



**ISAC STRATEGIC PLAN  
2022 - 2025**

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## INTRODUCTION



The Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) is a specialty clinic within the community legal clinic system of Ontario that was created in 2001 in response to welfare reform over the late 1990s.

Key areas of focus over the years have included systemic litigation, policy reform & advocacy, public legal education and partnerships. Recently, ISAC has undergone a renewal of its focus and approach. This strategic plan covers the highlights of their future plans.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

As part of its renewal efforts, ISAC undertook a review of its recent achievements, a series of stakeholder interviews, staff discussions, and a high-level review of their operating environment or SWOT analysis.

ISAC along with other legal aid clinics, works in an extremely dynamic socio-economic and political environment. The recent pandemic has only served to enhance this situation. Low-income people are struggling more than ever to meet their needs and understand their rights and benefits. Governments are making sweeping policy changes, sometimes in response to the pandemic issues and sometimes as a policy tactic while people are distracted and fraught over the impact of COVID.

The SWOT Analysis suggests that among its Strengths, ISAC has a solid and committed board, strong skill sets among its staff, a good track record on test cases and sound partnerships within the clinic system. Limitations that ISAC needs to focus more attention on moving forward include enhanced teamwork among staff and creative use of resources. When it comes to Opportunities, ISAC can take advantage of the emerging consensus on the racialization of poverty through the ever-increasing utilization of social media across much of the population. The Challenges ISAC faces include meeting raised expectations both on the part of the funder and clients represented by the clinic system. Details of the SWOT are provided in **Appendix A**.

## OUR VISION

A province where everyone flourishes on a livable income.

## OUR MISSION

To advance the systemic interests and rights of low-income and equity-seeking communities and meaningfully support Indigenous Peoples and communities, with a focus on improving income security programs and ending low-wage precarious employment.

## OUR MANDATE

We work towards achieving our Vision and Mission through:

- Litigation;
- Law and policy reform;
- Community organizing;

- Community outreach, public legal education, and capacity-building; and
- Partnership with clinics.

## OUR VALUES

As we carry out our mission and strive to realize our vision, we will always stay true to our core values:

**INCLUSION:** Committing to an equity lens and anti-oppression/anti-racist framework in everything we do.

**RESPECT:** Treating clients and colleagues with due regard for their circumstances, rights, and traditions; acting and supporting others in a fair and consistent manner.

**INTEGRITY:** Always adhering to the highest ethical standards in everything we do, while maintaining confidentiality of sensitive information at all times.

**COLLABORATION:** Maintaining open communications and working cooperatively within ISAC, clinic system partners, and with other community stakeholders in the achievement of our mission.

**EMPATHY:** Openly listening and responding to the perspectives of others, especially those with lived experience.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & OBJECTIVES

To achieve our Vision and carry out our Mission we will focus on the following Strategic Priorities and supporting Key Strategic Objectives:

Strategic Priority	Key Strategic Objectives
1. Build and maintain a sustainable legal clinic recognized for operational excellence and exceptional support to stakeholders.	1.1 Strengthen internal processes, protocols and policies with a focus on risk management.
	1.2 Build staff capacity and expertise.
	1.3 Develop a client-centered, anti-racist, anti-oppressive approach to service delivery.
	1.4 Establish the use of monitoring and evaluation tools to measure and track progress.

Strategic Priority	Key Strategic Objectives
2. Improve access to income security.	2.1 Respond to legislative changes and the evolving legal and advocacy needs of community legal clinics and communities with respect to income security.
	2.2 Prioritize advocacy for equity-seeking groups who are under-served or under-represented in accessing income support, decent work, and access to justice.
	2.3 Explore and advocate for alternate income security measures such as, but not limited to, basic income where appropriate.

Strategic Priority	Key Strategic Objectives
3. Increase ISAC's presence throughout the province to raise awareness and actively engage community and Indigenous groups in our work.	3.1 Develop a communications strategy and plan, employing various media, to promote ISAC's work and message.

## OPERATIONAL ACTION PLANS & PROGRAMS

The following action plans and programs will form the basis of each year's Operational Plan and will act as the foundation of the Executive Director's regular progress reports to the Board.

**Strategic Priority #1:** Build and maintain a sustainable legal clinic recognized for operational excellence and exceptional support to stakeholders.

