



**Regulation Matters:
a CLEAR conversation**

Episode 58: CLEAR's 2022-24 Strategic Plan – Supporting the Regulator of Tomorrow

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Line Dempsey: Welcome back to our podcast, Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation. I'm your host, Line Dempsey. I am currently the chief compliance officer with Riccobene Associates Family Dentistry here in North Carolina and Virginia. And I'm also CLEAR's president for 2022-23.

As many of you are aware, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, or CLEAR, is an association of individuals, agencies and organizations that comprise the international community of professional and occupational regulation. Once again, this podcast is a chance for you to hear about important topics in our regulatory community.

In today's episode, we want to take a moment to thank all of the participants that have been here at the September Annual Educational Conference. We're very privileged to actually be in-person to record this podcast and to actually put faces and names together (although I've known these folks for a long time). We've had a lot of interesting sessions this week from expert speakers. There was a lot of time for getting back together and networking with colleagues. So we do want to thank all of our session coordinators, speakers, moderators, exhibitors, sponsors, and most of all our attendees. We were glad to be back in-person, and this conference is always an exciting time during CLEAR's year.

But the focus of today's podcast episode is looking forward into CLEAR's year. CLEAR is here to support you in the regulatory arena throughout the year, and we have some exciting initiatives planned. CLEAR's Board of Directors has approved a 2022-24 Strategic Plan, and today we have with us two of the board members that were instrumental in developing that plan, Marc Spector and Kym Ayscough, as well as CLEAR's executive director, Adam Parfitt. Welcome to you all.

Marc Spector: Thank you, Line.

Adam Parfitt: Thank you, Line. It's great to be here in Louisville.

Kym Ayscough: Thank you, Line.

Line: We're glad to speak with you. And let me also thank our listeners for joining us today. So, every few years, the board undertakes the important task of developing CLEAR's strategic plan for

the coming years. This new strategic plan will take us through 2024. And there are a number of exciting initiatives, enhancements, and offerings being planned for CLEAR members. Let's jump right into a few of them.

In the spirit of supporting excellence and collaboration in regulation, one of the strategic outcomes is that "CLEAR provides formal and informal channels of support for regulators, across generations and throughout careers." That may take the form of a mentorship model. What are the main goals there? And, Marc, if you would, please give us kind of a clue.

Marc: Happy to, and I'm really glad you started with this question, Line, because for me that's always what's made CLEAR so very special and personal for all of us – being part of a community of not just regulators but colleagues, friends, and regulatory professionals. And that's why the goal of CLEAR is to foster support and encouragement and provide an opportunity for ideas to be shared and exchanged. Within the CLEAR community, there are people with similar jobs, but perhaps they're at different stages of life or different stages in their careers. Wouldn't it be valuable to pair a new CEO/registrar or executive director with someone who has years of experience in their role? Or those facing similar challenges or seeing real opportunities about a common issue. Wouldn't that be great to get together and be able to talk about those experiences and learn from each other? Equally, what could staff from a very small regulatory organization learn from colleagues in a much larger organization, or vice versa, or from a different jurisdiction? The fact is that there are opportunities here for regulators across continents, in health and non-health entities, and around the world. And we all face shared issues to really engage with each other one-to-one. We have an opportunity to offer support for each other, an opportunity to learn from each other, and to build a community together.

Kym: And Line, I might just reflect on conversations Marc and I were having last night, being in the same room for the first time in a couple of years. . .

Line: Yes!

Kym: . . . about the lived experience of this as a community in CLEAR. So, I've been coming to CLEAR events since 2009, and now I feel like I've got people all around the world in all different kinds of regulatory bodies that I can and do reach out to when I need to. And I also really appreciate the personal connections. When major events happen in your country of location, it's the unsolicited calls and emails to check on well-being from people in other parts of the world. I think we provide this kind of support at a professional level, and it builds into that personal community and series of relationships as well.

Line: Yes, this in-person aspect is such an important part of our regulatory organization, to be able to share so many things with different ideas and different organizations that you may not think initially are alike but they have similar aspects and similar things that they've had to go through. I've always used this as an opportunity to get information from other folks that may help me do my job in a better way.

Now, another overarching statement in the strategic plan is that “amidst significant change, CLEAR supports the regulator of tomorrow.” There are multiple items under that theme. One is exploring the use of regulatory sandboxes to engage with innovators. I’m familiar with sandboxes in the world of dentistry, dealing with a new practice management software where we can get in and play, if you would. But let me turn this over to Adam, our executive director. Give us a little bit more about what a regulatory sandbox is like.

