Executive Director
Legal Services of Eastern Missouri
St. Louis, Missouri

Celebrating Seventy Years of Providing Free Civil Legal Help for Low-Income Families.

SEARCH SUMMARY

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Inc. ("LSEM"), one of the nation's most comprehensive and successful civil legal services providers for low-income people and communities, is seeking an Executive Director. Reporting to a 27-member, community-based Board of Directors, the Executive Director will lead, manage, and inspire a staff of approximately 120 deeply committed attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and other professionals, in 5 offices serving 21 counties in eastern Missouri. The Executive Director will engage in strategic planning, program development and oversight, the development and implementation of an annual budget of approximately $18 million, and fundraising. As the external face of the organization, the Executive Director represents LSEM across its service area in Missouri, as well as among legal service providers and equal justice advocates across the US.

LSEM is a strongly rooted, financially stable, highly valued, legal services provider with an extraordinarily talented staff. With the retirement of its long-time Executive Director, this leadership transition is viewed optimistically as an opportunity to make some important changes in focus and operations. LSEM's mission has expanded and its programs require enhanced alignment and cohesion. Management reform is a top priority, and the next Executive Director will be expected to provide wise and experienced leadership to implement beneficial action in the near term. The future for LSEM is compelling, both in terms of achieving its mission in Eastern Missouri, as well as in providing leadership for the access-to-justice movement nationally.

The next Executive Director of LSEM should be a lawyer with significant, successful management experience, that can be applied to address the challenges facing the organization, which include: improving communications; developing a renewed, relevant strategic plan with clear programmatic priorities; reforming the organizational structure and improving management systems and procedures to best implement the strategic plan; enlarging and diversifying funding streams for LSEM; applying technology to advance the cause of access-to-justice; and expanding

and leveraging the engagement with community allies to alleviate poverty, combat social injustice, and resist the reversal of diversity, equity and inclusion policies and practices.

The Board of Directors has appointed a 10-member Search Committee and engaged the national executive search firm of Isaacson, Miller to assist in recruiting superior candidates for this role. For serious consideration, candidates should bring experience in the practice of law, a track record of successful management in a large, complex organization, a demonstrated commitment to public service, and many of the desired qualifications set forth in a later section of this Position Profile. Applications, nominations and inquiries should be submitted as described below.

ABOUT LSEM

Legal Services of Eastern Mssouri advances justice through legal representation, education, and supportive services. LSEM partners with the community to improve lives, promote fairness, and create opportunities for those in need.

The first organized response to the civil legal needs of indigent residents of St. Louis occurred in 1935 when the city and the Bar Association of St. Louis established a volunteer legal aid bureau. The bureau became The Legal Aid Society for the City and County of St. Louis, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1956. The national Legal Services Corporation was created in 1974 to take over the function of providing funding to local legal services programs. In 1977, the name was changed to Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, and in 1993, LSEM merged with Legal Services of Northeast Missouri in Hannibal, expanding its service area to 21 counties. In 2001, a Union office was opened to serve residents in Franklin, Warren, Lincoln and Washington counties.

Programs

LSEM clients must meet financial eligibility based on household incomes or meet other qualifications for consultation or representation. LSEM's goal is to remove the legal barriers to help low-income families overcome poverty and violence, maintain or obtain independence, and to achieve self-sufficiency. In general, LSEM services include: (i) representation in courts and administrative hearings; (ii) providing legal advice or referral information; (iii) assisting with community-based economic development; (iv) giving legal education through community workshops and other materials; and (v) offering professional training for attorneys, volunteers and others.

Advocates for Family Health Program - Helps pregnant women and families with children with Medicaid managed care.

Advocates for Older Adults Program - Represents clients 60 years or older.

Childrens Legal Alliance Program - Provides advocacy for children with special education needs and homeless children.

Community Economic Development Program - Provides legal assistance and education for low-income entrepreneurs and community nonprofits.

Connecting Kids to Coverage - Helps uninsured children, families and adults enroll in health insurance plans.

