



**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. The plan 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. Most recently, 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 agreed 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 link them to the actual 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, particularly in the areas of choice of service providers and lifelong person-centered planning.

ARCA will work to implement change by:

1. Directly advocating for rates that are based on the actual cost of service provision and automatically adjust with time and fiscal incentives for quality outcomes, leveraging ARCA's resources to calculate fiscal impacts, connecting advocates to legislative champions and decisionmakers in the Administration, and demonstrating the importance of this due to its impact on individuals served and their families as they seek greater person-centered choice and community participation.
2. Leading efforts to modernize and automatically update regional centers' Core Staffing Formula through a legislative and public relations campaign that includes rich data, cultivation of legislative champions, and advocacy coalition building with active participation from people served, their families, and local and statewide service provider organizations to highlight the importance of supporting robust service coordination.
3. Exploring and pursuing, with the support of stakeholders and governmental champions, reliable funding sources for the developmental services system outside the state's General Fund, beginning with an in-depth analysis of the funding streams for education and behavioral health systems.
4. Preparing for stability in the face of economic downturns and developing proactive contingency proposals centered on the preservation of critical services and supports.
5. Advocating for state investments in technology to support the efficiency and effectiveness of regional center and service provider staff and the collection of robust, actionable data.

Flexible and Sustainable Services

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 efficiently offers a greater variety of services and enhanced choice to people with developmental disabilities in order to empower them to meet their individualized person-centered goals.

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 expansion of flexible service models as the people served become increasingly diverse racially, ethnically, and linguistically, as well as in their needs and preferences. Since the Great Recession, the system has seen fiscal constraints (e.g., median rates, family fees) and limitations on flexibility in the services it can offer to meet identified needs. Individuals with developmental disabilities and their families are increasingly expressing a desire to access more flexible, innovative, individualized services. The pandemic demonstrated the benefit of flexible (e.g., daily schedule, service location, preferred support staff) service options and control for those served by regional centers and their families, particularly as a tool for increasing service equity and satisfaction.

ARCA will work to implement change by:

1. Building momentum for needed statutory and regulatory changes, including through public relations efforts, to enhance service flexibility informed by ideas provided by individuals served and their families through focus groups, surveys, and other means.
2. Promoting the value and importance of regional center flexibility to operationalize DDS directives and statutory and regulatory changes, with input from their local communities.
3. Embedding the philosophy of person-centeredness in formal decision-making processes and community communications and advocating for dedicated funding for person-centered education and training for regional centers and the broader community to empower and support individualized planning and resource matching.
4. Enhancing system sustainability through the promotion of more efficient coordination of regional center and generic services (e.g., IHSS, Medi-Cal).
5. Collaborating with DDS and system stakeholders to inform the effective operationalization of new initiatives and continuous improvement of previously-launched projects with an eye towards efficiency and quality outcomes.

Promotion of the Lanterman Act and Efficacy of the Developmental Services System

ARCA will pursue greater stakeholder and decision-maker understanding and support for the structure of California's developmental services system as outlined in the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act and Early Intervention Services Act.

ARCA envisions a developmental services system that visibly and effectively supports people with developmental disabilities through regional centers, which maintain their independence, are accountable to, representative of, and embedded in their communities, and earn the support of those served, legislators, and stakeholders.

The developmental disabilities service system has seen...

Regional centers were intentionally designed to meet the needs of their communities by making them responsive to both their state funding source and, through volunteer boards of directors, local communities. Uniform statutes, regulations, and contracts establish a consistent framework for services across regional center catchment areas. Rapid growth in both population served and state fiscal investment have led to increased, coordinated, and more-visible scrutiny of individual regional centers and the whole service system, as well as questions about the balance between statewide consistency and local flexibility. With the support of various advocacy groups, the Legislature and Administration have increasingly constrained local control in recent years. Since its inception, the developmental services system has enjoyed bipartisan legislative support, but given legislative turnover, it lacks consistent legislative champions.

ARCA will work to implement change by:

1. Educating legislators and staff about the regional center system and the value of its independence through a coordinated media strategy that will include clear, customizable materials, multilingual outreach, and refined talking points augmented by Grassroots Day and ongoing networking.
2. Improving collaboration with stakeholders and decision-makers to champion preservation of the regional center system through regular engagement and educational opportunities, including for those without ready digital access.
3. Enhancing ARCA's role as a recognized authority for quality information and perspectives on the developmental services system through reporting on strengths and challenges, and highlighting the strategies regional centers use to meet the needs of their communities.
4. Developing meaningful metrics supported by clean, actionable information that demonstrate regional center effectiveness through the establishment of standard and consistent definitions, data collection on service effectiveness and meaningful outcomes, and periodic evaluation with an eye towards continuous improvement.
5. Supporting greater consistency in performance across all 21 regional centers through the sharing of quality data, the establishment of a peer review and support structure, creation of a cross-regional center intervention and escalation strategy, and formalization of a mentorship process for incoming regional center Executive Directors.

Inclusive and Equitable Communities and Decision-Making

ARCA will pursue reforms to support greater visible and authentic participation of those served by regional centers in all of California's geographic, ethnic, and linguistic communities.

ARCA envisions a developmental services system led by the people it serves that supports their meaningful integration, better aligns with their wants, needs, and aspirations, and enhances their quality of life as measured by data and their satisfaction.

The developmental disabilities service system has seen...

While its origins were in a professional-led medical model, the developmental services system continues to evolve to improve its person-centeredness and its systemic and individually-defined outcomes. Building on an understanding that people are the experts in their own lives, federal guidance now requires the balancing of what is important for the individual with what is important to them. Increasingly, communities are moving from acceptance to integration to inclusion of individuals with disabilities, but there is still a lack of broad understanding of the value their participation brings to community life. Increasingly, there is greater understanding of the importance of hearing from people served directly when possible and following their lead in the development of policy and practices, although much work remains to be done in this area to ensure its more consistent application. Much of the future work in this area can be supported through partnerships with community-based organizations to leverage available funding sources (e.g., Service Access and Equity, Community Grants, Placement Plan/Community Development Plan).

ARCA will work to implement change by:

1. Identifying, supporting, and advancing people served to participate in statewide and local committees, commissions, and initiatives, including those internal to ARCA, through highlighting their strengths, contributions, and expertise.
2. Developing two-way communication and education strategies with racially, ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse communities to support advocacy for improving information and services available to local communities.
3. Increasing the recognition by the general public and other agencies of the presence and contributions of people served by regional centers through public relations (e.g., employer success stories) and networking efforts.
4. Supporting the work of regional centers and their partners to increase inclusion in community life (e.g., employment and targeted affordable housing opportunities) among individuals with developmental disabilities through better outreach tools and advocacy for needed service capacity.
5. Enhancing the capacity of regional centers to develop more culturally sensitive and responsive services and supports through the building of provider capacity that reflects the diversity of various cultural and ethnic communities.
6. Advocating for the flexible development of a greater array of services and supports to meet the needs of people requiring differing levels of support intensity and seeking funding to address identified shortfalls in this area.

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.

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ARCA will work to implement change by:

1. Fostering relationships with state-level partners and stakeholders, including DDS, the Legislature, the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration, and others.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Providing relevant and vital information to internal and external partners in a respectful, clear, and concise manner.
5. Maintaining fiscal responsibility to its regional center members with an unqualified independent audit with no material findings, and operating within budget.
6. Facilitate sharing of information and best practices (*e.g.*, board member recruitment, board member leadership development) between regional center board members throughout the state and provide requested training opportunities to them on relevant topics.

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.