

The background of the entire page is a dynamic, abstract image of a tunnel. The perspective is from the center of the tunnel, looking towards a bright light at the far end. The walls and ceiling of the tunnel are lined with numerous small lights, which have been blurred into long, horizontal streaks of orange and yellow light, creating a sense of motion and depth. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues and blacks, contrasted with the vibrant oranges and yellows of the light trails.

ARDC
ATTORNEY REGISTRATION &
DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION

**THE ARDC
STRATEGIC PLAN
2025-2029**

**OUR PATH
FORWARD**

NOVEMBER 2024

Table of Contents

(hover your mouse over a section, and “control + click” to move to the desired section)

Letter from Chair / Administrator	ii
Strategy Planning Team	iii
Introduction	1
Impetus for Developing a Strategic Plan	1
Overview of the Strategic Plan	1
Mission, Vision, and Core Values	3
Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs), Goals, and Strategies.....	4
SFA 1: Evolve and Enhance ARDC’s Programs, Services, and Reputation	5
SFA 2: Elevate Confidence in the Legal Profession	7
SFA 3: Build an Innovative and Adaptive Organization: Culture, Workforce, and Technology	8
Appendices.....	10
A: Future Scenarios (from Trends Analysis)	
B: Organizational Assessment	
• Internal and External trends information is available upon request. Please contact Althea Welsh at (312)565-2600.	



ATTORNEY REGISTRATION AND DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION
of the
SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

One Prudential Plaza
130 East Randolph Drive, Suite 1500
Chicago, Illinois 60601-6219
(312) 565-2600 (800) 826-8625
Fax (312) 565-2320

3161 West White Oaks Drive, Suite 301
Springfield, IL 62704
(217) 546-3523 (800) 252-8048
Fax (217) 546-3785

Dear Colleagues and Stakeholders,

We are pleased to introduce the ARDC's Strategic Plan, a forward-looking roadmap designed to guide the organization as we work to preserve and advance the integrity of the legal profession in Illinois. This plan reflects our commitment to addressing the evolving needs of attorneys and the public while strengthening the ARDC's role as a leader in legal regulation.

The legal profession is undergoing significant change, driven by technological advancements, shifting client expectations, and a growing need for transparency and accountability. At the same time, we face challenges related to declining public trust in the legal system and increased pressure to support attorneys in navigating a complex and dynamic landscape. This strategic plan is our response to those challenges and opportunities. It outlines a path forward that is grounded in three key areas of focus: evolving and enhancing our programs, services, and reputation; elevating confidence in the legal profession; and building an innovative and adaptive organization.

Our revised mission, vision, and values reflect a balanced approach to regulation—one that emphasizes proactive and restorative services while maintaining a steadfast commitment to ensuring the highest standards of professional conduct. Discipline remains a necessary tool, but it is a last resort, reserved for situations where it is necessary to protect the public and uphold the integrity of the profession. Additionally, we are committed to enhancing our attorney registration function by ensuring the process is user-friendly and used to collect meaningful data that helps both the profession and the ARDC better carry out our functions. This data will be key in identifying trends, providing valuable insights to lawyers, and informing future regulatory and educational efforts.

We are grateful for the collaborative efforts of our Board of Commissioners, staff, stakeholders, and the Illinois Supreme Court, whose guidance and support have been instrumental in shaping this plan. We look forward to working together in the coming years to implement these initiatives and ensure that the ARDC remains a trusted and transparent organization, committed to fostering an ethical and dynamic legal profession.

Sincerely,

Lea S. Gutierrez
Administrator, ARDC

Timothy L. Bertschy
Chair, ARDC Commission

2025 – 2029 Strategic Plan

November 2024

Introduction

The Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (ARDC) is an administrative agency of the Illinois Supreme Court, established to oversee the registration, regulation, and discipline of attorneys practicing law in Illinois. The ARDC plays a pivotal role in maintaining the integrity of the legal profession by ensuring that attorneys adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct and professionalism. Through its comprehensive disciplinary system and proactive educational initiatives, the ARDC works to protect the public and preserve confidence in the legal system.