Consumer Law Program - Represents clients with creditor/debtor problems and victims of deceptive or predatory lending.

Health & Education Justice Initiative - Provides information about students' rights and advocates for students facing unfair discipline.

Housing Law Program – Provides assistance with landlord/tenant issues, foreclosure and other housing problems.

Immigration Law Program - Assists immigrants with residency and citizenship and also serves victims of human trafficking.

Lasting Solutions Family Law Program - Helps survivors of domestic violence and their families achieve safety and stability.

Legal Advocacy for Adults with Mental Illness - Assists adults with serious mental illness in a variety of legal matters.

Marketplace Assistance Program - Helps families access health insurance.

Neighborhood Advocacy - Helps local residents and community organizations with vacant, abandoned and blighted housing in the City of St. Louis.

Public Benefits Program - Helps with applications and appeals for public benefit programs, including Medicaid, TANF, Food Stamps, Social Security and Medicare.

Youth and Family Advocacy Program - Provides legal assistance to homeless and at-risk youth and families in St. Louis County, connecting them to vital resources.

Impact

In 2024 LSEM provided services to 37,896 individuals, secured $20.5 million in monetary benefits for its clients, and achieved a 97% success rate on full case work. Over 90% of LSEM's clients live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. LSEM's clients were mostly women (76%), children (49%) and BIPOC- identified individuals (62%). The prominent issue-areas handled by LSEM are family law (25%), housing (23%) and healthcare (20%), followed by consumer matters, community economic development, public benefits, and individual rights. Legal services also has a long history of significant impact litigation to benefit its clients and client communities to preserve access to health care, education and affordable housing.

Funding and Financing

Nearly half (48%) of LSEM revenues in 2024 were sourced from government grants, including the Legal Services Corporation, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the State of Missouri, and the City and County of St. Louis. Other large grant sources include the Missouri IOLTA Program, Missouri Foundation for Health, the Missouri Bar, and United Way of Greater St. Louis.

ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director of LSEM is the chief executive of the organization and reports directly to the Board of Directors. The Executive Director will be a mission-driven leader with proven success in implementing strategic priorities to meet the needs of an in-demand and growing legal aid organization. The Executive Director will be responsible for overseeing the programmatic growth of LSEM, through visionary leadership and people management, strong communication skills, a deep understanding of the legal aid funding environment, and a comprehensive knowledge of the legal practice areas of LSEM. Externally, the Executive Director will represent the organization with existing partners across the state and region, steward fundraising opportunities and the management of $18 million per year in state, federal, city, and foundation grants, and strengthen relationships with the communities that LSEM serves.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As described above and at its web site https://lsem.org/, LSEM is a well-established and financially stable organization that is delivering on its mission to provide legal assistance to low-income individuals in eastern Missouri. With the advent of a new leader, opportunities emerge, along with some challenges, that need to be addressed by the next Executive Director. In selecting the next Executive Director the Board will assess how prepared candidates are, based on experience, training, skills, aptitude and values, to move these priorities forward and achieve salutary solutions.

- ***Develop a Strategic Plan and Re-set Programmatic Priorities***. The Executive Director will lead and inspire a process involving the board, staff and other stakeholders in assessing the organization's distinctive strengths, determining its core programmatic and operational priorities and direction, and aligning its many disparate initiatives and programs to achieve specific strategic objectives. Implementing the strategic plan and motivating all stakeholders in that effort is a key component of the Executive Director's responsibility.
- ***Reform Organizational Structure and Improve Management.*** The Executive Director will be responsible for examining the current structure and operational components of LSEM with the purpose of changing – where necessary - the ways and means the organization operates and should operate to achieve the strategic priorities that best advance its mission. This reformation would include: eliminating duplication, "silos," and

inefficiencies in order to maximize impact; evaluating, adjusting, and harmonizing the roles of legal, social service, administrative, and other staff components to best serve individual and community clients; negotiating and implementing a fair collective bargaining agreement with LSEM's unionized employees; improving staff morale and consciously instituting a management structure that emphasizes communications and accountability.

