifying ways to increase collaboration and further amplify RHLS's impact. Within these issue areas, RHLS will continue to spend a significant amount of time on work that benefits vulnerable populations, who have additional risk-factors for experiencing housing instability or homelessness. RHLS will continue to retain significant flexibility within the issue areas to enable it to continue to be nimble and address emerging issues. Initial ideas for substantive work in each category are included at **Exhibit B**.

## **Achieve Sustainability through Diverse Funding**

RHLS commits itself to continuing to have three-pronged funding strategy: PLAN/IOLTA funding, donations from CHLS (revenue from LIHTC), and foundation funding.

The current level of diversification of funding happened organically over time, but RHLS sees it as a strong strategy to build on by strengthening and growing each of these funding streams. This diversification helps RHLS mitigate any potential shocks from unexpected funding changes in one area. It also gives RHLS the opportunity to increase revenues, which is needed to ensure that RHLS has the revenue needed to match its costs if there are no intervening events that resolve its revenue challenges for it (such as increases in interest rates). If there are positive intervening events and RHLS also grows program revenue, it creates opportunities to explore increasing the staff size or to create a financial cushion to strengthen the organization during leadership transition.

***ACTION NEEDED: Executive Director works with Deputy Director, Associate Director, and the Manager of Organizational Advancement to create a plan to distribute primary contact relationships among staff and to create individual plans for cultivating new key relationships. Also, take steps below re: Communications.***

---

## **Communications and Branding**

### **Mission, Vision, and Possible Name Change**

RHLS continues to be dogged by four facts: 1) RHLS's name does not explain who RHLS is or what it does; 2) RHLS's mission is too broad to provide significant direction or inspiration; 3) the lack of clarity about mission and about how it works makes its messaging unclear; and 4) some leaders have a deep ambivalence about having a clearer message or becoming better known.

The lack of clarity in the mission and message is driven by the fact that RHLS strives to remain flexible to suit the needs of its funders. This can lead to dissonance about identity, purpose, and

messaging. For instance, RHLS is a legal aid program, but some of its staff do work that is very much like the work that lawyers in law firms do; some staff engage in significant administrative advocacy; some staff represent individuals, others only represent nonprofit organizations; RHLS sometimes performs and authors research; and RHLS is currently administering a large grant to provide community redevelopment legal services across the Commonwealth. RHLS does not fit in any box and is fearful of placing constraints on its identity that restrict its ability to function in the way that it sees as best for the issue at hand or funding that becomes available.



The fact that RHLS is able to function as a law firm, an advocacy organization, and a legal services program is what gives it its unique perspective, problem-solving toolkit, and relational power. These factors are a large part of what makes RHLS unique. RHLS has struggled in the past with articulating what makes it unique, which has hampered both RHLS's communications efforts and its organizational goal setting work. While there have been benefits to this fluid identity, funding realities demand that RHLS take steps to clarify who it is, what it does, and what it is trying to accomplish. That does not mean that RHLS needs to pick one identity; it needs to own the multi-faceted identity it already has.

***ACTION NEEDED: the MT will take steps to facilitate a revision of the RHLS mission and vision and a discussion about changing RHLS's name to better reflect its current activities and future aspirations. Starting language for the exercise is included at [Exhibit C](#).***

### Articulate a Clear Vision of What RHLS is Trying to Accomplish and How

RHLS will create a graphical document (Theory of Change) that describes the organization's goals and programs at a high level. This tool will make it easier to describe RHLS's work and how

its various components fit together to achieve its mission and vision. See a draft at **Exhibit D**. The thinking that goes into this document will be instrumental in allowing us to create program Logic Models and will also enable us to significantly improve its messaging about RHLS and its work.

***ACTION NEEDED: the Associate Director will work with Management Team and Staff to create an organizational Theory of Change for RHLS.***

---

## Internal Operations

### Succession Preparation

RHLS will complete an inventory of functions performed by senior staff expecting to retire in the next three to five years (see a draft at **Exhibit E**). This inventory will be supplemented with new skills that we believe are needed to implement this plan. After that work is complete, Management Team will review RHLS's Organizational Chart and make changes that will support RHLS's strategic goals from this Plan, including preparing the organization for eventual leadership transition. Job titles and job descriptions may change as a result of this work. Sample alternate organizational charts and job descriptions that contain more management functions are attached as **Exhibit F**.

***ACTION NEEDED: MT will facilitate a discussion on key skills and staffing needs for RHLS as it moves to leadership transition. The MT will also develop a strategy for moving this work forward, including considering the possibility of hiring a consultant to assist with this work.***

---

### Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity & Inclusion as well as a substantive focus on equity (especially racial equity) emerged as strong themes in this planning process. Both the Board and the Staff support increasing diversity and inclusion. There is also a strong interest in increasing RHLS's substantive work on issues of equity and publicly claiming that work.

