



**Mecklenburg Bar Foundation  
Strategic Plan 2015-2017**

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## I. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

The Mecklenburg Bar Foundation (“MBF”) strategic planning process began in January 2014 and continued through Fall 2014 in accordance with the following timeline:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Date</u>
Appoint Strategic Planning Co-Chairs	Late 2013
Committee organizational meeting	January 2014
Interview select MBF and MCB leaders	Feb/March 2014
Executive Committee discussion to identify key issues	March, 2014
Present draft plan to full Board	April 2014
Present revised plan to full Board	August 2014
Present final plan to Board for approval	October 2014
Present final plan to MCB Board for approval	November 2014
Distribute plan to MCB membership	December 2014

The process of gathering information and perspectives about MBF’s programs and activities was inclusive of MBF and Mecklenburg County Bar (“MCB”) professional staff and volunteer leadership. It also included review and consideration of the 2011-2014 MBF strategic plan goals (those that were accomplished and those still in progress) as well as MCB annual goals. It is the responsibility of the MBF Board of Directors and the Executive Director to oversee the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Special thanks are owed to Sarah D. Byrne and W. Lewis Glenn III, Co-Chairs of the Strategic Planning Committee, for their tireless efforts and tremendous wisdom leading this successful planning process.

## II. MISSION OF FOUNDATION

MBF affirms its relevance and importance to the legal community in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina as articulated the following mission statement:

The Mecklenburg Bar Foundation is a charitable organization that has as its mission to advance public understanding and respect for the rule of law and the role of the legal profession; to promote the highest ideals of professionalism, public service and access to the legal system; and to support the charitable and educational goals of the Mecklenburg County Bar.

## III. GOVERNANCE

MBF is committed to a governance model that adheres to the highest standards of nonprofit management, ensures appropriate alignment with MCB, and is inclusive of MCB diverse membership.

***Goal 1: Increase the communication and collaboration between MCB and MBF with methods that will render the relationship transparent and provide for mutual support of each organization’s goals.***

Tactics:

- Convene executive committees of MCB and MBF on a regular basis, and the presidents of each at least biannually, to increase communication between the bodies and to ensure that the goals of each are supported by the other. MBF President and MCB Executive Director will coordinate with MCB Leadership.
- Document a description of the landlord-tenant relationship between MBF and MCB and the methods by which MBF supports the charitable and educational goals of MCB, and make that document available to MCB membership.
- Encourage MCB leadership to better define MCB's charitable goals and together evaluate whether MCB and MBF would be better served by putting MCB's charitable functions under the governance of MBF.

Timeline: By the end of 2015

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Executive Committee; Executive Director.

***Goal 2: Ensure that MBF's leadership is inclusive of MCB's diverse membership.***

Tactics:

- Adhere to MBF Nominating Committee Guidelines that were designed to slate a Board of Directors that is inclusive considering a range of factors, including, without limitation, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability and place of employment.
- Recruit MBF officers, including Development Committee chair and vice-chair, with an eye toward inclusion.
- Increase communications and institute other methods of outreach for the Board nominating process to increase recruitment of the greater membership and beyond so that nominations do not come exclusively from the existing Board.
- Evaluate and diversify the membership of the Nominating Committee (e.g., consider including non-bar leaders).

Timeline: Immediately

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Nominating Committee; Executive Director.

***Goal 3: Maintain the efficiency that comes from strong Executive Committee structure while increasing the full Board's engagement in executive decisions.***

Tactics:

- Consider greatly reducing the time allocation for, or completely eliminate, oral committee updates to allow more time for executive decision discussion. If eliminated, written committee updates should be circulated.
- In addition to reducing oral committee updates, consider extending Board meetings to ninety minutes.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of continuing the practice of circulating Executive Committee minutes to the full Board.

Timeline: By December 2016.

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Executive Committee; Executive Director.

#### **IV. EFFICIENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

MBF strives to obtain the highest standards of efficiency and accountability for nonprofit organizations, consistent with MBF's expectations for its nonprofit grantees.