- ***Improve Communications***. The Executive Director will work to enhance communications, both internally and externally, to achieve transparency, inclusion, and synergy among all stakeholders.
- ***Fundraise and Ensure Excellence in Budget Management.*** As with any nonprofit organization, fundraising is a critical function and responsibility of the Executive Director. Experience in developing financial resources is important, but equally, if not more significant, is the Executive Director's aptitude and appetite for raising money and building positive relationships, which is core to an institution's advancement.
- ***Expand and Leverage Engagement.*** Recognizing that the causes and consequences of poverty and injustice are systemic and require human and financial resources beyond those held by LSEM, the next Executive Director will expand and leverage engagement in addressing the issues that result in inequality and prevent people and communities from advancing to prosperity. These resources include using the connections and influence of LSEM's board, expanding LSEM's *pro bono* programs and connect with the larger bench and bar community in eastern Missouri, applying technology to streamline access to justice, seeking and securing partnerships with other social justice and social service nonprofit and government agencies, enlisting the business sector in understanding and addressing poverty, and raising public awareness to search for new and effective solutions. LSEM's Executive Director should be a catalyst seeking collaborators in all sectors to join in creating a community in which every person has an equal opportunity to advance and secure a good quality of life.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The LSEM Board of Directors is seeking a deep and diverse pool of exceptional candidates for this leadership role. For serious consideration, candidates are **required** to have:

- A JD degree from an ABA-accredited law school (or its equivalent) and admission to practice law in at least one state or federal jurisdiction;
- Significant experience in the practice of law in the US;
- Leadership and management experience in the private, nonprofit, or government sectors within organizations comparable in size and complexity to LSEM; and
- A demonstrated commitment to public service.

In addition, while no one person will embody all of the **desired and preferred** characteristics, the successful candidate will offer many of the following qualifications and attributes:

- A track record of providing highly effective strategic leadership that connects vision and resources to implementation of programmatic priorities, and drives measurable outcomes;
- Experience managing or working in an organization with geographically dispersed teams and offices; and managing a unionized staff or administering an organization with distributed leadership;
- Experience in hiring, managing, and mentoring a diverse staff, and motivating, developing, and retaining high-performing staff members and teams;
- Strong financial acumen and the ability to administer an annual budget of $18 million and a net asset base of over $50 million;
- An understanding of the funding landscape for legal aid, including the protocols of the Legal Services Corporation, and oversight of grant-writing, cultivating, and sustaining individual donors, and philanthropic partnerships;
- Experience working effectively with and cultivating a Board of Directors or comparable governing authority;
- Highly effective communication skills, including the ability to build strong relationships, collaborations, and partnerships across a broad range of constituencies;
- An approachable, collaborative, and accessible leadership style with a high degree of emotional intelligence and personal integrity;
- An understanding of, and commitment to, an orientation towards access to justice and civil legal services that is systemic and holistic;
- A demonstrated ability to work with complicated legal issues and explain them to a wide range of audiences;
- Experience working with and understanding the effects of poverty, trauma, and systemic discrimination on impacted persons and community level change;
- A personal commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging;
- Ability to travel;
- An enthusiasm for the importance of legal aid and access-to-justice issues.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The anticipated salary range for this position is $175,000 - $225,000 annually and will be determined commensurate with relevant experience and strength of qualifications. The position comes with excellent benefits.

The main offices of LSEM are located in downtown St. Louis with satellite offices in Union and Hannibal, MO.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Application reviews will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. For timely and comprehensive consideration, applicant materials should be received no later than November 20, 2026. Inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications consisting of resumes and letters of interest to the Search Committee (Attention: Ryan Turnage, Esq., Chair), responding to the challenges and opportunities outlined above, should be sent electronically and in confidence to the following individuals through the link below:

Tim McFeeley, Partner
Alycia Johnson, Managing Associate
https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/legal-services-eastern-missouri/executive-director

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri is an Equal Opportunity Employer and welcomes applicants from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by Legal Services of Eastern Missouri. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by Legal Services of Eastern Missour would supersede any conflicting information in this document.