



Practical Steps to Strengthen Your Diversity Profile



NATIONAL
CONFERENCE
OF WOMEN'S
BAR ASSOCIATIONS

TOOLKIT

MARCH 2024

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATIONS

MISSION:

The NCWBA advocates for equality in the legal profession and in society by mobilizing and uniting women's bar associations to effect change in gender-based processes and laws by providing a national forum for exchanging ideas, best practices, and information vital to the organizational growth and success of women's bar organizations and the legal profession.

COMMITMENT:

NCWBA is dedicated to advancing the interests of women in the legal profession through education, programming, and networking.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION:

NCWBA is committed to the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion and ensuring that the legal profession and the justice system accurately reflect the communities they serve.

A NOTE FROM FORMER NCWBA PRESIDENT – TERESA BECK

When I became a member of the California State Bar many years ago, I immediately began looking for legal organizations to join. As a first-generation young woman lawyer, with no friends or family who were lawyers, joining a women’s bar organization was at the top of my list. In San Diego, we are blessed with a strong and successful women’s bar organization – Lawyers Club of San Diego. As I participated in this organization, I felt supported and included, in part because it had women of color and other diverse women in positions of leadership.

As my career advanced, I became aware of the homogeneity of the legal profession not just in San Diego but also in California. As I became more involved with the profession, I realized the homogeneity of the profession was also an issue across the country, and even in Canada and the United Kingdom. I grew increasingly aware of the existence of affinity bar organizations, and I wondered why affinity bar organizations were created. I concluded that local and state “non-affinity” bar organizations had not provided sufficient services to meet the needs of all lawyers in our respective legal communities.



I discussed this issue with colleagues from all over the country who recounted stories about women of color, LGBTQ+ women, and differently abled women who joined “traditional” bar associations but did not feel they belonged and who then joined affinity bar organizations to find a sense of belonging. Yet, for many women, even women bar organizations – created for women – were sometimes found to be lacking in inclusiveness. Indeed, some of these organizations had a history of exclusion of certain types of women. Some women who decided to join affinity bars described that they felt excluded and ultimately left or decided not to join women’s bar organizations precisely because of this feeling of exclusion. Many women’s bar organizations have a lot of work to do to be truly diverse, equitable, inclusive, and to create a sense of belonging for all women attorneys. It is incumbent upon women’s bar organizations to take proactive steps to reach all women attorneys and include them in their organizations.

While inclusion is important for groups of women who have historically been excluded, inclusion benefits the whole organization. We know that workplaces and groups are smarter and more successful, and have happier members, when they are diverse from the bottom to the top. (See [Why Diverse Teams Are Smarter and Inclusive Cultures Have Healthier and Happier Workers](#)). Knowing this, the vision that led to this task force was a vision of mending bridges and creating spaces for important conversations about how we may not have been as inclusive as we thought in our women’s bar organizations’ histories, and how we can, and must, do better.

Women’s bar organizations can study our histories and current structures and practices to acknowledge where we have fallen short and commit to doing better. NCWBA’s Diversity Task Force was created out of a deep commitment to equality and a great love for women’s bar organizations because they have been integral to the successes of so many of us. I know that every woman lawyer could benefit greatly from the same experience – and no woman lawyer should ever feel she does not belong with us. I was honored that Task Force Co-chairs Elvira Cortez and Geneviève Jones-Wright agreed to lead this effort. I am truly grateful to all task force members who contributed. These Task Force members have been involved in efforts by women’s bar organizations and other organizations to become more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and create a sense of belonging for all members. With this Task Force’s efforts, I am confident we can encourage and empower all of NCWBA’s members to be more diverse, more equitable, more inclusive, and create a greater sense of belonging for all women attorneys, which will take us to greater heights than we could ever ask for or imagine.

A NOTE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS – ELVIRA CORTEZ AND GENEVIÈVE JONES-WRIGHT

The words “diversity,” “equity,” “inclusion” and, by extension, “DEIB” (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging) are everywhere. But these are more than buzz words. The implementation of these tenets is fundamental for the success of every organization. In the legal profession, these principles are especially critical. For instance, diversity in our bar associations not only fosters civility in the legal profession as members interact with other members who have varying life experiences and backgrounds but also keeps us relevant in our multicultural society. Additionally, diversity among the membership of our bar associations means more innovation in problem-solving for the clients we serve and greater access to justice for all community members.

