



AWARDS GUIDELINES

AWARDS SUMMARY

In June 2026 the Women in Business Law Awards will present the winners of the 2026 Americas awards, celebrating the most ground-breaking achievements by the region's leading women lawyers and the most progressive law firms in terms of their gender policies, advocacy, and support of women in law.

The Women in Business Law Awards is a part of the Legal Benchmarking Group. The awards are adjudicated by a dedicated awards team that works across a range of titles including **Benchmark Litigation**, **International Financial Law Review**, **ITR**, and **Managing IP**, and operating in partnership with **The Lawyer**, the leading business-news and intelligence information resource for the legal industry. The Lawyer, a newly-acquired business under the Legal Benchmarking Group, is widely recognized for delivering in-depth market insight, data-rich analysis, and strategic commentary to help guide the thinking of legal professionals and support them in making the strategic decisions required to grow their business.

For any information about the awards please contact WiBL@legalbenchmarkinggroup.com.

Your key contacts are Shailyn Tirado, Director of Research Americas, and Makenzie Rodrigues, Research Project Manager.

METHODOLOGY

The Women in Business Law Awards celebrates the efforts and achievements of law and professional services firms across the Americas in helping women to advance in the legal profession. It also strives to shine a spotlight on the most impressive achievements by women lawyers during the review period. Awards will be presented along individual, law firm, jurisdictional and in-house category lines.

Law firms and in-house teams are invited to make written nominations detailing their gender employee statistics and their women-friendly working practice and policies, as well as biographical information specific to their women lawyers.

A dedicated research team will review the written nominations and, where deemed necessary, conduct interviews with market practitioners across the multiple areas of law and jurisdictions. The team will also incorporate other research from within the group, including relevant research and intelligence from across the brands.

DEADLINE

All nominations must be submitted through the **AWARDS PORTAL** by **January 23, 2026**.

JUDGING PROCESS

Final decisions will be made by the Women in Business Law Awards team following an extensive research process. Decisions are entirely independent and based solely on the quality and impact of the work that has been detailed.

Awards are judged internally with the involvement of a cross-departmental panel. This panel spans Legal Benchmarking Group's different brands and functions, and various levels of seniority.

Individual winners are judged on their professional accomplishments as well as their advocacy and influence within their fields between January 1 to December 31 of the preceding year. We try to assess an individual's leadership, mentorship, and influence.

Firm and jurisdictional winners are judged on how they support the development of women in the legal profession and the strength of work/life programs which enable women to pursue legal careers to the very highest levels. Criteria include the ratio of female-to-male lawyers (at all levels of seniority), the retention of women associates to partner level and diversity initiatives.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Download all relevant templates [here](#) by registering on the platform.

FIRM OF THE YEAR

The awards will recognize the best law firms *Internationally*, as well as across *Latin America* and *North America* within the following categories:

- Career Development Firms of the Year
- Intersectional Diversity Firms of the Year
(formerly *Diverse Women Lawyers* category)
- Gender Diversity Support Firms of the Year
- Innovative Firms of the Year
- Pro Bono Firms of the Year
- Work-Life Balance Firms of the Year
- *Women in Business Law Firms of the Year*

We invite firms to nominate themselves using a dedicated **Firm of the Year** template. *There is no entry template for the Women in Business Law Firms of the Year – firms will be shortlisted and awarded based on the evidence submitted across all categories.*

LAWYERS OF THE YEAR

The lawyers of the year award categories for Latin America and North America will be based on the role an individual played on influential deals/cases and their advocacy, influence, and thought leadership during the period. Candidates should be nominated via the **Lawyers of the Year** template.

Latin America categories will recognize a lawyer from a national firm based in Latin America. North America categories will recognize a lawyer from a national firm based in North America. The overall Americas categories will recognize a lawyer from an International Firm.

The key criteria are:

- **Professional accomplishments:** recent highlights and legal work (cases and/or deals) from calendar year 2025
- **Advocacy:** projects that demonstrate the nominee's advocacy for women in the legal profession, outside of client work
- **Influence:** decision-making and leadership roles that drive positive change for women in the legal profession within and external to the firm
- **Thought leadership:** professional creativity and thought leadership, including publications, speaking engagements and involvement in ESG activities that occurred during the research period

These awards may consider nominations for best practitioners in the following categories. LBG reserves the right to amend or expand the below categories:

- Antitrust & competition
- Aviation
- Banking & finance
- Commercial arbitration
- Copyright
- Corporate governance
- Capital Markets
- Energy, natural resources & mining
- Environment
- Financial regulation
- Insurance & reinsurance
- International trade
- Investment funds
- Labor & employment
- Life Sciences
- Litigation
- Media & entertainment
- Mergers & acquisitions
- Patent
- Privacy & data protection
- Private equity (incl. venture capital)
- Product liability
- Project finance
- Real estate
- Restructuring & insolvency
- Securities Litigation
- Shipping & maritime
- Structured finance & securitisation
- Tax
- Technology & Telecom
- Trademark
- Transfer pricing
- Wealth management
- White collar crime

INDIVIDUAL SPOTLIGHT AWARDS: THOUGHT LEADERS, ESG LEADERS, OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

These categories will be based on the Thought Leadership and ESG Leadership data submitted through the **Spotlight Awards** template. The award aims to recognize those individuals that are engaged in the most impactful work in pursuing thought leadership opportunities and ESG advocacy. These awards will recognize winners in *Latin America* and *North America* in the following categories:

- Thought Leader of the Year
- ESG Leader of the Year
- Outstanding Achievement Award

RISING STARS

A rising star must have under 15 years of professional experience and be undertaking responsibilities that might usually be seen at partner level. Use the **Rising Star** template to provide nominations.

