



Paving Career Pathway: Career Development Strategies for New B.C. Lawyers from Diverse Groups

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ABSTRACT

The legal profession in B.C. mirrors diversity and vibrancy, but many new lawyers face unique challenges and barriers in finding their first job. This poster is an empirical study aims to map career pathway barriers of new lawyers from diverse groups in B.C. - new called to the Bar, international trained lawyers, Canadians pursued legal education abroad and returning to launch legal careers. This research employs career development and intercultural communication theories and methodological approach, draws on key findings and strategies reflecting DEI, eliminates barriers and creating employment connection and inclusion by wage subsidy, mentoring and other interventions.



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CONTEXT & SWOT ANALYSIS

International trained and new called lawyers face challenges in BC, primarily through the complex and costly process of becoming licensed, which involves the National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) and meeting the requirements of the Law Society of BC. Other challenges include difficulty finding an articling position and first job, potential salary disparities, navigating cultural & language barriers.

STRENGTHS

- The NCA & LLM Committee address varied journeys of legal professionals by offering valuable resources, networking opportunities (panels and events) and mentorship at all stages of careers (Ho & Ye, 2025, p. 94)
- FACL BC has formalized mentorship programs, students and junior lawyers are paired with a few mentors of varying levels (Punzalan & Faner, 2025, p. 88).

WEAKNESSES

- Lengthy and costly requalification process, difficulty finding junior level job.
- Mentorship gap - Senior lawyers often struggle to find time for mentorship, lack of mentorship results unprepared new lawyers.
- Remote work make it difficult for junior lawyers to learn by observing, job shadowing.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Contextual Action Theory & Practice: Take action together to formulate, negotiate and pursue goals together (Domene & Young, 2019, p. 115) - Systemic change and employment program and funding support for new called and international lawyers via government funded mentorship program, wage subsidy initiatives such as WorkBC or individual programs.

THREATS

- Unconscious bias
- Rise of artificial intelligence
- Competitive job market
- Job insecurity – According to Job Bank (2025), employment prospects for lawyers over next 3 years is moderate.

THEORIES & METHODOLOGIES

- ❖ **Intercultural Communication Theories**
Identities and Intercultural Communication, Communication and Conflict, Co - cultural Communication theory (Martin & Nakayama, 2018)
- ❖ **Methodologies - Literature Review, SWOT analysis tool, Qualitative methods Interpretive Approach** – field studies, observations and participation observations (Martin & Nakayama, 2018)
- ❖ **Career Theories and Models** – Social Cognitive Career Theory, Contextual Action Theory, Sociological Career Theory, System Theory Framework of Career Development.
- ❖ **Focus Group** – International trained lawyers & new called to the Bar

FINDINGS

This study documents new social context of legal profession in BC, identify challenges and advocating effective strategies in transformation, engagement and inclusion.

The key findings show that legal progression career pathway in the BC context involving systemic barriers, contextual circumstances, intercultural communications, career development and government financial assistance.

The key findings identify the main barriers for new called and international trained lawyers - difficulty finding an articling position and entry-level jobs, lack of meaningful mentorship in workplace, lack of effective support navigating the whole process due to limited information and the lack of a peer support system.

For generations, mentorship has shaped the legal profession. Whether through articling, clerkships, or informal conversations, lawyers have long relied on experienced colleagues to help them grow, not just as practitioners, but as professionals who practice ethically and exercise sound judgment and resilience. Historically, mentorship has been at the heart of how the profession grew and sustained itself (Kainth, 2025). Synergistic theory illustrate that employee career development can't be considered outside the context of organizational development (Bernes, 2019). However, 60% completed articling in the last five years felt less than fully prepared for entry level practice, 30% encountered discrimination and /or harassment during recruitment and/or articling (Punzalan & Faner, 2025, p. 85), leaving junior lawyers feeling untethered and unsupported. Mentorship gap also results risks for new lawyers - make avoidable mistakes, feel isolated, experience mental health (Kainth, 2025).