Adam: Absolutely; thank you, Line. It’s one of the really interesting areas of innovation, and innovation’s really something that this new strategic plan is trying to focus CLEAR’s energies upon. Regulatory sandboxes - you can see really good examples of that in fintech (financial technology regulation) in the UK and the legal profession in Canada. It allows innovators to have access to regulatory expertise. In many instances, there are high costs of entry for some areas of innovation, and so, this kind of access to regulatory expertise is particularly attractive. It allows innovators to test products in a controlled environment and test ideas with consumers and how technology works within the market. It can also reduce time to market and identifies ways consumer protection needs to be built into products. And I think the important role for regulators here is that they become enablers rather than barriers. And that’s a really significant shift as regulation has become more and more politicized. So, I think it’s an important area for CLEAR to focus on, and I think we’ll discuss this for the years to come.

Line: That’s fantastic. Well, another area that the regulator of tomorrow will be dealing with is the impact of migration and mobility on the regulation of the workforce. We’ve certainly dealt with this in the US initially with access to care areas, so licensees that are all in that North Carolina or whatever the jurisdiction is being able to hit areas of underserved people. But we’re also now looking at this mobility across much larger expanses that county lines. Kym, can you talk from an international perspective on that?

Kym: Yeah, sure, Line. I’m coming to the realization – and discussions in the last day or so have really brought it into sharp focus – that areas of workforce shortage in the regulated professions is perhaps the biggest challenge emerging for regulators. And initial responses are, as you say, around mobility – so, mobility within countries and mobility internationally. What we learn when we come together in a pace like this is that the workforce crisis is international. So, there are questions about whether international recruitment is the solution to regulatory workforce challenges. And if it is, then how do we tackle things like the fact that there are increasing numbers of refugee populations and displaced people coming from places like Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine who want work in their host countries, but they potentially don’t have access to the papers and hard copies and credentials that we generally rely on to assess people’s suitability for registration. We’re also talking about often traumatized populations, and I think certainly as a health professional regulator, we’re already alert to the well-being of members of the professions and so wondering about what’s the implication for these traumatized practitioners entering into the professions. And what are the pressures that are on us as regulators to support this response to a workforce crisis? And how can we be clear about where our

role in that begins and ends? Those are some of the questions for me.

Line: Well, certainly. I was sitting in on one of the committee meetings earlier, and obviously there's a workforce shortage across all areas, but then there also seems to be this increase in complaints as well. So, what staff is left is having to deal with even more workload, which I think can be very challenging to burn out people, and also it's harder to recruit new people in. Domestically here in the States, there have been significant moves by many states and professions to recognize licenses issued in other states as a means to increasing professional mobility. There are certainly some lessons to be learned here from our early adopters from those states that are doing that from the US side. It's certainly very interesting.

Another new area that we're looking at is new working patterns at regulatory organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic quickly and unexpectedly launched us all into working remotely, so CLEAR will be offering resources about how remote working is going to look in the future. So, Marc, if you would, kind of chat about that.

Marc: Happy to, Line. So, when you talk about remote working, the thing that immediately comes to my mind is about relationships and what kind of relationships do we want to have. How have we evolved over the last two years or so? And how can we reconnect with each other, or how do we find new ways to connect on even a higher or deeper level? All that's to say, we're certainly mindful at CLEAR of both the opportunities but also the devastating toll that remote working can provide. That's true with regulators as with ourselves. So, we have to ask ourselves, what are the broader lessons of remote working? How can they be applied to the world of professional and occupational regulation? What are regulators doing differently as a result of remote working? What innovations forced upon us by COVID-19 will be retained, or expanded, and what will return back to the way it was? Discussing relationships and the kind of regulators we want to be, leaders we want to be – that's always a worthwhile conversation.

Line: Kym, I may want you to add on that, too. I know before this podcast we were talking, and I'm trying to create a term – hopefully it comes out – “Zoom blindness,” this experience of not remembering names when we actually go and see people in real life because we're so used to seeing their name below their photo. But how does this relate to CLEAR as we move forward, too?

Kym: I think it interesting; as you say, I think we're all needing to relearn some of our skills of engagement. And that's part of work of the future, I guess, and how we engage in this kind of “hybrid” world – that's the language, isn't it? Some things we do remotely; some things we do in-person, and we have to be a bit agile in the way we engage with other people. So, I think that's really important. I also think there's such a connection in those elements of the strategic plan between what we were talking about mobility and workforce and ways of working and this notion of remote working and also the innovations from the COVID period and which ones we might be required to retain in order to support greater access for the workforce. Those things kind of really come together. And the third piece is the technology question. We've all needed to adopt varying types of technology to support

working from home, and the rate of change in the available technology is going to drive the way that we think about work in the future. I'm actually really looking forward to diving into this topic at the 2023 CLEAR Winter Symposium, which will be in an in-person format in Savannah, Georgia on January 11, 2023 with that real focus around work of the future. I think there are some really innovative thinkers who are involved in CLEAR and will be involved in the symposium, and I'm looking forward to hearing how they envisage the future.

