



South African
General Council for
Diversity & Inclusion

Toolkit 1: Law firm engagement guide

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

A key goal of the South African General Counsel's Initiative for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is to **ensure meaningful buy in from as many members of the legal fraternity as possible.**

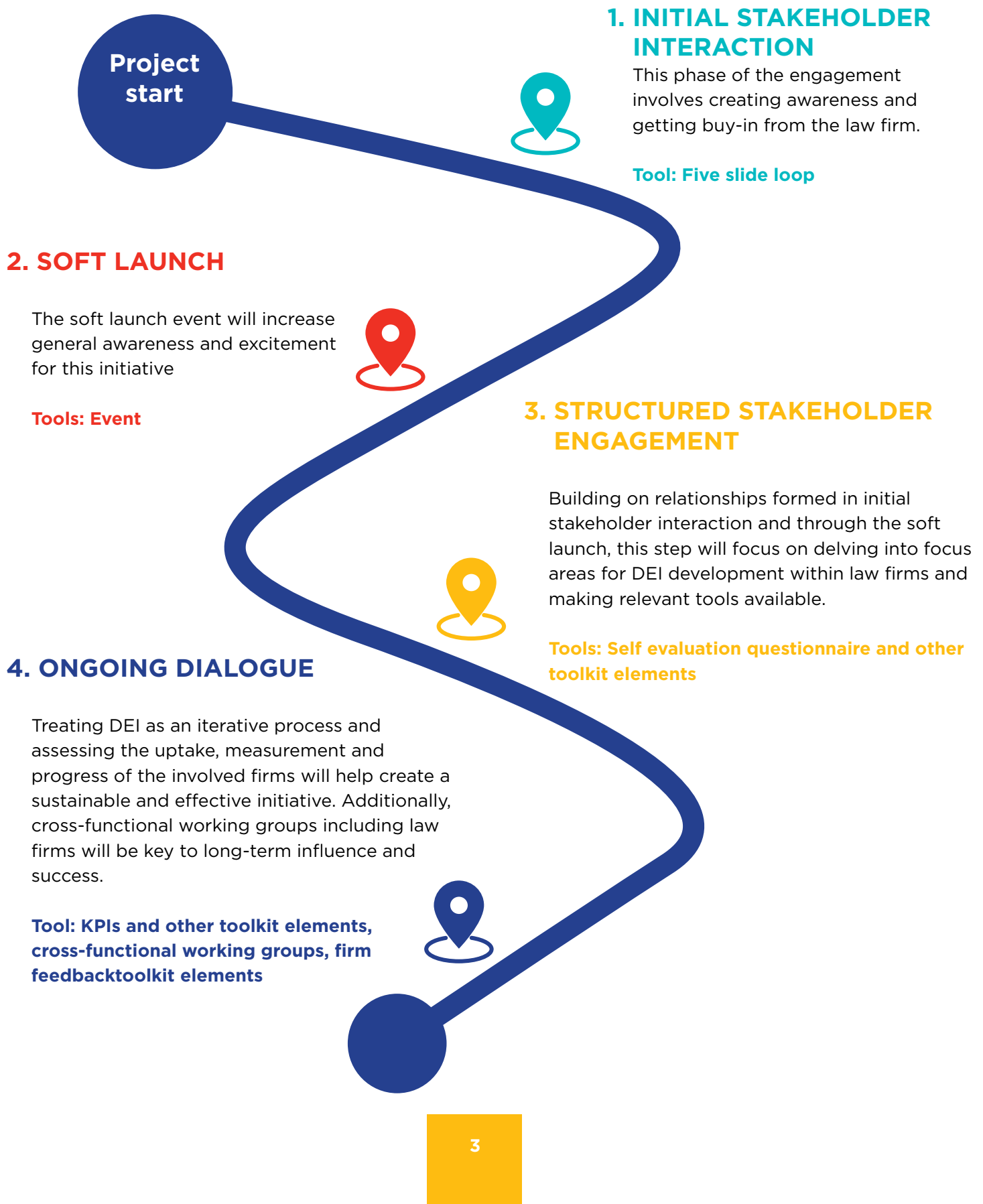
When communicating the initiative to potential members it is important to approach them in a way that is **exciting and encouraging**. We want to drive this initiative through willing, active participation. **In general, stakeholders that we meet will already want to do good and act in a way that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in their firms.** However, for many this process is time consuming and can seem arduous, which is why proper communication and support is key.

These toolkits provides guidance for general council members and corporates that are part of this initiative on how to approach law firms specifically. It is composed of the following sections:

1. An approach roadmap for law firm engagement which provides a contextual overview of the different events and activities that will help facilitate law firm buy in, in addition to the information in this toolkit; and

2. 5 principles to guide engagement with law firms. These principles help inform how to pitch the initiative and key considerations to communicate the collaboration required and channels to enable the success of this initiative.

