



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

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## Diversity and Inclusion: A Toolkit for Committees

### 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 committee can be thoughtful and intentional about diversity and inclusion:

#### 1. Assessing Diversity and Inclusion Gaps

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

## **2. Committee Appointments**

- Develop a diversity and inclusion plan that identifies, educates, and encourages diverse candidates of open committee 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 committee: (a) nominates committee members to the State Bar President; (b) fills vacancies on your committees; and (c) establishes new subcommittees to transact committee business.
- When available, invite Leadership Summit and Leadership Academy participants to serve on your committee.
- Try to reduce barriers for self-nominations within your committee. This will help ensure that nominations are made beyond the reach and connections of current committee members.
- 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 appointed, be inclusive to new committee members by encouraging them to contribute in meaningful ways from the outset.
- Reach out to local, specialty, and affinity bar association leaders for assistance in identifying potential members for your committee.

## **3. Producing CLE Programs**

- If your committee produces 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 committee's focus.
  - 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 committee programs accessible to government and public-interest lawyers.

## **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 Committee Information and Rosters:

<https://www.wisbar.org/formembers/groups/Committees/pages/GroupCommittees.aspx>

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