

ACCOUNTING SERVICES RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPS INTO TRUSTED CFO FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION



"The accountants at Sikich are the best I've ever worked with – and I would say that time and time again. Their accuracy, speed and depth of knowledge is by far the best that I've seen."

**– TOM CHAMBERS,
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

National Association of
Criminal Defense Lawyers

CLIENT PROFILE

The National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NACDL) is the preeminent organization advancing the mission of the criminal defense bar to ensure justice and due process for persons accused of crime or wrongdoing. A professional bar association founded in 1958, NACDL's thousands of direct members in 28 countries – and 90 state, provincial and local affiliate organizations totaling up to 40,000 attorneys – include private criminal defense lawyers, public defenders, military defense counsel, law professors and judges committed to preserving fairness and promoting a rational and humane criminal justice system. NACDL envisions a society where all individuals receive fair, rational and humane treatment within the criminal justice system. NACDL's mission is to serve as a leader, alongside diverse coalitions, in identifying and reforming flaws and inequities in the criminal justice system; redressing systemic racism; and ensuring that its members and others in the criminal defense bar are fully equipped to serve all accused persons at the highest level.

NACDL has one of the leading amicus curiae, or friend-of-the-court, programs in the nation. A cadre of some of the nation's leading criminal defense lawyers, on both the trial and appellate levels, form the committee that determines where and how the Association files briefs as an amicus in courts across the nation. Many of the top law firms and lawyers in the nation volunteer their services pro bono for the opportunity to author briefs on behalf of NACDL. As part of this program, each year NACDL files amicus curiae briefs in most of the criminal law-related cases that reach the U.S. Supreme Court. In addition to NACDL being cited in a number of Supreme Court decisions, the frequency and effectiveness of NACDL's advocacy as an amicus before the Supreme Court has been recognized in the National Law Journal, SCOTUSblog, The New York Times and Empirical SCOTUS.

DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED, NO MATTER WHAT

In 2015, NACDL Deputy Executive Director Tom Chambers was looking to hire an in-house CFO to manage the association's finances and work with Sikich staff, who had been providing accounting services for two years. During this time, our accounting services team also streamlined many internal processes involving accounts receivable, accounts payable, human resources, payroll and benefits. According to Tom, the team was also **"instrumental"** in creating models for proper allocation of staff time



TRUSTED CFO FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

“During staff turnover, maternity leave and other significant transitions on Sikich’s side, we have never felt lost on our end. All transitions were seamless: they did not drag on, were resolved quickly, and we were never late in finalizing financial statements or reporting to the Board and the Executive Committee.”

**- TOM CHAMBERS,
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE
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to federal grants, which improved the overall accuracy of their financial statements and grant reporting. In 2013, when Sikich’s Rally Kamenova and the accounting services team were first brought on, NACDL was significantly behind schedule on finalizing some financial reports, which was problematic because their annual audit was coming up. “Rally pulled us out of that mess,” Tom said. **“I will never forget how she worked long hours to help me, and we finalized the general ledger late on a Friday night, just in time for our 2013 Fiscal Year audit on Monday morning.”**

CHALLENGING SEARCH FOR A QUALIFIED CFO

NACDL receives over \$2 million annually in federal and private grants, operates the NACDL Foundation for Criminal Justice, which supports the association’s initiatives and tackles external issues to reform the criminal justice system, and utilizes the A-133 Single Audit, a financial statement known for its complexity, to provide assurance that its controls are in place. To balance these responsibilities, it was imperative for their new CFO to have an extensive scope of knowledge, tangible industry experience and a track record of success. On top of the technical skills, NACDL was looking for an individual with a personality that would allow them to collaborate well with members. “Our members are strong-minded,” Tom said. **“We needed someone who would be able to stand up and say, ‘This is what GAAP says, this is what our investment policy says, so this is what we need to do.’”** Following an exhaustive search and many interviews, NACDL ended up cycling through a few different CFOs, each of whom decided to move on from the organization.

PROVEN COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

Tom and Norman L. Reimer, NACDL Executive Director, eventually made the decision to hire an outsourced CFO after their challenges with an in-house position. After looking into Sikich and a few other firms, the two agreed that Sikich was the best fit based on the team’s pre-established accounting services relationship with NACDL, their demonstrated expertise in accounting and the tangible solutions they guaranteed. In the initial months of her new CFO position, Rally spearheaded the development of a master spreadsheet of all NACDL’s grants that includes information like amounts, donors, purposes and reporting deadlines. This has been an essential resource for NACDL that they still use today because it helps keep staff organized and on the same page. Since the beginning, Rally and the Sikich team committed to do whatever is needed, even if it means working late hours, to complete the project at hand, whether it be for grant applications, budgets or research.



TRUSTED CFO FOR NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

“There is a high level of complexity in our operations because we have a vast array of both private and government funding that support both our corporate and foundation initiatives, and the Sikich team is instrumental in making sure all financial and accounting processes of our entities run smoothly.”

- NORMAN L. REIMER,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
National Association of
Criminal Defense Lawyers

LONG-LASTING VALUE AND STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Because of NACDL’s trust in the Sikich team and the strong working relationship that had developed over many years, Sikich has been able to go above and beyond NACDL’s expectations for outsourced CFO and accounting services. In fact, according to Tom, the Sikich team provided guidance to NACDL concerning the process for determining the overhead rate, and NACDL was able to increase the rate from 17.5 percent to about 30 percent. “They have completely streamlined the process of updating our overhead rate and obtaining government approval; they do it in record time,” he said. The association has also been able to bring in increased funding and foster relationships with more grantors while working with our team. **“Sikich’s thoroughness and responsiveness has not only made it possible for us to procure significant funding from additional sources through our foundation and directly to NACDL itself,”** said Norman, “but also to administer the funding to the satisfaction of our valued grantors.”

Another area that Sikich has excelled in through the years is being able to keep NACDL staff accountable when it comes allocating time to their federal grants. “When members of our staff fall below their pre-established grant allocation time for the month, Rally is responsible for reaching out to them about their performance,” Tom said. **“She is able to have those difficult conversations and motivate them to work on improving.** I’ve seen that people are very responsible to her guidance, which helps us operate efficiently.” While these tough discussions are necessary for the association’s productivity, what Norman is most pleased about with the relationship with Sikich is how positively the team has integrated with the NACDL staff. “Though they are not here full time, they are full participants alongside the staff: they attend our staff meetings and they interact with our staff on an ongoing basis,” he said. **“I genuinely think of Rally as my CFO and the rest of the Sikich staff as part of the NACDL team.”**

