



Entrepreneurs in **COMMUNITY LAWYERING**

A program of
the Dallas Bar
Association

The Dallas Bar Association launched "Entrepreneurs in Community Lawyering" in 2019 as the first local legal incubator program in Dallas. The incubator helps socially conscious lawyers start a financially sustainable solo or small firm practice that caters to a lower income clientele.



WHY IS THE PROGRAM NEEDED?

- When faced with legal issues such as wrongful foreclosure, child custody, probate issues and bankruptcy, many moderate-income Americans are deprived access to justice because they cannot find an affordable lawyer.

In Dallas:

- 34% of children in Dallas lived below the poverty level before the COVID-19 crisis.
- With more than 1.2 million jobs lost in Texas in April alone, the needs of struggling families have only grown.
- At the same time, there are lawyers who would like to address the needs of these everyday people but lack the practical legal and business skills necessary to launch and sustain a financially viable solo or small firm. The incubator program fills this gap.

PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE:

- Extensive training on establishing a successful practice
- On-going coaching by dedicated solo/small firm practitioner
- Additional mentoring by lawyers in successful specialized practices
- Access to practice management resources
- Networking/business development opportunities
- Use of a professional office space for client meetings

PROGRAM GOALS:

- Assist new lawyers who want to become successful solo practitioners
- Provide affordable legal services for modest-means citizens in Dallas County



WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- Licensed attorneys with a strong interest in starting a solo or small firm practice serving a modest-means clientele
- All participants must complete an application and interview process and be invited to participate





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DBA INCUBATOR PROJECT (ENTREPRENEURS IN COMMUNITY LAWYERING)

The following items are required to apply for the DBA Incubator Program. **Deadline to apply is Friday, July 17, 2020. Send all documents to ecl@dallasbar.org.**

- Application
- Résumé
- Statement of Intent (three page)

INTERVIEW

If your application is selected for consideration, you will be contacted by the Dallas Bar Association to set up a phone interview. If you are selected to move forward to the second round of interviews, you will participate in a panel interview. You should anticipate being asked detailed questions about your business plan and commitment to serving people of modest means.

HOW WILL THE PROGRAM WORK?

Program Dates

September 2020 - August 2021

Training, Supervision and Mentoring

The program starts with an initial multi-day boot camp training program that introduces participants to the incubator program and covers topics ranging from creating a business plan, setting up and operating a business, budgeting, marketing and business development, alternative fee structures and billing, and identifying areas of practice. Following the initial multi-day training, program participants will meet regularly over the course of 12 months with instructors who will provide in-depth guidance, assistance and training on substantive law, case management, professional responsibility and operating a business. Volunteer attorney mentors will also be made available to the participants.

Pro Bono

Incorporated into the program is mandatory pro bono requirement. Program participants will be encouraged to attend Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program (DVAP) training programs and fulfill a requisite number of pro bono hours through DVAP or another approved pro bono entity.

Resource Access

Participants will be strongly encouraged to become active in the DBA and take advantage of its benefits. Through the DBA, participants will have access to free CLE, the Lawyer Referral Service, networking opportunities and training programs geared toward beginning lawyers such as Transition to Law and Trial Skills Academy. The incubator program also connects members with valuable discounts on a variety of practice management tools.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

Licensed attorneys who demonstrate determination, an entrepreneurial spirit, dedication to providing access to justice, and a firm commitment to the program. Sustainability of the applicant's proposed practice area is also critical. All participants must complete an application and interview process and be invited to participate. It is anticipated that the program will have eight to ten lawyers per session.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the commitment to the program?

The program lasts twelve months.

2. Do I need malpractice insurance?

Yes. Participants will be required to obtain insurance. The Dallas Bar Association can assist with helping you obtain affordable coverage.

3. Do I need to form my own firm?

Yes. You must either form your own solo firm or create/join one with other attorneys at the beginning of the program. Participants are not employees of Dallas Bar Association or the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program. In consulting with Dallas Bar Association staff or other incubator participants, you will be expected to maintain client confidentiality consistent with participants' status as separate firms.

4. What are the expectations of me as a participant?

Aside from complying with your ethical obligations as a lawyer, you are expected to participate in the monthly CLE programs, schedule regular meetings with your mentor and contribute at least 200 hours of pro bono service during your time with the incubator.

5. What are the benefits of participating in the Incubator Program?

As a participant in the incubator program, you will receive concentrated training on establishing a successful practice, on-going supervision by dedicated solo/small firm practitioner, additional mentoring by lawyers in successful specialized practice, access to a supportive network of practitioners and many networking/business development opportunities.





APPLICATION

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

E-mail address: _____ Year of JD degree: _____

Law School Attended: _____

Date of Licensure: _____ Years of Practice _____

Primary Area(s) of Practice (current or planned):

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

The following documents must be submitted to ecl@dallasbar.org with this application by Friday, July 17, 2020:

- 1. A current résumé.
- 2. Statement of Intent. In no more than 3 pages, please indicate the following:
 - a. Why you want to be a solo or small-firm practitioner. (If applicable, discuss how a former work experience in the legal profession influenced your decision to start your own practice.)
 - b. Why you should be selected to participate in the DBA Entrepreneurs in Community Lawyering Program.
 - c. A statement explaining how and the extent to which you expect to serve underrepresented, low- and moderate-income members of the community and how, if at all, you anticipate using alternative delivery methods in your provision of legal services (e.g., unbundling, sliding-scale fee structures, etc.).
 - d. A brief summary of your legal experience (if any).

Please initial each statement below indicating your agreement:

_____ I understand that eligibility to enter or continue in Entrepreneurs in Community Lawyering requires that I continue to be a member of the Texas Bar in good standing. I agree to notify the Entrepreneurs in Community Lawyering Program director immediately of any change in my status or of any action by the Texas State Bar Office of Disciplinary taken against me.

_____ I understand that I may be required to carry malpractice insurance in an amount of at least \$100,000/\$300,000, and to pay for any and all if the policy is a claims-reported policy.

_____ If I am selected as a participant in DBA Incubator Program, I agree to abide by and remain compliant with all the rules governing the program.

_____ All statements in this application and accompanying attachments are true to the best of my knowledge and reflect realistic projections based on information reasonably available to me. I understand that any material misstatements herein may subject me to termination from the program should I be selected.

_____ I expect to provide at least 200 hours of pro bono work during my participation in Entrepreneurs in Community Lawyering Program.

_____ I understand that I am creating my own law firm, that I am not an employee of Dallas Bar Association or the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program or of any participating schools or partners, and that I have not been promised and am not guaranteed any payments. I understand that I will be responsible for developing my own clientele and that Dallas Bar Association or the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program and the participating schools or partners cannot guarantee business. I further understand that in interacting with Dallas Bar Association or the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program staff or others who are not members of my firm, I will be expected to maintain client confidences consistent with my status as the principal of my own firm.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Dated: _____

