



TEXAS
CIVIL RIGHTS
PROJECT

**TCRP's
Unique Model
of Community
Lawyering:**

**Relationships.
Excellence.
Creativity.
Nourishment.**

***Our 2023-2025
Strategic Plan***

In October 2021, Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP) embarked on a yearlong learning process with Grassroots Solutions (GRS), with the goal of creating a three-year strategic plan to support the organization in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

TCRP is unique in Texas and nationally because our vision of community lawyering integrates top-notch, community-focused legal services and litigation with creative public policy advocacy, communications, and community engagement. The strategic planning process focused on further developing our definition of community lawyering and creating a set of organizational goals, priorities, and tactics to enable us to be better community lawyers and more effectively advance our organizational mission.

Our Process

At the outset, GRS worked closely with TCRP's President, Mimi Marziani, to create a strategic planning committee (SPC) composed of organizational leadership, board members, and two staff members elected at large by the TCRP staff. GRS and the SPC then established a data-driven process to raise and tackle big questions about the organization's identity, culture, programs, and opportunities over the next three years. This process included regular conversations with the committee, interviews with external stakeholders, multiple engagements with TCRP's staff, and multiple in-person retreats.

After establishing the SPC, GRS developed a discovery and document review process to analyze key context and history, organizational operational materials, and programmatic priorities to better understand how TCRP contributes to the larger social justice community. To ensure that perspectives and voices across TCRP's internal and external network were included in the process, the SPC and GRS worked together to assess these documents and establish learning questions to further our discovery efforts. From these learning questions, GRS developed interview guides for third-party partners and members of TCRP's Board of Directors and as well as a staff Remesh¹ to address critical questions and to ensure that staff input drove the creation of the plan.

In addition to supporting the development and implementation of the learning plan, the SPC engaged in facilitated bi-weekly meetings to discuss a draft definition of community lawyering, the values and criteria for community lawyering, as well as the values, history, and ethos of TCRP and the role we play in Texas' rising social justice movement. Discussions covered issues ranging from how to best listen to the community and tailor plans to uplift community needs to how to effectively integrate legal action, policy advocacy, and community engagement.

Data collection and staff engagement over the course of the year included, but was not limited to:

- **December 2021 All-Staff Retreat**
- **Spring 2022 Leadership Team Retreat**
- **All-Day SPC Retreat in April 2022**
- **1 TCRP Board Retreat**
- **3 All-Staff Meetings Presentations**
- **All-Staff Remesh focus group**
- **14 Interviews with partners and stakeholders**
- **7 Interviews with TCRP board members**

Once a draft plan was in place, SPC members presented and facilitated discussion about each goal and key tactics during TCRP's staff retreat in September 2022. This critical feedback ensured the final product was inclusive and reflected the input of the whole organization.

¹ Learn more about Remesh, [here](#).

Our Community Lawyering Definition

TCRP harnesses the power of the law to protect the civil rights of all Texans and to empower communities traditionally impacted by injustice. In the fight for a more just Lone Star State, TCRP serves as the go-to lawyers, policy experts, and advocates for grassroots organizations, local leaders and impacted community members who share our goal of protecting civil rights and empowering traditionally underserved communities, particularly communities of color. Our unique approach is one of “community lawyering,” rooted in deep community relationships, excellent legal services, and a creative approach to policy change.

Effective community lawyering requires, first and foremost, creating and maintaining trusting two-way relationships with key organizational and community partners, and then centering the needs of those communities in all that we do. Part of maintaining trust, and an equally critical part of effective community lawyering, is the ability to approach Texas communities with humility, cultural competency and an ability and willingness to actively listen to people impacted by systemic injustice.

TCRP provides excellent legal representation in a variety of circumstances — as litigators in court, as compliance counsel, as legal strategists, as policy analysts, and as public educators. As an operational matter, we often work for community organizations or within broader social justice coalitions, serving as their legal and policy arm, to leverage their on-the-ground community knowledge. Where gaps exist in connecting with or supporting impacted communities, we convene community discussions, build and maintain relationships, and learn and listen from impacted individuals to determine our role in their road to change. Given the expanse of injustice and inequity in Texas, successful community lawyering demands creativity in harnessing the power of the law and seamlessly integrating it into an advocacy campaign with community engagement, communications strategies, and policy solutions.

These factors taken together — deep community relationships, excellent legal services, and a creative approach to policy change — allow TCRP to most effectively serve Texans as their community lawyers.