Line: Sure, and as with change of any type, it's always challenging. And having our minds open to other possibilities of how this is gonna look in the future. We really don't know what the future holds, but we've gotten a glimpse of where we're heading, I think. This is the day and age of technology when we've been able to actually adapt and do that. This pandemic happening thirty years ago would have been a very different thing.

Now, another key area is using foresight resourcing and assessment during conference and program development. Let's talk about what that refers to and how it will benefit attendees. Adam, I know you've worked on this significantly. If you would, kind of talk to us a little bit about this.

Adam: Certainly, Line. Foresight resourcing relates to an attempt to think more closely about the context, or more likely the possible contexts, in which regulators will be operating and working in the future. We're mindful of the significant pace of change and transformation that we are living through, and the importance of being aware of external forces that will help shape regulation in the future. Bringing it down to a CLEAR committee level, many of the committees that have met here in Louisville already undertake environmental scanning when they meet. So, we're keen to build on these activities and initiatives to ensure the committees have a future focus for this component of their work so we can better share the learning and thinking and to further resource these activities that CLEAR undertakes.

Line: Great! Well, finally, the strategic plan calls for CLEAR to serve as a change agent, providing thought leadership and a space for innovation related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in professional and occupational regulation. Obviously, this is something that's been a big topic across the world, but how do you see this moving forward? Kym?

Kym: This is one of the discussions we had while developing the strategic plan and consulting on it was just really thinking again about what CLEAR's role is in providing support to regulatory agencies. And I think this topic is one of the places where it's easy to see we need to have a dual focus. We come to CLEAR because we work in regulatory agencies or we're connected to regulatory agencies or regulatory boards, and we want to understand about how to make our organizations work well. So that's an internal focus that CLEAR can support for us. And I think we also come because we're looking for support about how we regulate the professions we regulate and how we go about delivering those regulatory tasks. In this space around DEI, we know that we need to focus both on our own agencies and what we do, and CLEAR is focusing on itself as an organization. And then we need to think about the influence we have and how we use that influence to take forward these activities in the regulated

professions. I know CLEAR's been doing a lot of work in the past eighteen months. I wonder if Adam would summarize that.

Adam: Happy to, Kym. In the last 18 months CLEAR has demonstrated its commitment to seeing change related to DE&I by first training its Board and staff on unconscious bias and how that can be interrupted and challenged. We then offered training to all stakeholders during a previous winter symposium, regional seminar and during the annual conference. More recently, CLEAR formed a working group (which has since become a committee) that advises the Board on diversity, equity and inclusion; reviews existing resources; develops agreed definitions; and assesses where we and our organizations are placed related to DEI. It also, as Kym says, thinks about how CLEAR's own structures and processes need to change or need to be considered as we together commit to change and innovation in this space. It's what our DEO working group chair calls "forever work," and it's something that CLEAR is very much committed to in the days and months ahead.

Line: Yeah, I think that's brilliant. I like Staci's "forever work" comment. I know listening to her in one of our earlier meetings talk about that is great. And obviously this is something that is very important to CLEAR. We've taken the step to take this from a working group to one of our standing committees. Marc, do you have anything you want to add about that?

Marc: I do. For me, it's about being relevant. We at CLEAR, how are we going to support regulators in being relevant to the people they regulate? How does CLEAR continue to be a leader and learn from and support each other? I reflect about how last year's CLEAR stakeholder survey showed that DEI was the single most important issue facing regulators. So if that's how they're feeling, how can we not only support them, but how can we model that behavior. What Kym said about both looking inwards but also externally to support all of our members.

Line: Excellent. I think this has been a fantastic conversation, and so happy to be in the room with all of you to have this. I'm very excited about what CLEAR is working on to support our membership. Thank you, Kym, Marc, and Adam, for speaking with us today.

Adam: Thank you for having us.

Marc: Thanks, Line.

Kym: Thanks, Line. It's been great to be in a real conversation.

Line: That's right! Absolutely, and it has certainly been a pleasure to be with you to record this. We'd love to continue this conversation on CLEAR Communities. The podcast episode will be posted there, and you can reply with your comments. What are you looking forward to as a CLEAR member throughout the year? What else can CLEAR do to support you? Please take a moment to share your questions or comments on CLEAR Communities.

I also want to thank our listeners for tuning in for this episode. We'll be back with another episode of Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation very soon. If you're new to this podcast, please subscribe to

us. You can find us on Podbean or any of your favorite podcast services. If you've enjoyed this podcast episode, please leave a rating or comment in the app. Those reviews help us improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to find us. Feel free to visit our website at www.clearhq.org for additional resources and a calendar of upcoming online programs and events.

Finally, I'd like to thank our CLEAR staff, specifically Stephanie Thompson; she's with us today in-person as well. She's our content coordinator and editor for this program. Once again, I'm Line Dempsey, and I hope to be speaking to you again very soon.

The audio version of this podcast episode is available at https://podcast.clearhq.org/e/CLEAR_strategic_plan/.