



# 2023 THRIVING TOGETHER

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is integral to everything we do at Stinson LLP. Our mission is to provide an equitable workplace that attracts, retains and promotes individuals of diverse backgrounds through recruitment, engagement and accountability initiatives, partnerships with local and national organizations, and the development of systems and processes that mitigate the effects of bias.

Stinson understands that a truly inclusive and equitable firm does not occur overnight. With leaders who fully support our efforts, we believe in tackling tough issues, like micro-inequities and unconscious biases, with a growth mindset of being open to new ideas, seeking out innovative solutions and proactively looking for opportunities to enhance the professional and personal development of our attorneys and staff. We do not just think outside the box; we question whether we need the box. This allows us to be bold and garner remarkable results.

### UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO DEI

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* triggered a variety of measures undertaken by DEI opponents aimed at tainting the perception of DEI and dismantling DEI programs. Despite these attacks, Stinson's commitment remains unwavering.

We are a better firm because our efforts attract the brightest talent from diverse backgrounds whose perspectives enhance our ability to provide exceptional client service. We carefully analyzed our existing DEI programs to ensure they complied with the spirit of the Court's decision and found that all but one were in compliance; thus, we renamed our Minority Fellowship as the Equity Fellowship and opened eligibility to anyone who has personally experienced bias or demonstrated a commitment to advancing DEI in their future career.

We also carefully examined our systems to look for additional opportunities to strengthen inclusivity and equity. To be truly equitable, we take into consideration the unique challenges that could inadvertently impact attorneys and staff from underrepresented backgrounds. We initiated several efforts outlined in this report.



## Pro Bono Partnership

As a signatory to the Law Firm Antiracism Alliance, we are committed to using law as a vehicle for change. We continue to leverage our resources to amplify voices of individuals and communities oppressed by racism and to promote racial equity in society through pro bono efforts focused on identifying and dismantling systemic racism in the legal profession, in law and in government organizations. In addition, the firm works to support nonprofits and individuals affected by racism. Over the last year, the Pro Bono Department has worked with other departments at the firm to update its intake procedures to better track the types of clients and populations served by our work, and to have a greater understanding of the impact of our pro bono initiatives.

## Well-Being Partnership

Stinson recognizes the importance of well-being for both individuals and the firm. Our commitment to supporting our attorneys and staff is evident through our innovative well-being initiatives, led by our dedicated Director of Well-Being, Krista Larson. Krista spearheads the implementation of the firm's vision, strategy, and programs aimed at enhancing the personal and professional success of everyone at the firm. Our Well-Being Committee, composed of leaders across the firm, develops education, training, and resources on essential topics such as work-life integration and managing mental health challenges. Similar to DEI, the Well-Being Committee is focused on all of us thriving together, presenting a natural opportunity for partnership between DEI and Well-Being. For example, in 2023, the DEI and Well-Being teams collaborated to relaunch and bolster the firm's existing Caregivers Network, using a more tailored approach based on whom caregivers are caring for (e.g., children, elders, people with disabilities, etc.). As part of the enhanced services for caregivers, the firm expanded its benefits, launched a mentoring program for attorneys and staff taking parental leave, developed an internal networking platform for caregivers to communicate with and support one another, and deployed a robust communications strategy focused on highlighting available caregiving resources.



## Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) Fellows & Pathfinders

The firm continually identifies opportunities for our diverse attorneys to develop their leadership skills. We are a member of LCLD, a consortium of over 400 law firms and corporate legal departments that are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within the legal profession.

Partner Christina Arnone was selected by the LCLD to participate in the 2023 Fellows program and attorneys Kristen Ellis Johnson and Jessica Knox were selected to participate in the 2023 Pathfinders program.



**Christina Arnone**  
PARTNER \ KANSAS CITY

“LCLD has provided me with incredible opportunities to connect with a national network of professionals interested in becoming change-makers in their own organizations and within the legal community more broadly. One of LCLD’s many organizational strengths is that it is composed equally of in-house and outside counsel, working and networking together for a common purpose. LCLD provided us a safe space to discuss common issues faced by minority groups in the legal profession and to collaborate on solutions. My accountability partners have now become close friends, as well, celebrating career and life successes and joys and raising one another up through challenges.”