According to the ABA, bar associations of all sizes share three common concerns relating to diversity and inclusion:¹ (1) How do we increase our diverse membership (if we are a voluntary bar)? (2) How can we offer better diversity programs? (3) How do we engage and involve more of the diverse lawyers in our area in our work? The Women’s Bar Initiative [is that the agreed upon name?] asks these questions with a focus on women of color.

According to Zippia, in 2021 the most common ethnicity among U.S. lawyers was White, which, at the time, made up 76.0% of all lawyers. By comparison, there were 7.7% of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 6.3% of Asian ethnicity, and Black or African American lawyers made up 5.4%, while American Indian and Alaska Native lawyers made up just 0.2%. According to the data, about 51.5% of all lawyers were women and 48.5% were men in 2021, and women earned 93% of what men earned.² The disparity worsens when the salaries of lawyers who are white men are compared to lawyers who are women of color, particularly women lawyers who are Black and Latina.

In 2021, Bloomberg Law reported abysmal numbers for women lawyers of color in its article “Women, Minorities Make Few Law Partnership Gains, Report Says,” despite efforts by law firms and even gains in this area. In the article, James G. Leipold, the former longtime Executive Director of the National Association of Law Placement, Inc. (“NALP”) said, “less than 4% of all partners are women of color.” He continued, “[w]orse, Black women and Latinx women each continued to represent less than 1% of all partners in U.S. law firms.” He also noted, “[d]espite enormous efforts by law firms to make progress, bias in the profession has maintained inequities long past when many other professions, most notably medicine, have become more diverse.”

For this reason, we start this conversation by acknowledging that the legal profession is not immune to the existence of systemic racism as well as our country’s long history of oppressing maybe say under-represented groups? Correspondingly, we recognize how these groups have impacted the make-up of the membership of our bar associations across the country.



¹ https://www.americanbar.org/groups/bar_services/publications/bar_leader/2015-16/january-february/diversity-inclusion-challenges-opportunities-mainstream-bar-associations/

² <https://www.zippia.com/lawyer-jobs/demographics/> These numbers are always hard to get straight. The Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey puts white

The aim of this tool kit is to help bar organizations increase the participation of women of color in their organizations. This toolkit will identify best practices to achieve this goal, equip readers with the tools to have the crucial necessary and sometimes uncomfortable conversations about race and diversity, and serve as a guide on how to successfully create and implement a Diversity Program within your organization. In creating this toolkit, the Women's Bar Initiative [same] hopes to help our various bar associations across the nation fully understand the importance of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion and fostering a true sense of belonging within our respective organizations, which will benefit the legal profession as a whole.

While many bar associations have embraced DEIB and recognize the benefits to their membership and to the entire organization, it can be a challenge to implement DEIB initiatives. To start, embedding DEIB principles into the framework of any organization can be daunting. Cultural shifts are a massive undertaking and take time. But the challenge can be overcome through consistent and intentional efforts to make inroads. This, in and of itself, may cause fatigue. Finally, misunderstandings and misconceptions commonly arise from conversations about DEIB. A common challenge is the truth about what DEIB really means for organizations.

Naturally, recognizing that the participation of women of color in bar associations needs attention means confronting existing barriers that prevent increased levels of participation. These barriers may be systemic or structural and/or a result of past wrongs or even current practices. Addressing these issues is inherent in the DEIB conversation, which oftentimes leads to misunderstanding and even untruths about DEIB efforts. For instance, some people conclude that a built-in feature of DEIB is the vilification of one group in order to advance another. This is simply not true. True DEIB efforts consider all sources of disparities in order to create better models where everyone, without exception, thrives. Because we recognize this challenge as a pressing one for organizations seeking to implement the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we address some of the myths that are commonly repeated and highlight a few truths that readers can use in everyday conversation. It is our intent to not only correct falsehoods about diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts but also disrupt and challenge the misguided thinking that keeps us divided and causes harm to our wider society.

We hope this tool kit will not only help your organization successfully navigate the challenges of implementing DEIB programs, committees, and initiatives but also encourage you to incorporate the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion into your association's core. It is our sincere hope that your organization will be so inclusive that every member genuinely feels they belong and will, in turn, share their positive experience with diverse lawyers, especially women of color, increasing their membership numbers and participation levels. We know that if we act as change agents in our individual organizations, we will affect change on a national scale ensuring the highest impact is being made on our profession as a whole.

