



# Maryland Commission on Civil Rights

## Strategic Plan

2013-2018



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# Introduction

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) is pleased to present the Strategic Plan for the Commission as a clear, measurable challenge for the coming years.

The Strategic Plan (“the Plan”) not only reflects a recognition of the Commission’s primary mandate - the enforcement of the State of Maryland’s laws against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts - but also details a very aggressive approach to the education and outreach to every stakeholder in Maryland, with emphasis on underserved and vulnerable segments of the population in Maryland.

The Plan embraces several core values regarding the mandate and services that MCCR provides. **MCCR is committed to the following core values:**

1. **Accountability** as an agency through our actions, products and services offered, decisions made, and policies implemented. Every employee will be held accountable as representatives of the State of Maryland Commission on Civil Rights.
2. A healthy work-life **balance** for our employees.
3. Through training and development, we motivate employees to take initiative and perform at their highest level. By doing so, we **empower** our employees to lead and make good decisions.
4. **Transparency** in all of our communications, both internally (among staff) and externally (with leaders and the greater public).
5. **Integrity** in our work and services, while holding our ethics to the highest standard.
6. We understand that the work the Commission performs without dedicated **collaboration** and **teamwork** with each and every staff member, community leader, and partner.

As stated, the primary mandate of the Commission is to enforce the laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and state contracts. This mandate, as reinforced through Governor Martin O’Malley’s leadership, consumes a majority of the resources that MCCR receives through both State general funds and Federal funds (from contractual partnerships with EEOC and HUD).

*Therefore, MCCR must recognize, from the outset, that the availability of resources will have a profound impact on the endeavors delineated outside of the processing of complaints of discrimination.* The Plan has, however, carefully considered historic levels of funding and achievement, and believes at current funding levels the Plan, while very aggressive, can be accomplished.

The Plan prioritizes outstanding customer service as a key feature of every objective, and has incorporated measurement tools to evaluate all aspects of the various objectives and programs. Additionally, the plan requires MCCR to be proactive in a more robust fashion than it has been in recent history, especially in the areas of outreach and education. All of the objectives and strategies to accomplish those goals have clearly stated measurement tools, timeliness, and citations of staff responsibility.

The development process for the Plan involved the contributions of management, staff, and the Commissioners, as well as input from both government and private partners.

In order to realistically plan for the Commission to move forward, an assessment must be made regarding the current state of MCCR. About a year ago the Executive Director was appointed by Governor O'Malley. This was the first new Executive Director in 15 years.<sup>1</sup> Within the ensuing six weeks a Deputy Director was selected and installed to oversee Case Processing. The month prior to the appointment of the Executive Director, a new Assistant Director was hired. For the first time in nearly 30 years, MCCR had an entirely new management team. Additionally, in the past 18 months nearly 1/3 of the staff has changed.

During **FY2013**, the Executive Director outlined to the Governor, the Governor's legal representative, the Secretary of the Department Budget & Management, and the Commissioners several principal objectives to enhance the services MCCR provided while improving the work environment for staff. The objectives were:

1. Obtain a reclassification study to promote the salary upgrade for all investigative staff and supervisors. This was essential as MCCR staffs' salary levels lagged comparable positions on all levels, including the State. **This was accomplished effective July 1, 2013, for the first time in more than 20 years.**<sup>2</sup>
2. Upgrade all existing infrastructure of the MCCR IT system that was antiquated, prone to breakdowns and inefficient. **This was accomplished effective May, 2013. In addition, all personnel were provided new computers with completely updated software packages including software previously unavailable to the legal staff.**

<sup>1</sup> MCCR is currently in the process of selecting a new Executive Director.

<sup>2</sup> Due to ongoing budget constraints, MCCR is working to identify funds to support this reclassification.

3. Improve staff morale and the physical presentation of MCCR by replacing all public and conference room furniture, which far exceeded its life expectancy. Additionally, new desk chairs for every employee were necessary. Lastly, the office space at 6 Saint Paul Street, which had not been painted since MCCR moved in roughly two decades ago, needed to be refreshed. **All furniture has been replaced or is ordered, and the 9th floor, all common areas and some offices have been painted (the remainder of the offices will be painted in the near future).**

4. Redefine the Executive Assistant role from a largely clerical position into one where the dissemination of public information and the assistance in the development of an aggressive outreach program are the primary duties. **This was established and filled in May, 2013.**

5. Reestablish relationships with private partners from years past, such as the Equal Rights Center and Baltimore Neighborhoods, Inc. **These relationships were immediately rekindled and MCCR is currently in negotiations with HUD regarding FHIP/FHAP partnership grant funding with each entity. This funding will allow MCCR to enhance all three areas of the strategic plan through increased funding for case processing, outreach and education.**

6. Revitalize MCCR's education program by revamping the training models, retraining the existing staff, reassigning some of the training function from the General Counsel's office to other staff, and integrating some of these functions with our outreach efforts. **This process was initiated immediately, is continuing, and will remain an integral part of the Strategic Plan.**

7. Initiate efforts to meet with staff, inform them of budgetary and legislative changes that may affect them, and, generally, develop a sense of community within MCCR. **Upon installation of the new management team, MCCR has held numerous staff meetings, offered many more training opportunities, held events for staff to relax and simply communicate with each other, and for the first time in MCCR history, conducted a staff retreat (the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.) to re-energize and reengage the staff regarding the importance of MCCR's work.**

While all of these objectives have been accomplished or, as with the education provision, are ongoing in nature, there is still much to do. It is gratifying that the staff of MCCR has, through sacrifice, strong dedication, and hard work, achieved so much in less than one year. The challenges outlined in this Plan present the next phase of MCCR fulfilling its vision of a state free from unlawful discrimination.

The Strategic Plan follows a traditional approach in format, in that the Strategic Objectives are followed by Goals and the Strategies to effectuate the Plan. The three Strategic Objectives and the Goals are as follows, with detailed Strategies following this section:

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I:** *Enforce Maryland law prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation and state contracts.*

GOAL I - Reduce discrimination in Maryland.

GOAL II - Provide excellent and timely **advice and enforcement** regarding complaints of **unlawful** discrimination through a skilled workforce.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE II:** *Prevent discrimination through education.*

GOAL I - All stakeholders understand their rights and how to exercise them in creating a State free from discrimination.

GOAL II - All stakeholders understand their responsibilities in preventing violations of laws prohibiting discrimination.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE III:** *Increase MCCR's visibility and credibility by being recognized as the State's leading agency empowered to enforce the laws prohibiting discrimination.*

GOAL I - Increase the awareness of all stakeholders of the services MCCR provides.

**The Strategic Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis. Any amendments to the Plan will be recommended to the Commissioners from the Commission Staff.**

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# Mission

*It* is the mission of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights to ensure opportunity for all through the enforcement of Maryland's laws against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts; to provide educational outreach services related to provisions of this law; and to promote and improve civil rights in Maryland.

## Our vision

is to have a state that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.

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# The Commission

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) represents the interest of the State to ensure equal opportunity for all through enforcement of Title 20, State Government Article (formerly Article 49B) of the Annotated Code of Maryland, and the Title 19 of the State Finance & Procurement Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, which is State's Commercial Non-Discrimination Policy. MCCR investigates complaints of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and state contracts from members of protected classes that are covered under those laws.

MCCR is governed by a nine-member Commission appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Maryland Senate. Commission members are appointed to serve six-year terms. The Commission meets once a month to set policy and review programmatic initiatives.

