
MAY 22, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 4
ACTION ITEM

SCHOLARSHARE INVESTMENT BOARD

Resolution to Approve Strategic Plan for the ScholarShare Investment Board

Recommendation

ScholarShare Investment Board (SIB or Board) staff recommend that the Board adopt Resolution No. 2025-01 approving the Strategic Plan for SIB.

Background

The Board has experienced significant changes over the last several years consisting of the continued growth of the ScholarShare 529 Plan (ScholarShare 529 or Plan), which celebrated its 25th year in 2024, and the launch of the statewide California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program (CalKIDS or Program) in summer 2022.

As the Board's mission has grown, as have SIB's operations, staff, public outreach, audiences, and size. By the end of 2024, SIB oversaw more than \$17 billion in assets across more than 5.4 million accounts between ScholarShare 529 and CalKIDS. Therefore, it was timely for SIB to undertake a comprehensive review of the Board's overall strategy and structure and thoughtfully re-define its key priorities and processes.

In late-2024, SIB staff initiated the development of this comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Board for the next five years, with the Board's 529 industry consultant, AKF Consulting Group, facilitating this extensive process with SIB staff. The result of these efforts is our new five-year Strategic Plan (Exhibit A), which centers on specific key focus areas and clear goals to more strategically align efforts with California's changing future to increase prosperity and opportunity to the citizens of the state.

Presenter

Cassandra DiBenedetto, Executive Director, ScholarShare Investment Board

**SCHOLARSHARE INVESTMENT BOARD
RESOLUTION NO. 2025-01**

**RESOLUTION OF THE SCHOLARSHARE INVESTMENT BOARD
APPROVING THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE
SCHOLARSHARE INVESTMENT BOARD**

WHEREAS, the ScholarShare Investment Board (the “Board” or “SIB”) was created under the provisions of Education Code Section 69980 et seq. (the “Golden State ScholarShare Trust Act” or “Act”); and

WHEREAS, the Board’s mission has grown, as have SIB’s operations, staff, public outreach, audiences, and size, with SIB overseeing more than \$17 billion in assets across more than 5.4 million accounts between ScholarShare 529 and the California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program as of the end of 2024; and

WHEREAS, SIB staff initiated the development of this comprehensive Strategic Plan for the Board for the next five years, with the Board’s 529 industry consultant, AKF Consulting Group, facilitating the process with SIB staff; and

WHEREAS, these efforts resulted in a new five-year Strategic Plan for SIB that centers on seven specific key focus areas and outlines clear goals with direct steps to meet those goals, in an effort to more strategically align efforts with California’s changing future. The Strategic Plan will enable SIB to further advance educational savings and financial empowerment for Californians and all program participants.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board approves the Strategic Plan for SIB, as shown in Exhibit A, with any additional edits that may be made by the Board, or at the recommendation of the public, and which are adopted at this properly convened Board meeting held on today’s date, May 22, 2025.

Attest: _____
Chairperson

Date of Adoption: _____

SCHOLARSHARE INVESTMENT BOARD

**DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN
2025 – 2029**





**SCHOLARSHARE INVESTMENT BOARD
STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029
(IN-PROGRESS DRAFT)**

I. Introduction

Over the past 25+ years, the ScholarShare 529 College Savings Plan has established itself as one of the nation’s pre-eminent 529 savings programs. Launched in 1999, the original offering of the ScholarShare Investment Board (“SIB” or the “Board”) was the ScholarShare 529 Plan (the “529 Plan” or “ScholarShare 529”), which provided tax-advantaged investment accounts that could be used for qualified higher education expenses. Since that time, and consistent with certain changes to Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, the 529 Plan has expanded its mission to look beyond traditional higher education experiences. We now offer families the opportunity to save for higher education *and* for additional education-related expenses, including apprenticeships and student loan repayments.

In addition to our 529 Plan, SIB also administers programs that provide funding to jumpstart a child’s educational savings, including the California Kids Investment and Development Savings Program (“CalKIDS”), and other similar initiatives. Launched in 2022, CalKIDS funds accounts for eligible children in the State of California. Like ScholarShare 529, CalKIDS accounts can be used to pay for different types of post-secondary education expenses.

As our mission has grown, so too have our operations, our staff, our public outreach, our audiences, and our size. By the end of 2024, SIB oversaw more than \$17 billion in assets across more than 5.4 million accounts between ScholarShare 529 and CalKIDS. In order to responsibly continue this growth and reinvigorate our service to the public, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of SIB’s overall strategy and structure. This includes thoughtfully re-defining our key priorities and processes and re-imagining the vision we have for California.