Impetus for Developing a Strategic Plan

The development of this strategic plan comes at a critical juncture for the ARDC. Due to strong past leadership, the ARDC is internationally recognized as a leader in its field. With new leadership at the helm, the organization is now poised to capitalize on emerging opportunities while addressing significant challenges facing the legal profession. Impending changes in technology, law practice management, and client expectations necessitate a forward-looking approach to regulation and attorney support. Moreover, there has been a noticeable decline in public trust and confidence in the legal profession, driven by broader societal shifts and specific incidents of misconduct within the profession. Recognizing these factors, the ARDC has embarked on a strategic planning process to ensure it remains responsive and effective in fulfilling its mandate.

Overview of the Strategic Plan

The ARDC's strategic plan is designed to serve as a guiding framework for the organization over the next several years. Key elements of the plan include:

1. **Revised Mission, Vision, and Values:** The plan outlines a revised mission that shifts emphasis from primarily focusing on attorney discipline to a more balanced approach that includes stronger support for attorneys through education and restorative services. While the ARDC remains committed to upholding the integrity of the legal profession, the new mission underscores the importance of proactive measures and represents a broader commitment to fostering a healthy and ethical legal community, rather than solely acting as a disciplinary body. The vision statement projects a future where the legal profession in Illinois is widely respected for its ethics, integrity and service to the public.

The core values of accountability, empathy, open mindedness, and pioneering excellence are highlighted as foundational to the ARDC's work. The ARDC also embraces the core values of the Illinois Judicial Branch, especially as ARDC and its hearing and appeals boards address and adjudicate allegations and complaints of misconduct against lawyers in Illinois. The Branch's values are: fairness, accountability, integrity, and respect.

-
2. **Strategic Focus Areas:** The plan identifies three strategic areas of focus that will direct the ARDC's efforts:
 - **Evolving and Enhancing ARDC's Programs, Services, and Reputation:** Modernizing the organization's offerings to better serve the legal community and consumers of legal services, while enhancing its reputation as a leader in legal regulation.
 - **Elevating Confidence in the Legal Profession:** Implementing initiatives to better serve the public and rebuild and sustain public trust in the legal profession through greater transparency, accountability, and engagement.
 - **Building an Innovative and Adaptive Organization:** Ensuring the ARDC remains agile and forward-thinking by fostering a culture of innovation and belonging, embracing change, and modernizing workforce and volunteer practices.
 3. **Goals and Strategies:** For each strategic focus area, the plan sets forth specific goals and strategies. These are designed to advance the ARDC's mission, address the challenges facing the legal profession, and seize new opportunities. The goals are both ambitious and attainable, aiming to position the ARDC as a leader in attorney regulation and public protection.
 4. **Operational Plan and Annual Strategic Priorities:** While the strategic plan provides the overarching direction, the ARDC has also developed an Operational Plan that details the annual strategic priorities. This ensures that the strategic plan is actionable and that progress can be measured and adjusted as necessary. The Operational Plan translates the long-term goals into specific, manageable initiatives/ projects that will be undertaken each year.

The ARDC's strategic plan reflects a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptability, ensuring that the organization remains an effective steward of the legal profession in Illinois. Through this plan, the ARDC will not only respond to current challenges but also proactively shape the future of legal regulation in the state.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

MISSION

ARDC preserves and advances the integrity of the legal profession through attorney registration and education, public outreach, restorative services, and when necessary, attorney discipline.

VISION

ARDC'S vision is to shape a profession where all lawyers act ethically and with integrity.

VALUES

- 1. Pioneer Excellence, Set the Standard**—Leading in innovation and excellence by implementing best practices and setting new standards. Together, we drive standards that others aspire to and we reach the highest levels of performance as individuals and as an organization.
- 2. Show Empathy in Every Step**—Listening, understanding, and showing compassion in all interactions. We value the perspectives of others and foster a supportive and inclusive environment.
- 3. Stay Curious, Stay Open**—Asking questions and embracing new ideas and diverse perspectives in all we do. By remaining open-minded, we adapt to change and continuously improve.
- 4. Own It, Be Accountable**—Taking ownership of our actions, decisions, and commitments, while holding ourselves to high performance and behavioral standards. We deliver on promises with integrity, transparency, and timeliness, ensuring consistency in both what we do and how we do it.

