

*ACLU of Ohio Foundation*

*The Roadmap of Our Future:*  
Strategic Plan 2003-2008

## *Introduction*

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is our nation's guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution and the laws of the United States.

In 1920, when the ACLU was founded by Roger Baldwin, Crystal Eastman, Albert DeSilver and others, civil liberties were in a sorry state. Activists were languishing in jail for distributing anti-war literature. Foreign-born people who were suspected of political radicalism were subject to summary deportation. Racial segregation was the law of the land and state sanctioned violence against African Americans was routine. Constitutional rights for the gay community, the poor and many other groups were virtually unthinkable. Moreover, the U.S. Supreme Court had yet to uphold a single free speech claim under the First Amendment.

Since the ACLU's founding in 1920, the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization has grown from a roomful of civil liberties activists to an organization of nearly 400,000 members and supporters, with offices in almost every state. The ACLU has also maintained, since its founding, the position that civil liberties must be respected, even in times of national emergency. In support of that position, the ACLU has appeared before the Supreme Court and other federal courts on numerous occasions, both as direct counsel and by filing amicus briefs.

The ACLU of Ohio Foundation is an affiliate of the National ACLU. Through education, litigation and lobbying the organization seeks to preserve civil liberties for each new generation. As the state and national economic, political, legal and social climate changes, the ACLU of Ohio Foundation must be prepared to meet new threats and opportunities. For this reason, the organization determined that developing a strategic plan for the future was extremely necessary. With this outlook to the future, the ACLU of Ohio Foundation has developed a five year (2003-2008) Strategic Plan that will guide the organization toward its destination of success and growth.

## *Process Overview*

The strategic planning process for the ACLU did not follow the typical format in many ways. Since the ACLU is a statewide organization, scheduling meetings created a variety of logistical challenges. To address this factor, the ACLU and the Mandel Center team decided to hold meetings in the central location of Columbus, which is also the location for the Board of Directors meetings. The strategic planning meetings were held on the Sundays that followed the Board of Directors meetings. Generally, the strategic planning meetings transpired between 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It was imperative that we develop a timeframe and process that coincided with the needs of the ACLU in order to make this strategic planning effort effective.

Phase I, the Planning to Plan Phase, was completed with our initial meeting. During this meeting, key items were addressed. These included: the expected benefits and costs of strategic planning; the expectations of each party's responsibilities; the budget and reimbursement process for the Mandel Team; and issues regarding the selection of the strategic planning committee. At the conclusion of this meeting, the ACLU was left with key action items, including the agreement to select their strategic planning committee members and to commit to a meeting schedule. The Mandel team's action items included formalizing the minutes of the meeting, drafting a strategic planning contract and completing the environmental scan. Completion of these items was required for this process to move on to the next phase.

Phase II, the Analytic Phase, was addressed during the two six-hour meetings held in January and February 2003. The foci of these meetings were to examine the mission, vision, and values of the ACLU. In addition, a stakeholder analysis, and an in-depth SWOT analysis were conducted. The stakeholder analysis occurred through the utilization of two techniques: 1. An examination of survey results obtained by mailing it to various stakeholder groups, and soliciting vital information on their perceptions of the ACLU. 2. A group exercise that examined the relationships between the ACLU and various stakeholders. At the conclusion of the Analytic Phase, the ACLU had a good sense of the factors influencing the organization, both internally and externally.

Phase III, the Committee Deliberation Phase, began at a five-hour meeting held in March 2003. With the use of a creative roadmap exercise, the ACLU developed strategies to address their strategic issues in the following areas: fiscal and human resources; development; programming; leadership, management, and organization; and communication. From the compilation of the work up to this point, the Mandel Center team drafted the strategic plan document. This document was presented to the Executive Director along with suggestions for the implementation process. In response, the ACLU formed a Strategic Planning Oversight Committee (SPOC) to ensure the operational plan of the strategic plan would be implemented. The strategic plan will be presented to the Board of Directors on April 26, 2003 for approval. Once adopted, the SPOC will clarify responsibilities for employing the strategies in the plan. The SPOC will also be responsible for the reassessment of strategies, monitoring and reviewing implemented policies, plans and programs that resulted from the strategic planning process and gauging the ACLU's performance level. If these final steps are followed and implemented, the ACLU will have completed an effective strategic planning process.

## *Executive Summary*

Faced with operating in an ever-changing environment, the ACLU of Ohio Foundation chose to engage in a strategic planning process. The ACLU's objectives were to assess their current capabilities and identify their critical issues so that they may strategically lead the organization into the future. Therefore, from October 2002 until April 2003, the ACLU utilized a consulting team from the Mandel Center for Nonprofit Organizations to help them throughout this process.

In particular, throughout the strategic planning process, the ACLU examined the organization's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and threats of its external environment. The ACLU examined these elements in the areas of: *Mission & Vision; Communication; Fiscal & Human Resources; Development, Leadership and Organization; and Programs*. Once the critical issues were identified, the ACLU developed key goals and strategies for each of the aforementioned sections (except for Mission & Vision for those critical issues overlapped in other areas). It is important to note that all of the goals and strategies are directly tied into furthering the ACLU's mission, vision and core values.

