



**Law
Foundation
of BC**

Annual Report 2025





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About us

The Law Foundation of BC is an independent grantmaking foundation. We are entrusted to use revenues generated from the interest on lawyers' pooled trust accounts to benefit the public. Through our funding, we improve the lives of people in British Columbia by advancing public interest and narrowing the access to justice gap.

The Law Foundation of BC is directed to distribute funds for the advancement of our mandate and the public good. We fund legal aid, legal education, law reform, legal research, and law libraries for the benefit of people in British Columbia.

The Law Foundation of BC's office is located on the traditional, unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səliłwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.



Our mandate

Our mandate is to fund legal education, legal research, legal aid, law reform, and law libraries for the benefit of British Columbians.



Legal Aid



Legal Education



Law Libraries



Law Reform



Legal Research

Our vision

A future where systems of law and justice support all people to live and thrive in dignity.

Our mission

Through funding, collaborative relationships, and shared learning, we invest in work that empowers people and strengthens communities.

Our values

Our values reflect the kind of organization we want to be. Together, they hold us accountable to the communities we work with.

- **Reciprocity** — We listen and learn with humility, and we cultivate trusting, transparent, and supportive relationships, both within the Foundation, and with those with whom we interact, valuing the time, commitment, expertise, and energy that each contributes.
- **Equity** — We acknowledge and respond to the ongoing harms to equity-denied people and groups caused by the legal system and philanthropy. We take an anti-racist, intersectional approach to counter systemic racism and discrimination.
- **Decolonization** — We acknowledge and respond to the ongoing harms resulting from colonization, and the role of the legal system and philanthropy in perpetuating those harms. We decolonize our practices, centering the self-determination of Indigenous peoples and their leadership, knowledge, and expertise in justice transformation through their own laws, and Canadian law.
- **Sustainability** — We ensure that our work, practices, finances, and the programs we support are sustainable over time, and consistent with good environmental stewardship.
- **Transformation** — We encourage creative solutions to problems, prioritizing work informed by, and building with, people and communities facing systemic inequity.

Our impact

2025 AT A GLANCE



240+ grants totalling more than \$109 million to local organizations doing incredible work



\$63+ million invested in legal aid to improve access to justice



\$21+ million invested in law reform to improve the legal system



\$13+ million invested in legal education to empower communities and professionals



\$7+ million invested in legal research to inform better policy and practice



\$3+ million invested in law libraries to expand access to legal information





PHOTO BY EMMETT RACE

Message from the Chair

My first connection to the Law Foundation began more than 20 years ago, when I was in law school and serving on the executive of several student clubs and organizations. I prepared proposals and completed interim, financial, and final reports for initiatives that created educational and memorable experiences for law students. These included the Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Camp, Equity Conference, and support to attend and host the Black Law Students' Association conference. Through those early experiences, I came to see the Law Foundation as an important source of support for legal community initiatives.

At the time, however, I did not fully understand the Foundation's role in collecting and distributing interest on lawyers' trust accounts in the province to support legal education, law libraries, legal research, legal aid, and law reform. Although I became more familiar with its work over time through annual reports and funding priorities, it was not until I joined the Racial Justice Grants Advisory Committee in 2023 that I truly appreciated both the breadth of its mission and the intentional way it engages communities in its grant-making.



“In 2024 and 2025, we invested in significant expansions of the legal clinics serving the Okanagan and Thompson regions in Kamloops and Kelowna.”

I was honoured to be appointed to the Board of Governors later that same year, and now, as Chair, I have an even deeper appreciation for the responsibility of stewarding the Foundation’s resources with care and purpose. I bring to this role more than 16 years of experience in private practice and the public sector, along with governance experience as a board member, adjudicator, and volunteer, as well as firsthand experience applying for grants.

What stands out as an achievement in 2025 is the significant increase in funding for front-line direct legal services — the legal clinics and legal advocacy network in BC. The need for civil legal aid services continues to grow, especially in communities that are further away from large cities. Many people are facing challenges to fair access to the justice system, and in many communities, there has been a struggle to maintain adequate availability of legal services across many different areas of law.

Consistently over the past several years, the lion’s share of the Law Foundation’s investments have been under our mandate area of legal aid. This mandate area includes any type of legal assistance or legal services, provided free for clients. Last year, 50 per cent of our funding went to free legal services and support for low-income people in civil and family matters, which amounted to over \$37 million. This year we brought that amount to \$45 million.