WOMEN'S BAR INITIATIVE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE



Elvira Cortez is a former president of Lawyers Club of San Diego, and a Senior Associate with Wilson Turner Kosmo, LLP in San Diego where she draws on her extensive civil litigation experience to craft defense strategies to obtain favorable outcomes and solutions for her clients. Ms. Cortez was selected as Ones to Watch by the Best Lawyers in America in 2021, 2022, and 2023, named as one of Profiles in Diversity Journal's Latino Leadership Award in 2023, named by the San Diego Business Journal's Best of the Bar in 2016 and 2017, and is an alum of the Louis M. Welsh American Inns of Court.



Geneviève Jones-Wright works every day to dismantle our criminal legal system to make it more just for everyone. Beyond the courtroom and policymaking, Jones-Wright is a board member for several community-based non-profit organizations, a volunteer attorney for the California Innocence Project, and an adjunct professor at Point Loma Nazarene University. Jones-Wright is also the founder of Motivation.In.Action (MIA), a professional motivational speaking firm through which she empowers individuals to "write their own stories" and to live on purpose. As a result of corporations routinely seeking her out to facilitate and lead office-wide conversations about racial and social justice, Jones-Wright developed her unique DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) presentations, trainings, and work plans to help more organizations fulfill their goal of creating and maintaining truly inclusive work environments.



Vaani Chawla has represented corporations and individuals in a wide range of immigration matters for 30 years. Ms. Chawla is a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). She was president of the South Asian Bar Association of San Diego in 2019, and currently serves as the organization's Advisory Board Chair. She is a past board member of Lawyers Club of San Diego. Currently, she serves on the board of Women of Color in the Law and as District 9 Governor for California Women Lawyers. She is also an active leader working toward the establishment of the San Diego Unity Bar, an organization dedicated to promoting diversity on the bench and increasing collaborative efforts among diverse bar organizations.



Anne E. Collier, MPP, JD, Professional Certified Coach, is the CEO of Arudia, a firm dedicated to improving leadership, culture, collaboration and communication. Ms. Collier is an expert leadership coach steadfast in her commitment to excellence and her clients' goals. She coaches and delivers programming designed to support individuals, teams and organizations in amplifying their accomplishments. With confidence, intentionality and resilience, individuals and organizations alike manifest the extraordinary as they actualize greater financial stability and outcomes.

WOMEN'S BAR INITIATIVE FOR DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE



Mikhak Ghorban is the principal attorney at Ghorban Law, APC, where she specializes in family and immigration laws. Ms. Ghorban is currently serving on the Board of Lawyers Club of San Diego as Vice President of Policy and Membership. During her time with Lawyers Club, she has co-chaired many committees, including the Diverse Women's Committee where she worked to identify, confront, and address challenges that women of color, as double minorities, continue to face in the legal profession and society. Currently, Ms. Ghorban serves as the Affiliate Governor with the California Women Lawyers. She was also appointed co-chair of the Affinity Bar Outreach Committee, part of the new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Division of San Diego County Bar Association. She continues to serve on the Board of Women of Color in Law and is one of the active leaders working toward the establishment of the San Diego County Unity Bar.



Deborah L. Cordova is a founding member of the firm Walsh McGurk Cordova Nixon, PLLC in Edinburg, Texas. She served on the Board of Directors for the State Bar of Texas from 2019-2022, is a Past President of the Texas Women Lawyers, and a Past Chair of Women and the Law Section of the State Bar of Texas. Cordova was appointed to serve as the Vice Chair of the State Bar of Texas Diversity Equity and Inclusion Standing Committee for 2022-2023 and currently serves on the Diversity in the Profession Committee of the State Bar of Texas. Cordova was recognized as a 2020 Woman of Distinction in the Professional Category by the Rio Grande Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, as La Jefa for the RGVision Series in July 2022 and as a 2023 Hispanic Woman Making History by the Hispanic Women Network of Texas – RGV.



Sarah E. Redfield is Professor Emerita at the University of New Hampshire School of Law and Affiliate Professor at the University of New Hampshire Department of Women's and Gender Studies. Redfield's research is focused on diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and along the education pipeline, and the results of this work are used widely by the legal profession to achieve its DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) goals. She is the editor and chapter author of the ABA book on implicit bias, *Enhancing Justice: Reducing Bias* and the co-editor with the Honorable Bernice Donald of the second volume in this series, *Extending Justice: Strategies to Increase Inclusion and Reduce Bias*. She was a lead author for the ABA Section on Litigation's Toolbox on Implicit Bias, lead consultant for the ABA project on Achieving an Impartial Jury, and the expert advisor for the State Bar of California's online bias course.