The Commission is an independent agency that serves individuals, businesses, and communities throughout the State. Its mandate is to protect against discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation and genetic information. In housing cases, discrimination based on familial status is also unlawful.

In addition, the Commission assists employers in developing bias-free selection, hiring, retention, promotion and contracting procedures; increases equal housing opportunities to all groups in Maryland; ensures equal access to public accommodations and services; promotes knowledge and understanding of anti-discrimination laws; and helps to improve civil rights within the State.

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# History

It was for the purpose of considering matters concerning the “welfare of colored people residing in the State..., recommend legislation and sponsor movements looking to the welfare of said people, and to the improvement of interracial relations, and to cooperate with other State agencies to these ends” that the General Assembly created the **Interracial Commission** of Maryland in 1927 (Chapter 559 of 1927). The Commission was originally comprised of eighteen (18) members, nine (9) of which were Black and nine (9) were white. The Commission had no investigative or enforcement powers. However, in the realm of public service, the Commission came out against the Act of 1904. More commonly known as the Kerbin “Jim Crow” Law after its sponsor, Delegate William G. Kerbin of Worcester County, this law required separate seating, dining, and sleeping arrangements for Blacks and Whites on railroads and steamship lines operating strictly within the State’s borders.

In the arena of education, the Interracial Commission brought to light the vast disparities in education between the white and black communities. Specifically, the Commission found that:

1. Black teachers received a salary of \$640 per year, while white teachers received \$1150.
2. Per pupil spending was \$95 per year per white student, while only \$45 per year per black students.
3. White schools were open 187 days per year, while black schools were open 168 days per year.

In 1943, the Commission was renamed the **Commission to Study Problems Affecting the Colored Population** (Chapter 432 of 1943). Their first recommendations were:

1. The school code be amended to provide that the minimum salaries of colored teachers and supervisors be the same as those provided to whites,
2. An institution of higher learning be established for “Colored people around Morgan College,”
3. That Blacks be represented on all Boards and Commissions appointed by the State.

However, despite their work and recommendations, the Commission lacked staff and funding, and thus any power to positively and pro-actively affect the public policy at the time.

Then in 1951, the Commission to Study Problems Affecting the Colored Population was rebranded the **Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations** (Chapter 548 of 1951). This change was prompted by nearly a decade of racial tensions in Maryland, including riots in Baltimore in 1942 and the meeting of the Maryland Congress against Discrimination in 1946. While still lacking human and financial resources, the Commission found an ally in Governor Theodore R. McKeldin, a strong civil rights advocate.

Due to the national Civil Rights Movement and the breaking down of numerous barriers, the Maryland General Assembly and Governor established the **Commission on Human Relations** in 1969 (Chapter 83 of 1968). This was the first time that the Commission was allotted a budget for paid staff. By Chapter 153 of 1969, the State waived its sovereign immunity and the Commission was empowered to initiate and investigate complaints of discrimination in State agencies.

The 1974 General Assembly made further amendments to the law. Discrimination in housing on the bases of marital status and sex were prohibited, and exceptions were provided with respect to the application of certain provisions in the Discrimination in Housing subtitle (Chapter 848 of 1974). A second bill provided that it was unlawful for persons and organizations to discriminate in certain employment practices against persons who were mentally or physically handicapped, to prohibit certain discriminatory activities against the physically or mentally handicapped in housing or obtaining loans on dwellings, and to make technical corrections to the language (Chapter 601 of 1974). A parallel bill prohibited discriminatory activities in public accommodations, employment, and housing because of marital status or physical or mental handicaps, and clarifying the language of the law (Chapter 875 of 1974).

By Chapter 419 of 1975, the Commission was permitted to seek certain types of court relief; namely, a temporary injunction if the Commission believed the appropriate civil action is necessary to preserve the status of the parties or to prevent irreparable harm. Chapter 333 of 1975 provided that it was lawful for employers to establish standards concerning an employee's dress and grooming if the standards were directly related to the nature of the employment.

Chapters 937, 907, and 706 of 1977 were important changes that set the Commission on the track to its modern composition. Chapter 937 of 1977 reduced the size of the Commission from twelve (12) members to nine (9), empowered the Commission to designate its own chair person, and abolished the previous \$16,000 salary for the Chairperson. The new legislation continued the appointment of the Executive Director by the Governor, but provided that he must choose from a list of five names submitted by the Commission, and also provided for the Executive Director's removal by the Governor upon recommendation of two-thirds of the members of the Commission. The authority to appoint and remove the Deputy Director and the General Counsel was transferred from the Governor to the Executive Director with approval by the majority of the Commission members. The law also authorized the appointment of hearing examiners to hear cases under the Human Relations law, and provided for an appeal from the decisions of the hearing examiner to the Commission. Finally, the new legislation expanded the Commission's power to order appropriate relief for victims of discrimination by empowering the Commission to award monetary relief, limited to two years back pay, to the victims of employment discrimination.

Furthermore, Chapter 907 of 1977 required employers to treat disabilities caused or contributed to by pregnancy or childbirth in the same manner as they treat other disabilities; and by Chapter 706 of 1977, the procedures that the Commission must follow in processing employment discrimination complaints against State agencies were altered.

Overall, the Maryland Commission on Human Relations got its true authority beginning with Chapter 83 of 1968. For the next few decades, amendments were adopted on occasion, but the Commission still served a single purpose – to administer and enforce the Maryland Public Accommodations Law, Discrimination in Housing Law, and the Fair Employment Practices Law. In order to effectively achieve this, the Commission has a deferral relationship and funding provided by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the federal Department of Housing & Urban Development.

In 1999, Governor Parris N. Glendening made Maryland history as the first sitting Governor to advocate for banning discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It wasn't until 2001 that these protections were codified, after the Governor's pushing the bill in the Maryland General Assembly for two years (Chapter 340 of 2001). With that, sexual orientation was added to the already identified protected classes in Maryland law. That same year, genetic information was also included as a protected class.

The Commission has continued to build upon this framework as it carries on its superior investigatory procedures in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts. In 2011, the Commission changed its name to the **Maryland Commission on Civil Rights** to more accurately reflect the anti-discrimination work through enforcement of the State's anti-discrimination laws, and through public outreach and education (Chapter 580 of 2011).

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# 1. Case Processing

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I:** *Enforce Maryland law prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation and state contracts.*

**GOAL I** - Reduce discrimination in Maryland.

**GOAL II** - Provide excellent and timely **advice and enforcement** regarding complaints of **unlawful** discrimination through a skilled workforce.

**Responsibility** - **Executive Director**, Deputy Director, Case Processing Staff

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MCCR receives complaints directly from individuals who believe they have been victims of unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and state contracts, and also processes cases for the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). MCCR maintains headquarters in Baltimore, with supporting field operations in Hagerstown, Leonardtown, Salisbury and Easton.

The Case Processing Department provides intake and investigative services for the complaints filed with and transferred to MCCR. In an effort to expedite the investigative process, certain tools, such as fact finding conferences and mediation, may be utilized when appropriate.

The Department has achieved great success over the past 15 years and has consistently provided the people of Maryland with high quality, timely service. For the past 15 years the Division has had an average case age which has varied between 25% and 33% of the national average. During that time, the Department has maintained one of the highest acceptance rates in the nation of completed cases by our two federal partners. During the past year the Department achieved the highest total figure for monetary relief to Complainants which was over \$2 million with one of the smallest staffs the Commission has had.

Nonetheless, there are a number of areas where the Department will focus on to improve the services MCCR provides.