The increased funding means that community legal clinics can offer expanded services that are well-networked and well-supported — we have invested in building the province-wide support infrastructure for these services. Two supports made possible through the Law Foundation’s funding are the Family Advocate Support Lawyer and the Community Advocate Support Line. These are services staffed by lawyers who are experts in family law and a range of other administrative law areas that intersect with the lives of low-income people. They provide timely legal advice for legal advocates who are navigating complex cases. This is just one example of the way increased investments in free legal services can strengthen communities.

In 2025 we focused on funding expanded services in the north, the Interior, and the Lower Mainland. In 2024 and 2025, we invested in significant expansions of the legal clinics serving the Okanagan and Thompson regions in Kamloops and Kelowna. In the coming year, investments are planned to deepen the legal services available to people in the Kootenays and in central Vancouver Island. Early 2026 saw the launch of the new Northern Access Legal Clinic in Prince George.

For the eight clinics that were started in a funding partnership with the province of BC, the Law Foundation decided to assume full funding responsibility in 2026. This will enable the Ministry of Attorney General to use that funding for other important justice priorities.



And for the legal clinics themselves, the consolidation of funding sources will make the financial administration significantly more straightforward and less time-consuming, permitting them to focus more time and resources on their core missions.

The work of the Law Foundation, as an independent funder, helps to narrow the gap on access to justice for people who are disadvantaged in BC. We do this independently and without relying on public finances, something we feel good about and will continue to steward with clarity.

I would like to recognize colleagues who have left the Board and express my gratitude for their exceptional service: Mary Childs, KC and Zara Suleman, KC. Mary, former Chair of the Law Foundation, and Zara, former Chair of the New Grants Committee, brought trusted

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leadership, sound judgment, and support to staff, committee members, stakeholders, and their fellow Board members. Their insight and steady guidance helped shape the Foundation's work and deepen its impact. The Law Foundation has benefited greatly from their thoughtful leadership and commitment.

— Karen Ameyaw, Chair
(written in June 2026)

Preferred financial institutions for lawyers' pooled trust accounts

The Law Foundation of BC is grateful to the Preferred Financial Institutions — banks and credit unions — that have committed to pay competitive interest rates on lawyers' pooled trust accounts.

We thank members of the legal profession who choose to hold their pooled trust accounts at these Preferred Financial Institutions. The interest earned on these accounts helps ensure that the Foundation can provide funding for organizations providing vital free or low-cost legal services for low-income people across the province, and many other access to justice programs.

This funding is an important way that the legal profession's activities contribute to improving access to justice in BC. We encourage all members of the legal profession to maintain their pooled trust accounts at Preferred Financial Institutions.

We acknowledge our competitive interest rate agreements with:



Royal Bank
of Canada



中国工商银行
INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL BANK OF CHINA



AND ITS DIVISION:



AND ITS DIVISIONS:

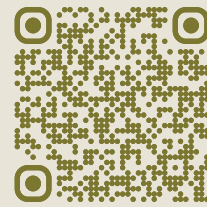


2025 Grant overview

In 2025, the Law Foundation approved more than \$109 million across more than 240 grants to advance access to justice in communities around BC.

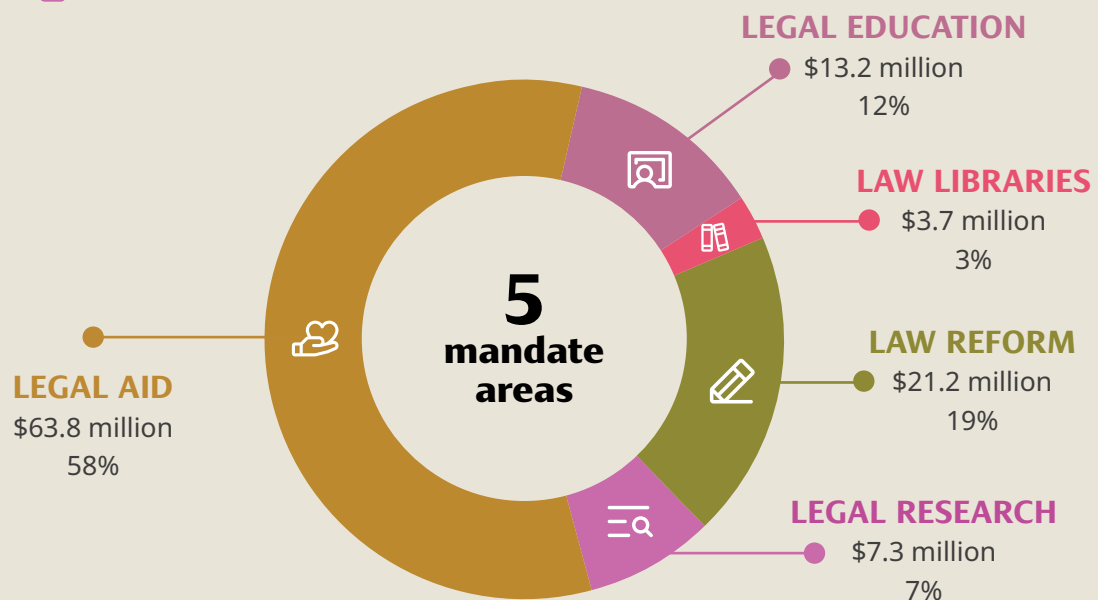
This annual report provides stories of work done in 2025 with Law Foundation funding.

