

Narrowing the Access-to-Justice Gap by Reimagining Regulation

**Report and Recommendations from
THE UTAH WORK GROUP ON REGULATORY REFORM**

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INTRODUCTION: Toward Equal Access to Justice

“An estimated five billion people have unmet justice needs globally. This justice gap includes people who cannot obtain justice for everyday problems, people who are excluded from the opportunity the law provides, and people who live in extreme conditions of injustice.”¹ This predicament is not unique to third-world countries: According to the World Justice Project, the United States is presently tied for 99th out of 126 countries in terms of access to and affordability of civil justice.² An astonishing “86% of the civil legal problems reported by low-income Americans in [2016–17] received inadequate or no legal help.”³ Yet at the same time, access to justice should be the very hallmark of the American legal system. To quote Chief Justice John Marshall, the “essence of civil liberty certainly consists in the right of every individual to claim the protection of the laws”⁴ And “[o]ne of the first duties of government is to afford that protection.”⁵

The Utah Judiciary, the branch of government with constitutional responsibility for the administration of justice, has been in the vanguard of initiatives aimed at solving the access-to-justice problem. The judiciary, under the leadership of the Utah Supreme Court (Supreme Court or Court) and the Judicial Council, has established state-wide pro bono efforts, moved to systematize court-approved forms and make them easily accessible online, established a new legal profession in Licensed Paralegal Practitioners (LPPs), and piloted an online dispute resolution model for small claims court. Each of these initiatives takes an important step toward narrowing the access-to-justice gap. But the most promising initiative, and the focus of this report, involves profoundly reimagining the way legal services are regulated in order to harness the power of entrepreneurship, capital, and machine learning in the legal arena.

In the latter part of 2018, the Supreme Court, at the request of the Utah State Bar (Utah Bar or Bar), charged Justice Deno Himonas and John Lund (past President of the Bar) with organizing a work group to study and make recommendations to the Court about optimizing the regulatory structure for legal services in the Age of Disruption. More specifically, the work

¹ Task Force on Justice, *Measuring the Justice Gap*, WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT (Feb. 6, 2019), https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/Measuring%20the%20Justice%20Gap_Feb2019.pdf (last visited Aug. 12, 2019); see also GILLIAN K. HADFIELD, *RULES FOR A FLAT WORLD: WHY HUMANS INVENTED LAW AND HOW TO REINVENT IT FOR A COMPLEX GLOBAL ECONOMY* 281 (2017) (estimating four billion people live “outside of the rule of law—with little access to basic legal tools”).

² WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT, *Rule of Law Index 2019*, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP_RuleofLawIndex_2019_Website_reduced.pdf (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

³ LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION, *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans* (June 2017), <https://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/images/TheJusticeGap-FullReport.pdf> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

⁴ *Marbury v. Madison*, 5 U.S. 137, 163 (1803).

⁵ *Id.*

group was charged with optimizing regulation in a manner that fosters innovation and promotes other market forces so as to increase access to and affordability of legal services. With this objective firmly in mind, members of the Utah court system and the Utah Bar, leading academics, and other experts, working closely together, have outlined what a new regulatory structure should look like. This new regulatory structure provides for broad-based investment and participation in business entities that provide legal services to the public, including non-lawyer investment in and ownership of these entities, through two concurrent approaches: (1) substantially loosening restrictions on the corporate practice of law, lawyer advertising, solicitation, and fee arrangements, including referrals and fee sharing; and (2) simultaneously establishing a new regulatory body (sometimes referred to as a regulator) under the supervision and direction of the Supreme Court to advance and implement a risk-based, empirically-grounded regulatory process for legal service entities. The new regulatory structure should also solicit non-traditional sources of legal services, including non-lawyers and technology companies, and allow them to test innovative legal service models and delivery systems through the use of a “regulatory sandbox” approach, which permits innovation to happen in designated areas while addressing risk and generating data to inform the regulatory process.⁶

Bridging the access-to-justice gap is no easy undertaking: it requires multi-dimensional vision, strong public leadership, and perseverance. It also requires timely action. And it is the view of the work group that the time for regulatory reform is now. Without such reform, it is our belief that the American legal system will continue to underserve the public, causing the access-to-justice gap to expand. Therefore, the work group respectfully urges the Supreme Court to adopt the recommendations outlined in this report.

THE UTAH WORK GROUP ON REGULATORY REFORM

The core mission of the work group is to optimize the regulatory structure for legal services in the Age of Disruption in a way that fosters innovation and promotes other market forces so as to increase access to and affordability of legal services.

In the fall of 2018 and winter of 2019, Supreme Court Justice Deno Himonas and John Lund, past president of the Utah Bar, gathered members of the Utah court system and the Bar, leading academics, and other experts to form the work group. Justice Himonas and Mr. Lund

⁶ The Utah work group is not going it alone in this space. Arizona, California, and the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System are all evaluating and moving toward regulatory reform in an effort to narrow the access-to-justice gap. See Brenna Goth & Sam Skolnik, *Arizona Weighs Role of Non-Lawyers in Boosting Access to Justice*, BLOOMBERG BIG LAW BUSINESS (Aug. 15, 2019), <https://biglawbusiness.com/arizona-weighs-role-of-non-lawyers-in-boosting-access-to-justice> (last visited Aug. 16, 2018); see also Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, *Unlocking Legal Regulation*, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER (forthcoming) (on file with author).

co-chair the work group. In addition to Justice Himonas and Mr. Lund, the group is comprised of H. Dickson Burton, immediate past President of the Bar; Dr. Thomas Clarke, Vice President of Research and Technology for the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) (ret.); Cathy Dupont, Deputy Utah State Courts Administrator; Dr. Gillian Hadfield, Professor of Law and Professor of Strategic Management, University of Toronto Faculty of Law; Dr. Margaret Hagan, Director of the Legal Design Lab and Lecturer in Law at Stanford Law School; Steve Johnson, past Chair of the Court's Advisory Committee on the Rules of Professional Conduct; Lucy Ricca, former Executive Director of and current Fellow with the Stanford Center on the Legal Profession; Gordon Smith, Dean of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University and Glen L. Farr Professor of Law; Heather White, past Co-Chair of the Bar Innovation in Law Practice Committee; and Elizabeth Wright, General Counsel to the Bar.⁷

The impetus for the work group was a letter sent by Mr. Burton to the Court on behalf of the State Bar.⁸ The letter correctly noted that “[a]ccess to justice in Utah remains a significant and growing problem.” The Bar set forth its belief that, to help combat that problem, “a key step to getting legal representation to more people is to substantially reform the regulatory setting in which lawyers operate.” The Bar therefore requested that “the Court establish a small working group to promptly study possible reforms and make recommendations for revisions, possibly major revisions, to the rules of professional responsibility so as to permit lawyers to more effectively and more affordably provide legal services and do related promotion of those services.”

The work group understood from the outset that, as outlined in the letter to the Court, the charge involved “the consideration” and evaluation of “(1) the effect of modern information technology and modern consumer patterns on the current rules, (2) the potential value, in terms of making legal services accessible to clients, of non-lawyer investment and ownership in entities providing legal services and the related regulatory issues, (3) the prospect of broadening the availability of legal services through flat fee and other alternative fee arrangements not currently permitted by the rules, (4) whether there is continuing justification for the rules against direct solicitation, (5) whether and how to permit and structure lawyer use of referral systems such as Avvo in light of the rule against referral fees[,] and [(6)] the related trends and approaches being considered and/or implemented in other bars, such as Oregon and the [American Bar Association’s (ABA)] work in this area.”

⁷ A short biography for each member of the work group can be found at Appendix A. We would also like to extend a special thanks to Dolores Celio, Judicial Assistant to Justice Himonas, and Kevin Heiner (J.D. 2018, Columbia Law School) and John Peterson (J.D. 2016, Harvard Law School), law clerks to Justice Himonas, for their invaluable help researching, writing, and editing this report.

⁸ A copy of Mr. Burton’s letter is attached at Appendix B.

THE NEED FOR REGULATORY REFORM TO ADDRESS THE ACCESS-TO-JUSTICE GAP IN THE AGE OF DISRUPTION

Nelson Mandela poignantly observed that “[a] nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”⁹ In the United States, millions of our citizens who experience problems with domestic violence, veterans’ benefits, disability access, housing conditions, health care, debt collection, and other civil justice issues cannot afford legal services and are not eligible for assistance from the civil legal aid system. This failure affects not only low-income people, but wide swaths of the population.¹⁰ The inability of these people to seek and obtain a remedy through the courts or through informal dispute resolution processes undermines the operation of the rule of law. Our justice system should be judged harshly by this failure.

This failure, however, should not be laid at the feet of lawyers. As a profession, lawyers have and continue to give generously of their time and money in an effort to mind the gap. But, as history has shown, we cannot volunteer or donate the problem away. Likewise, minor tweaks, while often helpful, are just that—minor. Serious reform requires recognition that our existing regulatory approaches are not working. And they are not working because they are not risk-sensitive and market-driven. Instead, they attempt to solve potential problems by imagining what could possibly go wrong and then dictating the business model for how legal services must be provided. This protectionistic approach has had catastrophic effects on access to justice. What follows is an examination of why and how we must shift from such a prescriptive approach based on abstract risk considerations to an outcomes-based and risk-appropriate paradigm.

⁹ NELSON MANDELA, *LONG WALK TO FREEDOM* 23 (1994).

¹⁰ *See, e.g.*, GILLIAN K. HADFIELD, *RULES FOR A FLAT WORLD: WHY HUMANS INVENTED LAW AND HOW TO REINVENT IT FOR A COMPLEX GLOBAL ECONOMY* 179 (2017).

The Access-to-Justice Gap

In this report, we describe the “access-to-justice gap” as the difference between the legal needs of ordinary Americans and the resources available to meet those needs. As noted, the civil justice system in the United States currently is tied for 99th out of 126 countries in terms of access and affordability.¹¹ And the United States has consistently shown poorly when it comes to access and affordability of civil justice: in 2015, the U.S. ranked 65th out of 102 countries¹²; in 2016, 94th out of 112¹³; and in 2017-2018, 94th out of 112.^{14,15} Without access to justice, “people are unable to have their voice heard, exercise their rights, challenge discrimination or hold decision-makers accountable.”¹⁶ In the U.S., many people “go it alone without legal representation in disputes where they risk losing their job, their livelihood, their home, or their children, or seek a restraining order against an abuser.”¹⁷

The access-to-justice gap is especially acute among low-income Americans. In 2017, the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) contracted with NORC at the University of Chicago to explore the extent of the access-to-justice gap. NORC conducted a national survey of “low-income households” (i.e., households at or below 125% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)) and analyzed data from LSC’s 2017 Intake Census, through which 133 LSC grantee programs “tracked the number of individuals approaching them for help with a civil legal problem whom they were unable to serve, able to serve to some extent (but not fully), and able to serve fully.”¹⁸ The Census Bureau estimates that the number of people living below the FPL is about 60 million

¹¹ WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT, *Rule of Law Index 2019*, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP_RuleofLawIndex_2019_Website_reduced.pdf (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

¹² WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT, *Rule of Law Index 2015*, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/roli_2015_0.pdf (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

¹³ WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT, *Rule of Law Index 2016*, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/RoLI_Final-Digital_0.pdf (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

¹⁴ WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT, *Rule of Law Index 2017–2018*, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-ROLI-2018-June-Online-Edition_0.pdf (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

¹⁵ The World Justice Project generates these rankings using data generated from questionnaires. The questionnaires are sent to people that the World Justice Project has identified as local experts. The responses to the questionnaires are codified as numeric values, normalized, and then subjected to a series of tests to identify possible biases and errors. The data are also subjected to a sensitivity analysis to determine the statistical reliability of the results. The data are then converted to country scores and rankings that represent the assessment of more than 120,000 households and 3,800 legal experts across the countries included in the rankings. See WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT, *Rule of Law Index 2019*, https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP_RuleofLawIndex_2019_Website_reduced.pdf (last visited Aug. 12, 2019) (explaining methodology for the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index).

¹⁶ UNITED NATIONS AND THE RULE OF LAW, *Access to Justice*, <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/access-to-justice-and-rule-of-law-institutions/access-to-justice/> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

¹⁷ LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION, *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-income Americans* (June 2017), <https://www.lsc.gov/sites/default/files/images/TheJusticeGap-FullReport.pdf> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

¹⁸ *Id.*

people, including roughly 19 million children. The three key findings of the report about this population are equal parts fascinating and disturbing:

1. Eighty-six percent [86%] of the civil legal problems faced by low-income Americans in a given year receive inadequate or no legal help;
2. Of the estimated 1.7 million civil legal problems for which low-income Americans seek LSC-funded legal aid, 1.0 to 1.2 million (62% to 72%) receive inadequate or no legal assistance; and
3. In 2017, low-income Americans will likely not get their legal needs fully met for between 907,000 and 1.2 million civil legal problems that they bring to LSC-funded legal aid programs due to limited resources among LSC grantees. This represents the vast majority (85% to 97%) of all the problems receiving limited or no legal assistance from LSC grantees.¹⁹

According to the LSC report, the most common civil legal problems relate to health (41% of low-income households) and consumer-finance (37% of low-income households) issues. Several other categories of civil legal problems—rental housing, children and custody, and education—affected more than one-fourth of low-income households.²⁰

In a study conducted in 2015, two years before the LSC report, NCSC looked at the access-to-justice gap by examining the non-domestic civil caseloads in 152 courts in 10 urban counties. The resulting report, *The Landscape of Civil Litigation in State Courts* [hereinafter the *Landscape*],²¹ showed that civil litigation predictably clusters around a few subjects (debt collection, landlord/tenant cases, and small claims cases involving disputes valued at \$12,000 or less) and results in very small monetary judgments (“three-quarters (75%) of all judgments were less than \$5,200”), suggesting that, “[f]or most represented litigants, the costs of litigating a case through trial would greatly exceed the monetary value of the case.”²² Not surprisingly then, at least one party was self-represented in most cases (76%), proving that “[t]he idealized picture of an adversarial system in which both parties are represented by competent attorneys who can assert all legitimate claims and defenses is an illusion.”²³ A majority of cases were disposed of through default judgments or settlements.²⁴ The report concluded, “[t]he picture of

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Civil Justice Initiative, *The Landscape of Civil Litigation in State Courts*, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS, <https://www.ncsc.org/~media/Files/PDF/Research/CivilJusticeReport-2015.ashx> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019). The “*Landscape*” dataset consisted of all non-domestic civil cases disposed of between July 1, 2012[,] and June 30, 2015[,] in 152 courts with civil jurisdiction in 10 urban counties. The 925,344 cases comprise approximately five percent (5%) of state civil caseloads nationally.” *Id.*

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

civil litigation that emerges from the *Landscape* dataset confirms the longstanding criticism that the civil justice system takes too long and costs too much.” The result is predictable: “[M]any litigants with meritorious claims and defenses are effectively denied access to justice in state courts because it is not economically feasible to litigate these cases.”²⁵

Raw data from the Third District Court for the State of Utah suggest that its caseload tracks the caseloads studied in the *Landscape* report.²⁶ In 2018, 54,664 civil and family law matters were filed in the Third District.²⁷ Of these cases, 51% were debt collection, 7% were landlord/tenant, and approximately 19% were family law cases. Moreover, the data show that the idealized adversarial system in which both parties are represented by competent attorneys is not flourishing in Utah: ***At least one party was unrepresented throughout the entirety of the suit in 93% of all civil and family law disputes disposed of in the Third District in 2018.***

And the public is taking notice. In the 2018 State of the State Courts-Survey Analysis commissioned by NCSC, “[a] broad majority (59%) say ‘state courts are not doing enough to empower regular people to navigate the court system without an attorney.’”²⁸ And “[o]nly a third (33%) believe courts are providing the information to do so.”²⁹

The Supreme Court and the Judicial Council are resolutely working toward narrowing the access-to-justice gap. To this end, they have established a statewide pro bono system to improve the delivery of free legal services to needy parties; established a new profession—the LPP—to deliver legal services in debt collection, landlord/tenant, and family law matters; and piloted an online dispute resolution model in small claims court. These efforts are important and should be supported and expanded. But they are not enough. As NCSC recognized in the *Landscape*, “civil justice reform can no longer be delayed or even implemented incrementally through mere changes in rules of procedure.”³⁰ What “is imperative [is] that court leaders move with dispatch to improve civil case management with tools and methods that align with the

²⁵ *Id.* A legal needs survey conducted by New York in 2010 demonstrates just how stark this problem is. For example, the New York Task Force found that, in New York City, 99 percent of tenants are unrepresented when faced with eviction and homelessness. THE TASK FORCE TO EXPAND ACCESS TO CIVIL LEGAL SERVICES IN NEW YORK, *Report to the Chief Judge of the State of New York* 17 (Nov. 2010), <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/sites/default/files/document/files/2018-04/CLS-TaskForceREPORT.pdf> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019). In consumer credit card debt collection matters, 99 percent of New Yorkers were unrepresented, while 100 percent of the entities bringing the collections were represented. *Id.* at 16.

²⁶ The data set forth in this paragraph were provided by court services personnel for the Administrative Office of the Courts of Utah.

²⁷ For purposes of this report, the Third District Court includes all adult courts, including justice courts, in Salt Lake, Summit, and Tooele Counties.

²⁸ Memorandum from GBA Strategies to National Center for State Courts (Dec. 3, 2018) (on file with author).

