Vault Law Firm Culture & Inclusion Questionnaire

Firm Information

- **Firm Name:** Please provide the full name of your firm.

Blank Rome LLP

Leadership

- **Head(s) of Firm:** Please provide the name and title of the head(s) of the firm (e.g., Chair, CEO, Managing Partner). Enter information for more than one individual, if applicable.

Grant S. Palmer, Chair and Managing Partner

- **Inclusion Professional(s):** Does the firm have a Chief Diversity Officer, Director of Inclusion, or other professional(s) leading the firm's inclusion initiatives? If so, please provide the name and title of the inclusion professional. Enter information for more than one individual, if applicable.

Reham Fared, Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging
Evan Richard, Senior Diversity & Inclusion Specialist
Karyn Cleveland-Barnes, Diversity & Inclusion Program Specialist

- **Ownership:** Is the firm women-owned, minority-owned, and/or LGBTQ+-owned? If so, please note any related certifications (e.g., NAMWOLF).

No.

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Culture and Community

- **Affinity Groups:** Does the firm have internal affinity groups or networks (open to all employees)? What affinity groups or networks does the firm have? What kind of support does the firm provide for these affinity groups or networks?

BR Asian, BR Black, BR Brave, BR Latinx, BR MENA, BR Parents and Caregivers, BR Pride, and BR Women

Our affinity groups are critical to fostering an inclusive work culture. These are our professional and employee-led communities where all attorneys have open spaces to connect, collaborate, create, cultivate, and grow.

These communities are hubs of new ideas, shared experiences, cultures, and backgrounds. The groups are open to all lawyers regardless of background, including allies joining or partnering to forge bonds, learn, and grow. We have relationships with various bar associations and professional organizations to scale our work and to present new developmental opportunities.

Firm leaders who serve on our Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Committee are active participants in and sponsors of each affinity group, offering attorneys and professionals in these communities the opportunity to contribute to DI&B strategy, to build and strengthen relationships across all of our offices, and to promote a deeper sense of belonging.

- **Culture and Inclusion Events:** Does the firm host culture and inclusion retreats or conferences? If so, please describe these events.

Yes: 1. BR Impact Summit: In 2026, we hosted our BR Impact Summit, a unique opportunity for attorneys at all levels from our various Affinity Groups and Firm Leadership to come together, deepen community, elevate belonging, and drive meaningful collaboration. Our theme was “building community, belonging and collaboration," 2. Women’s Summit: We have hosted our client facing Women’s Summit since 2017, drawing hundreds of women leaders in law and business nationally to discuss the ever-evolving legal and corporate landscape.

- **Cultural Awareness:** How does the firm commemorate important dates honoring different cultures of employees within the firm (e.g., Black History Month, Women’s History Month, Pride Month, etc.)?

The firm hosts cultural celebrations and programs honoring diversity (e.g., Black History Month, Women’s History Month, Juneteenth, Pride, Hispanic Heritage Month, Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, and Jewish American Heritage Month, Diwali), disseminates internal communications with educational resources firm wide, posts on social media, and engages in open conversations throughout the year in recognition of key dates honoring diverse groups. We invite internal and external speakers to participate in our programming.

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- **Inclusiveness:** Please describe steps the firm has taken to create an inclusive environment for women, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and parents/caregivers.

This year's BR Impact Summit served as an opportunity to build community as well as recognize areas of improvement (client development/relationship building skills, mentorship, and sponsorship) through substantive workshops to create an inclusive environment for the diverse communities of the firm to thrive in our high performance culture.

Through our affinity group networks we have also been able to provide specific supplemental programming to ensure the membership's unique needs are addressed and converted into strategic initiatives and events in support of affinity group members and the firm at large.

Networking, Mentoring, and Professional Development

- **Mentoring & Sponsorship:** Does the firm offer a mentorship or sponsorship program that connects junior attorneys with senior leadership? If so, please describe.

Yes. All of our associates receive guidance and support throughout their careers at Blank Rome. All associates are paired with an Integration Liaison, who is charged with integrating the associates into our firm as well as their designated offices and practice groups. The firm also has a Career Development Advisor ("CDA") Program where every associate is paired with a partner or counsel at the firm in a mentorship / sponsorship arrangement. At each developmental stage, associates help select partners or of counsel to serve as their CDAs. Our CDAs focus on sponsorship and on partnering with each of our associates to identify progress to date, short-term and long-term career goals, and, especially, on the ways the CDAs can proactively leverage their experiences and connections to help their associate advisees achieve those goals. Associates meet with their CDAs at least quarterly. As associates advance in their careers, they graduate from one CDA to the next, thereby enabling targeted advice and continually expanding their networks of support and guidance.

- **Reverse Mentoring:** Does the firm pair senior attorneys with junior attorneys to help bridge generational or cultural gaps, share perspectives and skills, and foster a more inclusive culture?

No.

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- **Associate Committee:** Does the firm have an associate committee that consults with the partnership? If so, please describe how that committee engages with the partnership.

