



**Regulation Matters:  
a CLEAR conversation**

## **Episode 88: Providing Effective Support to Regulatory Boards and Councils April 8, 2025**

**Line Dempsey:** Welcome back to our podcast for Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation. Once again, I'm your host, Line Dempsey. I'm currently the Chief Compliance Officer with Riccobene Associates Family Dentistry here in North Carolina with practices in South Carolina and Virginia. I've also been a board member and past president of CLEAR.

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. This podcast is an opportunity for you to hear about important topics in our regulatory community.

Today we're going to be talking about some of the skills needed to effectively provide staff support to regulatory boards and councils. CLEAR recently launched a new CLEAR Learning program called Skills for the Regulatory Administrator - Staffing a Board. Today's guests are faculty with the program. We have Sara Chambers in Alaska, Lise Betteridge in Ontario, and Priya Bhatia in Ontario. Thank you all for joining me.

CLEAR has had a couple of cohorts go through this program already, and registration is open for the next class. So let's talk about some of the learnings from the program. Now, the course, as I understand it, talks about the roles of different groups and people as it relates to regulation of the profession or professions. One important point you make at the beginning of the course is the difference between the role of a regulator and the role of a professional association. So starting with Sara, could you maybe touch on that from like a US perspective?

**Sara Chambers:** Sure, Line! Yes. So the role of a regulator encompasses many stakeholders. The regulator has a duty to the public interest. So someone who is in a regulatory position is going to be taking into consideration not only their registrants' or their licensees' interests, but also those of the people who they're serving and the society as a whole. Their role expands beyond just what a dentist or a hairdresser might be interested in. A professional association, on the other hand, really has a duty to their membership, and those are usually made up of registrants.

And so while everyone may generally be heading in the same direction, they can diverge on legislation, on methods of accomplishing different goals. They may have even completely different goals on various topics.

So we encourage learning in this course, learning about the differences in the roles. Partially because it's tough sometimes for regulators to separate themselves from their peers. And we want to make sure that regulators know that they're sort of set apart from the industry because of that focus on the public interest.

**Line:** Thank you. And so Lise, could you maybe give us the Canadian perspective on that as well as far as the regulator versus the association?

**Lise:** Sure, Line. And I think, you know, as Sara said, one of the challenges of the regulatory role is the range of stakeholders. A challenge and also, you know, one of the things that makes the role as regulatory staff so interesting, but also so challenging is the many stakeholders that the regulator will be dealing with. And that's as true in Canada as it is in the United States. But, you know, in terms of the roles of the regulator versus the association, I think what's so important about this question is it can very much come down to the credibility of the regulator.

So it's very important for regulators to get this right. The regulator is there to protect the public interest, as Sara said, but in every single one of its actions and decisions, whereas the association is there quite appropriately to advance the interests of the profession or the professions.

And so therefore, their mandates can be quite different. Or their mandates are quite different, but the issues that they are working on advancing could be the same, but sometimes they are different. So it's so important for the organizations to keep, or the regulator to keep their mandate clear in order to avoid confusion and at the same time, to ensure their own credibility and enhance and build public trust.

I do wanna mention as well that in Canada we have dual mandate regulators, meaning that there are organizations and regulators who serve as both regulator and association, which as you can imagine, could be potentially very confusing. And it's essential in these dual mandate organizations for there to be clarity and to keep these roles and very different functions separate. And then, I mean, I guess we'll just conclude with the fact that, you know, sometimes even within organizations, board members themselves, there may be a lack of clarity as to the mandate of the regulator. And so regulatory staff have a very important role, using all of their communications and emotional intelligence skills, to help board members, for example, (and I'm only using that as an example) to understand this distinction, to make sure that the public interest is first and foremost at the table at all times and that professional interests of whatever group don't make their way into decision making at the organization.

**Line:** Great. That was very helpful. Lise, I'm gonna stick with you again for another question. So,

another important point from the course is that staff are responsible for operations and the board is typically responsible for policy. Why is that distinction an important element for a regulatory board?

