



STATE BAR OF TEXAS STRATEGIC PLAN FY2017 & FY2018

INTRODUCTION

Overview

State Bar Act, Section 81.0215 requires the State Bar to develop a comprehensive, long-range strategic plan. In each even-numbered year, the Bar drafts a plan covering a five-year period beginning with the next odd-numbered year. As further required by the Act, the State Bar adopts performance measures based on the purposes and goals expressed in the strategic plan, and reports performance outcomes.

Plan Operation and Updates

The Strategic Plan will be the guidepost for all decisions and activities of the Board of Directors and of the Bar as a whole and will be reviewed and revised by the Board at least every other year to ensure its relevance and suitability.

All decisions and activities of the Board and the staff of the State Bar must comport with the goals of this Strategic Plan. The annual budget of the State Bar will be developed specifically to advance the State Bar's goals and objectives as expressed herein.

Implementation

The State Bar will be accountable for using its resources to accomplish the goals set forth by the Plan. Performance measures based upon the following goals will be developed and reported. To implement the Strategic Plan, the State Bar will work with and through:

- the State Bar Board of Directors;
- the Texas Young Lawyers Association;
- its extensive network of volunteers, including its 45 sections, three divisions, and 37 volunteer committees;

- programs, activities, and initiatives implemented and executed by its staff and volunteers;
- its relationships and working partnerships with related entities, including local, minority, and specialty bar associations;
- polls and surveys of its members and the public to determine what services are needed and desired and how best to deliver them;
- presentations, speeches, and public forums;
- continuing legal education seminars;
- its annual meeting and other conferences;
- press releases and articles disseminated to and through news media;
- emails, listservs, and facsimiles to its members;
- websites, including its own (www.texasbar.com, www.texasbarcle.com, www.tyla.org) and those of related entities such as the Texas Access to Justice Commission (www.texasatj.org), the Texas Access to Justice Foundation (www.teajf.org), Law Focused Education, Inc. (www.texaslre.org) and the Texas Center for Legal Ethics (www.txethics.org).

Compliance with the State Bar Act

The State Bar of Texas is governed by the State Bar Act (Texas Government Code, Chapter 81 (“The Act”). The Act lists the purposes of the State Bar and a number of specific requirements with which the State Bar must comply. The State Bar has implemented policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Act. Because these requirements are statutory and ongoing, they are not expressly specified in the following strategic goals.

STATE BAR MISSION

The mission of the State Bar of Texas is to support the administration of the legal system, assure all citizens equal access to justice, foster high standards of ethical conduct for lawyers, enable its members to better serve their clients and the public, educate the public about the rule of law, and promote diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of law.

STATE BAR STRATEGIC GOALS

SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

Statement Of Purpose

The State Bar of Texas serves the public by: 1) educating the public about the Rule of Law and the role of judges, lawyers, and the public in the justice system; 2) helping lawyers provide the

highest quality legal and community service; and 3) working for equitable access and participation in all aspects of the justice system by diverse groups within our society.

Goals

A. Through the distribution of electronic and print publications, and the use of information technology and social media, increase the public's knowledge and understanding of:

- the Rule of Law,
- the judicial system,
- selection and compensation of members of the judiciary,
- lawyers' professional ethics,
- lawyers' standards of practice,
- attorney discipline procedures,
- the Client-Attorney Assistance Program (CAAP),
- the Lawyer Referral and Information Service (LRIS),
- the importance of jury service and the jury process,
- availability of the client security fund, and
- fee dispute resolution.

B. Promote the development of and participation in programs at all levels of education that encourage a more diverse population to pursue legal careers.

C. Assist in efforts to identify needs of under-served populations and low-income Texans, and develop services and programs to assist them.

D. Expand opportunities for lawyers and judges to be involved in community service and education.

E. Enhance awareness of pro bono and volunteer work provided by lawyers and lawyers' contributions both to the legal community and the public at large.

