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LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program

**Group Mentoring Program Planning Guide:
Everything You Need to Know to
Plan a Successful Event**

The Group Mentoring Program (GMP) is an important part of the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) Success in Law School Mentoring Program. These events allow attorney Mentors, student Mentees, and local law students the opportunity to network with each other in a more informal setting. The events also allow students the opportunity to hear practicing attorneys’ advice on what they need to know to be successful once they begin their practice.

LCLD survey data suggests that these types of events are ones that both attorneys and students enjoy and appreciate. This guide is intended to be a road map for planning GMP events. However, we encourage you to consider the personality of your local region and it’s law school(s) when you begin to plan your event. Every region is different and LCLD wants to ensure that these events speak to local audiences!

As always, LCLD is available to help with planning for your event at every step of the way. If you would like to schedule a call to begin the planning process or if you have questions as you plan your event, please contact **Nancy Richardson** at **nrichardson@lclldnet.com**.

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Advance Planning

Convening a steering committee

Though it is not required, to help distribute responsibilities, LCLD suggests you convene a group of local attorneys and/or diversity professionals from LCLD Member organizations that are participating in the Individual Mentoring Program (IMP) to help with planning the GMP event. As City Lead, you should act as the group lead, but these people may be engaged to help with all aspects of planning the event, including (but not limited to) choosing a topic, setting the agenda, securing speakers/panelists, choosing a venue, managing RSVPs, and paying for the event. Though a steering committee is not required, it has significantly reduced the workload on the City Lead(s) in the locations where it has been engaged.

Choosing an event location

LCLD has no requirements for the location of a GMP event. In the past, events have typically been held at LCLD Member law firms or the local law school(s). When planning an event, one should consider from where both students and attorneys may be traveling, and choose a venue that is not only convenient for both, but that also may yield the most participation. For obvious reasons, the location you choose should also accommodate the size of the crowd that you anticipate. If the preference is for the event to be held at an LCLD Member organization, different LCLD Member organizations in the region should be approached to serve as host in different years, in order to spread both planning and financial responsibilities. In most cases, LCLD Member organizations have been happy to host events, especially when some of the cost is shared amongst other area Members.

Scheduling the event—working with law schools/hosts

The most difficult part of scheduling a GMP event is finding a time that works for students at the local law schools. Typically, a law school calendar of events is filled as much as a year in advance so it is important to get your event(s) on the calendars of all local law school(s) as soon as you are able. Equally as important is engaging your contacts at the local law school(s) to discuss a date/time. Not only is this good public relations for LCLD, but your contacts will often have a good handle on the calendar and when their students might be most available to attend. Scheduling a date for the event will likely come up when in discussions with the host but it is also important to consider the availability of other local attorneys who are part of LCLD Member organizations.

If you have assembled a steering committee, they may be able to help with organizing around specific events that have already been scheduled but, if not, be sure to check with your local bar association to ensure that there are no other events scheduled on the day of your event that might draw your attendance numbers down.

Finally, GMP events may be held at any time during the day. The majority of regions have scheduled events in the late afternoon/evening, but there have also been others held during a lunch hour. No region has held an event in the early morning, as it is usually not ideal for law students; however, the morning is also a possibility.

Choosing a format/topic

GMP events have taken many different forms in many different regions. In most locations, City Lead have planned events that include a panel discussion followed by a more informal networking opportunity. However, there have been other events that were structured differently, including a round-table discussion (this was a small group) and a panel followed by small group breakouts that included both attorneys and students. A panel followed by informal networking seems to be the structure most preferred by City Leads, but LCLD is also open to City Leads exploring other program formats, like the ones above, especially if you have information unique to your area that suggests a different format might be better received by students and attorneys. Below is a list of suggested topics; some have been covered during past GMP events and others are suggestions from LCLD:

- Networking & Relationship Building
- Professionalism
- Interviewing
- Practice Area Choice
- Resume Writing
- Exam-Taking Tips and Stress Management
- Attorney Evaluation
- What I Wish I Knew in Law School/The Unwritten Rules
- The Varied Professional Opportunities Provided By a Law Degree
- The Corporate In-House Perspective
- Growing Your Professional Network
- Executive Presence/Judgment

Suggestions to accompany virtual events above to incorporate fun

- Virtual Happy Hours
- Virtual Scavenger Hunts
- Virtual docent guided tour
- Virtual Bingo to meet each other

Communication platforms that might be helpful

- Skype for Business
- BlueJeans
- Microsoft Teams
- Zoom
- GoTo Meeting
- WebEx

Soliciting attorney participants (for a panel, discussion leader, etc.)

