



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN  
*Your Practice. Our Purpose.®*

## Diversity and Inclusion: A Toolkit for Sections

### Why does diversity and inclusion matter?

A diverse and inclusive bar is necessary to:

- attract and engage talented volunteers and leaders;
- effectively serve diverse clients with diverse needs;
- understand and adapt to increasingly diverse local and global markets;
- devise creative solutions to complex problems;
- improve access to justice;
- uphold respect for the rule of law and credibility of the legal profession.

### What Does Diversity and Inclusion Mean for the State Bar of Wisconsin?

The term "diversity" has a dynamic meaning that evolves as the demographics in the state change. It is an inclusive concept that encompasses, among other things, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation and disability. Inclusion helps to create a culture that embraces people from the widest range of talent and experience and promotes understanding and respect for all people and different points of view in the legal profession.

### Action Steps:

Here are some ways your section can be thoughtful and intentional about diversity and inclusion:

#### 1. Assessing Diversity and Inclusion Gaps

- Educate your leadership and membership on the benefits of diversity and inclusion, what diversity and inclusion means to the State Bar of Wisconsin, and provide a forum for open discussion on what diversity and inclusion means to your section members.
- Assess what voices are missing from your section. Consider concrete steps to fill these voids.
- Use section membership data, which includes some diversity statistics, to assess and periodically track your section's strengths and weaknesses regarding diversity.
- Identify resources and strengths of your section to attract diverse participation and involvement.
- Create a diversity and inclusion plan with concrete and realistic steps with timelines for increasing participation in your section.
- Create a committee of at least two committed members to head up your section's diversity efforts; appoint a leader to coordinate the committee's efforts. Include board and section members on the committee. Share your plan with your section and other sections, and keep each other accountable to the plan.
- Make your plan a standing agenda item for every board meeting.
- Encourage your board members to fill in the demographic data requested on your member profile on Wisbar.org under *MyStateBar*. This will provide helpful data as your board thinks about diversity and inclusion.

## **2. Conducting Elections**

- Develop a diversity and inclusion plan that identifies and encourages diverse candidates to run for leadership positions. Deliberately and intentionally commit to the plan. Periodically assess your progress and readjust your strategies if necessary.
- Consciously consider diversity and inclusion when your section board: (a) nominates or appoints section members for board elections; (b) fills vacancies on your board or other committees; and (c) establishes new committees or subcommittees to transact section business.
- When available, invite Leadership Summit and Leadership Academy participants to serve on your section board or committees.
- Try to reduce barriers for self-nominations within your section's elections. This will help ensure that nominations are made beyond the reach and connections of current board members.
- Open committee membership to all section members to increase opportunity for engagement, which could potentially lead to section or other leadership opportunities.
- Develop and maintain a working relationship with local, specialty, and affinity bar associations. Collaborate with them to promote leadership opportunities.
- Use a variety of forms of communication in advertising leadership opportunities to reach a wide audience. These include section or division webpages, e-lists, social media pages, blogs, newsletters, and word of mouth. Think outside the box to find creative and effective ways to reach your targeted audience.
- Once elected or appointed, be inclusive to new board or committee members by encouraging them to contribute in meaningful ways from the outset.

## **3. Producing CLE Programs**

- Think about the date(s) of your event. Consider religious holidays and other dates of importance.
- Be thoughtful about where you host your CLE events; use video conferencing when possible, to make your event more accessible, or consider holding your CLE event in a less served area of the state
- Consider topics of interest to a diverse audience and topics that would advance the concept of diversity and inclusion relating to your section's field of law or area of interest.
- Hold joint programs with local, specialty, and affinity bar associations or special diversity events.
- Encourage diverse speakers in your CLE programs.
- Reach out to local and specialty bar associations to share upcoming opportunities and events.
- Welcome out-of-state lawyers who attend your programs.

- Personally welcome new attendees to your events. Take the time to learn about their interests and invite them back to future events.
- Make section programs accessible to government and public-interest lawyers.

#### **4. Networking Events**

- Reach out to local, specialty, and affinity bar associations to share upcoming opportunities, such as: CLEs, networking events, competitions, and scholarship announcements. Consider hosting joint events with local, specialty, and affinity bar associations.
- Consider holding diversity focused events.
- Consider financially supporting diversity initiatives and inviting section members to participate in those events, when appropriate.
- Welcome out-of-state lawyers who attend your programs.
- Provide nametags at events, especially when expecting attendees who do not know each other.
- Be thoughtful about the date(s) and location of your event. Consider religious holidays and other dates of importance. Make sure your site is accessible to those with physical limitations.

#### **5. Reaching New Members**

- **Conduct outreach to law students:**
  - Attend the UW Discovering Practice Areas event held each fall, and the Marquette Law School Discovering Practice Areas event held in the spring, to showcase your practice area
  - Add a nonvoting law school liaison position to your board
  - Host a networking event on or close to campus
  - Submit articles about developments in your practice area, CLE announcements, or networking opportunities to the monthly State Bar Law School Newsletter
  - Become an employer of the Diversity Clerkship Program that matches 1Ls from both UW and Marquette law schools with employers for a 10-week paid summer clerkship
- **Conduct outreach to new members:**
  - Consider collaborating with the Young Lawyers Division on CLE programs and networking events.
  - Add a nonvoting Young Lawyers Division liaison position to your board.
  - Provide scholarship opportunities to section or State Bar events to section members who are also young lawyers.
- Hold joint programs with local, specialty, and affinity bar associations focused on diversity.
- Reach out to local, specialty, and affinity bar association leaders for assistance in identifying potential members for your section.
- Conduct onboarding or orientation activities for all new members joining the section and for all new board members to ensure early engagement with the section.

## 6. **Reviewing Bylaws**

- Consider updating your bylaws to include a diversity and inclusion statement and codify policies or procedures adopted to encourage greater diversity and inclusion.
- Set the tone of your section by adopting a diversity and inclusion statement and incorporating it into your section bylaws.
- Include language in your bylaws that prioritizes diversity during the Section election process.
- Evaluate your bylaws to see if you can remove any barriers that exist for members to make self-nominations for board positions. Removing language that requires nominees to obtain signatures in order to self-nominate would reduce the dependency on who you know for self-nomination.

### **Resources**

Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Committee

Roster: <https://www.wisbar.org/forMembers/Groups/Committees/DiversityOutreachCommittee/pages/roster.aspx>

Local Bar Contacts: <https://www.wisbar.org/Directories/LawRelatedOrgs/Pages/WI-Local-Bars.aspx>

Specialty/Affinity Bar Contacts: <https://www.wisbar.org/Directories/LawRelatedOrgs/Pages/WI-Specialty-Bars.aspx>

State Bar of Wisconsin Section Information and Rosters:

<https://www.wisbar.org/formembers/groups/sections/Pages/Home.aspx>

American Bar Association Diversity & Inclusion Portal: <https://www.americanbar.org/diversity-portal.html>