**Lise:** So thanks, Line. You know, I would say that the bright line between governance and operations is key to good governance. It's really one of the basics. So this is true not just for regulatory boards, but for all boards. But of course we're talking in the course about regulatory boards and role confusion. So I guess, you know, to continue with that metaphor, a lack of a bright line between governance and operations is really one of the key areas and the most common areas where regulators can get off course. When we see regulators who have gotten themselves into trouble, or regulatory boards that have gotten into trouble, whether that's being ineffective or outright dysfunctional, role confusion is almost always, if not always, a component of that dysfunction. So both boards and staff need to be trained. They need to be vigilant, and they need to be continually reminded regularly about this bright line. And that's why this issue is discussed in different ways throughout this course.

So just to be clear [about] what I mean by role confusion - this could be a board that starts to act as staff moving into operations. But it can also be staff being confused and overstepping its role by making decisions that should be made by a board. And at best, you know, role confusion can lead to inefficiency, but at worst, dysfunction. And the breakdown of relationships associated with this role confusion can really get in the way of the regulator fulfilling its very important mandate of protecting the public interest.

**Lise:** Absolutely. That makes good sense. Priya, I'd like to hear from you now. One of the topics in the new course is developing a strategic mindset. What do you mean by that? I mean, it sounds great, but what do you mean by that? And why is this maybe an important consideration for regulatory administrators?

**Priya:** Thanks, Line. This is actually a favorite of mine. And I think it's an exciting opportunity actually for folks who are supporting boards, especially if you are in a senior management role at the organization, or even if you're not and you're more of a sort of middle management role. Because really this is about shifting our focus from the tactical, which is very much within the purview of staff working within the regulator and really is about how we execute our objectives on the ground, to the strategic, which is to me much more about why we are doing it in the first place.

And the reason I think it's exciting is because it's an opportunity for regulatory administrators and council and whoever else is in that role to practice stepping back and thinking about the remit of the regulator in much broader strokes, and asking the big questions, the weighty questions, such as, you know, what is the problem we're trying to solve? Why do we need to act? What if we don't act?, et cetera. As opposed to sort of just launching into the sort of trajectory of, okay, we need a project plan and we're gonna do this, and we're gonna do that, which is something we do very well. But this skill is critical for regulatory administrators, if you are supporting a board, because this is where you are actually helping the board set its policy and priorities, which is a core function of the board, but you are at the table with your knowledge of the organization and your understanding of how the tactics

work. So, it's a neat and great opportunity for growth for those who are working with boards, and who may be used to doing the day to day.

**Line:** That sounds great. Thank you. Another area the course covers is ensuring transparent decision making. What are the risks if a regulator is not transparent in their decision making? I'd like to hear from Lise and then from Sara. So starting with you, Lise.

**Lise:** Thanks, Line. I mean, I think, the importance of credibility and public trust are themes that are woven throughout the course. Transparent decision making is one of the areas where this becomes so important and where there is a risk to credibility and trust and therefore fulfilling the regulatory mandate if they're not in place. [Laughing] So I think that's something like a double negative somewhere in there somewhere. But really, you know, in order to be able to do our job as regulators, we need to be seen to be doing our jobs well. It's no longer enough to just do it well. And transparency and credibility, as I've just touched on, are both key to this. So, I think if a regulator doesn't explain how it's making its decisions and why it's making decisions, it really creates a vacuum. And within that vacuum, the public government, other stakeholders can start to wonder and start to guess why and how the regulator is making decisions. And one of the questions that they can get into quite quickly is whether the regulator is there to protect the professional, the professions or professional self-interest as opposed to the public interest. And so, you know, as I've been speaking to this, this really starts to undermine trust and confidence in the regulator.

And one of the things that we cover in the course is that we can put a huge amount of effort into building trust, but we can lose it in an instant if we're not careful, and that's the biggest risk, is losing public trust and losing our credibility. I guess I would say, as well, that regulators have come a really long way in terms of transparency. It's not enough to say anymore, 'Well, we've always done it this way' and to just kind of do it in that vacuum that I've been talking about. We need to not disclose everything, but we do need to explain why and how we're making our decisions.

