



**Association of Regional Center Agencies  
Strategic Plan  
Fiscal Years 2023/24-2025/26**

## **The Strategic Planning Process**

### ***The Intent and Objective: Why a Strategic Plan?***

Strategic planning determines where an organization is going, how it's going to get there, and how it'll know if it got there or not. The fundamental purpose of strategic planning is to align the mission and vision with appropriate strategies and initiatives. Without them, the plan exists in a vacuum. And organizations that develop plans without considering mission and vision usually fail in their execution. The value statements are also important to the strategic planning process, as they provide a touchstone for the organization for how business decisions are made, and what are acceptable strategies and tactics. Goals, strategies, and tasks are the cornerstone of every strategic plan. They are the roadmap for where the organization is going. They define what will be accomplished, by whom, and when. By having focused goals, strategies, and tasks — coupled with a strong accountability system — an organization's likelihood of success is enhanced.

### ***The Next Step: Conducting a Strategic Planning Process***

In 2012, ARCA began work on the strategic plan that guided its efforts during the 2013-14 through 2015-16 Fiscal Years, which was later revised to guide the organization's work during both the 2016-17 through 2018-19 Fiscal Years and the 2019-20 through 2022-23 Fiscal Years. ARCA convened a strategic planning retreat in October 2022 to begin work on its updated strategic plan, intended to guide its work in the coming three Fiscal Years. This document is the result of that concentrated discussion, as well as further consultation with ARCA's various discipline groups and committees.

Given the extensive review of the Vision, Mission, and Values of the organization that was undertaken in 2012, it was believed that they continue to be current and applicable. It was felt that it was essential all regional centers have an opportunity to participate in the strategic planning process. As such, each regional center Executive Director and Board Delegate was asked to jointly complete a survey regarding the current strengths, challenges, and priorities that should be considered as the strategic planning process unfolded.

## **Vision, Mission, Values**

### ***Vision***

The Association of Regional Center Agencies effectively represents a strong regional center system that supports Californians with developmental disabilities and the developmental services system.

### ***Mission***

The mission of the Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA) is to promote, support, and advance regional centers in achieving the intent and mandate of the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act in providing community-based services that enable individuals with developmental disabilities to achieve their full potential and highest level of self-sufficiency.

### ***Values***

The Association of Regional Center Agencies values:

- Respectful interactions with all stakeholders;
- Democratic decision-making among its members;
- Honesty and integrity in communicating with all stakeholders;
- Analysis of relevant information and crafting of policy;
- Assertive leadership and advocacy; and,
- Effective negotiation of agreements with DDS and partner organizations.

## **Funding for Current and Future Needs**

ARCA will pursue funding to enhance stability and supporting greater individual choice while achieving the intent and mandate of the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act.

*ARCA envisions sustainable funding that is adequate to meet mandates and allows California to keep its commitments to people with developmental disabilities through individually-chosen services and lifelong service coordination supported by manageable caseload ratios.*

### ***The developmental disabilities service system has seen...***

The State has made recent investments to reduce caseload ratios, particularly for targeted populations, and update service provider rates to connect them to the cost of service delivery, but neither reform is accompanied by a long-term commitment to keep funding levels updated. Steps are being taken to tie reimbursements to individual outcomes with priority being given to more robust data collection, choice, person-centered planning, and cultural competence. The lack of guaranteed funding leads to annual budgetary vulnerability. In the long-term, this uncertainty coupled with a lack of automatic adjustments in response to inflationary pressures has resulted in inadequate staffing and high turnover in both regional center and service provider workforces, which compromises quality outcomes for individuals.

### ***ARCA will work to implement change by:***

1. Advocating for rates that are based on the actual cost of service provision, adjust with time, and include considerations for wage compression, operational needs, staff recruitment/retention/training, geographic factors, and the cultivation of both new resources and a career ladder for existing and future employees, as sustainable rates are foundational to quality services.
2. Using data and anecdote to illustrate the need for, and benefits of, smaller caseloads while addressing the overall sufficiency of regional center Operations funding needed to allow centers to carry out the direct service of service coordination through meeting required caseload ratios and to providing appropriate related support, including resource development, quality assurance, risk mitigation, and clinical services.
3. Pursuing funding for the replacement of the regional center Uniform Fiscal System with an accounting system that supports current expectations and is better able to implement future changes in laws, regulations, and rate structures, while ensuring reliable payments to service providers.
4. Engaging, aligning, mobilizing, empowering, and educating community members, including individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members, to participate in the legislative process in support of the common goal of a sustainable funding structure.
5. Supporting and advocating for policies that enhance the availability and accessibility of a variety of publicly-funded programs (*e.g.*, Medi-Cal, IHSS, SSI) that people with developmental disabilities rely on to meet their ongoing needs.

## **Inclusive Communities**

ARCA will pursue reforms to support individuals with developmental disabilities to live in inclusive communities as envisioned in the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act.

