



The State Bar of California

Discussion Regarding the *2024 California Justice Gap Study*, the Legal Aid Justice Technology Collaborative, and a Legal Aid Proposal to Create a California Community Justice Worker Program

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Board of Trustees Meeting, September 18 –19, 2025

Agenda

- *2024 California Justice Gap Study (JGS)* Recommendations and Planned Activities
- Legal Aid Justice Technology Collaborative (LAJTC)
- Update on the National CJW Landscape
- Legal Aid's Proposal for a California Community Justice Worker (CJW) Program
- CJW Working Group Feedback
- Discussion



2024 CA JGS Recommendations and Planned Activities

2024 CA JGS Recommendations	Current/Planned Activities	Possible Additional Recommendations
Support legal aid grantees' use of artificial intelligence to enhance service delivery	Continue working with legal aid grantees on the LAJTC, a project of OA&I	
Address immigration legal needs, specifically related to accredited representatives	Incorporate work related to accredited reps into existing immigration legal services work	Explore other means to increase availability of immigration legal services, including funding
Develop pro bono attorney outreach and engagement plan	Engage stakeholders, develop communications plan, update resources and website	

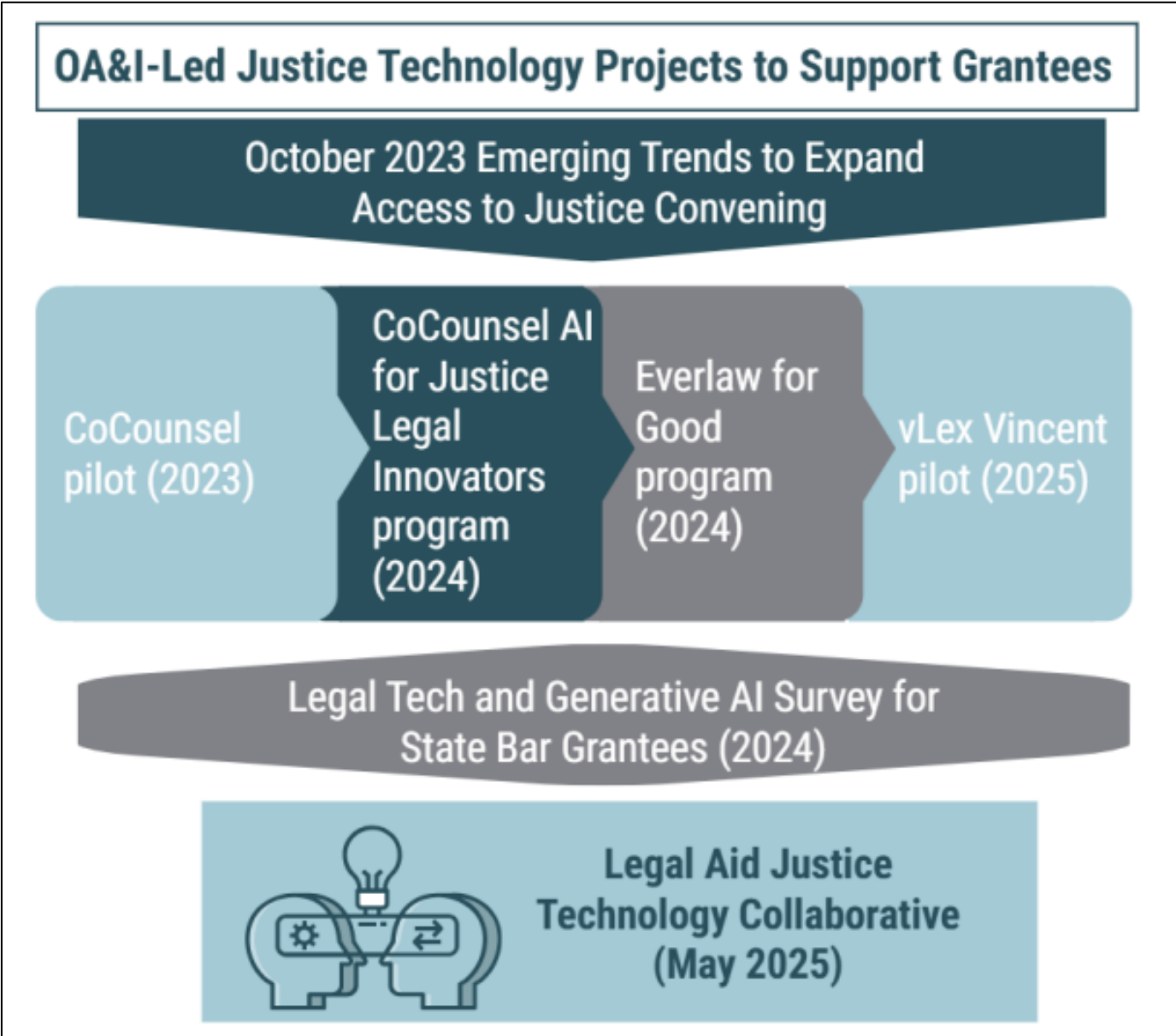


2024 CA JGS Recommendations and Planned Activities (continued)

2024 CA JGS Recommendations	Current/Planned Activities	Possible Additional Recommendations
Support and expand the Legal Aid Leaders Fellowship (LALF) grant	Administer current LALF grants; develop post-graduate fellowship opportunity tied to new discretionary grant funding	Explore additional opportunities for funding for law student and post-graduate fellowships in legal aid
Explore outreach opportunities and partnerships among legal aid, pro bono, and Lawyer Referral Services (LRS) partnerships; public defenders and LRS; small businesses and LRS	State Bar rules revision proposal related to LRS; develop outreach and engagement plan	
Conduct further data collection and analyses: immigration legal needs, pro bono attorney hours, and attorney deserts; LRS and Legal Incubator programs; State Bar grantee intake census	Develop plan for data collection and analyses	



Legal Aid Justice
Technology
Collaborative



Update on the National CJW Landscape

- The American Bar Association adopted [Resolution 605](#), which calls on states, courts, and other jurisdictions to explore CJW programs for individuals who cannot afford an attorney, as one way to narrow the justice gap and ensure equitable access to legal help.
- The Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators adopted [Resolution 1-2025](#), which supports exploring “Authorized Justice Practitioner” programs—including CJWs and paraprofessionals—to expand access to justice.



Legal Aid's Proposal for a California CJW Program

- The proposal would establish a statewide program where trained nonlawyers (CJWs) provide limited scope legal services to low-income Californians under the supervision of an attorney at an authorized legal services organization (LSO).
- The LSTFC would review applications and authorize LSOs (both State Bar grantees and non-grantee organizations).
- Authorized LSOs would certify individual CJWs to the State Bar and annually report data to the State Bar. The authorized LSO would develop its own training curricula, area(s) of law and scope of practice, and supervision requirements.