### **Strategy 1.1: Reducing Intake Processing Time**

In order to continue to provide excellent and timely service to the public regarding complaints of discrimination, MCCR will reduce the intake processing time at a minimum of 10% annually by the end of fiscal year 2018.

During the first year and in subsequent years where appropriate, MCCR will review and analyze current intake policies and procedures in order to provide a prompt initial interview and charge development where appropriate. It is believed that this will have a positive impact on the number of intakes MCCR will process during the year, given that feedback indicates a delay in the initial interview may result in an individual failing to file a charge.

*Goal for Completion:* Overall reduction of at least 10% annually until the close of FY2018 for intake processing time; Analysis conducted to review and address successes and challenges regarding achieving the minimum intake reduction by August 1 of every fiscal year; An analysis of the changes of the program, required staffing needs and implementation will take place by January 1, 2014. By June 30, 2014, an analysis of the results of the changes that will occur at the close of FY2015 will be completed.

### **Strategy 1.2: Efficiency of Case Processing Times**

In order to reduce discrimination in Maryland, the Case Processing staff will maintain the current time in processing of Employment and Housing cases and reduce the time in processing of Public Accommodations cases to comparable levels.

There are challenges with succeeding in this goal because for a number of years MCCR has endured an ever-diminishing staffing level through diminutions in both State and Federal funding. The assessment of this particular strategy is based upon the staffing level at the time of this writing and changes in the level of staffing, regardless if positive or negative, will perhaps alter the time for completion of this component.

*Goal for Completion:* Case processing times for Employment and Housing cases will remain at current levels or improve; Public Accommodations cases will see reduction to comparable levels as Employment and Housing cases by October 1, 2015; Empower staff through training and leadership opportunities to reach optimal case processing levels by October 1, 2017; Across-the-board reduction in case processing times, with a 10% reduction achieved by the start of FY2015, and a 15% reduction achieved by the start of FY2016; At the conclusion of FY2015, review case processing procedures to identify areas where optimization can occur without sacrificing quality of service; additional reductions will be amended into this plan if analysis demonstrates feasibility.

### **Strategy 1.3: Case Processing Compliance Manual**

In order to provide excellent and timely service to the public regarding complaints of discrimination, a Case Processing Compliance Manual needs to be published as a resource and training tool for Investigative staff and supervision. The existing Manual has not been updated in many years in terms of process or changes in the laws enforced by MCCR. Given the current organizational structure, a resource for all relevant staff to use to provide quality and consistent service is essential to MCCR's growth and success. This project will involve many Case Processing staff members as well as those assigned to educational duties.

*Goal for Completion:* Final edition of the manual to be published in the second half of the calendar year, 2014; revisions and edits will be made on a continual basis as information requires updating.

### **Strategy 1.4: Conduct Systemic Investigations**

To reduce discrimination in Maryland, MCCR will conduct, resource permitting, at least one Systemic Investigation per year. The institution of this type of investigation must be based upon reliable information demonstrating that a pattern or broad practice of discrimination exists. Potential areas for focus could include accessibility issues in housing or public accommodations; employment and/or housing discrimination to Maryland's underserved or vulnerable populations; or other issues that may be a focus suggested by MCCR Commissioners and community partners.

*Goal for Completion:* Ongoing; contingent upon securing fiscal and human resources both independently and with community partners.

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# 2. Legal

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I:** *Enforce Maryland law prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation and state contracts.*

**GOAL I** - Reduce discrimination in Maryland.

**GOAL II** - Provide excellent and timely **advice and enforcement** regarding complaints of **unlawful** discrimination through a skilled workforce.

**Responsibility** - **Executive Director, General Counsel, Legal Staff**

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The General Counsel is responsible for representing the agency in all legal matters including but not limited to personnel matters, advising executive staff, defending the agency and staff when sued, and case processing. The Office's role in case processing involves litigating before the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH), jury trials in State Circuit Courts, subpoena enforcements, seeking injunctive relief, enforcement of Commission Orders, appearing before Appellate Courts, submitting amici briefs on issues relevant to the agency, and, on occasion, appearing in federal court.

In addition to litigation, the General Counsel's Office provides detailed advisory legal opinions to staff, responds to request for guidance from the staff and the public, case reviews, responds to Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) requests, and assists in drafting interrogatories and subpoenas. The Office also provides subject matter, procedural, and legal update training to the agency's staff. The Office also plays a lead role in legislative proposals, bills, testimony and research, as well as all functions related to proposing and analyzing agency regulations for amendments or new ones to comply with new law.

### **Strategy 2.1: Streamline Legal Processes**

The Office of the General Counsel will develop guidelines regarding complaints of discrimination, all subpoena or interrogatory enforcements, Statement(s) of Charges, Probable Cause case reviews, requested opinions and other activities related to the enforcement of MCCR's mandate. There are two critical factors to be considered in this plan:

1. The enforcement and strategic litigation of cases of discrimination is the prime function of the Office. All other activities, while not only important but essential to the function of MCCR, are secondary to this focus.
2. The staffing level of the unit has been reduced considerably in recent years. The Office has, however, played an ever increasing role in Education and Outreach. While these activities comprise a major portion of the Strategic Plan, the Office of the General Counsel will be relieved of many of these duties through reassignment to appropriate staff. This is not to suggest the Office will have no role in these matters, but rather the primary focus of the Office will be enforcement and litigation.

### **Strategy 2.2: Advocating for All-Inclusive Equality under the Law**

In order to reduce discrimination in Maryland the Executive Director, Office of the General Counsel, MCCR outreach staff, and the Commissioners will develop a plan for changes in the laws enforced by MCCR to enhance the remedies available to individuals who file complaints of discrimination in Public Accommodations and the Issuance of State contracts. This plan should also identify possible and appropriate areas of expansion of the Commission's enforcement authority in law.

As previously stated, legislation has been a responsibility of the General Counsel's Office. This responsibility has included drafting departmental legislation, providing technical assistance to private sponsors of Title 20 legislation, preparing testimony and testifying at bill hearings, conducting research to address queries from legislators, acting as liaison with both the Governor's Office and legislators, and working with advocates on legislative proposals or other policy matters.

Over the past five to six years there has been significant legislative success in improving the coverage and remedies under Title 20 of the State Government Article. Some of the highlights include two new protected classes being added to Title 20 (sexual orientation and genetic information); the right to file a private action in court; and enhanced remedies to the employment discrimination subtitle. During this past legislative session reasonable accommodation was added as a protected right for pregnant employees.

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# 3. Administration

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE I:** *Enforce Maryland law prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation and state contracts.*

**GOAL I** - Reduce discrimination in Maryland.

**GOAL II** - Provide excellent and timely **advice and enforcement** regarding complaints of **unlawful** discrimination through a skilled workforce.

**Responsibility** - **Executive Director, Assistant Director, Administrative Support Staff**

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The multitude of services provided at MCCR would not be possible without the dedication and expertise provided by the administrative support staff. The Administrative Services Division is responsible for budget and fiscal administration, human resources, management information systems, general support services and facilities maintenance. Led by the Assistant Director, our human resources officer will continue to work with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) to ensure agency staff receive competitive and fair compensation while our IT Specialist will be responsible for building an information technology infrastructure to keep operations running smoothly. As MCCR continues to grow and improve services for Marylanders seeking relief, Administrative Services remains dedicated to providing comprehensive and strong support and guidance where it is needed.