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Civil Justice Initiative, *The Landscape of Civil Litigation in State Courts*, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS, <https://www.ncsc.org/~media/Files/PDF/Research/CivilJusticeReport-2015.ashx> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

realities of modern civil dockets to control costs, reduce delays, and ensure fairness for litigants.”³¹ And, perhaps, if we move efficiently and meaningfully enough, we can avoid a harsh but accurate assessment of our civil justice system by future generations.

The Age of Disruption

We live in an age where disruptive innovation is occurring non-stop.³² So-called “incumbent” institutions must continuously innovate to maintain and protect their positions and functions in society. The justice system is no exception. The shift of most court civil business to cases involving self-represented litigants, the rise of average education levels, and the unaffordability of lawyers has driven a new market for legal services serviced partly by non-traditional providers, which pushes the boundaries of what is the unauthorized practice of law.

Courts have struggled to adjust to a world in which unrepresented litigants are the norm. Many cases resolve by default or by failures to comply with required court processes. Judges either require special training to facilitate cases or must create special dockets where the rules of evidence are suspended. Civil and family caseloads are dropping as lawyers become ever more expensive and some litigants decide to proceed without assistance.³³ At the same time, alternative providers of dispute resolution are enticing more and more litigants away from the courts at both the high end (complex civil cases) and the low end (parking tickets, consumer debt, simple divorces, etc.).

Technology has been the leading force in disrupting the way we acquire and consume goods, sleep, work, and play. And it has certainly already altered the practice of law as we have heretofore known it. It has enabled litigants to reduce the costs of litigation, from providing them with access to information about the legal system they did not previously have to pressuring lawyers to use tools that make the litigation process less costly. Automated forms have empowered litigants to represent themselves and helped generate effective documents ranging from transactional documents (such as those used in wills, real estate purchase contracts, and business formations) to litigation pleadings (such as those in divorces, debt collection actions, and contract disputes). Moreover, lawyers have been forced to compete by lowering prices by means such as using electronic communications and document storage and transmittal, eliminating copying costs, electronically Bates stamping discovery documents

³¹ *Id.*

³² See Clayton M. Christensen, Michael E. Raynor & Rory McDonald, *What is Disruptive Innovation?*, HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW (Dec. 2015), <https://hbr.org/2015/12/what-is-disruptive-innovation> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

³³ See NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS, *Data Visualizations*, <https://public.tableau.com/profile/ncscviz/vizhome/CSPCaseloadDashboard/CaseDashboard> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019), and Court Statistics Project, *National Overview*, NATIONAL CENTER FOR STATE COURTS, <http://www.courtstatistics.org/NCSC-Analysis/National-Overview.aspx> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019) for data summaries of the trends.

(reducing the time to do so from hours to seconds), and even employing artificial intelligence that can review thousands of pages of documents and pull relevant documents for review and use with greater accuracy than humans.

Lawyers have also benefitted from the rise of technology in several ways. Technology has enabled lawyers and law firms to dramatically cut costs in certain areas by streamlining communications with clients, simplifying and streamlining case management and billing, automating discovery, and enabling telecommuting—which allows lawyers to conduct business remotely rather than having to travel hundreds, if not thousands, of miles—just to name a few.

And, again, courts have not been immune from disruption. They, too, compete in this ever-changing world that continuing advances in technology bring. More access for litigants means a heavier workload for many already overburdened judges and their staff. Courts also have been required to handle more cases with unrepresented litigants, which increases the time spent reviewing arguments and theories and preparing rulings and orders that people without legal training can understand and follow without explanation from a lawyer. But not all disruption has created legal burdens. Disruption has also brought with it increases in efficiency, from electronic filing and storage to telephone conferences for discovery disputes and other non-dispositive matters. Information filed with the court is now more easily retrieved as well.

The potential benefits for access to justice from legal disruptions are significant. If legal services can be provided to litigants and those with potential legal problems in a much more cost effective way, then true access to justice becomes possible for millions of people who currently get no help and do nothing. Technology, especially online legal services, exponentially increases the potential to improve access to justice. But it also simultaneously increases the risk of legal and practical harm to users if those services are not of sufficient quality. However, the potential benefits are too large to pass up, so changing how legal services are regulated to both open the door to innovation and protect litigants and other users in responsible ways is critical.

Because of the assumed monopoly on the provision of legal services by lawyers (and a few related, sanctioned roles³⁴), current regulation focuses on requirements for lawyers. If

³⁴ For example, Utah allows LPPs to assist clients in a limited number of areas in which the LPP is licensed. UTAH STATE BAR, *Licensed Paralegal Practitioner*, <https://www.utahbar.org/licensed-paralegal-practitioner/> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019). Other states have similar programs. Washington allows limited license legal technicians to advise and assist people through divorce, child custody, and other family law matters, WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, *Limited License Legal Technicians* (July 24, 2019), <https://www.wsba.org/for-legal-professionals/join-the-legal-profession-in-wa/limited-license-legal-technicians> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019), and permits limited practice officers to select, prepare, and complete certain approved documents used in loan agreements and the sale of real or personal property, WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION, *Limited Practice Officers*, <https://www.wsba.org/for-legal-professionals/join-the-legal-profession-in-wa/limited-practice-officers> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019). And Arizona

innovation brings a wide variety of legal services to consumers, then the strategy of regulating narrow roles will no longer suffice. There needs to be a way to regulate a broad array of legal services created and provided in different ways. This approach needs to be consistent, cost effective, and safe.

ACHIEVING REFORM—A ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

Fundamental reform of how legal services are regulated requires equal parts courage, caution, imagination, and deliberation. The current paradigm is deeply entrenched in the country's justice system, in the hearts and minds of those who have dedicated themselves to the law, and even in our society at large. With rare exception, long gone are the days when an Abraham Lincoln could "read into" the practice of law. For over a century now, the entry point to be allowed to provide legal services has been territory controlled by law schools molding Juris Doctors (JDs) and courts and bar associations assessing the character and fitness and broad legal knowledge of those JDs. Oddly though, in most jurisdictions, once admitted—and subject only to continuing legal education and conduct requirements—an attorney may provide any legal service across the entire spectrum of needs, everything from writing a will or closing a major contract to defending a felony or filing a class action. While very few divorce lawyers would take on a major real estate deal, their licenses allow them to do just that. The regulatory scheme regulates the provider, not the service.

This approach, though faithfully followed for the past century, has not yielded a broad-based legal services industry that provides affordable legal services to all members of society. Far from it. And this approach is coming under more pressure on a daily basis. Technologies and market forces keep undermining the fundamental premise that lawyers, and lawyers alone, can provide suitable legal services as consumers are increasingly finding tools to meet their needs outside of the regulated legal profession.

As to what the future holds for legal services, hardly anything is clear. What the Greek philosopher Heraclitus said in the 5th century B.C. is as true now as it was then: "Life is flux."³⁵ The only constant is change. So, realistically, drafting a roadmap for the way forward is best viewed as attempting to chart a course in the right direction, watching how the winds blow, tending the lines carefully, and trimming the sails as needed.

allows legal document preparers to prepare and provide certain legal documents without the supervision of an attorney. STATE BAR OF ARIZONA, *Legal Document Preparers*, <https://www.azbar.org/lawyerconcerns/regulationofnon-lawyers/legaldocumentpreparers/> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

³⁵ Joshua J. Mark, *Heraclitus of Ephesus*, ANCIENT HISTORY ENCYCLOPEDIA (July 14, 2010), https://www.ancient.eu/Heraclitus_of_Ephesos/ (last visited Aug. 10, 2019).

To correctly set that course, we have studied other regulatory reform efforts and how they have fared. The most comprehensive example, and a good source of guidance and insight, is the United Kingdom's Legal Services Act of 2007 (the LSA). We have provided a thorough discussion of the LSA and its strengths and weaknesses in Appendix C. The LSA is a broad-based reform that identifies key elements for success, such as independent regulators, a risk-based approach, use of guiding principles, and the articulation of the specific outcomes expected from the regulation. With these elements in place, room can be made both for new approaches by lawyers and for innovators with ideas for legal services that do not involve lawyers.

We have also spent a great deal of time thinking about, researching, and analyzing the rules of professional responsibility and the creation of a new regulator of legal services. Through our deliberative process we came to think of two tracks, both of which are critical to the path to successful reform.

Track A: Loosening restrictions on lawyers—To make room for new approaches by lawyers, we informed ourselves about movements across the country to loosen some of the restrictions on lawyers so that they can both compete and innovate. We collaborated with the Court's Advisory Committee on the Rules of Professional Conduct. That committee participated in a design lab led by Professor Margaret Hagan of Stanford Law, which allowed for all who participated to imagine rule changes that would still fully protect clients without unduly hampering lawyers from harnessing the power of capital, collaboration, and technology. Our specific recommendations for changes to the Rules of Professional Conduct and the supporting rationale are set forth below.

Track B: The creation of a new regulatory body—Lawyers are no longer the only ones who provide legal services. There are now LPPs and other licensed paralegal professionals.³⁶ There are companies providing online legal forms and assistance with court processes. There are referral services. There are even limited types of legal services being provided by other professionals, such as real estate professionals and tax preparers. And there are many others who would be fully capable of providing discrete legal services but who lack the required license to do so. If one considers the byzantine world of Social Security, there are undoubtedly clerks working for the Social Security Administration who, if they were allowed to, could give someone much better advice about how to process a claim than could all but a few of the lawyers licensed to practice law in Utah.

So should room be made for people other than lawyers and organizations other than law firms to provide certain legal services? The answer is clearly yes. We have concluded that allowing for greater competition, subject to proper regulatory oversight, will bring innovation

³⁶ Utah will license its first LPPs within the next few weeks.

to the legal services industry in ways that are not even imaginable today. Critically, we believe that allowing for that innovation will be the solution to the access-to-justice problem that plagues our country. The question is: How can we allow for that innovation without creating intolerable levels of risk for the consumers of legal services? Our full answer to that is the detailed recommendation set forth below and in Appendix D. But the key steps we recommend are first to create a regulatory body armed with a set of risk-based principles for regulation, and second to permit that body to allow providers to provisionally test and prove their services in a “regulatory sandbox” environment, where data can be gathered and innovation can be assessed and revised as needed before more permanent licensure is granted. This body would operate under the supervision and direction of the Supreme Court. Initial funding would be obtained through grants.³⁷

Track A: Freeing Up Lawyers to Compete By Easing the Rules of Professional Conduct

Certain rules of professional conduct have been viewed by lawyers as impeding their ability to increase business and survive in the online world. Restrictions on lawyer advertising, fee sharing, and ownership of and investment in law firms by non-lawyers are concepts that need serious amendment if we are to improve competition and successfully close the access-to-justice gap.³⁸ This is a step that we believe must be taken independent of the creation of a new regulatory body. Nor are we alone in this belief. “California has taken a step towards altering the role of lawyers after a state bar task force [in June 2019] advanced controversial proposals for new ethics rules that would allow non-lawyers to invest in law firms and tech companies to provide limited legal services.”³⁹ And Arizona has recently followed suit.⁴⁰

Lawyer Advertising

Traditionally, lawyer advertising was frowned upon as being undignified. Courts went so far as to say that advertising would undermine the attorney’s sense of self-worth and tarnish the dignified public image of the profession. This changed somewhat with the United States Supreme Court’s decision in *Bates v. State Bar of Arizona*, which recognized that the lawyer

³⁷ By way of example, the Administrative Office of the Utah Courts should soon have the opportunity to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System. As envisioned, the MOU would provide partial backing for this project. Implementation of the MOU would be subject to, among other items, the Court adopting the work group’s report and recommendations.

³⁸ Some of these restrictions are already worked around and effectively bypassed through means such as litigation financing. By loosening these restrictions and bringing some of these workarounds within the purview of the new rules, we can ensure more effective regulation of those workarounds and provide better protection for consumers.

³⁹ Roy Strom, *California Opens Door to More Legal Tech, Non-Lawyer Roles (1)*, BLOOMBERG BIG LAW BUSINESS (July 2, 2019), <https://biglawbusiness.com/california-opens-door-to-more-non-lawyer-roles-tech-solutions> (last visited Aug. 10, 2019).

⁴⁰ Brenna Goth & Sam Skolnik, *Arizona Weighs Role of Non-Lawyers in Boosting Access to Justice*, BLOOMBERG BIG LAW BUSINESS (Aug. 15, 2019), <https://biglawbusiness.com/arizona-weighs-role-of-non-lawyers-in-boosting-access-to-justice> (last visited Aug. 16, 2018).

advertising ban in place in Arizona inhibited the free flow of information and kept the public in ignorance.⁴¹ The Court held that Arizona's total ban on lawyer advertising violated the free speech guarantee of the First Amendment.⁴² This case opened the door to lawyer advertising across the country.

The *Bates* Court did, however, allow states to ban false, deceptive, or misleading advertising, and to regulate the manner in which lawyers may solicit business in person. States can require warnings and disclaimers on advertising and impose reasonable restrictions on the time, place, and manner of advertising. And following the *Bates* decision, most states included such restrictions in their rules of professional conduct. Utah was one of those states.

Despite *Bates* and the many other court rulings since 1977 that removed restrictions on lawyer advertising, the belief on the part of some that lawyer advertising needs to be carefully constrained has persisted. As recently as 2013, the Bar submitted a petition to the Supreme Court requesting that lawyers be required to submit copies of all advertising and solicitations to a Lawyer Advertising Review Committee no later than the date of mailing or publishing of the advertisements or solicitations, so that the ads could be reviewed for appropriateness. The purpose of the proposed rule was to prevent Las Vegas-style advertising from creeping into Utah. Thankfully, the proposed rule was not adopted.

Last year, in recognition of the changing legal landscape, the ABA attempted to simplify the advertising and solicitation rules. Certain changes were made to the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, and states were encouraged to adopt similar rules. The Court's Advisory Committee on the Rules of Professional Conduct has monitored these changes to the Model Rules and has a review and update of the Utah advertising rules on its agenda.

The Advisory Committee's review includes an analysis of the purpose of the rules and the need to protect the public while simultaneously allowing the members of the public to be better-informed of the legal services available to them. The Committee must consider the reality that lawyers may advertise online and through attorney-matching services, pay-per-click ads, link-sharing, legal blogs, and social network accounts in order to promote services. The main concern should be the protection of the public from false, misleading, or overreaching solicitations and advertising. Any other regulation of lawyer advertising seems to serve no legitimate purpose; indeed, it is blunt, ex ante, and—like so many current regulations—neither outcomes-based nor risk-appropriate.

⁴¹ 433 U.S. 350, 365 (1977).

⁴² *Id.* at 384.

The Committee's review of advertising standards is well underway and we understand that a proposal should be sent to the Court for its consideration within the next two months. We applaud the Committee's efforts with respect to lawyer advertising.

Lawyer Referral Fees

Utah Rule of Professional Conduct 7.2 prohibits a lawyer from giving anything of value to a person for recommending the lawyer's services or for channeling professional work to the lawyer.⁴³ But use of paid referrals is one method for allowing clients to find needed legal services and one of the ways lawyers can find new clients. Again, this rule should be amended to balance the risk of harm to prospective clients with the benefit to lawyers and clients through an outcomes-based and risk-appropriate methodology.

Ownership of Law Firms and Sharing Legal Fees with Non-Lawyers

Non-lawyers have traditionally been prohibited from owning and controlling any interest in law firms. Utah Rule of Professional Conduct 5.4 provides that a "lawyer shall not permit a person who recommends, employs or pays the lawyer to render legal services for another to direct or regulate the lawyer's professional judgment in rendering such legal services."⁴⁴ The rules also prohibit a lawyer from "practic[ing] with or in the form of a professional corporation or association authorized to practice law for a profit" if a non-lawyer owns any interest therein, if a non-lawyer is a director or officer or has a similar position of responsibility in the firm, or if a non-lawyer has a right to direct or control the professional judgment of the lawyer.⁴⁵

The ABA Ethics 2000 Commission vigorously debated the concept of non-lawyer ownership of law firms in 2000. The ABA House ultimately rejected a proposal to allow non-lawyer ownership of law firms. Since then, however, a number of jurisdictions have seen the need to reevaluate such proposals. In Washington, D.C., the rules of professional conduct now allow for non-lawyer ownership of firms under certain conditions.⁴⁶ And as of June 2019, a state bar task force in California advanced a proposal that would allow non-lawyers to invest in law firms.⁴⁷ Most notably, "[i]n a July 11 meeting, the Arizona task force voted to recommend

⁴³ UTAH R. PROF'L CONDUCT 7.2(f).

⁴⁴ UTAH R. PROF'L CONDUCT 5.4(c).

⁴⁵ UTAH R. PROF'L CONDUCT 5.4(d).

⁴⁶ D.C. R. PROF'L CONDUCT 5.4(b). Rule 5.4(b) permits non-lawyer ownership of firms if (1) the law firm has as its sole purpose the provision of legal services, (2) all persons having management duties of an ownership interest agree to abide by the rules of professional conduct for lawyers, (3) the managing lawyers in the firm undertake to be responsible for the non-lawyer participants, and (4) these conditions are set forth in writing. *See id.*

⁴⁷ California has proposed two different amendments to its own rule 5.4. The first proposal is seen as an incremental evolution of the current rule. *See* STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA TASK FORCE ON ACCESS THROUGH INNOVATION OF

scrapping Rule 5.4 . . . in its entirety.”⁴⁸ And, “[i]n a related move, the panel voted . . . to amend the state’s ethical rules to allow lawyers and nonlawyers to form new legal services businesses known as ‘alternative business structures.’”⁴⁹ We believe the Arizona approach has much to offer. Indeed, we view the elimination or substantial relaxation of Rule 5.4 as key to allowing lawyers to fully and comfortably participate in the technological revolution. Without such a change, lawyers will be at risk of not being able to engage with entrepreneurs across a wide swath of platforms.