To view a full list of grants approved in 2025, please visit our website at lawfoundationbc.org/grant-listings/





What we fund





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“My clients have complex issues, and I help them navigate to a safe situation and move forward in a healthy way.”

— Danielle Moore,
Family Law Advocate

PHOTO BY HANNAH KURJATA

Strengthening northern communities through legal advocacy

Legal services and support are especially difficult for low-income people to access in northern communities in BC. The network of legal advocates funded by the Law Foundation of BC plays a critical and unique role in addressing this significant access to justice gap.

In the Bulkley-Nechako region of BC's northwest, Linda Locke, KC, notes that access to legal services is often “the difference between people able to make choices, and people in despair.” Locke is the Executive Director and a supervising lawyer at the Upper Skeena Counseling and Legal Assistance Society, where the Law Foundation funds a Community Law Advocacy program that serves clients as they call or walk into the office seeking free legal assistance. While clients are primarily local, the program receives calls from people living anywhere in the northwest region.



“We’re an extension of access to justice,” Locke notes. “If our office doesn’t provide the service, we don’t shut the door on people — we refer them, we connect them to counselors, health services, or hospitals. People can give up really easily. Sometimes, we’re the last line.”

Legal advocates are trained in providing legal assistance, and practical and specialized support to their clients navigating complex legal issues. Sometimes, especially in the north, they are the only people in a community who can provide any legal assistance at all, and other support is many hours away.

“We have such few resources,” says Danielle Moore, the Family Law Advocate at Fort St. John Women’s Resource Society. “We serve the entire Peace Region; the next closest legal advocate is Fort Nelson or Prince George. It’s challenging to get connected to lawyers, and not many take legal aid cases.”

Moore points out that in this northeastern community, the economics of the natural resource sector often presents difficult challenges for women who need legal support during family breakdown. “Lots of clients barely make income, while their ex or partner makes unimaginable money,” says Moore. The imbalance of resources in family law disputes means that free legal assistance can be a lifeline.

“We’re an extension of access to justice. If our office doesn’t provide the service, we don’t shut the door on people — we refer them, we connect them to counselors, health services, or hospitals.”

**— Linda Locke, KC,
Executive Director**

Moore considers that part of her work, in addition to providing legal advice and support, is to create a safety net for her clients — which is particularly important when people have moved far away from their other family supports for work. “How well you’re doing in life depends on how strong your support network is. When you’re isolated

because you’re here for your husband’s work, it’s really hard to keep that hope alive, to keep that good feeling” during family law difficulties, she said.

“My clients have complex issues, and I help them navigate to a safe situation and move forward in a healthy way.”

The need for free and accessible legal services in northern communities has been an ongoing focus for the Law Foundation. Over the past five years we’ve spent more than \$18 million at agencies based in Prince Rupert, Kitimat, Terrace, Hazelton, Smithers, Burns Lake, Prince George, Fort St. John, Fort Nelson, Williams Lake, Quesnel, Dawson Creek, and serving the regions beyond those centres. ●



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“I work with them to make sure they excel and support the people in their community.”

— Maggie House,
Supervising Lawyer

PHOTO BY EMMETT RACE

Centralized supervision enables more effective legal advocacy

There are a variety of arrangements through which supervising lawyers provide assistance and oversight for legal advocates in BC. There are many private bar lawyers in communities across BC who have supervised legal advocates for many years and have deep relationships with their program. Another approach that has developed over the last few years is the centralized supervision model. In this model, supervising lawyers are employed at a community-based organization and provide supervision to legal advocacy programs around the province.