## **Strategy 3.1: Case Management System (CMS) Database Project**

MCCR currently inputs all of the information obtained through intake, investigation, and legal services into a federal database. However, once that information is entered, it is difficult for the Commission to extract and analyze the intricacies of this data. In the spirit of transparency, to which MCCR is fully committed, we believe it is most important that we build and maintain an internal database, known as CMS. This will enable MCCR to analyze information in order to improve practices, while permitting MCCR to respond fully to inquiries from the public about the kind of services and work provided at the Commission.

*Goal for Completion:* IT Staff currently building the database; projected completion is June 1, 2014; annual reviews will be conducted to ensure accuracy and efficiency by August 1, with any modification completed within a one month period of the final review.

### **Strategy 3.2: MCCR Intra-Office Communication Network**

In today's information-based society, and with the O'Malley Administration's emphasis on telecommuting, it is imperative that MCCR build an intra-office communication network to guarantee staff have access to every resource they need both in the office and when working in the field. Over the past year, the IT Unit has taken great strides in building the foundation of this network. To date, staff currently have access, both locally and remotely, to any resource they need. These resources include official Commission stationary, HR-related programs, procurement requests, etc. Through the development of the "cloud" network and the recent acquisition of new technology (such as laptops) for the staff, MCCR employees are able to seamlessly continue their work anywhere the job takes them. Overall, it gives staff access to the tools and utilities needed to perform their functions.

Over the coming years, MCCR will be mindful to identify, develop, and upload content that will further assist staff with their responsibilities. This will include, but is not limited to, videos and other materials that relate to training and promoting staff accomplishments. MCCR believes that as outreach efforts are made across all of Maryland, these kinds of measures, when implemented, will guarantee that MCCR is delivering to every Marylander the quality service they expect and deserve when contacting the Commission.

*Goal for Completion:* Foundation uploaded and functional; Maintenance and additions are ongoing to meet staff demands; Quarterly updates to ensure that the staff is provided with all necessary resources.

### **Strategy 3.3: Internship Program**

There exist incredible human resources that can assist MCCR with all of their operations. Local high schools, community colleges, colleges, universities, and graduate schools (such as law schools) encourage students and the greater community to research and partake in internship opportunities. Especially at the collegiate level, there are so many programs and academic majors relevant to MCCR's work that the Commission would be wise to take full advantage of this. *Case Processing, Legal, Administration, and Education & Outreach* could all benefit mutually from developing internship programs. In FY2014, DBM's Recruitment and Examination Division will be developing a comprehensive internship resource for the State of Maryland. The intent of this statewide program is to help students interested in either paid or unpaid internships, gain some much needed experience and to expose them to State service. MCCR will collaborate with DBM to identify qualified students to work in various programmatic areas of the agency.

**Additionally**, in the stakeholder building process, MCCR can formalize relations with a number of schools in the area. For majors of study, MCCR could look into Black Studies, Women's Studies, Political Sciences, **Public Administration**, Mediation/Conflict Resolution, Business Management/ International Relations/Business, Law (for instance, Labor & Employment and Immigration law), etc. By having that open line of communication with department heads, MCCR stands to get quality interns that are dedicated to assisting the Commission while expanding their own personal knowledge.

Beyond academic programs, there are a number of organizations on campuses and in the community that could be incredibly helpful in recruiting interns. Groups, such as the Black Student Union, Muslim Students Association, Black Law Students Association, Vietnamese Cultural Association, Gay-Straight Alliance or EROS (Encouraging Respect of Other Sexualities), debate teams, Multicultural Affairs Offices, etc., are prime ground to find quality interns for a mutually beneficial experience.

*Goal for Completion* – Structure of internship program completed July 1, 2014; Outreach for relationship building and recruit beginning around April, 2014; full utilization of internship program by February, 2015.

### **Strategy 3.4: Training & Development**

MCCR employees, when compared to their counterparts in other states and jurisdictions, are among the best in this field of work. If the Commission wants to continue being such a leader, and if the Commission wants to recruit and retain the best caliber employee out there, then we need to reform how training opportunities and skills are discovered, disseminated, and tracked.

To date, MCCR does not have a database listing all of the training certifications held by individual employees. Additionally, there is no central resource available to our employees in every Unit identifying and easing access to basic training and continuing education opportunities.

By developing a repository for all of this information, MCCR's staff will be able to take advantage of the many opportunities out there in every corner of the State, through Maryland's top-notch education system and strong business community. Furthermore, this repository will enable MCCR's leadership and supervisors to track employee progress while recommending appropriate and necessary training opportunities tailored to the needs of the individual employee.

*Goal for Completion* – Database foundation and design functional by December, 2014; All existing employees will complete all required training by June 1, 2015; MCCR leadership and supervisors will review the database on a quarterly basis; MCCR leadership and supervisors will discuss every six months the feasibility, value, and possible requirements of optional continued education opportunities being taken advantage of by the staff.

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# 4. Education & Outreach

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE II:** *Prevent discrimination through education.*

**GOAL I** - All stakeholders understand their rights and how to exercise them in creating a State free from discrimination.

**GOAL II** - All stakeholders understand their responsibilities in preventing violations of laws prohibiting discrimination.

**Responsibility** – Training Staff, Executive Director, General Counsel

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The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights' (MCCR) statutory mandate requires that a thriving and effective Intake, Investigations, and Legal departments serve as the **law enforcers** of the Commission. However, in the interest of advancing civil rights, MCCR can be proactive through educational and training programs **that identify and address pressing civil rights matters in the community. MCCR recognizes that while many of the programs will fall within our statutory jurisdiction, there exist relevant opportunities outside of Title 20 where MCCR can act as a community leader. MCCR is currently in the process of redesigning the Education & Outreach Unit to emphasize an all-inclusive approach to civil rights in Maryland.** While, if effective, this would theoretically reduce casework for the Commission, it would still accomplish the final two components of the Mission Statement (“to provide educational outreach services related to provisions of this law; and to promote and improve civil rights in Maryland”) in order to achieve the vision of “a state that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.” Thus, having robust and expansive education and training resources is integral to the function of the Commission.

## **Strategy 4.1: Training Programs**

Training programs are an opportunity to inform people, community organizations, and businesses about Maryland's dedication to freedom and equality. With this knowledge, the various stakeholders can expand the message to their families, neighbors, and coworkers. For employment purposes, the trainings enable businesses to be current on the laws/regulations so that their policies and practices reflect State policy.

It is especially important that training be both proactive and up-to-date. Local, state, and federal law is evolving when it comes to statutory protections for disadvantaged and underserved populations. With the recent Supreme Court rulings on Prop 8 and DOMA, and with the ongoing gender identity anti-discrimination legislation battle continuing in the Maryland General Assembly, MCCR needs to be mindful of programs to make sure the best possible product is being delivered to our communities. *MCCR's training team is currently reviewing existing modules to identify where these modules can be developed and expanded upon to address both traditional and modern civil rights matters.*

### *Reaching the Individual*

Given budgetary restrictions, MCCR is working hard to reach out and train people on how to coexist in harmony. In June, 2013, alone, MCCR reached out and educated over 1300 people at eight events across the State. This, at the very least, should serve as the base upon which the Commission should build its outreach efforts.

Maryland is very diverse. From the far reaches of the western panhandle all the way through to the eastern seaboard, Maryland is fortunate to be comprised of so many people from different walks of life. That is why MCCR needs to have a single message that can be used to reach each of those communities.

In the long-term, MCCR will strive to conduct new contact trainings each month, with specific emphasis on targeted underserved populations in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodations and state contracts.

