



MINNESOTA WOMEN LAWYERS
Equality • Leadership • Community

MWL Affinity Groups

MWL Affinity Groups consist of members who form a group, consistent with MWL's mission, to advance a common interest (legal or non-legal), professional goal, or with the intent to network and promote collegiality.

MWL Affinity Groups often:

- Promote further satisfaction in the practice of law.
- Provide individual professional development opportunities.
- Promote the sharing of resources and the exchange of ideas.
- Emphasize networking, connection, community and relationship building.

MWL Affinity Group Requirements

- Must be approved by the Board.
- Must consist of at least 8 active MWL members.
- Must designate 1-2 members to serve as Affinity Group Co-Chairs to lead coordination of group activities and gathering. (Board President will confirm final Co-Chair appointments).
- Must meet regularly (at least quarterly).
- Must commit to at least one year of activity. (Each Affinity Group will be re-evaluated by the Board after its first year, in consideration of permanent Affinity Group status. The Group would then remain active as long as there is interest and other requirements are met).
- Must be established and maintained as a self-functioning group. Staff assistance may be available, but on a very limited basis.
- May request budget funds (limited availability).
- Must gain approval from the Board for any effort to seek outside sponsor support. Approval must be gained BEFORE any sponsor contact.
- May have access to MWL website and Google Group (for communication among members);
- May be disbanded by the Board for any reason, at any time.

MWL Affinity Groups are offered as a *benefit* of membership. Affinity Groups may or may not be designed to directly address MWL's core strategic priorities. However, Affinity Groups are viewed as a vital and valuable opportunity for member participation, networking, connection and support.

The overall success of each Affinity Group will largely be a function of the group's leadership and its participant's involvement. All events and activities should be sustained primarily through the efforts of the Affinity Group Co-Chairs and any additional member volunteers.

MWL Affinity Group Co-chairs will be responsible for:

- Participation in an organization-wide planning retreat to assist in coordinating the strategic direction for MWL.
- Developing the Affinity Group's annual activity proposal (action plan), ensuring that Affinity Group's activities advance MWL's mission and/or strategic goals.
- Submit the proposal to the Board for approval and subsequent inclusion in MWL's fiscal year master calendar.
- Attend leadership orientation and/or training specific to Affinity Group leadership (if appropriate).
- Implement action plan over the course of the fiscal year.
- Confirm all Affinity Group activities and related details with MWL Staff prior to finalizing details and/or beginning publicity, particularly to avoid conflicts with other MWL events.
- Welcome and support volunteers to assist in Affinity Group work.
- At each event or activity, complete the Affinity Group attendance sign-in sheet and submit to the MWL office.
- Maintain strong communication between the Affinity Group and Staff to ensure each is fully informed of activities and related issues.
- Submit a brief written report each month (or quarter) to the Executive Director. The report will be shared with the Board, keeping it informed of activities and projects.
- Keep Affinity Group informed of upcoming MWL events and initiatives (Staff will provide related information) and regularly encourage member engagement in other MWL activities.
- Request Staff assistance/support as appropriate.
- Seek Board approval for any activities that were not initially approved as part of the fiscal year's action plan.
- Participate in a year-end leadership evaluation.

MWL Staff will provide:

- General (but limited) administrative support.
- Meeting, event and activity publicity.
- Development of and access to an Affinity Group "Google Group" for direct communication with participants.
- Note: MWL Staff will *not* be expected to attend Affinity Group events or meetings.

Upon request:

- An event registration form may be established via the MWL website, for purposes of tracking attendance and determining related logistics.
- Staff can provide blank nametags to be completed by the attendee at the event.
- Staff may have access to and help coordinate event space at HCBA for events.

All Affinity Group activities and events are open to the whole of MWL's general membership.

Non-MWL Members are welcome to attend an Affinity Group activity or event one time, as a guest. However, after this one-time attendance, guests will be invited to join MWL, in order to continue attendance. (MWL Staff will extend the membership invitation, based on a review of the attendance sign-in sheet submitted after an Affinity Group event or activity).

Each Affinity Group may be provided with a nominal funding for group events/projects during a given fiscal year. Request and expenditure of these funds must be coordinated with Staff.

To the extent possible, events should be made available to attendees at no charge or at a minimal cost. If costs are associated with an event, the "pay on your own at the event" method is preferred. Exceptions may be possible. Contact Staff to discuss further.

Current MWL Affinity Groups

Alternative Legal Careers

Book Club

In-House Lawyers

Knitting Group

Legal Wine Lovers

Master Lawyers

Professional Parents

Public Sector Lawyers

RISE: New Lawyers

Solo/Small Firm