A staff survey identified several actions that RHLS could consider taking to advance diversity & inclusion as well as equity:

- Engage in intentional outreach to organizations that advocate for people of color;
- Encourage the board to increase diversity in a range of ways, including racial diversity;
- Dedicate RHLS to learning about and implementing best practices to improve diversity in hiring (not just a project for when there is a job opening);
- Receive staff training on recognizing our own implicit biases;

- Revising Policy acceptance criteria to center racial equity as a key issue in RHLS's policy work; and
- Seeking funding for RHLS's work to promote racial equity and address racial inequity.

***ACTION NEEDED: D & I Committee should be convened with the initial task of prioritizing the actions identified in the survey and ensuring a balance of action on Diversity & Inclusion issues (which are more organizational -- staffing, consultants, staff training, etc.) and the substantive equity work. Given the overlap between these topics and RHLS's staff size, one committee will handle both issues.***

---

### Network Building

Intentional network building should be incorporated into all new efforts under this Plan. The Health & Housing and Equity work both demand that RHLS builds new networks. Doing that intentionally will benefit RHLS and its Staff. In addition, intentional networking must be built into RHLS's foundation outreach efforts.

***ACTION NEEDED: Staff goal setting should include networking goals. Networking goals should also be included in each program plan and in the fundraising plan.***

---

### Develop Program Plans (Logic Models)

Because of the nature of RHLS's work, RHLS is compelled to pay attention both to the potential for revenue that the work has and the impact that the work will have on low-income households. Accordingly, RHLS will use two tools to help navigate the decision-making process: Financial Plans and Logic Models (Financial Plans are discussed in more detail below).

RHLS is committed to doing the hard work of thinking through what activities it is undertaking, what it believes it will accomplish by doing those activities, and interrogating the underlying assumptions. This work will allow RHLS to identify numerical metrics for each program area that it can assess throughout the year to make sure it is on track to achieving the goals it set out to achieve – or to receive a warning that it needs to make a course correction or reevaluate some assumptions. To complete this exercise, RHLS will use a standard tool from the nonprofit world – the Logic Model. Logic Models are “a systemic and visual way to present and share your understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan to do, and the changes or results you hope to achieve.”<sup>2</sup> While much of the

---

<sup>2</sup> The W. K. Kellogg Foundation, available at [https://www.esu.edu/about/administration/provost/ospr/documents/pdf/Introduction\\_Logic\\_Models.pdf](https://www.esu.edu/about/administration/provost/ospr/documents/pdf/Introduction_Logic_Models.pdf).

value of creating a Logic Model comes from systematically thinking through the elements of a program, Logic Models will also help RHLS better communicate its work to internal and external audiences. Draft Logic Models for Development Services and Policy are included as **Exhibit G**.

***ACTION NEEDED: Associate Director works with Executive Director and Deputy Director to create Logic Models for the Policy and Development Services Program areas, including quantifiable goals for each area. These plans will be combined into a larger operations plan for the organization.***

---

### Oversight & Management

Management Team meeting agendas should focus on program areas (Development Services, Policy, CRLA, and PULP) and assessing how the RHLS is moving towards its goals and to reinforce any changes it makes in the Organizational Chart or job titles. For the changes detailed in this Plan to take place, Management Team must prioritize discussions of organizational strategy and performance evaluation.

***ACTION NEEDED: MT will review and revise its agenda, setting guidelines for appropriate content for the meeting and identifying issues that can be delegated to a particular person and out of group decision-making. See Exhibit H for a template for MT agendas.***

---

## V. Financial Sustainability Plan

As discussed above, RHLS is has undertaking an effort to project its revenues and expenses over the next three years. RHLS fully expects its costs to continue to increase at a steady rate. The growth of RHLS's revenue is less certain. While RHLS has had tremendous success with stopgap solutions to funding issues, those solutions are largely a function of the current Executive Director's relationships and are not guaranteed to last beyond his tenure. While any one significant funding change (like an increase in interest rates) could eliminate any projected deficit, RHLS is choosing not to leave that to chance. Because RHLS's projections indicate there is some risk that RHLS will experience an unusually large gap during one of the years of this Plan, RHLS is taking affirmative steps to increase the revenue generated by its program work.

## Three-Year Planning Budget

As of October 2017, the projected deficit for RHLS during the period of this Plan ranged from \$225,000 to \$375,000. However, since that time a new filing fee has been adopted in Pennsylvania that is expected to bring RHLS additional revenues of *at least* \$150,000 per year.

## Financial Forecast

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Previous Estimated Deficit (Fall 2017)	(225,000)	(375,000)	(300,000)
Updated Estimated Deficit (Winter 2018)	(75,000)	(225,000)	(150,000)

As noted above, there are a variety of external events that could happen that would eliminate the projected deficits. In any case, RHLS is choosing to be proactive by working toward filling the projected gaps by generating additional revenue from each of the program areas, as detailed below.