*Goal for Completion – Complete review and analysis of module topics by March, 2014; Complete module revisions and refreshments by June, 2014; Annual review of every module at the beginning of the fiscal year.*

### *Quality Assurance*

Simply having training programs developed and ready to be used does not achieve the effectiveness and efficiency standards necessary to both justify and continue said efforts. As stated previously, new laws and policies are being implemented at every level of government as our society continues to evolve. Steady supervision of every program by many people – Executive Director, Executive Associate, training staff, and General Counsel – needs to be maintained to ensure the accuracy of the program.

To begin, feedback from the audience will help MCCR to appropriately train in a community's weakest areas. The distribution, collection, and analysis of pre- and post-training surveys will produce a valuable mechanism for overall evaluation. These surveys should be just as much about the content of the program as it is about the technique of the trainer and deliverability of the product.

For mandated trainings with entities that have demonstrated issues with equal opportunity policies and procedures, corrective trainings will be done, and follow-up conducted by training staff (as necessary or required) so as to decrease the number of complaints arising from that particular entity.

With respect to internal quality assurance mechanisms, a monthly report needs to be developed regarding all activities for the prior month. The information should include the trainer, subject matter, location, the audience size, and whether a new stakeholder was discovered by MCCR or referred to the Commission. This is the most direct opportunity for stakeholder building (outreach) and training programs to demonstrate causality. There should be a clear relationship between the two, so synchronization of the efforts needs to be a priority.

*Goal for Completion* – Survey and report templates should be completed by no later than January, 2014; phase-in of the feedback materials should begin as soon as possible, with full-implementation and usage within three months (April, 2014); constant review to ensure necessary revisions and updates.

#### **Strategy 4.2: Communication**

While the agency literature (brochures, flyers, posters, etc.) and training programs should be independent of one another, they should still have a co-dependence when it comes to uniformity and content. With the design of these programs, the following should be used as barometers to measure content and effectiveness:

1. Enhance Marylanders' overall knowledge of civil rights relative to employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts.
2. Inspire individuals to develop civic activities related to the advancement of civil rights in Maryland.
3. Provide training on all aspects of civil rights related to the agency's staff.

#### *Download Availability*

In today's information age, many businesses and groups turn to the internet to get information quickly at any time. While MCCR's training and education depends heavily on actually touching these communities in-person, the Commission can be just as productive and accessible if it makes presentations, handouts, and other enhancers available to the public. The easiest way to do this is through the website. This will increase distribution while not placing any burden on the financial resources of MCCR.

The training staff should focus on just a few of MCCR's overall publications program. Specifically, their focus should hone in on those items that provide more detail/explanation to the customer. Here are some examples of where training staff can be most effective, while complementing outreach work:

1. In collaboration with the Case Processing Department and Office of the General Counsel, build training manuals for housing, public accommodations, and employment training.
2. **Reevaluate existing and create new** presentations and slideshows for housing, public accommodations, and employment training.
3. Develop and distribute a bi-annual newsletter of training topics for public and private entities outlining new legislation, current court opinions, and emerging trends in civil rights.

*Goal for Completion* – Initial outline for manuals and materials **by July 1, 2014**; final design of manuals and materials completed **by July 1, 2015**; **Training staff educated in information and presentation by September 1, 2015**; uploading documents on website **as they become available**; **Bi-annual newsletter design developed by July 1, 2015, with the contact lists and final newsletter being completed by January 1, 2016**; continual review and oversight to ensure accuracy of information and **quality of training staff**.

#### **Strategy 4.3: Programmatic Enhancements**

Technology affords MCCR the capacity to expand its outreach and contact, without necessarily having to expend any financial resources in the process. While nothing will be more effective than human-to-human interaction (between the Commission and stakeholder), resource limitation does not allow that. This is why MCCR needs to increase innovation to accommodate and repair existing weaknesses.

##### *Remote Education (Webinars/Podcasts)*

Maryland's leaders, both public and business, have begun harnessing and exploiting online services to train and reach new people. With the State becoming increasingly reliant on services provided by Google, there exists the possibility of building a webinar presence. Google Hangout allows for users to log in and participate in a webinar. The webinar allows users to speak directly to one another, and for presentations to run at the same time. In tight budgeting times, this will permit MCCR to quickly conduct those trainings with stakeholders and build further relations with them.

*Goal for Completion* – Sign-up for Google Hangout should be immediate; in the event the State does not allow using Google Hangout or the IT infrastructure changes, another service should be sought, subject to State permissions; **Develop education and training modules for the webinar section, with a complete analysis and proposal of topic identification by the start of FY2015**; **Modules drafted and designed by FY2016**.

#### **Strategy 4.4: Outreach Events**

While MCCR's statutory charge is to enforce Maryland's anti-discrimination laws, outreach events enable the Commission to further educate about the existence, purpose, and operations of the Commission. As has been stated previously, MCCR is a hidden asset in Maryland. MCCR needs achieve a prominence in the community so that we can increase the likelihood of securing additional financial and human resources.

Regardless of how these events are approached, the communications database should be utilized to send out the press advisories. By disseminating to the media evidence that MCCR is engaging the public, the Commission is likely to garner more attention.

##### *Hosting Regular Events*

Hosting an event, while resource intensive, is the greatest opportunity for MCCR to directly touch members of our community. Be it a town hall, public hearing, or other type of event, it places the Commission directly in the community, instead of keeping the Commission strictly confined to the state offices. These kinds of open events also allow MCCR to shed some light on what we do and how we help people.

This is also the greatest opportunity for the Commissioners and staff to work together to bring the message out into the community. Where possible, it would be beneficial to team up with the Commissioners to host an event or meeting out in their locality. Because our Commissioners are diverse, we could use their backgrounds and passions to further connect and make inroads into those underserved populations.

##### *Teaming Up with Stakeholders*

A less expensive and resource intensive approach towards public outreach events is to team up with stakeholders/partners. This accomplishes multiple goals: (1) shoring up relationships with groups, (2) making inroads into underserved populations, and (3) getting MCCR's message out to the public.

The least expensive method of engaging the public is to sign up to attend public events and functions. In Baltimore alone, there are a myriad of events hosted with fair frequency. Beyond Baltimore, many community associations and civic groups host events where information can be distributed – such as civic association-hosted days. By building our stakeholder connections and maintaining an awareness for what is going on in our community, MCCR can send surrogates to work these events. This can come from having a table to hand out literature, or just working with the event organizers.

If publications are scarce for handouts, then MCCR could, again, co-host a station, especially if it is with a leader popular in the community – such as an elected official.

*Goal for Completion (overall Strategy 2.4)* – Ongoing; strive to host/co-host/partner/attend public meetings at different locations around the State when feasible.

#### **Strategy 4.5: Long-Term Vision**

Education and training are two of the most direct programs offered by MCCR that accomplish the Commission's mission. By doing this, the Commission becomes more visible and familiar to Marylanders. From there, the importance and relevance of the Commission is enhanced because it will demonstrate to our leaders (Governor, legislators, county officials, business leaders, advocacy groups, other stakeholders) why MCCR is needed in today's society. With enough exposure and honorable mention, the Commission can hope to gain increased support, both in personnel and budgetary support, from the State. The casework may increase at first as more people learn of the Commission's existence and ability to assist in their lives. In the long-run, we would be hopeful that the casework actually decreases as Maryland achieves that ultimate vision of being free from unlawful discrimination. Overall, education and training, along with outreach and continued successes in case processing, will position MCCR to be a stronger player at the table when it comes to policy matters and funding requests.

