

WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION OF LOS ANGELES

PLANNING SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS

I. FORMING A COMMITTEE

It is never too early to start forming a committee of interested WLALA members to assist with the planning of a program or event. Before the Board meets at the initial Retreat, you can check with the Executive Administrator for the names of any members who are interested in serving on your committee or working with your section. Contact these members immediately. Check with the Executive Administrator periodically to learn if any new members have expressed interest in your committee or section. Involve these members as much as possible throughout the year. Under no circumstances should a member's expression of interest go unacknowledged. It is a good idea to maintain a database of the interested members and have their email and telephone numbers handy and available to involve them in all stages of planning.

II. PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM OR EVENT

- A. **Program/Event Ideas and Timeline** – Obtain historical information from the prior chair of the committee or section. You may find that there will be a schedule of important deadlines that you will need to be aware of in the planning process. Ask the Executive Administrator to send you the program flyers for the last 3-4 years so you have an idea of what other chairs have done and so the program topics and speakers are not repetitive. Make sure the event/program topic fits within the WLALA mission. Run the program idea, potential speakers, and program date by the Executive Administrator, First Vice President, and Executive Committee Liaison **before** issuing any invitations to speakers. Consult with the Executive Administrator and the First Vice President to select a date for the meeting so that WLALA avoids conflicting meetings and events with our own calendar and those of other major bar associations.
- B. **Budget and Costs** – There is a budget that member meetings and events must meet each year, i.e. certain meetings and events must generate a certain amount of profit each year to help sustain WLALA's operations.
 - 1. The Treasurer should reach out to you early in the year to give you the financial goal for your program or event. If you have any questions, please contact the Treasurer as soon as possible. The budget goal is the net profit that WLALA's operating budget projects that your program/event will make. It is very important that you work hard to meet your financial goal so that WLALA can sustain its operations.
 - 2. In calculating program expenses, include all expenses associated with the proposed program or event (e.g., food, venue, printing of sponsor boards).
 - 3. In order to keep costs low, consider asking a law firm to sponsor a program by providing a conference room and/or food and drinks at no

- cost. If you are not part of a law firm, look to your committee members for options. Other Board Members can also be resources.
4. Many vendors are also willing to sponsor a program by providing a meeting space and/or food at no cost.
 5. For mentoring programs or networking events, consider using a public meeting place and have each member pay their own tab or bring a brown bag lunch.
 6. The WLALA Office may also be used for programs if scheduled in advance. But, please be mindful of limited parking options.
 7. For the larger events – WLALApalooza and Litigator’s Forum, negotiate and compare venue/location prices. Ask the Executive Administrator to provide the cost and income information from the prior year or two.
 8. When selecting speakers, ask if their firm will sponsor the event/program.
 9. Don’t forget about parking. Try and negotiate the inclusion of free or discounted parking. Look for alternative parking arrangements in nearby lots. If possible, include in the overall price of the program so that it is not an extra, unexpected cost to the participants.

C. **Prepare a Proposal to the WLALA Executive Committee** - The written proposal should be emailed to the entire Executive Committee and include information regarding the date and time of the program, the format of the program, the topics to be covered, who the speaker(s) and moderator are and, importantly, the racial diversity of the panel participants. **In order to address WLALA’s historic lack of racial diversity, the guideline set by the Executive Committee is that at least half of the panelists for our programs be racially diverse. This does not include moderators.** The EC reserves the right to recommend or require consultation with eBAR and/or the Advisory Council regarding racial diversity of the participants. In the case of requests from other bar associations for co-sponsorship or publicity of their programs where at least half of the panelists are not racially diverse, the EC may by majority vote:

- approve the request where the request is non-monetary; and
- seek approval by the Board of Governors where the request is monetary.

The proposal should include whether MCLE credit will be available. Please note all virtual WLALA programs should adhere to the standardized pricing as follows:

WLALA Members: \$20

Non-Members: \$30

Government, Solo, Public Interest, Retired, Judiciary WLALA Members: \$15

Law Student WLALA Members: Free

WLALA Executive Committee approval is required only if changes to these standard prices are proposed.

The proposal should also include estimated expenses and income, sponsorships and an explanation of how you will meet your program goal. Please also include how you will publicize the event.