If you have convened a steering committee, this step in the planning process may be quite easy. All of the people on your committee are likely to have many professional contacts of their own and will be able to reach out accordingly to folks who may be skilled at speaking on a panel in a particular area. If you have not convened a steering committee, you should plan to contact attorney Mentors already

participating in the IMP to check their interest in participating on a panel or to see if they have additional contacts who might be suitable for participating. Additionally, it is likely that there are LCLD Fellows in your area who may be interested in participating in the event as panelists. It may be helpful to search the [LCLD Directory](#) by “City” to find local Fellows, Pathfinders, and Alumni. In the case that the IMP City Lead is someone other than you, please reach out to the IMP City Lead to help in this process. If you reach out locally and are unable to secure attorney participants, please contact the LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program Manager for additional assistance.

How to pay for the event

Although LCLD would like for you to put forth every effort to plan and execute a professional event, you should not feel as though your organization or others need to spend a lot of money on a GMP event. In the case that you have convened a steering committee, consider asking other members of the committee if their organization will share the cost of the event amongst all members. Depending on the number of committee members, this may cut down significantly on the total cost. If you do not have a steering committee, it is reasonable to ask the host organization to take on costs associated with the event.

LCLD has a small stipend available to help supplement the costs for one of your events, and funds will be provided upon request. After your event ends, email the Program Manager with receipts from your event, to whom the check should be made payable, and the name of the contact. A reimbursement check will be processed upon receipt.

Refreshments

As previously mentioned, LCLD is interested in all City Leads overseeing the planning of a professional event, however, spending a lot of money to do so is not required. Depending on the financial capacity of the host(s), you may choose an event that includes alcoholic drinks and appetizers or you may opt for something a bit more casual like pizza and soda or a box lunch. LCLD does not require that you provide refreshments, though offering something to attendees does often provide a bit of incentive for attendance.

Invitations

LCLD asks that City Leads work to plan three GMP events per academic year. The first “kick-off” event is intended for only newly matched Mentors and Mentees participating in the IMP. This gathering is an opportunity for Mentors and Mentees to meet each other after being matched, but also for everyone who is involved to come together as a group and network.

LCLD also hopes that a similar event, with the same invitees, will happen in the spring before students leave law school for the summer break. Similarly, this spring event is simply an opportunity for everyone to meet, network, and make plans to meet in the summer or when the fall session begins again.

A more substantive, open GMP event should be planned for the late January to mid-April time frame. This event is intended for all local law students depending on the invitee list determined by the City Lead (see details on the next page).

The LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program Manager has contact information for all Mentors and Mentees involved in the IMP and can provide that information. In the event that the invitee list includes all 1L, 2L, and 3L students at the local law school(s), please plan to work with your law school contact(s) to distribute information about the event to all of their students (in addition to sending an email invitation directly to all Mentees).

Fall & Spring Events (closed)

Only 1L Mentees and their Mentor attorneys should be invited to the closed, small-scale gatherings in the fall and spring. These events are intended to be an opportunity for Mentors and Mentees to get to know each other but also to get to know others participating in the program.

Winter Event (open)

In all cases, determining who to invite is left up to the City Lead and should be based on what you feel is most suitable for your region. Where capacity allows, LCLD recommends that all 1L, 2L, and 3L students at law schools in your city be invited. You may only be partnered with two or three of the law schools in your region and may prefer to only invite 1L, 2L, and 3L students from those schools. In larger regions, you may choose to invite only those students who are participating (or who have participated) in the IMP. Where space allows, we also ask that you consider inviting 1L LCLD Scholars in your local area. Please contact the LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program Manager for a list of Scholars in your area.

