

# Ayuda Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025



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## Mission

Ayuda advocates for low-income immigrants through direct legal, social and language services, training, and outreach in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia.

## Vision

We envision a community where all immigrants thrive in the United States.

## Core Values

**Excellence:** Ayuda believes that all people deserve excellent legal, social and language access services, particularly immigrant communities who often face barriers. We strive to provide the highest quality services.

- We value passion, innovation and determination.
- We hire and train experts in our fields.
- Our staff are committed to continuous professional and personal growth.

**Integrity:** Ayuda strives to exemplify honesty, transparency, and the highest ethical standards in everything we do.

- We honor the trust that our clients and our supporters put in us and our work and treat it with the utmost respect and care.
- We are accountable to our staff, donors, partners, and the community we serve.
- We accept responsibility and work to rectify issues when they arise, because trust is built in the proper handling of both our successes and our failures.

**Collaboration:** Ayuda believes in the power of collaboration, where immigrant communities and service providers work hand in hand together to tackle hard problems. We strive to be an active partner with immigrant communities and fellow service providers.

- We recognize that our work is one part of a system larger than Ayuda, and that our clients benefit most when we respect each other's strengths. We work to deepen trust and collaboration.
- We demonstrate trust and mutual support across our teams, and we work together to provide holistic services to our clients.

**Inclusion:** Ayuda seeks to build and maintain an inclusive community of clients, staff and partners where all are safe, respected and valued. We believe that a diversity of experiences, opinions and backgrounds is integral to achieving our mission and vision.

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- We celebrate diversity and seek to leverage the passion, energy and ideas of a culturally diverse team. We are thankful for the ways we get to learn from one another.
- We all share in the responsibility to create a positive culture and to promote equity, inclusion and respect.
- We celebrate immigrant lives and the rich diversity they bring to our country & community.

**Client-Centeredness:** Ayuda respects the unique needs, challenges and realities of our clients' lives. In all matters, we strive to center the needs of our clients.

- We recognize clients as the ultimate decision makers for their own lives
- We use our platform to elevate the voices of immigrants in the local dialogue to broaden perspectives of the wider community and inform local policy.
- We value the insights of our clients' lived experience and invite their input to guide our decisions and our work.

**Wellbeing:** Ayuda recognizes the value and dignity of every person, and that the wellbeing of our staff is essential to the success of our work. We strive to be an organization where people thrive.

- We know the work we do is hard. We show compassion and support for each other as we do our work in a healthy and sustainable way.
- We show respect for one another's boundaries and wellness needs.
- We take a holistic approach to our services that values our clients as whole people.

### **Priority #1: Increase program capacity**

In recent years, demand for Ayuda's services has increasingly outstripped our capacity and the capacity of our partner agencies. Oftentimes low-income immigrants who cannot access services from Ayuda and our partners are unable to receive the support that they need. For this reason, we hope to increase our capacity to serve more clients while ensuring that we continue to provide excellent services.

#### **Objective 1A – Invest in our legal program to better fill critical service gaps in immigrant communities while achieving sustainable caseloads for staff**

Ayuda will invest in additional legal staff in order to improve the services we are offering current clients and improve the efficiency of our services while achieving sustainable caseloads. Once we have reached sustainable caseloads, we will focus on increasing our legal team staffing to expand our capacity to provide excellent legal representation to individuals we are currently

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unable to serve due to capacity constraints. In addition, expanding our staff and capacity will better equip us to both respond to negative changes in immigration law to defend our clients and embrace opportunities presented by positive changes in immigration law to apply for the best forms of relief available to our clients and client communities.

### **Objective 1B – Increase staff capacity to provide case management, therapy and emergency client assistance**

The need for Ayuda’s social services, including mental health services, case management and emergency client assistance such as food, diapers and housing has increased. We are seeing higher demand than what our capacity allows for and would like to grow our capacity to better meet the need.

### **Objective 1C – Expand language access to Virginia and continue to maintain or increase capacity in Maryland and DC**

Ayuda will work to expand the reach of our Community Legal Interpreter Bank and Victim Services Interpreter Bank into Virginia and enhance our ability to meet the demands of those Banks in Maryland and DC.

## **Priority #2: Strengthen our Foundation**

Ayuda needs to make specific investments in our infrastructure in order to support our staffing and programs, especially as we look to growing our programs over the course of this plan. Strengthening our foundation will help ensure the sustainability of our services.

### **Objective 2A – Expand centralized grant management and finance support**

To increase the efficiency and capacity of Ayuda’s direct services for the community, Ayuda will increase centralization of grant seeking, grant management, data management, finance, and administrative functions.

### **Objective 2B – Strengthen future growth and succession planning**

Ayuda will work to strengthen documentation of process and procedures, and to better prepare for eventual successors to its leadership positions.