D. **Publicity** - Planning ahead guarantees the most and best publicity.

1. Have the event flyer prepared and ready to circulate to membership at least 6 weeks prior to the event. The Event Flyer Request Form can be found at <https://wlala.org/wlala-event-flyer-request-form/>.
2. Submit an article to the Communications Officer for inclusion in the Newsletter. Remember that submissions for the following month are due by the 15th of each month.
3. Plan for ways to reach beyond the WLALA membership. Look for alliances with other organizations and bar groups.
4. Reach out to local media (LADJ, Met News, Downtown News, LABJ, LA Times, etc.).
5. If you work at a law firm, check with your firm's Marketing Director and ask to use any appropriate contacts. Remember that this is a marketing opportunity for you **and** your firm! Send a firm wide e-mail with a personal opening that advises that you have planned this event/program and that you would appreciate the support of your colleagues in its success.
6. Send a personalized e-mail to all of your client and business contacts that you think would enjoy attending.

E. **MCLE** – Offering MCLE credit generally boosts attendance rates. Make sure your program and materials meet the requirements set forth by the State Bar: <http://mcle.calbar.ca.gov/Providers/EducationApproval/QualifyingActivities.aspx>

F. **Minimize the Environmental Impact of Your Event**

1. **Avoid plastics.** Over 90% of all plastics are not recycled and can remain in landfills for hundreds of years. Instead of plastic water bottles and utensils, use canned drinks, glass bottles, and/or reusable or compostable utensils.
2. **Recycle.** Ensure that recycling bins are available at your event.
3. **Minimize food waste.** Ask for RSVPs before events and order food accordingly. Take leftovers to local food shelters when possible.
4. **Sustainable products.** Purchase paper products made from recycled content. Minimize use of paper by using electronic correspondence. Avoid wasteful giveaways.
5. **Green catering.** Choose food vendors that use some degree of locally-sourced, organic and/or sustainable foods, as well as non-plastic packaging.
6. **Green venues.** Consider venues that have experience running sustainable events and/or are LEED or Green Seal-certified. Ask venues what steps they can take to minimize their environmental impact.

7. **Educate.** Inform attendees of the steps that have been taken to green the event.

III. **CHECK LIST AND TIME TABLE**

ONE MONTH BEFORE THE PROGRAM DATE

- Confirm details with the venue including the menu and any requirements for audiovisual equipment, etc. Determine when the venue requires a final head count. Don't forget about any special audio visual needs such as multiple microphones, screens, projectors, etc.
- Confirm that the facility has necessary insurance coverage and/or confirm with the Executive Administrator that the WLALA insurance policy will be sufficient for the program/event.
- Arrange to have committee members as volunteers to check people into the event and make certain that the event runs smoothly – designate a liaison with the venue.
- Announce the event at the Board Meeting.
- Confirm that the materials submitted by the panelists meet MCLE requirements and can be produced within budget (consider making them available on the WLALA web site or by email upon request).
- Confirm that the Executive Administrator is preparing the MCLE evaluation forms.
- Touch base with the panelists or speakers. A conference call is recommended with all committee/section chairs and the involved speakers so that everyone is on the same page regarding the goals of the program, the schedule and all time constraints. Provide the speakers with a list of questions and discuss them on the conference call.
- Communicate with the Executive Administrator and Treasurer regarding any checks that need issued in advance of the program/event.

48 – 60 HOURS BEFORE THE PROGRAM DATE

- Confirm the number of attendees with the Executive Administrator and relay that information to the venue/security.
- Confirm volunteers for sign-in or make alternate arrangements with the Executive Administrator.
- Confirm the food service and parking arrangements.

DAY OF THE PROGRAM

- Confirm that necessary equipment (i.e. microphones) is in working order.

- Welcome attendees to the program, briefly explain the WLALA mission and encourage non-members to join WLALA by filling out a membership application (have membership applications on hand).

DAY AFTER THE SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

- Write thank you letters to the speakers and anyone who assisted such as facility staff.
- Ask the Executive Administrator to calculate the profit for your report at the next Board meeting.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

Report on the meeting/program/event as to attendance, evaluations and profit!