*ARCA envisions natural communities that demonstrate awareness, acceptance, integration, participation, and respect for community members with developmental disabilities, in addition to a developmental services system that offers services and supports designed to honor individual abilities, needs, backgrounds, and choices.*

### ***The developmental disabilities service system has seen...***

California's community-based developmental services system was established to provide an alternative to institutional care. The state is now finalizing the transition of most of its developmental center residents to community settings, where the overwhelming majority of individuals with developmental disabilities live. Further, the demographics of the people served by the regional center system have been changing in tandem with the state's overall population, including increases in the racial and ethnic communities represented. Many Californians with developmental disabilities need additional services and supports to allow them to maximize their participation in the areas of community life, employment, and housing – a need increasingly matched by expectations of the federal government, individuals served, and their families. Additionally, while many community members are willing to better include people with developmental disabilities in everyday life, they may lack awareness of their needs or how to best contribute to solutions in this area. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of social connectedness for people served by regional centers, the instability of the job market for them, and the need for enhanced community clinical staff and first responder training.

### ***ARCA will work to implement change by:***

1. Advancing opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to pursue, and be supported in, integrated employment options that are consistent with their individual interests, goals, and support needs.
2. Pursuing funding for affordable housing through state and federal sources and supporting regional centers to do so at the local level, as access to this critical resource is central to supporting individuals with developmental disabilities choosing independent community living.
3. Partnering with state agencies and community service providers to ensure services offered through regional centers are provided in settings that meet the integration expectation of the Home and Community-Based Services Final Rule ahead of the March 2022 implementation deadline, and meaningfully support full community participation and membership.
4. Honoring the diverse cultures of people with developmental disabilities and their families by ensuring access to valued services and supports that are enhanced by new and ongoing community partnerships and informed by meaningful data, as well as shared information and lessons learned from regional centers' experiences.
5. Increasing general community awareness, understanding, acceptance, and recognition of the contributions and needs of community members with developmental disabilities.

## **Flexible and Sustainable Service Models**

ARCA will pursue reforms to enhance resources to meet individual needs as envisioned in the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act.

*ARCA envisions a developmental services system that is empowered to meet the varied, complex, and dynamic needs of people with developmental disabilities in flexible and innovative ways in order to support them in achieving individualized goals, regardless of whether they are served traditionally or in the Self-Determination Program.*

### ***The developmental disabilities service system has seen...***

A foundational tenet of California's developmental services system is that services and supports should be uniquely tailored to enable each person served to meet his or her individualized goals, which requires the maintenance and expansion of flexible service models. In response to state fiscal challenges over the last two decades, the system has seen fiscal constraints and limitations on flexibility in the services it can offer to meet identified needs. At the same time, regional centers are increasingly striving to support people with greater medical, behavioral, and psychiatric support needs in community settings. As the state's Self-Determination Program launches, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families can access more flexible services, which provides an opportunity to explore creative person-centered service models that can enhance the traditional service system as well. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the benefit of flexible service options for individuals served by regional centers and their families, particularly when individual rate decisions can be made quickly at the local level.

### ***ARCA will work to Implement Change by:***

1. Maximizing opportunities for strategic resource development to meet community service needs through available funding for Community Resource Development Plans.
2. Supporting regional centers to enhance their capacity for safety net services by collaborating with DDS to improve data collection related to complex needs, researching national best and promising practices in this area, and gauging the effectiveness of policy responses.
3. Pursuing freedom and flexibility for regional centers to support individuals with innovative and creative service models that are based on individual need, economically feasible, sustainable, and scalable.
4. Working to restore regional centers' ability to purchase services that were suspended by the Legislature in 2009, including social recreation and camp services, as these services are low-cost investments that yield high-value outcomes for people with developmental disabilities and their families.
5. Stressing the value of person-centered thinking and planning as critical tools to improve individual lives, meet federal requirements, promote flexible service delivery, and highlight the importance of long-term service coordination support at reasonable caseload ratios.
6. Supporting regional centers as they launch the Self-Determination Program through the collection and dissemination of systemwide information about initial experiences, shaping of recommendations as the program prepares for expansion, and analyzing promising practices and services that present opportunities for improving the traditional service delivery system.

## **Operational Focus Area: Regional Center System Efficacy**

ARCA will pursue an effective, efficient organization that promotes the goals and objectives of the ARCA Board of Directors and encourages and supports regional center efforts in California.

*ARCA envisions an effective, efficient organization that promotes the goals and objectives of the Board of Directors, and encourages and supports regional center efforts in California.*

### ***ARCA will work to implement change by...***

- Fostering relationships with state-level partners and stakeholders, including DDS, Legislature, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration, and others.
- Representing ARCA, the regional centers, and the developmental disabilities service system in legislative and Budget hearings, promoting the developmental disabilities service system at Grassroots Day and other venues, and by being responsive to requests for information, testimony, and formal and informal meetings with state representatives, including members of the Legislature, DDS, and others.
- Promoting education and information sharing within the ARCA office, with the Board of Directors, its Committees and sub-Committees, task forces, key stakeholders, and our community.
- Providing relevant and vital information to its internal and external partners in a respectful, clear, and concise manner.
- Maximizing the effectiveness and efficiency of both the ARCA staff and consultants, and facilitation of the Board of Directors through Professional and Organizational Development efforts.
- Maintaining fiscal responsibility to its regional center members with an unqualified independent audit with no material findings, and operating within budget.

## **Implementation and Accountability**

The Strategic Plan establishes a prioritization of activities for the next three years. Annual budget and work plan development in each fiscal year should be organized around the focus areas of the Strategic Plan.

Annual focus areas will be developed at the beginning of each fiscal year.

Periodic reporting on progress will ensure there is ongoing awareness of, and engagement with, the plan.