Strategic Focus Areas (SFAs), Goals, and Strategies

ARDC’s key strategic focus areas (SFAs), long-range goals, and comprehensive strategies to achieve the goals are presented in this section.

An analysis of internal and external trends was instrumental in identifying ARDC’s SFAs. It helped develop a collective understanding of the external and internal landscapes, anticipate long-term implications for ARDC, and illuminate what ARDC needs to do to prepare for the future. Additionally, developing future scenarios – or narratives – helped to consider what the future might look like if ARDC adapts and responds effectively (or not) to the many trends. *See Appendix A for two plausible future scenarios: (1) a challenging future for ARDC and (2) an optimistic and positive future for ARDC.*

An organizational assessment also highlighted areas important to ARDC’s future. Information gathered from stakeholders, partners, and staff through interviews and focus groups, and from complainants through an online survey, helped to identify ARDC’s strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, the Planning Team considered future opportunities and potential threats. All were useful in ferreting out the key issues and opportunities facing ARDC and identifying areas of strategic importance. *(See Appendix B for a summary of the Organizational Assessment).*

Three SFAs emerged from the data and discussions. They are as follows:



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

1. Evolve and Enhance ARDC’s Programs, Services, and Reputation.
2. Elevate Confidence in the Legal Profession.
3. Build an Innovative and Adaptive Organization— Culture, Workforce, and Technology



SFA 1: Evolve and Enhance ARDC's Programs, Services, and Reputation

Description: The legal profession is rapidly changing, with advancements in technology, evolving client expectations, and shifting societal needs placing new demands on attorneys and organizations that regulate them. This strategic focus area (SFA) addresses the need to keep pace with these changes. Specifically, it illuminates how important it is for ARDC to evolve and adapt its programs, services, and reputation to meet the changing climate and ever-changing needs of lawyers, the profession and consumers of legal services.

The ARDC recognizes that to preserve and advance the integrity of the legal profession and fulfill its functions of registration and education, public outreach, restorative services and attorney discipline, it must adapt and effectively support the legal community in Illinois. That is, the ARDC must continuously transform and modernize its programs and services, ensuring its offerings remain relevant, efficient, and impactful. By enhancing and evolving its programs and services, the ARDC aims to better (1) equip attorneys with the tools and knowledge they need to practice ethically and effectively and (2) assist and serve consumers of legal services. The ARDC aims to remain a vital and effective resource for attorneys and consumers of legal services.

The ARDC also remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting the public from attorney misconduct and errors and holding attorneys accountable for practicing ethically. The ARDC will take an increased consumer focus, refining its approach to resolving grievances between lawyers and consumers of legal services, ensuring that charges are addressed promptly and with open communication with the complaining witness, and introducing appropriate measures of restorative justice. In short, the ARDC is dedicated to addressing and resolving complainants' grievances in a fair, timely, and effective manner, reinforcing its role as a champion of ethical practice.

Finally, by providing innovative and holistic regulatory programs and strengthening interactions with the legal community and consumers of legal services, the ARDC seeks not only to respond to the evolving needs, but also to reshape and enhance its reputation as a trusted, transparent, and supportive agency. By proactively addressing the needs, the ARDC is positioning itself as a forward-thinking and responsive regulator, reinforcing its reputation as a leader in legal regulation.

Long Range Goals and Strategies:

Goal 1: The ARDC's programs and services will meet the needs of lawyers and support lawyers in practicing ethically and competently.

Strategies:

- a. Monitor evolving needs and gather meaningful data (e.g., registration) to inform the legal profession and ARDC programming.
- b. Provide holistic programs that help prevent misconduct (e.g., mentoring programs, behavioral health support / referrals, education programs, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), restorative justice) and deliver remedial services to attorneys to address grievances.
- c. Collaborate with the Court and partners to share insights and strengthen ARDC's programs and services.
- d. Foster a culture of excellence by educating, supporting, and holding lawyers accountable to high ethical standards.

Goal 2: ARDC’s services will meet both the existing and evolving needs of consumers of legal services.