F. Educate the public about significant areas of the law.

G. Identify and employ new methods and technologies by which pro bono training can be made accessible and available to more Texas lawyers.

H. Increase access to consumer legal information for the public.

I. Actively promote the Lawyer Referral and Information Service.

SERVICE TO MEMBERS

Statement Of Purpose

The State Bar of Texas seeks to provide its members superior services (including continuing legal education, online resources, publications, networking and leadership opportunities, and member benefits) to assist them in offering ethical, high quality legal services and in establishing and maintaining efficient, effective, and productive law practices.

Goals

A. Monitor evolving trends in the legal profession and implement appropriate services to help Texas lawyers adapt to and succeed in their ever-changing legal, technological, and business environment. Adapt the role, function, and services of the State Bar as the legal profession changes.

B. Facilitate increased use of State Bar services by Texas lawyers. Develop strategies to increase participation in State Bar elections. Increase awareness of the CLE options available from the State Bar, including low cost and free opportunities.

C. Develop and implement strategies to increase bar association involvement among all attorneys, focusing both on service to the bar and networking and career opportunities.

D. Continue to monitor and enhance the quality of current membership benefits, and promote their use by members.

E. Work to increase diversity and inclusion among members of the State Bar, including Sections, Committees, Divisions, and other entities. Continue to publicize and support State Bar diversity programs and initiatives.

F. Continue to monitor the evolving continuing legal education needs of Texas lawyers, and develop new educational programs and resources to address those needs.

G. Continue to explore new and innovative methods and media for use in delivering continuing legal education and other resources to State Bar members.

H. Enhance services to and collaboration with State Bar Sections, local bar associations, minority bar associations, and specialty bar associations in an effort to more effectively provide services to all Texas lawyers.

I. Enhance services to and collaboration with Texas law schools in an effort to improve State Bar outreach to law students. Encourage and support the development of mentoring programs for young lawyers and law students by licensed attorneys. Continue to offer State Bar presentations at law schools. Encourage and support State Bar participation in law school programs that encourage diversity in the legal profession.

J. Survey members periodically on the types of communications and member benefits they would like to receive, and adjust communications and benefits accordingly.

K. Develop additional member services regarding alternative careers, career counseling, and career development. Where possible, collaborate with law schools on these services.

PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC

Statement of Purpose

The State Bar works to protect the public through its powers to regulate the conduct of lawyers and by promoting high ethical standards and professionalism.

Goals

A. Increase Texas lawyers' knowledge of and compliance with professional ethical standards and disciplinary rules for Texas attorneys through education and the dissemination of information.

B. Educate the public and attorneys about pre-grievance dispute resolution through the Client-Attorney Assistance Program.

C. Educate the public and Texas lawyers about the State Bar grievance system and the Client Security Fund, and continue to ensure there are sufficient funds for disbursement.

D. Review and recommend such improvements as may be necessary to ensure a fair and effective disciplinary system and dispute resolution procedure, and continue monitoring the Grievance Referral Program for impaired attorneys.

E. Educate the public and attorneys regarding unauthorized practice of law (UPL) and barratry issues, and where appropriate support the work of the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee, local law enforcement, and district attorneys in pursuing these matters.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Statement of Purpose

The State Bar of Texas works to ensure access to justice for all.

Goals

A. Augment pro bono services –

- Provide incentives for attorneys who perform pro bono legal services.

- Provide public recognition for law firms and corporations to support pro bono participation.
- Continue to involve the Supreme Court of Texas in efforts to increase pro bono participation. Increase communication and outreach to attorneys and local bar and specialty bar associations regarding pro bono opportunities and available support services such as malpractice insurance for pro bono cases. Promote pro bono opportunities to State Bar sections, local bar associations, law firms, and corporations.
- Educate attorneys regarding the Emeritus Attorney Program and consider expanding the program.
- Create a mentorship program for aspiring legal aid attorneys and pro bono volunteers.
- Identify and pursue methods to increase pro bono opportunities for government and transactional lawyers.
- Explore innovative methods to increase the availability of pro bono legal services in remote areas of the state.
- Promote the use of information technology to increase access to justice and support legal services programs.
- Identify and pursue methods to assist State Bar Sections, local bar associations, and specialty bar associations in creating and expanding pro bono programs and in encouraging their members to provide pro bono services.
- Increase coordination with key partners, including the Texas Access to Justice Commission, the Texas Access to Justice Foundation, and legal services providers, to improve and enhance access to justice in Texas
- Educate attorneys about and promote assistance to legal services programs around the state.