The result of these efforts is our new five-year Strategic Plan (“Plan”). The Strategic Plan centers on seven Key Focus Areas:

1. Participant Experience
2. ScholarShare 529 Investments and Fees
3. Outreach and Marketing
4. Growth
5. Operations and Administration
6. Teams
7. Industry Leadership

In each Key Focus Area, we will strive for clear goals and excellence in execution.

Above all, we re-affirm our commitment to advancing educational savings and financial empowerment for all Californians. But we also recognize that SIB is a mature organization facing an expanding, modern world and new educational norms. By executing this Plan, we aim to more strategically align our efforts with California’s changing future, bringing greater prosperity and opportunity to the citizens of our State.



II. Vision Statement

A future where financial security and higher learning are *believable* and *achievable* for all Californians.

III. Mission Statement

Empowering our future by providing Californians with funding and investment opportunities for higher education and career training. Through early financial support and community engagement, the ScholarShare Investment Board fosters educational equity, economic mobility, and long-term success for all students.

IV. Core Beliefs and Values

Beliefs:

1. We believe in the power of education – in traditional and non-traditional forms – to improve an individual's future and financial security.
2. We believe that educational resources and opportunities should be equally accessible to all Californians, regardless of their background, wealth, or circumstance.
3. We believe that individuals should be empowered to pursue their educational goals without overwhelming financial burden.

Values:

1. **Service.** In all we do, we put the interests of our Participants first.
2. **Collaboration.** We cultivate partnerships, community trust, and mission-based relationships – because success takes a village.
3. **Innovation.** We regularly seek out new and better ways of operating our programs.
4. **Transparency.** We engage the public with openness and accountability.
5. **Efficiency.** We make informed, data-based decisions, in order to drive efficiency.
6. **Inclusion.** We aim for diverse, equitable, and inclusive outcomes in our decisions and actions.
7. **Passion.** We approach each day with observable enthusiasm for our mission.

V. Key Focus Areas

Participant Experience

Offer service, technology, and design that lead to an excellent and fulfilling experience for our ScholarShare 529 and CalKIDS Participants.

Objective 1: Continually improve Participant experiences

- Measure 1: Biennial user experience surveys
- Measure 2: Customer service performance against benchmarks
- Measure 3: Semi-annual product review with service providers, to discuss opportunities and track progress
- Measure 4: Annual certification of compliance with accessibility standards
- Measure 5: Add foreign language translations for websites

Objective 2: Assess SIB Programs' impact on participants

- Measure 1: Research studies on ScholarShare 529
- Measure 2: Research studies on CalKIDS

Objective 3: Pursue policy enhancements

- Measure 1: Annually, identify key policy priorities
- Measure 2: Pursue a state tax incentive for contributions to ScholarShare 529 accounts
- Measure 3: Pursue changes to align state law with federal 529 law, as needed
- Measure 4: Increase participation in federal advocacy efforts of key industry organizations
- Measure 5: Identify policy and budgetary changes to expand CalKIDS eligibility

ScholarShare 529 Investments and Fees

Offer a menu of exceptional, understandable, and low-cost Investment Options that can serve the needs of a variety of investors.

Objective 1: Ensure quality of current investment offerings

- Measure 1: Investment performance against benchmarks
- Measure 2: Investment performance against Peer Plans
- Measure 3: Number and type of options offered (compared to Peer Plans)
- Measure 4: Annual review of Investment Option menu with service providers
- Measure 5: Annual due diligence meetings with Investment Managers

Objective 2: Provide clear education about Investment Options

- Measure 1: Review and update, as needed, investment information / education available on 529 Plan website
- Measure 2: Survey Participants regarding Investment Options and education

Objective 3: Consider and evaluate other potential Investment Options in a timely and objective manner

- Measure 1: Develop and implement clear process for consideration of other Investment Options
- Measure 2: Update Investment Policy Statement to include process for consideration

Objective 4: Offer a competitive fee structure

- Measure 1: Program management fees
- Measure 2: Board / State fees
- Measure 3: Underlying investment fees
- Measure 4: Annually conduct fee analysis

Outreach and Marketing

Increase program awareness and engagement through public outreach and presentations, as well as targeted marketing efforts.