Strategies:

- a. Gather and provide information to consumers that will help them obtain legal services and make informed decisions (e.g., registration and disciplinary information, public records available on website – expectations, licenses, FAQs, reliable data).
- b. Make information and processes accessible, understandable, and easy to navigate.
- c. Invest in and use existing and emerging technologies to enhance services and assistance to consumers of legal services.
- d. Collaborate with partners to enhance access to legal services across Illinois (e.g., rural areas, legal deserts).

Goal 3: ARDC will address and resolve grievances in a fair, timely, efficient, and respectful manner.

Strategies:

- a. Ensure procedural and outcome fairness, dignity, and impartiality for all participants in the grievance process.
- b. Improve workflow effectiveness and reduce backlogs through streamlined procedures and processes and effective case management practices.
- c. Leverage emerging technologies to increase access and enhance operational efficiency.
- d. Modernize grievance and disciplinary processes with fair, restorative, and problem-solving approaches.

Goal 4: ARDC will build a reputation for being supportive, helpful, and transparent.

Strategies:

- a. Implement a comprehensive communication strategy to increase visibility, shape a positive narrative, and promote ARDC's services and resources that support the ethical practice of law.
- b. Strengthen collaboration with the Illinois Supreme Court, sibling agencies, and other partners.
- c. Advance ARDC’s legacy through proactive problem solving and expanded services and resources designed to prevent attorney errors and misconduct.
- d. Increase transparency around ARDC data and its effects on the disciplinary process while upholding confidentiality.

SFA 2: Elevate Confidence in the Legal Profession

Description: Public confidence in the legal profession is foundational to the justice system's integrity and effectiveness. In recent years, a decline in trust has emerged, driven by broader societal shifts and events, and isolated instances of misconduct within the legal community. The ARDC recognizes the critical need to address these concerns, foster a culture of excellence, and restore the public's faith in the legal profession. This strategic area of focus is dedicated to enhancing transparency, accountability, and engagement with the public, ensuring that the legal profession is seen as ethical, responsible, and committed to serving the public interest.

To achieve this, the ARDC will prioritize efforts to improve communication and outreach, providing the public with clearer, more accessible information about the legal profession and its regulatory processes. By promoting a deeper understanding of the ethical standards that attorneys are held to, and the ARDC's role in upholding those standards, ARDC can help to demystify and build trust in the legal profession and build stronger, more positive relationships with the public.

Long Range Goals and Strategies:

Goal 1: The ARDC will engage with the public about the legal profession, legal services, and Illinois' regulatory process.

Strategies:

- a. Understand the needs and experiences of those who interact with the legal system.
- b. Educate the public about the legal profession and legal services using all forms of media.
- c. Collaborate with legal and other partner organizations (e.g., sibling organizations, bar association, law schools, community organizations, government agencies, media professionals, etc.) to elevate understanding of and confidence in the legal profession.
- d. Increase the public's awareness and knowledge of the role of ARDC.

Goal 2: ARDC will build trust in the legal profession.

Strategies:

- a. Increase public understanding of the legal system and processes.
- b. Foster the highest ethical and professional standards among members of the legal profession.
- c. Model the behaviors lawyers are expected to embody.
- d. Engage with sibling agencies and legal partners to understand their work and priorities, and where appropriate, collaborate to advance and continuously improve the legal profession and legal system.

SFA 3: Build an Innovative and Adaptive Organization: Culture, Workforce, and Technology

Description: In an ever-evolving legal landscape, the ARDC recognizes the importance of being an organization that is innovative and adaptable. This strategic area of focus is dedicated to ensuring that the ARDC remains an agile, forward-thinking, and responsive organization in the years ahead.

Central to this focus area is ARDC’s commitment to adopting new technologies and modernizing its work processes. By leveraging advancements in technology, the ARDC can streamline operations, improve efficiency, deliver more effective services, and anticipate and be responsive to changing needs and expectations. The ARDC will foster a culture that embraces change, continuous improvement, and excellence.

