



# Nature-Intelligent Legal Services Toolkit

**VISION:** As trusted advisers, legal service providers become a source of expertise that clients turn to for navigating the nature positive transition – creating competitive advantage while advancing nature outcomes across the economy.

The IBA Environment, Health and Safety Law Committee and IBA Law Firm Management Committee, working with Nature Positive and biodiversity law experts, and with input from across the IBA, are designing a Nature-Intelligent Legal Services Toolkit. The purpose of this Toolkit is to help legal service providers (LSPs) understand their clients' exposure to nature-related risks, with a view to enhancing the legal services that lawyers can provide to their clients, and to raise broader awareness among the legal profession of the importance of nature and its intersections with legal practice.<sup>1</sup> While guidance for engaging with nature risks has been developed for other professions including accountants and financial institutions,<sup>2</sup> this Toolkit is the first to be designed specifically for use by lawyers and law firms.

## What does the Toolkit do?

The Toolkit provides LSPs with a methodology to understand their clients' nature-related exposures and how best to use this data to enhance their legal services. It is designed for use by law firm leadership, business development teams, risk and compliance teams and lawyers.



## Stage 1: methodology to assess client sectoral nature indicators and governance

**WHO?** Client onboarding teams.

**WHY?** Business development and legal teams can use this data for strategic portfolio analysis and to assess opportunities to add nature-related solutions to services.

## Stage 2: strategic portfolio analysis and market positioning

**WHO?** Leadership and business development teams.

**WHY?** This process identifies which clients need immediate attention due to high exposure and underdeveloped governance and provides a firm-wide view of your nature-related risk and opportunity landscape.

## Stage 3: 'nature value add': guidance on embedding nature within services

**WHO?** Lawyers working with business development teams.

**WHY?** To enable enhanced, nature-intelligent legal services that add value for clients and differentiate your firm.

Stage 3 of the Toolkit is accompanied by guidance, to help lawyers to work with clients to mitigate nature-related legal risks across a range of different sectors, from agriculture and real estate to water and natural resources.

### Designed for flexible implementation

The Toolkit is designed to be flexible and can be implemented in stages. LSPs can use it in a way that best matches their size and resources.

#### Getting started

- Familiarise leadership and staff with the business case for nature-related risks and opportunities (see accompanying business case guide).
- Deliver training on nature considerations in legal practice and nature-related contract clauses.

#### Basic

- Start using Stage 3 to help lawyers identify opportunities to add nature considerations to client services.
- Update client onboarding procedures and train teams to use Stage 1's simple scoring chart to add sectoral nature exposure ratings to client profiles.

#### Intermediate

- Further update onboarding procedures and train teams to add Stage 1 assessments of client nature governance maturity using the decision tree and publicly available information.
- This requires more research capability but enables richer insights for lawyers and business development teams.

#### Advanced

- Implement Stage 2's systematic portfolio analysis to gain firm-wide visibility of nature-related risks and opportunities across the entire client base.
- Use the combined data from Stages 1 and 2 to enable full Stage 3 value-add services, strategic resource allocation and market positioning.

## Why did we develop this Toolkit?

### **Nature as an emerging financial risk and business priority**

All businesses, including law firms, are highly dependent on services provided by nature as sources of value, either directly or through their supply chains. Meanwhile, many business activities are adversely impacting nature, for example through changing land and sea use, contributing to the climate crisis, creating air, land and water pollution or over-exploiting ecosystems.

### **Climate risks and nature risks: two sides of the same coin?**

There is broad recognition that the global biodiversity and climate crises are deeply linked. Just as climate change is one main driver of nature degradation, and climate risks are a type of nature risk, at the same time the destruction of nature exacerbates the impacts of the climate crisis.

These impacts and dependencies on nature are resulting in risks for organisations and their value chains, and

these risks are manifesting as material financial impacts. For example, water scarcity can lead to greater capital expenditures and operational disruptions; companies' values can be impacted by litigation or reputational risks linked to the effects of pollution and deforestation; and regulatory changes can negatively impact firm value and can lead to stranded asset risk.<sup>3</sup> Despite these trends, evidence suggests that companies currently have a limited understanding of how nature-related risks can be relevant to their businesses.<sup>4</sup>

Financial institutions and regulators are responding to these risks by increasingly integrating them into their assessments,<sup>5</sup> and this can have an impact on clients' financing costs and access to capital. In parallel, many organisations, including asset managers and publicly listed companies, are voluntarily adopting frameworks for identifying and disclosing nature-related risks.<sup>6</sup>

Companies face significant value creation opportunities arising from understanding nature-related impacts and dependencies. Companies can access new revenue streams through products or services that support ecosystem restoration and regenerative agriculture or enhance supply chain resilience by investing in sustainable sourcing or innovative technologies, reducing costs and strengthening stakeholder relationships.<sup>7</sup>

## **Proactively identifying clients' nature-related risk exposures: a new frontier of opportunity for LSPs**

Law firms who take a proactive approach to understanding clients' nature-related risk exposures are well positioned to provide the necessary technical and strategic advice to support clients to respond to such risks and harness related opportunities. This can create opportunities for firms to bring in new types of clients, matters and markets, develop client loyalty, attract and retain talent and mitigate risks.

