

# BUILDING A PATH FORWARD

Diversity & Inclusion Ideas for Companies



# New Year. New Ideas for D&I.

## *A Note From Thompson Coburn*

More and more companies are recognizing the significant benefits of having a robust diversity and inclusion program: improved engagement with employees, more openness and transparency among team members, and stronger connections with increasingly diversity-focused clients and community leaders.

But depending on the size, structure or history of your organization, it can be overwhelming to know where to start, or figure out how and when to grow an existing program.

That was the inspiration for this document. Drawing on Thompson Coburn's historic commitment to D&I, our Firm has created a D&I program that in recent years has been singled out for recognition:

- In 2019, Thompson Coburn received the Minority Corporate Counsel Association's (MCCA) 2019 **George B. Vashon Innovator Award**, a recognition for organizations that have made extraordinary strides to support diverse attorneys.
- In 2020, Norma Jackson, Thompson Coburn's Chief Diversity & Attorney Development Officer, was selected to receive a **2020 Diversity & Inclusion Award** from Missouri Lawyers Media.
- For 13 consecutive years, Thompson Coburn has earned a **perfect score of 100 points** in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index (CEI) and Best Places to Work Survey, which evaluates businesses across the country on their treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees, clients and investors.
- Thompson Coburn is one of just 118 firms in the country that have been certified under the **Mansfield Rule 4.0**, a national initiative to increase the representation of diverse lawyers in law firm leadership by broadening the pool of candidates considered for roles and opportunities. We have already committed to participate in Mansfield 5.0, and Norma Jackson serves as an advisory board member for Mansfield 2021, which determines the next set of national standards for promoting diversity in law firm hiring, promotions and governance.

We're immensely proud of these recognitions, which are the result of years of dedicated work by our D&I leaders and Firm management. **But the real reward of any diversity and inclusion program is the impact it can make within a single organization.** Strong D&I programs create opportunities for career advancement. They build connection, raise awareness, spur critical conversations, and create a workplace where people from all backgrounds and experiences feel valued, included, and supported.

This document includes some of the initiatives and activities that have worked for us, and that you can use for inspiration in the creation or expansion of your own D&I programs, no matter where you are in that effort: Beginner/Limited Budget; Established/Moderate Budget; or Advanced/Full Budget. This brochure, of course, does not constitute legal advice regarding your compliance with any legal obligations.

Sincerely,



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# Ideas for Building Impactful Diversity & Inclusion Programs

## For Beginner/Limited Budget:

- ❑ Build a diversity committee made of leaders, influencers, allies, and representation from marginalized groups.
- ❑ Identify SMART goals for the development of D&I program initiatives (this document includes several ideas for specific activities/initiatives).
- ❑ Create affinity or employee resource groups to engage diverse team members and allies and solicit their ideas for D&I programming.
- ❑ Develop a system to track diversity metrics, being thoughtful about diversity that extends beyond race and gender; consider ethnicity, nationality, disability, religion, sexual orientation, faith, veteran status, English proficiency, languages spoken, etc.

## For Established/Moderate Budget

- ❑ Hire a D&I Coordinator or Manager to steer D&I activities (see our sample job description for this position).
- ❑ Pinpoint gaps in your talent pipeline and create targeted opportunities for internships, training opportunities, scholarships and fellowships for diverse candidates.
- ❑ Connect with diversity nonprofits in your industry and geography and provide funds and support for their initiatives and events.
- ❑ Develop a D&I training curriculum for your employees; provide regular opportunities to learn about inclusion, access, racism, bias, and religious traditions/customs.

## For Advanced/Full Budget

- ❑ Submit national diversity and inclusion surveys in an effort to eliminate bias and enhance diversity in your organization or profession.
- ❑ Participate in initiatives to measure and track progress in advancing women, minorities, LGBTQ+, veterans, and attorneys with disabilities.
- ❑ Publish quarterly and annual D&I reports and share them with your entire organization, board, and clients/customers; publish on your organization's website.
- ❑ Identify relevant industry benchmarks for diversity and report your D&I statistics; commit to industry-leading benchmarks and work within your organization to achieve those standards.
- ❑ After achieving your outcomes, submit your organization for D&I awards within your industry or geography; these recognitions give you the opportunity to celebrate your progress and publicize your achievements on your organization's website and social media channels.