Furthermore, building an innovative and adaptive organization also means preparing for a workforce of the future and modernizing workplace and volunteer practices. The ARDC is committed to investing in the growth, development, and wellbeing of the ARDC’s staff, leadership, and volunteers, fostering a culture of high performance. It also will foster an engaging and fulfilling work environment and encourage collaboration across all levels of the organization, thereby building a team that is equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern legal landscape. This also means that the staff and volunteers who serve on ARDC boards are diverse in all aspects and add to the integrity of the organization. Ultimately, this strategic focus area is about positioning the ARDC as a dynamic, resilient organization that is able to fulfill its mission and work toward its vision of the future: preserves and advances the integrity of the legal profession and leads the way in shaping a profession where all lawyers act ethically and with integrity.

Long Range Goals and Strategies:

Goal 1: The ARDC will attract, retain, and develop diverse and talented employees and volunteers, fostering a culture of high performance and excellence.

Strategies:

- a. Modernize human resource and management policies and practices (e.g., including recruitment and retention efforts, onboarding, employee and volunteer recognition for performance and innovation, hybrid work / flexible arrangements, performance management system, succession planning, etc.).
- b. Develop methods and processes for recruiting and retaining diverse, qualified, and dedicated staff and volunteers.
- c. Provide resources and invest in training, development, and growth opportunities to enable employees to perform at the highest levels.
- d. Establish model practices and procedures that support employee and lawyer wellbeing.
- e. Build a culture that embraces innovation, change, and continuous improvement.

Goal 2: The ARDC will be an agile, forward-looking, and proactive organization.

Strategies:

- a. Continuously strengthen ARDC's governance, leadership, and organizational structure ensuring each support the work and priorities of ARDC.
- b. Assess and respond to the changing legal landscape and needs of lawyers, the legal profession, and the public.
- c. Anticipate the future volunteer and staffing needs of ARDC and develop the next generation of volunteers and leaders.

Goal 3: The ARDC will be a center of technology excellence.

Strategies:

- a. Optimize ARDC's technology infrastructure for maximum efficiency (e.g., enhance / invest in document management system, case management tools, communication platforms, data analytics, cloud and automation tools, system / data security).
- b. Partner with technology companies, universities, and industry leaders to stay abreast of technological advancements, foster a technologically sophisticated workforce, and bring new tools to ARDC.
- c. Cultivate a culture that embraces and uses new technologies in daily work.
- d. Be a leader in systems security and the protection of confidential information and data.
- e. Educate the legal community about technological advancements and uses of technology to practice efficiently and ethically.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Future Scenarios

Below are two, plausible future narratives submitted by members of the strategic planning committee in response to a discussion about trends implications.

SCENARIO 1: Challenging Future Scenario

Below is a challenging, or undesirable, future scenario for ARDC. This is what might or could happen if ARDC fails to adapt and respond to changing needs, expectations, and the effects of the many internal and external trends.

- a. Incivility Continues to Permeate Society Generally: Hate, incivility, unhappiness, and anger remain prevalent in society generally. Trust in government institutions continues to decline. The number of claims by and against lawyers and complaining parties continues to rise.
- b. Reputation of the Profession is Declining: People stop hiring lawyers due to cost and loss of respect for the profession. ARDC's workload is impacted accordingly.
- c. Technology: ARDC becomes functionally obsolete because it does not stay current with the best digital practices, practice management software, and digital options. ARDC struggles to keep pace with technology resulting in costly and distracting data breaches, inability to effectively investigate and prosecute misconduct involving tech, and overall general inefficiency. A cyber-attack cripples ARDC. ARDC is not viewed as knowledgeable or helpful with respect to technological advancements that impact the legal profession.
- d. ARDC Struggles Financially: Attorney retirements continue to increase and fewer lawyers are applying for admission to the Illinois Bar. Additionally, inflation continues to rise. ARDC's expenses are rising faster than can be accommodated. Staff reductions may be necessary. ARDC is struggling financially; it lacks adequate funding. ARDC and sibling agencies are adversely affected due to the lack of funding; agencies are fighting over policy and finances. Fee increases are needed, and they are unpopular.
- e. Workforce and Nature of the Work: ARDC lacks sufficient staff. ARDC is neither diverse nor up to date on new workplace practices. Staff report work as being unpleasant, and pay is mediocre. Staff are frustrated because they are not able to assist the public as they would like (i.e., like they used to be able to do). ARDC is struggling to recruit and retain staff. Specifically, ARDC is having difficulty recruiting diverse and competent staff and senior staff are retiring and/or leaving. ARDC is ill-prepared for turnover and retirements; institutional knowledge has been lost.
- f. Quality of Work and Reputation of ARDC Decline: ARDC fails to adapt to the trends. It is viewed as ineffective and behind the times by Illinois attorneys. Complainants stop reporting to ARDC; ARDC is not viewed as being fair or helpful. The quality of work and ARDC's reputation are declining. Respect for and trust in ARDC also are declining.
- g. Inability to Recruit Volunteers. ARDC is unable to recruit competent and engaged volunteers. ARDC's services are adversely impacted.

