

North America Innovative Lawyers Awards 2023: the winners



© Efi Chalikopoulou

FT law firm index - North America

Index ranking	Law firm name	Total score* (/110)	Innovation**** (/30)	Digital (/20)	People (/20)	Social responsibility (/20)	Growth (financial)**** (/20)
19	Weil, Gotshal & Manges	81.3	26.4	8.1	17.0	16.7	13.0

Ranking of the top 35 participating law firms based on submissions made to this year's report and index *The total score is the sum of banded scores for innovation, digital, people, social responsibility and growth, which each comprise several indicators. Scores shown in each column are rounded to one decimal place. **Winner of "Most innovative law firm in North America 2023" award ***Winner of "Most digital law firm in North America 2023" award **** Growth (financial) is banded on revenue growth for three years to financial year ending in 2022 and profitability per equity partner figures from RSGI research ***** Innovation scores are scaled to yield a score out of 30. More methodology information below. Source: RSGI

Methodology

FT Innovative Lawyers North America 2023 is a ranking, report and awards scheme for lawyers based in the region, produced by the FT and its research partner, RSGI, based on a unique methodology.

Law firms and in-house legal teams are invited to make submissions. Each submission is researched and scored out of 10 for originality, leadership, and impact — giving a maximum score of 30 for each published entry. Top-ranked entries in the report are shortlisted for the FT Innovative Lawyers North America 2023 Awards.

Some 300 submissions and nominations were received from 61 law firms and 39 in-house legal teams. RSGI researchers assessed and researched them through interviews with clients, senior lawyers, executives, and experts between August and November 2023. Featured entries are the submissions that ranked highest in each category.

FT Law Firm Index

The index provides a ranking and a holistic assessment of law firm success. Participating firms were assessed on submissions to the report and a separate questionnaire, and ranked on the following criteria, with a maximum score of 110:

Innovation

The sum of scores for the top three submissions from each law firm entering the FT Innovative Lawyers North America Awards 2023, including those that were not published. Scores are divided by the highest score and multiplied by 30 to give a scaled score out of 30.

Digital

Law firms completed a questionnaire on their use of data and technology. Each of six questions was scored and benchmarked against other responses (weighted score out of 20);

People

Law firms completed a questionnaire about gender representation, diversity and inclusion, and

investment in skills for lawyers and for business services people. Five questions were scored and benchmarked against other law firm responses (weighted score out of 20);

Social responsibility

Law firms completed a questionnaire on their approach to social responsibility. Five questions covering commitment and investment in pro bono work, and social responsibility and ESG reporting were scored and benchmarked against other law firm responses (weighted score out of 20);

Growth (financial):

Law firms were compared with each other for three-year revenue growth to the financial year ending in 2022, and for profit per equity partner in the financial year ending in 2022. Figures were sourced from RSGI's research (weighted score out of 20).

RSGI research team

Reena SenGupta, Yasmin Lambert, Mary Ormerod, Chris Sharp, Sarah Davis, Mina Jenkins, Molly Reynolds, Tom Saunders, Gitanjali DasGupta

Practice of law: best examples in legal work

Featuring the most innovative services that lawyers have developed for clients

People and skills

STANDOUT

Weil, Gotshal & Manges

O: 7; L: 8; I: 7; Total: 22



The WeilPride programme highlights LGBTQ+ issues and provides pro bono support to several non-profit groups supporting the queer community. Within the firm, it has supported the rollout of a family benefits scheme, including financial contributions for fertility treatment, adoption and surrogacy, as well as providing advice and support through the network. The proportion of LGBTQ+ law students in “stepping stone” summer associate roles at the firm in 2023 was up 10 percentage points, to 18.2 per cent, in 2020, when the family benefits initiative began.

Commended individual: Justin Lee

Technology

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Weil, Gotshal & Manges

O: 8; L: 7; I: 7; Total: 22

Weil, Gotshal & Manges advised Facebook-owner Meta in its takeover of Within Unlimited, maker of virtual reality fitness app Supernatural, which was advised by Hogan Lovells. The firms helped their clients overturn objections to the deal from the Federal Trade Commission, the US competition regulator, which had argued that Meta would gain an unfair advantage in the emerging VR market.

Top legal practitioner

The FT Innovative Lawyers awards seek out those who go beyond sheer prowess to address the nexus of the law, business and wider society



Miriam Buhl Pro bono counsel Weil, Gotshal & Manges

Miriam Buhl has made it an expectation that lawyers at all levels at the firm should commit to pro bono hours. She supports individual lawyers in their cases and co-ordinates Weil, Gotshal & Manges pro bono resources, such as technology, associates, and external relationships.

Examples of the firm’s impact include work with the Innocence Project, a non-profit organisation that works to overturn and prevent wrongful convictions, on a tech-heavy project to clear a backlog of 5,000 prisoner requests for aid in 2019 and helping to achieve the 2023 exoneration of Tyrone Day, who was wrongly imprisoned in 1990.

Buhl has overseen Weil, Gotshal’s lawyers working on many projects, including assisting the Public International Law and Policy Group, a global pro bono law firm, on a draft law for a Ukrainian war crimes court.

Since Buhl joined Weil, in 2005, its lawyers have committed more than 1mn pro-bono hours. They added more than 80,000 hours last year.