Yes. The firm's Associate Committee meets regularly throughout the year and raises issues directly with the partnership, including the Chair and Managing Partner who meets directly with the Committee. The Committee also meets with others in firm leadership to raise issues beneficial to the associate experience and is relied upon as a sounding board by the partnership to provide feedback on policies and programs the firm is considering.

- **Professional Development:** Does the firm offer professional development programs specifically for junior attorneys? Please elaborate on the professional development programs available to junior attorneys.

Yes. The firm has made it a priority to offer professional development programming for our attorneys to be equipped with the skills and experience needed to drive a high-performance culture. For junior associates in particular, we offer a wide range of programming designed to build both core professional skills and substantive legal knowledge. Beginning in their first year, associates participate in New Associate Academy, which features internal panels led by Blank Rome attorneys who share practical insights, best practices, and tips for success, along with writing and communication training delivered by external experts. Programming also focuses on integration, which helps new associates build connections and gain the tools they need to succeed from day one. Junior associates benefit from targeted programming throughout the year. This includes sessions led by external presenters on core skills like networking and legal writing. In addition, the Professional Development team collaborates closely with practice groups to deliver boot camp-style, practice-specific training and hands-on workshops. Examples include Trial Accelerator for litigators, which is an experiential training that breaks down a trial into different elements where associates practice individual skills, and Contract Drafting and Accounting for transactional attorneys, designed to strengthen technical skills through practical application. Junior associates also have access to the firm's broader professional development offerings, as well as supplemental programming through our affinity groups. These resources include a comprehensive professional development curriculum and opportunities for individualized writing and productivity coaching with external coaches. Together, these initiatives are designed to support our associates' growth, deepen their capabilities, and position them for long-term success at the firm.

Recruitment, Promotion, and Advancement

- **Recruitment Process:** What steps has the firm taken to build a more inclusive recruitment process (e.g., interview training, behavioral interview questions, blind resume review, etc.)?

We train our interviewers in advance and also provide a comprehensive guide for the interviewing process. We emphasize the need to make fair and inclusive hiring decisions, and being aware of and avoiding any type of bias, including implicit bias, the contrast effect, central tendence, similarity bias,and the halo effect. We also provide specific questions to help interviewers focus on the most pertinent areas and to enable appropriate comparisons between candidates based on their responses. This includes employing behavioral interview questions as an important part of our process.

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- **Fellowship/Scholarship:** Does the firm offer any scholarships, fellowships, or internships? If so, describe those programs. How many of the law students who participated in the firm's most recent 2L summer associate program were hired through such a program?

Yes. Blank Rome offers the Blank Rome Scholars Program, a two-year program designed to attract and develop high-potential law students from a diverse set of backgrounds, who through their life experiences, have demonstrated the character to have a successful career in law and make a positive impact on the profession and in their communities.

The program is open to 1L students (or 2L evening students) and provides participants with:
1. Two consecutive summer associate positions (1L and 2L summers), offering meaningful legal experience and integration into the firm's Summer Associate Program
2. A $25,000 scholarship paid in two installments toward second- and third-year law school expenses
3. Mentorship, coaching, and professional development opportunities, along with exposure to firm leadership and client work.

The program is intended to provide a pipeline into the firm's 2L summer associate class and, ultimately, full-time associate hiring.

In our 2026 summer associate class, 4 of our 21 2L summer associates were hired through the Blank Rome Scholars Program.

- **Advancement:** Describe any firm initiatives to create equal opportunities for all attorneys with respect to work allocation, performance reviews and upward reviews, and/or promotions.

Assigning Partners and Practice Group Leaders use Associate workload projections, including financial dashboards and analytical tools, as well as meetings with Associates and information about their experiences and exposure, to allocate work equitably. The Firm also has monthly Associate utilization meetings that include our Practice Management, Legal Talent, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, and HR professionals, to discuss workflow and utilization on an associate by associate basis, and proactively work to ensure that all attorneys have equal access to quality assignments. There is a culture of constant communication, where supervising lawyers clearly outline project expectations, conduct regular check-ins to ensure efforts are appropriately directed, and hold debriefs to identify further efficiencies moving forward.

- **Multitiered Partnership:** Does the firm offer a multitiered partnership? If so, please describe.

Yes, the firm has an Income Partner tier as well as an Equity Partner tier. Both internally and externally, however, all Partners are held out exclusively as "Partners."

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- **Alternatives to Partnership:** Does the firm offer a non-partner track alternative for attorneys? If so, please describe.

Yes. Blank Rome is not an up-to-Partner-or-out law firm. While many Associates choose to pursue partnership, and the firm prides itself on providing real opportunities for partnership elevation to those who pursue it, other attorneys make careers at the firm in senior-level, non-partnership roles, including as Of Counsel, Senior Attorney, and Practice Attorney.

- **Reduced Hours and Flex-Time Options:** Does the firm offer reduced hours and/or flex-time options? If so, please describe and explain how working an alternative schedule might affect an associate's path to partnership.

Yes. No impact. The firm has a formal policy in place ensuring that associates working an alternative schedule are eligible for consideration for partnership on the same schedule as all other associates and has regularly promoted associates who were on an alternative schedule prior to, or at the time of, their promotion.