ROADMAP FOR GC ENGAGEMENT WITH LAW FIRMS



PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE GC ENGAGEMENT WITH LAW FIRMS



1. Use your influence wisely

It is imperative to consider who in an organization is most accountable for change. In order to ensure impactful and lasting change, it is important to ensure the inclusion of partners and leaders, not just DEI teams.

It is important to understanding the influence that you may have as a corporate because of your size, brand, and influence. Based on this understanding, realise your responsibility, use your influence wisely, and understand how smaller firms may perceive your influence.

It is also important to let the size and level of establishment of the firms you approach guide you on how best to pitch the initiative and the amount of guidance and collaboration you may need to provide.

2. Be straightforward and build relationships

A key to a successful collaboration is to be clear about the intentions behind increasing DEI across the South African legal fraternity. It is important that we explain that the initiative is designed to be beneficial for all parties while causing the least amount of disruption to existing systems.

It should be communicated that this is an iterative journey and also to highlight the networks and support that are accessible to firms joining or supporting the initiative. Essentially, supporting the initiative is an opportunity to create relationships that will promote successful DEI strategies within firms and across the industry.



PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE GC ENGAGEMENT WITH LAW FIRMS



3. Design and discuss the benefits of initiative buy-in

If the core mission of the initiative is not enough motivation, remind your counterparts of the benefits to their firm in terms of branding, partnerships, recruiting, and internal DEI improvements. Over time, look for (and design) opportunities to celebrate and acknowledge successes and work done.

4. Lead by example

In-house teams need to show that they're putting in the same levels of commitment to their own DEI initiatives. It is important to show that you are holding yourself and your organisation to the same standard as what you expect from the legal fraternity as a whole.

A good way to communicate this would be to have accessible information about your company's DEI progress and DEI strategy as well as potentially communicating contributions to and work on the initiative. Sharing best practices will bolster support.



5. Highlight the need for collaboration and revision

Potential revisions in the scope and approach of this initiative are crucial as DEI is a constantly evolving space. These should be done regularly and collaboratively between GC and law firms, and other relevant stakeholders like industry bodies and recruiters.

It is important to communicate with new members of the initiative how these revisions will take place, and the channels through which they can voice concerns or seek guidance on their D&I strategies.

USEFUL RESOURCES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This guidance is based off our consultations with local DEI experts and the [EU GCD&I Toolkit](#).

[EU GCD&I Nudge Card for GC Engagement with law firms](#)

This specific toolkit element was used to inform our approach on how to engage with law firms in South Africa

These questions and assessment levels are based off the [EU GCD&I Toolkit](#) and [The Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks](#).

[The right mind-set: Approaching diversity and inclusion in South Africa](#)

This report compiled by Deloitte goes into detail on DEI in South Africa, providing good insight into the direct benefits of DEI for your organization

[How to Measure Inclusion in the Workplace](#)

This Harvard Business Review article goes into detail about the different areas of DEI in your organisation, looking at, for example : 'capturing employee perceptions of inclusion', ways to take action, and potential pitfalls.

[Information on B-BBEE](#)

[The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa](#)

[The Employment Equity Act](#)

[Additional information on conformity bias](#)

This source provides a more indepth look at conformity bias

[Social Influence, Conformity Bias, and the Study of Active Minorities](#)

This academic paper looks at the significance of social influence when it comes to bias and its impact on minorities

[SHRM's HR Glossary](#)

This glossary provides definitions of different biases as well as other important terms relating to DEI

[A Simple Checklist to Improve Decisions](#)

This is a comprehensive list of questions to ask to help detect bias

[Implicit Bias in the Legal Profession](#)

This resource from the IPO provides a detailed look at implicit bias specifically within the legal profession

[The Fundamental Attribution Error: What it is & how to avoid it](#)

A more detailed look into the fundamental attribution error from the Harvard Business School

[The Similarity Bias](#)

This resource provides an expanded view on the similarity bias

[16 Unconscious Bias Examples and How to Avoid Them in the Workplace](#)

This source expands on unconscious bias. It goes into further detail on the different types of biases that exist beyond the ones explored in this toolkit

[Additional information on conformity bias](#)

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[FAQ on LGBTQIA](#)

This list of frequently asked questions was put together by the Department of Justice to communicate helpful definitions and answers questions about LGBTQIA people.

[Glossary of Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging \(DIB\) Terms](#)

This glossary from Harvard Human Resources delves into additional and potentially more niche DEI definitions, but is a good additional resource.

[Disability Inclusion](#)

This resource compiled by the CDC provides an indepth look at disability and inclusion and how to define and approach disability when it comes to creating inclusive spaces.