With respect to attorneys, LCLD recommends that you invite all local attorneys who are participating (or who have participated) in the IMP and, where space allows, that you encourage them to bring their colleagues from LCLD Member organizations. Also, please consider inviting local LCLD Fellows; they are often very interested in participating in events like these and as practicing, diverse attorneys, may have some great insights for students. Please visit the [LCLD Directory](#) for a list of Fellows, Pathfinders and Alumni in your local area. Students very much enjoy speaking with attorneys, and because attorneys are often very busy, their attendance at these events is much lower. The more attorneys you invite, the larger the number that may actually attend the event. And finally, if space allows, you may want to consider inviting your law school contact(s).

When possible in the case of both types of events, invitations should be sent six weeks in advance of the event, but no later than four weeks in advance. RSVP reminders should be sent according to the number of RSVPs that have already been collected and the number of attendees you hope will attend. At least one RSVP reminder, approximately one to two weeks in advance of the event, should be distributed to your invitation list. If you have questions about how to determine who to invite to your event, please contact the LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program Manager for additional assistance.

Collecting RSVPs

Though LCLD has some capacity to help collect RSVPs, we recommend that you instead engage someone locally to help with this process. If a steering committee has been assembled, it is very likely that someone within this group will volunteer to take on the responsibility of collecting RSVPs. If you are

not working with a steering committee, consider asking the host organization to collect RSVPs; or perhaps someone within your organization is available to provide assistance. If you are unable to identify a person to help collect RSVPs, please contact the LCLD Success in Law School Mentoring Program Manager for additional assistance.

The Week of the Event

Final reminder

Because some attorneys and students may have registered to attend very early, you will need to send a reminder email a few days in advance of the event. This reminder is also an opportunity to include any special instructions attendees may need about directions to the venue, parking, or getting into the building. If you need a better idea of final attendees for the purpose of estimating the amount of food to order, this reminder is also an opportunity to ask attorneys and students to reply if their schedule has changed and they are no longer able to attend.

Security clearance

Some venues may require that guest names be submitted in advance of the event to verify that they are supposed to be in the building, especially if the event is after regular business hours. Be sure to check with the host organization in advance of the event to see what, if any, protocols they have in place to account for event attendees.

Parking


As with security clearance requirements, some venues may have special instructions for visitor parking/parking validation. Be sure to check with the host organization for these special instructions so they may be distributed to guests in advance of the event. If there will be a cost associated with parking, please be sure to let students know in advance.

Name tags

All guests at the GMP event should have a name tag. For attorneys, the name tag should include their name and organization; for students, the name tag should include their name and law school. LCLD asks that City Leads coordinate name tag production with the host organization.

Pre-event inspection of the space

When possible, the City Lead or someone else on the steering committee should visit the venue to look at the space and ensure that it is adequate. This visit should include speaking with someone on-site about how the room(s) should be set up for the event you have planned (e.g., where the panelists will be located, how many seats the panel table needs, how many seats to set up in total, how to set up the area for networking, etc). Ideally, the person you speak with at the venue should be someone who is working



closely with the event on the ground and who you can consider your primary contact leading up to the event and on the day of the event.

Confirmation of arrangements

A day or two before the event, the City Lead and/or others working closely on the planning of the event should email the primary contact person at the venue to confirm all arrangements. On the day of the event, the City Lead and others working closely on the planning of the event should arrive at the venue in advance of the scheduled start time to do a final walk through of the space to ensure that everything is in place for the start of the event.

Photography

As part of the arrangements for the day of the event, please work to secure someone from the host organization to take several photos. LCLD is working to collect information about GMP events for possible use on our website and photos are a great enhancement to anything we post about your event.

Follow-Up

Post-event recap for LCLD and participating organizations

Because LCLD staff members are unable to attend all GMP events across the country, we like to collect short recaps of each event that takes place. This information serves both as an informational piece for LCLD staff but may be used at some point on the LCLD website or in a newsletter to highlight the GMP to other LCLD Members, student Mentees, and attorney Mentors.

