

**The Arc of Litchfield County, Inc.**  
**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**  
**September, 2022**

**Agency Vision & Mission**

The mission of The Arc of Litchfield County (LARC) is to work cooperatively with others in developing opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to:

- Achieve their maximum level of independence
- Experience community presence and participation
- Make decisions about their lives and their futures
- Live with respect and dignity

Guided by a vision of Community for All, LARC strives to:

- Continue enhancing the quality of life for those with developmental disabilities
- Support their families
- Include the individuals in all aspects of community life

**Guiding Principles**

**We assist people with disabilities to lead their own lives.**

We believe that everyone, including people with disabilities, has a right to unobstructed access to their own life. To this end:

- We assist people to be competent decision makers.
- We believe that everyone, including people with disabilities, has the right to make his/her own choices about issues that affect his/her personal life. We will respect the informed decisions people make about their own lives even if we do not agree.
- We believe that understanding an individual's rights and needs are essential to accomplishing our mission.
- We connect people's lives to the community in which they live.

Community interconnection is a central need to people's lives. To this end, we will:

- Work for universal physical accessibility in which people can get into and move about in the place they have a right to be as citizens of a community.
- Take it as part of our job to assist people to pursue acquaintances, friendships, and/or romantic partnerships with others in the community as a healthy interconnection.

- Support only living and working situations that are respected and valued by the general community, including fair wages, freedom from harassment, freedom from pity, and expression of appreciation.
- We will use existing resources from the community whenever possible before utilizing any “special” service designed specifically for people with disabilities.

**We support the right of voluntary association.**

In the work we do, we will, at all times, make it possible for people to:

- Choose with whom they will spend free time.
- Choose with whom they will live.
- Choose what supports are needed, who will and who will not be invited to assist them, provide services for them, or control their personal resources.

**We teach people how to have control over their personal resources.**

Everyone, including people with disabilities, has the right to determine how his/her personal resources will be spent or used.

We will respect and encourage these rights at all times and will spend other people’s money only for:

- Supports, services, and goods that are delivered.
- Activities/situations that will be life enhancing.
- Activities/situations that increase the ability of the person to participate in community settings for work, residence, leisure, or other activities involving community connection.

**Four Pillars of Focus**

**1. Organizational Climate**

Organizational climate is one of the four pillars upon which the strategic plan of The Arc of Litchfield County (LARC) is predicated—the other three pillars being accountability, partnerships, and growth for the future. By organizational climate we mean our staff, capital investments (homes, office space and equipment), and organizational values.

We recognize that our employees are the most critical element to our success. LARC is dedicated to hiring and retaining the best staff, giving them training and opportunities for development, and rewarding them with valued compensation and benefits.

With respect to our capital investment, LARC is committed to a planful approach to optimally maintain and regularly improve upon our investment in property, vehicles, and equipment.

While values are an intangible asset, our values are the very foundation of who we are as an organization. LARC strives to be an organization where professionalism and respect for others continuously creates a supportive, appreciative, and inclusive environment.

### **Action Items (Organizational Climate):**

- Ascertain the goals of each new hire within the first month of employee's first day of work, which will become part of the annual review process so that the agency can help the employee attain realistic goals within a reasonable amount of time.
- Establish mechanism and/or processes for regular staff supervision—to ensure we are hearing staff concerns, providing constructive feedback in real time, and providing an opportunity for both staff and supervisors to grow professionally.
- Implement the Trauma-Informed Care Pilot project, with our partner agencies and the Traumatic Stress Institute at Klingberg Family Centers. This will make us statewide (and even regional) leaders in this innovative approach to individual supports and staff well-being.
- Ensure that annual budgets are balanced, and that surplus funds (when available) can be used to incentivize staff.
- Develop a longevity recognition program to help recognize and retain staff.
- Develop an employee relations committee to strategize around activities which will impact retention and demonstrate appreciation of staff, aiming at one activity per quarter.
- Create new job descriptions where there aren't any.
- Develop a career ladder approach to DSPs, including additional compensation for increased ability and responsibility.

### **2. Agency Accountability**

LARC will work to ensure that systems, structures, and procedures are in place to allow for the efficient and accurate collection and reporting of all information necessary for the agency to bill for supports, provide meticulous reports, and ensure that we are in full compliance with all mandates.

We will work to support and train all staff, so that they are able to navigate records and systems—and to ensure that all agency personnel are proficient in the use of technologies to support their daily efforts.

We will regularly assess the use of technology as a means of both supporting and extending the reach and efforts of our staff—and, wherever possible and practical, we will use technology to perform tasks that are easily automated, thus freeing up staff (our most valuable resource) to do the work that only they can do.

Periodically, we will assess agency structure and performance, to ensure the highest levels of efficiency—in order to use resources at our disposal in the most effective ways possible.

We will seek input from all areas of the organization, in ongoing efforts to ensure that policies and procedures intended to create efficiency and accuracy are practical, will work as intended, and are likely to be beneficial to all.

Through regular self-reflection and agency communications, we will work to ensure that we are using philanthropic resources in accordance with donor expectations and agency priorities to the best of our ability.