***Goal 1: Seek to appropriately balance MBF's program-related expenses with administrative, fundraising and other non-charitable expenses.***

Tactics:

- Annually evaluate the need to decrease expenses and/or increase program service expenditures (i.e., grants to nonprofits with a legal nexus and to MCB for charitable and educational programs and direct MBF charitable program services) to ensure optimal efficiency.
- Review peer foundations based on similar characteristics such as size of bar membership, scope of programs, and age of organization along with Form 990s when a thorough evaluation is needed.
- Determine meaningful efficiency data to share with donors and other stakeholders.
- Determine schedule and formula to evaluate MBF's performance including exploration and evaluation of potential for regional or national organization review and/or certification.

Timeline: As needed, but at least every other year.

Person(s) Responsible: Treasurer; Development Committee Chair; Director of Finance and Human Resources; Director of Development.

***Goal 2: Be transparent regarding MBF's operations and activities with all stakeholders, including MCB members, MBF donors, and the general public.***

Tactics:

- Post on MBF website the following: articles of incorporation, bylaws, conflict of interest policy, Forms 990 for prior three fiscal years, and most recent annual audit.

Timeline: Immediately.

Person(s) Responsible: Treasurer; Director of Finance and Human Resources; Director of Communications and Member Networking.

***Goal 3: Use stakeholder feedback obtained from routine survey data to help MBF evaluate its performance in meeting its defined metrics and to identify areas of strength and weakness to help evaluate ongoing programs as well as overall fundraising and grantmaking efforts.***

Tactics:

- Develop timeline (default to every fifth year) for survey of stakeholders.
- Review survey results and trends for performance issues.

Timeline: September 2015 (and every fifth year thereafter).

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Director of Communications and Member Networking; Executive Director.

## V. BAR CENTER

MBF Board and professional staff are committed to ensure that all budgetary transfers between MBF and MCB are fair and reasonable.

***Goal: Establish and evaluate, in conjunction with MBF, guidelines for calculating (i) the administrative fee paid by MBF to MCB, and (ii) fair market rent paid by MCB to MBF.***

Tactics:

- MBF to assess services provided by MCB staff.
- MBF in conjunction with Future Bar/Foundation Center Committee liaison to conduct real property market analysis for new Bar Center.
- Tax implications to be considered.
- Written guidelines to be approved by both MBF and MCB boards.

Timeline: Ongoing but not later than July 1, 2016.

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Treasurer; Director of Finance and Human Resources; Executive Director.

## VI. FUNDRAISING

MBF is committed to maximizing its philanthropic impact for the benefit of the Mecklenburg County community and the legal profession.

***Goal 1: Meet or exceed a reasonable overall fundraising goal set annually by MBF Board.***

Tactics:

- Annual goal to be set by considering various factors including the prior years' campaign goals and successes, expected grant requests (if foreseeable), and any other circumstances that may affect that year's campaign.
- Document annual campaign cycle (including incremental goals, events and stewardship programing) which is to be distributed among the committee members annually.
- Discern and document separate goals of the Lawyers' Impact Fund ("LIF"), the Naming Rights Campaign, and other categories of fundraising.
- Research opportunities for a "negative check off" giving option on bar-related forms to inspire annual giving. (For example, look into how the N.C. State Bar Foundation does this on its dues form and research applicable state bar rules).
- Engage in robust use of website to increase giving.
- Encourage MBF and MCB board members to give at leadership levels.
- Improve stewardship methods including programming to thank donors a set number of times per year and identify by whom.

Timeline: By end of 2015

Person(s) Responsible: Development Committee Chair; Director of Development; Executive Director.

