

Executive Director

Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo

Buffalo, NY

Salary: \$215,000 - \$255,000

The Organization

The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc. (LABB) is Western New York's oldest and largest provider of legal services to low-income individuals, children, and families. Founded in 1912, LABB has provided more than a century of unwavering service to the region's most vulnerable communities. With over 160 staff, including more than 50 attorneys—and a growing \$22 million annual budget, LABB serves residents across eight counties in Western New York through holistic, high-quality legal representation.

LABB's mission is to ensure access to justice and due process through compassionate, client-centered legal assistance. The Bureau supports thousands of clients each year across a broad spectrum of legal areas, including:

- **Criminal Defense & Appeals:** As the largest provider of indigent criminal defense in the City of Buffalo and appellate representation across multiple counties, LABB defends individuals charged with crimes at all stages of the process.
- **Civil Legal Services:** Including family law, housing rights, consumer protection, and education law, LABB supports clients navigating challenges that directly impact their safety, stability, and wellbeing.
- **Reentry Support:** LABB helps formerly incarcerated individuals and veterans overcome barriers to employment, housing, and family reunification.
- **Immigration Representation:** The Bureau offers legal assistance to immigrants, refugees, and limited English proficient individuals seeking stability and protection.
- **Attorneys for Children:** LABB's lawyers are appointed to advocate for children in family court matters, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights protected.

Throughout its history, LABB has evolved in response to changing community needs and policy landscapes. From its early days charging 25 cents per consultation to becoming a major legal institution in the region, LABB has expanded its footprint and impact—while remaining rooted in a core commitment to justice, dignity, and equity.

LABB is organized into four main program units—Civil Legal Services, Attorneys for Children, Criminal Defense, and Appeals—and is headquartered in the heart of Buffalo at Swan Tower. The Bureau works closely with the courts, legal service agencies, government partners, and community organizations to meet the complex legal needs of clients across the region. A trusted and visible presence in Western New York, LABB continues to lead with integrity, compassion, and an unwavering belief that access to legal representation is essential to a just society. As it looks to its second century of service, the Bureau is positioned for meaningful growth and renewed public engagement, including increased visibility, expanded government partnerships, and a deepening investment in community-centered advocacy.

The Position

The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo is seeking a bold, collaborative, and community-grounded leader to serve as its next Executive Director. This is a rare opportunity to lead one of the most established legal services organizations in New York State through a critical period of growth, renewal, and strategic evolution.

Reporting to a diverse and committed Board of Directors, the Executive Director is the chief executive of LABB and holds ultimate responsibility for the overall strategic, operational, and financial health of the organization. They will lead an experienced leadership team and oversee more than 50 staff, including attorneys, support professionals, and administrators. The Executive Director will ensure that LABB continues to deliver high-quality legal services while deepening its impact in the communities it serves.

As LABB's most public-facing leader, the Executive Director must be an engaged advocate, a skilled relationship builder, and a compelling spokesperson. This role requires a deep understanding of the issues facing low-income individuals and families, particularly in Western New York, and the ability to work effectively with diverse stakeholders—including government funders, community organizations, elected officials, labor unions, and client communities.

The incoming Executive Director will succeed David Schopp, who has led the Bureau for 26 years. This leadership transition comes at a pivotal moment for LABB. The organization is anticipating significant growth, particularly in its government-contracted criminal defense and family court work. Internally, the Bureau is navigating generational shifts among staff and board leadership and is seeking a leader who can clarify a forward-looking vision, model a culture of transparency and inclusion, and elevate LABB's visibility and advocacy voice in the region.

Key to the success of this role is the ability to lead with humility and clarity, delegate with trust, and cultivate strong, reciprocal relationships across the organization. The Executive Director will be expected to listen deeply to the needs and aspirations of staff, promote a culture of mutual respect and collaboration, and ensure that LABB remains a workplace where mission-driven professionals can thrive.

This is not a behind-the-scenes executive role. The next Executive Director must be present in the community, active in local and state policy conversations, and visible as an advocate for LABB's clients and values. They should also bring a long-term commitment to Western New York and see this role as a capstone opportunity to build lasting change within the region.