# Key Activities for D&I Development

For an in-depth look at some key D&I activities, follow the road map below as you navigate the best D&I pathways for your organization.

## Stage

Beginner/  
Limited Budget

## INITIATIVE

Affinity/  
Employee  
Resource  
Groups

## Benefits

- Engages diverse team members and allies by inviting them to connect in small groups
- These groups can identify challenges faced in the workplace and uncover opportunities for education and awareness
- With just the investment of time and space for meetings, gain the engagement and insights of team members

## Challenges

- Success depends on buy-in and participation of individuals
- Requires outside accountability for regular meetings, strategy

## How Thompson Coburn did it

- We revived latent affinity groups and added Hispanic/Latinx and Working Parents affinity groups
- We assigned chairs and/or co-chairs to each group and established budgets for each so members could attend conferences, conduct outreach efforts to local high schools and colleges/universities, and sponsor programming to bring awareness to their groups

Affinity/  
Employee  
Resource  
Groups

Stage<sup>®</sup>  
Beginner/  
Limited Budget

**INITIATIVE**  
Diversity  
Awareness  
Efforts

### Benefits

- Use your internal communications channels to share D&I resources and bring awareness to diversity-related holidays, heritage months and other events
- Regular postings about diversity demonstrates an organization's commitment to D&I and creates a "common conversation" on the topic for all team members



### How Thompson Coburn did it

- We create and distribute a diversity awareness calendar to all team members with religious holidays, heritage months and other D&I milestone dates
- We developed a "Race, Racism and Allyship Guide" so our entire team has resources to learn about and discuss these topics
- We regularly honor diversity-related events, holidays and happenings on the front page of our Firm's intranet



Diversity  
Awareness  
Efforts

## Stage

Beginner/  
Limited Budget

## INITIATIVE Mentorship Programs

### Benefits

- Engages both diverse employees and established leaders by connecting them in a formal mentorship program

### Challenges

- Attracting influential mentors ready to commit time and energy to the program



Emily Peel, Jesse Doggendorf,  
Christina Randolph



Katherine Murchinson and  
Judge Booker Shaw

### How Thompson Coburn did it

- What started as a mentorship program for female associates was expanded to both male and female associates after achieving success and participation from senior leadership, including the Firm Chair
- Our program is built around the specific goals of associates and counsel and may cross offices and practice areas, depending on the mentee's priorities for the relationship
- Our Diversity Mentorship Program also focuses on sponsorship as distinct from mentorship

### Thompson Coburn's Mentorship Programs

- Partner-to-Associate
- Associate-to-Associate (peer mentoring)
- Diversity Mentoring

Mentorship  
Programs

## Stage

Established/  
Moderate  
Budget

## INITIATIVE Diversity Resources

### Benefits

- Makes it easier for your management and employees to talk about D&I by providing regular updates, training opportunities, and reports
- Starts a conversation among your stakeholders and visibly demonstrates your commitment to diversity awareness and cultural competency

### Challenges

- Time and budget to compile such resources or hire a D&I consultant to help you develop them

### How Thompson Coburn did it

We provide our stakeholders with resources that they can regularly access:

- Diversity awareness calendar
- Disability awareness guide
- Ramadan guide
- Quarterly D&I educational offerings
- Quarterly mental health workshops
- Quarterly D&I newsletter
- Annual D&I report
- D&I book club
- Small-group discussions of D&I topics



Diversity  
Resources

## Stage

Established/  
Moderate  
Budget

## INITIATIVE Pipeline Programs

## Benefits

- Provides direct opportunities and access for diverse candidates/ students to gain exposure to your industry and organization
- Fills gaps in the talent pipeline
- Can extend from established job-seekers to college and post-secondary students
- Work with local colleges and universities, as well as K-12 institutions, to provide opportunities to introduce students from marginalized groups to your industry