Maggie House is a private bar lawyer at Portside Law family law firm in New Westminster, and a supervising lawyer at Rise Women's Legal Centre. Her position at Rise is one of several staff lawyer positions funded by the Law Foundation of BC to provide centralized supervision. House led a pilot project in 2022 to centralize supervision of family law advocates. After the pandemic, affordability and other issues were causing serious strain across the network of access to justice services in BC. “At the time, the rural and remote locations were facing significant challenges retaining family law advocates,” says House. “Critically, these family law advocates were placed in areas that have significant gaps in legal services. They are in locations that are very rural and very remote. These locations typically do not have many family law lawyers, and some have no lawyers at all.” The Law Foundation decided to invest more in support infrastructure for advocates.

What House heard early on from legal advocates was that there is a clear benefit to consistent, centralized support from dedicated supervising lawyers. House homed in on areas for improvement and growth and developed systems around standardized supervision and onboarding. She also developed and provided practical training and education.

As their supervising lawyer, “I am completely accessible to the family law advocates; they are my priority—they are my sole concern. I work with them to make sure they excel and support the people in their community.”

This availability and ease of access is experienced in an impactful way by the legal advocates doing the work. Michelle Testawich-Krawczyk is the Family Law Advocate at Prince George Native Friendship Centre. She works with House as her supervising lawyer. “I have the ability to text her if I have a question. She can review things quickly so I can get things back to a client.”

Like in other northern communities, the scope of legal services provided by Testawich-Krawczyk are in great need. “There’s a big demand, especially in Prince George. There are not many family law lawyers and very few legal aid lawyers to assist with family law matters.” Testawich-Krawczyk describes the switch to centralized supervision with House as pivotal. “It completely changed everything. We have a great relationship.”

Centralized supervision continues to mature as a program. The supervision model developed by Rise for family law advocacy programs demonstrated so much promise in its early years that the Law Foundation decided to fund a similar service, adapted to support the different needs of community legal advocacy programs at Community Legal Assistance Society. Centralized supervision of legal advocates is already making the networked system of legal supports for low-income people more effective. ●



“There’s a big demand, especially in Prince George. There are not many family law lawyers and very few legal aid lawyers to assist with family law matters.”

**— Michelle Testawich-Krawczyk,
Family Law Advocate**



PHOTO BY FREE WEST PHOTOGRAPHY



Launch of new training program for legal advocates

For the past two decades, the Law Foundation-funded legal advocates received formal training through two courses: the Family Law Advocacy Training Course and Legal Advocate Training Course. There was a two-week course for beginner legal advocates each fall, and another two-week course for intermediate legal advocates in the early spring. This model, facilitated by staff of the Law Foundation, was relatively effective for the years while the legal advocacy network was smaller. However, as the network has grown in recent years, the model has resulted in newly hired legal advocates sometimes going months without receiving any formal training.

Legal advocates were explicit about the need for training to build their capacity to effectively support clients who are systemically marginalized.



In 2023, the Law Foundation conducted a needs assessment to understand how our training approach could be improved to better meet the needs of legal advocates. The study revealed some key themes.

Needs from legal advocates

Legal advocates provided insightful feedback about their training needs and affirmed some of our assumptions. They confirmed the categories of learning that would benefit them the most in their different legal advocacy roles, and that they needed to be delivered within the first month in their roles. For example, Community Law Advocates emphasized the need for training on residential tenancy, provincial disability benefits, and an overview of welfare. Professional responsibility and file management were also named as learning priorities.

In addition to legal knowledge and technical skills, legal advocates were explicit about the need for training to build their capacity to effectively support clients who are systemically marginalized. They emphasized the need to learn with a decolonizing, anti-oppressive, and anti-racist lens, and that trauma- and mental health-informed approaches to working with clients should be prioritized.

Legal advocates also provided feedback that in-person learning could support better learning for some.

Strategic shift in approach

Incorporating feedback from legal advocates, we began to plan a major shift in our approach to the foundational legal advocate training program. Through a collaboration between the Law Foundation, University of the Fraser Valley, and a community working group of experienced legal advocates and lawyers, a new training program was developed.

The pilot launched in November of 2025, with senior, experienced legal advocates hired as instructors. The pilot included a three-part structure: pre-training onboarding, core training common to all legal advocates, and specialized streams in either family law or community law. The first cohorts of learners are already sharing feedback about their learning experience, which will enable us to continue improving the program. We will keep evolving this program to ensure legal advocates can provide high quality legal services to the clients they support. ●



The three-year grant from the Law Foundation of BC enables QMUNITY's new legal clinic to operate sustainably, providing consistent, reliable access to justice.