And also internally to reexamine our decisions about why we may not be transparent about a particular issue, whether there's something to reexamine. Because when we look at the work of regulators, you know, and I'll speak from my own experience and from, I think, the broader experience in Ontario, Canada, there are things where there was room for much greater transparency and those changes happened and I would say they were very much for the good of the public, and therefore also good for the regulator as well.

**Line:** Sara?

**Sara:** Well, I love that Lise touched on that core concept from the course - trust and the integrity required of regulators. And I'll add to that by pivoting slightly, that it's really in the regulator's best interest to maintain the integrity of the process as well. Not only, or in addition to the integrity of their motives, but also by stepping out of the public light and making decisions in the darkness, you're depriving yourself as a regulator of key input that could really influence your decisions. Sometimes we

see regulators, maybe not intentionally, sort of putting blinders on to what their personal scopes of knowledge are or their smaller spheres of influence - that bias of what's easiest or what's closest to us is what's best. And as humans, we're busy, we understand that that's a very real bias or risk that we face. And so by not sharing the decision making process with the public, of course when it's appropriate (we regulators shouldn't be sharing confidential information and that sort of thing), but a decision making process like a regulation or the rulemaking process needs public input and in most jurisdiction requires a public comment period.

So, even in embarking on those decisions, whether they're a formal rulemaking process or more of an informal sort of internal process, gathering input and letting it be known that we are working on this and we want the perspectives of others produces a better product, a more well-rounded product. And it also preserves the integrity of that decision by not opening itself to an administrative challenge. A regulation or a rule without a public comment process sometimes could be deemed illegal or be challenged. And while that's a headache, it also drags out the timeframe because you often have to do it over. So not only are you chipping away at the trust that you've worked so hard to maintain, but you're also jeopardizing your own timeframes and your own processes and possibly risking even a bad decision by making them under the cover of darkness.

**Line:** Great points.

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We will be back to my conversation with Sara, Lise, and Priya in just a moment. But first CLEAR would like to thank our podcast episode sponsor. Today's episode is sponsored by **World Education Services**, or WES. World Education Services is a trusted choice for international academic credential verification and evaluation, serving over 48,000 institutions worldwide. WES experts collaborate with US and Canadian licensing boards to streamline the evaluation of applicants' international credentials. Learn more at [wes.org](https://wes.org). Thanks again to World Education Services for their support. And now back to our conversation about skills for the regulatory administrator.

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**Line:** In the course, you talk about leading a board and the collaborative leadership model. Can one of you talk a little bit about what that means and the characteristics of a collaborative leader? Maybe we'll start with Priya on this.

**Priya:** Sure. We have a lot of leadership approaches in our toolboxes. And I think of collaborative leadership as the opposite of the authoritarian leadership that we might be familiar with. And we might actually expect a more authoritarian leadership style in a regulatory environment, right? Rules, standards, compliance - but actually, you know, as the course will get into, there's many ways to get there. And in fact, collaborative leadership is about being a facilitator, a convener, to allow for open dialogue and allowing all the decision makers to share their perspective and give everyone a sense of agency in the process with the public interest in mind. When we do that (and in the course, we'll talk

about how to do that) you end up building trust and mutual understanding, which actually allows you to influence your board in a very meaningful way and is helpful for the complex work that regulators have to do.

**Line:** Thanks. That's great. Lise, it looks like you wanted to add something. Go ahead.

**Lise:** Yeah, I mean, I completely agree with Priya, and I guess I think of the expression, the sum is greater than the parts. And to me, that's what collaborative leadership is about, that strong leaders surround themselves with other leaders who have so much to offer. And in the complexity of the regulatory environment, that's a huge asset. And so collaborating, being able to manage conflict, being able to communicate well, build relationships, build trust - these are all essential skills to collaborative leadership that we talk about in the course and kind of recognizing the importance of that group. And I think the only other piece I would add is that a very important aspect of collaborative leadership is that the leader models the kind of behavior that they'd like to see. So all of this, you know, what Priya's been talking about, what I mentioned as well, regulatory staff can learn these skills very much so. They can think about these skills, they can model them, and that then strengthens the group, the leadership group at the organization, and that benefits the organization and therefore that advances the regulatory mandate.

