



SEARAC Five-Year Strategic Plan

2017 – 2021

SEARAC Strategic Plan Framework

2016 was a pivotal year for SEARAC as we set out to assess our evolution with a new strategic planning process that coincided with a presidential election. Our assessment started with community focus groups in St. Paul, MN and Seattle, WA, and in-depth conversations with community leaders, key partners, policy makers, funders, staff, and Board.

As soon as the election results were clear, SEARAC's staff and board came together to reflect on the new political landscape. We affirmed that the next four years will demand more from us: more people, strategy, and skill. Through three retreats and multiple conversations, we identified policy threats that could significantly harm our communities, as well as opportunities for deeper community engagement, cross-racial movement building, and state-level advocacy.

Reflecting on our mission and values, our accomplishments over the last 38 years, and our nation's new political reality, we developed a strategic plan that focuses organizational resources on protecting our community's civil rights and promoting our self-determination and empowerment through *three primary goals*:

- 1) SEARAC will protect our community through powerful advocacy that builds national, state, and local policy champions, and speak out publicly, loudly and consistently in opposition as needed.
- 2) SEARAC will deepen our community's ability to take action for self-determination through building powerful community leaders and advocates, community engagement, and community mobilization on advocacy initiatives.
- 3) SEARAC will maintain and expand a robust internal infrastructure to strengthen organizational health and long-term impact.

We will accomplish these goals through four strategic areas:

- Building Powerful Community Leaders and Advocates
- Community Engagement and Mobilization
- National and State Policy Advocacy
- Internal Infrastructure

This strategic plan is SEARAC's public promise to grow our leadership in the civil rights movement by deepening community engagement and mobilization and strengthening our advocacy voice on our long collective road to equity and social justice.

Mission

SEARAC is a national civil rights organization that empowers Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese American communities to create a socially just and equitable society. As representatives of the largest refugee community ever resettled in the United States, SEARAC stands together with other refugee communities, communities of color, and social justice movements in pursuit of social equity.

Vision

We envision a socially, politically, and economically just society for all communities to enjoy for all generations.

Values

- We believe all people have inherent human rights.
- We respect, honor, and promote the historical and cultural diversity within our communities.
- We value the voices of all ages, genders, and sexual orientations.
- We value partnership with local communities, as we believe in the exchange of knowledge, expertise, experience, and resources.
- We act with integrity, transparency, and accountability.
- We believe everyone is an active agent in creating a just society, regardless of socio-economic or immigration status.
- We believe the communities most impacted by the issues should be the faces and voices leading our work.
- We are committed to helping build the voice, power, and self-determination of all refugee communities.
- We put love and community at the center of our work to cultivate community healing and a culture of dignity.
- We value diverse forms of movement building because we believe change occurs at all levels – individually, interpersonally, and institutionally.

Communities

For SEARAC, Southeast Asian American is a political identity that comes from the shared experience of people who came to this country as refugees from the U.S. occupation of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Southeast Asian Americans now number nearly three million, and most of them arrived in the U.S. as refugees, are the children of refugees, were sponsored by refugee families, or arrived as immigrants.

Southeast Asian Americans include people from dozens of diverse ethnic and language groups, including but not limited to:

- Cham, a Muslim minority group
- Khmer
- Khmer Loeu, or Highland Khmer
- Hmong
- Iu Mien or Mien
- Khmu
- Lao, otherwise referred to as Lao Loum or Lowland Lao
- Taidam
- Khmer Kampuchea Krom, or ethnic Khmer
- Montagnards, or Highlanders of several different ethnic groups
- Vietnamese

*Certain ethnic Chinese also have heritage in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Five-Year Goals: 2017-2021

- 1) SEARAC will protect our community through powerful advocacy by building more national, state, and local policy champions, and speaking out publicly, loudly and consistently in opposition as needed.
- 2) SEARAC will deepen our community's ability to take action for self-determination through building powerful community leaders and advocates, community engagement, and community mobilization on advocacy initiatives.
- 3) SEARAC will maintain and expand a robust internal infrastructure to strengthen organizational health and long-term impact.

Core Strategic Areas

- Community Engagement and Mobilization
- Building Powerful Community Leaders and Advocates
- National and State Policy Advocacy
- Internal Infrastructure

Five-Year Objectives

Building Powerful Community Leaders & Advocates

One of SEARAC's core values is that communities most impacted by issues must be the faces and voices leading the work. To that end, SEARAC works to build the advocacy capacity of SEAA community organizations, organizational leaders, grassroots movement leaders, and individual advocates. We believe that our collective work is stronger when all individuals and organizations engaged have opportunities to continuously enhance their capacity.

The next four years will demand more from us – more people, more strategy, and more skill. SEARAC will expand efforts to build powerful community leaders and advocates at different phases of their leadership and advocacy development and in various community roles, from the new advocate to the seasoned veteran, and from the community volunteer to organizational and movement leaders.

Community Engagement & Mobilization

SEARAC's partnerships with SEAA communities—with individuals, grassroots leaders, and organizations—are core to who we are and how we work. Throughout SEARAC's history, collaboration with community partners have resulted in building community power through successes ranging from nurturing trusted thought partnerships, to powerful organizing and mobilizing on coordinated advocacy campaigns. The urgency of this political moment requires SEARAC to deepen collaboration with our partners to build an even larger, activated base that can mobilize to defend and demand justice, access, and equity.

Together with our partners, we commit to increasing our engagement with our existing base of individuals and organizations. We also commit to expanding relationships with partners in new states to both guide and participate in collective action. Through our partnerships, we commit to deepening our community engagement and mobilization efforts defined by listening, educating, convening, strategizing, and moving to action on advocacy initiatives.

National & State Policy Advocacy

SEARAC is a leading national advocacy voice on issues that deeply affect the Southeast Asian American community. Our advocacy campaigns are grounded in deep community engagement with community partners and individual advocates and in solidarity with other communities of color and social justice movements. We believe that this political moment calls for SEARAC to be a powerful voice of opposition to the current administration's efforts to undermine equity and social justice, while expanding efforts to advance state and local policies aligned with our mission and values.

Internal Infrastructure

To strengthen organizational health and long-term impact, SEARAC commits to maintain and expand internal infrastructure defined by expanding internal capacity, diversifying SEARAC's funding base, and striving to be a model for Board governance of a national nonprofit organization.