- The State Bar would develop a process for authorized LSOs to certify individual CJWs, post the roster of authorized LSOs online, and report to the Legislature and Supreme Court all complaints against CJWs annually.
- The program would be evaluated after five years to assess the impact of the program, community trust and engagement, and costs.



Legal Aid's Proposal for a California CJW Program



State Bar staff and the authors presented the proposal to the Legal Services Trust Fund Commission (LSTFC) and the Program Development and Impact (PDI) committee.



The PDI committee formed a working group to further review the proposal and draft a letter to the authors with additional feedback. The letter will express support to develop a statewide program and recommend the authors consider several suggestions.



The working group will present its recommendations to the PDI committee at its October 24, 2025, meeting, and again to the LSTFC at its November 7, 2025, meeting for approval.



CJW Working Group Feedback

Labor Implications

The working group recommends that the proposal authors proactively work with relevant legal aid and community-based organization unions. This will ensure the authors can address any concerns unions may have about the implementation of a CJW program.

Ensuring Quality Controls

- The proposal would allow legal services organizations to determine their own CJW certification criteria and process.
- The working group will recommend minimum ethics training requirements as a compromise between flexibility and standardized quality controls.

Ensuring Quality Supervision

- The proposal does not mandate the degree and quality of supervision.
- The working group seeks to balance permitting authorized LSOs to determine their supervision structure with ensuring public protection.

Funding Questions

In the absence of dedicated funding:

- How will State Bar grantees pay for the program?
- How will the State Bar expense program administration for non-grantees?
- How will the five-year evaluation be funded?



CJW Working Group Feedback (continued)

Expanding Access in Attorney Deserts

- The proposed CJW program offers an opportunity to expand access to justice in California's attorney deserts.
- Questions remain about whether the use of Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts funds can support out-of-county work without statutory and/or rule changes.

Inclusion of the 2024 CA JGS

- The proposal was published in December 2024, several months before the release of the 2024 CA JGS. It cites data from the 2019 JGS.
- The working group recommends the authors update relevant data points with figures from the 2024 CA JGS.

Supreme Court and Legislative Support

- How will the authors ensure Supreme Court and legislative buy-in?
- The working group recommends the authors engage in outreach with legal aid, community-based organizations, and the private bar preemptively to demonstrate community support.

Addressing Public Harm

- The proposal includes a literature review of nonlawyer legal help in the past 50 years.
- More explicit discussion of public harm/lack of harm, and how the public gets legal help without an attorney would strengthen the proposal.



Discussion

- California’s justice gap continues to grow.
- The 2022–2027 Strategic Plan, Goal 2 implementation steps were developed to address the 2019 Justice Gap Study findings.
- Other jurisdictions demonstrate that licensure reform—including CJW programs—can expand access to justice.
- In addition to its current work plans to address the justice gap, what additional steps—if any—would the Board like the State Bar to take?