Finally, by laboring through three critical phases, the Planning to Plan Phase, the Analytic Phase and the Committee Deliberation Phase, the ACLU was successfully able to create a roadmap that will guide their organizational goals for the next five years. And in order to ensure accuracy of the organization's direction, the ACLU appointed a strategic planning oversight committee to monitor and assess all developments and outcomes of the plan.

**ACLU's Mission:**                    *To aid in maintaining and extending constitutional and other fundamental rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities, and to take all legitimate actions in furtherance of that object without political partisanship.*

**ACLU's Vision:**                    *We envision Ohio as a free, safe and just society where civil liberties are secure for all.*

**ACLU's Core Values:**            *Respect, diversity, integrity, courage and justice*

## *Mission Statement*

**To aid in maintaining and extending constitutional and other fundamental rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities, and to take all legitimate actions in furtherance of that object without political partisanship.**

*\*Narrative:* Throughout the strategic planning process, the mission statement was reviewed and discussed. It was decided that for the scope of this plan, the mission statement would not change. However, the ACLU may revise the wording---but not the intent---of the mission statement in the future.

## *Vision Statement*

**We envision Ohio as a free, safe and just society where civil liberties are secure for all.**

*Narrative:* This version of the ACLU's vision statement will be used as a means to inform the public of the organization's passion and commitment.

## *Core Values*

Core values are woven into our culture, and serve as the foundation in which the organization stands. They are fundamental to our sustainability and to our mission to aid in maintaining and extending constitutional and other fundamental rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities, and to take all legitimate action in furtherance of that object without political partisanship. The following are the American Civil Liberties Union's core values:

### **Respect**

*By this we mean...*

- We respect the Rule of Law
- We value the rules, and work to ensure the rules are right for all
- We honor the people who enforce and live the law

### **Diversity**

*By this we mean...*

- We honor collaboration with all staff, Board members, and leaders throughout the state chapters
- We value the diversity among all staff, Board members, and leaders
- We respect all cultures

### **Integrity**

*By this we mean...*

- We value the efficient stewardship of our resources
- We are committed to the thoughtful examination of cases
- We are dedicated to the promotion of civil liberties, and we take innovative approaches to protecting these liberties

### **Courage**

*By this we mean...*

- We are on the cutting-edge with the concerns of civil liberties violations
- We are uncompromising in our pursuit to protect civil liberties
- We respect the law, but work to make the law satisfy the status quo

### **Justice**

*By this we mean...*

- We are deeply committed to the promotion of constitutional and other fundamental rights, liberties, privileges, and immunities
- We are relentless in the pursuit of equality for all
- We are accountable to our mission in preserving liberty for all

*ACLU*  
*Fiscal and Human Resources Strategies*

**1. Efficient and Effective Utilization of Human Resources**

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- 1a. Develop comprehensive volunteer action plans and volunteer job descriptions
- 1b. Perform skills assessment on volunteers to properly match individuals to appropriate tasks
- 1c. Develop mentoring program to foster leadership qualities in staff, volunteers and Board of Directors
- 1d. Re-evaluate staffing structure

**2. Develop Fiscal Stability**

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- 2a. Utilize volunteers to research capacity building grants from various foundations
- 2b. Explore possibility of increasing the handling of legal cases in which fees are awarded
- 2c. Pursue creative methods to increase membership base
- 2d. Develop comprehensive development plan

*ACLU*  
*Leadership, Management, and Organization*

**1. Strengthen Staff Management**

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- 1a. Recruit staff who demonstrate leadership abilities
- 1b. Recruit talented staff who can commit to working for ACLU long-term

**2. Strengthen Board Leadership**

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- 2a. Recruit board members who demonstrate leadership abilities
- 2b. Recruit board members who are skilled at fundraising
- 2c. Recruit board members who can commit time/passion required of position
- 2d. Establish active board committees
- 2e. Perform peer-review board assessments
- 2f. Develop structure of accountability for board members
- 2g. Cultivate a culture of leadership

**3. Develop Leadership Among Chapters and at Local Level**

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- 3a. Recruit committed and talented volunteers/staff to serve chapters
- 3b. Provide skill-building training
- 3c. Create leadership opportunities for chapter leaders
- 3d. Support local activity

**4. Develop a Succession Plan for Organizational Leaders**

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- 4a. Analyze time commitments of top leadership positions
- 4b. Recruit and/or cultivate new leaders to replace potentially out-going leaders
- 4c. Develop job descriptions

*ACLU*  
*Legal & Education Program Strategies*

**1. Enhance legal programming activities**

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- 1a. Utilize volunteers to increase administrative support for legal program
- 1b. Develop method for increasing intake of legal cases that generate fees
- 1c. Create networking opportunities for volunteer attorneys and prospective volunteer attorneys
- 1d. Recruit volunteer attorneys for lobbying and testimonials