WHAT IS DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

The principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (referred to as “DEIB”) are aimed at creating a more inclusive environment in any organization. DEIB implementation can have profound benefits for women’s bar associations. DEIB can lead to a richer, more diverse pool of legal expertise and perspectives, better representation of the community in legal matters, enhanced problem-solving capabilities, and a more just and equitable legal system. Furthermore, organizations that prioritize DEIB are often seen as more attractive to top talent, leading to higher levels of member engagement and retention.

Below we highlight the definitions of each principle and how embracing DEIB can significantly help women’s bar associations in attracting and retaining a more diverse membership base:

Diversity refers to the presence of a wide range of different characteristics in a group, such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and cultural background. In the context of a bar association, embracing diversity means actively seeking to include attorneys from various backgrounds. This diversity enriches the organization by bringing a plethora of perspectives and experiences, which can lead to more innovative problem-solving and a greater understanding of the diverse clientele they serve.

Benefit: By actively seeking to include members from various backgrounds — including different races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages, and abilities — women’s bar associations can broaden their appeal. Diversity in membership reflects the variety of experiences and perspectives within the legal profession, making the association more representative of the community it serves. This approach can attract those who might feel underrepresented in other professional groups.

Equity is about ensuring fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all, while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. In bar associations, this means ensuring that all members have equal access to opportunities such as career advancement, professional development, and leadership roles, regardless of their background.

Benefit: When a bar association is seen as a place where all members have equal and equitable chances for growth and recognition, it becomes more appealing to a diverse range of legal professionals.

Inclusion involves creating an environment where all individuals feel welcomed, respected, and valued for who they are. For a bar association, this means fostering a culture where diverse members feel that they belong and can contribute fully as their authentic selves. This might involve inclusive policies, practices, and day-to-day interactions that make everyone feel a part of the organization.

Benefit: An inclusive culture demonstrates that your organization values and respects the contributions of all its members, making it more attractive to a diverse audience.

Belonging goes a step beyond inclusion and refers to a sense of connection and community. It’s about creating an atmosphere where members not only are present but also feel secure, supported, accepted, and valued. In the context of a bar association, fostering belonging can lead to greater member satisfaction, loyalty, and engagement.

Benefit: Fostering a sense of belonging is essential for member retention. When members feel a strong connection to the organization and believe that they are an integral part of it, they are more likely to remain active and engaged. A sense of belonging can create a loyal and committed membership base.

By implementing DEIB principles, women’s bar associations can position themselves as inclusive, equitable, and supportive environments. This not only attracts a broader range of members but also enriches the association’s collective expertise and perspective. This diversity can enhance the association’s ability to address complex legal issues, advocate effectively for various groups, and provide a supportive network for women in the legal profession.

WHAT VALUE DOES DEIB BRING TO YOUR ORGANIZATION – MYTHS AND TRUTHS

Does Increasing DEIB Keep Your Organization Relevant?

→ TRUE

Prioritizing DEIB keeps bar associations relevant. The Law School Admissions Council reports that the class of 2022 was the most racially and ethnically diverse law school class in history.³ As law school classrooms become increasingly more diverse, the demographics of practicing lawyers will begin to reflect that change. Bar associations that recognize and adapt to change will continue to thrive while organizations that resist risk becoming irrelevant.

Neglecting DEIB sends a message that the organization wishes to remain as it is, and, whether intentional or not, it sends a message that deters diverse professionals from joining. Membership numbers are likely to remain stagnant and limited to traditional demographics. By contrast, organizations that appreciate DEIB send a message that diverse lawyers are welcome and their contributions are valued. Embracing lawyers with different backgrounds generates interest in the organization from a broad range of legal professionals and a greater percentage of the legal community. As diverse members begin to join, they will bring their friends and contacts from their professional networks. Ultimately, this translates into increased membership and active involvement from a larger number of attorneys enabling the organization to reach its full potential.

Does DEIB Increase Revenue for Your Organization?

→ TRUE

Forbes magazine points out that firms with diverse executive teams are 33% more likely to be profitable.⁴ Similarly, diverse membership brings in more dollars to bar associations. Each new member pays membership dues which increases revenue, but they bring in far more than that. It is common for bar associations to habitually tap into the same corporate sponsors year after year as resources for funding. New members who have nontraditional backgrounds have their own connections often with law firms and businesses that most bar associations might otherwise overlook. These firms and businesses present a wealth of opportunity for untapped sponsorship dollars.