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# 5. Marketing & Advancement

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE III:** *Increase MCCR's visibility and credibility by being recognized as the State's leading agency empowered to enforce the laws prohibiting discrimination.*

**GOAL I** - Increase the awareness of all stakeholders of the services MCCR provides.

**Responsibility** - Commissioners, Executive Management Team, Executive Associate

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The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (MCCR) is an asset within Maryland's public service apparatus. However, budgetary restraints, turnover, and a 2011 name change have left MCCR with recognition issues. MCCR needs to establish and execute short-term and long-term marketing/outreach strategies. By having these in place, we can improve MCCR's recognition and familiarity in a manner that garners additional fiscal and human resources in order to support improvement in MCCR's services to the people of Maryland. By establishing our identity, we are increasing the awareness of our agency's role in meeting the demands of a 21st century global society.

## **Strategy 5.1: Identity Development**

The key to effective identity development is to have a set of tools that are simple, visual, and clearly convey the purpose of the entity at hand. These tools should be easily transferable among every medium (website, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, press releases, correspondence, other mass/social media platforms). Over the past decade, MCCR published a number of items to accomplish its mission of enforcing Maryland's anti-discrimination laws. However, there has been no common thread tying all of these items and actions together. We as an agency need to settle on one of each tool that we can use to bring our message to the public. Ultimately, our identity should inspire people to be invested in what we do as an agency, whether helping with outreach or seeking relief.

## *Mission & Vision Statements*

The current mission statement for MCCR has embodied the same principle of enforcement education of Maryland's anti-discrimination laws over the years. However, among the brochures, posters, website, and other items found around in different areas, the mission statement is different, depending on the time of publication. With that, we need to settle on one mission statement to be used wherever applicable. We should consider using the following as a basis upon which to make a determination, given it is the only statement that identifies the agency by its current name:

“It is the mission of the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights to ensure opportunity for all through the enforcement of Maryland's laws against discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts; to provide educational outreach services related to provisions of this law; and to promote and improve civil rights in Maryland.”

This message is incredibly powerful. Reflecting on MCCR's charge under the Annotated Code of Maryland, it captures the reality of why the State entrusts this agency with such authority and discretion. While alterations may be appropriate, this statement can be easily placed on all of MCCR's hard and electronic documents to publicly reinforce why MCCR exists and remains relevant today.

A vision statement should serve as a complement and a footer to the mission statement. The current one posted reads:

“Our vision is to have a state that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”

The posture this one takes – one of optimism and encouraging MCCR to become obsolete via societal evolution – is also powerful. If MCCR's work serves the public effectively, then we can one day live in a society that is beyond discrimination. After all, this would accomplish the basic American value of a more perfect union.

Much like the mission and vision statements, all press releases and media advisories should contain an ending paragraph/footer. This is not only commonly accepted style and formatting, but it also ties media matters back to and reinforces the reason why MCCR is necessary to Maryland - to advance civil rights through the enforcement of Maryland's anti-discrimination laws. A good footer is versatile, meaning it not only relates back to the subject of the release or advisory, but also can be copied and pasted into other MCCR publications and announcements.

To serve as a base and example upon which to build, MCCR's currently approved and used footer at the bottom of all press releases and media advisories reads:

“MCCR represents the interest of the State to ensure equal opportunity for all through enforcement of Title 19 of the State Finance & Procurement Article and Title 20 of the State Government Article, Annotated Code of Maryland. MCCR investigates complaints of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and state contracts filed by members of protected classes under federal and state law. For additional information, please contact [Contact Name] at [Contact Phone] or by email at [Contact Email].”

*Goal for Completion* – Statement finalizations determined by December, 2013; Continued emphasis and oversight placed on quality assurance of statement usage for all communications to guarantee that statements are used effectively and consistently by all Commission staff.

#### *Logo Design*

Effective identity development requires distinguishable graphics. Cabinet level agencies around Maryland (Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Department of Human Resources, Department of Natural Resources, etc.) have their own logos that appear on letterhead, in emails, and on vehicles. Through reinforcement, the public can recognize and identify the agency without needing to read into the graphic or further into the document.

As an independent agency in Maryland, MCCR should have its own logo. Whether on the website, correspondence, or publications, the logo in a header gives something for the public to recognize and think about should they experience or know someone that is a victim of discrimination. The current logo, which only appears on the website, is a circular cut out of the center of Maryland's flag surrounded by hands embracing one another. This does not serve MCCR well. It is ambiguous what the hands are actually doing. Thus, the unity and diversity messages are lost. Furthermore, MCCR's letterhead brandishes the Seal of Maryland, not the logo on the website. Thus, the disjointed utilization of any one particular logo means that these images are merely filling dead space.

The Seal of Maryland is appropriate for MCCR's use. It helps to reinforce the Maryland-nature of MCCR. However, the Seal itself is property of the public. Therefore, it is mostly utilized by those given the public trust – i.e. elected officials and others commissioned individuals. So while appropriate, it is not the most effective at distinguishing MCCR from other agencies.

To discern the relevant entity being entertained, many functions around Maryland have their own logos. Take, for instance, the following:



Montgomery County, Maryland Seal



Maryland Terrapins, University System



Maryland Department of Natural Resources



Maryland Transit Administration

Given that MCCR came in existence (by name only) in 2011, and given that MCCR has served Maryland for decades at the forefront of equality efforts, MCCR needs to design and use everywhere a unique logo.

*Goal for Completion* – **March, 2014**, by Executive Associate, with support from Commission Staff.

#### *Website Design*

With the new website template slated to go live during FY2014, MCCR should seize the opportunity to update and correct the information on the website, **while expanding information accessibility to all in Maryland (including those with visual and auditory impairments)**. In today's information age, the vast majority of our people turn to the internet for research and assistance. As it stands, the website is incorrect, out of date, and in need of complete revision. Luckily, the content needed to reorganize into an effective website is strewn in our annual reports, correspondence, and other documents. It is simply a matter of combing through everything and bringing it together, with an eye for edits in order to give the information a facelift so that it is fresh, inviting, and easy to digest.

If MCCR maintains its current website layout, then information will not be easily accessible. That is why with the new template, mandated by the State, MCCR should prioritize having all information available according to the “three click rule.” That means that whomever visits the website, whether for the first time or returning to it, should be able to access anything and everything that person wants within three clicks. The average person does not have the patience or desire to dig around in a draconian website in order to find a quick number or sentence.

With that, headers and side bars on the website should prioritize the following broad pieces of information, as well as the direct services offered by the agency:

1. Home
2. About Us (mission, vision, history)
3. Structure (executive, commission, general counsel, intake, investigations, mediation)
4. Our services (overview, FFC, investigation, mediation, filing a complaint, education and outreach)
  - a. This section is most critical, and needs to be the most user friendly. Language should be simple so that everyone may understand it and feel empowered, regardless of level of education or socioeconomic background.
5. Publications (posters, flyers, brochures, newsletters, reports, minutes, plans, regulation comment)
6. Press Room (releases, advisories, etc.)
7. Contact Us (names, phones, emails, addresses)
8. Quick Links (Director’s Welcome, Minutes, Employment, Partners, Code and COMAR)
9. What is Discrimination (Explanation of the types employment, housing, PA, commercial)
10. How can we help you (similar to our services... one click on homepage with all of the pertinent information to file for action)

Beyond the webpage, we can establish and maintain social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, Flickr, blogs) to further distribute news in a quick, digestible format. This will expand our reach beyond the normal people, and to the younger generation and those leaders/organizations wired into today’s society.

*Goal for Completion* – March, 2014 for roll out; final updates should be uploaded to website simultaneously; revisions conducted regularly and in a timely manner by the Executive Associate to ensure information is accurate, and adjusts for necessary changes identified by Commissioners and Executive Management Team.

