

Strategic Plan

2022-2027



The State Bar
of California

WE PROTECT

THE PUBLIC

Mission

The State Bar of California's mission is to protect the public and includes the primary functions of licensing, regulation, and discipline of attorneys; the advancement of the ethical and competent practice of law; and support of efforts for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system.

The top priorities of the State Bar are to:



License attorneys and regulate the profession and practice of law in California



Discipline attorneys who violate rules and laws



Manage all aspects of admission to the practice of law



Advance access to the legal system



Promote diversity and inclusion in the legal system

2022–2027 Goals

The State Bar’s mission is rooted in protecting the public. The strategic goals reflect the organization’s vision for realizing that mission over the next five years. As a foundational principle, the State Bar is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion with respect to both its own operations and the legal profession itself.



1. Protect the Public by Strengthening the Attorney Discipline System

Administer an attorney discipline system that is efficient, accountable, and transparent.



2. Protect the Public by Enhancing Access to and Inclusion in the Legal System

Increase access to the legal system through public outreach and education, improved access to legal advice and services, and a legal profession that reflects the diversity of California’s communities.



3. Protect the Public by Regulating the Legal Profession

Promote the ethical and competent practice of law and prevent misconduct by providing education, resources, and support for the legal profession.



4. Protect the Public by Engaging Partners

Engage partners and stakeholders to enhance public protection and restore the State Bar’s credibility, reputation, and impact.



5. Protect the Public through Innovative Use of Technology and Responsible Data Management

Strategically invest in and implement technology infrastructure, cybersecurity, and next-generation tools and systems to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the State Bar.

Strategic Plan Outline

Goal 1

Protect the Public by Strengthening the Attorney Discipline System

Administer an attorney discipline system that is efficient, accountable, and transparent.



Vision

The State Bar discipline system is, and is recognized as, effective, fair, and timely.

Five-Year Plan Strategies

Effectiveness

Adopt new case processing standards and improved operational practices to focus resources on cases posing the most significant risks of harm and reduce the backlog of unresolved disciplinary cases.

Consumer Focus

Assist the public in navigating the complaint process and seeking fair, appropriate, and timely resolution.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Continue to address any racial or other disparities in the attorney discipline system.

Policy and Systems Change

Respond to emerging issues regarding attorney misconduct and promote solutions to increase public protection.

Goal 1 Implementation Steps



Effectiveness

- Support accountability in the attorney discipline system through the development and implementation of new case processing standards that ensure complaints are processed in a timely manner; evaluate and report performance against the case processing standards.
 - Secure additional funding for the attorney discipline system.
 - Sustain a well-resourced, motivated, and accountable prosecutorial workforce.
 - Maximize the efficiency of the discipline case management system and make technological, resource, and other investments as needed to increase the accuracy, comprehensiveness, and timeliness of the investigation and prosecution of attorney misconduct complaints.
 - Reduce the time from Client Security Fund application to payout by re-assessing rules and policies, streamlining processes, and increasing funding as necessary.
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Consumer Focus

- Assist members of the public needing assistance in submitting complaints and resolving problems by providing clear information about how the system works, outlining what constitutes a viable complaint, and facilitating connections with other resources where consumer issues do not warrant attorney discipline.
 - Educate communities most likely to be subject to the unauthorized practice of law to reduce the incidence of victimization.
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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Implement reforms and recommendations to reduce inequities identified in the 2019 report: *Discrepancies by Race and Gender in Attorney Discipline by the State Bar of California: An Empirical Analysis*.
 - Conduct a follow up study of racial disparities in attorney discipline, identify areas for improvement, and implement recommendations.
 - Identify disparities in discipline rates and outcomes, including those related to solo and small firm practitioners.
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Policy and Systems Change

- Align and implement recommendations of the Special Discipline Case Audit Committee and the Ad Hoc Commission on the Discipline System.
- Develop strategies to effectively investigate and prosecute attorneys who commit misconduct, regardless of the nature of their practice, including attorneys in large organizations and firms.