Strategic Leadership

- Clarify, articulate, and advance LABB's vision and strategic priorities, with input from staff, board, clients, and community stakeholders.
- Ensure LABB is positioned to respond to growth opportunities, particularly in government-contracted legal services.
- Serve as a visible and credible advocate for justice across Western New York.

Organizational and People Management

- Lead and support a senior leadership team overseeing legal practice areas, operations, and finance.
- Cultivate a workplace culture of respect, inclusion, transparency, and mutual accountability.
- Foster healthy labor-management relationships and implement union contracts with integrity and fairness.
- Ensure staff are equipped, supported, and valued in their work.

External Affairs and Community Engagement

- Represent LABB publicly with authenticity and purpose; build and sustain relationships with funders, legislators, legal institutions, and local leaders.
- Engage regularly with client communities and community-based partners to keep LABB responsive and grounded.
- Communicate LABB's mission and impact effectively, including via social media, public speaking, and community forums.

Financial and Operational Oversight

- Work closely with the CFO and finance team to manage a complex, multimillion-dollar budget and ensure fiscal stability.
- Oversee the stewardship of government and private grants and seek out new funding opportunities aligned with LABB's mission.
- Ensure operational systems and infrastructure are robust and support long-term organizational health.

Board Partnership and Governance

- Partner with a committed, diverse, and evolving board of directors—supporting their engagement and leadership while building alignment around LABB's direction.
- Provide regular updates on programmatic, operational, and financial matters and cultivate shared ownership of LABB's future.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The ideal candidate for the Executive Director position possesses the following competencies:

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| Visionary Leadership | Community and Political Acumen | Strategic Management |
| Shapes and drives LABB's long-term direction. | Builds strong local and state relationships. | Leads complex operations with clarity and focus. |
| People Leadership | Board Partnership | Public Advocacy |
| Creates an inclusive, supportive staff culture. | Engages the board in shared leadership. | Represents LABB powerfully in public spaces. |

Required Qualifications

- J.D. and admission to the New York State Bar—or eligibility and willingness to gain NYS admission within one year.
- Minimum of 15 years of legal experience, including substantial experience in public interest law or legal services.
- Proven success leading complex, mission-driven organizations or large programs, preferably in a unionized environment.
- Experience managing senior teams, overseeing significant budgets, and working closely with a board of directors.

Preferred Attributes

- Deep commitment to racial and economic justice, and a demonstrated ability to lead with equity.
- Strong political acumen and understanding of the local Western New York context or a demonstrated ability to build trust and credibility in a new region.
- Track record of successful government relations, fundraising, or community engagement.
- Effective communicator with strong public presence, including comfort with media and social media.

WHO WE ARE

Work Environment

The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo offers a mission-driven, fast-paced work environment grounded in service, equity, and accountability. Staff are deeply committed to advancing justice for low-income individuals and families across Western New York. The culture values professionalism, collaboration, and compassion, while also recognizing the challenges inherent in public interest legal work. With a diverse team of attorneys, advocates, and support staff, LABB is evolving to be more inclusive and responsive—both internally and externally—as it grows. The next Executive Director will be expected to model transparency, foster trust, and strengthen a workplace where people feel respected, supported, and heard.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

The Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo is committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace. We welcome candidates of all backgrounds and strongly encourage applications from women, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, veterans, and people with disabilities. We believe our work is strongest when it reflects the voices and experiences of the communities we serve.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salary

\$215,000 to \$255,000, commensurate with experience.

Benefits

- Medical, dental, and vision coverage for employees and dependents
- Generous vacation, sick, and personal time policies
- Long- and short-term disability insurance
- Life, accident, and supplemental insurance
- Parking and transit reimbursement
- Flexible spending accounts
- 401(k) retirement plan
- Support for Public Service Loan Forgiveness

TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS

If you are interested in this position, please [click here](#). All applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of their application.

We encourage candidates of all backgrounds to apply even if you do not meet all of the qualifications outlined above. If you are selected to move forward for an initial screening call, we expect you to hear from us by November 2025.

Omar Lopez
Principal

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[Submit an application](#)