## Targeted Increase in Revenue by Practice Area

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Development Services	50,000	125,000	150,000
Policy	<u>25,000</u>	<u>100,000</u>	<u>125,000</u>
Total	75,000	225,000	275,000

The targeted increases in the first two years are designed to exactly match the forecasted deficits. In the third year, the targeted revenue is in excess of the deficit number, which could allow RHLS the flexibility to hire additional staff, as needed.

## Develop Program-Specific Financial Plans; Individual Goals

To ensure that RHLS can meet its revenue goals, RHLS will create brief Financial Plans for Development Services and Policy. The Financial Plans will include a statement about the

baseline activities and revenues associated with the program as well as the 3-5 new activities that must take place to increase revenue at the level projected by this Plan. CRLA-related work will be a portion of both the Development Services and Policy Financial Plans. The Financial Plans must include the persons who are responsible for meeting the goals, the approximate number of hours that must be worked per month, and the criteria that will be used to determine if the effort is on track. RHLS sees this work as important, but also understands that it is not a part of the current culture. Good goals for RHLS will celebrate and extend current culture and activities while also making directions for growth clear – allowing RHLS's exceedingly capable and motivated staff to fully own new initiatives. A Financial Plan template is included at **Exhibit I**. In addition, the Management Team will create overall organizational performance goals for the organization on an annual basis. Once the financial plan and the organizational goals are finalized, supervisors will meet with supervisees to come up with individual goals that support the program and organizational goals. A template for thinking through individual goals is included as **Exhibit J**.

***ACTION NEEDED: Associate Director works with Executive Director and Deputy Director to refine the Financial Plans for Development Services and Policy.***

***ACTION NEEDED: Management Team and the Board of Directors will explore whether there are opportunities to build a financial reserve for the organization.***

---

### Fund Development Priorities

RHLS will follow a two-track approach to its foundation fundraising activities over the plan period. First, it will seek to maintain current funder relationships and extend/renew existing grants. Second, it will create a prospecting plan, which will include:

- Switching from a project-by-project approach for funding RHLS's policy work to applications for funding for RHLS's policy portfolio;
- Identifying and strategically pursuing 2-3 new foundation relationships that could support RHLS's work on health & housing (including seriously exploring 1-2 national foundations);
- Identifying and strategically pursuing 2-3 new foundation relationships that could support RHLS's work on racial equity (including seriously exploring 1-2 national foundations); and
- Assigning staff contacts to each foundation in addition to the Executive Director in order to build the "bench" and facilitate shared relationships.



### Equal Justice Center

RHLS is continuing to work with partners toward the goal of funding and building an Equal Justice Center (EJC) in Center City Philadelphia. The current timeline of this project suggests that RHLS would not move to the EJC until the final months of this plan – at best. However, whatever the timeline is, once the project is funded, RHLS will need to plan for the transition, including accounting for potential costs and savings associated with any move to the EJC.

### Financial Reserve

RHLS should to explore the possibility of creating some sort of financial reserve, which would ease the transition to a new Executive Director, when the time comes. This issue will be added to the list of issues the Management Team needs to review over the coming years.

## VI. Implementation Outline & Timeline

This tentative Implementation Outline & Timeline is provided to help guide the work of implementing this Plan. Tentative leads for each area are listed below. Those areas lead by Management Team (MT) may indicate that the MT handles the issue fully or it may choose to assign the work to some subset of MT and staff, a consultant, or any other allocation of responsibility that the MT believes will advance the work. Timelines are suggested and will be revised, as needed.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>End</b>
Mission, Vision & Name	MT	July 2018	Dec 2018
Org Theory of Change	Assoc. Dir.	Jan 2018	April 2018
Program Financials	Assoc. Dir., Deputy Director, Executive Director, CFO	Jan 2018	April 2018
Program Logic Models	Assoc. Dir., Deputy Director, Manager of Org Advancement	Feb 2018	April 2018

Prioritize key actions for D&I & Equity and create a plan for FY 18-19	D&I Committee	Feb 2018	June 2018
Redesign MT Agendas	MT		March 2018
Create Individual Goals (from Org & Program goals)	Supervisors	April 2018	May 2018
Succession Planning/Skills Assessment	MT	April 2018	Dec 2018
Create process for gauging progress toward goals	MT	July 2018	(ongoing; quarterly)
Create transition plan for moving to EJC (if applicable)	MT or Committee	Jan 2019	

**EXHIBIT A****RHLS History for Strategic Planning 2017<sup>3</sup>**Mid-1970s to mid-1980s

RHLS was founded in 1973 to address systemic conditions in workforce housing issues in a systemic way. Our signature work during the initial period was to help stabilize conditions in large suburban housing developments. In 1975 CDBG funds started to flow and we represented our first client developer. We provided comprehensive services that could be characterized as both legal and technical assistance. This work helped us see challenges in the CDBG program and led to our advocacy on that program. There was a significant amount of staff freedom to identify issues and develop them. RHLS had community organizers on staff for a time.