***Goal 2: Improve communication about the difference between the Lawyers' Impact Fund ("LIF") and other funds and campaigns.***

Tactics:

- Improve communications to the membership about the difference between the LIF and program-related fundraising initiatives.
- Communicate to the membership that the LIF supports nonprofits with a legal nexus by investing in important projects and filling gaps created by unexpected challenges. Because our grants and funding do not typically provide essential general operating support for these organizations, we encourage every member of the Bar to contribute

to the LIF and directly to our grantees' annual fundraising campaigns such as the LANC/LSSP "Access to Justice" Campaign, Council for Children's Rights and others.

- Consider the impact of MBF's annual support of the County's largest legal aid organizations on those organizations' own campaigns and the constituents they serve.
- Collect data about the impact of MBF solicitations on other fundraising campaigns.

Timeline: By December 2015.

Person(s) Responsible: Development Committee Chair; Director of Development.

***Goal 3: Collaborate with the Naming Rights Campaign Committee to ensure that both campaigns operate in tandem without compromising the success of either.***

Tactics:

- Maintain open communication between the Development Committee Chair and Vice Chair and the Naming Rights Campaign Co-Chairs about goals, communicated purpose of gifts, success, strategy and targeted donors.

Timeline: Immediately.

Person(s) Responsible: Development Committee Chair; Naming Rights Campaign Committee Co-Chairs; Executive Director.

***Goal 4: Clarify the role of smaller events in the Foundation's fundraising.***

Tactics:

- Establish criteria for determining whether to engage in an event, including without limitation demands on professional staff.
- Consider creating a committee to oversee small events.
- Establish, ideally measurable, goals (other than fundraising, such as fellowship) for such events.

Timeline: By the end of 2016.

Person(s) Responsible: Development Committee Chair; Director of Development; Executive Director.

**Goal 5: Pursue solicitation of planned or endowment fund gifts.**

Tactics:

- Establish a strategy for soliciting planned or endowment fund gifts.
- Identify model programs for such solicitation.

Timeline: By the end of 2017.

Person(s) Responsible: Development Committee Chair; Director of Development; Executive Director.

## VII. GRANTS AND EVALUATION

MBF is committed to a grants program that ensures impact, integrity and efficiency, both as it relates to grants to community nonprofit organizations with a legal nexus and to MCB in support of its charitable and educational purposes.

**Goal 1: Receive and review a diverse pool of high quality grant proposals with objectives consistent with MBF's mission statement.**

Tactics:

- Develop a concrete marketing plan to publicize existence of available grant funds and be clear about the legal nexus requirements. The plan is to be circulated among and executed by MBF's Grants and Communications Committees. *See IX (Internal and External Communications).*
- Consider establishing post-grant marketing guidelines for both grantees and MBF/MCB. Such would provide guidance regarding how grantees communicate about MBF grant and how MBF and MCB communicate about the grantee.
- Revise and update Grant Request Application Form to, among other things, ensure that the amount of information requested is appropriate for the size of the grant to be awarded.
- Regularly remind grantees of evaluation requirements.
- Consider replacing current anti-discrimination certification for potential grantees with an inclusion certification, acknowledging that many charitable programs are inherently discriminatory (i.e., target new immigrants or women).
- Formalize conflict of interest disclosure process for Board members and Grant Committee members.

Timeline: By end of 2016

Person(s) Responsible: Grants Committee Chair; Liaison to the Communications Committee.

***Goal 2: Elevate MBF's recognition as a strategic philanthropic investor that adds significant value to its nonprofit grantees.***

Tactics:

- Discern MBF's unique value as a grantmaker.
- Leverage relationships and knowledge of the broader MCB membership to seek proactive grantmaking opportunities.
- Due to recent increase in grant requests, consider whether MBF should make smaller grants to a greater breadth of organizations or, alternatively, decline funding to several organizations in order to provide more impactful grants to a smaller pool of grantees.
- Generally, award grants only during the first quarter of the calendar after the Lawyers' Impact Fund ("LIF") campaign concludes.
- Create an "emergency" grant fund and establish criteria for its use.
- Coordinate with Development Committee Chair to determine whether pre-selecting grantees would be beneficial to LIF campaign and other unrestricted fundraising efforts (i.e., the Law & Society Luncheon).
- Consider whether MBF should offer its grantees something in addition to dollars such as technical support, volunteer time or community prestige.

