On the eve of the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum demonstrating the universal nature of Goal 16 by formally establishing the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (LAIR) and charged it with "assist[ing] the United States with implementation of Goal 16." The activities of LAIR recognize that access to justice is necessary to end poverty within our nation's borders. As Ambassador Samantha Power said at the time of the 2030 Agenda's adoption, "it would be a serious mistake – and would run contrary to the universal character of the 2030 Agenda – to think that this goal [Goal 16] only applies to fragile or conflict-ridden countries ... all governments – including developed democracies, including mine and many of yours – must work at building more just, inclusive, and transparent societies."

While access to justice is a distinct goal in the 2030 Agenda, it is also necessary to realizing many of the other Sustainable Development Goals. The same is true of the work done to advance access to justice by LAIR and its civil society partners. Through integrating civil legal aid into federal programs that support underserved communities, not only is access to justice improved, federal programs that focus on poverty (Goal 1), hunger prevention (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), the empowerment of women (Goal 5), employment (Goal 8), inequality (Goal 10), and safety (Goal 11) are also strengthened.

And that is how the National Legal Aid and Defender Association and the Justice in Government Project have been so successful expanding legal help for individuals and families by unlocking funding opportunities for civil legal aid in the United States.
NLADA supports efforts to secure funding for legal aid providers to serve underserved populations, including:

- Using a variety of mechanisms to educate providers about recurring and emerging programs. These outreach methods include in-person and virtual presentations, as well as dissemination of information through LegalAidResources.org, NLADA-hosted listservs, and listservs of partner organizations;
- Promoting a wide array of federal programs, ranging from longstanding and well-known grant programs to new initiatives and demonstration projects. This includes programs for which civil legal aid can apply as a primary grantee, as a partner subgrantee, or advocate with state and local government entities for funding through block and formula grants; and
- Reaching additional providers not only to increase the number of federal grant programs of which providers are aware, but also the number of providers who are aware of these grant programs. Through this outreach, we engaged programs beyond the traditional community of providers as well as civil legal aid programs who do not regularly consider pursuing federal funding.

NLADA works to increase awareness of how legal aid advances policymaker and grant administrators’ goals:

- Continuing to educate on the importance of the Legal Services Corporation federal funding, which is necessary for the provision of civil legal aid across the United States; and
- By submitting official comments to federal agencies on their program designs, including official comments to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) to emphasize the critical role Public Service Loan Forgiveness and other federal programs play in underwriting the availability and quality of critical public services, and specifically legal services.

JGP supports efforts to secure funding for legal aid providers to serve underserved populations, including:

- Civil legal aid programs in Kentucky, Ohio, Oklahoma, and West Virginia launching projects that partner with schools and health clinics to provide legal help to children and their caregivers affected by the opioid crisis through DOJ OVC funds;
- The Los Angeles Mayor’s Office for Reentry use of state funds for legal help to remove barriers to employment for people with criminal records;
- Arizona Bar Foundation receipt of DOJ OVC funding to develop a service provider technology coalition and interactive website about the housing, consumer, family, and guardianship civil legal needs of crime victims, bringing this information to both rural and urban parts of the state; and
- State-administered federal crime victims funds by extending the categories of crime victims that can be reached by legal help to victims of wage theft and other employment-related crimes and financial fraud.

JGP works to increase awareness of how legal aid advances policymaker and grant administrators’ goals:

- In collaboration with NLADA, JGP conducted outreach for commentators when the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) issued a Notice of Request for Information on the VA’s Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers that included a section on legal needs;
- Collaborated with Legal Aid Association of California to support incorporating legal aid into a new grant program funded by the state’s cannabis tax; and
- Recognizing the federal government’s call for resources to address the ongoing opioid crisis, JGP and NLADA produced a factsheet about how civil legal aid can be a partner for addressing this crisis.

For more about the NLADA’s work, check out this page.

The Justice in Government Project’s Toolkit helps government policymakers, grant administrators, and advocates learn about the evidence base for legal aid, funding opportunities, and examples of successful state partnerships.

To learn more about LAIR’s work, check out their annual report and Toolkit. Learn more about Goal 16 here.