SCENARIO 2: Positive Future Scenario

Below is a plausible, positive future narrative for ARDC. This scenario assumes ARDC is proactive, nimble, and responsive to the changing needs, expectations, and the effects of the many internal and external trends.

- a. Leader in the Field. ARDC has a stellar reputation; it is viewed as a leading regulatory agency, one that other agencies emulate. ARDC is a leader in the understanding of and use of AI. ARDC is a thought leader at the intersection of technology and law, where ARDC provides guidance to lawyers for how to most effectively and ethically use technology/AI in the practice of law. ARDC anticipates trends and adapts quickly, maintaining its leadership role in attorney registration and regulation.
- b. Fair and Respectful Treatment. Complainants feel they are treated with respect. ARDC is regarded as fair and helpful to lawyers and the public. ARDC routinely obtains feedback from various sources to improve practices and interactions. Better and more frequent communication is possible using existing and emerging technologies.
- c. Financially Stable. ARDC has adequate and stable funding. ARDC has established an effective dues schedule that works for ARDC and sibling agencies.
- d. ARDC's Focus/Work. ARDC is less about attorney discipline and more about supporting and rehabilitating attorneys. ARDC has lower case numbers and more informal resolutions; it has increased the use of alternatives to discipline, such as diversion. ARDC is involved in building a regulatory framework for licensed or certified paraprofessionals to help address the access to justice problem. ARDC has developed new processes to resolve disputes over fees (e.g., adopted a fee arbitration process; implemented mediation that provides relief to complainants). And, ARDC is adapting its work – programs and services – to meet current and evolving needs. For example, ARDC has expanded its educational role. It is enhancing current educational programs and expanding into new areas (e.g., educating attorneys on how to adapt to / use new technologies; informing the public about the benefits of hiring / using an attorney or other legal professional, etc.). Additionally, ARDC is looking at innovative ways to address client / complainant concerns outside the traditional regulatory / discipline framework (e.g., similar to programs in Australia and United Kingdom).
- e. Reimagined Workplace/Talented, Engaged, and Satisfied Workforce. ARDC has updated its management, HR, and workplace practices in response to recent trends; it is known as a best place to work. ARDC is attracting and retaining diverse and talented staff. ARDC is a leader in developing an inclusive culture. New and seasoned staff are satisfied and engaged. ARDC pays well and has an excellent benefit structure. ARDC has anticipated and planned for succession needs; the transfer of institutional knowledge is occurring. ARDC has enhanced training and development opportunities, expanded career advancement / promotional opportunities, and has strengthened its performance management and accountability system.
- f. Volunteers. ARDC has a vibrant and effective volunteer recruitment system.

APPENDIX B: Organizational Assessment

An organizational assessment is an integral part of thinking and planning strategically. It allows the planning committee to pause and critically evaluate the organization’s strengths and areas for improvement in light of what the future may hold. Future opportunities and potential threats (or challenges) also are realized through a trends analysis and organizational assessment.

A list of strengths and areas for improvement (from the April and May meetings) is provided below. Also provided below is a summary of future opportunities and potential threats/challenges facing ARDC (as submitted through PollEv).

