



# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

# BY THE NUMBERS



MLSC helps people improve their lives by preventing and solving legal problems – from consumer, to contracts, to family, to employment matters; discrimination and civil rights; affidavits and powers of attorneys; from notary services and simple legal advice to representation in litigation; and much more.

55

STAFF MEMBERS, INCLUDING

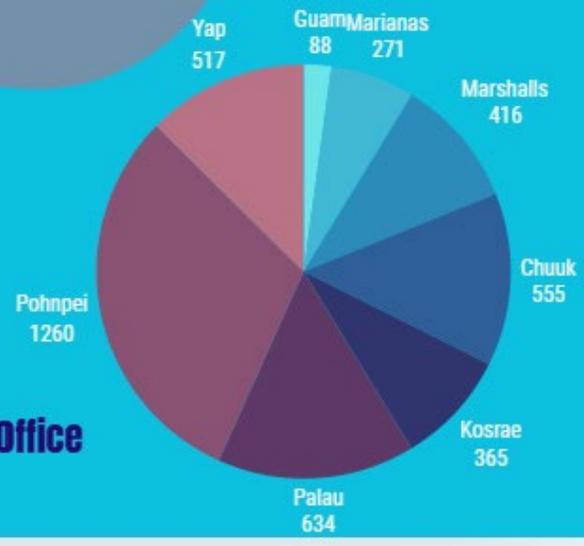
- \_\_ ATTORNEYS
- \_\_ TRIAL COUNSELORS
- \_\_ PARALEGALS
- \_\_ ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
- \_\_ ACCOUNTANTS
- \_\_ IT SPECIALISTS

**4,106**  
CASES CLOSED IN 2024

**12,565**  
TOTAL PERSONS HELPED

IMPACTING

- \_\_ Veterans
- \_\_ Women
- \_\_ Persons with Disabilities
- \_\_ Children
- \_\_ Persons over 60



2024 Cases Closed by Office

MLSC has offices throughout Micronesia, including the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, on Guam, in Palau, in each of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae), and in the Marshall Islands (Majuro and Ebeye). Our central administrative office is located on Saipan.

## MISSION

**Promote equal access to justice and to provide high quality civil legal assistance to low income people in order to improve the lives of the people of Micronesia.**

We have a total staff of 55, including secretaries, trial counselors, paralegals, attorneys, and our administrative staff, including accountants and IT Specialists.

MLSC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, governed by a 10-member board of directors, with at least one director representing each of the regions in which we have offices.

MLSC never charges for our services to the community. All our services are always free. MLSC is supported by several sources, including each of the governments in which we have offices, the U.S. Legal Services Corporation, other institutional and government grants, and by individual donations.

Our Board sets priorities for use of MLSC resources each year. For 2025, MLSC has adopted the following priorities:

- Support for Families
- Preserving the Home
- Maintaining Economic Stability
- Safety, Stability, and Health, with emphasis on anti-domestic violence advocacy
- Populations with Special Vulnerabilities, with emphasis on service to persons with disabilities
- Delivery of Legal Services (including outreach, community education, and collaboration).

The primary strategies MLSC uses for implementing these priorities include provision of direct legal services to low income individuals and families, free of charge; collaboration with agencies and institutions; and outreach and community education.

Individuals and families may be eligible for free legal assistance from MLSC if their household income is below 125% (or 200% in some circumstances) of the U.S. Federal Poverty Guidelines for Hawaii and their assets do not exceed specified amounts. Groups, associations, and corporations may also be eligible for free legal assistance from MLSC if they lack funds to retain private counsel.

However, due to limited resources, MLSC is not able to help all persons who are eligible and need free legal assistance in civil matters; MLSC has adopted the following case acceptance considerations to guide us in deciding which cases we should accept.

- Is the case within organization and local office priorities? If so, what is the degree of importance given to a case of this type within an office's priorities?
- The merits of the case—do we think we can resolve the case to the client's satisfaction?
- Availability of other resources to assist—can we refer?
- Capacity to handle this case—do we have the skills and knowledge to provide quality services in this case?
- How much resource (staff time) will be required of us?
- Impact of the case for the client: what will our services mean for this client?
- Impact of the case for the community: will working on this case positively affect others besides the client?
- The potential consequences to individuals with that type of legal problem if only limited representation or non-representational assistance is offered?
- Are attorney's fees available?
- Does this case provide an opportunity for professional development of staff?

