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Diversifying Affiliates' Relationships

The success of any local affiliate can be immediately enhanced by partnering with neighboring local affiliates. Different geographic regions provide diversity in resources and ideas. Co-hosting events can be a simple way to expand membership, increase awareness of social issues, and minimize expenses. Most importantly, collaborative efforts better serve the communities where we live and practice law.

"Disaster Response Legal Clinics" – San Antonio Young Lawyers Association + San Antonio Bar Association + Corpus Christi Young Lawyers Association

Following Hurricane Harvey in 2017, these two affiliates, along with SABA's Community Justice Program, conducted a Disaster Response Legal Clinic in Portland, Texas.

"Beach Day" – Hidalgo County Young Lawyers Association + Cameron County Young Lawyers Association

It doesn't take a natural disaster to bring local affiliates together. These two affiliates have partnered to host an annual Beach Day at South Padre Island, Texas. Both organizations have seen an increase in membership and active participation.

"Family Movie Day" – Bexar County Women's Bar Association + San Antonio Young Lawyers Association

Each year, these two organizations co-host a Family Movie Day at the Alamo Drafthouse, and cover the costs for members and their families to come together and watch a family-friendly movie.

"Moms in Law" – Dallas Women Lawyers Association + Dallas Bar Association + Dallas Association of Young Lawyers

These organizations' members formed a group for the purpose of making the legal profession more mom-friendly. The group meets for lunches that include CLE and other topics of interest to the group.

If you're interested in contacting other local affiliates to partner on programs, TYLA provides an updated list (including contact information) at: <http://www.tyla.org/tyla/index.cfm/affiliates>.

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Diversifying Membership

There are numerous ways to increase the diversity of the membership of your local affiliate.

- **Committee/Project Assignments**

One way to attract lawyers who do not normally participate in your local affiliate is to assign them to certain projects and/or committees. Even though many large affiliates will have non-board members fill committee and project positions, small affiliates can also use this technique to involve lawyers from varying specialties and backgrounds.

- **Identifying Diversity Problems in Your Membership**

A key first step in diversifying membership is identifying what members of the legal community are not participating in your local affiliates. Once you can identify who is not participating and why they aren't, you can develop a solution to address the issues. For example: several affiliates noticed that government and public interest lawyers were not involved in their local bar organizations. After approaching several of these lawyers, it was determined that the cost of joining the organization and fees/prices of events often prevented these

attorneys from participating. Several affiliates then put a policy into place where government and public interest lawyers have reduced membership dues and reduced prices of admission to events.

- **Network with Minority and Specialty Bar Associations**

Network and develop events with your local minority and speciality bar associations in order to expand your membership. By programming with these other bars, you diversify your programming and expose a diverse group of lawyers to your organization, thus encouraging them to join and participate in your local affiliate.

- **Giving Members a Variety of Programming**

Affiliates can attract diverse membership and attorney participation by providing their membership with a variety of programming. This diversity of programming includes varying types of events, types of CLE programming, and types of public service projects.



Leadership Institutes

Another means of improving diversity in your local affiliate membership is to develop a leadership program. Several municipalities and professional organizations have developed service-oriented leadership programs that are designed to cultivate future leaders for the organization and have their membership become involved in the community, participate in their local bars, and focus on professional development. Depending on the size of your local affiliate or bar organization, class sizes may vary. Most leadership programs have potential members apply and then program participants are selected by a committee or a board of directors. LeadershipSBOT, the State Bar of Texas's leadership program, seeks to diversify leadership within the State Bar of Texas by developing and encouraging future bar leaders. If you are interested in developing a leadership program, the following organizations have developed their own and can be contacted for information: Dallas Association of Young Lawyers, Houston Young Lawyers Association, Austin Young Lawyers Association, and State Bar of Texas Office of Minority Affairs.

SBOT Office of Minority Affairs Resources

A great resource to consult when seeking to diversify your local affiliate or bar organization is the State Bar of Texas Office of Minority Affairs. The office is committed to creating a fair and equal legal profession for minority, women, and LGBT attorneys. Programs available to local affiliates and minority members of the Bar are as follows:

Texas Minority Counsel Program (TMCP): A flagship program that offers opportunities for minority, women, and LGBT lawyers to network with corporations, businesses, and government agencies.

Texas Minority Attorney Program (TMAP): A live CLE presentation geared towards minority and women solo and small firm practitioners.

Diversity Forum: An annual CLE presentation where participants learn about diversity in the legal profession from a wide variety of attorneys.

Diversity Summit: Held annually at the Bar Leaders Conference, a program that allows local bar leaders to discuss existing and new opportunities and ideas for increasing diversity in their membership.

Minority Attorneys at the Podium "MAP" Project: A project that encourages and enables minority, women, and LGBT attorneys to serve on CLE course planning committees and to speak at Texas BarCLE courses.