Track B: The Creation of a New Regulatory Body

Alongside the proposed revisions set forth in Track A, we propose developing a new regulatory body for legal services in the State of Utah. Rule revisions are necessary to propel any change, but our position is that wide-reaching and impactful change will only follow reimagining the regulatory approach. Therefore, as the Supreme Court moves forward with revising the rules of practice, we endorse the simultaneous creation of a new regulator, operating under the supervision and direction of the Supreme Court, for the provision of legal services.

The proposed regulator will implement a regulatory system:

LEGAL SERVICES, *Recommendation Letter on Proposed Rule 5.4 [Alternative 1]* (June 18, 2019), <http://board.calbar.ca.gov/docs/agendaitem/Public/agendaitem1000024362.pdf> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019). The second proposal is much more comprehensive and is meant to create a major shift in how financial arrangements with non-lawyers are regulated. See STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA TASK FORCE ON ACCESS THROUGH INNOVATION OF LEGAL SERVICES, *Recommendation Letter on Proposed Rule 5.4 [Alternative 2]* (June 14, 2019), <http://board.calbar.ca.gov/docs/agendaitem/Public/agendaitem1000024359.pdf> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019). This proposal allows for fee sharing between a lawyer or law firm and any person or organization not authorized to practice law if:

(1) the lawyer or law firm enters into a written agreement to share the fee with the person or organization not authorized to practice law; (2) the client has consented in writing, either at the time of the agreement to share fees or as soon thereafter as reasonably practicable, after a full written disclosure to the client of: (i) the fact that the fee will be shared with a person or organization not authorized to practice law; (ii) the identity of the person or organization; and (iii) the terms of the fee sharing; (3) there is no interference with the lawyer’s independent professional judgment or with the lawyer-client relationship; and (4) the total fee charged is not unconscionable as that term is defined in rule 1.5 and is not increased solely by reason of the agreement to share the fee.

Id.

⁴⁸ Brenna Goth & Sam Skolnik, *Arizona Weighs Role of Non-Lawyers in Boosting Access to Justice*, BLOOMBERG BIG LAW BUSINESS (Aug. 15, 2019), <https://biglawbusiness.com/arizona-weighs-role-of-non-lawyers-in-boosting-access-to-justice> (last visited Aug. 16, 2018).

⁴⁹ *Id.*

Narrowing the Access-to-Justice Gap by Reimagining Regulation

1. Driven by clearly articulated policy objectives and regulatory principles (objectives-based regulation);
2. Using appropriate and state-of-the-art regulatory tools (licensing, data gathering, monitoring, enforcement, etc.); and
3. Guided by the assessment, analysis, and mitigation of consumer risk (risk-based regulation).⁵⁰

We suggest the following core policy objective for the new system: *To ensure consumers access to a well-developed, high-quality, innovative, and competitive market for legal services.*

As the core policy objective indicates, the explicit goal of this approach is to develop a regulatory framework that allows, supports, and encourages the growth of a vibrant market for legal services in Utah and, ultimately, across the United States. At every regulatory step, the regulator should consider how its actions impact the core objective, choosing those paths that enhance, not diminish, the achievement of that objective. Potential impacts on the core objective, from either the regulator's own decisions or from actions by participants in the market, will be measured and assessed in terms of risk to the core objective. The regulator will be guided by this primary question: What is the evidence of risk, if any, that this action will create in the consumer market for legal services? This is objectives-based, risk-based regulation.⁵¹

Examples:

- *What evidence do we see of consumer harm caused by improper influence by non-lawyer owners over legal decisions? What steps can we take to mitigate these risks in the market?*
- *What do the data tell us about the risks of consumer harm from software-enabled legal assistance in an area such as will writing? Are the actual risks of harm more likely or more significant than the risks of a consumer acting on their own or through a lawyer?⁵² How can the risks be mitigated?*

⁵⁰ Robert Baldwin & Julia Black, *Really Responsive Regulation*, 71 MOD. L. REV. 59, 65–68 (2008) (explaining risk-based regulation).

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² In the U.K., for example, will writing is not a regulated legal activity. The government considered and ultimately rejected a proposal to make will writing a regulated legal activity because it found that there was not a sufficient showing that regulation was necessary or that other interventions could not address concerns around quality and service. See Catherine Fairbairn, *Regulation of will writers*, Briefing Paper No. 05683 16, HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY (Nov. 29, 2018), <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05683/SN05683.pdf> (last visited Aug. 21, 2019). The investigation by the government showed essentially the same error rate (about 1 in 4) in wills drafted by attorneys and non-attorney legal service providers. The error rate was the same across complex and simple wills. See LEGAL SERVICES CONSUMER PANEL, *Regulating will-writing* 3 (July 2011),

- *What do the data indicate about the risk of consumer harm from non-lawyers providing legal advice in the area of eviction defense? Is the risk of these kinds of harm more significant than the harm we currently see for pro se defendants? What steps should be required to ensure and maintain quality service?*
- *What are the data on the risks of cyber and data security to consumers of legal services? Where is the impact most likely and greatest, and what regulatory resources should be brought to bear?*

This approach is meant to be open, flexible, and focused on the reality of the consumer experience with the law and legal services. The system we propose is designed specifically for the regulation of consumer-facing legal services and targeted at the risks posed to the purchasers of legal services. Opening the legal services market to more models, services, and competition will serve other important objectives including access to justice, the public interest, the rule of law, and the administration of the courts.

We propose development of the new regulatory system take place in two phases.

Phase 1

In Phase 1, the Supreme Court will set up an implementation task force much akin to the approach the Court took with respect to LPPs and online dispute resolution.⁵³ The implementation task force will be responsible for, among other items, (1) obtaining funding for the regulator, primarily through grant applications, (2) recommending necessary rule changes to the Court, (3) creating and operating a Phase 1 regulator responsible for overseeing a legal regulatory sandbox for non-traditional legal services, (4) gathering and analyzing data and other information in order to evaluate and optimize the regulatory process, and (5) preparing a final report and recommendation to the Court regarding the structure of the Phase 2 regulator. We believe Phase 1 should last approximately two years.

In short, in Phase 1, the regulator will operate as a pilot and will focus on developing an empirical approach to objectives- and risk-based regulation of legal services. The regulator will operate within the Court as part of the implementation task force.

https://www.legalservicesconsumerpanel.org.uk/publications/research_and_reports/documents/ConsumerPanel_WillwritingReport_Final.pdf (last visited Aug. 21, 2019).

⁵³ The implementation task force may include representatives from the Court, from Bar leadership, and others with applicable expertise—including perhaps representatives from the legal technology sector.

Narrowing the Access-to-Justice Gap by Reimagining Regulation

During Phase 1, the regulator will operate alongside the Utah Bar, which will continue to have authority over lawyers and LPPs.⁵⁴ The regulator will regulate non-traditional legal services: organizations offering legal services to the public that have ownership, a business structure/organization, or service offerings currently not authorized under Utah practice of law and professional conduct rules. Non-traditional legal entities could include: non-lawyer owned and/or managed corporations or non-profits or individuals/entities proposing to use non-lawyer human or technology expertise to provide legal assistance to the public. The regulator's focus will be on the activity or service proposed and the risks presented to consumers by that activity or service.

Also during Phase 1, the regulator will oversee the limited market of legal entities admitted to participate in a legal regulatory sandbox. The regulatory sandbox is a policy structure that creates a controlled environment in which new consumer-centered innovations, which may be illegal (or unethical) under current regulations, can be piloted and evaluated. The goal is to allow the Court and aspiring innovators to develop new offerings that could benefit the public, validate them with the public, and understand how current regulations might need to be selectively or permanently relaxed to permit these and other innovations. Financial regulators have used regulatory sandboxes over the past decade to encourage more public-oriented technology innovations that otherwise might have been inhibited or illegal under existing regulations.⁵⁵ In the legal domain, the United Kingdom's Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) has also created a structure—the Innovation Space—that introduces a system of waivers of regulatory roles for organizations to pilot ideas that might benefit the public.⁵⁶

Establishing a legal regulatory sandbox is inherent to Phase 1 of our proposed new regulatory system. Although we are well aware that particular rules will need to be relaxed or

⁵⁴ Given the Bar's expertise regulating lawyers, including in licensing and enforcement, the regulator may benefit from drawing on such expertise.

⁵⁵ The United Kingdom's Financial Conduct Authority created the first regulatory sandbox in 2016. Since then, it has overseen 4 cohorts of regulatory sandboxes to promote financial services innovation. The Monetary Authority of Singapore has run sandboxes to encourage experimentation with financial technology. Abu Dhabi's Regulatory Lab set up a sandbox for financial technology that involved the Abu Dhabi Registration Authority, Financial Services Regulatory Authority, and the courts. Other financial technology sandboxes have been run in Australia, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Canada, Thailand, Denmark, and Switzerland. Some of the things being tested in financial sandboxes include new insurance, retirement, retail banking, investment, and retail lending offerings. In 2018, Arizona launched a regulatory sandbox for financial technology, specifically to promote entrepreneurship and investment around blockchain, cryptocurrencies, and other emerging technologies. See Arizona Attorney General, *Welcome To Arizona's FinTech Sandbox*, STATE OF ARIZONA, <https://www.azag.gov/fintech> (last visited Aug. 21, 2019). And in May 2019, Utah launched its own financial technology sandbox. See Department of Commerce, *Regulatory Sandbox*, STATE OF UTAH, <https://commerce.utah.gov/sandbox.html> (last visited Aug. 21, 2019).

⁵⁶ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Enabling innovation: Consultation on a new approach to waivers and developing the SRA Innovation Space* (Apr. 12, 2018), <https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/enabling-innovation.page> (last visited Aug. 12, 2019).

eliminated to permit innovation, we are less certain what might be on the other side of regulatory reform. What new regulations might be appropriate to ensure that new services do not generate unacceptable risks? Because the legal market has been so strictly limited, we cannot presently catalog the risks that might develop or the regulatory methods that might be effective to appropriately identify and manage those risks. Hence, the regulatory sandbox will be as much for the development of the regulator as for the development of the models, products, and services within. Below, we have put together the key features of our sandbox for Phase 1 of the project. These are features present in regulatory sandboxes around the world.

Three key features to the regulatory sandbox:

1. **Testing out what innovations are possible.** With the relaxation or elimination of the rules around unauthorized practice, fee sharing, and corporate practice of law, we can see how much and what kinds of new innovation might be possible in the legal sector. We expect to see innovations around business models (new financing, ownership or contracting models), services (new roles for experts in other fields, collaborating with lawyers), and technology (increased use of technology to offer legal advice and guidance, use of technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and mobile). Through the sandbox, we can learn what is possible, what benefits may be realized, and what risks these new offerings present. The sandbox enables the Court and the public to understand how much innovation potential there is in the legal ecosystem, beyond mere speculation that emerging tech has promise in the legal market if regulations were changed.
2. **Tailored evaluation plans focused on risk.** The sandbox model puts the burden on companies to define how their services should be measured in regard to benefits, harms, and risks. They must propose not only what innovation is possible, but also how it can be assessed. Risk self-assessment by companies participating in the sandbox will be a key requirement in order to further our regulatory goals.
3. **New sources of data on what regulation works best.** The sandbox will be the source for the new regulator's data-driven, evidence-backed policy-making. Because sandbox participants gather and share data about their offerings' performance (at least with the regulators, if not more publicly), the sandbox can help develop standards and metrics around data-driven regulation. This is particularly needed in the legal arena because we have so little data about how people engage with the legal world. It can incentivize more companies to evaluate their offerings through a rigorous understanding of benefits and

harms to the public, and it can help regulators develop protocols to conduct this kind of data-driven evaluation.

Sandbox participants could be an accounting firm proposing to offer legal services provided by lawyers alongside its accounting services, a technology startup using AI-enhanced software to help consumers complete legal documents (wills, trusts, incorporations, etc.), or a non-profit proposing to allow its expert paralegal staff to offer limited legal advice to clients independent of lawyer supervision. To participate in the sandbox, each provider will have to agree to share relevant data with the regulator. The regulator will identify, measure, and assess potential consumer risk and then determine whether the provider will be permitted to participate in the sandbox and with what form of security (please see a more detailed outline of our proposed Phase 1 regulatory process at Appendix D). All consumer participants in the sandbox must provide informed consent. Over the course of the two-year Phase 1 sandbox, the regulator will build up its regulatory approach—in particular, its risk identification, quantification, and response approach.

Throughout Phase 1, the regulator will be in regular reporting and communication with the Supreme Court.⁵⁷ It is the goal that, by the end of Phase 1, the regulator will have developed and refined a data-driven regulatory framework focused on the identification, assessment, mitigation, and monitoring of risk to consumers of legal services, and an enforcement approach designed to respond to evidence of consumer harm as appropriate to support the core objective. The regulator will then present a comprehensive report and proposal for Phase 2 to the Court for its review and approval.

Phase 1 needs from the Supreme Court include the following:

1. Establish the Phase 1 regulator as an implementation task force of the Court and delegate regulatory authority to set up and run the regulatory sandbox. The Court should also outline regulatory objectives and regulatory principles for the Phase 1 regulator. (Suggested principles may be found at Appendix D).
2. Establish by appropriate means that providers (including their ownership/management and their employees) approved to participate in the regulatory sandbox by the Phase 1 regulator are not engaged in the unauthorized practice of law in Utah.

⁵⁷ We wish to be quite clear that, as we have reinforced throughout the report, the regulator must be, and will be, subject to the supervision and direction of the Supreme Court.

3. Establish that licensed Utah lawyers will not be subject to discipline for entering into business with or otherwise providing services with providers approved by the Phase 1 regulator for participation in the sandbox.

Phase 2

In Phase 2, we anticipate some form of an independent, non-profit regulator with delegated regulatory authority over some or all legal services.⁵⁸ However, we will not say much about Phase 2 in this report because we do not wish to put the cart before the horse. Phase 1 of this project allows for the carefully controlled research and development of objectives-based, risk-based regulation of legal services. Phase 2 may implement the regulatory approach across the Utah legal market more broadly.⁵⁹

It is our belief that the objectives- and risk-based regulatory approach should be the future of regulation for legal services in Utah, and indeed throughout the country. Utah has an opportunity to be a leader nationwide. Phase 2 could proceed in multiple different directions as long as the objectives-based, risk-based approach remains its key characteristic. The Court may determine that the regulator is best suited for entity regulation (i.e., regulation of non-traditional legal entities like companies) and should operate alongside the Bar, which will continue to regulate lawyers. It would then be up to the Bar, in cooperation with the Court, to assess whether and how it wants to implement objectives-based, risk-based regulation for lawyers.

The Court may, on the other hand, determine that the new regulator and the objectives-based, risk-based approach should be rolled out for all legal services in Utah. In that case, the Court will have to revise its delegation of authority to regulate the practice of law via Rule 14-102 from the Bar to the new regulator. The Bar could continue to function as a mandatory Bar with regulatory functions operated under the auspices of the Court, but now through the regulator. Alternatively, the Bar could function solely as a membership organization that awards professional titles and specialized practice certifications, maintains ethical standards,

⁵⁸ We also wish to be quite clear about the meaning of the word “independent.” By independent, we mean a regulator independent from management and control by those it regulates, i.e., lawyers. We do not mean independent of control of the Supreme Court. The independent regulator we propose in Phase 2 would, as the Bar is now, no longer be operating within the Court, but would, as the Bar also is now, still ultimately be answerable to the Court for achieving the core regulatory objective and would be subject to any requirements established by the Court.

⁵⁹ The task force is aware that the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System presently intends to “develop a model for a regulatory entity that would focus on risk-based regulation for legal services and would operate across state lines.” Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, *Unlocking Legal Regulation*, UNIVERSITY OF DENVER (forthcoming) (on file with author).

engages in advocacy, and provides continuing education.⁶⁰ It may be that those professional titles will be required by the regulator in certain oversight roles for legal service entities (e.g., Big Box Stores offering legal services to the public may be required to have Bar-approved lawyers in managerial roles) or that the Court will decide for public policy reasons that only Bar-approved lawyers may perform certain activities before the Court.

CONCLUSION

Decade after decade our judicial system has struggled to provide meaningful access to justice to our citizens. And if we are to be truly honest about it, we have not only failed, but failed miserably. What this report proposes is game-changing and, as a consequence, it may gore an ox or two or upend some apple carts (pick your cliché). Our proposal will certainly be criticized by some and lauded by others. But we are convinced that it brings the kind of energy, investment, and innovation necessary to seriously narrow the access-to-justice gap. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Supreme Court adopt the recommendations outlined in this report and direct their prompt implementation.

⁶⁰ The professional titles offered by the Bar in this system could be market indicators of levels of education, qualification and, perhaps, service. It is possible the Bar could continue to tie access to titles and certification to ethical standards of service. However, the Bar would no longer have the authority to regulate the market for legal services and members of the Bar would be forced to compete in a larger market.

APPENDIX A

DENO HIMONAS (CO-CHAIR)

Justice Deno Himonas was appointed to the Utah Supreme Court in 2015. For the decade prior, he served as a district court judge, where he was able to try hundreds of criminal, civil, and family law cases and run a felony drug court.