Client Work: Warminster Heights/Lacey Park - helped design the rehabilitation plan; secured CDBG funds, project-based section 8, and Department of Community Affairs funding; and formed limited-equity coop  
Better Homes Inc of Bucks County - homeownership program

Advocacy Work: CDBG litigation in federal court (3 cases)  
Fair Housing litigation in federal court (1 case)  
Many administrative complaints re: CDBG  
Very active with LALSHAC - federal advocacy, testify before congress  
Active in fighting back state efforts to change LL/T law  
Staff members were founding members of what is now the PA Housing Alliance

Mid-1980s to mid-2000s

RHLS modifies its theory of change -- RHLS cannot work effectively to create new developments while filing administrative complaints against those who fund new development. So, the litigation and administrative advocacy work is largely over. RHLS does continue to act as an advocate in other ways by being active on the local, state, and national level on issues related to CDBG, HOME, and Section 3.

The LIHTC program was created in the 1980s. RHLS was involved in LIHTC transactions from the beginning. In addition, in the late 1980s Mark Schwartz was appointed to the PHFA board. At the beginning many organizations tried LIHTC projects, which were initially relatively small in size. RHLS provided something close to general counsel services to its clients. From the late 1980s until the mid-2000s our LIHTC work went from a trickle to a consistent stream.

During this period PULP joined with RHLS. From that point until now PULP has operated as an independent entity within RHLS. Its work includes individual tenant representation, back-up for local programs on utility issues, and significant amounts of administrative advocacy. For more, see [PULP History](#).

---

<sup>3</sup> This history is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

## Client Work:

- 1515 Fairmount
- Silverlake Plaza Apartments
- Cooperatives
- Land trusts
- Mobile home park conversion
- NCFH scattered site preservation
- Home repair programs
- Economic development (set up an utility co-op)

## Advocacy Work:

- National advocacy on CDBG, HOME, and Section 3
- Tenant advocacy work (Pittsburgh)
- Helped design Homeownership Choice Program
- Community Reinvestment Act challenges
- Bank Consortium to increase access to mortgage credit
- Reviving the NAP program

## Special Projects:

- Started the Housing Law Project (a clearinghouse for local legal services organizations on housing issues -- public housing, eviction, etc.)
- Helped design and then co-administered two Bridge Loan Programs with PHFA
- PULP joins RHLS

Mid-2000s to present

RHLS has a group of nonprofits that it has worked with for decades, a number of which are very sophisticated developers by this point. This is good because LIHTC now has quite high barriers to entry, making LIHTC transactions out of reach for small nonprofits (unless they partner with an experienced developer) or even large nonprofits that don't already have development experience. This maturation of the LIHTC industry, coupled with the maturation of RHLS staff means there is less emphasis on helping to develop the capacity of small or new organizations.

At the same time that RHLS representations in LIHTC were growing, federal housing funding has been sharply curtailed, so there is much less focus on federal advocacy -- the vast majority of LIHTC advocacy happens at the state level. In addition, the way in which RHLS does its LIHTC advocacy is strongly shaped by the fact that Mark Schwartz sits on the board of PHFA.

RHLS's funding at this point has changed to a mix of PLAN funding, foundation support, and earned revenue from LIHTC deals. RHLS takes on a range of policy issues not tied to LIHTC, largely at the behest of a particular foundation. These policy issues are generally the focus while the funding exists, but were not long-term projects of RHLS. Similarly, several new special projects were created and then terminated when funding decreased (or, in the case of the HEMAP Help Center, demand disappeared)

## Client Work:

- Wood Street Commons

- JBJ Soul Homes
- Inglis
- Brandywine Health Center

#### Advocacy Work:

- Increasing the number of accessible LIHTC units
- Modification of the QAP to increase housing for vulnerable populations
- Increase weatherization of affordable multifamily properties
- Analysis of Philadelphia's Foreclosure System
- Data Collaborative
- Philadelphia Land Bank

#### Special Projects:

- HEMAP Help Center
- Creation of CHLS to represent LIHTC clients for a fee
- Resident Protection Project
- Section 3 Business Certification Program
- CRLA program