**Action Items (Agency Accountability):**

- On a monthly basis, a member of the Technology Committee will report out to the Leadership Team, during one of the weekly meetings with feedback on new technology, updates on identified problem areas, suggestions for new technology, and any other pertinent information.
- Continue to expand the role and reach of Therap ERS agency-wide, to include additional modules (nursing, med administration), and ensure staff are trained and proficient in its use. Ensure robust review protocols are in place, to guarantee accuracy of all records.
- Explore and invest in software for a fleet record-keeping program that will track vehicle leases, maintenance, registrations, insurance, emissions, VIN#s, etc. This will ensure timeliness with the upkeep of vehicles and monitor necessary documentation and maintain up- to-date records of vehicles, reducing unnecessary costs. To better manage and address the needs of the agency and the programs served.
- Provide on-going Therap training to staff to ensure accurate documentation and concise reporting of all information necessary for LARC to bill for supports provided. On a monthly basis, program documentation will be reviewed and the need for additional staff training will be assessed and provided immediately. This is to ensure that all supports are being documented correctly and accurately so that LARC can be properly, and fully, reimbursed.
- Provide opportunities for specialized training to those who have expressed interest in acquiring skills for professional growth.
- Ensure that fiscal policies and practices are clearly delineated, understood by agency staff, and built around robust checks and balances. Further, to work with each unit to help them understand fully their budget(s) and ensure that each unit works within the limits of available financial resources.
- Continue to pursue efficiencies in training delivery to ensure full compliance.
- Provide regular financial guidance and information to Directors and Managers with an eye to fiscal responsibility.
- Further develop systems and processes to ensure accurate and timely data collection and retention.

**3. Partnerships**

LARC has always depended upon the broader community for its vitality. With a goal to remain a vital organization, it is paramount that LARC stay engaged with the community and endeavor to collaborate with others who share our vision of inclusivity.

LARC will continue to seek out and strengthen partnerships with stakeholders, state and local government, service providers, private businesses, and other Arc providers to ensure that we learn from those around us how to better our practices.

LARC will continue to engage and communicate with donors, sponsors, and funders to ensure there is a clear understanding of the important work undertaken by the agency and how their financial support enables the agency to fulfill its vision of “Community for All.”

LARC will continue to innovate with new fundraisers to keep the community interested and to connect with new supporters. Sponsorship opportunities will continue to adapt in order to reflect an interest on the part of businesses for new ways to expand their philanthropic reach and impact.

LARC will continue to engage with The Arc National, Arc Connecticut provider agencies, and other nonprofits on pilot projects, training, and shared administrative services where applicable and appropriate.

#### **Action Items (Partnerships):**

- Continue collaborating with arts and culture organizations throughout Litchfield County, working to create opportunities that engage individuals supported by LARC in activities and programming that enrich their lives and serve to increase public awareness of the important work done by LARC and partner organizations.
- Establish LARC as the lead DDS provider agency in all of northwestern Connecticut—and ensure that we are an agency where pilot projects, limited-scale projects, and innovative support models are planned, tested, and launched.
- LARC’s Autism Resource Center will continue to establish and strengthen collaborative partnerships with organizations that support individuals and families impacted by autism spectrum disorder. In conjunction with community partners, LARC will provide opportunities, resources, education, and support for families.

#### **4. Growth for the Future and Innovation**

Since 1964, LARC has provided essential services that help individuals with disabilities live more full and inclusive lives in the community. As the nature of disability services change, and as compensation models are updated, LARC will seek out new opportunities to provide supports while striving to remain relevant and viable.

As employees become more technologically savvy, they become accustomed to systems that allow for more access to information and the ability to access their employee benefits information—at their convenience. LARC will continually assess employee-accessible systems that allow them to personally monitor their benefits plans, request and monitor time-off allocations, and access payroll information on their own devices. LARC will continue to assess current systems to ensure they are efficient, provide accurate data and are accessible to employees.

LARC will increase knowledge and use of assistive technology to provide enhanced supports to individuals served and help them be more independent and better able to accomplish tasks that create a sense of fulfillment and achievement.

LARC will stay up to date on new and enhanced ways to better serve the individuals we support whether through programming, housing, work, or play.

**Action Items (Growth for the Future and Innovation):**

- Create videos of individuals using assistive technology in group homes, vocational settings and Day Support Program and share with the community via eblasts, social media, texts, and website.
- Continue to position LARC as an innovator on as many fronts as possible—in the eyes of DDS, families, individuals supported, and the community at large.
- Ensure that LARC leadership is well represented on statewide and regional committees working on innovative support systems for the IDD community.
- Further leverage technology to provide easier access to training curricula.
- Continue to pursue opportunities for enhanced or additional funding.

**Background and Process**

In Spring and Summer of 2021, agency Leadership and Board of Directors members (full list of participants below) participated in several facilitated brainstorming and strategy sessions—intended to provide areas of focus for the agency over the next three to five years. The four pillars of this work—Agency Climate, Agency Accountability, Partnerships, and Growth for the Future—are presented above, along with brief descriptions of the associated activities, as well as some relevant and timely examples.

While not a full Strategic Plan, this document serves as a Strategic Framework of priorities for the agency—as both a reference, as well as a template by which to align our efforts, activities, and projects in development.

LARC Leadership will regularly update the Board of Directors on progress made on Strategic Initiatives under each of the Four Pillars.

**Participants**

Dorothy Beckley	Board, President
Kim Brown	Board, Past President
Barbara Canary	Board, Director
George Craig	Board, Director
Linda Cull	LARC, Director of Finance

Jenn Hull	LARC, Director of Day and Vocational
Mary Ellen Kunz	LARC, Director of Development
Mark Lambert	Board, Director
Shirley McCarthy	LARC, Residential Manager
Michael Menard	LARC, Executive Director
Ruth Nadeau Dwyer	Board, Secretary
Julie Stachowiak	LARC, Director of Services
Scott Whittaker	LARC, Director of Human Resources