Objective 1: Execute strategic outreach approaches, outlining clear process and well-defined goals

- Measure 1: Create, review and update annual strategic outreach implementation plans and initiatives for ScholarShare 529 and CalKIDS, including prioritized list of outreach targets and partnerships, and incorporation of collaborative efforts with channel partners ensuring that clear process and well-defined goals are outlined
- Measure 2: Develop improved process and clear criteria for evaluating, approving outreach opportunities
- Measure 3: Annual evaluation of structure, including roles and responsibilities of the outreach team

Objective 2: Conduct effective outreach events and activities

- Measure 1: Number of virtual events and attendees
- Measure 2: Number of in-person events and attendees
- Measure 3: Number of new partnerships with organizations
- Measure 4: Quarterly assessment of past event success / results and new and existing partnerships
- Measure 5: Annual review and updating, if needed, of outreach presentations
- Measure 6: Semi-annual outreach training for staff

Objective 3: Conduct effective marketing campaigns

- Measure 1: Annually develop, review and update comprehensive marketing plans combined with effective press strategies with clear goals and objectives
- Measure 2: Conversion rates for marketing campaigns
- Measure 3: Metrics on end-to-end outcomes from marketing campaigns which may include, but not limited to, conversion rates and impressions
- Measure 4: Quarterly strategic assessment of social media platforms and analytics
- Measure 5: Increase storytelling by collecting and utilizing testimonials

Objective 4: Use data to inform outreach and marketing activities

- Measure 1: Identify key data and reports needed to determine outreach / marketing success
- Measure 2: Refine process and identify clear expectations for data tracking
- Measure 3: Maximize use of customer relationship management tool for data management by increasing adoption and training amongst users
- Measure 4: Review data / reports quarterly to guide future activities

Objective 5: Reach underserved populations

- Measure 1: Number of outreach activities for underserved populations
- Measure 2: Number of new Participants in target demographic and geographic areas
- Measure 3: Regular review of available demographic data to identify opportunities

Growth

Increase overall participation and engagement with ScholarShare 529 and CalKIDS.

Objective 1: Increase ScholarShare 529 participation

- Measure 1: Number of new accounts opened and funded
- Measure 2: Number of total open accounts
- Measure 3: Total assets under management
- Measure 4: Total new contributions
- Measure 5: Number of employers participating in workplace savings program

Objective 2: Increase CalKIDS participation

- Measure 1: Number of accounts claimed
- Measure 2: Number of distributions
- Measure 3: Number of linkages to ScholarShare 529 accounts

Operations and Administration

Run efficient operations and implement well-designed, well-informed processes. Work effectively and collaboratively with external service providers.

Objective 1: Improve internal program data collection and usage

- Measure 1: Standardize data collection efforts and templates
- Measure 2: Standardize suite of monthly / quarterly program reports
- Measure 3: Quarterly review of reporting to identify actionable tasks and track outcomes

Objective 2: Conduct effective oversight and minimize risks to SIB

- Measure 1: Conduct biennial due diligence meetings with primary service providers
 - *Among other items, to include annual assessment of cybersecurity and fraud risks*
- Measure 2: Annual review of service provider audits and System and Organization Controls reports
- Measure 3: Annual review and update of the ScholarShare 529 Plan Description and the CalKIDS Program Information Guide
- Measure 4: Biennial fiduciary and investment training for Board members

Team

Develop a team of dedicated, talented Staff members.

Objective 1: Provide transparent, clear direction to Staff on internal matters

- Measure 1: Annually review and update key internal policies and procedures in writing
- Measure 2: Provide regular and on-going training for staff on key policies and procedures
- Measure 3: Evaluate ongoing staff resource needs
- Measure 4: Hold regularly scheduled all-Staff meetings to communicate status and new developments
- Measure 5: Biennial review and updating if needed of staff roles and responsibilities

Objective 2: Recruit and retain a successful team

- Measure 1: Prioritize filling of vacancies / unfilled needs
- Measure 2: Develop, review and update as needed, onboarding manual and processes for new employees
- Measure 3: Evaluate opportunity for restructuring / streamlining of teams
- Measure 4: Annual team member performance reviews
- Measure 5: Employee turnover rates

Industry Leadership

Take an active, visible role in driving national policies and practices.

Objective 1: Position California as a national leader and model in its industries

- Measure 1: Increase participation in activities and initiatives of industry organizations that include the College Savings Plans Network and College Savings Foundation
- Measure 2: Speaking engagements at industry / association conferences and events
- Measure 3: Develop internal subject matter experts to participate in national initiatives
- Measure 4: Number of national media articles generated for SIB Programs

Objective 2: Maintain or improve annual industry standings by focusing on best practices in Program administration

- Measure 1: Conduct annual strategic analysis which may consist of peer reviews, fee studies, etc.
- Measure 2: Identify and implement enhancements to investment products and processes that contribute to strengthening the programs' standing within the industry



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