#### High-level trends

1. **Funding Drives Work.** Federal funding shifts what our clients can do (and who can be our clients), which shifts the focus of our work (CDBG → LIHTC). The introduction of fees for LIHTC work (through CHLS) has accelerated RHLS's focus on LIHTC. Foundation funding has helped RHLS remain strong and avoid layoffs, but we have not had a comprehensive strategy for our policy work. The result is that we have a strong body of work related to LIHTC policy (led by Mark Schwartz) and a smattering of other projects that do not get significant institutional support -- unless there happens to be foundation funding. We have also taken on a number projects just for foundations without a serious effort to integrate them into RHLS's larger goals.
2. **Development Has Matured and Professionalized; So Have We.** CDCs started with an activist orientation, but many now have more development orientation (see: Brief History of CDCs). RHLS tracked this change, with our role shifting from being primarily an outsider/agitator to an insider (change was probably amplified by Mark Schwartz being on PHFA board). The activist approach persists in Pittsburgh, but is not embraced by the organization. Once we left the activist approach, we provided comprehensive, general counsel-type services to growing organizations. Now we primarily focus on providing sophisticated legal assistance on financing and property acquisition. Our sophistication plus the barriers to entry to LIHTC (and, frankly, staff preferences) means that we do not emphasize work with smaller organizations.

**EXHIBIT B**  
**Selected Possible Expansion Activities**

**I. Health & Housing**

- A. Expansion of development services work on housing for young adults with disabilities
- B. More involvement with using Medicaid money for housing
- C. Increase policy and advocacy work around housing conditions (medical certificates, lead, asthma, etc.), especially for vulnerable populations

**II. Equity**

- A. Expanding work on Inclusionary Zoning in Pittsburgh
- B. Building relationships and making ourselves available as a resource for nonprofits that we don't currently work with -- especially those led by persons of color and/or located in high poverty, majority-minority areas

**EXHIBIT C**  
**Starting Language for Revising Vision & Mission**

**Vision:** RHLS is working toward a world where every person lives in a home that is healthy, affordable, and in a neighborhood of their choice.

**Mission:** To increase housing affordability, health, and choice for low-income households and communities by providing legal and technical assistance, consulting services, and systemic advocacy.

**EXHIBIT D**  
**Organizational Theory of Change**

Vision: Healthy, affordable housing in neighborhoods of choice for all Pennsylvanians.

Outcomes	Low-income and minority communities are equipped with the knowledge and tools to improve their conditions	Nonprofits are able to create housing and offer programs that support the most vulnerable; Utilities provide affordable access to low-income consumers	Housing and community development related programs and policy are changed in ways that support low-income persons, vulnerable populations, and communities of color
Strategies	<p align="center">Support</p> Provide outreach, technical assistance, consulting, training, research support, and more to community-driven efforts to address affordability, health, or choice.	<p align="center">Legal Services</p> Represent nonprofit developers of affordable housing and low-income tenants in utility matters.	<p align="center">Systems Change</p> Advocate for changes to policy and programs that help break the cycle of housing instability and improve affordability, health, and choice.
<p>Catalyzing Strategy</p> <p align="center">Addressing housing instability requires a long-term, multi-prong effort that includes affordable housing development, neighborhood revitalization, preservation/repair, cost-containment, and advocacy to change housing and related systems (such as health and racial equity) that feed the instability cycle.</p>			
Problem	Communities across the United States need access to information and resources that will enable them to break the cycle of housing instability, which research has linked to negative outcomes in physical health, mental health, childhood development, educational attainment, and more. These negative outcomes, in turn, feed housing instability, trapping households and neighborhoods in a negative cycle.		



**EXHIBIT E**  
**Key Job Functions - ED, CFO, Chief Counsel**

**1. Figure-Head & Keeper of Key Relationships**

- a. Serve as the public face of RHLS.
- b. Nurture effective relationships between RHLS and clients, funders, housing/community development, and business, political, and legal aid communities.
- c. Maintain leadership role with Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA).
- d. *Maintain positive working relationship with and defend independence of PULP.*

**2. Planning**

- a. Develop and implement a short-, medium- and long-term business plan for RHLS, focusing on the next 2 to 5 years and beyond.
- b. Facilitate the strategic planning necessary to implement that vision and leverage relationships and talent to accomplish it.

**3. Fundraising**

- a. *Maintain relationships with current funders (outside applications and grant reports)*
- b. *Develop new potential funder relationships*
- c. *Create/oversee development & implementation of annual development plan*

**4. Technology**

- a. Maintain the organization's Management Information Systems. Coordinate the computer equipment and software purchase.
- b. Coordinate training on equipment and software applications.
- c. Develop databases needed to support program and office functions.

**5. Management**

- a. *Supervise members of MT (ensure they are supervising their staff).*
- b. *Run MT meeting.*
- c. Share MT Notes with staff.
- d. Make sure that the organization has an effective process for recording employee time including regular hours worked, overtime, compensatory time, vacation time, sick time, etc.
- e. Ensure that all filing systems are well maintained including accounting, personnel and legal files.