In addition to his judicial duties, Justice Himonas has taught at the S.J. Quinney College of Law at the University of Utah and has been a visiting lecturer at universities in Kiev, Ukraine. He is the 2017 Honorary Alumnus of the Year of the S.J. Quinney College of Law, a recipient of the Judicial Excellence award from the Utah State Bar, and a Life Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

Justice Himonas is deeply involved in the access-to-justice movement and can often be found speaking about access-to-justice around the country. He currently chairs two access-to-justice task forces, one on licensed paralegal practitioners and the other on online dispute resolution, and co-chairs a third, which is reimagining the regulation of the practice of law.

Justice Himonas graduated with distinction from the University of Utah with a bachelor's degree in economics and went on to receive his J.D. from the University of Chicago. Upon graduation, he spent fifteen years primarily litigating complex civil matters in private practice.

JOHN LUND (CO-CHAIR)

John Lund has practiced law the old-fashioned way since 1984. He is a shareholder with Parsons Behle & Latimer, where he represents clients in challenging litigation and trials throughout the West. Mr. Lund is recognized by Chambers USA as a Band 1 lawyer for commercial litigation and is also a Fellow of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers. Mr. Lund is the immediate past president of the Utah State Bar and has been involved in leadership of the Utah Bar for over a decade. He recently concluded two terms as the lawyer representative on Utah's Judicial Council, which oversees Utah's judicial branch. He has served on various committees and projects relating to improving access to justice and innovation in the practice of law. These include co-chairing the Utah Bar's 2015 Futures Commission, developing the Utah Bar's online interactive directory of lawyers, serving on the Utah Supreme Court's task force for Licensed Paralegal Practitioners, serving on the Utah Supreme Court's task force for reform of Utah's attorney discipline system, and establishing Utah's newly formed Access to Justice Commission. Currently, Mr. Lund co-chairs a joint task force of the Utah Supreme Court and the Utah Bar that is recommending significant and potentially disruptive changes to the regulation of legal services in order to bring innovation to legal services and thereby improve access to justice.

H. DICKSON BURTON

Mr. Burton is the past President of the Utah State Bar, completing his term in July 2019. In his day job, Mr. Burton is the Managing Shareholder of TraskBritt, a nationally-recognized Intellectual Property law firm, where he litigates patent, trademark, and trade secret matters in courts around the country. He is also frequently called upon to mediate or arbitrate patent and other complex intellectual property disputes, with mediation training and certification from both the World Intellectual Property Organization and Harvard Law School. He has also served as an Adjunct Professor at the University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law teaching patent litigation.

Mr. Burton is the current Chair of the Local Rules Committee for the U.S. District Court for the District of Utah, and is currently serving on the Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panel for that court.

Mr. Burton has been honored for many years in peer-review lists including Best Lawyers, IP Stars, Chambers USA, and SuperLawyers, including being listed as one of the Top 100 of all lawyers in the Mountain States.

THOMAS CLARKE

Tom Clarke has served for fourteen years as the Vice President for Research and Technology at the National Center for State Courts. Before that, Tom worked for ten years with the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts first as the research manager and then as the CIO. As a national court consultant, Tom consulted frequently on topics relating to effective court practices, the redesign of court systems to solve business problems, access to justice strategies, and program evaluation approaches. Tom concentrated the last several years on litigant portals, case triage, new non-lawyer roles, online dispute resolution, public access/privacy policies, and new ways of regulating legal services.

CATHERINE DUPONT

Cathy Dupont is the Deputy State Court Administrator in Utah. Prior to serving as the Deputy State Court Administrator, Cathy was the Appellate Court Administrator and served as one of the Utah Supreme Court's legislative liaisons during the 2019 Legislative Session. Before joining the courts, Cathy worked as the Director of Strategy and External Relations for the state's Public Employee Health Plan and managed the Provider Relations Department and the Marketing and Communications Department. She also worked for over 20 years as an associate general counsel for the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel, a non-partisan office responsible for drafting legislation and staffing legislative committees.

GILLIAN HADFIELD

Gillian Hadfield, B.A. (Hons.) Queens, J.D., M.A., Ph.D. (Economics) Stanford, is the Schwartz Reisman Chair in Technology and Society, Professor of Law and Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Toronto. She also serves as Director of the Schwartz Reisman Institute for Technology and Society. Her research is focused on innovative design for legal and dispute resolution systems in advanced and developing market economies; governance for artificial intelligence; the markets for law, lawyers, and dispute resolution; and contract law and theory. Professor Hadfield is a Faculty Affiliate at the Vector Institute for Artificial Intelligence in Toronto and at the Center for Human-Compatible AI at the University of California Berkeley and Senior Policy Advisor at OpenAI in San Francisco. Her book, *Rules for a Flat World: Why Humans Invented Law and How to Reinvent It for a Complex Global Economy*, was published by Oxford University Press in 2017.

Professor Hadfield served as clerk to Chief Judge Patricia Wald on the U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit. She was previously on the faculty at the University of Southern California, New York University, and the University of California Berkeley, and has been a visiting professor at the University of Chicago, Harvard, Columbia, and Hastings College of Law. She was a 2006-07 and 2010-11 fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford and a National Fellow at the Hoover Institution in 1993. She has served on the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council for Agile Governance, Future Council for the Future of Technology, Values and Policy, and Global Agenda Council for Justice. She is currently a member of the American Bar Association's Commission on the Future of Legal Education and is an advisor to courts and several organizations and technology companies engaged in innovating new ways to make law smarter and more accessible.

MARGARET HAGAN

Margaret Hagan is the Director of the Legal Design Lab at Stanford University, as well as a lecturer in the Institute of Design (the d.school). She is a lawyer, and holds a J.D. from Stanford Law School, a DPhil from Queen's University Belfast, an MA from Central European University, and an AB from University of Chicago. She specializes in the application of human-centered design to the legal system, including the development of new public interest technology, legal visuals, and policy design. Her research and teaching focuses on the development and evaluation of new interventions to make the legal system more accessible. Her recent articles include "Participatory Design for Innovation in Access to Justice" (Daedalus 2019) and "A Human-Centered Design Approach to Access to Justice" (Ind. JL & Soc. Equal. 6, 199, 2018).

STEVEN JOHNSON

Steven Johnson is a 1977 graduate of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University. He has been a member of Utah State Bar since 1977, and of the State Bar of California since 1989. He has worked for a small Salt Lake City law firm, is the former general counsel for an international marketer of turkeys and turkey products, and is currently a solo practitioner in Highland, Utah, advising and representing clients in a variety of legal matters including business and corporate issues, real property matters, and contracts; and he has also served as an arbitrator and mediator in private practice and for the Better Business Bureau.

He has spent a good part of his career serving in the Bar and serving the courts of the State of Utah to enhance access to justice. He has served as an officer, including chair, of both the Corporate Counsel Section and of the Dispute Resolution Section of the Bar. He has been a member of Utah State Bar's Fee Arbitration Panel since 1999, and chaired the Panel from 2006 to 2010. He was appointed as a member of the Supreme Court's MCLE Board in 1999, and served as Trustee of the Board for 4 years. He served 7 years as an Associate Editor of the *Utah Bar Journal* beginning in his second year of law school, and served for 10 years as a member of the Bar's Government Affairs Committee.

Mr. Johnson has served 20 years on the Supreme Court's Advisory Committee on the Rules of Professional Conduct, and for the last 9 years has served as chair of that committee. He has served as a member of the Supreme Court's Commissioner Conduct Commission for the past 9 years, and currently serves as a member of the Fourth District Justice Court Nominating Commission. He is a member of the Utah State Courts' Certified Panel of Arbitrators.

The Supreme Court has also asked him to serve on three Court task forces—the Licensed Paralegal Practitioner Task Force, the Office of Professional Conduct Task Force, and the Task Force on Regulatory Reform.

In 2018, the Supreme Court awarded him the Service to the Courts Award for his contributions to Utah's judicial system. In 2019, he was awarded the Utah State Bar's Distinguished Service Award.

Mr. Johnson served on 3 different occasions in the countries of Ethiopia and Eritrea, teaching government employees how to organize and manage farmer cooperatives so that they can go out and teach farmers how to run cooperatives to better their economic status. He has helped them to amend their cooperative codes to eliminate inconsistencies and to fill in gaps in the laws.

LUCY RICCA

Lucy Ricca is a Fellow and former Executive Director of the Stanford Center on the Legal Profession at Stanford Law School. Ricca was a Lecturer at the law school and has written on the regulation of the profession, the changing practice of law, and diversity in the profession. As Executive Director, Ricca coordinated all aspects of the Center's activities, including developing the direction and goals for the Center and overseeing operations, publications, programs, research, and other inter-disciplinary projects, including development and fundraising for the Stanford Legal Design Lab. Ricca joined Stanford Law School in June 2013, after clerking for Judge James P. Jones of the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia. Before clerking, Ricca practiced white collar criminal defense, securities, antitrust, and complex commercial litigation as an associate at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe. Ricca received her B.A. cum laude in History from Dartmouth College and her J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law.

D. GORDON SMITH

D. Gordon Smith is the Dean and Glen L. Farr Professor of Law of the J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University. Dean Smith is a leading figure in the field of law and entrepreneurship and has done foundational work on fiduciary theory. He has also made important contributions to the academic literature on corporate governance and transactional lawyering. For his work in promoting the study of corpus linguistics and design thinking in law schools, Dean Smith was included in the Fastcase 50 (2017), which honors “the law’s smartest, most courageous innovators, techies, visionaries, & leaders.”

Dean Smith earned a JD from the University of Chicago Law School and a BS in Accounting from Brigham Young University. He has taught at six law schools in the U.S., as well as law programs in Australia, China, England, Finland, France, Germany, and Hong Kong. Before entering academe, Dean Smith clerked for Judge W. Eugene Davis in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit and was an associate in the Delaware office of the international law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom.

HEATHER S. WHITE

Heather White is a partner with the Salt Lake City-based law firm of Snow Christensen & Martineau, where she leads the firm's Governmental Law Practice Group. Her primary focus is on the defense of government entities in high profile civil rights disputes. Heather is a 1996 graduate of the University of Utah, S.J. Quinney College of Law.

Heather defends governmental entities and their officers against complaints asserting the deprivation of civil rights. These include all types of claims of alleged misconduct, such as excessive force, search and seizure, wrongful arrest, false imprisonment, malicious prosecution, abuse of process and denial of medical care, to name a few. At any given time, Heather is involved in multiple officer-involved shooting cases from inception, including investigations by the Department of Justice and press inquiries, through conclusion.

With deep respect for her Utah police officer clients, and their dedication to society at great personal expense, Heather has become their trusted confidant and advisor. She listens closely to determine individual needs – whether in out-of-court settlements or in public trials – then presses forward assertively with a customized approach and legal strategy. To better understand and closely connect with her clients, and the matters they are involved in, Heather regularly joins officers in the field participating in police ride-alongs. She is certified by the Force Science Institute and conducts training sessions for law enforcement throughout the state, including both client and non-client entities.

Heather also represents the two primary insurers of government entities in the State of Utah—the Utah Risk Management Mutual Association and the Utah Local Governments Trust—as well as a number of self-insured governmental agencies. She believes in the importance of educating her clients on legally related elements of their complex, public careers. In this effort, Heather regularly speaks to agencies and insurers on police training issues, liability, risk management, and incident-prevention issues.

Heather has an extensive track record of governmental civil rights cases and trials, with multiple favorable defense verdicts in state and federal trial and appeals courts. In addition, Heather regularly defends governments against claims involving accidents with government vehicles and premises liability, such as “slip and fall” accidents that might involve sidewalks, water meters, or swimming pools, cemeteries, playgrounds, recreational centers and others.

Heather is a frequent trainer, presenter, and author, covering a wide range of governmental law topics and current governmental law headline subjects.

Heather is actively involved in professional and civic organizations including: American Academy of Trial Attorneys; Utah Bar Technology and Innovation Committee; Salt Lake County

Narrowing the Access-to-Justice Gap by Reimagining Regulation

Bar, Utah State Bar, and Federal Bar Association; Model Utah Jury Instructions, Chair of Subcommittee on Civil Rights Instructions; Magistrate Merit Selection Panel; Defense Research Institute; Utah Defense Lawyers Association; and Utah Municipal Attorneys Association

Heather has maintained a steady 5.0 Martindale-Hubbell® Peer review rating; is consistently recognized as a Utah Super Lawyer by Super Lawyer Magazine; is regularly recognized as a Utah Legal Elite by Utah Business Magazine; is listed in Best Lawyers in America; and was named a Distinguished Faculty member by Lorman Education Services.

ELIZABETH A. WRIGHT

Elizabeth Wright is General Counsel for the Utah State Bar. She is a graduate of Hamilton College and Case Western Reserve School of Law. She is admitted in New York and Utah and was an Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of New York before moving to Utah. Wright began working for the Utah State Bar in 2011 as the Coordinator of the New Lawyer Training Program. She became General Counsel in 2014. As General Counsel, Elizabeth represents the Bar and also works closely with Bar and Court committees to modify and propose rules governing the practice of law in Utah. Elizabeth served on both the Executive and Steering Committees for Utah's Licensed Paralegal Practitioner Program helping to develop rules for the program. Elizabeth currently serves on the Utah Task Force on Legal Reform which is exploring changing the regulatory structure in Utah to foster innovation and promote market forces to increase access to and affordability of legal services.

APPENDIX B



John C. Baldwin
Executive Director

Board of Bar Commissioners

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August 22, 2018

VIA EMAIL to cathyd@utcourts.gov

Justices of the Utah Supreme Court
c/o Appellate Court Administrator
450 S. State Street
P.O. Box 140230
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Dear Justices of the Utah Supreme Court,

Access to justice in Utah remains a significant and growing problem. It can be readily seen in the data regarding self-represented parties in the Utah court system. However, it is a much broader and complex issue which not only involves all sort of legal needs but overlaps with a host of other challenges confronted by low and middle-income people living in Utah. We believe lawyers can and should be part of the solution to this problem. There are times well before a court action when some simple advice from an attorney could prevent a problem or resolve a conflict. Yet, as the Bar's recent survey shows, very high percentages of individuals and businesses in Utah have no sense of the value lawyers can provide, they do not know how to find the right lawyer and they believe that it will be too costly to get a lawyer's help.

There are undoubtedly many steps needed in many places. However, we believe a key step to getting legal representation to more people is to substantially reform the regulatory setting in which lawyers operate. We request the Court establish a small working group to promptly study possible reforms and make recommendations to the Court. The purpose of the working group would be to evaluate and make recommendations for revisions, possibly major revisions, to the rules of professional responsibility so as to permit lawyers to more effectively and more affordably provide legal services and do related promotion of those services. The specific areas of focus would be rules concerning (1) fee sharing, (2) advertising and (3) fee arrangements. There are also some conflict of interest issues implicated by some of the possible revisions in these areas.

The work would include consideration of (1) the effect of modern information technology and modern consumer patterns on the current rules, (2) the potential value, in terms of making legal services accessible to clients, of non-lawyer investment and ownership in entities providing legal services and the related regulatory issues, (3) the prospect of broadening the availability of legal services through flat fee and other alternative fee arrangements not currently permitted by the rules, (4) whether there is continuing justification for the rules against direct solicitation, (5) whether and how to permit and structure lawyer use of referral systems such as Avvo in light of the rule against referral fees and (5) the related trends and approaches being considered and/or implemented in other bars, such as Oregon and the ABA's work in this area.

Serving the public. Working for justice.

Narrowing the Access-to-Justice Gap by Reimagining Regulation

Justices of the Utah Supreme Court
c/o Appellate Court Administrator
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In terms of the makeup of the group, we suggest that the group be co-chaired by a Supreme Court Justice and the immediate past president of the Bar, John Lund. We believe the Bar's general counsel can provide support. We would also suggest including the chair of Court's Committee on the Rules of Professional Responsibility and would also ask that Cathy Dupont be appointed to the committee. Importantly the group should be made up of people who will actually study and consider recommended changes. In that vein, we propose including one of the leaders from the Bar's Innovation in Law Practice Committee, possibly Heather White, Co-chair of that Committee.

Once established, we believe the group could be expected to provide a report and recommendation to the Court within 6 months.

We would be most pleased to attend the Court's Conference on August 27 and discuss our proposal in more detail and answer any questions or concerns from the members of the Court.

Sincerely,



H. Dickson Burton

cc: Richard H. Schwermer (ricks@utahcourts.gov)
John R. Lund (jlund@parsonsbehle.com)
John Baldwin (jbaldwin@utahbar.org)

APPENDIX C

THE LEGAL SERVICES ACT OF 2007

The Legal Services Act (LSA) overhauled the regulation of legal services in the United Kingdom.⁶¹ The regulatory overhaul was precipitated by an overall push for regulatory reform across the U.K., looking particularly at how restrictive rules and norms in the professions impacted competition and the cost of legal services. The goal of the regulatory reform was explicitly consumer and competition focused: “Putting Consumers First.”⁶² Through these reforms, the U.K. legal profession lost its self-regulatory power. The profession is now regulated by an entity, not controlled by lawyers, answerable to Parliament.

