

A Proposal to Reorganize MSBA's Diversity Projects/Initiatives

In previous conversations regarding the future of the MSBA's diversity work, it seems that two basic models of organization have emerged. One model envisions creating a new networking body that will link the various undertakings, akin to an internal Minority Bar Summit. The other model envisions consolidating existing diversity efforts into a more unified structure. Because one theory behind the creation of the Planning Task Force has been the question of whether MSBA already has a plethora of bodies working on diversity and may benefit from slimming the number down, arguably creating yet another runs in the opposite direction. Therefore, this proposal urges a consolidation model, as follows:

1. Because of substantial similarities in the overall goals, purposes, and undertakings between them, combine the existing Diversity Committee and Women in the Legal Profession Committee into a *Diversity and Gender Equity Committee* (“DGE”). This name reflects the title of the 2008 Best Practices Guide (“Diversity and Gender Equity in the Legal Profession: Best Practices Guide”) and the distinct historic importance of gender issues within the diversity rubric.
2. Since WILP “owns” the SAGE report and would bring it to the proposed Diversity and Gender Equity Committee, it would also make sense to incorporate the similar though broader Best Practices Guide and related work within the scope of the DGE Committee’s charge, thus bringing the Best Practices Outreach Task Force under the DGE umbrella and ending its existence as a stand-alone body.
3. Because the Diversity Committee already “owns” the mnlegaldiversity.org website project, one of whose purposes is to facilitate communication between diversity projects (e.g., Twin Cities Diversity in Practice, law school efforts) and between minority bar groups, and recognizing that this purpose is also at the heart of the MSBA Minority Bar Summit, which currently does not have an institutionalized home or formal purpose, institutionalize the Minority Bar Summit as a project of DGE, to be called between 2-4 times per year to serve as a networking opportunity and an advisory body for DGE and its projects.
4. Though there are potential overlaps between some of the work of the existing Diversity and WILP Committees and some of the work of the Life & the Law and Human Rights Committees, there are also significant areas of focus in the latter two committees that are not necessarily directly related to diversity and gender equity in the legal profession. Therefore, Life & the Law and the Human Rights Committees will be asked to designate at least one specific “representative” who will be a part of DGE and serve as liaison(s) between DGE and the other committees.
5. Upon delivery of a report to the MSBA Assembly in June, presuming approval, the Diversity Planning Task Force will disband, and implementation of its recommendations referred to DGE.