**6. Financial Oversight**

- a. Oversee the Accounts Payable and Receivables functions.
- b. Review the monthly bank statements; reconcile bank accounts to financial accounts.
- c. Ensure payroll information is processed and transmitted to the payroll company; and payroll deduction accounts are paid on a timely basis. Maintain, track and periodically reconcile all payroll deduction accounts.
- d. Responsible for the organization's pension fund.
- e. Make sure that the organization has adequate liability insurance.

**7. Policy Work**

- a. Provide leadership on local, state and federal policy matters which impact the organization's clients.
- b. *Coordinate bi-monthly Policy meeting.*

c. *Determine which policy matters to accept; provide feedback and support on policy projects.*

**8. Transactional Work/Development Services**

- a. Represent clients carrying out rental housing projects (primarily Low Income Housing Tax Credit).
- b. Determine whether to accept requests for services, assign the correct funding source, assign staff members.
- c. *Coordinate bi-monthly Development Services meeting.*

**9. Support Org Roles**

- a. Maintain financial records for the Commonwealth Housing Development Corporation. Prepare information for audit. Act as third party administrator for the Women's Community Revitalization Project (WCRP) for seven (7) rent subsidy and supportive services funds.
- b. Maintain financial records for the Commonwealth Housing Legal Services (CHLS). Write agreement between RHLS and CHLS and ensures that the services provided are billed and paid appropriately. Prepare information for audit.
- c. As Executive Director of CHDC, responsible for physical condition of the Glenside office and for paying all CHDC bills. Oversee the ownership responsibilities of the Legal Aid of Southeastern PA (LASP) Building in Norristown. Responsible for annual Board meetings and reviewing and approving annual audit and IRS Form 990.
- d. As Executive Director of CHLS, sign contracts for special projects carried out through CHLS and for purchase of RHLS attorney time to carry out CHLS tax credit representations. Responsible for annual Board meetings and reviewing and approving annual audit and IRS Form 990.

**10. Human Resources**

- a. Ensure compliance with HR laws and regulations
- b. Serve as point of contact for staff complaints
- c. Advocate for staff

**11. Office Move Management**

- . If we move to the EJC someone will need to coordinate that process

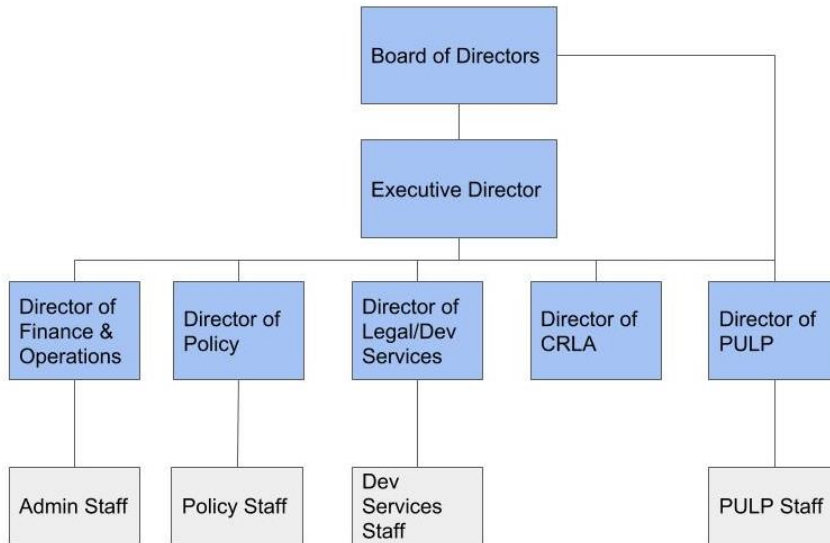
**EXHIBIT F**  
**Organizational Chart Possibilities**

These charts are only for illustrative purposes to lay out graphically some directions that RHLS's organizational chart might take in the future. The proposed charts, where possible, use titles other than the ones we currently employ. They were created this way in the hope of placing the focus on the structure and the purpose for the structure, rather than raising issues about particular staff member's role in a new structure. As noted in the Plan, RHLS functions as a law firm, a legal services program, and an advocacy organization. Each of these different organization types tends to have a different structure. The proposed structures in this exhibit reflect a series of options that are firmly embedded in a nonprofit world view, rather than a legal world view, reflecting the bias of the authors. Any changes to RHLS's organizational chart will require extensive discussion about what we are trying to accomplish and how changes to the organizational chart will get us there.

