**Minnesota Justice Foundation**

**Strategic Plan Narrative**

Over the last quarter century, the Minnesota Justice Foundation has grown to be a critical

resource for thousands of Minnesotans struggling to find or afford legal services. MJF matches

the talents of law students from Minnesota's four law schools to the agencies and legal-service

organizations that bring those talents to bear upon the needs of low-income or otherwise

disadvantaged clients throughout the state. While MJF’s work is at times done in the

background, it is the reason why law schools, agencies, and legal-service organizations rely upon

the foundation as a partner in their work serving students and clients. MJF works to instill in law

students and lawyers an ethic to provide high-quality legal services to those who otherwise could

not protect their rights and obtain justice. MJF believes it is a privilege to be trained in the law;

from that privilege flows a duty to serve others.

In 2013, the Board of Directors prepared a new strategic plan to guide the foundation

through 2016. Board members assessed what the foundation does well, took an honest look at

what it can do better, and set three goals for the future. They are: to better promote MJF to the

public at large; to strengthen its partnerships with the Minnesota law schools it serves; and to

expand and leverage the skills of board members and staff.

**Promoting MJF.**

MJF has a story to tell and now aims to tell it more often. While lawyers, law schools,

and service agencies hold the foundation in high regard, it is not well known beyond the legal

community. Increasing MJF’s visibility in the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota will allow

MJF to further is mission of promoting pro bono and public interest service.

To this end, MJF will: gather information and secure consent from the clients, volunteers,

and lawyers who are the personal examples of the foundation’s success; cultivate contacts in the

media and develop a professional communications infrastructure; identify issues and events that

will be opportunities for MJF to tell its stories; and then offer its stories to the public. MJF also

will communicate directly with its audiences through its internal publications and public website.

And it will make itself better known to lawyers practicing in small firms, who may not be aware

of the foundation and its mission but who should join larger law firms as partners in MJF’s

future work.

**Strengthening law school partnerships.**

MJF volunteer placements and summer clerkships offer important legal experience to

students at Hamline University Law School, the University of Minnesota Law School, the

University of St. Thomas School of Law, and the William Mitchell College of Law. MJF is

integrated into the mission of each school, and each administration has committed crucial

support to the foundation. To further these connections, staff attorneys at each campus advise

students seeking volunteer placements and applying for the competitive clerkships, and student

chapters increase awareness of public-interest legal work within the student bodies. Increasing

MJF’s partnerships with the law schools, primarily through increased communication, will allow

MJF to reach out to more students, find additional opportunities for students to volunteer, and

strengthen the public service ethic.

To this end, MJF will report to the deans, advancement departments, and alumni

development on the service performed by students at each school. MJF will seek to better

connect with the faculty and inform new faculty of MJF’s work. And it will help student

chapters build continuity and share resources so their important work continues as individual

students earn their degrees and move into their careers.

**Expanding and leveraging MJF’s people.**

MJF relies on a volunteer Board of Directors, volunteer committees, and supporters to

fulfill its mission. Many of those lawyers were introduced to public-service legal work while

serving as MJF student volunteers. They and other alumni are the base of the expanded network

that supports MJF. Expanding the opportunities for MJF alumni and supporters within the

organization, developing staff, and drawing deeper from board members will allow MJF to

expand its reach and reach the goals set by this strategic plan.

To this end, MJF will cultivate its current board by bringing members into closer contact

with the students whose volunteer work directly furthers MJF’s mission. MJF will continue to

bring on diverse board members to expand its connections and encourage the representation of a

variety of attorneys on the Board of Directors. It will match board members’ interests and

experience to foundation needs. And, through new committees and advisory panels, it will

develop new placements for students and provide alumni opportunities to serve the foundation,

review its programs, and suggest new ways for it to fulfill its mission. Finally, MJF will identify

areas of training that will serve its professional staff and will support them through new funding,

working to ensure their personal growth continues during the time they contribute their efforts to

the foundation.

**Conclusion.**

The Board of Directors has set these goals to further MJF’s mission. They are designed

to increase the number of students, agencies, and organizations served by the foundation as it

approaches its thirtieth anniversary. The goals take better advantage of MJF’s strengths and

create new opportunities to fulfill its mission: to strive for justice by creating opportunities for

law students to perform public interest and pro bono legal services