## SYSTEMIC REFORMS TO ADVANCE EQUITY AND INCLUSION

### DEI Attrition Task Force Launched

Stinson launched a DEI Attrition Task Force in its zealous commitment to continuously improve our efforts to retain talented lawyers from various backgrounds. The task force’s objective is to understand why diverse attorneys leave and why they stay and propose solutions to the firm’s board of directors in summer 2024 that would mitigate attrition by 3-5% in the next five years. As part of its extensive research, Stinson hired a consulting group to conduct stay and exit interviews of Stinson attorneys. Stinson attorneys also participated in a large-scale study conducted by Anne Brafford, founder of Aspire and past Chair of the ABA Law Practice Division’s Legal Attorney Well-Being Committee, on how leaders can foster inclusion within the legal profession, the results of which will be featured during Stinson’s 2024 Diversity Week.

### Real-Time Feedback

Timely, candid and actionable feedback is essential to the professional development, engagement and retention of all associates. Regular and timely performance feedback can help establish a two-way communication channel between an assigning attorney and an associate and can lead to improved engagement, better performance, less attrition and increased productivity.

Yet it can be difficult for some assigning attorneys to provide feedback for a variety of reasons, including competing demands on their time, the need to prioritize billable work or sheer discomfort in providing critical feedback to a colleague. This phenomenon can be exacerbated when a person is afraid of appearing biased, and thus refrains from providing critical feedback to a person of a different identity (e.g., race, gender, etc.). Feedback can also be easier to give and receive when it is rooted in an authentic relationship, which may result in disparate experiences for diverse associates and associates who may primarily work for attorneys in other offices. As a result, there is an inconsistency with how and how often assigning attorneys provide feedback. To help ameliorate this phenomenon, Stinson launched the Real-Time Feedback initiative to provide a simple feedback tool and clear guidance on how to provide actionable feedback using the “Situation-Behavior-Impact+Next Steps” framework.



## Associate Competencies Engagement Program (ACE)

Stinson's commitment to success extends to associate training and professional development through the ACE Program. The program aims to empower associates by giving them a clear roadmap for success and the opportunity to take charge of their professional development, as well as supporting the development of all associates by ensuring equitable access to career-enhancing work experiences and business development opportunities. At the helm of the program are Practice Development Partners who, in addition to making sure that projects are equitably distributed, guarantee each associate is provided the opportunity to develop the applicable competencies, build relationships with other attorneys and clients, and participate in client development opportunities. These partners work closely with Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer [Ann Thomas](#) to ensure that diverse attorneys are receiving the support they need to effectively advance in their careers.



**Greg Payton**  
ASSOCIATE \ TAMPA

“ACE is a great resource for Stinson associates. My Take Charge Tracker identifies relevant skills for my practice area and helps me track my progress as I develop those skills. I always leave my quarterly meetings with my Practice Development Partner feeling focused on my goals and with a set of action items that will help me achieve those goals.”

## Interviewer Bias Training

Interviewer bias exists when the expectations, beliefs and prejudices of an interviewer influence the interview process and the interviewer's interpretation of the interviewee. This can either affect the outcome positively or negatively, and these preconceptions can both consciously and unconsciously influence judgment.

In an effort to mitigate bias among interviewers, each year Stinson trains all members of the Recruitment Committee on several biases that can impact the recruiting process along with effective techniques to mitigate these biases.

## PROGRAMMING

### R.I.S.E.

Stinson developed a program called R.I.S.E.: Rainmaking. Influencing. Succeeding. Elevating., which is specifically designed to foster the professional growth of women attorneys. The program provides quarterly business development training consisting of panel discussions and skill-application exercises, among other trainings. The program also includes Connections, an opt-in component where women attorneys are grouped into small cohorts of six to eight to facilitate personal interaction across the firm's 13 office locations, implement strategies outlined in the business development training modules and receive input and support from one another on their business development goals.

In 2023, R.I.S.E. programming focused on learning from the career trajectory of Stinson women who have successfully advanced their career. The series kicked off with the inspiring story of Managing Partner [Allison Murdock](#), who shared how she rose up the ranks from summer associate to the pinnacle of law firm leadership.