QMUNITY's new legal clinic is a place of hope

For many members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, accessing legal services can feel intimidating. Discrimination, systemic barriers and financial constraints often prevent people from getting the support they need. QMUNITY, a nonprofit working to improve queer, trans and Two-Spirit lives, is changing that with its new legal clinic aimed solely at serving 2SLGBTQIA+ people. "So many queer and trans people want to work with someone who understands what it's like," says Didi Dufresne, Director of Legal Services at QMUNITY. "It's an immense privilege to be there for people as they speak out against injustice."

The QMUNITY Legal Clinic helps clients navigate various types of law, such as family, employment and tenancy law, and legal name changes. Because QMUNITY already



"It's an immense privilege to be there for people as they speak out against injustice."

**— Didi Dufresne,
Director of
Legal Services**



“At the end of the day, it’s about supporting each other and building a community where everyone can live fully as themselves.”

— Didi Dufresne

offers counselling and special support groups for seniors and youth, it can refer legal clinic clients to more support when needed. Services are offered at no cost, a must when serving a community that is significantly marginalized.

Community support helped make clinic possible

The three-year grant of \$385,000 per year from the Law Foundation of BC enables the clinic to operate sustainably, providing consistent, reliable access to justice. “I feel so lucky to be supported; they’re stalwart, committed supporters of access to justice,” says Dufresne, who previously worked as an advocacy manager at First United, another Law Foundation grantee.

Queer and trans lawyers from around Vancouver and BC flocked to the legal clinic’s launch party. “Being able to network with other queer and trans lawyers is invaluable to the profession,” says Dufresne. For instance, QMUNITY relies on volunteer lawyers to staff its name change clinics.

The work is challenging, but QMUNITY’s legal clinic is rooted not just in legal victories, but in queer joy. “The fight is hard for sure,” says Dufresne, “But queer joy keeps us engaged and reminds us why this work matters. At the end of the day, it’s about supporting each other and building a community where everyone can live fully as themselves.” ●



PHOTOS BY EMMET RACE



Financial highlights

In 2025, the Law Foundation of BC collected \$120.4 million in interest earned on lawyers' pooled trust accounts, \$48.6 million in investment income, and \$1.7 million in other income including government grants.

\$109.2 million in grants were approved, a 20.6% increase from 2024. \$1.9 million was spent on grantee training and operational support, reflecting our focus on providing additional supports for grantees beyond their core funding.

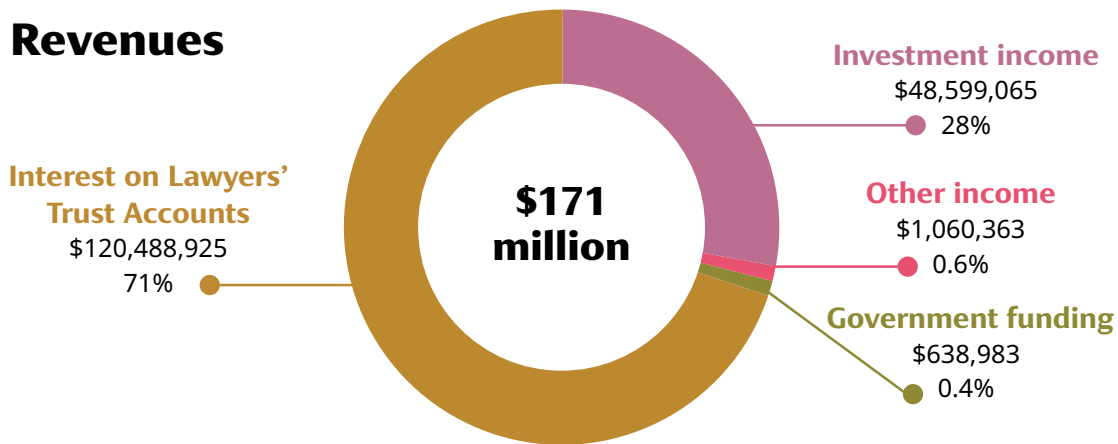
Grant Stabilization Fund

In 2025, \$49.9 million was added to the Grant Stabilization Fund (GSF), bringing the fund to \$465.6 million. At year-end, the GSF ratio was 3.4 times annual average expenditures—just shy of the Law Foundation's optimal ratio range of 3.5 to 5.0.