Approach of the LSA

The LSA sought to create an objectives-based, risk-based system for the regulation of legal services in the U.K. The Act itself does not set out detailed, prescriptive rules of behavior to be followed by regulated entities. Rather, the Act sets out regulatory objectives and principles to guide the regulators. It is the responsibility of the regulators to develop the details of the system within those guidelines. “Regulation needs to be proportionate and targeted, focused on outcomes and reflecting real risks in the market. It needs to tackle risk of consumer detriment but, in doing so, stop short of creating an excessive burden that might stifle innovation or restrain competition.”⁶³

1. Objectives and Principles (set out in the LSA)

a. Objectives:⁶⁴

- i. Protecting and promoting the public interest;
- ii. Supporting the constitutional principle of the rules of law;
- iii. Improving access to justice;
- iv. Protecting and promoting the interests of consumers;
- v. Promoting competition in the provision of regulated services;

⁶¹ These reforms were limited to England and Wales. Scotland is independently assessing legal market reforms. The U.K. has always had a very different system from the U.S.—split bar system, several other legal roles, many services we consider to be practice of law are not so considered in the U.K. (including providing legal advice). See Stephen Mayson, *Independent Review of Legal Services Regulation: Assessment of the Current Regulatory Framework* (University College London Centre for Ethics & Law, Working Paper LSR-0, 2019), https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ethics-law/sites/ethics-law/files/irlsr_wp_lsr-0_assessment_1903_v2.pdf (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁶² See LEGAL SERVICES BOARD, *History of the reforms*, https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/about_us/history_reforms/index.htm (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁶³ See LEGAL SERVICES BOARD, *Improving Access to Justice: Rationalising the Scope of Regulation*, https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/projects/rationalising_scope_of_regulation/index.htm (last visited June 13, 2019).

⁶⁴ The objectives are not defined in the Act but the LSB published a separate paper defining the objectives. See LEGAL SERVICES BOARD, *The regulatory objectives: Legal Services Act 2007*, https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/news_publications/publications/pdf/regulatory_objectives.pdf (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

- vi. Encouraging an independent, strong, diverse, and effective legal profession;
- vii. Increasing public understanding of the citizen's legal rights and duties; and
- viii. Promoting and maintaining adherence to professional principles.

b. Principles:

- i. Authorized persons should act with independence and integrity;
- ii. Authorized persons should maintain proper standards of work;
- iii. Authorized persons should act in the best interests of clients;
- iv. Those who exercise before any court a right of audience, or conduct litigation in relation to proceedings in any court, by virtue of being authorized persons should comply with their duty to the court to act with independence in the interests of justice; and
- v. Affairs of clients should be kept confidential.⁶⁵

What Is the Regulatory Structure?

The LSA establishes one overarching regulator, the Legal Services Board (LSB). The LSB is a government regulator accountable to Parliament. The primary duty of the LSB is to “promote the regulatory objectives” when carrying out its regulatory functions.⁶⁶

The Lord Chancellor, a member of the U.K. Parliament and also Secretary of State for Justice, appoints the members of the LSB. The Board is made up of both lawyers and laypeople, and has a lay chairperson.⁶⁷ The Act creates a Legal Services Consumer Panel made up of lay people that advises the LSB on various relevant topics, particularly those considering public interest.⁶⁸ The Act also establishes a separate Office of Legal Complaints to address and help resolve consumer complaints.

Instead of directly regulating legal services providers, the LSB regulates multiple “front-line” regulators, which in turn regulate different sectors of the profession (see chart below for

⁶⁵ Legal Services Act 2007, c.29, Part 1, § 1, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁶⁶ *Id.*, Part 2, § 3, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). The LSB does not have a standalone objective or the power to promote the regulatory objectives separate from its established regulator functions.

⁶⁷ *Id.*, sch. 4, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁶⁸ *Id.*, Part 2, § 8, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). The Consumer Panel has significant independent authority under the Act, including the ability to independently report to the public on advice that it gives the LSB.

overview). The LSB has authority to set governance requirements and performance targets, review rules and procedures, and investigate the front-line regulators.⁶⁹

The LSA defines certain regulated activities and persons. Both the activities and the persons follow historically grounded legal roles in the U.K. As will be discussed in more detail below, recent reviews of the effectiveness of the LSA reforms have offered strong criticism of the retention of these traditional activities and roles within the new regulatory regime.

The LSA designates six specific activities as “reserved activities”:

1. The exercise of a right of audience;
2. The conduct of litigation;
3. Reserved instrument activities (transactions involving real or personal property but not including wills);
4. Probate activities;
5. Notarial activities; and
6. The administration of oaths.⁷⁰

Those activities can only be performed by people (“authorized persons”) granted a license through one of the regulators. It is a criminal offense for an unauthorized person to perform any of the reserved activities.⁷¹ All activities other than these six are unregulated (such as the provision of ordinary legal advice or assistance with legal documents) and may be performed by any person or entity.⁷²

Nine roles are designated “authorized persons” under the LSA.

1. Solicitor;
2. Barrister;
3. Legal executive;
4. Notary;
5. Licensed conveyancer;
6. Patent attorney;

⁶⁹ *Id.*, Part 4, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). The chart below does not list all of the front-line regulators. A complete list can be found here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29/schedule/4>.

⁷⁰ *Id.*, Part 3, § 12(1), <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁷¹ *Id.*, Part 3, §§ 14, 17, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁷² In June 2016, the LSB published a report on the unregulated market for legal services. It estimated that, in cases in which parties sought legal advice, 37% was sought from non-profit legal service providers and between 4.5–5.5% was sought from for profit providers. See LEGAL SERVICES BOARD, *Research Summary: Unregulated Legal Services Providers* (June 2016), <https://research.legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/media/Unregulated-providers-research-summary.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). Based on this data, the LSB decided not to extend their regulatory reach at this time.

7. Trademark attorney;
8. Costs lawyer;⁷³ and
9. Chartered accountant.⁷⁴

Each group is authorized to perform certain reserved activities (e.g. barristers, solicitors, and legal executives can perform all reserved activities except for notarial activities).⁷⁵

The front-line regulators generally align with authorized persons roles (e.g. the Bar Standards Board (BSB) regulates the activities of barristers and the SRA regulates the activities of solicitors). There is certainly overlap, particularly when individuals are working within regulated entities (e.g. it is common for conveyancers, legal executives, and barristers to work in entities regulated by the SRA and almost all notaries are also solicitors).

The front-line regulators are required to promote the regulatory objectives.⁷⁶ Pre-LSA, the front-line regulators were, like our bar associations, the trade associations for their associated groups. Post-LSA, they are required to separate any advocacy work from regulatory work.⁷⁷

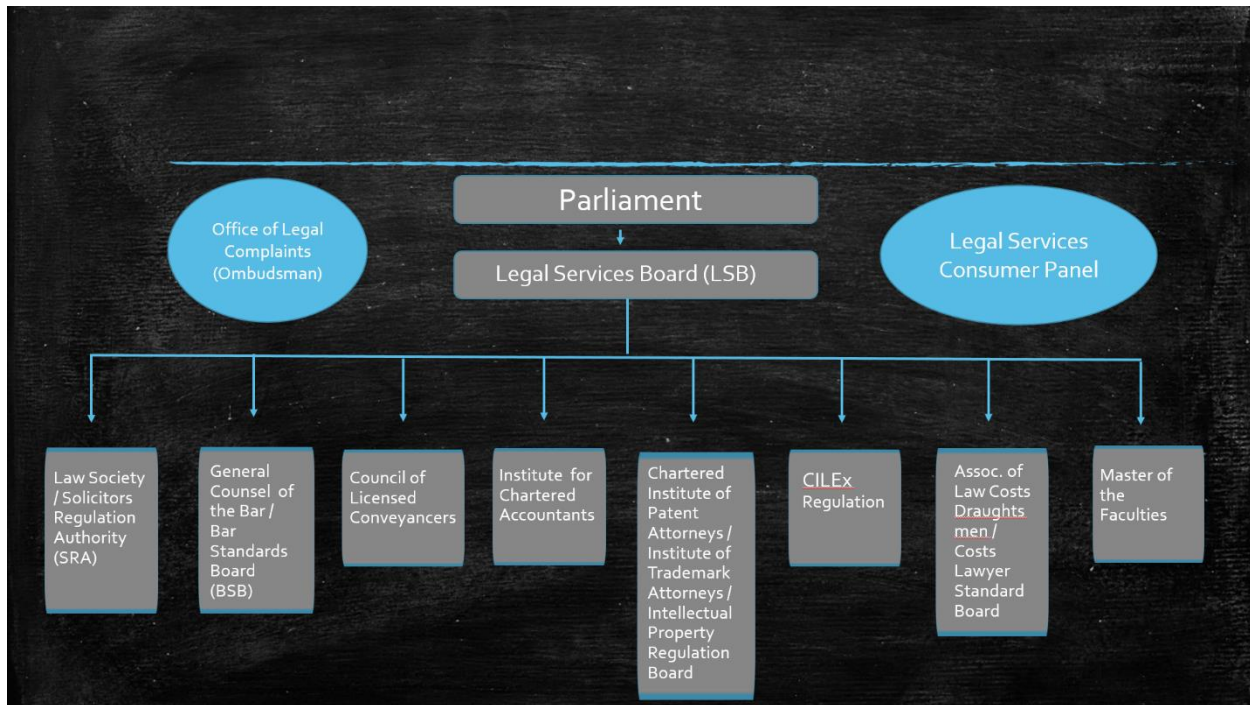
⁷³ A costs lawyer is a specialist in the law governing the allocation of costs in the U.K. legal system. Unlike the American system, under British law, prevailing parties in litigation are routinely allowed to collect their “costs” (including attorneys’ fees) from losing parties. Also, clients may seek an assessment of their legal bills from a court, which is authorized to adjust the bill.

⁷⁴ See Legal Services Act, c.29, sch. 5, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁷⁵ *Id.*, sch. 4, Part 1, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁷⁶ *Id.*, Part 4, § 28, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁷⁷ *Id.*, Part 4, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). The system is somewhat complex. Under the current approach, the designated regulators under the LSB are the traditional representative organizations for the legal role (i.e. the Law Society, the General Counsel of the Bar, the Association of Law Costs Draughtsmen). Under the LSA, those organizations are required to put the regulatory function beyond the representative function, leading to the creation of the current operating regulators (i.e., the Solicitors Regulation Authority, the Bar Standards Board, and the Costs Lawyer Standard Board). One of the bigger criticisms of the LSA reforms is that this approach does not go far enough to separate the regulatory function from the representative/advocacy function and the LSB is assessing changes to make that separation more complete.



The LSA authorizes and regulates non-lawyer owned legal service entities that are called Alternative Business Structures (ABSs) (discussed in detail below).

What Does This Actually Look Like: The Solicitors Regulation Authority

The Solicitors Regulation Authority is the largest regulator of legal services in the U.K., regulating solicitors and ABSs. The SRA describes its regulatory approach as follows:

The outcomes-focused approach to regulation means that our goal is to ensure that legal services providers deliver positive outcomes for consumers of legal services and the public, in line with the intent of the LSA regulatory objectives. This is in contrast to our historical rules-based approach: we no longer focus on prescribing how those we regulate provide services, but instead focus on the outcomes for the public and consumers that result from their activities.⁷⁸

The SRA establishes specific regulatory outcomes to measure its progress toward the LSA's regulatory objectives.

- Outcome 1: The public interest is protected by ensuring that legal services are delivered ethically and the public have confidence in the legal system.
- Outcome 2: The market for legal services is competitive and diverse, and operates in the interests of consumers.

⁷⁸ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *SRA Risk Framework* (Mar. 2014), <http://docplayer.net/45754930-Sra-regulatory-risk-framework-march-2014.html> (last visited June 13, 2019).

- Outcome 3: Consumers can access the services they need, receive a proper service and are treated fairly.
- Outcome 4: Regulation is effective, efficient and meets the principles of better regulation.⁷⁹

The SRA outlines ten principles for regulated individuals and entities, including upholding the rule of law and the proper administration of justice, not allowing your lawyer independence to be compromised, acting in the best interests of the client, running a legal business in a way that encourages equality of opportunity and diversity, and protecting clients' money and assets.⁸⁰

The SRA issues a Code of Conduct, which contains professional standards for people and entities under its jurisdiction. These are not “rules” but rather guidance of “indicative behaviours” that the SRA would expect to see to achieve objectives (e.g. to ensure Outcome 3, solicitors should explain the scope of their representation to their client, provide (in writing) a description of all involved parties, and explain any fee arrangements).⁸¹

The SRA also issues specific rules in certain areas: accounts rules, authorization and practicing requirements, client protection (insurance and compensation fund), discipline and costs recovery, and specialist services.⁸²

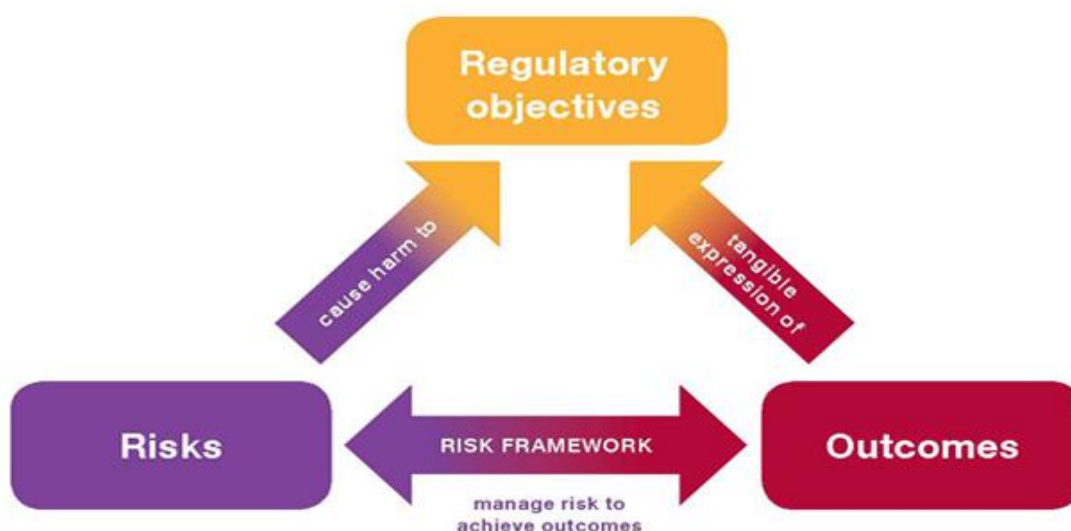
Day-to-day regulatory activity at the SRA is guided by identified risks to the regulatory objectives and outcomes. Identification and prioritization of risks enables proportionate and responsive regulation.

⁷⁹ *Id.*

⁸⁰ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *SRA Handbook: SRA Principles* (Dec. 6, 2018), <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/handbookprinciples/content.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁸¹ See SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *SRA Handbook: Code of Conduct*, <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/code/content.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁸² See SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *How we regulate*, <http://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/sra-regulate/sra-regulate.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).



The SRA uses a Regulatory Risk Index that groups risks into 4 categories:⁸³

1. Firm viability risks (Risks arising from the viability of the firm and the way it is structured)
2. Firm operational risks (Risks arising from a firm's internal processes, people and systems)
3. Firm impact risks (Risk that firm or individual undertakes an action or omits to take action that impacts negatively on meeting the regulatory outcomes)
4. Market risks (Risks arising from or affecting the operation of the legal services market)⁸⁴

The SRA assesses these risks by impact (potential harm caused) and probability (likelihood of harm occurring), and categorizes risks along individual, firm, theme, and market.⁸⁵ Risk informs the regulator's decisions on admission, governance, monitoring, enforcement, and soft regulatory interventions (education, etc.). Using this approach enables interventions to be proactive and flexible, including:

1. instituting controls on how a firm or individual practices;
2. issuing a warning about future conduct;

⁸³ According to Crispin Passmore, former Executive Director of Supervision and Education of the SRA, the SRA is moving away from the Regulatory Risk Index and focusing more of its approach on proactive and thematic risk assessments.

⁸⁴ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *SRA Risk Framework* (Mar. 21, 2014), <https://www.sra.org.uk/risk/risk-framework.page> (last visited June 13, 2019).

⁸⁵ See *id.*

3. closing a firm with immediate effect or imposing a disciplinary sanction, such as a fine;
4. informing the market about undesirable trends and risks;
5. adapting regulatory policy to minimize recurrence of an issue; and
6. setting qualification standards and ongoing competency requirements.⁸⁶

Alternative Business Structures

The LSA permitted participation in legal service providers by those who are not qualified lawyers: entities with lay ownership, management, or investment are designated ABSs under the Act.⁸⁷

Multiple regulators are approved to regulate ABSs, including the SRA, the BSB, the Council of Licensed Conveyancers, the Institute for Chartered Accountants, and the Intellectual Property Regulation Board.

An ABS is either (1) a firm where a “non-authorized person” is a manager of the firm or has an ownership-type interest in the firm or (2) a firm where “another body” is a manager of the firm or has an ownership-type interest in the firm and at least 10 percent of the “body” is controlled by non-lawyers.⁸⁸

ABSs may offer non-legal services alongside legal services.⁸⁹ ABSs are regulated as entities and each authorized person within the entity is independently regulated and subject to discipline. The ABS must always have at least one manager who is an authorized person under the LSA.⁹⁰ Regardless of ownership structure, control over the right to practice law must remain

⁸⁶ *Id.*

⁸⁷ Legal Services Act 2007, c.29, Part 5, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). See also Stephen Mayson, *Independent Review of Legal Services Regulation: Assessment of the Current Regulatory Framework* (University College London Centre for Ethics & Law, Working Paper LSR-0, 2019), https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ethics-law/sites/ethics-law/files/irlsr_wp_lsr-0_assessment_1903_v2.pdf. Note: the LSA also permitted Legal Disciplinary Practices (LDP), through which different categories of authorized persons can enter into partnerships (e.g. barristers and solicitors working together).