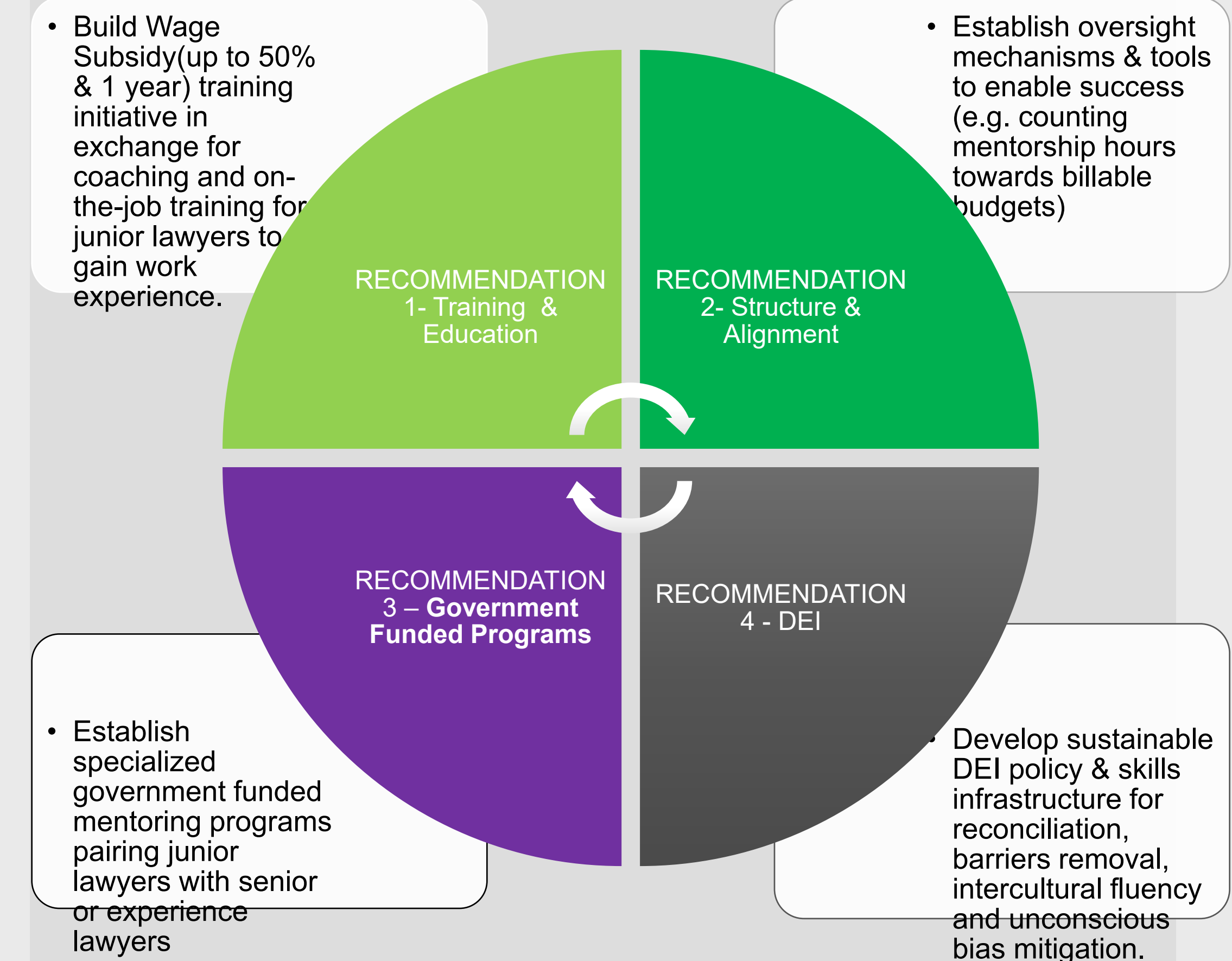
CONCLUSIONS

It's an essential step for systemic change to build a more inclusive legal profession via government funded wage subsidy work experience and career mentorship programs. Specialized government funded wage subsidy and mentoring programs can be a powerful equalizer to pave career pathways for new BC lawyers from diverse groups to advancement, leadership, and inclusion.

Mentoring enhance new lawyers' sense of competence, helps new lawyers transition to effective practice, socialize them into the profession, and develop ethical judgement (Punzalan & Faner, 2025, p. 87). Mentorship helps to transmit core values and preserve the quality, integrity, and humanity of this profession. It strengthen the entire legal ecosystem, creating a more competent, ethical, resilient, and inclusive community of lawyers (Kainth, 2025).

Mentorship is also an effective DEI tool providing representation and opens doors for equity-seeking lawyers, and foster diversity in the legal profession (Punzalan & Faner, 2025, p. 88). As of BC Government (2025), DEI ensures a reflective of inclusive of Indigenous peoples, minority communities, immigrants, persons with disabilities and the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

RECOMMENDATIONS



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