**Line:** Great. Thank you so much for that. Now I'm looking at the course and it looks like a section of it talks about effective communication and presentation skills. Now this is always an area that's near and dear to my heart. I feel like I'm always on as an extrovert, always trying to hold court. But I guess as a regulator or regulatory administrator in a board meeting, you may not think of yourself as, you know, being in presentation mode, to use that term. But why is it important to treat it like a presentation, thinking about both what you say and how you say it?

**Sara:** Well Line, I'll take that one. This is Sara. As we've said a few times already today, regulators are in the public eye. Regulators are always, or, you know, 99% of the time, public facing with the work that they do. And we've talked about stakeholders and their audience as well. And when regulators are sitting in a board meeting, they may be looking at fellow board members, a handful of staff, maybe some members of the public showed up, maybe they're on Zoom, but there's an entire audience that perhaps isn't physically there in the meeting that will be watching later. There may be an audience that again, like on Zoom or on another video conference platform, board members are not really thinking about who may be listening to that presentation.

And presentations are intended to convey information, but if that information isn't delivered in a manner that's understandable, or is delivered in a manner that's sort of taken the wrong way, then it creates roadblocks to understanding. So not only do regulatory board members need to remember that they are communicating with each other in the board, but there's also an entire world listening in that has a right to understand what they're talking about.

Some areas that we see regulators struggle with is using insider terminology, insider jargon, maybe

acronyms or other terms that they understand as regulators or maybe people in their profession understand, but the public may not, or elected officials who are listening may not. Sometimes staff may not even understand. If you're on a healthcare board and you're talking about particular procedures, your administrative staff may not understand those things as deeply as you do. So it's really important as regulators to be mindful as they're talking to reasonably explain any terminology and jargon so everyone listening understands and there's a context for that.

And I'd also like to say, you know, tone is key. If a board member who's extremely valuable, knowledgeable, is presenting and isn't mindful of his or her tone, that could send a very unwanted or different message than what they intended. It might be viewed as resentful or negative, when in fact they're just conveying something that might be dry. So, these are areas that, in the course, we really encourage regulators to be thinking about and be aware of so they can practice, so they can hone their craft and really be mindful before they step up to the microphone, so to speak, of these areas that they may not naturally be working on.

**Line:** Those are great points. And I have a good friend who describes himself as passionate when he talks. So, it can certainly come across the wrong way. Priya, would you like to add a couple things on that as well?

**Priya:** Yes, I agree with what Sara said and wanna build off of that. So I would start with this. First of all, I'm really glad we included this in the course to the extent that we did, because I'm a real geek about this particular aspect of the role. And it's because I think when you're a regulatory administrator or you're supporting a board, you have to accept that you are always in presentation mode.

So what I'm trying to say is I'm trying to distinguish between the times when, you know, you're giving a presentation to the board or to a group of stakeholders or to your team about something and when you are simply interacting with your board. And I don't mean that you have to constantly pull out a slide deck to explain your ideas. But what I'm saying is that you are always sort of being looked at or looked to provide expertise and insight, and what you say has weight. That's why you're there. So whether you're answering a question, providing data, or even offering an opinion, you need to remember that you are in presentation mode.

You know, some of the things that Sara mentioned are really relevant here - avoiding jargon and weird acronyms and getting too in the weeds and not bringing people along. So I just wanna stress that for your board, this is not their day job. While they have obviously some understanding of the profession and the issues and context in which your regulatory agency is doing its work, this is not their day job; it's yours. So the more clear, the simpler you can keep your communications, the better understanding you have of your own key messages, the more likely you are to be effective in getting the point across or being responsive to the question.