- **Credit for Work Other Than Client Billable:** Does the firm provide hours credit for work not pertaining to clients, such as recruiting, business development, knowledge management, or inclusion efforts? Note that this does not include pro bono projects. If so, describe the policy for such work.

No.

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Successes and Priorities

- What are the firm's top three accomplishments or areas in which the firm has had its greatest success with respect to fostering inclusion within the firm?

Creating affinity group programming tailored to business development and professional development that align with the firm's High Performing Competencies. These programs create additional touch points that are accessible to all members of the firm, to foster innovation, inclusion and increased performance.

Under new leadership, we've taken a more intentional and coordinated approach to embedding DIB across the firm. This includes aligning efforts across departments – such as HR, marketing and communications, business development, and talent management – as well as working directly with practice groups to integrate inclusive practices into client service and group management. This cross functional model ensures that DIB is not siloed, but rather positioned as a core business function.

We've strengthened our internal communication strategy to drive greater transparency, engagement, and shared understanding around DIB. This includes more frequent firm wide messaging, educational spotlights tied to cultural observances and streamlined channels for sharing DIB updates and resources. By making DIB communication more consistent and visible, accessible, and educational, we're helping foster a culture where inclusion is better understood, more deeply valued, and actively practiced across the firm and with our clients.

- What are the firm's top three priorities for advancing inclusion within the firm?

Enhancing better reporting to inform strategies, including refining self-identification efforts, tracking retention and advancement metrics and having more informed conversations across leadership.

Strengthening education and inclusive leadership by expanding DIB learning content that supports professional growth that moves beyond awareness and into action – helping all colleagues develop skills needed to lead inclusively, navigate cultural differences and continue to foster a high-performing, respectful workplace.

Working with our newly reorganized and expanded diversity, inclusion and belonging committee to take what we learned from our 2026 summit and cross committee/affinity group chair meetings held at the summit to prioritize high impact initiatives and goals for 2026 and beyond.

Advice to Candidates

- What advice do you have for candidates who are looking for an inclusive work environment? What questions should they ask when interviewing to help them assess the extent of a firm's commitment to inclusion?

Candidates should approach the interview process as a two-way dialogue, not just to demonstrate competency, but to evaluate whether the firm's culture aligns with their values. When it comes to inclusion, pay attention to both what is said and what is demonstrated. Ask questions that go beyond the surface-level commitments. It's important to be authentic about what matters to you, whether that's mentorship, community or career development and how that is being received. Inclusion thrives in environments where curiosity and honest dialogue are welcomed. The interview is your first glimpse into that culture where you can listen closely to how the firm responds to thoughtful questions and how they share your values.

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Additional Response Space

Please use this page for information that did not fit in the spaces provided. If this is a continuation of a prior answer, please indicate which question(s) are being addressed.

Continuation to:

Recruitment, Promotion, and Advancement

Advancement: Describe any firm initiatives to create equal opportunities for all attorneys with respect to work allocation, performance reviews and upward reviews, and/or promotions.

In addition to our culture in which consistent and constant real-time feedback is provided by supervising attorneys, Practice Group Leaders, Career Development Advisors, and the Legal Talent team, Blank Rome has implemented two formal feedback processes each year to ensure equal opportunities for all attorneys: 1) the annual review process, and 2) the mid-year check-in for Associates. The annual review is a comprehensive process that solicits feedback from supervising attorneys across the firm for all Associates and Of Counsel attorneys. This process provides specific and actionable feedback on each of the four skill areas in the firm's core competencies, along with advice for proactive skills development and areas for improvement. Practice Group Leaders meet by Department to discuss each attorney individually, while the Legal Talent team actively tracks feedback and performance throughout the year, and ensures consistent and fair assessments across all attorneys and Practice Groups. Practice Group Leaders also meet with each attorney, along with their Career Development Advisors, for a comprehensive meeting to discuss the feedback, which is also provided in writing. At the mid-year point, the firm conducts a formal Mid-Year Check-In process, soliciting similar feedback on core competency skills and development needs. Associates meet with their Career Development Advisors, and sometimes with their Practice Group Leaders, to discuss this feedback. Blank Rome is proud of the 99% participation rate of its supervising attorneys in these formal review processes, which foster a culture of feedback and help facilitate equal opportunities for all attorneys. Promotions: To ensure equal opportunities for attorney promotions, our firm has implemented a comprehensive and transparent process. Regular performance reviews are conducted to provide constructive feedback and identify areas for growth, and a uniform feedback process is also employed to collect feedback from all partners on all candidates up for consideration, specifically with respect to their qualifications for elevation. The Lawyer Promotions Committee, composed of members from diverse backgrounds, practice groups, and offices, evaluates candidates based on merit and performance, ensuring that decisions are free from bias. The committee also considers factors such as leadership potential, client relationships, and contributions to the firm's success. By fostering an inclusive environment and providing equal access to resources and opportunities, we aim to promote a fair and equitable advancement process for all attorneys.

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