Our Plan

Between the beginning of 2023 and the close of 2025, TCRP's central focus will be to deepen and sharpen our successful, unique community lawyering model. To do so, we will focus on four main goals:

1. Relationships. We will deepen our connections with the Texas communities most impacted by injustice by creating and maintaining trusting relationships with key community partners that are rooted in mutual respect for human dignity, and explicitly tailoring our efforts to reflect community priorities.

2. Excellence. We will hold ourselves to the highest standards of practice, to zealously and most effectively serve Texas communities.

3. Creativity. We will foster and promote creative, multi-faceted advocacy, including by thoughtfully incorporating legal, policy, engagement, and communications strategies to advance each effort to protect rights and advance policy change.

4. Nourishment. We will steward a healthy and equitable workplace, seeking to reflect internally the values we aim to drive forward externally through the advancement of our mission.

Below, we set forth the key strategies to accomplish each goal, followed by specific tactics and a proposed timeline for implementation. We use the following timeline:

Year 1 (i.e., end of 2023)

Year 2 (i.e., end of 2024)

Year 3 (i.e., end of 2025)

To ensure accountability and transparency, this plan will be tracked through TCRP's goal-tracking software, Lattice, and directly overseen by TCRP's President and Chief of Staff. Progress under this plan, and any revisions, updates or accomplishments of the key strategies and tactics, will be reviewed by TCRP's Board of Directors twice annually, at Q2 and Q4 Board meetings in each applicable year, and will also be reported to all staff.

GOAL 1: Relationships

We will deepen our connections with the Texas communities most impacted by injustice by creating and maintaining trusting relationships with key community partners that are rooted in mutual respect for human dignity, and tailoring our efforts to reflect community priorities.

Key Strategy

- Systematize the community lawyering model evenly throughout the organization, and do so in a manner geared to: **(A)** build stronger relationships with impacted Texas communities; **(B)** identify and then prioritize community needs in the development and execution of programmatic work; and **(C)** evaluate our effectiveness as "go-to" lawyers, policy experts, and advocates for the communities we serve on an ongoing basis.

Tactics & Timeline

Year 1

- *By the end of Q1*, TCRP will finish our training with Movement Law Lab and establish next steps for implementation of 360 degree organizational assessment.
- *By the end of Q2*, TCRP will establish a Community Lawyering Committee (CLC) with representatives from each core team to implement the recommendations of the 360 degree organizational assessment and, in doing so, to deepen TCRP's commitment to building and maintaining deep community relationships. The committee is encouraged to utilize a variety of tools and tactics, which may include:
 - Auditing and organizing organization-wide community relationships
 - Surveying allies and partners by program
 - Conducting community listening sessions, designed to include meaningful follow-up
- *By the end of Q3*, the CLC will provide recommendations to each program for integration of community lawyering tactics and goals into the annual goals for 2024 and beyond.

● *By the end of Q4:*

- The Program Directors will create a set process for notifying and transferring community relationships whenever a TCRP staff member transitions from TCRP, as part of a larger, established system for tracking and maintaining community contacts.
- The Program Directors and community engagement directors will ensure that all versions of TCRP's litigation/campaign review panel reflect a deepening of community relationships and engagement.
- Each team's 2024 annual goals will reflect the recommendations of the CLC.
- The President will report to the TCRP Board of Directors the results of the year-long community relationships efforts, including a plan to engage the Board in deepening community relationships.

Years 2 & 3

- TCRP will evaluate the CLC's impact and whether that committee should sunset or continue in Year 2.
- TCRP will continue to work to deepen community relationships, including by building upon the foundation set by the CLC and its recommendations.
- TCRP will report biannually, internally and externally, on the community lawyering tactics, goals and outcomes.

GOAL 2: Excellence

We will hold ourselves to the highest standards of practice, to zealously and most effectively serve Texas communities.

Key Strategies

1. Provide exceptional community lawyering services to empower Texas communities historically impacted by injustice.
2. Deliberately identify both near and long-term opportunities to secure wins and advance justice, while being nimble enough to swiftly respond when circumstances demand.
3. Invest in year-round, robust training opportunities for all staff, with our version of what community lawyering means serving as the central driving force.

Tactics & Timeline.

STRATEGY ONE: Provide exceptional community lawyering services to empower Texas communities historically impacted by injustice.

Year 1

- Each Program Director will revise the theory of change for their program, expressly incorporating the central facets of this Strategic Plan, and seeking to clearly articulate our scope of work in the coming years (and, importantly, what we do not do).
- TCRP will implement a new case management system, led by our operations team, with a focus on streamlining litigation practices and case-related communication across the organization.

