

PRESS RELEASE

Baker Donelson Launches Diversity & Inclusion Compact

December 10, 2020

As part of its longstanding and ongoing diversity efforts, Baker Donelson has implemented a Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Compact, a multi-year plan to drastically increase the number of diverse attorneys within its ranks, as well as committing to provide additional support and remove barriers to advancement.

Baker Donelson's [D&I Compact](#) outlines the Firm's commitment to be an industry-leading law firm in diversity and inclusion by December 31, 2025 and specific benchmarks for the Firm to achieve in order to meet that goal. For the purposes of the D&I Compact, diversity is defined as racial, ethnic, and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer) status.

The groundwork for the Compact began in early 2019, after [Timothy M. Lupinacci](#) assumed the role of chairman and CEO of the Firm and identified diversity and inclusion among his top strategic priorities. "Baker Donelson has a long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion. We're proud of the progress we've made since launching our Diversity Initiative in 2002, but we recognized there was much more work to be done," Mr. Lupinacci said. "The D&I Compact will allow Baker Donelson to continue to make progress and establish our Firm as a leader in the industry."

In 2019 the Firm conducted a D&I Cultural Audit to survey its diverse attorneys for their views on the Firm's diversity and inclusion efforts, obstacles they have experienced and suggestions for improvement. The audit identified many positive attributes but also areas for improvement, including retention, access and connection to significant Firm clients, opportunities for leadership advancement, and mentoring.

Over the last year, [Marcus M. Maples](#), chair of the D&I Compact Advisory Board, has led a team of attorneys and professionals across the Firm in utilizing feedback from the D&I Cultural Audit to create Baker Donelson's D&I Compact. "The audit was crucial in helping us identify the types of obstacles that may limit an attorney's pathway to success. We believe the Compact offers a concrete, actionable plan to help attorneys overcome those obstacles. Our hope is that our efforts will serve as an example in the legal community as a firm that understood it had work to do and committed to doing it. We also hope to inspire others in the legal profession and beyond to take their own steps forward," Mr. Maples said.

To achieve industry-leading benchmarks of at least 20 percent diverse attorneys, ten percent diverse shareholders, eight percent diverse equity shareholders and a ten percent diverse management team, the D&I Compact outlines four priorities:

- **Robust tracking of diverse lawyers' recruitment, progress and pathway success:** The Firm has implemented clear measurement and tracking tools. All Firm leaders – including the board of directors, compensation committee, practice group leaders, department chairs and office managing shareholders – will be held accountable, and their compensation will be dependent on their achievements.
- **Sponsorship:** As a person of influence and an advocate, a sponsor is a champion who promotes their protégé's interactions with signature Firm clients and other Firm leaders, and helps raise their visibility

in the community and within the Firm. For the Compact's sponsorship program, sponsors will be Firm owners with 1,000+ shares or a Firm leader who actively works on his or her protégé's behalf and advocates for their pathway to success. The Compact outlines expectations and resources for sponsors and protégés.

- Increased focus on business generation training and execution: The Firm will take aggressive measures to ensure that (1) diverse attorneys are given every opportunity to participate in its business development programs; and (2) attorney sponsors are doing everything they can to help diverse attorneys become successful business developers and leaders in business generation.
- Implementation of the D&I attorney recruitment plan: The recruitment plan encompasses a number of measures that primarily seek to ensure that a diverse attorney or a member of the Diversity Committee interviews each diverse attorney candidate.

Mr. Maples noted, "The cornerstone of any effective D&I program should be the creation of a sense of home for diverse attorneys, so that they feel as much at home at the Firm as anybody else. Home is a place where we feel comfortable, where we can express ourselves, where we can disagree but still come together for the common good, and where people respect others and their opinions. That's what the Compact is about. It's about removing barriers that have been in place for generations that have kept diverse attorneys from succeeding at the same rate as their non-diverse colleagues, and ensuring that each person has the same access to opportunities and the same chance for advancement."

[Mark A. Baugh](#), chair of Baker Donelson's Diversity Committee, added, "We are extremely proud of the work that Marcus and all of our Advisory Board members put into developing this Compact. This is Baker Donelson's pledge to hold our Firm and its leaders accountable as we work together to build a law firm that will lead the legal industry in our numbers of diverse leaders, lawyers, shareholders and equity shareholders. We look forward to the day when we as a firm can celebrate our success in not only reaching but exceeding the goals we have set for ourselves."

Diversity & Inclusion at Baker Donelson

Baker Donelson strives to create an inclusive environment for all employees, welcoming people of all races, genders, ages, languages, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, disabilities, sexual orientations and religious beliefs to assist clients in achieving their legal goals. Through its focus on creating an atmosphere that honors the diverse qualities in each of its employees, Baker Donelson honors the unique perspectives and approaches that are provided by differences in educational background, socio-economic background, personality profile, geographic location, job duties, marital and family status. As a Mansfield Rule Certified Plus 2020 firm, Baker Donelson affirmatively considers at least 30 percent women, attorneys of color, LGBTQ+ attorneys, and attorneys with disabilities in the candidate pools for recruitment, governance roles, equity partner promotions, and inclusion in formal pitch presentations to clients. Baker Donelson is also a member of the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance (LFAA), a coalition of more than 200 of the nation's leading law firms focused on utilizing private bar resources to assist legal services organizations in furtherance of their missions to dismantle barriers to opportunity in communities of color.