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TALENT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (TDI) Some Frequently Asked Questions

Who is The Chicago Committee? The Chicago Committee is a not-for-profit membership organization that for twenty-five years has worked with Chicago law firms to support the success of their racial and ethnic minority attorneys, thus advancing diversity in the broader legal profession. It was previously known as the Chicago Committee on Minorities in Large Law Firms. Currently the Committee has 45 member law firms.

What is the purpose of TDI? To advance our mission to increase racial and ethnic diversity in the legal profession, the Committee offers guidance to its member law firms to implement best practices to develop and retain their minority talent. Empirical research supports the proposition that implementing sound talent development practices in large law firms is essential to improving retention of minority attorneys.¹ In collaboration with the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism (ILSCCP), the Committee has agreed to make certain benefits available to non-member law firms in Illinois with ten or more attorneys.

How does TDI work? Generally speaking, TDI is a set of tools by which law firms look inward at their resources, implement best talent development practices and measure the impact of these action steps on the progress of their minority attorneys. TDI focuses on associate attorney development systems that impact the path to partnership and it is adaptable to a range of law firm environments. A number of Committee firms are already implementing some or all TDI components, tailored to fit their needs, e.g. managed associate assignment systems, attorney competency models, attorney mentoring and intentional direction of professional development opportunities.

¹ “Progress in the Chicago Corporate Bar? A 10 Year Progress Report, 2002-2012” , March 7, 2013 presentation by William D. Henderson to Chicago Committee and guests, referring to “How Bell Labs Creates Star Performers”, Robert E. Kelley, Janet Kaplan, Harvard Business Review July-August 1993; and an unnamed, large Am Law 200 law firm’s reported experience with a lawyer competency model.

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What are the tools offered to non-member firms? They are the following:

- diagnostic – firms internally gather and analyze their basic historical retention data to establish the baseline for progress measurement, i.e. using data from the last three years, record the relative tenure of individual minority attorneys (associates and partners) at the firm to majority attorneys at the firm
- a set of frequently asked questions and responses (this document)
- participation in the TDI Success Index – a set of criteria by which firms can measure whether their internal policies, infrastructure and culture promote the advancement and retention of minority attorneys

When will the tools be available and how do we access them?

The diagnostic and FAQ document are currently available on the Chicago Committee website at www.chicagocommittee.org under TDI, Non-member Firm Resources. The TDI Success Index will be released in fall 2013 and will also be accessible on the Committee's website.

If you have additional questions regarding TDI, you can send an email to info@chicagocommittee.org or contact Peggy Davis, Executive Director at pdavis@chicagocommittee.org or by phone at 312.899-8466.