Diverse members also give organizations access to a wider range of talented speakers. Associations with nontraditional members will have more talented professionals that they can call upon from within their ranks to serve as speakers on a variety of topics. Some diverse members can also bridge knowledge gaps by sharing insights into the problems and needs of the communities they serve. Diverse members also provide access to their own personal connections to national and world leaders outside the organization. This enables professional associations to cast a broad net for event speakers.

³ <https://www.lsac.org/blog/incoming-class-2022-major-advance-diversity-more-work-to-do#:~:text=The%20incoming%20class%20of%202022%20is%20by%20far,year%E2%80%99s%20record-setting%20level%20of%2034.7%25%20students%20of%20color>.

⁴ E.g., *Diversity Matters Even More: The Case for Holistic Impact* | McKinsey (2023); Givelle Lamano, *Three Tips for Boosting Business Profits: How Investing in Diversity Increases Profitability*, *Forbes* (Dec. 20, 2021), [tinyurl.com/ttznkhay](https://www.tinyurl.com/ttznkhay); McKinsey, *Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters* (mckinsey.com) (2020); Vijay Eswaran, *The Business Case For Diversity is Now Overwhelming. Here's Why*, World Economic Forum (weforum.org) (2019).

WHAT VALUE DOES DEIB BRING TO YOUR ORGANIZATION – MYTHS AND TRUTHS

Are DEIB Policies in Your Organization a Form of Affirmative Action?

→ MYTH

Efforts to encourage DEIB have often been met with and stifled by the affirmative action myth. Affirmative action was originally introduced in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order 10925. Throughout its history, affirmative action has applied only to programs and entities receiving federal funds. Affirmative action is recognized as a set of procedures designed to eliminate unlawful discrimination, remedy results of prior discrimination and prevent future discrimination. The procedures involve setting numeric goals to reflect representation of diverse groups in a target population.

Affirmative action differs from DEIB programs, which do not rely on federal funds, set numeric goals or focus on the same results. DEIB programs acknowledge the inherent benefits of our collective wisdom. The goal is to improve our businesses, organizations, governing bodies, and group activities by drawing from the experiences of people who come from different backgrounds. The increasing diversity of our profession and of the clients we serve calls for change in the voices at the table. To be the best we can be for those we serve, it is incumbent upon us to recognize the changing world in which we exist. Thus, DEIB transcends the goals of affirmative action by embracing and utilizing our differences to benefit all.

Do DEIB Policies Sacrifice the Quality of Your Members?

→ MYTH

It's not uncommon for some to think that prioritizing DEIB means sacrificing qualifications for the sake of demographic representation. This view is rooted in two myths: (1) believing in the objectivity of qualification criteria and (2) failing to see the value diversity brings to decision-making. First, qualifications: while we would like to think that our criteria and qualifications are objective and universally agreed upon, research shows us that they are often shaped by cultural and systemic views that are sometimes unintentionally biased or otherwise influenced by our own experiences rather than data. That is, we are likely to fall into our stereotypes of what it looks like to be qualified –what school(s) someone attended, where they live, common connections—rather than individuating to see the actual fit of qualifications for the work. Second, value: research has consistently shown that diversity actually enhances the quality of work and decision-making. Diverse teams bring a range of perspectives, experiences, and skills that can lead to greater creativity, innovation, problem-solving, and profitability. Prioritizing DEIB also helps to strengthen and broaden the pipeline to attract and retain more top talent from diverse backgrounds, again, improving performance and bottom-line results.

WHAT VALUE DOES DEIB BRING TO YOUR ORGANIZATION – MYTHS AND TRUTHS

Will Discussing DEIB in Your Organization Make Members Uncomfortable?

→ TRUE

Some find discussing DEIB uncomfortable and thus shy away from these conversations. While it's not uncommon to shy away from discomfort, most have learned to withstand the discomfort associated with difficult conversations in order to achieve greater good by improving a relationship or solving a difficult problem collaboratively. But some tell themselves that discussing DEIB is unsafe, not just uncomfortable. Here people often fail to distinguish between discomfort and a lack of safety. Understanding this difference is an essential first step to determining how to move forward productively. It's okay to be uncomfortable. In fact, meaningful accomplishments often require discomfort in the making. Thus, we wish to dispel the myth that conversations have to be comfortable.