## **Strategy 5.2: Stakeholder Building**

Maryland's culture is ripe with civic engagement. In densely populated areas, like Montgomery County and Baltimore City, a number of organizations and associations exist to represent a diverse array of interests and populations. With MCCR's charge to enforce the State's anti-discrimination laws and to educate our people, an opportunity exists to expand our message's reach. By harnessing strong relationships with these groups, MCCR can reach more people and touch underserved populations in ways that are not possible with the current structure.

### *Building the List*

There are four basic types of representatives that any effective organization needs to work with in order to be networked throughout the community:

1. Federal, state, local officials and agencies
2. Community associations
3. Advocacy organizations
4. Interest groups

To date, MCCR has an understanding and the capability to reach out to the immediate population in Baltimore. However, much remains to be done to connect with people as far west as Oakland, and as far east and south as Crisfield.

By identifying key players of the above mentioned groups, MCCR can build a database (list) which can be accessed immediately. When disseminating mass communications and announcements, it is important to have a functional database. This list should be updated periodically, roughly every six months at minimum. The list should be as comprehensive as possible, including names, titles, addresses, emails, phones, and faxes, so that it can produce blast notices, whether hard copy or electronic. These lists should not be limited to one contact per group – the more people that can be reached at one time, the better MCCR can disseminate information in a relatively short period of time, not to mention this will help to reduce costs associated with postage.

*Goal for Completion* – initial compilation completed December, 2013; Executive Management Team will determine meeting priority in consultation with the Commissioners; continued focus on updating and maintaining accurate database to ease communication blasts to stakeholders.

### *Establishing Formal Relations*

Meeting face-to-face is arguably more important than connecting and maintaining a relationship via electronic communication. Effective organizations and agencies make a point of interacting with partners directly so that the relationship remains strong and vibrant.

MCCR can accomplish a lot in a small period of time by targeting umbrella organizations that serve various people on a larger scale. Groups, such as CASA de Maryland and Equality Maryland, have large networks that do not differentiate between people based on locality. By reaching out to these organizations, we can let them know that MCCR exists to help. From that original introduction, top leadership from MCCR should schedule meetings with the heads of these organizations/interests. MCCR should remain flexible, offering to host a meeting in the Baltimore office or willing to meet at a more convenient location for the organization.

*Goal for Completion* – Ongoing; Identify and introduce MCCR to new organizations when possible; benchmark outreach efforts by continued contact and expanded outreach efforts every quarter.

### *Visiting Functions Regularly*

MCCR should not just limit itself to formal meetings to explain what the Commission does and how it can work with a certain interest. Instead, MCCR needs to have a point person (or two) that receives regular announcements for functions and events being hosted by stakeholders around Maryland. It does not matter how distant the event may be from the direct mission, MCCR needs to have a presence. By sending the same person(s) to these events, the relationship between MCCR and the organization will remain strong.

Visiting these extra-curricular functions will also help MCCR brainstorm innovative ways to collaborate with our stakeholders. By seeing these organizations in action, MCCR will have the opportunity to identify and collaborate in a way that expands our educational programs beyond the traditional methods currently utilized.

*Goal for Completion* – Ongoing; send key people to functions whenever they arise, and resource permitting.

### **Strategy 5.3: Media Relations**

The media is a cornerstone of our society. MCCR does so much that is newsworthy, it is just a matter of tailoring it in a way that catches their eye and gets them to report this. Also, they are free publicity for the agency. By building relations with the various mediums, MCCR can get its message out there effectively, and in a positive light.

#### *Compiling Media Blast Lists*

The most arduous task in this process will be building a comprehensive and effective media blast list. This list needs to include media outlets, points of contacts, mailing addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and emails, at a minimum, for every major source. Beyond that, these lists need to be updated every six months, at a minimum. By having this comprehensive list on hand, MCCR can disseminate press releases, media advisories, and other newsworthy blasts in a matter of minutes.

*Goal for Completion* – Original construction November, 2013; ongoing for updating and adding further contacts.

#### *Formalizing Relations*

Having a comprehensive blast list will be fruitless unless MCCR builds positive working relationships with various contacts in every outlet. Whenever a member of the media reaches out, MCCR needs to prioritize returning contact as soon as possible. The media is almost always working on incredibly tight deadlines, so time is of the essence. By returning contact and showing a willingness to provide information/answer questions (where necessary and appropriate) MCCR can foster a cooperative working relationship, and hopefully avoid adversarial interactions in the future. By creating these strong connections, MCCR is more likely to have the two following scenarios happen:

1. When a press release/media advisory/announcement is distributed, the source is more likely to take a moment to review it instead of glossing over it, and
2. When a news story breaks, the source is more likely to reach out to us for comment or input, where necessary and appropriate.
  - a. Media personnel will not waste their time trying to track down a contact in an agency they know will not get back to them in a timely manner. This is a matter of professional courtesy.

As with building stakeholder relationships, constant contact and friendly, open lines of communication will go a long way to both helping MCCR spread its message while serving our people.

*Goal for Completion* – Original outreach beginning Fall, 2013; ongoing efforts to build and expand relationships.

#### *Targeting Media Outlets to Maximize Message Impact*

While the traditional methods of communication with mass media will undoubtedly spread the word fast about MCCR's work, emphasis should be placed on targeting announcements. This will enable MCCR to target particular communities, especially those that may be underserved or disadvantaged.

One method to formalize strong connections with these communities is to partner and have solid relationships established with groups representing their interests. For instance, if outreach efforts are made into the Latino community, MCCR stands to gain more by partnering with an organization the community knows can be trusted. In today's hyper-polarized society, and with certain government programs stigmatizing unrelated government services, MCCR may be shut out unless these partnerships are apparent. The community needs to know that we are here to help, and that we should not be judged by State and local law enforcement that perform a completely different function.

While the aforementioned tactic deals heavily in direct individual contact, MCCR can also break new ground in outreach utilizes specialized media outlets. For example, radio is a timeless and effective outlet that is utilized by most everyone these days. Especially in the DC/metropolitan area, there exist stations and shows that reach a very particular sector of our community. By reaching out to establish a presence with the network, and/or by partnering with a local leader or affiliate organization, we can reach thousands, if not millions, of Latinos in a relatively short period of time. The partnerships, again, legitimize our message and make the community more receptive to our mission.

Advertising/hard publications can reach defined groups broadly as well. Maintaining contact and functioning as a positive resource for our print media will help MCCR secure advertising and news space when needed most. Furthermore, through local/regional publications and those sources affecting a particular community MCCR can establish a web and print presence. By inserting some of our publications, and by placing announcements and advisories online and in the paper, people can read about MCCR, learn what MCCR does to help Marylanders, and establish that relationship. Meanwhile, traditional tools, such as public service announcements, will serve as a cost-effective way to reach a wide audience while bolstering the message MCCR is sending all over Maryland.

*Goal for Completion* - Original outreaching beginning Fall, 2013; ongoing efforts to build and expand relationships.

## **Strategy 5.4: Updating Publications**

MCCR's current stock of literature to be distributed to the community is outdated and requires complete revision. The information contained in each of the pamphlets, brochures, posters, and flyers is excellent and can be used for updates. The name still reads "Maryland Commission on Human Relations," which is the most basic cause of MCCR's current recognition issues. Every piece also lacks cohesion, character, and catchiness.

