



Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc. seeks an Executive Director

Established in 1968, and located in Kern County, California, Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance, Inc. (GBLA) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote social change and justice by providing high quality legal services to the low-income community. Equal Justice Under Law is one of our nation's most basic principles. Economic realities leave this promise too often unfulfilled.

GBLA strives to accomplish this mission by first providing legal services to meet the basic legal needs of its eligible clients. These basic legal problems involve preventing homelessness, gaining access to health care, and securing financial resources to meet the necessities of life. GBLA also helps clients who are able and willing to get out of poverty by focusing on legal needs that address issues of economic and family stability, physical security, and access to quality education.

GBLA has a staff of 55, including 15 attorneys. It is financially stable with an annual budget of approximately \$6 million, primarily from federal and state grants. The successful candidate will succeed GBLA's long-time and well-respected former executive director, whose involvement with GBLA Legal Services spans over 30 years as executive director. In addition, the next Executive Director will have the commitment of the Board and Staff to engage in an exciting process of envisioning the future of GBLA. Personnel, Board support, and financial resources for planning and training exist. A strong administrative unit will support the new Executive Director and their leadership. This person will guide GBLA in the process of moving the organization into its next iteration. All staff are fully committed to GBLA's mission and values and are excited to welcome a new leader.

About GBLA:

For over fifty years GBLA has helped thousands of the poorest and most vulnerable residents of Kern County with an array of legal issues involving access to health, housing and homelessness, children and family services, domestic violence, guardianship, consumer issues, and senior law and long-term care. Many services involve assistance with access to the basic necessities of life such as health care, housing, education, and food. GBLA plays a vital role in representing those who oftentimes do not have a voice and empowering low-income individuals, families, and communities to be their own agents of change.

GBLA's core values are:

- Striving for equal justice for all
- Confronting and addressing the root causes of poverty through the legal process
- Prioritizing work to be effective
- Advocating on behalf of clients in the forum which can most appropriately address their issues
- Encouraging education to support the mission
- Empowering those served

GBLA's work includes: protecting young children from exposure to violence, assisting grandparents with obtaining legal guardianship so children in their care have an opportunity to grow up in a stable and loving home environment, ensuring elderly residents of long-term care facilities live with dignity and respect in environments free from abuse and neglect, moving homeless persons from the streets to housing and jobs, protecting individuals and families from housing discrimination, assisting families and children with meaningful access to health services, and moving the most vulnerable of individuals and families from seemingly impossible situations to hope and opportunity. GBLA provides counsel and advice, brief service, and direct representation.

GBLA staff members are highly engaged with the low-income community with activities such as community education presentations, targeted outreach events, community resource fairs, workshops, collaborative meetings, and self-help assistance.

In 2021, GBLA provided legal services to 1,391 clients.

High Priority Roles and Responsibilities for the next Executive Director:

The Executive Director is responsible for the overall administration, operation and supervision of all phases of GBLA's programs, and providing leadership and direction for GBLA. The Executive Director will nurture and sustain relationships with the Board of Directors of GBLA, the Legal Services Corporation, the State Bar of California, the Kern County Office on Aging, staff, local government and public officials, clients and representatives of client groups. Included in this category are the following criteria:

- Serve as an effective ambassador for GBLA, by nurturing collaborative relationships with funders and grantors, elected officials, private bar and judicial leaders, private donors, and business and civic organizations throughout the service area;
- Hire, supervise, guide, direct, evaluate, lead and retain staff to ensure a positive equitable and safe workplace culture, including successful management of hybrid employees;
- Oversee and execute a strategic operational plan in conjunction with Board and staff;
- Create, lead, and support an effective management team;

- Provide leadership and nurture the values of GBLA, including a holistic view of client services, ease of access for new clients, and prioritization of strategies that treat the cause of legal problems.

- Foster diversity, equity, and inclusion in the program's delivery of services to clients, with staff and board, and a culture that promotes mutual respect and teamwork;

- Increase and diversify financial support for GBLA, and provide leadership for development initiatives;

- Ensure the organization's financial health and stability by developing and maintaining sound financial planning and management systems, including preparation of budgets and oversight of financial systems and controls;

- Develop GBLA's culture, emphasizing inclusiveness, openness, transparency, compassion and supportiveness;

- Maintain GBLA's leadership role among city, state, and national poverty advocacy organizations and coordinate its work with those groups;

Desired Qualifications and Experience of the Successful Executive Director Candidate:

- JD from an accredited law school
- Active member of the California State Bar
- Significant previous legal practice with low income and elderly clients
- Ability to relate to the client community being served
- Previously demonstrated leadership and admin skills
- Bilingual Spanish and English a plus
- Exceptional leadership skills and a passionate commitment to advocating for the legal rights of low-income individuals and those from disadvantaged communities;
- Substantial management experience in a successful legal services organization, law firm, corporate law department, branch of a court system, relevant government agency or nonprofit organization;
- Management experience at a policy-making level including nonprofit programmatic planning, evaluation, staff supervision, legal systems development, fiscal oversight, reporting and budget development;
- Significant civil legal practice experience in one of GBLA's core case service areas;
- Experience developing relationships for resource development and a history of successful grant-writing;
- Knowledge of the Legal Services Corporation and state regulatory systems that apply to GBLA;
- A visionary, positive and collaborative leadership style when working with staff and Board;
- A high level of initiative and the ability to make decisions, solve problems and plan;
- Experience working with organizations and individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, including clients, staff, board members, the public, and elected and appointed officials;
- Additional personal attributes including resilience, open-mindedness, ability to motivate and delegate, professionalism, integrity and good listening skills.

Location: This is primarily an on-site position at GBLA's Bakersfield office. Periodic travel throughout the service area is required.

Salary: The anticipated salary range of the competitive candidate is \$145,000 - \$190,000, depending on experience and qualifications.

Application Process:

GBLA is assisted in its search for a new Executive Director by Patricia Pap, Consultant, Management Information Exchange, www.mielegalaid.org.

Materials should be submitted electronically to ppap@mielegalaid.org in Microsoft Word or PDF format. Candidates with questions about the position or process are encouraged to contact Patricia at the email address above or at 508-737-4010.

To receive full consideration, you are encouraged to submit your application materials by **December 18, 2023**. Please submit a letter expressing your interest in the position, your qualifications for the job, and what you believe you will be able to contribute to GBLA's future. Please include a resume and the names and contact information for three professional references.

About Kern County:

GBLA is located in Bakersfield, Kern County's largest metropolitan city, with a growing population of 408,000. Bakersfield is the 9th most populated city in California. Kern County has a population of 917,000, and is situated in south-central California, occupying 8,134.65 square miles (larger than the states of Delaware, Connecticut and Rhode Island combined, or the states of Massachusetts or Hawaii). Kern County is the third largest geographic county in the state of California.

The county spans the southern end of the Central Valley, ranging west to the southern slope of the Coast Ranges, and east beyond the southern slope of the eastern Sierra Nevada into the Mojave Desert, at the city of Ridgecrest. Its northernmost city is Delano. Its southern reach extends to just beyond Frazier Park, and the northern extremity of Antelope Valley.

The Kern County population is diverse, including, 31% White non-Hispanic, 6% Black or African American, 3% American Indian and Alaska Native, 6% Asian, less than 1% Native Hawaiian, and "other." 56% of the population in Kern County is Hispanic, making it California's third-most populous majority-Hispanic county and the sixth-largest nationwide.

16% of residents in the county live below the 125% poverty level. The population over the age of 65 is 11%. Kern County is one of the youngest counties in the state with 31% of Kern County children under the age of 6.

Kern County is known for:

- **Agriculture and farming** – Kern County is often referred to as the “breadbasket of California,” due to its significant contributions to the state’s agricultural industry. The region’s fertile soil and favorable climate make it an ideal location for cultivating a wide variety of crops, including almonds, citrus fruits, grapes, and cotton.
- **Oil and energy** – Kern County is known for its association with the oil and energy industry. The city’s history and growth are closely intertwined with the discovery of oil in the late 19th century. Today, it remains a significant hub for oil production, with numerous oil fields dotting the landscape. It also has a strong aviation, space, and military presence
- **Aviation/Space Exploration** – The Mojave Spaceport, Edwards Air Force Base, and the China Lake Naval Weapons Program are at the forefront of science and technology and bolster the county’s economic base.
- **California State University Bakersfield** – Home of the Road Runners! Established in 1968 and with enrollment of over eight thousand students. Offering a quality education and Division 1 Sports Programs to the local community.
- **Outdoor recreation** – Kern County offers plenty of opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts to engage in recreational activities. The nearby Sierra Nevada Mountains and Kern River provide a picturesque backdrop for hiking, fishing, camping, biking, water sports and other activities.
- **Historic sites and museums** - The Kern County Museum showcases the region’s past through interactive exhibits and preserved buildings, while the Bakersfield Museum of Art features an impressive collection of contemporary and modern artworks. History buffs will appreciate a visit to the Colonel Baker’s Field, the city’s namesake and a site of historical significance.

For more information about GBLA, visit www.gbla.org.