Pipeline Project: A project that uses classroom visits to encourage a diversity of students to pursue a career in the legal profession.

Ten Minute Mentor Program: a TYLA program that offers mentorship to attorneys on a variety of legal topics using ten-minute online videos.

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Improving Diversity with Policies

Put Diversity on Your Agenda. Literally!

Diversity doesn't create and maintain itself. If diversity is a priority, then put it on your agenda for board and committee meetings. Diversity can be a top-level item for discussion or a component of other sub-items on the agenda, such as event planning and membership efforts.

Make a Statement with a Non-Discrimination Policy

Non-discrimination policies can convey and emphasize an affiliate's commitment to diversity. Consider adopting a policy against discrimination based on being part of a legally protected class and based on other characteristics that would be an asset to your organization. Non-discrimination policies can be relatively standard, such as the following example:

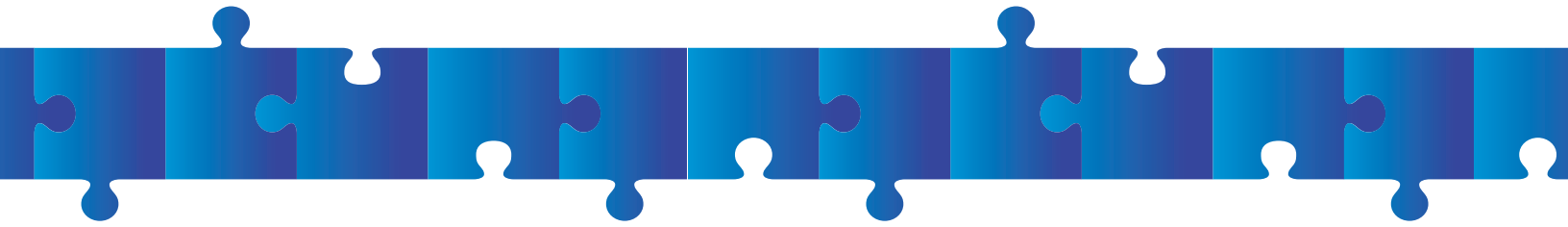
"We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation."

A non-discrimination policy can also include other attributes, such as actual or perceived gender, creed, ethnic origin, gender identity and expression, genetic information, and parental, marital, domestic partner, civil union, military, and veteran status.

Boost Your Board with an At-Large Director

If board elections leave room for improving your board's diversity, then consider adding an at-large director to the board. Depending upon your size and particular needs, you can either add a new position to your board of directors or convert an existing board position into an at-large director position. An example of language that could be added to your bylaws is the following:

"The Board of Directors may appoint an At-Large Director for a two-year term. Any member of the Board of Directors may, at the board meeting designated by these bylaws, nominate a non-Board member in good standing to serve as an At-Large Director."



Bylaw language can also include criteria for selecting an at-large director. In addition to general board member qualifications, some criteria for appointing an at-large director of a local bar association could include:

- practice area
- place of employment
- years in practice
- the size of law firm, organization, or agency
- geographical, gender, ethnic, or cultural diversity
- involvement in local or specialty bar association
- a perspective informed by a unique background or life experiences

Consider bylaw language that makes the appointment of an at-large director permissive, instead of mandatory, to leave your board the discretion depending upon your organization's size and needs.

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Improving Diversity Through Projects

When it comes to improving and maintaining diversity within our profession and in our bar organizations, knowing where to start can be a challenge. Below are some diversity projects that have proven to be a successful way to bring the discussion of diversity to the attention of the community and the legal profession.

"Diversity Speed Mentoring and Networking Event" – Houston Young Lawyers Association

An event where law students and young lawyers could connect with more seasoned diverse attorneys at a no-pressure "speed dating" reception.

"Resources for Minority Law Students" – Dallas Association of Young Lawyers

Information to aid law students at different schools in finding their own organizations, bar associations, and scholarships focused on diversity in their respective communities.

"Diversity Dinner" – Texas Young Lawyers Association

An annual event hosted by the Texas Young Lawyers Association's Diversity Committee where each year speakers from various backgrounds address fellow members of the legal profession.

"Pre-Law Diversity Symposium" – Texas Young Lawyers Association

Several different affiliates have hosted Pre-Law Diversity Symposiums at local high schools or junior colleges to help inform students about the law school admissions process and what to expect in a legal career in order to encourage more diverse student populations in our law schools.

"Tomorrow's Attorney Pipeline Program" – Houston Young Lawyers Association

A two-day program designed to inspire a diverse array of high school students to enter the legal profession.

"Diversity Career Panel" – Austin Young Lawyers Association

A panel of diverse young lawyers speaking to law school students about issues currently facing the legal profession.

"El Conocimiento Es Poder" – Hidalgo County Young Lawyers Association

A CLE and community-wide educational program about changes in deportation priorities and what citizens' constitutional rights are pertaining to deportation.