⁸⁸ Legal Services Act 2007, c.29, Part 5, § 72, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019); see also THE LAW SOCIETY, *Alternative Business Structures* (May 21, 2018), <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/practice-notes/alternative-business-structures/> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁸⁹ See Legal Services Act, 2007, c.29, Part 5, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). Note that the ability to offer non-legal services alongside legal services differentiates this structure from those permitted in Washington, D.C. under its Rule 5.4(b), which permits lawyers to enter into business with non-lawyers (including non-lawyer owners or managers) but the sole purpose of the business must be providing legal services. See WASHINGTON, D.C. BAR, *Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 5.4: Professional Independence of a Lawyer*, <https://www.dcb.org/bar-resources/legal-ethics/amended-rules/rule5-04.cfm> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁹⁰ Legal Services Act, 2007, c.29, Part 5, § 72, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

in the hands of licensed legal professionals: designated authorized role holders.⁹¹ The SRA requires ABSs to have both legal and financial compliance officers.⁹² These roles are responsible for ensuring that the entity and all of its interest holders, managers, and employees comply both with the terms of its license and with regulations applicable to its activities (reserved and potentially non-reserved depending on the terms of the license).⁹³ If an entity, or those within it, violate the terms of the license or the rules of professional conduct, the compliance officer has a duty to correct and report to the regulator.

In keeping with the regulatory focus on opening the market and enabling competition, the bar to entry, at least within the SRA process, is relatively low. An applicant must outline which reserved activities the entity plans to offer, provide professional indemnity insurance information, and identify firm structure details (including authorized role holders) and incorporation details if applicable.⁹⁴ To grant a license, the SRA needs to be satisfied that, for example, the proposed ABS will comply with professional indemnity insurance and compensation fund requirements, appropriate compliance officers have been appointed, the authorized role holders are approved, and the lawyer-manager is qualified. The SRA may refuse to grant the license if it is not satisfied that these requirements have been shown, or if the applicant has been misleading or inaccurate, or if it feels that the ABS is “against the public interest or inconsistent with the regulatory objectives” set out in the LSA.⁹⁵ The SRA may also grant a license subject to any conditions it deems necessary.⁹⁶

Impact of the LSA

There has been some debate about the impact of the LSA on the legal services market in the U.K. and on access to justice in particular.⁹⁷ A paper produced by a workgroup chaired by Professor Stephen Mayson had this to say on the impact of the LSA:

The LSA’s reforms have gone some way in beginning to address the pressing issues of the time – independence of regulation, poor complaints handling, anti-competitive restrictions and the need for greater focus on the consumer.

⁹¹ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *SRA Authorisation Rules 2011*, Rule 8.5, <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/handbook/authorisationrules/content.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *New Firm Applications* (Sep. 29, 2017), <http://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/firm-based-authorisation/authorisation-recognition.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁹⁵ THE LAW SOCIETY, *Alternative Business Structures* (May 21, 2018), <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/practice-notes/alternative-business-structures/> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ It should be noted that as the reforms were implemented the Government dramatically reduced funding for legal aid across the U.K. and the world faced the global market downturn. See Dominic Gilbert, *Legal Aid Advice Network “Decimated” by Funding Cuts*, BBC NEWS (Dec. 10, 2018), <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-46357169> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

Regulatory reform since then has been wide ranging. Regulators have increasingly simplified and focused their processes and removed barriers to market entry, enabling innovation among new and existing providers, improving consumer choice and competition.⁹⁸

In the area of non-lawyer ownership (i.e., ABSs), the market has seen increased innovation in legal services offerings but change is unsurprisingly more incremental than revolutionary. As of February 2019, it appears that regulators have licensed over 800 entities as ABSs.⁹⁹ Most entities seeking ABS licenses are existing legal services businesses converting their license; one-fifth are new entrants.¹⁰⁰ Lawyer-ownership remains the dominant form with three-fifths of ABSs having less than 50 percent non-lawyer ownership.¹⁰¹ Approximately one-fifth of ABSs are fully owned by non-lawyers and approximately one-fifth are fully owned by lawyers with some proportion of non-lawyer managers.¹⁰² A 2014 report by the SRA sought to understand how firms changed upon gaining an ABS license. Most often, firms changed either their structure or their management under the new regulatory offering.¹⁰³ Twenty-seven percent changed the way the business was financed. The SRA found that investment was most often sought for entry into technology, to change the services offered, and for marketing.¹⁰⁴ A 2018 report by the LSB found that ABSs were three times as likely as traditionally organized entities to use technology, and ABSs, as well as newer and larger providers, have higher levels of service innovation.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ *Legislative Options Beyond the Legal Services Act 2007*, <https://stephenmayson.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/legislative-options-beyond-the-legal-services-act-2007.pdf> (last visited Aug 13, 2019).

⁹⁹ The SRA maintains a list of all registered ABSs at <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/firm-based-authorisation/abs/abs-search.page>. This is likely a small percentage of all the legal firms in the United Kingdom. In 2015, for example, there were approximately 10,300 solicitors firms in the U.K. See Mari Sako, *Big Bang or drop in the ocean?: The Authorized Revolution in legal services in England and Wales*, THOMSON REUTERS FORUM MAGAZINE (Oct. 8, 2015), <https://blogs.thomsonreuters.com/answerson/abs-ldp-drop-ocean-england-wales/> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹⁰⁰ See LEGAL SERVICES BOARD, *Evaluation: ABS and investment in legal services 2011/12-2016/17 – Main Report 4* (June 2017), <https://research.legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/media/Investment-research-2017-Report-Main-report.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Research on alternative business structures (ABSs): Findings from surveys with ABSs and applicants that withdrew from the licensing process* 17 (May 2014), <https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/reports/research-abs-executive-report.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹⁰⁴ *Id.*

¹⁰⁵ LEGAL SERVICES BOARD, *Research Summary: Technology and Innovation in Legal Services* (Nov. 2018), <https://research.legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/media/Innovation-survey-2018-web-FINAL.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

The market continues to develop. LegalZoom has received an ABS license and has started purchasing solicitors firms in the U.K.¹⁰⁶ Each of the Big Four accounting firms has an ABS license.¹⁰⁷ Most importantly, there is little to no evidence of ABS-specific consumer harm.¹⁰⁸

The SRA will be rolling out relatively significant changes in the form of new “Standards and Regulations (STARS)” in the coming months. Those changes are targeted at increasing liberalization of the market and increasing the efficiency of the regulatory response. Perhaps the most significant change is that solicitors will now be permitted to offer non-reserved legal activities out of unregulated businesses (i.e., a solicitor may now be employed by Tesco or a bank to offer non-reserved services like will writing).¹⁰⁹

Challenges of the LSA

In December 2016, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) released a report reviewing the legal services market post-LSA.¹¹⁰ Professor Stephen Mayson’s reviews of the impact of the LSA are also illuminating to understand how the reforms of the LSA may have fallen short in opening the market.¹¹¹

1. **Retention of traditional roles/activities:** As noted above, although the LSA sought to implement an objectives- and risk-based regulatory system, it also relied upon traditional legal roles and their associated activities as regulatory hooks. Both the CMA report and Professor Mayson’s work identify this continued reliance on traditional activities/roles as a proxy for regulatory strategy/intervention as problematic and limiting to the impact of the reforms. Authorized persons and reserved activities were essentially “grandfathered” or lobbied into the LSA (an “accident of history” or result of

¹⁰⁶ John Hyde, *LegalZoom Enters Market with ABS License*, THE LAW SOCIETY GAZETTE (Jan. 7, 2015), <https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/practice/legalzoom-enters-market-with-abs-licence/5045879.article> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹⁰⁷ See Joseph Evans, *Deloitte Becomes the Last of the Big Four to get ABS License for Legal Services*, THE AMERICAN LAWYER (June 22, 2018), <https://www.law.com/americanolawyer/2018/06/22/deloitte-becomes-last-of-big-four-to-get-abs-licence-for-legal-services/> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹⁰⁸ See COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY, *Legal Services Market Study: Final Report* (December 15, 2016), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5887374d40f0b6593700001a/legal-services-market-study-final-report.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). See also Judith K. Morrow, *UK Alternative Business Structures for Legal Practice: Emerging Market and Lessons for the US*, 47 Geo. J. Int’l L. 665, 668 (2016).

¹⁰⁹ Crispin Passmore, *Look to the STARS*, Passmore Consulting (Mar. 20, 2019), <https://www.passmoreconsulting.co.uk/look-to-the-stars> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹¹⁰ See *id.*

¹¹¹ See Stephen Mayson, *The Legal Services Act 2007: Ten Years On, and “Mind the Gaps”* (June 2017), <https://stephenmayson.files.wordpress.com/2017/06/mayson-2017-legal-services-act-10-years-on1.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

political bargaining) and do not reflect a true assessment of risk.¹¹² The CMA report recommended that “[A]n optimal regulatory framework should not try to regulate all legal activities uniformly, but should have a targeted approach, where different activities are regulated differently according to the risk(s) they pose rather than regulating on the basis of the professional title of the provider undertaking it.”¹¹³

2. **Gold-plating of regulation vs. regulatory gap:** Some regulators regulate all activities of authorized persons (including non-reserved activities) while, at the same time, unreserved activities of unauthorized persons are not regulated at all (i.e., a solicitor who drafts a bad will can be subject to regulatory control but a shopkeeper who drafts a bad will is beyond legal regulatory authority because will writing is not a reserved activity). This causes excessive costs to be imposed on authorized persons, leaves possible high-risk activities beyond regulatory scope, and is very confusing to the consumer.¹¹⁴
3. **No prioritization among regulatory objectives:** The regulatory objectives set out in the LSA are listed without any indication of how the LSB or the front-line regulators are to prioritize them or weigh them in the event of a conflict between objectives.¹¹⁵
4. **Continuing challenges around consumer information gap, pricing challenges (level and transparency), and access to justice:**¹¹⁶ “[C]onsumers generally lack the experience and information they need to find their way around the legal services sector and to engage confidently with providers. Consumers find it hard to make informed choices because there is very little transparency about price, service and quality—for example, research conducted by the Legal Services Board (LSB) found that only 17% of legal services providers publish their prices online. This lack of transparency

¹¹² See *Legislative Options Beyond the Legal Services Act 2007*, <https://stephenmayson.files.wordpress.com/2016/07/legislative-options-beyond-the-legal-services-act-2007.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹¹³ See COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY, *Legal services market study: Final report* 201 (Dec. 15, 2016), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5887374d40f0b6593700001a/legal-services-market-study-final-report.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹¹⁴ See Stephen Mayson, *Independent Review of Legal Services Regulation: Assessment of the Current Regulatory Framework* 11 (University College London Centre for Ethics & Law, Working Paper LSR-0, 2019), https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ethics-law/sites/ethics-law/files/irlsr_wp_lsr-0_assessment_1903_v2.pdf (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹¹⁵ Stephen Mayson, *Independent Review of Legal Services Regulation: The Rationale for Legal Services Regulation* 9 (University College London Centre for Ethics & Law, Working Paper LSR-1, 2019), https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ethics-law/sites/ethics-law/files/irlsr_wp_lsr-1_rationale_1903_v2.pdf (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹¹⁶ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Price transparency* (Nov. 2018), <https://www.sra.org.uk/solicitors/resources/transparency/transparency-price-service.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

weakens competition between providers and means that some consumers do not obtain legal advice when they would benefit from it.”¹¹⁷

5. **Incomplete separation of regulatory and representative activities:** The separation of regulatory and representative activities, as required by the LSA, is incomplete and gives rise to tension.¹¹⁸

Keeping in mind that the reforms are still relatively new (ABSs began being licensed in early 2012),¹¹⁹ the most appropriate conclusion appears to be that, while the LSA initiated much needed reforms to the regulatory process and began the process of opening up the legal services market, significant challenges remain and require continued focus.

¹¹⁷ See COMPETITION AND MARKETS AUTHORITY, Legal Services Market Study: Final Report 4 (Dec. 15, 2016), <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5887374d40f0b6593700001a/legal-services-market-study-final-report.pdf> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹¹⁸ See Stephen Mayson, *Independent Review of Legal Services Regulation: Assessment of the Current Regulatory Framework* 12 (University College London Centre for Ethics & Law, Working Paper LSR-0, 2019), https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ethics-law/sites/ethics-law/files/irlsr_wp_lsr-0_assessment_1903_v2.pdf (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹¹⁹ See THE LAW SOCIETY, *Setting up an ABS* (Oct. 31, 2012), <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/advice/articles/setting-up-an-abs/> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

APPENDIX D

REGULATOR: DETAILED PROPOSAL

Our suggested proposal for the Phase 1 regulatory structure and approach is outlined below. Although we have put a great deal of thought into this proposal, we stress that this is just a proposal. Our model assumes that the Phase 1 period will be one of research and development regarding the regulator's structure and framework and that both will likely change with increased data from the regulatory sandbox market and other inputs.

Framework (Phase 1)

The Court will operate the regulator as a task force of the Court. The Court should outline regulatory objectives for the regulator. We propose a single core objective:

To ensure consumers access to a well-developed, high-quality, innovative, and competitive market for legal services.

As discussed above, this objective purposely focuses the regulatory authority on the consumer market for legal services. The Court should also outline regulatory principles for the regulator. We propose five regulatory principles:

1. **Regulation should be based on the evaluation of risk to the consumer.** Regulatory intervention should be proportionate and responsive to the actual risks posed to the consumers of legal services.
2. **Risk to the consumer should be evaluated relative to the current legal services options available.** Risk should not be evaluated as against the idea of perfect legal representation provided by a lawyer but rather as against the reality of the current market options. For example, if 80 percent of consumers have no access to any legal help in the particular area at issue, then the evaluation of risk is as against no legal help at all.
3. **Regulation should establish probabilistic thresholds for acceptable levels of harm.** The risk-based approach does not seek to eliminate all risk or harm in the legal services market. Rather, it uses risk data to better identify and apply regulatory resources over time and across the market. A probability threshold is a tool by which the regulator identifies and directs regulatory intervention. In assessing risks, the regulator looks at the probability of a risk occurring and the magnitude of the impact should the risk occur. Based on this assessment, the regulator determines acceptable levels of risk in certain areas of legal service. Resources should be focused on areas in which there is both high probability of harm and significant impact on the consumer or the market. The thresholds in these areas will be lower than other areas. When the evidence of consumer harm crosses the established threshold, regulatory

- action is triggered.¹²⁰ Example: Under traditional regulatory approaches, the very possibility that a non-lawyer who interprets a legal document (a lease, summons, or employment contract, for example) might make an error that an attentive lawyer would not make has been taken to justify prohibiting all non-lawyers from providing any interpretation. However, if the risk is actually such that an error is made only 10% of the time, then a risk-based approach would recommend allowing non-lawyer advisors to offer aid (particularly if the alternative is not getting an interpretation from an attentive lawyer but rather proceeding on the basis of the consumer's own, potentially flawed interpretation). If a particular service or software is actually found to have an error rate exceeding 10%, then regulatory action (suspension, investigation, etc.) would be taken against that entity or person.
4. **Regulation should be empirically-driven.** Regulatory approach and actions will be supported by data. Participants in the market will submit data to the regulator throughout the process.
 5. **Regulation should be guided by a market-based approach.** The current regulatory system has prevented the development of a well-functioning market for legal services. This proposal depends on the regulatory system permitting the market to develop and function without excessive interference.

Regulator Structure

In Phase 1, the regulator will operate relatively leanly given that it will be overseeing a small marketplace (the regulatory sandbox); however, staffing needs to be sufficient to ensure that the regulator is successful from the start. The regulator must be able to respond to applicants, questions, and demands quickly and efficiently and be able to adequately monitor and assess the market's development and respond appropriately and strategically.

We preliminarily envision an executive committee or senior staff made up of a Director, a Senior Economist, and, perhaps, a Senior Technologist. It is not necessary that these individuals be lawyers. The Director will be the face of the entity, responsible for strategy, development, budget, and reporting to the Court. The Senior Economist will be responsible for developing the quantitative analytical tools used by the regulator. The Senior Technologist will be responsible both for reviewing, assessing, and explaining the technological aspects of any proposed products or services as well as offering technological expertise on a strategic level (i.e., where regulatory resources should be targeted). The support staff would need to cover

¹²⁰ The "probability threshold" approach is not unfamiliar in the legal world. Indeed, it arguably guides First Amendment constitutional law doctrine. See Jonathan S. Masur, *Probability Thresholds*, 92 IOWA L. REV. 1293, 1297 (2007).

the following functions: operations, development, and communications. Finally, we envision creating a Board of Advisors made up of both legal and non-legal leaders, including particularly leaders in technology and academics well-versed in regulatory theory.