### **Expanding the client service offering**

Expanding recognition of the importance of nature to businesses is creating a range of opportunities for lawyers to provide value for clients. For example, just as climate target setting and transition planning have become common practice, similar practices for nature are emerging, and lawyers are well positioned to support clients to develop nature-related targets and plans in a manner that mitigates legal risks such as greenwashing.

Similarly, as disclosure and due diligence regulations move towards requiring businesses to measure and disclose nature-related impacts and dependencies – two examples are the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) – lawyers can support preparation for, and compliance with, such regulations. Further, nature loss is linked with adverse human rights impacts and lawyers play a critical role in upholding strong human rights practices.<sup>8</sup> To help lawyers capitalise on these opportunities, the Toolkit is accompanied by a guide for embedding nature in legal services and a guide for mitigating nature risks through contracting.

### **Attracting and retaining talent**

Law firms that demonstrably address nature-related risks may significantly improve attraction and retention of talent. Taking concrete actions – such as adopting

science-based targets for nature, integrating nature-positive clauses into client work and providing early career opportunities in sustainability-focused projects – signals authenticity and creates meaningful career pathways. These actions make organisations more appealing to top legal talent.<sup>9</sup>

### Supporting strong law firm governance

Legal opinions in several jurisdictions support the proposition that company directors have legal duties to consider and manage nature-related risks, which can affect the company's short- and long-term financial success. While not all law firms are legally constituted as companies, and therefore may not be subject to the same duties as company directors, these opinions establish a clear link between governance of nature-related risks and long-term financial success.

### Future proofing the role of lawyers as competent advisors

Advising on climate-related legal risks should be considered within the scope of professional duties. It follows that, as nature-related legal risks become increasingly foreseeable, quantifiable and recognised in legal and financial frameworks, the ability to identify and communicate relevant nature-related legal risks

to clients may increasingly form part of simply what it means to be a competent and careful lawyer.

### Staying ahead of the regulatory curve

As regulations around the world are moving towards requiring businesses to measure and disclose nature-related impacts and dependencies across value chains, law firms themselves could fall within the scope of these regulations, or, as part of clients' value chains, could be required to provide data on their nature-related risk exposure to support compliance by their clients. Law firms who take proactive steps now to understand their nature-related exposures will be well-positioned to respond to these regulatory changes.

### Anticipating reputational risks and avoiding greenwashing

Just as companies face increasing pressure from the public and stakeholders to disclose and manage their climate- and nature-related risks, law firms may face similar expectations. Firms who advise companies with significant environmental impacts may face increasing public scrutiny and reputational impacts or risks of greenwashing claims. Taking proactive steps now to understand client nature-related exposures enables LSPs to mitigate such risks.

## Next steps

This Toolkit is ambitious. It encourages lawyers from every area of legal practice to consider how nature-related risks are impacting their clients and how lawyers can play an important role in mitigating these risks and ultimately supporting client transitions towards resilience.

Further, understanding client nature-related risks is just one aspect of what it means for law firms to have

strong sustainability practices. Nature should not be considered in a silo, but alongside other sustainability risks and opportunities including climate impacts, corporate governance considerations and business human rights impacts. We hope that this Toolkit will help to further conversations about the many ways in which LSPs can support sustainability.<sup>10</sup>

### Notes

- 1 The committees thank in particular biodiversity law expert Jenni Ramos who prepared initial drafts of the Toolkit and the accompanying guidance and provided continual inputs to their design.
- 2 See, for example, Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, 'Why nature matters to accountants' (accessed October 2025); Toronto Centre, 'Climate and biodiversity risks toolkit for financial supervisors' (February 2023); and Climate Financial Risk Forum, 'Nature-related Risk: Handbook for Financial Institutions' (October 2024).
- 3 Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures, 'Evidence review on the financial effects of nature-related risk' (June 2025).
- 4 Analysis from European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG) on the early implementation of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS) under the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) finds limited disclosures of biodiversity metrics: EFRAG, 'State of Play 2025 Implementation of the European Sustainability Reporting Standards' (July 2025).
- 5 BloombergNEF, 'When the Bee Stings: Counting the Cost of Nature-Related Risks' (December 2023). The IBA 'Updated IBA Guidance Note on Business and Human Rights' (2023) notes increasing integration of ESG in investment decisions.
- 6 TNFD, 'TNFD 2025 Status Report' (September 2025).
- 7 See generally, Business for Nature, 'Why Nature Matters' (accessed October 2025); CGI and CCLI, 'Biodiversity as a material financial risk: What board directors need to know' (March 2023).
- 8 See IBA, 'Updated IBA Guidance Note on Business and Human Rights' (2023) which observes the implications of growing recognition of the potentially severe human rights impacts of environmental harm, climate change, pollution and loss of biodiversity for legal practice.
- 9 See generally, Islam Soliman, 'Only half of workers say employer's ESG commitments match actions, survey shows' (January 2025); Deloitte Insights, 'Gen Zs and millennials find reasons for optimism despite difficult realities' (June 2024); ESG Today, 'Law Firms, Legal Departments Upskilling Lawyers to Meet Growing Demand for ESG Expertise: Wolters Kluwer Survey' (October 2024).
- 10 Once finalised, the Toolkit will help shape the activities of the IBA Environment, Health and Safety Law Committee and the IBA Law Firm Management Committee throughout 2026. It will evolve and be updated in due course. For more information, or if you would be interested in piloting the toolkit with your law firm and providing feedback, please contact [lpru@int-bar.org](mailto:lpru@int-bar.org).