Goal 2

Protect the Public by Enhancing Access to and Inclusion in the Legal System

Increase access to the legal system through public outreach and education, improved access to legal advice and services, and a legal profession that reflects the diversity of California's communities.



Vision

All California residents have access to high quality, affordable, and culturally competent legal advice and services.

Five-Year Plan Strategies

Effectiveness	Increase representation through the State Bar's existing regulatory and oversight authority including special admissions and pro bono practice programs.
Consumer Focus	Increase public education, outreach, and awareness to close the knowledge gap and connect consumers to relevant legal resources.
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Support the law school to profession pipeline to foster a diverse legal profession representative of California's communities, particularly as related to race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
Policy and Systems Change	Identify and advocate for innovative policy and regulatory reforms needed to increase access to legal services, particularly by disenfranchised, underserved, and rural communities.

Goal 2 Implementation Steps



Effectiveness

- Increase the number of attorneys admitted through special admissions programs.
 - Update and modernize the bar admissions requirements to be more relevant to the practice of law to eliminate unnecessary barriers to admission, or to implement changes to the bar examination or other pathway to licensure approved by the Supreme Court.
 - Incentivize and support licensees and law firms to increase the number of pro bono hours provided to underserved groups.
 - Administer the Attorney Census annually.
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Consumer Focus

- Continue to analyze data points to identify the potential causes of inequities in accessing legal services to inform policy recommendations to reduce the access to legal services gap.
 - Better understand the knowledge gap and develop strategies to address the barriers consumers face in securing legal advice.
 - Keep abreast of the legal services market and how changes in the market impact individual consumers.
 - Make the State Bar a leader in connecting the public to legal representation by enhancing public awareness of the resources available and continually enhancing those resources.
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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Publish an annual report card on workforce diversity and retention trends in the legal profession.
- Increase the numbers of diverse attorneys in the legal profession by encouraging diversity pipeline programs that support aspiring attorneys in graduating from law school and passing the bar exam.
- Identify data-supported practices that promote retention and advancement of a diverse and inclusive legal profession, including strategies that support solo and small-firm practitioners, and share those practices through toolkits and other resources.
- Engage diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) leaders and other stakeholders to encourage legal employers to set and publicly commit to measurable diversity, equity, and inclusion goals through the State Bar DEI Leadership Seal Program.
- Continue the Mindsets in Legal Education Initiative and evaluate the merits of expanding the program.
- Conduct an equity and cost focused analysis of the impact of various options for administration of the bar exam on pass rates, including remote and open-book formats.
- Provide implicit bias trainings for bar exam proctors and graders to reduce any potential bias.
- Continue to diversify the exam development and grading pool.



Policy and Systems Change

- Create a policy foundation for regulatory reform to increase access to affordable legal advice and services.
- Collaborate with legislative and other stakeholders to establish a law school student loan forgiveness program to make legal aid an attractive and sustainable career goal.
- Collaborate with stakeholders and law schools to improve the law school accreditation process.

Goal 3

Protect the Public by Regulating the Legal Profession

Promote the ethical and competent practice of law and prevent misconduct by providing education, resources, and support for the legal profession.



Vision

State Bar licensees exemplify excellence and personal responsibility in the practice of law.

Five-Year Plan Strategies

Effectiveness

Use data to identify attorneys most at-risk of misconduct complaints and develop the resources and supports needed to prevent misconduct.

Consumer Focus

Develop and deploy self-assessment modules, minimum continuing legal education, practice tools, and other resources to support attorneys in continued education, professional development, and the competent practice of law.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Support retention, development, and advancement of a diverse legal profession, with a focus on preventive measures to address disproportionate complaint and discipline rates.

Policy and Systems Change

Explore and implement regulations to address and deter actions that pose significant risks of public harm.

Goal 3 Implementation Steps



Effectiveness

- Develop metrics for assessing the impact of the State Bar’s prevention and proactive risk-based management work.