*Please note: all charts assume that the oversight of all legal work will be the responsibility of the person who oversees the Development Services group.*

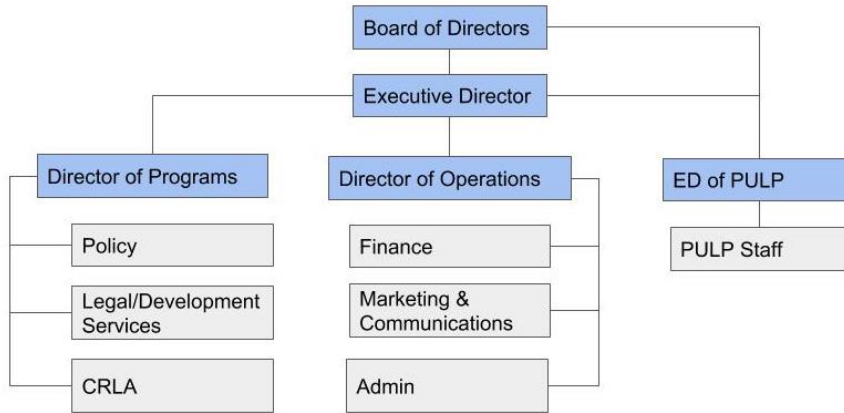
**Option 1 :**

This option most closely matches current structure, but includes two titles and related functions that are program specific - Director of Policy and Director of Development Service. The approach reinforces a focus on substantive issues and outcomes.



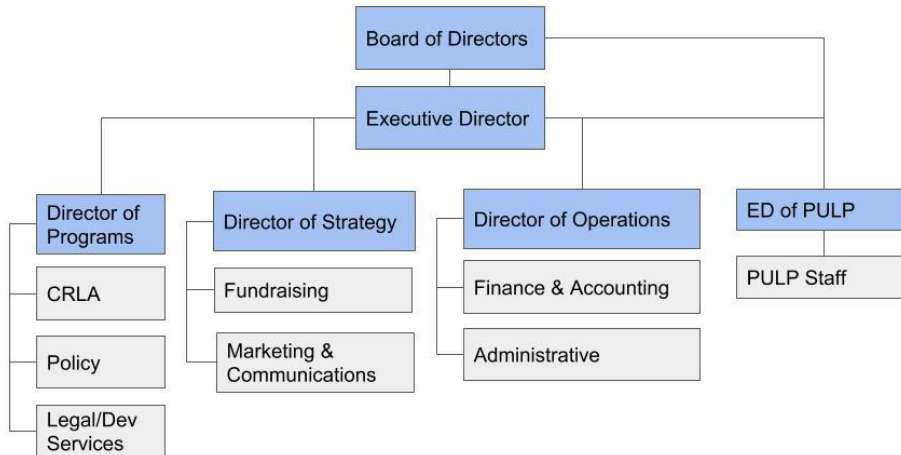
**Option 2:**

This option significantly streamlines management. It creates a role for a person at RHLS who would have oversight over all substantive program areas. This option reduces the direct supervision load of the Executive Director and creates an enhanced management role over all programs. This option provides several roles that would allow staff members to gain significant experience working on key functions in the organization. In addition, that would also allow the organization a significant amount of flexibility in considering internal candidates for Executive Director.



**Option 3:**

In this option, a significant portion of the work of providing oversight (at least in terms of metrics and reporting) is off-loaded from the Director of Programs to the Director of Strategy. In that instance, the Director of Programs would focus more on the substantive issues in the program area, and somewhat less on the management function than in previous options.



**EXHIBIT G**  
**Draft Program Logic Models**

# Regional Housing Legal Services Development Services Logic Model

**Problem**

Communities and families across Pennsylvania deal with housing instability, due to a shortage of affordable housing, lack of social safety net supports, and community issues. Housing instability is linked to negative outcomes in physical health, mental health, childhood development, educational attainment, and other social problems. These negative outcomes often, in turn, feed housing instability, trapping many households in neighborhoods in a cycle that prevents them from having a stable place to call home.

**Rationale**

A lack of affordable housing units contributes to housing instability. Development of new affordable rental housing, preservation of existing affordable rental housing, and optimization for nonprofit affordable housing managers/developers can help to address this issue.

**Assumptions**

- RHLS's services go beyond standard representations in ways that increase client success and improve capacity.
- RHLS attorneys make innovative projects possible, many of which focus on vulnerable populations.
- As a mission-driven organization, RHLS adds value for nonprofit clients.

**Resources**

- Time
- Funding
- Administrative support
- Networks
- Educational opportunities

**Activities**

- Attorneys represent nonprofit clients through all stages of the affordable housing development and preservation process.
- Provide consulting services
- Outreach

**Ouputs**

- Financial closings on subsidized multifamily transactions
- Expertise/knowledge shared.
- New connections; expanded network

**Outcomes**

Affordability: # of affordable housing units created or preserved.

Health: # of units with supportive component or integrated healthcare.

Choice: # of units created/preserved in a gentrifying area; and # of units created/preserved in "choice neighborhoods."