B. Build and support partnerships to enhance delivery of legal services –

- Educate and engage non-legal professionals who can provide relevant resources, such as mediators and accountants.
- Help Texas law schools create and expand clinics, mentorship programs, and other efforts to increase legal services to the poor.
- Collaborate with other agencies that provide legal services.
- Provide local and specialty bar associations and State Bar Sections with jump-start programs, basic toolkits, and mentoring opportunities.
- Help connect legal aid lawyers with local volunteer attorney programs.
- Enhance efforts to assist traditionally underserved or specialty populations.
- Increase available resources for limited English-proficiency, hearing-impaired, and visually-impaired populations.
- Continue to help local bar associations with response teams after natural disasters and other crises.
- Continue to support partners who provide high quality pro se information, education, and support materials for indigent persons.

C. Increase the visibility of pro bono efforts and access-to-justice issues

- Educate attorneys regarding the structure and funding of access to justice programs, including explanations of how funds are used, who imposes fees that fund access to justice, and the definition of “pro bono.”
- Improve measurement of and publicity for lawyer volunteer efforts.
- Explore and implement new methods to increase awareness and understanding among Texas lawyers and the public about access to justice issues. (e.g., promote pro bono needs and opportunities at Section and CLE events, and share stories of people being helped).
- Create a fundraising program to allow donors to “adopt” pro bono attorneys, legal clinics, or law students who provide pro bono services.

SOUND ADMINISTRATION & RESOURCES

Statement of Purpose

The activities and services of the State Bar shall be administered at a high level of efficiency and professionalism, in conformance with best practices observed by Texas state agencies and by bar associations of similar size and scope.

Goals

A. Assess, enhance, develop, and review a biennial plan for the training and mentoring of State Bar staff.

B. Review and, if advisable, develop a plan and system for deciding if and when to reapportion State Bar districts to better reflect and represent the geographical distribution of State Bar members, taking into account practice area and firm size.

C. Review and improve processes for handling and responding to customer service requests and communications, including tracking, analysis, and reporting.

D. Identify and pursue appropriate technological solutions and protections to improve the State Bar’s ability to perform its functions.

E. Adapt methods of member communication as warranted (i.e., electronic v. paper), and when possible target communications according to lawyer interests and demographics.

F. Provide for the continued maintenance and improvement of the Texas Law Center and other facilities occupied by the State Bar in conjunction with the implementation of the State Bar’s five-year Real Estate Strategic Plan.

G. Continue the emphasis on diversity, quality, efficiency, and professionalism within all levels of the staff of the State Bar.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Statement of Purpose

The State Bar shall conduct its fiscal affairs in conformance with the best management practices observed by Texas state agencies and by bar associations of similar size and scope.

Goals

- A. Safeguard and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of managing the State Bar's financial resources.
- B. Conserve and grow State Bar assets by efficiently and effectively delivering the services of the State Bar both to the public and to its members.
- C. Continue to develop and maintain a long-term financial plan for the State Bar of Texas to assure adequate reserves for both the general fund and other special capital funds.
- D. Ensure financial and internal audits are unqualified, through competent financial administration and thorough Board oversight.
- E. Annually review the State Bar's financial and reporting requirements to ensure effective and efficient compliance with the State Bar Act.
- F. Improve communication between the State Bar staff and Sections with regard to financial management and reporting.
- G. Enhance communication to members regarding the status of State Bar financial management, using graphical illustrations to simplify the presentation of data.