Generally speaking, the recap should include the following information:

- Number of attendees
- Names and titles of program leaders/panelists
- General description of the program and its format
- Any quotes or feedback from attendees about their experience

Post-event recap/thank you for law school representatives

In order to continue to cultivate the relationship with law school partners, LCLD recommends that City Leads distribute a thank you email/note to all law school contacts that had student representation at the GMP event. Primarily, the message should thank the contact for distributing information about the event to students. LCLD recommends that you include a recap that details the information above, especially if the law school contact or other representative was unable to attend.

Final agenda

GMP events are being held in regions across the country each academic year and, in order to begin to create additional resources for planning, LCLD would like to collect the final agenda for your event once the event has concluded. The same topics are often covered in different cities and LCLD often receives requests from City Leads for the agendas used in other cities; having these on hand may help other City Leads in the planning of their own events.

Thank you emails to attorney participants (program leaders, panel), the host organization, and the steering committee

LCLD recommends that the City Lead and/or the steering committee as a group send a short thank you email to all panelists or program leaders who participated in the GMP event. This may be executed in a number of different ways but a group email to all involved is sufficient. Similarly, thanking the host organization and any personnel associated with the event is highly recommended. And finally, LCLD recommends that you send a thank you email to the event steering committee; it will likely go a long way in securing help for future events.

Follow up on payment of expenses by participating firms

If you chose to share costs amongst local organizations, after the event, you or others on the steering committee may need to follow up with those organizations that volunteered to help subsidize the event. Typically, someone from the host organization will contact you or those who volunteered to help with cost, but you may need to help reach out to those organizations who fail to forward payment in a timely manner. In advance of the event, be sure to speak with a representative from the host organization about how you have arranged for payment to be made and offer to work with them along the way to ensure that all event-related expenses are reconciled soon after the event.

LCLD has a small stipend available to help supplement the costs for one of your events, and funds will be provided upon request. After your event ends, email the Program Manager with receipts from your event, to whom the check should be made payable, and the name of the contact. A reimbursement check will be processed upon receipt.

Support from LCLD

Planning help

When needed, the LCLD Success in Law School Program Manager is available to consult with City Leads and steering committees as you work to plan an event in your city. The Program Manager may be able to provide advice about a topic for discussion, who to invite based on your city size, program structure, and, more generally, how events have been executed in other cities. LCLD asks that City Leads consider all of the items under the “Advanced Planning” section of this document to begin to think about how the event might look. At that point, the Program Manager can help with remaining questions that the City Lead or steering committee may have. Please do not hesitate to contact the Program Manager, at any point, if you have questions or concerns. Also, you may ask the Program Manager to join in on planning calls to help guide program planning.

Event agenda

Depending on what you are planning for an event topic, LCLD may be able to provide assistance with respect to the agenda. As suggested previously, the topic you plan to discuss may have been the focus of an event in another area and LCLD may have the agenda. Further, the LCLD Program Manager is happy to discuss your plans and help to fine tune them if you are interested in feedback.

Invitation design

The City Lead Training Manual contains a file with the basic design of an invitation that should be used for all planned GMP events. LCLD asks that, if you are able, you create and distribute the invitation, with help from your steering committee as necessary. When necessary, LCLD may be used as a resource to help with creation and distribution of invitations, but when possible, we ask that you conduct the invitation process internally.

Event attendance

Unfortunately, LCLD staff members are unable to attend all GMP events scheduled across the country. However, we do plan to attend a select few events each academic year so that we may stay connected to our Member organizations, their attorneys, and the students who choose to attend GMP events. If you would like a representative from LCLD to attend your event, please let the LCLD Success in Law School Program Manager know as soon as the event is scheduled so that an LCLD staff person may plan to attend. In most cases, the staff person to attend would be the LCLD Success in Law School Program Manager. In a select few cases and as his schedule allows, LCLD President Robert Grey may be available to attend, but significant advance notice is required.