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p><u>From Strategic Planning Committee:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to excellence; desire to create a vision and plan for the future 2. Support from Supreme Court 3. Many partnerships; collaborative approach to working with others 4. Multi-pronged approach to meet mission; (e.g., increase in remedial action and support; focus on severe misconduct) 5. Financial stability 6. Engaged and dedicated commissioners who bring valuable backgrounds and perspectives; commitment to continuing to improve ARDC 7. Dedicated, knowledgeable, and experienced staff and leadership; commitment to fulfilling mission and improving outcomes 8. Excellent reputation in regulatory community 	<p><u>From Strategic Planning Committee:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are legal deserts across rural Illinois, which adversely affect access, the quality of legal services, and the reputation of the legal profession 2. Understanding, use of, and investment in technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To increase access to and the delivery of legal services (virtual, online) - Within ARDC to ease administrative burden / increase efficiency / free up staff to do value-added work - More knowledge / understanding of impact of technology is needed including the effects of AI on the legal profession and outcomes for consumers 3. Need to address the big differences / gaps in practice settings across areas of the state - 4. Branding / image of ARDC 5. Evaluate, improve, and expand ARDC services to meet increasing and changing needs. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Services to attorneys with behavioral health issues (mental health, substance use) - Type and quantity of education provided to attorneys - Plan to regulate alternative business structures and paraprofessionals 6. Staffing / Workforce Issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning for impending retirements/an aging workforce; developing successors; providing professional development and career advancement opportunities

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need greater diversity of staff and volunteers; need greater diversity of staff across roles/levels (race/ethnicity, age, etc.) - Cross-training / Training and Education of Staff (e.g., how to discover and address / effective treatments for attorneys dealing with behavioral health, cognitive impairment, etc.) - Employee retention <p>7. Establish ARDC priorities and set measures/targets to track progress / accomplishments (NOTE: this in part will be accomplished through the strategic planning process)</p>
<p><u>Strengths identified from Listening Tour</u></p> <p>9. Attractiveness as an Employer</p> <p>10. Employee Satisfaction - Meaningful Work, employees are contributing to mission, etc.</p> <p>11. Important Mission/Purpose</p> <p>12. Knowledgeable and Respectful Staff and Volunteers</p> <p>13. Effective and Empathetic Investigations into Misconduct / Effective Diversion Efforts</p> <p>14. Disciplinary efforts are fair/due process is afforded – volunteers are independent and high quality</p> <p>15. Increased diversity on boards</p> <p>16. ARDC’s products / programs are high quality / helpful</p>	<p><u>Areas for Improvement from Listening Tour</u></p> <p>8. Growth and Development of Staff, Accountability of Staff</p> <p>9. Technology and Information Security</p> <p>10. Role Clarity needed between Commission and Staff – (i.e., Governance vs. Operations)</p> <p>11. Handling of Cases – Streamline processes/ procedures, timely investigations and resolution, reduce time to resolve grievances and pending cases, inconsistency in how cases are handled and outcomes</p> <p>12. Respectful treatment for all parties; provide opportunity to be heard, ensure a fair process (all aspects of procedural fairness – respect, voice, neutrality, and trust)</p> <p>13. Disproportionate impact on solo practitioners</p> <p>14. Perceptions of ARDC: Lawyers are “afraid” of ARDC (e.g., ARDC is out to get them); need to improve public’s perception (and understanding) of ARDC</p> <p>15. Confusion among public / bar of the various organizations involved in the legal profession – e.g., ARDC, sibling agencies, ISBA, etc.</p> <p>16. General distrust of court system and govt generally spills over to ARDC</p>

Future Opportunities and Threats

Below are potential future opportunities for ARDC:

1. Re-imagine / Strengthen ARDC's Services, Programs, Operations
 - a. Shift to a restorative and holistic approach to providing assistance, services, and taking action / resolving grievances
 - b. Focus on prevention of misconduct
 - c. Increase / strengthen communication, education, and other support services (e.g., be more proactive in resolving disputes between clients and lawyers)
 - d. Streamline and improve disciplinary and other processes (e.g., includes intentionality around suspension recommendations, pursue discipline on consent, fast track cases, use settlement conferences, address issues around the pace of investigations, make information easier to access and processes easier to navigate; etc.)
 - e. Expand and increase usage of diversion programs
 - f. Address mental health and substance abuse in areas of discipline and licensing
 - g. Learn about and use AI (e.g., create an AI system to respond to attorney ethics questions)
 - h. Enhance / demonstrate fairness of the process – processes are fair, reasonable, and non-punitive (all aspects of procedural fairness)
 - i. Build processes for resolving fee disputes and mediating other disagreements between lawyers and client (e.g., alternative dispute resolution)
 - j. Better publicize ARDC's system for assisting lawyers with ethical issues - hotline, educational materials, opinions, etc.
 - k. Expand educational services for attorneys and the public (e.g., provide guidance to lawyers around emerging technological issues (e.g., AI, information security, etc.)
 - l. Improve customer service (e.g., responsiveness, communication, quality and frequency of contact with complainants)

