

Mentoring Toolkit for Under-Represented Lawyers

Legal Technology & Mentorship

Table of Contents

Welcome	3
General Mentoring Principles	3
Glossary	4
Resources	6
Law Society of Alberta Resources.....	6
Getting More out of Mentorship.....	6
Cultural Fluency	6
Unconscious Bias	6
Be a Better Ally	7
Anti-Racism	7
Contact Information	7
Feedback	7

Welcome

Despite the growing diversity of the Canadian population and significant numbers of internationally trained lawyers seeking to join the Alberta bar each year, we still have a long way to go to achieve an equitable, diverse and inclusive profession.

It is in the public interest for the legal profession to be representative of the population it serves. The public should have a meaningful choice in who represents them. This is particularly true in the case of groups who might be under-represented in society. These groups may encounter cultural or language barriers to working with certain lawyers or firms, or may simply feel more comfortable having someone who understands their culture representing them.

Mentorship can play a key role in opening doors for the professional advancement of under-represented lawyers.

To support these lawyers and the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, the Law Society of Alberta has produced this toolkit. We have gathered best mentorship practices, important terminology and resources that will help mentors and mentees in developing their relationships and achieving their mentorship goals.

General Mentoring Principles

Many aspects of good mentorship are the same, no matter who the mentoring relationship is between. The **Resources** section of this document links to more materials that offer comprehensive information on developing mentorship relationships and other considerations for mentorship of under-represented lawyers.

As a start, we recommend that you use your first mentorship meeting to talk about what makes a successful mentoring relationship and what each of you is hoping to get out of this one. This will form the basis of your Mentoring Plan, which acts as a road map for the mentoring relationship. Set out short-term and long-term goals – what you hope to learn from the relationship – and talk about the things you would like to cover.

Your Mentoring Plan is not meant to be a fixed document and can evolve over the course of the mentorship. Discuss issues as they come up and revisit others if circumstances change.

If you need help deciding what you want to talk about, see [Discussion Topics for Mentors and Mentees](#) on the Law Society website.

The [Mentor Connect Handbook](#) has more suggestions about how to build a good Mentoring Plan.

Glossary

You and your mentoring partner may be approaching the practice of law from significantly different perspectives due to age, culture, background and other distinct characteristics. It will help to have a common understanding of some key terminology related to equity, diversity and inclusion. Keep these definitions in mind as you get to know each other.

***Note:** The language in this area is always evolving and this is not an exhaustive list. Please refer to the links below for additional resources.

Ally: A term used for people who support a social group other than their own, by acknowledging disadvantage and oppression and taking action on behalf of others. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, people of colour. See also **Visible Minority**.

Bystander effect (Bystander apathy): What happens when a person feels discouraged or is less likely to provide help to a person in distress because of the presence of other people. People assume someone else will step in and help and so no one does anything and the people who could have stepped in to help become a bystander. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Confirmation bias: Seeking out or only noticing information that reinforces our existing beliefs. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Cultural competence: A basic understanding of your own culture, its impacts on your perspective and a willing curiosity to learn about and understand other cultures with a positive attitude and a genuine respect and acceptance of cultural differences. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Cultural fluency: The ability to understand basic perspectives and norms of other cultures, recognize communication cues and context, and adapt your responses to communicate effectively. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Disrupting bias: The ongoing and conscious work of identifying your own unconscious bias, actively working to change your way of thinking and interrupting bias when you see it operating in others. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Diversity: Diversity refers to the variation between people. This includes parts of our identity that are considered 'innate' (like race, age, nationality, etc.), and aspects that are 'acquired' like cultural fluency and languages spoken. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Dog whistle: The subtle use of coded or suggestive language in political messages (often discriminatory or prejudiced in nature) that appear neutral to the general public but are intended to convey a secondary message to a targeted audience. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

EDI: An acronym that stands for equity, diversity and inclusion. Other acronyms describing work in this area include DEI, D&I and IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility).

Equity: A condition or state of fair, inclusive, and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences. ([Glossary of Terms](#), Canadian Race Relations Foundation):

Gaslighting: A form of abusive manipulation that causes the victim to question their own reality. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Inclusion: The extent to which diverse members of a group (society/organization) feel valued and respected. ([Glossary of Terms](#), Canadian Race Relations Foundation):

2SLGBTQ+: The acronym for two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual + other gender identities.