Year 2

- Following completion of the 360 degree organizational assessment (see above), the Program Directors will create surveys for existing clients and key community partners on their experience with TCRP and how we could better serve them. We plan for the survey to occur on at least an annual basis, and will incorporate results in annual goal-setting processes moving forward.

Year 2 & Year 3

- TCRP will continue to use the updated litigation/campaign review panel, case management system, performance review, and client survey, and refine each system/process as necessary.

STRATEGY TWO: Deliberately identify both near and long-term opportunities to secure wins and advance justice, while being nimble enough to swiftly respond when circumstances demand.

Year 1

- Each team will create a 5-year blueprint for change in Texas, which will be approved by TCRP's President. With an eye towards strengthening intersectional programmatic collaboration, the blueprint will identify the major legal and policy changes that TCRP can promote over the coming years. Each Leadership Team member will ensure that input from key community partners is collected and incorporated into these long-term goals. Each team will use their blueprint to inform annual goals moving forward, including in Years 2 and 3.

STRATEGY THREE: Invest in year-round, robust training opportunities for all staff, with our version of what community lawyering means as the central driving force. Specifically, we seek to ensure that all staff have a baseline understanding of: **(a)** community lawyering and what that means to TCRP; **(b)** litigation and legislative processes in Texas; **(c)** the law and policy of each program's subject matter focus; **(d)** best practices in communications strategies, media relations, digital advocacy, community engagement and project management.

Year 1

- As noted above, TCRP will complete a new training series for all staff in conjunction with the Movement Law Lab, with the goal of teaching foundational concepts, movement lawyering values, and guiding values that will allow each of us to deepen our commitment to community lawyering.
- TCRP will hone our standard onboarding procedures for all new staff and Board to include the categories of information explained above. Current staff and Board will receive the training in Year 1 as well.
- The Leadership Team will create an annual organizational training plan, after seeking input from staff. This plan will be the basis for TCRP's training offerings for the remainder of the calendar year. Moving forward, the Leadership Team will create an annual organizational training plan each fall for the following year, in conjunction with the annual budget process.
- TCRP will continue offering peer training sessions via "Lunch & Learn" gatherings throughout the year, run by TCRP's Chief of Staff.
- TCRP will continue to provide at least \$500 in dedicated funds for each individual's annual professional development.

Year 2 & Year 3

- TCRP will continue to refine the processes and programs of: onboarding, annual training plan, "Lunch & Learn" sessions, and provision of dedicated funding for professional development.

GOAL 3: Creativity

We will foster and promote creative, multi-faceted advocacy, including by thoughtfully incorporating legal, policy, engagement, and communications strategies to advance each effort to protect rights and advance policy change.

Key Strategies

1. All annual goals and ongoing priority projects will be multi-faceted, and – whenever practicable – will incorporate multiple types of strategies for each litigation/campaign.
2. TCRP will maintain a set of interconnected programmatic priorities – actively fostering an environment of collaboration – with healthy allocations of staff capacity to execute.
3. TCRP will intentionally create greater spaces for creative thought and spontaneous collaboration.

STRATEGY ONE: All annual goals and ongoing priority projects will be multi-faceted, and – whenever practicable – will incorporate multiple types of strategies for each litigation/campaign.

Year 1

- Each program will hire and onboard a Senior Advocacy Manager and Outreach Coordinator for each program by midyear. Among other parts of their jobs, these staff will play a central role in setting multifaceted annual goals and ensuring multifaceted advocacy is woven into all priority projects.
- TCRP will ensure that goal-setting and planning incorporate multifaceted advocacy as a best practice on a regular basis. One key example: TCRP's litigation/campaign review panel will require the inclusion of multiple strategies for each litigation/campaign, outside of extenuating circumstances.

Year 2 & Year 3

- TCRP will maintain high nonlawyer, advocacy staff levels, as anticipated in 2023, and will incorporate multifaceted advocacy as a regular practice.

STRATEGY TWO: TCRP will maintain a set of interconnected programmatic priorities – fostering an environment of collaboration – with healthy allocations of staff capacity to execute.

Year 1

- TCRP will continue our monthly “Get Shit Done (GSD)” meetings, a TCRP staff meeting space intended to enhance connection and collaboration, to cultivate communication and collaboration across teams. We will assess periodically, and at least twice annually, to continue to refine and ensure continued high utility.
- TCRP will review progress on our existing intersectional working group as a potential model for cross-programmatic collaboration. Following that review, we will consider launching one additional intersectional working group by year-end.
- TCRP will execute 2023 legislative advocacy work with a sharp eye toward prioritizing intersectional wins (such as prison gerrymandering work in 2021). Include questions of intersectional performance in session-end evaluation of legislative outcomes.