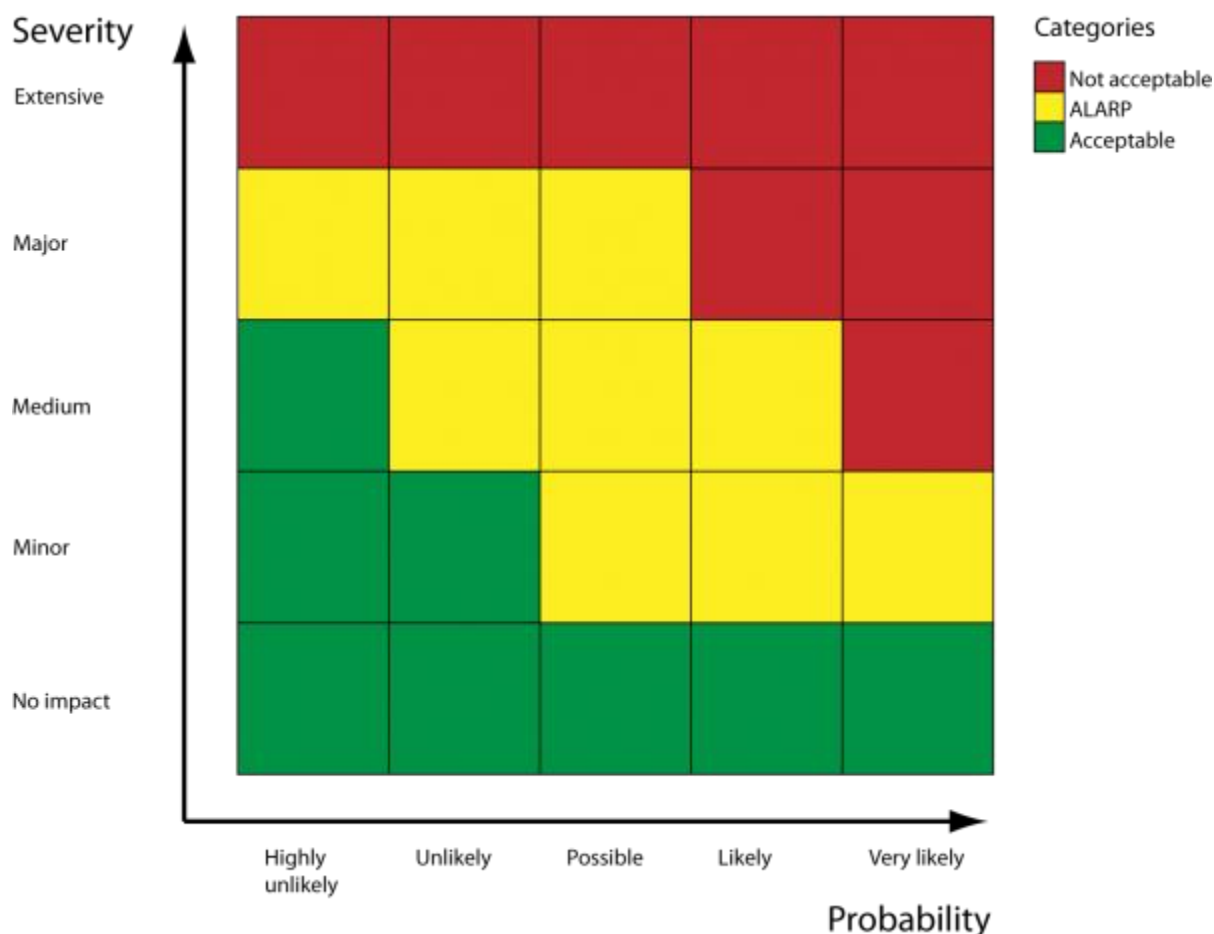
We propose that the regulator be funded primarily from fees collected from market participants. At the outset, however, we propose seeking grants for the establishment and support of the Phase 1 regulator.

Regulatory Approach

It is the regulator's job to develop a system that, applying the regulatory principles, works to achieve the regulatory objective. Identifying, quantifying, understanding, and responding to risk of consumer harm using an empirical approach is prioritized in our regulatory principles. There are two major aspects to this: (1) assessing risk of consumer harm in the market as a whole (both now and over time); and (2) assessing risk of consumer harm in a particular applicant's legal service offering.

We foresee the regulator using a risk matrix as its primary tool for identifying and understanding risk. A risk matrix is essentially a framework used to evaluate and prioritize risk based on the likelihood of occurrence and the severity of the impact. It is one of the most widespread tools used for risk evaluation. A simple example follows:

Narrowing the Access-to-Justice Gap by Reimagining Regulation



Developing the risk matrix should be the first task for the regulator in assessing the legal services market, and it should be revised and updated market-wide on an ongoing basis. The risk matrix also guides the regulator’s approach to individual regulated entities throughout the regulatory process.

We propose attention to 3 key risks:

1. Consumer achieves a poor legal result.
2. Consumer fails to exercise their legal rights because they did not know they possessed those rights.
3. Consumer purchases a legal service that is unnecessary or inappropriate for resolution of their legal issue.

Using the risk matrix, the regulator would consider likelihood and impact of each of the three key risks mentioned, as well as any other risks identified either in the market generally or as indicated for a particular participant or group of participants. For example, for an entity proposing to offer a software-enabled will drafting service (using perhaps machine learning enhanced guidance or advice or non-lawyer will experts answering questions), the regulator

would assess the likelihood that the consumer achieves a poor legal result (e.g. an unenforceable will or term) and the impact of that harm on the consumer (potentially significant, but rectifiable, in some cases).

The regulator should establish metrics by which those risks might be measured and identify the data regulated entities will be required to submit in order to assess risk on an ongoing basis. The regulated entities will be required to submit data on these in order to participate in the market. In the example above, the risk of a poor legal result can be measured through expert testing/auditing of the proposed product and through consumer satisfaction surveys. The regulator should consider what level of risk self-assessment should be required from applicants in addition to any key risks identified by the regulator.

Regulatory Process

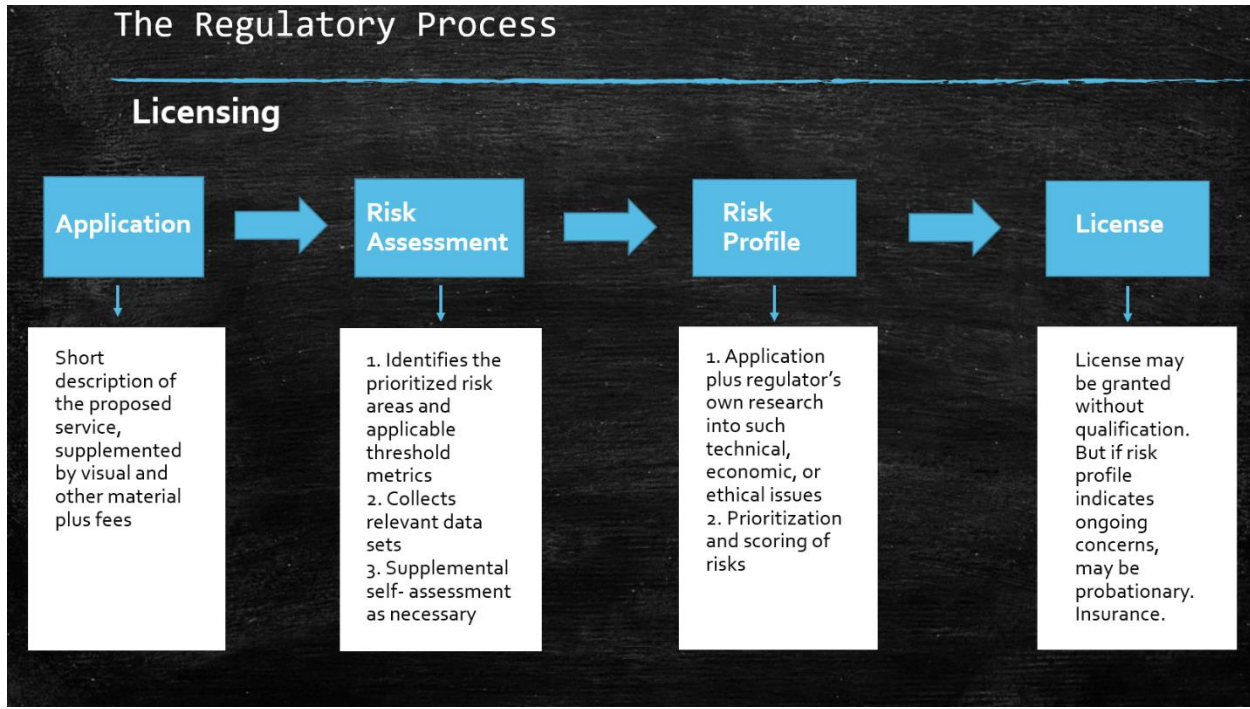
The key points of the regulatory process should be as follows: (1) licensing; (2) monitoring; and (3) enforcement. Each defines a key interaction between the regulator and the market participant.

Licensing

The licensing approach would be guided by the following analysis:

1. What is the specific nature of the risk(s) posed to the consumer by this service/product/business model?
2. Where does the proposed service/product/business model lie within the risk matrix?
3. Can the applicant provide sufficient evidence on the risk(s)?
4. What mechanisms might mitigate those risks and how? What are the costs and benefits of those mechanisms?

The visual below illustrates the proposed licensing process:



Applicant initiates process: The applicant describes the service/product/business model offered. The explanation should be simple and short. The applicant should submit supplemental materials (visuals, etc.) as necessary.

Risk Assessment: Based on the description provided in the initial application, supplemented as necessary with information requests to the applicant, the regulator initiates the risk assessment process.

1. The regulator assesses the applicant's proposal within the context of the risk matrix. Does the proposed service implicate one of the key risks, and what is the likelihood and impact of those risks being realized? The applicant must submit required data on these risks and any information on the mitigation of these risks and response to risk realization built into its model.
2. Self-assessment: the applicant will be expected to identify any risks to consumers not identified in the first step. These may be risks specific to the type of technology proposed, the business model, the area of law, or the consumer population targeted. For example, a blockchain platform for commercial smart contracting presents different concerns than a document completion tool used by self-represented litigants.
3. The regulator should develop a mechanism for sealed risk disclosures—to the extent that any necessary disclosures around technology or other risk mitigation processes should not be made public.

Fees: The applicant should submit licensing fees both at the outset of the licensing process and annually in order to maintain an active license. The fee regime will be developed to scale with the applicant's statewide revenues.

Regulator Response—Risk Profile: The regulator will then use the application and its own research into such technical, economic, or ethical issues as necessary to develop an overall risk profile of the proposed service/product/business model. A risk profile is not a list of potential risks with little or no differentiation between them. Instead, the risk profile should assess the identified risks both in relation to each other (which are the most probable, which present the greatest financial risk, etc.) and in relation to the legal services market overall. The risk profile will also guide the regulator in its regulatory approach going forward, i.e., how frequently to audit, what kind of ongoing monitoring or reporting to employ, and what kinds of enforcement tools need to be considered.

Regulator Response—Determination on Licensure: If, based on the risk profile, the regulator finds that significant risks have been identified, but it is not clear how the applicant plans to address and mitigate those risks, the regulator can impose probationary requirements on the applicant targeted to address those risks or refuse licensure.

Monitoring and Data Collection

Once an entity is licensed, the regulatory relationship moves on to the monitoring and data collection phase. The purpose of monitoring is continual improvement of the regulatory system with respect to the core objective. Monitoring enables the regulator to understand risks in the market and identify trends and to observe, measure, and adjust any regulatory initiatives to drive progress toward the core objective. Monitoring is not the regulator simply checking the box on a list of requirements.

In monitoring, the regulator can use several different tactics. The regulator should develop requirements such that regulated entities periodically and routinely provide data on the three key risks. The regulator should have the flexibility to reduce or eliminate specific reporting requirements if the data consistently show no harm to consumers. The regulator should also conduct unannounced testing or evaluation of a regulated entities' performance through, for example, "secret shopper" audits or expert audits of random samples of services or products.

The regulator should consider imposing an affirmative duty on regulated entities to monitor for and disclose any unforeseen impacts on consumers.

The regulator should also conduct consumer surveys across the market and consider how to engage with courts and other agencies to gather performance data.

The regulator should use the data gathered to issue regular market reports and issue guidance to the public and regulated entities. The regulators in the U.K., the SRA in particular, provide strong examples of the reporting opportunities. The SRA issues regular reports on risk, regulatory activities, regulated population, consumer reports, and equality and diversity.¹²¹ On risk, the SRA issues quarterly and annual reports that span across the market, as well as thematic reports (a report on risks in conveyancing, for example) and reports on key risks, risks in IT security, risks to improving access to legal services, etc.¹²²

Enforcement

Enforcement is necessary where the activities of licensed entities are harming consumers. Ideally, the regulator will take action when evidence of consumer harm exceeds the applicable acceptable harm thresholds outlined in the risk matrix or individualized risk assessment. The regulator should strive to make the enforcement process as transparent, targeted, and responsive as possible.

The regulator should develop a process for enforcement: intake, investigation, and redress. Evidence of consumer harm can come before the regulator through multiple avenues:

1. Regulator finds evidence of consumer harm through the course of its monitoring, auditing, or testing of regulated entities.
2. Regulator finds evidence of consumer harm through its monitoring of the legal services market.
3. Consumer complaints.
4. Referrals from courts or other agencies.
5. Whistleblower reports.
6. Media or other public interest reports.

The regulator should develop a process by which members of the public can approach the regulator with complaints about legal service. The U.K. approach is informative on this issue. The LSA established a separate and independent entity, the Office of Legal Complaints (OLC) and its Legal Ombudsman to address the bulk of consumer complaints against legal service providers. Complaints around poor service are directed to the Ombudsman, which has the authority to identify issues and trends and refer those to the frontline regulators like the SRA.¹²³ The frontline regulators like the SRA accept complaints that directly implicate significant

¹²¹ See SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Research and reports* (July 2019), <https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/how-we-work/reports.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹²² See SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Risk publications*, <https://www.sra.org.uk/risk/risk-resources.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹²³ See SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Providing information and intelligence to the SRA* (Jan. 20, 2015) <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/providing-information.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). The Ombudsman requires the consumer to complain to the service provider directly before accessing the

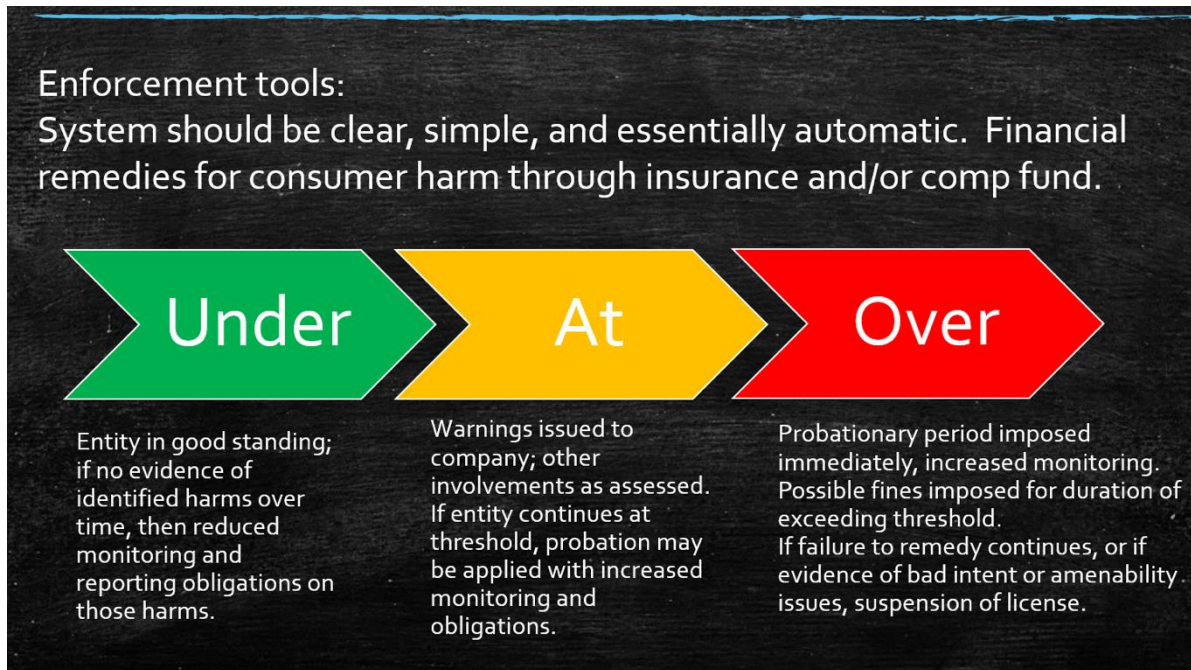
consumer risk (financial wrongdoing, dishonesty, and discrimination for example). The SRA does not, however, advocate individual complaints against service providers. Rather, the SRA will accept the information and either (1) keep the information for future use if necessary (“no engagement at present”), (2) use the information to supervise a firm more closely, or (3) use the information in a formal investigation.¹²⁴ Thus, the structure for complaints enables the frontline regulator to retain its focus on risk at the firm and market level rather than dispensing resources on investigating and managing every individual consumer complaint.

The regulator should consider establishing a Legal Ombudsperson role or office to focus on consumer questions or complaints about poor legal service (issues such as poor communication, inefficient service, trouble following client direction, etc.). This role could be contained within the regulator, but requires proper structural independence and authority to address complaints, require remedial action, and issue clear guidelines on what kinds of information should be referred to the enforcement authority of the regulator.

