

Morrison & Foerster Joins Growing Roster of Big Law Firms with Diversity Billable Hour Credit

The policy "undoubtedly helps recognize the disproportionate amount of time diverse and women attorneys contribute to driving the firm's commitment to D&I," chief diversity and inclusion officer Natalie Kernisant said.

By Jessie Yount

Morrison & Foerster will offer up to 50 billable hours for diversity and inclusion efforts to all timekeepers globally, beginning in 2022.

The Am Law 50 firm is the latest among a growing number of firms to embrace such a policy. In October, K&L Gates, Fox Rothschild and Stoel Rives announced DEI credit.

Others that adopted credit in the past two years include Baker McKenzie, Cooley, Davis Wright Tremaine, Dorsey & Whitney, Foley Hoag, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, Greenberg Traurig, Hanson Bridgett, Hogan Lovells, Locke Lord, Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, Reed Smith, Robinson+Cole and Ropes & Gray.

Morrison & Foerster said the credit applies to participation in D&I committees and affinity groups as well as attendance at recruiting events and training.

The policy comes on the heels of the launch of its Allies Network, which offers a framework for

participation in diversity initiatives and is currently working to create small "accountability circles" that will meet throughout the year to discuss how each member can actively use allyship tools.

The Allies Network launched in the fall, led by Tony Carbone, chair of the firm's tax department and the former co-chair of the firm's diversity strategy committee. The network is made up of over 125 members including 80 partners, and acts as a counterpart to the firm's affinity groups.

The new billable hour credit "undoubtedly helps recognize the disproportionate amount of time diverse and women attorneys contribute to driving the firm's commitment to D&I," chief diversity and inclusion officer Natalie Kernisant said in a statement Wednesday.

She continued, "But we've taken it a step further to also educate, encourage, and provide a clear and concrete framework for our non-diverse/all attorneys to more



(Photo: Jason Doiy/ALM)

actively engage in and begin to lead the firm's diversity and inclusion efforts through the launch of our Allies Network."

Next year, the firm said, its diversity and inclusion team will spearhead the launch of "MoFo Navigate," a program that unifies the firm's existing mentorship and sponsorship programs and is intended to provide more holistic support to attorneys.

The new initiative, which has already been piloted, aims to promote collaboration across departments and geographies, Kernisant said, noting that the program will address root causes of attrition and "how to mentor more effectively across difference."