People of Colour: A term which applies to non-White racial or ethnic groups; generally used by racialized peoples as an alternative to the term “visible minority.” The word is not used to refer to Aboriginal peoples, as they are considered distinct societies under the Canadian Constitution. When including Indigenous peoples, it is correct to say “people of colour and Aboriginal / Indigenous peoples.” ([Glossary of Terms](#), Canadian Race Relations Foundation):

Sponsor: A sponsor is a powerful internal advocate who looks after your interests, helps connect you to leaders and special projects, and amplifies your work to other senior people in your business. The difference between sponsors and mentors is that mentors give guidance and advice but don’t necessarily have the same influence to effect change that sponsors do. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Systemic Discrimination: Policies, procedures and practices within systems and institutions that result in disproportionate opportunities or disadvantages for people with a common set of characteristics such as age, culture, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and/or socio-economic status. ([Law Society of Alberta Acknowledgement of Systemic Discrimination](#))

Unconscious bias: An implicit attitude or association that operates beyond our control or awareness. These biases inform our perceptions of people and social groups and can influence our decision-making and behaviour. ([Hive Learning, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#))

Visible Minority: Term used to describe people who are not white. Although it is a legal term widely used in human rights legislation and various policies, currently the terms racialized minority or people of colour are preferred by people labelled as ‘visible minorities’. ([Glossary of Terms](#), Canadian Race Relations Foundation)

Resources

Law Society of Alberta Resources

- [Looking for Mentorship? Law Society Mentorship Programs Overview Chart](#)
- [Mentor Connect Handbook](#)
- [Mentor Express Handbook](#)
- [Acknowledgment of Systemic Discrimination](#), Law Society of Alberta (2022)
- [Equity & Diversity Resources](#)
- [Indigenous Education Series: Guide for Lawyers Working with Indigenous Peoples](#), video 1:20:04
- [Indigenous Mentorship Program](#)

Getting More out of Mentorship

- [Be the Change: How Mentoring Can Improve Diversity in the Legal Profession](#), Law Practice Today, American Bar Association (July 2016)
- [Proactively Establishing a Valuable Mentor Network](#), Law Practice Today, American Bar Association (July 2021)
- [Five Things that Make a Great Mentor](#), American Bar Association (Dec. 2020)
- [Eight Tips for an Amazing Mentor Relationship](#), Forbes (Jan. 2018)
- [How to Develop a Mentoring Team](#), Forbes (July 2020)
- [What Mentors Wish Their Mentees Knew](#), Harvard Business Review (Nov. 2017)
- [How to Mentor in a Remote Workplace](#), Harvard Business Review (March 2022)
- [Mentoring Matters, Especially for Women and Minorities](#), CLO.com (Feb. 2018)
- [The Key to Diversity and Inclusion Is Mentorship](#), Forbes (Sept. 2019)

Cultural Fluency

- [3 Ways to Improve Your Cultural Fluency](#), Harvard Business Review (April 2019)
- [Cultural Competence: An Essential Skill in an Increasingly Diverse World](#), PracticePRO (Sept. 2014)
- [Learn a New Culture](#), TEDx video 13:38, Julien S. Bourelle (Oct. 2017)
- [Guide for Lawyers Working with Indigenous Peoples](#), Advocates' Society (May 2018)

Unconscious Bias

- [Rebalance the Scales: Implicit Bias, Diversity, and the Legal Profession](#), Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism Online Course

- [Unconscious Bias in Mentoring Relationships](#), Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism (March 2015)
- [How 'unconscious bias' training improves culture and productivity](#), HR Morning (Aug. 2021)
- [Unconscious Bias in the Workplace: Managing Differences Through Mentoring](#), Pollinate Networks (June 2020)
- [Implicit Bias: What is it? How to interrupt it?](#) Mirna Santiago (Nov. 2017)
- [11 Harmful Types of Unconscious Bias and How to Interrupt Them](#), Catalyst (Jan. 2020)

Be a Better Ally

- [Be a Better Ally](#), Harvard Business Review (Dec. 2020)
- [Want a More Just World? Be an Unlikely Ally](#), TEDx video 10:07, Nita Mosby Tyler (Nov. 2019)
- [Inclusive Language is Allyship](#), Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism, (Apr. 2021)

Anti-Racism

- [Anti-Racism Education for Legal Professionals \(On-Demand\)](#), Legal Education Society of Alberta (2021) (registration for an account is required but the course is complimentary)
- [Anti-Racism](#), Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre

Contact Information

Email: Law Society of Alberta [Mentorship Team](#)

Tel: 1.800.661.9003 (toll free) or 403.229.4700

Law Society of Alberta

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Feedback

If you have feedback or recommendations for this toolkit or our [mentorship programs](#), or if we can support your professional development in any other ways, please reach out to our [Mentorship Team](#).