2. Prepare for a Workplace and Workforce of the Future
 - m. Expand training / education to ARDC staff including those who are not attorneys (e.g., cognitive impairment, behavioral health, etc.)
 - n. Support a more diverse workforce; provide / expand advancement opportunities
 - o. Prepare for impending attrition and retirements; do intentional succession planning
 - p. Provide competitive pay / benefits / compensation (e.g., ensure life insurance and disability benefits are competitive with social security)
 - q. Optimize / strengthen the performance management system – coaching culture, provide feedback, etc.
 - r. Strengthen governance and orient / train new Commissioners and volunteers
 - s. Develop organizational culture
 - t. Modify organizational structure / positions to support the future work of ARDC.

3. Rebrand ARDC / Improve Attorney and Public Perception
 1. Expand outreach and education – with consumers of legal services, with attorneys, students, other agencies, etc.
 2. Study and develop ways to increase consumer / public advocacy

4. Strengthen Relationships and Partnerships
 - w. Expand external partnerships (e.g., expand mentorship program to assist solo practitioners, LAP, IBAB, law schools, etc.)

-
- x. Better connection with siblings and their budgetary needs
 - y. Get the word out about "who we are" and "how we can assist the public"
5. Build / Promote ARDC's Reputation / Advance the Legal Profession
- z. Continue to be a leading regulatory and service agency – remain nimble, responsive, and innovative
 - aa. Continue to advance the legal profession (e.g., develop a response to new technology based legal services; collaborate with partners to build regulatory frameworks for paraprofessionals and/or online legal service providers)

Future potential threats or challenges include:

- 1. Societal Trends that May Adversely Affect the Legal Profession / ARDC
 - a. Rising inflation – impact on fee increase cycle
 - b. Increasing gun violence
 - c. Explosion in use of technology / AI – misuses, risk of cyber-attacks, data security, etc.
 - d. Continued polarization among population, declining trust in government institutions, declining commitment to the rule of law – rising threat of social unrest and violence
- 2. Failure to Foresee, Anticipate, Prepare For/Respond to Other Legal Trends/Changing Environment
 - e. E.g., - technological advances - Increasing uses and misuses of AI (e.g., people can now create AI twins which is especially dangerous in virtual settings)
 - f. Preparing for a workforce of the future
 - g. Diminishing respect for / other changes to the legal profession - e.g., how legal services are purchased, use of para-legal professionals; more lawyers involved in public scandals
 - h. Fewer lawyers going into solo practice – may result in fewer grievances to ARDC
 - i. Aging attorney population - Adverse impact on revenues and fee increase cycle
 - j. Declining lawyer registrations – adverse impact on reserves to distribute to sibling agencies
 - k. Difficulty preserving / maintaining quality legal representation – more lawyers experience behavioral health issues
 - l. Risk of becoming obsolete or having limited relevance
- 3. Shrinking and/or Unstable Revenues
 - m. Unable to keep up to date, meet changing demands, or respond effectively to the changing environment (e.g., vs rising expenses for pay/benefits, facility costs, staffing levels, investments in technology, etc.)
- 4. Stagnant Workplace/Failure to Meet Needs/Expectations of the Future Workforce
 - n. Inability to maintain competitive compensation – pay, benefits, etc.
 - o. Inability or unwillingness to update workplace and workforce practices – respond to changing needs and expectations
 - p. Aging leadership / loss of institutional knowledge – failure to develop the next generation of leaders (lack of succession planning)
 - q. Inability to stay current on new technologies
 - r. Challenges keeping systems and people safe (e.g., increasing threats against technology and ARDC staff)