SECTION CHAIR GUIDE

Mission of the MSBA
The Maine State Bar Association promotes the honor, dignity and professionalism of lawyers, advances the knowledge, skills and interests of its members, and supports the public interest in a fair and effective system of justice.

Congratulations! You are the chair of a Maine State Bar Association section. Leading a section is a prestigious career benchmark and an important task. As a member of the MSBA leadership team, your work will be a substantial service to your colleagues and can provide a public service as well.

Your energy, initiative and resourcefulness will be the driving forces that determine what your section will accomplish during your tenure as chair. We encourage you to set goals, establish a timetable for achieving them and decide how to motivate your members.

This guide addresses these issues and provides useful information regarding the MSBA resources available to you. All volunteers who have joined your section have already expressed an interest in your area, providing a built-in incentive. Your challenge is to harness their energy and expertise to meet your objectives.

Sections keep association members abreast of developments in substantive areas of the law. As voluntary groups within the MSBA, they nominate their own officers for appointment by the Board of Governors and choose their areas of activity. You must be familiar with the bylaws governing the MSBA and those of your section.

Section Leadership Goals/Expectations
• Submit Annual Report no later than February 1 for previous calendar year.
• Submit Section Budget in June 2020 for upcoming fiscal year.
• Attend Section Leadership Orientation/Legislative Lunch November 6, 2020.
• Section-sponsored continuing legal education programs.
• Keep MSBA informed of all changes in leadership.
• Submit articles and section news for MSBA.
• Monitor section-related legislative issues in coordination with the MSBA lobbyist and section legislative liaison (if applicable).
• While each section maintains a degree of autonomy, all business must be conducted in accordance with the bylaws of the Association with the approval of the Board of Governors, including action on legislative issues; co-sponsorship of events with an outside group or organization; and any program or event that will require the expenditure of funds.

MSBA Board of Governors
The MSBA’s policy-making body is its 22-member board of elected governors. The Board has 13 governors representing 11 districts created along county boundaries.
(including three representing Cumberland County), one governor representing the New Lawyers Section, one representing the Women’s Law Section, one representing public service sector lawyers, and one representing in-house corporate attorneys. The Board also includes the president, president-elect, vice president, immediate past president, and treasurer. Elected biennially to two-year terms (officers are elected to one-year terms) by the Association's members, the Board members meet approximately 10 times each year to review MSBA activities and chart its short- and long-range future.

**Membership**
Section membership is only open to Association members. Section leaders oversee and coordinate the work of the section and plan programs for the year. Sections should sponsor at least one CLE program through the CLE Committee each year. You can stimulate involvement in your section through emails to members, MSBA groups and forums, updates on your section webpage, direct mail to your members, electronic section newsletter, or through the [Maine Bar Journal](#) or The Supplement.

**What are the benefits of section membership?**
As the chair of your section, it is important for you to know and be able to discuss the benefits of section membership with current and potential members.

- A forum for members to pursue their interests in specific areas of law, and share professional experiences.
- Notice of and participation at meetings/social events.
- Networking opportunities – we especially encourage newer lawyers who would like to meet and interact with other members in their practice area.
- Continuing legal education opportunities (some sections offer up to two one-hour CLEs to their members).
- Opportunities to hear speakers and discuss with colleagues timely issues impacting their practice area.
- A forum to connect with other section members across the state via the email discussion groups and online forums.

**Administrative Support**
The MSBA staff is available to assist you with all administrative needs for your section. Administrative support provided by the MSBA staff may include:

- Section meeting planning and coordination.
- Financial accounting for section activities, including dues processing.
- Assistance with annual budget planning.
- Posting of content to section's page on MSBA website.
- Clerical and administrative support for section meetings and CLE programs.
- Coordination of section mailings (electronic communications are encouraged to minimize expense).
- Electronic newsletter design, assembly and distribution.
- Basic legislative information.
- Assistance with membership development and marketing.
Section Dues
Annual dues for each section membership are $15. These dues help defray routine Section expenses. Section dues cover the administrative overhead costs associated with supporting sections. These costs include coordinating registration and staffing of section events, reporting of CLE credits, layout and design of section brochures and publications, conference calling fees, electronic communications and marketing of section meetings and events. Administrative expenses do not need to be included in your section’s annual budget proposal. All section dues are billed directly from Association headquarters on the annual dues statement. There are no dues for New Lawyers Section membership.

Financial/Budget
The Maine State Bar Association’s fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30. A very important part of the MSBA’s budgeting process involves putting together reliable budgets for the MSBA’s sections, which are included in Section Budget Policies and Procedures.

MSBA sections fulfill a valuable purpose in serving their members and the Association as a whole. The Finance Committee and the Board of Governors are committed to supporting section activities that further the MSBA mission. As your section submits its budget request for the coming fiscal year, we ask that you provide an overview of what the section hopes to accomplish during the year. A solid understanding of your section’s goals and objectives will allow the Finance Committee to ensure adequate support and funding for the administration of section activities.

The Budget Policies and Procedures will assist you with the preparation of your section’s budget. Please note that your budget will not include CLE activities offering more than one hour of credit, which must be approved by and offered through the MSBA’s CLE Committee. The one exception to this policy will be the two-hour Real Estate & Title Section meetings, as the work accomplished by that section contributes to the ongoing Title Standards revisions, which generate revenue for the Association.