In the case of discussions that feel unsafe, the question is “how do we create a sense and reality of safety?” The lack of safety needs to be addressed and must include dispelling any myths that a person must say “the right thing” to be safe. Concerns over saying the “wrong thing” causing a person to be branded a racist are real. Thus, we recommend establishing “ground rules” for discussion such as being curious, assuming positive intentions, and listening for common ground and underlying concerns. In this way, we wish to dispel the myth that a person has to say the “right thing” to participate in DEIB conversations.

Should Your Organization Emphasize DEIB?

It is vital for Bar Associations across the United States to include as part of their mission and/or policies the principles of DEIB. A strong DEIB statement carries many benefits. By increasing participation of diverse members, law firms and attorneys are able to better serve increasingly diverse clientele. A culture of inclusion also positively impacts employee retention and advancement within the legal field. An organization committed to embracing and celebrating diverse perspectives catalyzes change by breaking barriers and bridging the diversity gap in the legal profession.

STEPS TO INCREASE AND SUSTAIN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

So how exactly do you increase DEIB in your organization? Creating a plan to increase the DEIB of your membership will vary from organization to organization. However, the plan should reflect the characteristics of the members and mission of your organization. While there is no simple set of steps that can be followed to implement a plan that will promote DEIB, here are key steps an organization can take to begin to increase the diversity of its members.

PHASE ONE – EVALUATE YOUR ORGANIZATION

Implementing a successful diversity plan requires an in-depth evaluation of your organization and commitment by your board members to take the necessary steps to commit to diversifying membership.

→ Step 1

Review the Bylaws and Policies of Your Organization. An organization's bylaws and policies must ensure a commitment to diversity by addressing the following:

- ✔ Diversity Policy: Create a policy that commits to making diversity a priority of the organization.⁵
- ✔ Organizational Structure: If your organization has committees, create a diversity committee.
- ✔ Speaker Requirement: If your organization offers programming which includes panels, require panels to have at least one of its speakers be of a diverse background.

→ Step 2

Provide DEIB Training. The Board Members and Leadership of your organization should receive training regarding DEIB at the inception of the bar year.⁶

→ Step 3

Survey Membership. Surveys should seek to determine how many diverse members are part of the organization and what their interests are.

→ Step 4

Set Goals. The organization should establish a five-year plan with benchmarks to increase diverse members and establish a committee for accountability.

⁵ For an example of a diversity statement, please see Appendix A.

⁶ For references to providers of DEIB training, please see Appendix B.

STEPS TO INCREASE AND SUSTAIN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

PHASE TWO – CREATE A DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Several organizations often set out a goal to increase the diversity of their membership, but often fall short. Organizations focus on active recruitment of diverse members. However, active recruitment by itself is insufficient. Organizations must also have policies to address retention that focus on inclusion. If diverse members do not feel engaged or supported, they will likely cease being active members. To ensure diverse members feel like they belong in an organization, they must have a space to be able to express the concerns and unique challenges that they face in their profession and have their ideas valued.

→ Step 1

Create a Diversity Committee. If you do not already have a Diversity Committee, create one. Having a statement in support of DEIB is not sufficient to support and advance diverse members. A Diversity Committee provides members a place to share their unique stories, provides a sense of belonging, and creates a support network. A Diversity Committee will also inform and advise the organization of issue facing diverse members.

→ Step 2

Look for Leaders within your Organization to Lead the Committee. An experienced member in charge of the Diversity Committee would provide credibility to the committee and its important work. Such a lead member would also be able to navigate the organization to achieve the success of DEIB goals. And, if the leader of the committee is also diverse, the leader can provide helpful insight to other diverse members on how to succeed in the organization and can lead the committee to select interesting and relevant topics for programming.

→ Step 3

Board Members and Leadership Must Recruit Diverse Members. Board Members and Leadership must take active steps to recruit diverse members within the community. Diversity and Affinity bar organizations within the community are important resources for leadership to tap. Importantly, this should include attending events held by diversity bars to show that the interest is genuine.

→ Step 4

Diverse Programming. Members of the committee, with the approval of the Board of Directors, should have a voice with respect to the programming that will be presented to members. Although the Board of Directors should approve the programming offered by the Diversity Committee, it should avoid the appearance of imposing their vision of the programming. Doing so would make diverse members feel like they do not have a voice in the programming. Programming should also be offered consistently (i.e. quarterly).⁷

⁷ If interested in learning about possible topics that might interest diverse members, please see Appendix C for a list of program topics.

