



Women Lawyers of Franklin County
Strategic Plan
Years 2023-2028

Introduction

Founded in 1942, the Women Lawyers of Franklin County (hereinafter “WLFC”) is one of the oldest female bar associations in the country. At its inception, WLFC was created as an organization of women to “encourage and maintain the high ethical standards of the legal professional” and “to give women in the legal profession an opportunity to meet each other.” Although the legal landscape has evolved for women in 81 years, the needs and desires of the original founders remain relevant. WLFC encourages and demands professionalism and provides the space for all women in the legal profession to meet each other.

In 2023, WLFC continues to confront new challenges presented by a rapidly changing legal and societal environment. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, WLFC like many membership organizations, suffered a decline in membership and engagement. WLFC’s leadership recognized these challenges and decided to respond by implementing a strategic plan (the “Plan”).

The Plan describes how WLFC will respond and adapt to these changes for the benefit of its members. The Plan outlines the Goals and Strategic Objectives for the next five years. The Plan serves as a guide for the organization’s efforts to advance its mission.

The Plan is intended to provide forward mobility, increased relevance, and enhance the overall membership experience, while maintaining WLFC’s core value statement “We Are Our Own Best Resource.” WLFC was created to be a community of Women Lawyers practicing and working in Franklin County. To continue to bring that community together, we need to maintain flexibility within this Plan to fulfill our Goals and Strategic Objectives. This Plan makes no future assumptions and allows for flexibility to meet the core Goals and Strategic Objectives with an ever-changing landscape and demands on the legal field.

The Strategic Planning Process

2022-2023 WLFC President Celia Schnupp created the Strategic Planning Task Force (hereinafter “SP Task Force”), chaired by 2022-2023 Trustee Gina Piacentino. The SP Task Force was comprised of board members, non-board members, and non-members/interested parties (see Appendix). The SP Task Force had three 2-hour sessions where they brainstormed current challenges, future challenges, and ideas to respond to the changing legal world. Former WLFC President Eleana Drakatos volunteered to facilitate the sessions. Chair Gina Piacentino presented the strategic plan to the full board on May 9, 2023. The Board approved the 2023-2028 Strategic Plan.

Consideration of the Mission Statement

In addition to the three sessions, the SP Task Force considered whether WLFC’s mission statement fulfilled its intended goal and purpose. Through email exchanges, the SP Task Force exchanged various drafts and recommended to the Board that it reconsiders its mission statement to be a shorter and more active objective. Further, the SP Task Force recommended to the Board the adoption of a “Vision Statement” to better articulate to the members WLFC’s aspirations for the future and to hold some of the ideas that are currently in the WLFC’s mission statement.

Mission Statement

The WLFC’s mission statement currently reads as follows:

We advocate for the inclusion, equality and respect of all women in our profession and our community. Our culture is rooted in the honest exchange of ideas and dedicated to the professional advancement of women through leadership, educational programming, networking and community outreach. In alignment with our core values of inclusion,

equality, and respect, we are committed to increasing the representation and promotion of racially diverse, LGBTQ+, disabled, and veteran women in our profession. Individually and collectively, we are our own best resource.

The SP Task Force provided its recommendation for both the mission statement and the vision statement and recommended to the Board consideration of both in fiscal year 2023, with the goal of presenting both statements to the full membership for a vote.

Definition of Long-Term Success

The SP Task Force considered WLFC’s “definition of long-term success.” This definition was meant to identify the characteristics of a “successful” WLFC, as well as the accomplishments that would flow from that success.

A successful WLFC will focus on

- Engagement of its members
- Increased intentional recruitment of members
- Continually evaluating the metrics of the membership, to identify or recognize any concerns with inclusion or lack of diversity in its members or its Board
- Creating a leadership pipeline of the most engaged members
- Fostering the relationship with the Columbus Bar Association
- Staying relevant throughout its members’ entire career
- Maintaining its reputation and legacy
- Articulating how WLFC is distinct yet complementary to other affinity bars and female bar associations

WLFC 2023-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN (WITH FIVE-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN)

I. GOAL: Continue to be “Our Own Best Resource.”

A. Objective: Create a community of women lawyers

INITIATIVES

- Intentionally recruit with increased focus on law school engagement.
- Collaborate with other affinity groups.
- Connect with other companies, firms, and government women initiative groups.
- Focus interaction, connection, networking at meetings.
- Intentional outreach to new members.
- Create metrics in membership applications.

