



Connecticut Bar Foundation
Strategic Plan | 2023 - 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Connecticut Bar Foundation's strategic planning process began during a time of significant leadership, capacity, and programmatic changes—in addition to a global pandemic. As we embrace the need and opportunity for change, our board and staff leadership, grantees and program partners, Fellows and stakeholders, have desired greater clarity about who we are, what we do, and why and how we do it.

CONTEXT: CLARIFYING OUR ROLE

With this context, the strategic planning process presented an opportunity to consider our changing role in the legal aid ecosystem, the alignment and needs of our programming, and the capacity investments necessary to advance our mission and vision and achieve our desired impacts.

After an intense period of listening and learning, we find that our role calls upon us to apply a holistic view of the legal aid ecosystem, its needs, and impact, in order to bring resources to bear effectively and advance a common vision for civil justice in Connecticut. Our resources include information, policies, funding, committed partners, and a strategic mix of interventions.

Every aspect of our work is fundamentally relational and systems oriented. First, we must assess the needs and range of solutions involved in advancing civil justice in Connecticut. Then, with this common understanding, we can facilitate collaborative efforts to:

- 1 Map the activities of stakeholders across the system and identify strengths, gaps, pressing needs, threats, and opportunities
- 2 Facilitate open communication and collaboration among stakeholders
- 3 Establish shared measurement, evaluation, and reporting practices that embed community voice and input and create accountability
- 4 Invest resources strategically to maximize the desired outcomes
- 5 Provide technical assistance and capacity building to providers to support their success
- 6 Stimulate the field to catalyze or incubate new ideas and partnerships
- 7 Promote the field to develop pipelines of professional talent and volunteer leadership
- 8 Build public awareness and will to mobilize support and funding
- 9 Advance public policies that safeguard, improve, and resource the system.

The goals and strategies within this plan can be read with this paradigm in mind.

We fully recognize and embrace that our strategic plan and the work it entails require transparency, open dialogue, close collaboration, ongoing listening, and applied learning. In other words, advancing civil justice in Connecticut requires us to engage many voices and partners. And while much will change over the next few years, our partners can continue to count on the CT Bar Foundation to be a steadfast steward and proponent of a stronger civil legal system.



OUR MISSION

Facilitate systemic change that advances civil justice for all, regardless of power or resources, to achieve a more just and equitable society.

We do this by stewarding funding, volunteers, programming, data, innovation, and collaboration to lead and partner in integrated approaches to improving the administration of civil justice.

OUR VISION

We envision a Connecticut where:



OUR BELIEFS

At the Connecticut Bar Foundation, our work and mission are driven by the belief that:

- 1 Everyone deserves equal access to justice regardless of power or privilege.
- 2 The strength and stability of the rule of law relies upon trust that it will be upheld through a justice system that actively strives to provide equal access.
- 3 The work of legal aid is a critical component of equal access to justice but must be part of an integrated system of support.
- 4 Equal access to justice requires more than just access to an attorney. It also requires equitable access to the courts (both in-person and virtually); to administrative and review tribunals and alternative resolution processes; to educational and language resources and self-help tools; to government benefits and funding; to community resources; to legal protections and procedural safeguards; and to government officials who make and implement laws.

Our organization strives to be:



A TRUSTED VOICE and strategic steward of funding for civil legal services in Connecticut.



A LEADER in building a stronger civil legal aid system through evaluation, collaboration, capacity building, public awareness, advocacy, and resource generation.



A CONVENER of legal professionals and community advocates to explore and pursue a shared commitment to continually improve access to civil justice for all residents.

OUR VALUES

In our work and interactions, we apply the following core values:

- 1 Trust is earned by being a transparent leader and an accountable steward.
- 2 Learning and improvement are iterative. Systems change is not a one-time goal but a continual process of evaluation, analysis, feedback, learning, collaboration, and improvement.
- 3 Equal access to justice requires equity. Therefore, the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion must be present in every aspect of the work we do.
- 4 Relationships enable everything we do and aim to achieve. From our staff, Board, grantees, and Fellows to our collaborators across government and the legal and funding communities, nurturing mutually supportive relationships should always be top of mind.

OUR GOALS & STRATEGIES FOR 2023-2025

GOAL 1:
Strengthen the civil legal aid system by serving as a steward of information, funding, collaboration, and capacity building.

STRATEGIES:

- 1 Lead collaborative efforts to resources and assess the civil legal aid system.
- 2 Collaboratively review and redesign our fund allocation and evaluation strategies for the legal aid system.
- 3 Deepen relationships with and between legal service providers and expand our capacity building supports.
- 4 Evaluate impact and communicate funding needs for Right to Counsel and Temporary Restraining Order programs.

GOAL 2:
Build our organization's capacity to enact its work effectively and equitably.

STRATEGIES:

- 1 Evolve the organization's structure and staffing to support its priorities.
- 2 Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) within the organization and across its efforts.
- 3 Develop a comprehensive approach to information management and technology.
- 4 Continue to develop our financial management system and strategies.

GOAL 3:
More fully engage and activate fellows by clearly aligning the purpose, activities, and contributions of the program with the CBF's mission and vision.

STRATEGIES:

- 1 Clarify the purpose and articulate the value of the Fellows program.
- 2 Increase the Fellows program's financial sustainability and contributions.
- 3 Re-examine the membership criteria and nomination process and develop approaches to increase recruitment, engagement, and stewardship.
- 4 Refine the Fellows' programmatic mix to strengthen mission alignment.
- 5 Build the pipeline and capacity of our volunteer leaders.
- 6 Engage the next generation of lawyers and leaders by expanding law students' awareness of the legal aid field (talent pipeline) and the Fellows program.
- 7 Ensure the administrative sustainability of restricted funds entrusted to the CBF.

GOAL 4:
Increase awareness of and support of our mission.

STRATEGIES:

- 1 Create brand clarity and a cohesive brand strategy.
- 2 Build the case, awareness, and relationships to support access to civil justice.
- 3 Expand and diversify our fund development efforts.

GOAL 5:
Clarify and strengthen our governance structures and functions.

STRATEGIES:

- 1 Revisit Board and volunteer committee structures to increase and diversify participation and foster a pipeline of volunteer leaders and potential Board members.
- 2 Build a more diverse pipeline of prospective Board members through strategic recruitment.
- 3 Improve Board member orientation and development.
- 4 Increase Board engagement in support of strategic priorities.
- 5 Form a joint committee to review and discuss the strategic alliance between the CT Bar Association (CBA) and CT Bar Foundation (CBF).



IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN & MONITORING OUR PROGRESS

Our Strategic Plan is a living, working document that will be used to create annual goals for the Executive Director and Board, and annual priorities and workplans for staff and volunteer committees.

A detailed implementation plan will be used to track progress against the selected strategies and tactics for the first year, and then will be updated accordingly for each successive year. Regular reporting and updates at staff and Board meetings will ensure that our shared learning and dialogue continues, and that we are monitoring desired key results under each goal.

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- 2 Engage the next generation of lawyers and leaders by expanding law students' awareness of the legal aid field (talent pipeline) and the Fellows program.
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Advancing civil
justice in Connecticut
requires all of us.



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