RHLS Strategic Plan 2018-2021

2/9/2018

# Regional Housing Legal Services Policy Logic Model

## Problem

Communities and families across Pennsylvania deal with housing instability, due to a shortage of affordable housing, lack of social safety net supports, and community issues. Housing instability is linked to negative outcomes in physical health, mental health, childhood development, educational attainment, and other social problems. These negative outcomes often, in turn, feed housing instability, trapping many households in neighborhoods in a cycle that prevents them from having a stable place to call home.

## Rationale

Policies and programs affecting the affordable housing universe have systemic issues that perpetuate the cycle of housing instability. As such, system-wide problems require system-wide solutions.

### Assumptions

- RHLS has its own organizational voice that it can use to improve the lives of low-income households.
- RHLS's unique positioning leads us to identify creative and powerful solutions to problems.
- RHLS must use a wide range of strategies and tools to address policy-related issues.

### Resources

- Time
- Funding
- Administrative support
- Power/influence
- Networks and relationships
- Staff skill sets

### Activities

- Coalition-building
- Relationship-building/networking
- Research
- Advocacy
- Collaboration with Development Services

### Outputs

- Changes to the QAP
- Changes to NAP
- Educational materials for legal services and other advocates about LIHTC
- Reports and articles
- Public testimony & comments
- Coalitions built/maintained

### Outcomes

Affordability: \$ for affordable housing through policy/advocacy

Health: Additional \$ for health and housing programs, # HH with new access to health & housing interventions.

Choice: # of barriers to choice removed; # HH with more choice

RHLS Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Draft: 2/16/2018

## EXHIBIT H Management Team Agenda Template

### Executive Director

- Geographic coverage
- Client Mix
- Financial Reserve

### Operations

- Financial
- HR
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Technology
- Fundraising
- Strategic Planning

### Program Reports

- Development Services (should be tied to program goals and plan, may include: # of cases, # of developments, # of units, # of technical assistance projects, # of outreaches, # of trainings; work on health & housing; work on racial equity; expertise development/staff promotion; and other issues)
- Policy (should be tied to program goals and plan, may include: # of matters, # of people potentially impacted, health & housing work, network development, expertise development/staff promotion, other issues)
- PULP (should be tied to program goals and plan, may include: # of individual cases, # of litigation cases, # of people impacted, # of trainings; health & housing work; network development; expertise development/staff promotion; other issues)
- CRLA

**Exhibit I**  
**Program Financial Plan Template**

Use this template to think through the key questions for the program financial plan.

Development Services

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Cost/time needed</b>	<b>Expected \$</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Metrics by quarter</b>
Existing work: _____				Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
New work #1: non-LIHTC for fee		\$25,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
New work #2: technical assistance/consulting		\$10,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
New work #3: non-urban work		\$25,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
CRLA		\$60,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:



Policy

Activity	Cost/time needed to implement	Expected revenue	Who responsible?	Metrics by quarter
Existing work: _____				Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
New work #1: equity/inclusionary zoning		\$10,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
New work #2: health & housing - tbd		\$10,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
New work #3: policy portfolio funding		\$30,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:
CRLA		\$50,000		Q1: Q2: Q3: Q4:

## **EXHIBIT J**

### **Individual Goal Setting**

This template is designed to help supervisors and supervisees work through the goal-setting process in a way that supports the goals of RHLS as stated in the 2018 strategic plan. To accomplish the goals we have set out for ourselves in the plan, we'll each need to commit to taking some new steps.

Substantively, the plan focuses on affordability, health & choice. These substantive issues should inform each of the areas below. The key internal strategies are focused on: knowledge, networks, and skills.

#### Knowledge

1. My strongest substantive knowledge areas
2. Areas of substantive knowledge that I'd most like to build
3. Plan to build substantive knowledge over the next year (plan should be SMART<sup>4</sup>)
4. MT: What are my strongest areas of knowledge in terms of organizational management?
5. MT: What areas of knowledge do I most want to grow in terms of organizational management?
6. MT: Plan to grow organizational management knowledge

#### Networks

1. My key network(s)
2. Areas where I'd like to grow my networks (consider geography, substantive areas, demographic groups, etc.)
3. Plan to grow networks (what specifically are you going to do; plan should be SMART)

#### Skills

1. My strongest skills (related to, but different than knowledge)
2. Skills I would like to build and why
3. Plan to build skills (SMART)
4. MT: What are my strongest management skills?
5. MT: What management skills do I most want to grow in the next year?
6. MT: What is my plan for growing management skills?

How I will support RHLS thinking through and acting on equity goals?

How will the plans developed above enable me to increase my profile/the profile of RHLS as experts?

What help do I need from my supervisor to meet these goals?

What help do I need from RHLS to meet these goals?

---

<sup>4</sup> SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timebound.