Law Society Innovation Sandbox
At the September 2020 Bencher meeting …

The Futures Task Force recommended that “… the Benchers need to authorize regulatory sandboxes to allow innovations, which may be illegal or unethical under current regulations, to be piloted and evaluated in a controlled environment.”

The Licensed Paralegal Task Force observed “… that the amendments to the Legal Profession Act have been in a holding pattern for almost two years, and it is time to move forward with a program of expanded service provision with a path towards licensing. For the reasons contained in this report, the Task Force recommends the Law Society further develop what we call a grassroots sandbox approach …”

The recommendations were accepted by the Benchers.
The Law Society website provides potential proponents with information about the Innovation Sandbox initiative and provides a link to an online form that allows proponents to provide information about their proposal.
The proposal form invites proponents to answer a series of questions directed at ensuring the proposals are addressing the unmet legal needs of BC residents, who is expected to benefit from the service, how will any risks be managed and what ability the proponents have to provide the services.
After a proposal is submitted, it is reviewed by staff and additional information is obtained if necessary to clarify the proposal.

Once the proposal is finalized, it is then considered by a staff working group to develop a recommendation and submission to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committees considers the proposal and the working group recommendation and decides on the proposal.

Need
Ability
Risk
To date, we have received 32 proposals covering a wide range of potential services:

- Legal advice and assistance for persons with dementia and their families
- Legal coaching
- Lawyer referral services
- A virtual legal clinic
- Online wills services
- Advice on strata property matters
- Legal research using artificial intelligence
- Representation/counsel services in small claims court and administrative tribunals
Of the 32 proposals, half have been considered by the Executive Committee and the remainder are still under investigation.
Proponents and proposals approved for participation in our innovation sandbox will receive a “no action” letter tailored to the particulars of their proposal setting out the Law Society’s expectations and requiring regular reporting on the services they provide.
As the Law Society continues to consider and approve (or reject) proposals, we will be developing information on the Law Society website (much like our Lawyer Directory) to identify for the public the proponents and proposals that have been considered and decided by the Executive Committee and provide information about the services the successful proponents may provide and what to do if there is a concern about their services.
It is still early days but we are hopeful that our innovation sandbox initiative will provide the opportunity to identify and evaluate alternative legal service providers and provide the groundwork for more formal recognition of providers as contemplated by the Futures Task Force and the Licensed Paralegal Task Force.
Questions?