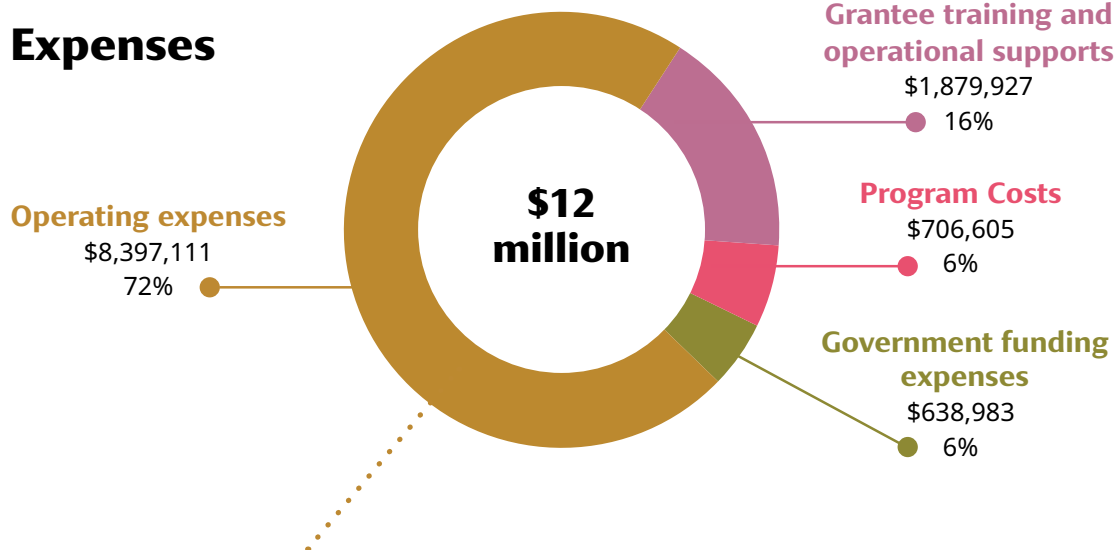
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in grants were
approved in 2025,
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To view our audited financial statements, please visit our website at:
lawfoundationbc.org/annual-report/

Revenues



Expenses



Breakdown of operating expenses

Salaries and employee benefits

\$6,507,235
78%

Office and other

\$406,215
5%

Information technology

\$376,642
4%

Consulting and legal

\$367,708
4%

Rent and occupancy costs

\$299,579
4%

Amortization of capital assets

\$163,996
2%

Staff and board meetings and travel

\$159,418
2%

Audit and annual report

\$116,318
1%

Our Board of Governors & committee assignments

Karen Ameyaw

Foundation Chair; Executive (Chair); Ex-officio member of all other committees

Lilian Chau

Finance & Operations

Abigail Cheung

Executive; Policy & Planning (Chair)

Mary Childs, KC

Executive; Policy & Planning

R. Max Collett

Capacity & Access Funds; Finance & Operations; Investments

Sharon Hobenshield, Ha-Youly

New Grants

Claire Hunter, KC

Executive; Finance & Operations (Chair); Investments

David Hughes

Capacity & Access Funds; Finance & Operations;

Eugene Lee

Executive; Finance & Operations; Investments (Chair); New Grants

Judge Nina Purewal

Capacity & Access Funds; New Grants; Policy & Planning

Sarah Runyon

Policy & Planning

Judge Linda Thomas

Capacity & Access Funds

Brandon L. Veenstra

New Grants; Policy & Planning

Leah Mack

Capacity & Access Funds (Chair); Policy & Planning

Paul Craven

Assistant Deputy Minister, Justice Services Branch, Ministry of the Attorney General

Zachary Murphy-Rogers

Capacity & Access Funds; New Grants; Policy & Planning

as of December 2025

Our Leadership Team

Darcie Bennett

Director of Strategic Projects

Kim Hawkins

Director of Legal Service Grants

Vi Nguyen

Director of Grants and Programs

Andrea Gutierrez Crosson

Director of People & Operations

Sarah Khan, KC

General Counsel

Josh Paterson, KC

Executive Director

Cheryl Churney

Interim Director of People & Operations

Patrick McNary

Director of Finance

Bernice Paul

Director of Communications





The work supported by the Foundation takes place on the unceded and treaty lands of First Nations across what is now known as British Columbia, Canada

If you would no longer like to receive our annual report, or would prefer to receive it by email, please visit lawfoundationbc.org/ar-mailing-list to update your preferences

lawfoundationbc.org