I always tell people, slow down and pare it down and see if you can convey that in the simplest of manner. Sometimes we also, I think, wanna really beef up our message to show, you know, we have it

all figured out and maybe to demonstrate our expertise because we are perhaps dealing with a board that we want to impress or in some way persuade that we have it in hand. But actually if you can talk to the board, and in particular I'm talking about speaking to your board and you're in that advisor role, you are in presentation mode, but you can also use simple language and convey quite a bit. So not getting too bogged down is something I think about here. There's a lot in this course about effective presentation in a variety of contexts.

**Line:** Well, that's great. Well, I've only got a couple more topics I wanna discuss with you, but I'd like to get all three of you to weigh in on each of these. What are some of the unique aspects and challenges of staffing a regulatory board opposed to other types of organizations? And I'll start right back with you, Priya.

**Priya:** Sure. I mean, I think I would start by saying, you know, the work that regulatory boards do is complex and important. The stakes are high because of the public interest, and so that brings a certain amount of pressure. And add to that, some of the things that Sara and Lise already touched on is, you know, board members will bring a specific perspective generally. Perhaps they'll have some subject matter expertise or they'll have proximity to the particular profession. And so that dynamic of having someone who may not be apprised of all the things that the regulator has to do with, but has a very specific angle, can kind of bump up against the internal culture of the regulator where you might be used to being quite aligned on the key issues.

And so I think that makes it, it can make it uncomfortable. And that can be challenging. And if it manifests in conflict or misunderstanding or even lack of engagement (because sometimes that can happen too), it's challenging for the folks who are staffing the board to deal with that. They may be used to that team approach where everyone gets it and we're just trying to get that done. And you're really trying to bring people along, get your arms around all the variety of perspectives. So I think that's one of the reasons staffing a regulatory board can be particularly challenging.

**Line:** Great, thanks! Sara?

**Speaker 2:** One thing I love about CLEAR is being in contact with so many fantastic peers. And so, Lise and Priya, I'm thankful for them to be thinking of all of the great points that I was thinking of as well. So, high caliber folks here in CLEAR. I just wanna build on what Priya said that regulatory board members are, in most jurisdictions, volunteers and are busy professionals, usually at the top of their game in whatever profession they're engaged in.

And, it's difficult for them sometimes to find the time for all of the extra meetings, the time to work with staff individually, where that may be called for in a committee context or a special project context. And so staff not only, like Priya said, have the additional pressure of the public eye for producing discoverable documents, public noticing meetings, some of the extra layers that they may not have working for a nonprofit board, for example. They also are working with a team; sometimes they're beholden to the team to keep things moving forward when that team is made up of



volunteers.

So it's, it's an extra level of trying to keep them informed, pull them along, make sure that board members understand that engagement is critically important and timeframes are critically important. Sometimes that takes extra onboarding for new board members, which is another element that staff would be in charge of.

So there just some unique dynamics to staffing and serving on a regulatory board that people are just not born with, or often they come into service on a regulatory board without any comprehension of these angles. And I think that's something that CLEAR works really hard to do, and this course will be really helpful, is to make sure that everyone's truly aware and that we are all being transparent as to what you're getting yourself into by either serving on or staffing a board.

**Line:** Thanks, Sara! And Lise?

**Lise:** Well, I just love the comments so far, and I really am not gonna add a whole lot other than to say, I think it is such an important point about this is not board members' day job. But this is your day job. So it's a high pressure day job, but it's also a very exciting day job. And one of the reasons that it is exciting is that it's complex in terms of, for example, the policy making, protecting the public interest, given the political context that's changing, the global trends that are evolving, the legal context of course, and then the specific activities of the regulator as well, which I'm not gonna get into in detail, but which the people on the course will be familiar with. So you put all of those things together with the relationships that are necessary to foster and to build in order to be effective in your role. That makes for a very exciting pot of regulatory soup, let's say. I think that the course addresses that very well, both in terms some of the things we've already touched on related to leadership style and approaches, stakeholder relationships, but also there's a lot of timebound to on emotional intelligence, which then ties into a lot of this work that we're talking about and some of the challenges in the regulatory context.