**2. Enhance Education Programming Activities**

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- 2a. Develop campus outreach programs statewide to gain more student involvement/activism
- 2b. Efficiently utilize a campus outreach program, a plan for chapter leaders to work together and communicate needs to be established
- 2c. Utilize creative program ideas by utilizing grassroots organizers and volunteer members to aid in administrative and organizing tasks

*ACLU*  
*Development Strategies*

**1. Develop a comprehensive development plan**

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- 1a. Contact members and donors for Development/Fundraising volunteering
- 1b. Utilize volunteers, board members, and donors for contacts and resources
- 1c. Involve volunteers in fundraising initiatives: grant writing & special events
- 1d. Increase chapter involvement and responsibilities regarding fundraising
- 1e. Utilize technology for more efficient use of development database
- 1f. Increase staff dedicated to development efforts

**2. Improve public image**

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- 2a. Create Public Awareness Plan

*ACLU*  
*Communication Strategies*

**1. Effectively and Efficiently Utilize Communication Resources**

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- 1a. Develop a plan to build coalitions throughout the communities
- 1b. Create a plan to continue and expand on the effective use technological capabilities
- 1c. Utilize the media to effectively and accurately present views to the public
- 1d. Develop a plan to work in conjunction with coalitions to conduct events

### *Conclusion*

The preceding document contains recommendations from a collaborative effort of the ACLU Strategic Planning Committee and the Mandel Center Consulting Team. This strategic plan should be used as a roadmap for the ACLU of Ohio Foundation. It should not be expected to provide minute, day-to-day details for the next five years; rather, it should be used as a guiding force that will bring the organization closer to ideals of its mission.

A group consensus regarding this strategic plan was reached throughout the strategic planning process. While consensus was achieved for the overall plan, some members of the Strategic Planning Committee expressed reservations regarding particular verbiage of some statements. Fortunately, the strategic plan is a living document that can and should be reviewed throughout the next five years.

It is the hope of all involved, that this strategic plan will lead the ACLU towards a successful future. It is also the hope of all involved, that this strategic plan will assist the ACLU to further the fight of civil liberties violations wherever and whenever they occur. The ACLU is dedicated to fighting this fight so that the Bill of Rights will always be more than a “parchment barrier” against government oppression and the tyranny of the majority.

## *Appendix*

### **Implementation Guidelines**

Now that the strategic plan has been developed, the critical portion of the process will begin with the implementation phase. It is suggested that a Strategic Planning Oversight Committee (SPOC) be developed to oversee the development of the strategic plan. The SPOC can be a standing committee on the Board of Trustees or can be comprised completely separate from the Board. However, if the latter option is chosen, it is highly suggested that there be Board involvement and periodic communication with the Board. The SPOC will monitor the implementation phase and should appoint a champion for the Implementation Plan.

A timetable and structure for development of the Implementation Plan needs to be designed by the SPOC. The SPOC will prioritize which goals and strategies are to be advanced within the timeline of the Strategic Plan, which was designated to be five years. The critical strategies would be addressed immediately while other less pressing goals can be developed later within the timeline. To address these strategies, action plans need to be developed so that they can be carried out rather promptly. One person from the SPOC should be assigned as the lead person responsible for each action step within the action plan. The SPOC should meet regularly to ensure that the action plans are being implemented. While the SPOC has the responsibility for oversight and management of the Implementation Plan, others will be involved in this phase.

A critical portion of implementation lies within the efforts of those individual employees or volunteers who will be responsible for carrying out the action plans. These individuals should be given the opportunity to determine how their own work can be changed to support implementation efforts. Also, it is important to involve these individuals in the priority setting stage with the SPOC. Another suggestion is to tie individual performance goals to the Implementation Plan. This provides a concrete measure for the individual in achieving the goals set forth in the Strategic and Implementation Plans. In addition, it is important to provide channels for input and to receive feedback from staff at all levels regarding the implementation as the process unfolds. Communication is very important and the use of open forums and informational sessions on a periodic basis can be helpful to keep all parties abreast of the progress taking place.

In conclusion, the implementation process is the key phase in strategic planning process. An oversight committee should be developed to determine how to proceed in addressing the goals and strategies set forth in the Strategic Plan. Once determined, action plans need to be developed for each individual goal. One person from the SPOC should be assigned as the lead person responsible for carrying out the action steps in an action plan. It is not intended that this person have the sole responsibility for carrying out each action plan. Each action plan can have a separate person responsible for oversight, and should correlate to that individual's strengths, knowledge and abilities of that particular area. Staff and volunteer involvement and communication with them is an aspect that cannot be emphasized enough. Lastly, the cycle of strategic planning is continuous. The SPOC will need to reassess the goals and strategies of the Strategic Plan periodically within the five-year period to ensure that they are still applicable to the current environment in which the ACLU exists. It is suggested that the strategic planning process be executed every three to five years.