## Celebrating Our Ninth Annual Diversity Week

Stinson celebrated its ninth annual Diversity Week in June with a theme focused on allyship. We welcomed Kenji Yoshino, Chief Justice Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law at NYU School of Law and the Director of the Center for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, to facilitate a training, “Becoming an Ally to All.”

Professor Yoshino provided our attorneys and staff with insight on how to overcome one of the major obstacles to effective allyship – saying the wrong thing. He engaged our attorneys and staff in a discussion that offered a practical, shame-free and nuanced approach to issues that we increasingly confront in our day-to-day lives and examined allyship principles that can be applied to the legal profession.

Additional Diversity Week highlights included an interactive training, “Empathy: A Path to Allyship,” that was facilitated by the DEI department and members of our Allies Network. The training discussed how empathy is the “secret sauce” to your allyship journey. Takeaways included:

- DISTINGUISHING EMPATHY FROM OTHER TYPES OF RESPONSES.
- USING EMPATHY TO ADVANCE THE FOUR STAGES OF ALLYSHIP.
- USING EMPATHY TO HELP SUPPORT MICRO-AFFIRMATIONS.

## RECOGNITIONS

### Mansfield Certification Plus

Stinson achieved Mansfield Certification Plus status for the fourth consecutive year. This certification measures the structural changes and steps law firms and legal departments have taken over the past year to ensure paths to leadership – including lateral hiring, client pitch teams, promotions, appointments and more – are open and transparent to all qualified attorneys. The “Plus” designation indicates a firm has taken steps to increase inclusivity in leadership roles and has measured progress in doing so.

### Human Rights Campaign Foundation Corporate Equality Index

The firm received a score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s 2023-2024 Corporate Equality Index for the sixth year in a row and the designation of being a 2023 Equality 100 Award: Leader in LGBTQ+ Workplace Inclusion recipient. Stinson is one of 545 major U.S. businesses to earn the Equality 100 designation.

### LCLD Top Performer & Compass Award Recognitions

For the sixth year in a row, Stinson was recognized by the LCLD with the Compass and Top Performer Awards. The Top Performer Award recognizes organizations in the top 20% for participation in LCLD programs and activities. The Compass Award recognizes individuals and organizations who have fulfilled LCLD requirements in a single calendar year, including engagement from an organization’s managing partner or general counsel with LCLD, the nomination of an LCLD Fellow and Pathfinder and participation in an LCLD Pipeline program. Stinson was one of 73 organizations to receive both recognitions this year.

### Women in Law Empowerment Forum

We were awarded the Gold Standard Certification by the Women in Law Empowerment Forum for the 11<sup>th</sup> time since 2011. The Gold Standard status was awarded to 28 U.S. law firms and six international firms for their commitment to advancing and retaining the number of women among equity partners and in firm leadership positions.

## Stinson Attorneys Advance Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Stinson is proud to be home to a diverse group of attorneys who are consistently recognized for their dedication to serving their communities and advancing diversity and inclusion. We are privileged to support their contributions as they lead by example, emphasizing the significance of DEI within the firm and legal community at large.



Managing Partner Allison Murdock was one of only six law firm executives selected to receive Missouri Lawyers Media's 2023 Law Firm Leader award. This award celebrates law firm executives who have demonstrated extraordinary vision, innovation and leadership during the past year.



Partner Laura Halferty was honored with the *Finance & Commerce Top Women in Finance* award for breaking down barriers and paving the way for other women in the finance industry.



Partner Sharon Ng was named to *AZ Business' 2023 Most Influential Minority Business Leaders* list.



Partner Jill Radloff was recognized as a Top Women in Law award honoree by *Minnesota Lawyer* for her professional accomplishments and dedication to serving the community.



Partner Nicci Warr was honored with the 2023 Diversity & Inclusion Award by *Missouri Lawyers Media*. The award recognizes legal professionals who are significantly advancing DEI in Missouri's legal profession and in communities in which exceptional legal work helps ensure justice for all.



Attorney Judith Araujo was selected as one of 14 associates from among several law firms to participate in the 2023 U.S. Bank Spotlight on Talent program.

## CONTACT US

For more information on our DEI initiatives, please visit [stinson.com](https://stinson.com) or contact Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ann Thomas.