Rising star lawyers will be awarded in *Latin America* and *North America* in the following categories:

- Arbitration
- Banking & Finance
- Corporate/M&A
- Intellectual Property
- Litigation
- Tax

IN-HOUSE AWARDS

Use the **In-House** template to provide nominations. In-house awards will be awarded across *Latin America* and *North America* for the following categories:

- In-House Team of the Year
- In-House Rising Star
- General Counsel of the Year

JURISDICTIONAL FIRMS OF THE YEAR

Jurisdictional firm of the year awards will be based primarily on the evidence of firm initiatives and demographics included in the **Jurisdictional Firms of the Year** template. The evaluation will focus on the impact and complexity of the initiatives, as well as the demographic balance between women and men within the firm. Jurisdictional firm of the year will be awarded for the following jurisdictions:

Latin America:

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Central America
- Caribbean
- Chile
- Colombia

• Ecuador

- Mexico
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

North America:

- US Midwest
- US Northeast
- US South
- US West
- Canada

Regional jurisdictions such as the Caribbean or Central America may be broken down to reflect quality and quantity of entries.

Note: We reserve the right to expand or limit awards categories

DEFINITIONS

FIRM AWARDS

Career Development

- Mentoring, sponsorship, coaching and talent management
 - A mentor is a guide for you to get to your goals on your own
 - A sponsor actively tries to get you promoted
 - A coach is usually external to the company and sits with you one-on-one
- Recruiting, retaining, promoting and training initiatives
- Leadership development programs
- Other initiatives that find ways of hiring more women associates (ie novel advertising campaigns or programs for lateral hires)

Intersectional Diversity (formerly Diverse Women Lawyers category)

- While the title of this category has changed, the criteria remains the same
- Support for women from diverse backgrounds, including race, LGBTQ, disability, social mobility, etc.
- Programs, groups, or initiatives that integrate gender with other dimensions of diversity

Gender Diversity Support

- Groups and networks (ie. women's groups with alumni, partners, and clients present)
- Gender-based events that promote visibility, connection, and empowerment
- Initiatives and impact by women's groups/networks within respective firms

Pro bono

- Pro bono work that supports women's rights and working conditions
- Social/community engagement programs where the work is relevant to women and gender diversity issues.
- Legal work involving disadvantaged women, access to justice and fair treatment.

Work-life Balance

- Flexible working, maternity leave, and groups for parents at law firms (affinity groups)
- Maternity/transition coaching
- Childcare and other innovative initiatives that support work-life balance.

Innovation

- It can include projects that fall into any or all other firm categories, with the exclusive criterion being innovation
- We look for interesting, new initiatives that are in the pipeline or recently launched
- Evidence that impact is being made

INDIVIDUAL AWARDS

Advocacy

- The ways in which the nominee has advocated for women in the legal industry
- Mentorship, sponsorship, being a part of or leading groups that promote women in law

Influence

- The extent to which the nominee has influenced policy and change within or external to the firm for the promotion of women in the law

Thought Leadership

- Examples of thought leadership activities, such as publishing articles or books, speaking engagements, panel memberships, within the nominee's practice area specialism or in reference to supporting women in law.

ESG Leadership

- Examples of engagement and leadership in ESG initiatives and advocacy work includes:
 - **Environmental** – which includes waste and pollution, resource depletion, greenhouse gas emission, deforestation, and climate change issues
 - **Social** – which includes employee affinity and intersectional collaboration, working conditions, conflict, and community engagement
 - **Governance** – which includes executive remuneration, donations and lobbying, as well as board diversity and structure

Outstanding Achievement

- Includes exceptional accomplishments, whether through career achievements, major contributions to the legal community, or transformative work that has set new standards for women in the industry.

IN-HOUSE AWARDS

In-house Team

- Team awards recognize the teams for their contributions to business engagement, inclusion of modern technologies, development of new specialisms within the team, growth in team size, relationship and engagement with the CEO, and around the company

In-House Rising Star

- Individual awards recognize the individual for their contributions and role on impactful work, as well as their advocacy for women in business law.
- A nominee must have under 15 years of professional experience and be undertaking responsibilities that might usually be seen at senior level.
- An In-House Rising Star is considered an emerging professional with demonstrable talent, potential, and achievement early in their career.

General Counsel

- General counsel awards recognize the best woman general counsels for their impact in business facilitating and thought leadership