Consumer Focus

- Position the State Bar as a trusted resource; increase proactive interactions with licensees to ensure that licensees are aware of how the work of the Bar supports the competent and ethical practice of law.
- Provide effective support for attorneys experiencing practice management and other challenges that affect competency.
- Collaborate with the California Lawyers Association and other bar associations on providing programming and continuing education content to licensees.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Identify competency-related factors that drive disparate voluntary departures from the legal profession by race and gender.



Policy and Systems Change

- Implement the Client Trust Account Protection Program.
- Identify the benefits and risks of lawyer use of technology in the practice of law, including generative artificial intelligence (AI), and explore and implement regulations for appropriate use.

Goal 4

Protect the Public by Engaging Partners

Engage partners and stakeholders to enhance public protection and restore the State Bar’s credibility, reputation, and impact.



Vision

Partners and stakeholders are actively involved with and supportive of the State Bar’s public protection initiatives, achievements, programs, and services.

Five-Year Plan Strategies

Effectiveness	Increase public trust and consumer awareness by demonstrating competence, consistency, and transparency.
Consumer Focus	Establish collaborative relationships with community and consumer facing organizations and engage partners in collaborative workgroups.
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Ensure that communications materials and resources are accessible to California’s diverse communities.
Policy and Systems Change	Partner with stakeholders to increase public protection and attorney regulation through legislation and policy change.

Goal 4 Implementation Steps



Effectiveness

- Enhance visibility of and accessibility to State Bar public meetings.
 - Serve as an incubator for innovation, share successes and best practices, and support implementation efforts in other organizations.
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Consumer Focus

- Build a robust, diverse, and mission-oriented network of partners.
 - Demonstrate transparency and, within constraints imposed by law, maximize disclosure in public communication.
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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Expand multilingual content and outreach.
 - Engage diverse voices in the development and evaluation of State Bar policy.
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Policy and Systems Change

- Collaborate with the Legislature and other stakeholders to increase public protection and support the State Bar's mission.

Goal 5

Protect the Public through Innovative Use of Technology and Responsible Data Management

Strategically invest in and implement technology infrastructure, cybersecurity, and next-generation tools and systems to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the State Bar.



Vision

The State Bar embraces innovative technologies that enhance the ability to fulfill its mission; maintains a secure, dynamic, and responsive data infrastructure; and safely enhances technology experiences for the public and staff. The State Bar adopts AI tools for clear business purposes, while adhering to stringent security, confidentiality, and ethics protocols governing use.

Five-Year Plan Strategies

Effectiveness

Operate mission-critical State Bar systems and applications effectively and securely; maximize capabilities and use of existing systems and applications while protecting sensitive data; identify and adopt new applications to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Consumer Focus

Make State Bar data and performance outcomes transparent; adopt a robust, organization-wide data governance framework; and improve the public's online experiences with State Bar platforms.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Design and plan for inclusive, accessible technology; identify and mitigate disparate impact in technology tool adoption.

Policy and Systems Change

Create a responsive, fiscally sound information technology (IT) organization with sufficient capacity and capability to serve the needs of the State Bar and those who rely on it; finalize AI guardrails for secure and ethical Bar-wide use.

Goal 5 Implementation Steps



Effectiveness

- Systematically assess and document the interdependencies of IT systems and infrastructure to efficiently, safely, and effectively deploy technology.
 - Develop a mature IT security infrastructure.
 - Boost adoption of IT tools and resources to increase operational efficiency and effectiveness.
 - Identify and provide staff training required to increase knowledge of capabilities of current systems and applications.
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Consumer Focus

- Increase access to State Bar data and performance outcomes.
 - Design and implement a data governance framework.
 - Implement website redesign and other technology initiatives to improve usability and transparency.
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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Plan, select, and implement technological innovations with an eye toward inclusion and accessibility.
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Policy and Systems Change

- Secure appropriate funding levels to staff an IT organization that serves the needs of the State Bar.
- Engage in consistent, robust fiscal oversight as appropriate given the significant non-personnel expenditures on IT.
- Develop robust guardrails for the use of AI at the State Bar.

More Information

[Digital Strategic Plan](#)

[State Bar Website](#)

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The State Bar
of California