**Strategic Objective 1.1:** Strengthen internal processes, protocols and policies, with a focus on risk management.

Processes, Protocols, & Policies	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate existing internal processes, protocols, and policies by determining what more is needed</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gaps identified &amp; recommendations approved by Board where appropriate</li> <li>Completed on time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop needed protocols, processes and policies</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review process &amp; new protocols etc. completed on time and any needed approvals received</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement by communicating to staff and storing in accessible location</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulse check survey results show staff understand and support new protocols etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop review schedule for internal processes and protocols and engage in regular review</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed on time</li> </ul>
Risk Management	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Organizational Risk Assessment</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed on time and Board approval received</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigation Plans Implemented</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigation plans approved by Board and completed on time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of Risk Assessment Annually</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed annually by the end of the third quarter</li> </ul>

**Strategic Objective 1.2:** Build staff capacity and expertise.

Staff Capacity	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff and Management to determine training needs and goals (e.g., skill building, different litigation forums, related sub-areas of law etc.)</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of staff complete needs survey</li> <li>Annual training for each staff member completed</li> <li>Acceptable training effectiveness survey results realized</li> <li>Process repeated annually</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 1.2: Build staff capacity and expertise.</b>		
Staff Capacity	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance employment law/policy/organizing work by hiring additional staff</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organizer hired in Year 1</li> <li>Additional staff support needs determined in Year 2</li> <li>New resources in place by Year 3</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a Staff Engagement Program, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determining parameters of Engagement Committee</li> <li>Selecting Committee Representatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>Planning and implementing team building/staff engagement events or activities</li> </ul>	Years 2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parameters determined in the first quarter of Year 2</li> <li>Representatives in place in the second quarter of Year 2</li> <li>1-2 events or activities held in Years 2 and 3</li> <li>Positive feedback from staff on events/activities</li> <li>Ideas for ongoing events/activities in place</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 1.3: Develop a client-centered, anti-racist, anti-oppressive approach to service delivery.</b>		
Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Committee	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression staff/management Committee and determine scope and membership</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee staffed on time</li> <li>Terms of reference in place</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the Committee takes a leadership role in organizing the necessary training</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership role developed and communicated to staff</li> <li>Training launched on time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign the Committee the task of making recommendations about the best mechanism for needs assessment</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position on needs assessment established by the end of Year 3</li> </ul>
Race-based Data	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore race-based data collection methodologies for ISAC</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position on race-based data collection established on time</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 1.4:</b> Establish the use of monitoring evaluation tools to measure and track progress.		
<b>Satisfaction Surveys</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Client/PLE/Inter-Clinic Group satisfaction surveys and an unstructured feedback mechanism</li> </ul>	Years 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivered on time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement surveys and feedback mechanism</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>90% of services delivered are surveyed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report on survey results and feedback collected</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results of surveys show an acceptable result</li> </ul>
<b>Benchmarking</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop clear benchmarks for docketing, file management, case work and initiatives, including PLE</li> </ul>	Years 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benchmarks developed &amp; delivered on time in Year 1</li> <li>Benchmarks met by end of Year 2</li> <li>Ongoing review process in place by end of Year 2</li> </ul>
<b>Internal Evaluation Processes</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Internal staff evaluation processes including self-evaluation and a one-on-one feedback/check-in component</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff Evaluation in place and implemented on time</li> </ul>
<b>ISAC Membership</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and Revise ISAC's Membership Policy</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy reviewed and revised</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a membership drive strategy and implement</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership Drive engaged</li> <li># of new members</li> </ul>

**Strategic Priority #2:** Improve Access to Income Security

<b>Strategic Objective 2.1:</b> Respond to legislative changes and the evolving legal and advocacy needs of community legal clinics and communities with respect to income security.		
<b>Litigation and Initiative Strategy</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Measures of Success</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refine and implement test case/systemic case/standard case and initiative selection criteria</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy developed on time</li> <li>Implementation of Case and Initiative Selection Policy measured by # of cases by type and # of initiatives by type</li> </ul>



Litigation and Initiative Strategy (continued)	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in a range of legal, policy and advocacy, and organizing and Legal Education work with partner clinics, organizations and individuals in response to legislative changes and legal and advocacy needs</li> </ul>	Years 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of cases and initiatives</li> <li>Case and initiative outcomes reported</li> <li>Results of satisfaction surveys and feedback from partner clinics positive</li> <li>Comparison of number of cases taken over time (by Year 3)</li> </ul>
Relationship Building	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build and Maintain relationships with community legal clinics and other specialty clinics to collaborate on law reform and other advocacy issues</li> </ul>	Years 1- 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involvement in X # of inter-clinic groups</li> <li># of collaborative projects (E.g., Submissions, advocacy letters etc.)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build and maintain relationships with government, community groups and other stakeholders</li> </ul>	Years 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of government, community, and stakeholder meetings</li> <li># of initiatives</li> <li>Outcome of initiatives</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 2.2:</b> Prioritize advocacy for equity-seeking groups who are under-served or under-represented in accessing income support, decent work, and access to justice.		
Targeted Advocacy Strategy	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create multi-pronged strategy for under-served/under-represented groups to improve access to income support and decent work through submissions, case work, advocacy etc., with a focus on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health equity for vulnerable populations including people with mental health disabilities</li> <li>Indigenous people with disabilities facing barriers to accessing ODSP or other income supports</li> <li>People with precarious immigration status</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan developed on time</li> </ul>