B. Objective: Create meaningful member engagement and relevant programming

INITIATIVES

- Continual audit of programming.
- Eliminate and streamline programs that match our Goals, Strategic Objectives, and overall mission/vision for the organization.
- Focus on being essential.

- Develop an annual budget that outlines our expectations and allows for sponsorship requests.

C. Objective: Foster a leadership pipeline and strengthen board involvement

INITIATIVES

- Identify and create intentionality with board positions.
- Create and identify board responsibilities.
- Engage non-board members to committee responsibilities.
- Create a leadership application process and identify that process to the members.
- Develop and implement a strategy to continue to be more inclusive and grow diverse leadership within WLFC.
- Review our metrics of the membership and ensure the board members are reflective of our membership, including identification of level of career.

D. Objective: Stay relevant for our member’s entire career and life stages

INITIATIVES

- Create intentional programming for relevant stages of members’ careers.
- Target marketing for our programming but encourage full membership attendance.
- Create area in membership application to gauge interest or needs and/or in follow-up event surveys regarding our members’ needs.
- Increase use of deliberate communication.
- Consider deliberate partnership of attorneys outside of their career or life stage or similar stages.

II. GOAL: Foster WLFC’s relationship with the CBA.

A. Objective: Become more deliberate in our relationship with the CBA

INITIATIVES

- Evaluate the potential of sending a board liaison to CBA Board meetings and inviting CBA Board to participate with WLFC. In the alternative, schedule ongoing discussions with CBA leadership.
- Ensure that we are using CBA benefits to our full advantage and educate Board members of the existence of the resources.
- Re-evaluate the relationship each year, ensuring use of CBA space, staff, and resources.
- Review memorandum of understanding and educate new board members of our relationship with the CBA.

B. Objective: Utilize CBA technology and monitor membership issues

INITIATIVES

- Re-evaluate membership sign-up and tracking internally through WLFC.
- Recognize and identify technology platforms to utilize to WLFC's benefit.

C. Objective: Consider combined events

INITIATIVES

- Support law student members of both organizations.
- Review CBA's committee support and determine if WLFC partnership is relevant.
- Potential collaboration on CLE (annual focus).

III. GOAL: Continue WLFC's Reputation and Legacy, While Articulating How WLFC Is Distinct Yet Complementary to Other Female and Affinity Bars.

A. OBJECTIVE: Acknowledge intersectionality of our potential members

INITIATIVES

- Explore and offer mutually beneficial joint membership fee arrangements with other affinity bars or multiple bar association memberships.
- Create strategic relationships with other affinity bars.
- Identify on membership application the member's association in other bar associations or community organizations.
- Intentionally connect and make meaningful outreach to members.

B. OBJECTIVE: Maintain WLFC's reputation and legacy

INITIATIVES

- Formalize board member education.
- Identify and create intentionality with board positions.
- Create and identify board responsibilities.
- Create a decision tree for potential positions that the organization promotes, including the retention of a non-public memorandum of outcome and purpose.

C. OBJECTIVE: Maintain WLFC's role in the community at-large

INITIATIVES

- Continue partnership with organizations that benefit women.
- Educate law schools about WLFC and attend law school events.
- Consider and give preference to diverse owned or community-based organizations as vendors, if applicable, available, and comparable in price for service needed.

APPENDIX A

Strategic Planning Task Force

Gina Piacentino, Chair
Lina Abbaoui
Chris Duraney
Nita Garg
Megan Gonzalez
Kelly Grigsby-Jones
Bridjette Hairston
Jasmine Hurley
Lisa Pierce-Reisz

Jane Snider-Gleaves
Heather Sowald
Kelli Stiles
Sara Valentine

Alexis Preskar, *ex-officio*
Celia Schnupp, *ex-officio*

Eleana Drakatos, *facilitator*

Strategic Plan Drafting Committee

Celia Schnupp, 2022-2023 WLFC President
Gina Piacentino, 2022-2023 WLFC Trustee
Eleana Drakatos, former WLFC President