## VISION

At MLSC, we believe in a Micronesia where all people are treated fairly and with respect; where government and institutions are accountable even to the most vulnerable among us; where those who need legal services the most get the highest quality assistance to better their lives; where justice and fairness for all, even the poor, is the standard not only in our courts but in every community; and where communities thrive under democratic principles.

## 2024 ADVOCACY DATA

### Cases closed

In 2024, we closed a total number of 4,106 cases for clients:

Year	Number of cases closed
2018	6,784
2019	5,843
2020	3,905
2021	4,558
2022	3,434
2023	5,191
2024	4,106

Here's our breakdown of cases closed, by region:

Office	Closed Cases in 2024	Total Number of People Helped (includes total number of persons in household)	Number of MLSC staff per office (2024)	Total population
Chuuk	555	2,368	7	49,595
Guam	88	207	7	172,952
Kosrae	365	840	4	6,744
Marianas	271	530	7	49,796
Marshalls	416	1,714	6	42,418
Palau	634	1,101	5	17,614
Pohnpei	1,260	4,452	8	36,896
Yap	517	1,353	5	11,597
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,106</b>	<b>12,565</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>387,612</b>

### **Level of service provided**

Here we show the level of service provided on the cases closed in 2024:

Advice only	390
Limited services only	2,788
Negotiated Settlement without Litigation	23
Negotiated Settlement with Litigation	52
Agency Decision	28
Court Decision Uncontested	741
Court Decision Contested	33
Court Decision Appeals	2
Other Closure Method	11
Extensive Services	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,106</b>

### **Cases remaining open**

We ended 2024 with 2,770 open cases, which we continue working on in addition to new cases.

### **Services for the community**

In addition to services for clients, MLSC also provides services to the community generally. This includes outreach, community education, self-help and other legal information, and working in collaboration with others to increase access to justice for all.

### **Value**

In 2024, our budget for providing services throughout the entire Micronesia region was about \$4.3 Million. The investments in MLSC by our funders have resulted in value to our clients and our communities with a significant multiplication factor, amplifying the impact of every dollar spent and generating exponential benefits for our clients and communities throughout the Micronesia region.

Every one of over 50 studies conducted on the return on investment (ROI) of civil legal aid in the last 25 years demonstrates that civil legal aid provides a positive return on investment. Investment in civil legal aid has paid for itself many times over. Every study has found that civil legal aid generates more economic value than the funding it receives. These benefits include cost savings for public programs, recovered income for clients and economic ripple effects that support local communities. Reported ROI ranges from \$1.15 to \$17.99, with an average of ROI \$6.72.

By helping individuals resolve legal challenges, legal aid reduces the burden on government services and strengthens communities. <https://www.lsc.gov/our-impact/economic-impact>

### **Budget**

Our single largest funder has been the U.S. Legal Services Corporation, which is appropriated funds each year by the U.S. Congress. LSC then distributes funds to MLSC and 130 other nonprofit legal services organizations in the U.S. based on population. Historically, some 2/3 of our funding is from LSC. Appropriations from governments where we provide services has always been essential for MLSC to maintain our services to our communities.

### **For more information**

Executive Director Lee Pliscou: [lee@mlscnet.org](mailto:lee@mlscnet.org) or 670-322-6472.

Web <https://micronesianlegal.org/>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/micronesianlegal.org>

To request legal assistance, contact the office nearest you, or you can request legal assistance online:

[https://mlscoi.legalserver.org/modules/matter/extern\\_intake.php?pid=129&h=daa817&](https://mlscoi.legalserver.org/modules/matter/extern_intake.php?pid=129&h=daa817&)

If you are traveling to Hawaii or the U.S. Mainland, please know that you may be eligible for free legal services. There is a free legal aid organization that serves you, wherever you are in the U.S., including Hawaii, and every place on the U.S. mainland. Go to <http://www.lawhelp.org/find-help> to find the organization (or organizations) for that region.

*MLSC is funded in part by the Legal Services Corporation ("LSC"). As a condition of the funding it receives from LSC, it is restricted in certain activities in all of its legal work- including work supported by other funding sources. MLSC may not expend any funds for any activity prohibited by the Legal Services Corporation Act, 42 U.S.C. 2996 et seq. or by Public Law 104-134. Public Law 104-234 §504(d)a requires that notice of these restrictions be given to all funders and contributors to programs funded by the Legal Service Corporation.*

