

**2017 Foundation of the Federal Bar Association
Diversity Grant Awards**

2017 marks the inaugural year for the Foundation's Diversity Grant program. The following groups applied for, and were granted funding:

Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky

Summer Work Experience in Law, Inc. (SWEL)

SWEL's mission is to help primarily African American students make an informed decision with respect to entering law school and the legal profession. SWEL sets the stage for each student's own self-discovery by exposing them to the inherent opportunities and challenges of practicing law through summer work experiences, coaching and networking. SWEL's vision is to be the best decision-development program for African American students and others who may need assistance that have an interest in the legal profession.

As our community and country grow more culturally diverse, and as clients require diversity from the companies that represent them, it is critical that the legal profession become more representative of the changing racial demographics in the region. SWEL's goals of diversity in the legal community align with those of the Chapter and the Federal Bar Association nationally.

Veterans and Military Law Section

Advocating for Veterans in Indian Country

The program's primary focus will be advocacy on behalf of veterans seeking VA benefits, including preparation of the claim, appealing a VA decision to the Board of Veterans' Appeals, and cultural competence in advocating for veterans with mental health symptoms. Additional topics will include Veterans Treatment Courts, advocating for patient-centered Native healthcare services for veterans, current legislative issues relevant to veterans in Indian country, and economic development for veterans in Indian country.

The VMLS's objectives in offering this program are to educate advocates who will work with veterans in Indian country, providing necessary training for accreditation as a Veterans Service Officer. By offering the training in the West (e.g., Montana), the VMLS hopes to draw attendees from various tribes and tribal organizations throughout the region. Additionally, the VMLS will work to collaborate with VA Office of Tribal Government Relations to invite regional VA staff working to increase access to healthcare and services in Indian country. The program will be modeled after VA accreditation CLEs, but it will cover a broader range of topics important to advocates working in Indian country.

More broadly, this program will advance several of the Federal Bar Association's strategic efforts. It will promote the education and professional development of attorneys practicing in the areas of federal law, including the law governing veterans benefits and Indian law. Improved education of diverse advocates will lead to improvements in national advocacy for all veterans. The program will also strengthen connections among federal practitioners across the country and create new lines of networking in the federal bar. Finally, the program will be exploring best practices for representing veterans in Indian country, which advances the Federal Bar Association's dedication to excellence in Continuing Legal Education.