Timeline: \_\_\_\_\_ By December 2015.

Person(s) Responsible: Grants Committee Chair; Executive Director; Treasurer.

***Goal 3: Improve MBF's evaluation program to validate the effectiveness of its grants to nonprofit organizations to ensure a continued legal nexus and support of MCB's charitable and educational goals.***

Tactics:

- Develop an evaluation program that will provide necessary information to MBF without unduly burdening the grantees.
- Identify key indicators of success with each grantee.

Timeline: By end of 2016.

Person(s) Responsible: Grants Committee Chair; Liaison to the Communications Committee; Director of Communications and Member Networking.

## VIII. FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

In addition to making grants, MBF conducts a number of its own charitable and educational programs and events. Such programs include the McMillan Fund Fellowships, Law and Society Luncheon, and MCB/MBF Joint Bar Leadership Institute programs and events.

***Goal:*** *Evaluate the continued relevance and impact of each existing MBF program and event and consider adding new programs to address emerging needs of the MCB membership and the community.*

Tactics:

- Adopt or review for effectiveness (if existing) an annual work plan and calendar for each program.
- Develop a volunteer leadership succession plan for each program to ensure both continuity and new perspectives.
- Recommend for evaluation whether the Lawyers as Volunteers Advisory (LAVA) Committee should fall under the umbrella of MBF.
- Establish Task Force to set timeframe for MBF agenda item(s) to discuss addition or deletion of programs and evaluation of same, including use of outside audit resources to thoroughly and routinely assess each program's effectiveness and develop metrics for internal ongoing review of same.

Timeline: By end of 2015.

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Executive Director; respective Program Chairs.

## IX. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

MBF will leverage additional support for the Lawyer's Impact Fund ("LIF") and other MBF charitable initiatives by sharing its current successes and past achievements. Raising awareness of MBF also will enhance the public's image of attorneys in Mecklenburg County.

***Goal 1:*** *Inform MCB membership about the success of MBF grantees, thereby inspiring current and future donors to support financially LIF and other MBF charitable initiatives.*

Tactics:

- Use a combination of data and stories (with an emphasis on the latter) to promote MBF's impact within MCB and the community as a whole.

- Collect vignettes and photos from MBF grantees about individuals and communities positively impacted by MBF grants.
- Consider publishing results of grantee evaluations to MCB membership.
- Begin by educating MCB leadership and major donor organizations.
- Utilize multiple communication channels including MCB website, Bar Blast, Mecklenburg Bar Newsletter, MCB Annual Meeting, and other MCB events.
- Identify current communication strategies and individuals responsible on both MBF Board and MCB Staff. Propose to MCB and MBF a MBF Board liaison to MCB Communications Committee.

Timeline: Immediately with donor presentation to begin by Spring 2015.

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Grants Chair; Executive Director; Director of Communications and Member Networking; Liaison to the Communications Committee, Director of Development.

***Goal 2: Inform the general public about the impact of MBF's grants and its own charitable and educational programs with the goal of enhancing the public image of the MCB membership.***

Tactics:

- Utilize earned media including the Observer, Philanthropy Journal, and other local print and on-line publications.
- Consider whether to purchase advertising space to announce grants when earned media is not available.
- Apply for local, state and national awards such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals (Charlotte Chapter) Outstanding Philanthropic Organization of the Year.
- Use opportunities for promotion of MBF impacts by using cooperative grantee/MBF presentations to tie MBF to grantee outcomes.

Timeline: By end of 2015.

Person(s) Responsible: Board President; Grants Chair; Executive Director; Director of Communications and Member Networking; Liaison to the Communications Committee.

*Thank you to the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation 2014 Board of Directors for their vision to create this plan with the leadership of Strategic Planning Committee Co-Chairs, Sarah D. Byrne and W. Lewis Glenn III:*

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