Year 2 & 3

- We will continue GSD meetings. TCRP’s plan for the 2025 legislative session – and execution of the same – will seek to explicitly elevate interconnected programmatic priorities, working from the foundation set in 2023.
- TCRP will evaluate current intersectional working groups; then, we will refine and/or sunset as needed, and possibly one additional intersectional working group.

STRATEGY THREE: TCRP will intentionally create greater spaces for creative thought and spontaneous collaboration.

Year 1

- TCRP will normalize our new practice of aggressively reducing or eliminating meetings on Fridays, to create space for creative thought and spontaneous collaboration.
- TCRP will invest in work spaces that bolster creative, collaborative work, drawing from data collected by the Future of Work Committee.
- TCRP will create and launch a new internal mechanism to create innovative pilot approaches to test new ideas and theories of community lawyering and advocacy, as well as regarding organizational operations. Release proposal to implement this program by Q3 2023.

Year 2 & 3

- TCRP plans to continue “no meeting” Fridays, to support continued investment in collaborative space and the pilot program described above; all should be evaluated in Year 2 and again in Year 3 and refined as needed.

GOAL 4: Nourishment

We will steward a healthy and equitable workplace, seeking to reflect internally the values we aim to drive forward externally through the advancement of our mission.

Key Strategies

- 1.** Foster a strong, ongoing professional development environment – to uplift, grow, and strengthen the contributions of each staff member.
- 2.** Implement equity in an observable and tangible way – embodying an inclusive culture of resilience, wellness, service and stewardship.

STRATEGY ONE: Foster a strong, ongoing professional development environment – to uplift, grow, and strengthen the contributions of each staff member.

Year 1

- TCRP will set benchmarks and organizational goals for retention and internal promotions, led by PFOps.
- TCRP will use the Movement Law Lab's Movement Lawyering Skills Assessments and Growth Plan as a foundation for career development for each staff member. From there, we will establish a performance review template based on this process for all current and incoming staff, in support of individual career growth and setting a clear standard of staff performance.
- The executive team will establish a TCRP Impact Network as an alumni network that connects current and former TCRP members to further our mission.

Year 2

- TCRP will assess the previous year's performance review template. Then, we will update the template accordingly for implementation across all teams by the end of year 2, as an annual practice going forward.
- TCRP will conduct a process audit of all internal processes (i.e., best practices guide processes, annual goal setting, Leadership Team Charter processes, campaign/litigation panels, hiring) to establish what works, what doesn't, what should be improved and what should be eliminated. Continue every other year going forward.
- TCRP will formally create a mentorship pilot program for staff to support growth and development across role and career stages. This will include broad exposure to others in the social justice ecosystem, through mentorship and peer coaching opportunities as part of the TCRP Impact Network.

Year 3

- TCRP will: close out any action items from the 2024 internal process audit; continue to advance individual staff development; maintain and expand the reach of the alumni network and mentorship program; continue practice of annual performance reviews, using established template.

STRATEGY TWO: Implement equity in an observable and tangible way – embodying an inclusive culture of resilience, wellness, service and stewardship.

Year 1

- TCRP will assess what additional support the DEI Committee needs to be a strong, empowered voice within all aspects of the organization's operations and will implement those supports as soon as practicable. That Committee will then create a DEI action plan to further eradicate racism from our systems and structures and to advance race equity throughout the organization.
- TCRP will define and effectuate "work equity," including through refining the Reimagining Work Policy, and incorporating into annual goal setting and performance review templates.
- As part of the retention and internal promotions benchmarks, noted above, the DEI Committee will form benchmarks specifically addressing race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, individuals with disabilities, and other underrepresented communities.

Year 2

- TCRP will continue to resource, elevate, and advance the expressed needs and established practices of the DEI committee to further their efforts, and maintain and refine the DEI retention and internal promotions benchmarks set in Year 1.
- TCRP will retain an external expert/facilitator to evaluate progress and current status of DEI efforts, along with how we can continue to evolve as an anti-racist, inclusive organization.

Year 3

- TCRP will continue to resource, elevate, and advance the expressed needs and established practices of the DEI committee to further their efforts, and maintain and refine the DEI retention and internal promotions benchmarks set in Year 1.
- TCRP will implement the expert recommendations, following the evaluation process in Year 2.