If the regulator makes a finding of consumer harm that exceeds the applicable threshold, then penalties are triggered. The penalty system should be clear, simple, and driven by the core objective. The regulator should strive to address harm in the market without unnecessarily interfering with the market.

office. See SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Reporting an individual or firm*, <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019); see also LEGAL OMBUDSMAN, *Helping the public*, <https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019). The Ombudsman has the power to require the legal services provider to take remedial actions such as return or reduce fees, pay compensation, apologize, and do additional work. See LEGAL OMBUDSMAN, *Helping the Public*, <https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk/helping-the-public/#what-problems-we-resolve> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹²⁴ See SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Providing information and intelligence to the SRA* (Jan. 20, 2015), <https://www.sra.org.uk/consumers/problems/report-solicitor/providing-information.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).



There should be a process to appeal enforcement decisions, both within the regulator and to the Supreme Court.

The regulator should make regular reports on enforcement data and actions to the Court.

Other Regulatory Duties

The regulator may have other duties that advance the core objective. These would obviously include its reporting duties to both the Court and the public. Reports would detail the overall state of the market, risks across the market, prioritized risk areas, and specific market sectors (by consumer, by area of law, etc.). The regulator may also have the authority to develop initiatives, including public information and education campaigns.

Regulatory Sandbox

This section presents an overview of regulatory sandboxes generally and insights into how our proposed regulatory sandbox could operate.

The regulatory sandbox is a policy structure that creates a controlled environment in which new consumer-centered innovations, which may be illegal under current regulations, can be piloted and evaluated. The goal is to allow regulators and aspiring innovators to develop new offerings that could benefit the public, validate them with the public, and understand how current regulations might need to be selectively or permanently relaxed to permit these and other innovations. Financial regulators have used regulatory sandboxes over the past decade to

encourage more public-oriented technology innovations that otherwise might have been inhibited or illegal under standard regulations.¹²⁵ In the legal domain, the U.K.'s SRA has also created a structure—the Innovation Space—that introduces a system of waivers of regulatory roles for organizations to pilot ideas that might benefit the public.¹²⁶

The regulatory sandbox structure has been used most extensively in the financial services sector. This is an area with extensive and detailed regulations and a significant amount of technological development and innovation. While there are significant differences between financial services and legal services, there are insights to be drawn from regulatory sandbox operation in that sector. Below are some general characteristics of sandboxes:

1. **Testing out what innovations are possible.** The regulatory sandbox can allow the regulator to selectively loosen current rules to see how much and what kinds of new innovation might be possible in their sector.¹²⁷ Regulators and the industry see that new types of technology developments, with the rise of artificial intelligence, digital and mobile services, blockchain, and other technologies, may bring new benefit to the public. Guarantees of non-enforcement in the sandbox can allow companies to raise more capital for experimental new offerings that may not otherwise be funded because of regulatory uncertainty about how the rules would apply to these new models. The regulators can use the sandbox to understand how much innovation potential there is in the ecosystem, beyond mere speculation that emerging tech has promise in their market if regulations were changed.
2. **Tailored evaluation plans focused on risk.** The sandbox model puts the burden on companies to define how their services should be measured in regard to benefits, harms, and risks. They must propose not only what innovation is possible, but also how it can be assessed.
3. **Controlled experimentation.** The sandbox allows for regulators to run controlled tests as to what changes to regulation might be possible, both in terms of what rules apply and how regulation is carried out. They can install safeguards to protect the experiments from spilling over into the general market, and they can terminate individual experiments or the entire sandbox if the evidence indicates that unacceptable harms are emerging.

¹²⁵ See *supra* n.55.

¹²⁶ SOLICITORS REGULATION AUTHORITY, *Enabling innovation: Consultation on a new approach to waivers and developing the SRA Innovation Space* (Apr. 12, 2018), <https://www.sra.org.uk/sra/consultations/enabling-innovation.page> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

¹²⁷ The selective loosening or non-enforcement of different rules is less applicable in our proposed sandbox because, as noted, we have a good idea of what rules need to be revised or removed (unauthorized practice of law, corporate practice, and fee sharing rules). What we are less certain of is what risks might come to bear as a result of the loosening or non-enforcement of those rules (see point 2).

4. **New sources of data on what regulation works best.** The sandbox can be a new source of data-driven, evidence-backed policy-making. Because sandbox participants gather and share data about their offerings' performance (at least with the regulators, if not more publicly), the sandbox can help develop standards and metrics around data-driven regulation. It can incentivize more companies to evaluate their offerings through rigorous understanding of benefits and harms to the public, and it can help regulators develop protocols to conduct this kind of data-driven evaluation.

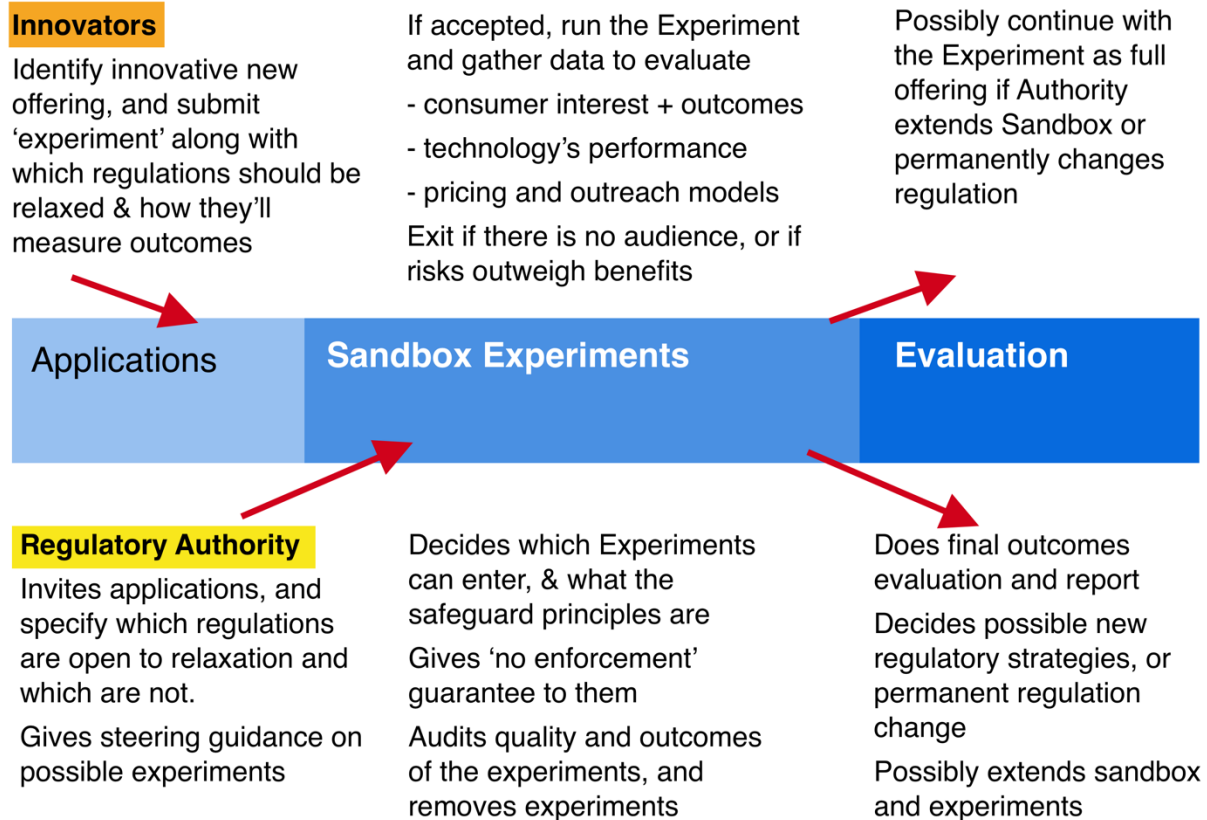
Points 2 and 4 will be key for our regulatory sandbox: identifying and assessing risk and developing data to inform the regulatory approach.

How Does A Regulatory Sandbox Work?

A regulator can create a sandbox to incentivize greater innovation and to gather more data-driven evidence on how offerings and regulations perform in regard to benefits or harms to the public. The essential steps of a regulatory sandbox are as follows:

1. **The regulator issues a call for applications.** This call defines the essential rules of the sandbox: which regulations are open to being relaxed or removed and which cannot be. It also can specify what kinds of innovations will be accepted into the sandbox, the types of data and evaluation metrics that must be prepared, the non-enforcement letters or other certifications that successful applicants will receive, and other safeguards or criteria for possible applicants. Typically, this call is for a "class" of applicants that are all accepted at the same time and run in parallel (though it could be a rolling application instead).
2. **Companies submit applications.** Any type of organization can propose a new offering to be included in a sandbox class. Applicants must detail exactly what the new offering is (e.g., what the technology is, what it intends to accomplish, and how it functions); how they expect it to benefit the public; what risks or harms they expect might arise; how they will deploy and measure this offering; and which rules or regulations need to be relaxed in order for this offering to be allowed.

A Regulatory Sandbox Model



3. **Start of the sandbox.** The regulator reviews the applications and accepts those that have demonstrated an innovative new offering, a strong assessment plan, and a strong potential for public benefit. The regulator invites these approved participants to enter the sandbox and establishes how the data-sharing, auditing, and evaluation will proceed. If the participants agree to these arrangements, they receive a letter of non-enforcement from the regulator that gives them permission to develop and launch the agreed-upon offering, within the confines of the sandbox, without being subject to the identified regulations.
4. **Sandbox runs and rolling evaluation begins.** A typical sandbox period could be six months to two years. The participant companies work on developing their offerings, putting them on the market, and collecting data on their performance. When applicants bring a new offering to the public, they must conspicuously disclose that it is part of the sandbox and refer consumers to the regulator where they can learn more about the offering and give feedback or complaints. The regulator observes the performance of the offering to see if the public uses it, if the intended benefits result, if any of

the expected or unexpected harms result, and what complaints consumers have. The regulator can suspend or cancel the non-enforcement letter at any time if the company is not performing according to the agreement, if its offering does not engage an audience, or if the offering results in harms above what the regulator has deemed acceptable.

5. **Sandbox ends and company and regulator (potentially) continue on.** Once the designated period of the sandbox finishes, the company can continue with its approved offering if it so wishes, with the non-enforcement authorization still intact. The regulator can take stock of the participants, offerings, and data, and it can use this information to shape another round of applications—perhaps changing the terms of the safeguards; the protocols for evaluation of risks, harms, and benefits; or what types of innovation it solicits. The regulator might also use the data from the completed experiments to permanently relax or change the regulations for the entire market. In this way, the sandbox can be a way to experiment with and validate different regulations. The regulator may also formalize the protocols it uses to measure harm and benefit, moving those protocols from the sandbox experiments to all company offerings in the market.

A sandbox cycle ideally will result in a class of consumer-centered innovations that demonstrate how new kinds of technologies and services can offer value to the public. It can inform regulators about what rules and protocols work best to evaluate both sandbox innovations as well as existing offerings in the market. It can also incentivize more companies to enter the market with offerings that can both serve consumers and secure investment for the company. It may also make clear which types of technologies may be harmful to the public, how better to predict and assess what kinds of harms and benefits a given potential offering may result in, and what the public does and does not want.

A Regulatory Sandbox for Legal Services

As of mid-2019, there has not been a regulatory sandbox for legal services. But there have been calls, including in the UK and in Australia, for legal regulators to create sandboxes similar to those used in financial services, to test regulatory reform for innovation and new business structures that promote broader access to justice.¹²⁸

Our team held a workshop in April 2019 to explore the prospect of a legal regulatory sandbox in the U.S. Our goal was to understand whether there might be an appetite from law firms, legal technology companies, legal aid groups, foundations, and other organizations that might be entrants into a legal services regulatory sandbox. If a state was to issue a call for

¹²⁸ Neil Rose, *Law Society calls for “innovation sandbox”*, LEGAL FUTURES (Aug. 22, 2016), <https://www.legalfutures.co.uk/latest-news/law-society-calls-innovation-sandbox> (last visited Aug. 13, 2019).

sandbox applications and the possibility to relax legal professional rules, would there be interest from groups to enter this sandbox, with an innovative offering to test?

We held the workshop as an invite-only follow-up to the Stanford Future Law conference, which is a pre-eminent gathering of those interested in legal innovation. The conference organizers helped us reach out to many attendees who might be possible sandbox entrants, including leading legal technology companies, law firms with innovation groups, venture capital groups that are interested in the legal market, other large financial and professional services companies, legal aid groups, justice technology non-profits, and foundations interested in access to justice. We then supplemented this recruitment with invites to attorneys, entrepreneurs, and funders who might be interested in new models of legal services.

The workshop was a two-hour, hands-on event. We had approximately 30 participants, which we assembled into small teams to work on exploring what ideas participants had for innovation, what current rules and regulations they might ask to have relaxed, and what concrete innovation offerings they might be interested in submitting to a sandbox. This workshop design was meant to have participants:

1. Reflect on whether a sandbox was needed,
2. Identify what kinds of innovation potential it might unlock, and
3. Validate if they would participate in a sandbox if it were to launch, and under what conditions.

Our team documented the work, discussions, and debrief of the sandbox workshop.

Positive response to sandbox and new regulatory approach. The participants were overwhelmingly positive towards the prospect of a sandbox—confirming that controlled tests were needed to encourage innovation in legal services, allow more capital investment in new technology and service models that currently would face regulatory uncertainty, and drive more benefit to the public regarding access to justice. They welcomed a risk-based, empirical approach to regulation of the legal services market. It was not difficult for them to understand the concept, and the financial services sandbox models made it easy to see how analogous models could work in law.

Willingness to enter the sandbox with near-term or long-term innovations. Many of the participants, including start-ups, alternative service providers, and consumer/legal technology companies, said that they would seriously consider entering the sandbox if it was to launch. There were near-term innovation experiments that participants would be ready to apply for within the next year. This could include projects such as chatbots that provide help and referrals to the public or a new technology-based proof-of-service offering to record digital

forms of service. There were also more long-term innovations that would only be ready for application to the sandbox once given more time and investment. Those included automated dispute resolution tools to create contract-based or court-order judgments and community-based arbitrators to resolve disputes with staffing models that include more non-lawyers and judges.

Some of the particular points raised by participants that indicate some of the conditions, safeguards, and concerns that a legal services sandbox may need to address include the following:

1. **Expanding the sandbox from legal professional rules to other rules.** Many people mentioned the possibility for a sandbox to not just suspend professional rules of conduct, but also to possibly change court rules and civil procedure rules in order to allow new services to flourish.
2. **Absolute importance of post-sandbox approval.** The participants all agreed that a crucial condition of the sandbox is that participants could continue with their offering, provided risks of harm were demonstrably within appropriate levels, after the sandbox class formally concluded. They would not invest in a new innovation if they were given a non-enforcement guarantee that would expire at the end of the sandbox. They were fine with the possibility that the guarantee might be rescinded if their offering did not perform as intended or if it harmed the public.
3. **Concern over access to evaluation data.** Participants were very concerned about who would be able to access the data that they would gather and share with the regulator about the performance and effects of their innovative offerings. Many asserted that the data should not, by default, be “public data” or subject to total transparency. They said that the prospect of having their data about acquisition cost, pricing, staffing, sales, profit and other performance analytics being shared with others would deter them from entering the sandbox. This is closely-guarded competitive information, and even sharing it with a regulator would be considered a possible threat to business strategies. They would be more comfortable sharing outcome data—such as data about number of users and outcomes of users—particularly if other competitors must share these data with the regulator as well.
4. **Concern over failed testing at the sandbox stage.** One concern of possible sandbox entrants was that a failed offering may receive more public scrutiny if it occurs as part of the sandbox than if the company stayed in the regular marketplace and had the same product failure. They expressed concern that the data about this failure would be publicly available and the story of that failure might turn out to be a liability for the company. They could instead

develop the offering in the current regulatory scheme, not expose the innovation explicitly to the regulator, and then choose how much attention to draw to their offering.

5. **More states involved, more entrants.** Several participants mentioned that they would be more likely to devote resources to entering the sandbox if there were multiple states involved in it. This multistate involvement could be explicit in the form of states as members of the sandbox, or states could be “watchers” of the sandbox with potential to also extend non-enforcement guarantees or open their markets to successful sandbox experiments. Such involvement would encourage more entrants, particularly if states with larger legal markets were to be involved. That said, participants agreed that being vetted and legitimated by a regulator in one state would be worthwhile, in the expectation that it could positively influence their relationship with other states’ regulators.

A focus on access. A final cluster of points that emerged from the workshop and subsequent conversations with interested parties was about the need to prioritize access to justice and equity in the sandbox design. Many reflected, after the workshop, that the sandbox most likely will lead to innovations, especially initially, that serve the middle and upper classes, who can afford unbundled legal service offerings. They questioned whether the sandbox could be designed to incentivize benefits to extend to people with less money to spend on services. Some specific ideas included:

1. **Obligation to distribute innovations to low-income communities.** As more offerings succeed in the sandbox, there might be obligations for the companies to give free licenses, software, or other access to people who cannot afford them.
2. **Matchmaking between technologists, legal aid, and social service groups.** Could a regulator, or associated group, help encourage more access-oriented entrants by bringing together experts with new technologies and business models with professionals who work closely with low-income communities? In this way, the regulator could help legal aid lawyers and social service providers better understand how they might harness emerging technologies and do “innovation” (when most of them do not have the resources to do this on their own). The regulator might also offer incentives and training to possible entrants who are focused on low-income consumers.
3. **Particular encouragements in the application call.** Participants also recommended that the regulator might specifically call for access-oriented innovations when it announces the sandbox. The regulator could identify promising uses of data, AI, staffing, and business models that the literature and experts have already identified for promoting access to justice.