### *Overhauling Information*

As with the website, the information contained in every one of our publications needs to be scrubbed for consistency and accuracy. Due to the 2011 name change and other alterations made annually, these documents should be, in a sense, living. Careful attention needs to be paid to what information is inserted so that it is always consistent with every other publication. Reaching for the ability to change and adapt over an extended period of time, publications should also be written in a way that makes them timeless. This is to make up for the lack of financial resources which hinders MCCR's ability to print mass quantities many times a year.

*Goal for Completion* – Have the information prepared by December, 2013; information should be reviewed quarterly for revisions, updates, and overall quality assurance.

### *Ease of Access for All*

In today's information age, more people are turning to the internet to learn about what exists in the world. Even disadvantaged populations will use the internet to discover resources, which may help them get economic and social justice. That is why the library network is so important and supported in Maryland.

The publications currently on the website are not organized well, and are simply scans of our current outdated materials. By updating information, MCCR can post, in real time, any revisions. MCCR can also make them available in multiple languages, either through the advent of translation technology/services in MCCR or simply having the hard materials available in other languages.

*Goal for Completion* – Coincides with December, 2013, deadline for overhauling information; research should be conducted periodically to see if there are new trends that benefit connecting information to a greater number of people.

### *Common Identity for Every Publication*

Just like a logo and a singular message/vision statement, MCCR publications should have a common design thread tying them all together. For example, MTA Maryland's schedules, brochures, and advertisements all have a sloping full-color header. While they may be different colors or have different shapes along the bottom, overall you can see the piece and know it is a product of MTA Maryland. MCCR should strive for the same thing in the name of a strong identity and recognition.

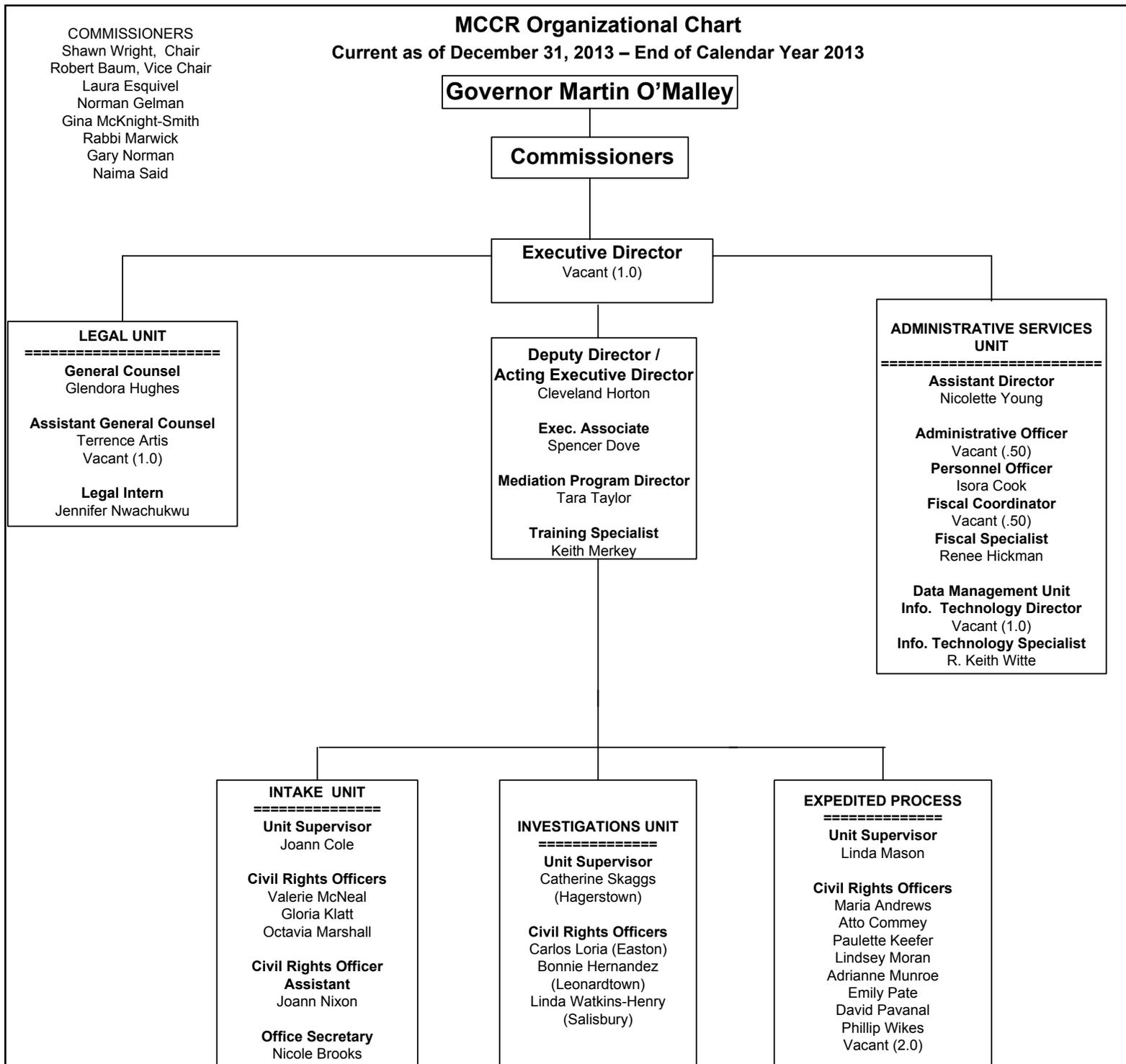
These designs need not and should not be intricate. However, this singular template will also help to streamline the production of documents. MCCR has utilized this model in the past, as with the posters titled "What is Sexual Harassment on the Job?," "Workshops & Training Programs," and "Equal Opportunity for All." Due to the lack of personnel available to produce many different items accomplishing an array of goals, this design will shore up efficiency in the actual production phase.

*Goal for Completion* – December, 2013. Document production should begin shortly after that date, with the hope of updating materials posted on the website by January, 2014. Period reviews and adjustments should be made as necessary.

### **Strategy 5.5: Long-Term Execution**

The identifiable goals are meant to serve as starting benchmarks for their individual completion. However, as has been stated and as is the nature of public relations, none of the actions or documents should be complete at the time they are considered "final." Maryland's civic-minded communities, from Garrett County all the way to Worcester County, will continue to see evolving dynamics. This plan should serve as the outline by which MCCR continues to review and enhance daily operations so that it is connecting with as many people as possible.

# Appendix A: MCCR Structural Chart



# Appendix B: 5 Year Budget Snapshot

<b>MCCR Budget Report for Last Five Fiscal Years</b>					
<b>Fiscal Years</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Federal Funds</b>					
<b>HUD</b>	\$441,315	\$324,251	\$286,556	\$222,450	\$250,000
<b>EEOC</b>	\$314,850	\$352,305	\$349,490	\$332,622	\$430,731
<b>Special Funds</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$12,336	\$0
<b>Reimbursable Funds</b>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000	\$0
<b>Total Federal Funds</b>	\$756,165	\$676,556	\$636,046	\$572,408	\$680,731
<b>General Funds</b>	\$2,544,329	\$2,509,219	\$2,510,970	\$2,424,819	\$2,493,066
<b>Grand Total</b>	\$3,300,494	\$3,185,775	\$3,147,016	\$2,997,227	\$3,173,797
<b>Staff Positions</b>					
<b>Authorized Permanent</b>	40.6	38.6	37.6	34.6	34.5
<b>Contractual</b>	1.0	1.0	1.0	.5	0
<b>Total Positions</b>	41.6	39.6	38.6	35.1	34.5