STEPS TO INCREASE AND SUSTAIN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

PHASE THREE – INCLUSION AND RETENTION

→ Step 1

Create a Welcoming Environment. It is often the case that diverse members make up a small percentage of the members of an organization, sometimes only a few members at an event. Therefore, it is crucial for leadership to make diverse members feel welcome when they attend events.

→ Step 2

Take Concrete Steps for Inclusion. Although you can make a diverse member feel welcome, it does not mean that they feel included. It is important that diverse members feel valued and their input heard. This includes being invited to participate in making important decisions for the organization. It is also important that diverse members feel that they can be themselves when attending events and participating in activities.

→ Step 3

Encourage Broader Participation of Diverse Members in Your Leadership. Importantly, some diverse members want not only to be spokespeople for diversity in their organizations, but to advance in the organization's leadership. It is essential that diverse members be given support and be provided the opportunity to undertake significant positions within the organization to prepare them for leadership positions.

CONCLUSION

Implementing a versatile and engaging DEIB plan for your organization is difficult and you will likely face setbacks and experience missteps. However, you must not let these obstacles hinder your dedication to DEIB. Importantly, as long as you follow the three phases, you have already done most of the work and can anticipate that your members will appreciate your commitment and dedication. Your eagerness and dedication will serve as a model for others to follow and in itself provide a sense of inclusion and belonging for all.

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE DIVERSITY STATEMENT FROM THE SAN DIEGO LAWYERS CLUB

Policy I.a. - Lawyers Club of San Diego's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy:

DEFINITIONS

"Underrepresented Group" includes but is not limited to women who identify as women of color, women from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds, women with disabilities, women who identify outside of the gender binary or with a gender expression outside of the traditionally defined male/female stereotypes and expectations, or women with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual as it is traditionally defined.

"Women" includes anyone who identifies as a woman., lesbians, non-binary people, and transgender women.

POLICY

Lawyers Club is committed to fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the community and the organization. Our Lawyers Club committees, programming, events, advocacy work, and overall day-to-day operations are designed to highlight women and their contributions to the legal profession. We acknowledge that women are underrepresented in the legal profession and should be included in any diversity policy within the field.

This policy applies to all members of the Board, staff, and volunteers. This policy also applies to any work performed by Lawyers Club including, but not limited to, original Lawyers Club committee programming, events, advocacy work, Fund for Justice grant vetting, and overall day-to-day operations.

While women as a group are underrepresented in the legal profession, it is further the policy of Lawyers Club to promote inclusion of women with one other characteristic that further makes them underrepresented.

Programs and Panels:

1. Any original Lawyers Club program or panel composed of three or more panel participants (including the moderator) shall have at least one member from an Underrepresented Group. A panel that includes more than four panel participants should include two people from Underrepresented Groups.
2. Diversity within areas of practice as well as large and small firms in private practice, government, and non-profit organizations should always be considered.
3. It is understood that original Lawyers Club programs or panels will be composed of all women, when feasible, or mostly women.
4. There is no maximum number of panelists from Underrepresented Groups.

APPENDIX B – PROVIDERS OF DEIB TRAINING



Thelma Tamez

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Professor Sarah E. Redfield

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APPENDIX C – EXAMPLES OF DIVERSITY PROGRAMMING TOPICS

1. You Can Do It Too: How Diverse Women Can Succeed in the Legal Profession
2. Be Your Own True Self: Authenticity in Diversity
3. The Intersectionality of Reproductive Justice
4. The Role of Diverse Women in Creating Social Change
5. The Road Less Traveled: Unconventional Paths to Leadership
6. Getting a Seat at the Table
7. Gender, Race, and Outsider Status
8. Using Our Differences to Make Us More Successful at Work
9. Making the Ask
10. Pathways to the Bench for Diverse Women
11. What's Diversity Got to Do with It?
12. Finding our Voice
13. Achieving Work Life Balance as a Diverse Lawyer
14. Words of Wisdom from Diverse Women Lawyers
15. Unseen Barriers in the Legal Profession
16. Pathway to Partnership for Diverse Women
17. Overcoming Bias in the Courtroom
18. Pay Inequity: Closing the Gap
19. How to Manage Implicit Bias at Work
20. Effective Strategies for Managing Stress
21. Dealing With Racial Trauma in the Workplace