Targeted Advocacy Strategy (continued)	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design &amp; deliver a variety of submissions, consultations, advocacy letters, toolkits and educational materials, clinic &amp; community training sessions</li> </ul>	Years 2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timetable established in Year 1</li> <li>Delivery on time as per plan</li> <li># of activities to support advocacy initiatives completed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek out and take on test or precedent setting cases advocating for access to income support or decent work for the prioritized groups</li> </ul>	Year 2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of cases</li> <li>Outcome of cases</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation of Targeted Strategy</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting on outcomes for targeted groups</li> </ul>
Digital Access for Low Income Communities	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a Digital Access Strategy</li> </ul>	Year 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy developed on time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in case work addressing limitations of the digital access to the Social Benefits Tribunal</li> </ul>	Years 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of activities to support advocacy initiatives about digital access completed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage in Public Legal Education and other advocacy (letters, submissions etc.) addressing digital access for low-income people and work to amplify the GTA Region Strategy</li> </ul>	Years 2-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of activities to support advocacy initiatives about digital access completed</li> <li>Positive impact on GTA Region Strategy</li> </ul>
Employment Insurance (EI) Reform	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and Reform of EI through submissions, campaigns, policy advocacy, case work</li> </ul>	Years 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of activities to support review and reform of EI</li> </ul>

<b>Strategic Objective 2.3:</b> Explore and advocate for alternate income security measures such as, but not limited to, basic income where appropriate.		
Advocacy of Alternate Income Security Measures	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue work on Basic Income Class Action intervention</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Litigation Activities Completed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce report engaging critical thinking on the issue of basic income</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic Income report produced</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for broad eligibility of the Canada Disability Benefit and progress treatment by other provincial income security programs; and engage in consultations with government</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively consult on Canada Disability Benefit eligibility</li> </ul>

**Strategic Priority #3:** Increase ISAC’s presence throughout the province to raise awareness and actively engage community and Indigenous groups in our work.

<b>Strategic Objective 3.1:</b> Develop a communications strategy and plan, employing various media, to promote ISAC’s work and message.		
ISAC’s Communications Reach	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Communication Policy</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy developed on time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and Implement ISAC Communication Strategy with reporting component.</li> </ul>	Years 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy developed</li> <li>Strategy implemented</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revitalize Website</li> <li>Determine and Set-up Social Media platforms</li> </ul>	Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New website developed</li> <li>Social Media engaged</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze data from communications (Year 2)</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analytics Reporting Mechanism for Social Media</li> <li>Range of communication approaches expanded</li> <li>Percentage increase in stakeholders reached</li> </ul>
Communications to Prioritized Groups	By When	Measures of Success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using analytics from broad communication strategy, develop plan to target communications to prioritized groups including: People with mental health disabilities, Indigenous Communities, people with precarious immigration status</li> </ul>	Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan Developed on time</li> <li>Plan Implemented</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze data from prioritized groups</li> </ul>	Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage increase in targeted communication</li> <li>Impact of targeted communication: # of interactions, # of information requests, # of referrals</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX A – STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid board &amp; board/staff relations</li> <li>• History of strong partnerships with other clinics</li> <li>• New, skilled staff who are responsive and working well together</li> <li>• Leadership using test case approach is really great</li> <li>• Expertise readily shared with other clinic staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationship-building on the part of new staff will take some time</li> <li>• Staff changes energy draining</li> <li>• Somewhat under the radar</li> <li>• Under-resourced in some areas</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible COVID inequities make it easier to push liberal agenda</li> <li>• Normalized nature of social media extends reach</li> <li>• Make the case by making the data widely available</li> <li>• “There are ears to hear” about racialization of poverty</li> <li>• Assist in building province-wide coalitions of grassroots community groups</li> <li>• Use expertise to influence those at the federal level on Indigenous issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current government not responsive to changing basic income supports</li> <li>• LAO’s proposed new funding parameters</li> <li>• Finding alternative sources of funding</li> <li>• Soaring expectations among many for assistance (EI access, mental health issues)</li> <li>• How best to respond to Indigenous communities that have been hard hit</li> <li>• People don’t know enough about ISAC</li> <li>• Funder-required course correction</li> </ul>