Sections do not have their own bank accounts. The finance department maintains a ledger for each section’s finances and is available upon request. *Please note: budgeted funds do not transfer to the next fiscal year.*

Legislative Affairs
During the course of each session of the Maine Legislature, the MSBA reviews hundreds of pieces of proposed legislation as bills are printed and referred to one of the 17 Joint Standing Committees. Some of these bills are of interest to the MSBA as a whole, and some are of interest to sections due to changes in substantive areas of law. The Legislative Affairs Procedures will provide you with the steps and requirements necessary should your section want to track a bill, take a position on legislation or provide testimony during a committee hearing.

Continuing Legal Education (CLE)
As the premier provider of CLE in Maine, the MSBA helps attorneys collectively to earn more than 12,000 credits each year. In order to maintain high quality, diverse and
successful programs, it is the policy of the Association that all continuing legal education requests, including section suggestions, be reviewed and adopted by the CLE Committee. The exceptions to this are Annual Bar Conference session proposals, which are reviewed and considered by MSBA leadership and staff in the context of all proposals submitted for the meeting, and section events (such as brown-bag lunches) offering one hour or less of CLE credit.

As previously stated, sections are expected to sponsor at least one CLE program each year. Section leadership should coordinate with the CLE director and the CLE Committee about current developments in your practice field and support the development of program content suitable for the general membership. Additionally, the CLE Committee may call upon you and your section to produce a program in response to member CLE requests and learning needs.

Sections often request CLE credits for attendance at lunch and dinner events that have a featured speaker on a substantive topic. The MSBA may approve up to 1 hour of CLE credit for such section events. These events are considered to be in-service programming, rather than CLE programming, which is widely advertised and directed to the entire membership. We encourage sections to direct their resources toward programming that benefits not only their members, but also the Association as a whole. Requests for programming of more than 1 hour of CLE credit will be directed to the CLE department.

CLE programming is a significant source of non-dues revenue that supports our public service projects, and other activities and expenses. Such non-dues revenue allows us to keep member fees and dues reasonable. Accordingly, programs must be analyzed in light of their ability to attract sufficient participation from members and other practicing attorneys.

**Business Meetings**
Sections may hold business meetings by teleconference, as a standalone event, or in conjunction with other MSBA events (e.g. Annual Bar Conference). Please coordinate your business meeting with the membership department to ensure there are no conflicts with other MSBA events. Attendance and minutes should be taken at these events, and submitted to the membership department. Business meetings do not qualify for CLE credit. See [Maine Bar Rule 5](#).

**Eblasts**
Please coordinate all section email blasts through the membership department to eliminate any cost to your firm. The MSBA is fully equipped to mail or electronically post reports, minutes, flyers, etc., to section members. Section chairpersons seeking records of current members may contact MSBA staff.

**Teleconferencing**
The membership department schedules the teleconference line for section use. Please contact the membership department in order to reserve the line and avoid any conflicts.
Communications
The work of your section may be of great interest to other lawyers in the MSBA. MSBA staff can bring important business and information regarding your activities to the attention of your colleagues throughout the state using electronic state bar resources. The MSBA supports open and frequent communication with its members and encourages you to contact staff members by email or phone with your MSBA-related news items.

The Maine Bar Journal is the association’s professional journal, which is published four times per year and covers substantive areas of Maine law. You are invited to propose articles or focus issues for consideration by the Maine Bar Journal Editorial Advisory Committee. Additionally, many section CLE presentations can be converted into educational and substantive articles. Please contact the communications director for further details.

The Supplement, the MSBA’s electronic newsletter, is published twelve times per year and covers newsworthy information about our members, section events, membership meetings, CLE seminars and membership benefits. Please contact the Communications Director to submit information about your section for this electronic publication.

Section Newsletters
Sections may publish electronic newsletters as a service to their members and to stimulate interest in activities. An electronic newsletter provides an efficient, inexpensive way to publish reports, substantive articles and other important information regarding a specific area of practice. The communications director can arrange for editing, layout, and distribution of your section’s newsletter.

To facilitate the publishing of your newsletter, a section member should be appointed to work with the communications director to establish a production schedule that will help ensure prompt distribution. Your newsletter is an important part of the valuable and professional services your section offers its members and the legal profession. Contact the communications director for newsletter samples, guidelines and personal assistance.

Online Communities
All MSBA sections have online communities with forums, email distribution capability, calendars of events, meeting minutes information, newsletters and section news. Questions can be posted to the section, legislative information can be updated, and important news can be accessed quickly. The ability to exchange information, news, events of interest and other items is a key component of the networking that section membership offers. The MSBA offers these opportunities through our website, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. Please contact the communications director for further information.

Media Relations
The president of the MSBA is the official spokesperson for public comment on association policies and positions. As a practical matter, a number of other individuals may be designated to provide factual information on behalf of the state bar, as required
by demands of timeliness or expertise. These individuals may include other officers, the executive director, MSBA staff members or section and committee chairs. Specific guidelines limiting statements by MSBA members are established in Article XV of the Association’s Bylaws.

The MSBA may occasionally be the source of information regarding the legal profession for news reporters. All communication with reporters, except those conducted directly by the president, is handled by the Association’s communications director in consultation with the Board of Governors and/or the executive director. All written statements disseminated to the media are specifically reviewed and approved by the executive director.

When a news reporter contacts the association with a factual question or is in need of information on a specific area of law, the communications director will refer the reporter to the appropriate section chair, or a designee, for an answer or comment. In most cases, a staff member will contact you if a reporter has been referred to you. You can assist reporters by providing straightforward, factual information. Any personal observations should be clearly explained as your own views and not those of the Maine State Bar Association.