**Line:** Awesome. Thank you. Well, look, I don't wanna give away too much content, but I do want to get, maybe from each of you, if you can share one great strategy or tip for dealing with these challenges. And let's start right back with you, Lise.

**Lise:** Yeah. And, you know, I think one of the things that I have loved so much about working in the regulatory sector is what a small, specialized and supportive field it is. And CLEAR is a very important part of that small, specialized and supportive field - getting ever larger, but nevertheless. I think it's so important for everybody working for a regulator, no matter what the role and certainly for people taking this course and prospective people in this course - remaining current and building a network of regulators across jurisdictions, not just regulators that look like you do, but, you know, regulators globally, to understand different approaches to the really complex issues that we face. So, I guess, in a nutshell, remaining current.

**Line:** That's great, perfect. Sara?

**Sara:** I would say for staff and for board members, a great strategy - which may seem kind of natural but how often do we forget to do it - is to set your assumptions at the door. Don't make any assumptions about what people may know, what their experience and background may be, how familiar they may or may not be with various processes, both public and behind the scenes. This is really important for staff to remember when onboarding new board members or when the board may be facing something that they haven't dealt with in a long time or maybe ever. You may have been on staff for a long time and may remember six months ago, three years ago, when a particular situation came up that was difficult, challenging, and unusual, but your board members may have changed since then. Or when a new board member comes on, they may have been watching the board, they may have been attending board meetings for years, but that doesn't make them necessarily privy to the inside workings of being on the board. And so as a staff member, you can help shepherd that process well by just setting those assumptions aside and opening up clear communication with the new board member or with the existing board, if we're talking about an experience they haven't had before or it's been a while, and ask probing questions. Make sure that you all are on the same sheet of music before you launch into the process or the situation that you're facing.

So just do a little information check when someone's new or before heading into a challenging situation.

**Line:** Oh, that's great, Sara. Thank you. And finally, Priya?

**Priya:** So many great tips have been offered, so I won't go on too long. But I think I would sort of say: in the dark days, which you will have in a regulatory environment from time to time because things happen, remember this - that the board wants to be successful just as you do as a regulatory professional. And if you can remember that, it will help you become an effective translator and interpreter of what you're hearing and seeing in the room and be responsive to that without feeling, necessarily, demoralized or that this is personal. Because everyone in the room wants to be successful, including the members of the board, and they may just need your help figuring out how to do that.

**Line:** Excellent. Well, thank you. I think it was very interesting to hear about these essential skills for staffing a regulatory board. Lots of important things to think about, whether you're new or a seasoned administrator. Thank you Sara, Lise, and Priya for speaking with us today.

**Sara, Lise, and Priya:** Thank you. Thanks for having us. That was great.

**Line:** Absolutely. It has been a pleasure. And we'd love to continue this conversation with our members on the CLEAR Regulatory Network. This podcast episode will be posted there for your comments and discussion. A question that we might wanna look into: what skills do you think are essential for executive and senior regulatory staff? So, please share your thoughts on the CLEAR

Regulatory Network.

The next offering of the [Skills for the Regulatory Administrator course](#) is scheduled and open for registration. A welcome session takes place May 29<sup>th</sup>, with instructor-led video conference sessions on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. Visit CLEAR events calendar to find out more and register.

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 the CLEAR podcast, please subscribe to us. You can find us on Podbean or any of your favorite podcast services. And if you've enjoyed this episode, please leave a rating or comment in the app. Those reviews help us to improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to find us.

Feel free to visit our website at [www.clearhq.org](http://www.clearhq.org) for additional resources as well as the calendar of upcoming programs and events. Finally, I'd like to thank our CLEAR staff, specifically Stephanie Thompson. 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.

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