### **Objective 2C – Utilize technology to better support organization efficiency and function**

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Ayuda will invest in technology to assist staff in carrying out its mission, including technology in support of programs, finance, operations, development and grants. Additionally, Ayuda will work to provide increased training for staff to better utilize its technology and aim to find improved ongoing technology support for its systems.

### **Objective 2D: Enhance and diversify Ayuda's revenue**

Ayuda's fundraising, revenue generation, and revenue management practices are critical to the health of the organization. The majority of Ayuda's funding currently comes from restricted grants which do not allow Ayuda the freedom to provide the depth and level of services that we would wish to. Ayuda seeks to increase unrestricted or minimally restricted support from community members, corporations, and foundations. We will do this by working to expand online fundraising, major donor support, law firm partnerships, Board fundraising, staff, and volunteer networks.

### **Priority #3: Deepen inclusion**

Ayuda seeks to expand its community of clients, staff and partners. We will continue to prioritize individual and organizational growth and practices that increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace as well as amongst our client communities.

### **Objective 3A – Increase representation of diverse immigrant voices in Ayuda's decision-making processes**

Ayuda will work to establish a Community Advisory Council to partner with former clients and other community members from diverse immigrant backgrounds and language groups to advise and help guide the organization. We will also create additional opportunities for Ayuda's clients to provide voluntary feedback on services provided.

### **Objective 3B - Build capacity to enhance culturally specific services to Ayuda clients who speak languages other than Spanish**

The majority of community members seeking services at Ayuda have historically come from Latin American communities. However, beyond the Spanish-speaking community, we are seeing increasing unmet need in the communities we serve for culturally and linguistically specific legal services for immigrants who speak a wide variety of languages, particularly Amharic but also including French, Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Farsi, Tigrinya, Urdu, and Tagalog and Central

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American and Mexican indigenous languages. Ayuda will work to meet this need through adding culturally and linguistically specific capacity to our legal services teams and working in collaboration with our language access program in order to ensure full access to Ayuda's legal services for speakers of all languages.

### **Objective 3C – Increase effective services for LGBTQ+ clients**

Ayuda works closely with many LGBTQ+ clients, and we recognize the need for more culturally specific services in this area. We will work to increase staff education and skills and expand our capacity to provide (and promote) welcoming, supportive, culturally appropriate services to LGBTQ+ clients, especially LGBTQ+ youth.

### **Objective 3D – Help immigrant community members grow into leadership roles in Ayuda and organizations like ours**

Ayuda will work to support and encourage the growth of immigrant community members to prepare for and step into more leadership roles in organizations like Ayuda. Specifically, we will look to increase internships, educational and career opportunities for immigrant community members, as well as invest in leadership development and skills training for employees.

## **Priority #4: Increase advocacy, communication and collaboration**

### **Objective 4A – Increase service-provider partnerships**

Ayuda will strengthen partnerships and pro-actively seek new partnerships with other service providers and government services to help our community be a welcoming place for immigrants. Ayuda will assess systems and organizations that our clients interact with, and partner with these organizations and systems to increase their capacity to provide culturally and linguistically specific services for Ayuda's clients and other immigrant community members.

### **Objective 4B – Increase dedicated advocacy efforts**

Ayuda is a well-known and highly respected organization providing direct services to immigrants in DC, Maryland and Virginia. In recent years, Ayuda has been conducting increasing advocacy on the local, county, state, and national levels. Ayuda will continue advocacy actions such as providing comments on proposed regulations, advocating for language

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access funding in Virginia, advocating for increased funding for culturally specific services, and advocating for government funders to better streamline their grant policies and procedures.

Ayuda will leverage our expertise and unique voice in serving immigrant communities and crime victims by investing in dedicated advocacy efforts. Ayuda will develop a detailed advocacy plan to guide our advocacy efforts and invest in the resources to execute this plan.

### **Objective 4C – Amplify Ayuda’s voice as a trustworthy source of information**

Ayuda is an important source of information for supporters of immigrant rights, for low-income immigrants, for community members and for people looking to support immigrants. Ayuda plans to work to develop increasingly robust communications. We will also ensure that communications to immigrant communities are done through channels that are culturally and linguistically appropriate.

### **Objective 4D – Increase volunteer capacity**

Ayuda will expand opportunities for community members and supporters to partner with Ayuda, and to amplify our work by developing a more centralized volunteer and intern program.

Ayuda will also seek to increase pro bono involvement with Ayuda. Through Ayuda’s pro bono program, Ayuda has created increased access for immigrants to receive brief advice and legal referrals, as well as long-term representation. Most individuals seeking services at Ayuda’s clinics qualify for at least one form of immigration relief, and this aims to help those individuals access long-term representation more quickly. Expanding our legal staff will enable us to expand our mentorship abilities. We will also deepen our partnerships with private firms and support firms in increasing their internal capacity for immigration cases in the hopes of encouraging firms to commit to more immigration pro bono matters.