

Page: Submitter's Information
Chapter Name ACC San Francisco Bay Area
Page: Achievement Award
Category Innovative Programming Effort
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Chapter Size Large (more than 851 members)
Entry Title Unmasking Talent: Creating Neuroinclusive Legal Teams
Entry Description This powerful CLE program reframed implicit bias through the lens of neurodiversity—one of the most overlooked but critical inclusion topics in today's workforce. With leading voices from academia, law firms, and neurodivergent advocacy, the panel delivered an evidence-based, deeply human discussion about the impact of bias, masking, and disclosure on legal professionals. Participants left with tangible strategies to build inclusive, high-functioning teams. Approved for California Implicit Bias credit, this session blended legal relevance, social science, and professional vulnerability to catalyze a more inclusive legal industry.
When was the program initiated? 3/6/2025
What was the project objective? Describe the steps you took to achieve this objective, including key strategies, activities, or milestones. Objective: To educate legal professionals on how implicit bias impacts neurodivergent individuals in the workplace and to equip attendees with practical tools to foster an inclusive, strengths-based team culture. Key Steps: Built a cross-disciplinary speaker panel combining legal expertise, neurodivergent lived experience, and academic research. Structured CLE content to align with California's "implicit bias" credit, using research and storytelling to underscore systemic and personal dimensions of bias. Developed tools and takeaways for building neuroinclusive teams: communication frameworks, allyship strategies, and universal design approaches. Framed masking and non-disclosure as legal productivity and wellness issues, not just DEI matters.
How was the objective achieved? How did you measure success, and to what extent do you believe the objective was met? Success Indicators: High Attendance and Strong In-Session Engagement: The panel drew significant attendance and featured an active, thoughtful Q&A throughout the discussion, with attendees sharing personal experiences and asking in-depth questions—demonstrating the program's resonance and impact. Positive Feedback: Attendees gained new awareness of neurodiversity in law and indicated intent to apply at least one takeaway (e.g., allyship strategies, flexible communication formats) Conclusion: The objective was exceeded—attendees gained both awareness and action, and the program inspired next-step efforts to institutionalize change.

Please describe the total budget allocated for your program or initiative. Include a brief breakdown of how the funds were distributed across key areas. In addition, explain how the budget was used effectively or creatively to maximize impact.

Total Budget: \$0

This program was executed with no financial cost, demonstrating the power of mission-driven collaboration and resourcefulness.

How We Maximized Impact Without a Budget:

Volunteer Speakers: All panelists donated their time and expertise, motivated by a shared commitment to inclusion and advocacy.

Virtual Format: The session was hosted online using existing chapter infrastructure, eliminating venue and tech costs.

Internal Promotion: Marketing and communications were handled through our chapter's regular channels, ensuring wide reach at no additional expense.

Educational Resource Sharing: Panelists contributed publicly available slides and reference materials, allowing us to provide high-value content to attendees

By leveraging community goodwill, subject matter passion, and internal assets, we delivered a high-impact, innovative CLE program at zero cost—making this initiative replicable and sustainable for chapters of any size.

What significant obstacles or challenges did you encounter during the planning or implementation of your program or initiative? How did you address or overcome them? If you did not face major challenges, please explain why that may have been the case and what factors contributed to the smooth execution of your work.

Challenges:

Framing the topic for CLE credit while maintaining authenticity. Neurodiversity is not always seen as a “bias” topic under typical CLE models. We overcame this by grounding the content in employment law implications, workplace equity, and legal education statistics (e.g., 74% of neurodivergent legal professionals feel the industry is not inclusive).

Encouraging vulnerability in a professional forum: We prepared speakers with intentional prompts and pre-panel discussion to establish trust and boundaries. The panel was really open and authentic during preparation of the slide deck, and there were inevitable disagreements. It turned out to be too much for one of the original panelists, but they graciously allowed the use of their content which was expertly carried forward by the other panelists. Lessons learned: flexibility, patience, and lots of active listening.

Siloed awareness: Many attorneys had never been exposed to neurodiversity as a professional development topic. The panel format allowed for safe entry into a potentially unfamiliar space.

Enablers of Success:

Thoughtful planning, strong moderator support, and emotionally compelling content made the session both smooth and powerful.

What do you anticipate will be the long-term impact of your project or initiative? Describe how the outcomes will extend beyond the immediate results, including any lasting benefits to the local/global ACC community. If applicable, explain how the initiative might be sustained, scaled, or replicated in the future.

Long-Term Impact:

Cultural Shift: By addressing masking and non-disclosure, the panel prompted a larger conversation about authenticity and belonging in legal teams.

Practical Application: Attendees left with specific tools—like neuroinclusive communication grids, universal meeting practices, and allyship checklists.

Sustainable Learning: The strength-based, team-centered lens can be reused in onboarding, team development, and DEI initiatives across firms and companies.

Please share what you are most proud to report about execution of this program. Please explain what this accomplishment means to you and how it reflects the values or goals of your work.

We are most proud of creating a space where neurodiverse professionals were seen, heard, and celebrated. The session struck a rare balance between legal education, emotional resonance, and actionable tools.

This accomplishment reflects our chapter's values of inclusion, innovation, and professional growth. It showed that DEI isn't just a checkbox—it's a pathway to stronger teams, better client outcomes, and healthier workplaces.

Please share how your project or initiative is innovative. Describe any original approaches, strategies, or tools you used to address a problem or achieve your goals. What makes your work stand out from more traditional methods.

This program redefined CLE by:

Positioning neurodiversity as a core team productivity issue, not a peripheral DEI topic.

Blending legal research and storytelling, including real data on masking, disclosure rates, and employment barriers.

Using strength-based design principles and universal workplace tools (e.g., communication matrices, feedback preferences, meeting redesign).

Modeling inclusion through delivery: Accessibility tools, format flexibility, and intersectional speaker perspectives.

Unlike traditional lectures, this panel engaged hearts, minds, and habits—and provided the tools to turn insight into workplace change.

Photo upload #1

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Please share any additional supplemental materials related to your submission.

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Please share the link to any video files related to your submission.

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGjcS7nd_0/Wk9attONsXco6TJEGxnRhg/watch?utm_content=DAGjcS7nd_0&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=uniquelinks&utlId=ha5b5086662
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