## Challenges

- Such programs and scholarships do require time and resources

## How Thompson Coburn did it

- We established the Thomas F. Eagleton Scholarship for diverse law school students, which includes a scholarship, a paid summer internship with the Firm and mentorship from Thompson Coburn partners
- We participate in various initiatives with local high schools, colleges and universities to expand awareness and access to potential careers in the legal profession



Pipeline  
Programs



## Stage

Advanced/  
Full Budget

## INITIATIVE Industry Benchmarks for Hiring and Advancement

### Benefits

- Helps your organization evaluate your D&I performance in comparison with others in your industry
- Creates concrete goals/standards for diversity hiring & advancement

### Challenges

- Prompts your organization to confront shortcomings
- May require considerable time and resources to improve performance

### How Thompson Coburn did it

- In 2018, Thompson Coburn got involved with the Mansfield Rule, a national initiative to increase the representation of diverse lawyers in law firm leadership by broadening the pool of candidates considered for roles and opportunities
- We created and executed a very deliberate plan to move women attorneys into practice, office, and firmwide leadership
- Thompson Coburn was one of just 118 law firms in the country that have been certified under the Mansfield Rule 4.0, meaning that in addition to meeting or exceeding the baseline requirements, we successfully reached at least 30 percent diverse lawyer representation in a notable number of current leadership roles
- Thompson Coburn is committed to participate in Mansfield 5.0



Industry  
Benchmarks

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## SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION: DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COORDINATOR

### JOB SUMMARY:

The Diversity & Inclusion Coordinator will work closely with the Director of Diversity and Inclusion to help implement the organization's various diversity and inclusion initiatives. This role will be responsible for assisting with the execution of relevant programming, training, and other strategies to continue fostering an equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplace for all personnel.

### JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:

- ❑ Supports diversity and inclusion initiatives, as set by the Director of Diversity and Inclusion (e.g., sponsorship initiatives, heritage month celebrations, industry benchmark participation, diversity educational offerings, etc.), and assists with executing relevant strategies, which benefit employees.
- ❑ Coordinates the scheduling of Diversity Committee meetings, affinity group meetings, and relevant diversity and inclusion events or programming.
- ❑ Tracks expenses charged to the Diversity and Inclusion budget, and provides monthly budget reports to the Director of Diversity and Inclusion.
- ❑ Updates content for the various sections of the diversity & inclusion intranet and website pages.
- ❑ Assists the Director of Diversity and Inclusion with the communication of the diversity and inclusion commitment and activities, through annual diversity reports and other publications, and in response to RFPs and other client inquiries.
- ❑ In support of the Director of Diversity and Inclusion, compiles and organizes data in response to industry surveys regarding diversity and inclusion, professional development, and recruiting, and in compliance with the firm's participation in the Mansfield Rule initiative.
- ❑ Assists with other diversity and inclusion needs as necessary.

### REQUIREMENTS:

#### Education

The position requires a Bachelor's Degree in a relevant field or an equivalent combination of education, training, and experience.

#### Experience

The position requires a minimum of two (2) years of related experience in [your industry] or similar workplace environment, during which the knowledge, skills and abilities applicable to the position were demonstrated.

### KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES:

- ❑ Demonstrated ability to provide quality client service to both internal and external stakeholders, regarding both routine and complex matters. Requires tact, patience, and the ability to maintain confidentiality.
- ❑ Demonstrated ability to communicate clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing. This includes editing work for spelling and grammar, with high attention to detail.
- ❑ Demonstrated ability to organize and prioritize multiple projects in a dynamic and complex environment, meeting and communicating around deadlines and successfully managing the daily workload.
- ❑ Advanced knowledge of MS Suite, to produce quality written communications, including presentations and complex functions of Excel.
- ❑ Demonstrated ability to work effectively with others in a cooperative manner, to accomplish work and participate in team efforts.
- ❑ Demonstrated ability to represent the firm with professionalism and honesty, consistently acting in an ethical manner.

# Questions?



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