




May L. Harris, Esq., MA

Founder | CEO

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May L. Harris is the Founder and CEO of For Purpose Law Group, where she leads with bold vision, operational clarity, and an unwavering commitment to empowering the organizations that are changing the world. Since founding the firm in 2012, May has grown FPLG into one of the nation's leading legal practices exclusively serving nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, and philanthropic leaders.

As CEO, May shapes the firm's strategy, culture, and direction—building a purpose-driven team of attorneys and advisors who deliver exceptional service grounded in deep sector expertise. She works closely with the firm's legal services leadership, overseeing FPLG's practice groups and ensuring that the firm's growth is intentional, values-aligned, and built to serve clients at scale.

May's career spans over two decades as a nonprofit founder, executive director, board member, and corporate counsel. That lived experience has uniquely positioned her to understand the daily challenges faced by nonprofit leaders—and to deliver legal solutions that are not only technically sound, but also mission-aligned and immediately actionable.

Recognized nationally for her expertise in nonprofit and exempt organizations law, May advises clients across sectors and stages—from grassroots startups to multi-million-dollar institutions—helping them navigate governance, compliance, strategic growth, and major transitions. Her leadership has established FPLG as a trusted partner for change-makers

'The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.'

—— RALPH WALDO EMERSON



looking to lead with purpose, stay legally protected, and maximize their impact.

May holds a Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego School of Law and a Master's in Nonprofit Leadership and Management from USD's School of Leadership and Education Sciences. She is admitted to practice in California and Washington, D.C., and regularly speaks and teaches on topics ranging from nonprofit governance to risk management strategy.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

Nonprofit Counsel, Governance & Compliance →

Nonprofit Startup & Tax-Exempt Status →

Nonprofit IRS Audits and State Regulatory Inquiries →

ADMISSIONS

- California Bar
- Washington, DC Bar
- California Supreme Court
- US District Court for the Southern District of California

EDUCATION

- Juris Doctor, University of San Diego School of Law
- Managing Editor, Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues
- Master of Arts, Nonprofit Leadership & Management, University of San Diego, School of Leadership and Education Sciences (SOLES)
- Bachelor of Science, Geology / Mathematics, University of Utah

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS



- American Bar Association, Taxation Section; Member of the Tax-Exempt Organizations Standing Committee
- American Bar Association, Business Law Section, Nonprofit Organizations Committee
- American Bar Association, Business Law Section, Corporate Governance & Social Responsibility Committees
- California Lawyers Association, Taxation Section, Nonprofit Organizations Committee
- Washington, DC Bar Association, Taxation Section
- Board Member, Advisors in Philanthropy, San Diego Chapter
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
- San Diego County Bar Association
- Wealth Counsel

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- ARCA Academy, Encouraging Public Participation, Without Losing Effectiveness and Efficiency, April 2023
- Cause Conference, Exploring the Tradeoffs: C-Corp, 501 (c)(3), LLC, B-CORP, What Does it all Mean?, September 2022
- California Charitable Fundraising Platform Regulations, Lorman Education Live Webinar, March 2022
- Nonprofit Governance Symposium, University of San Diego (2016 - 2021)
- Cause Marketing: Building a (Legal) Framework for Success, Cause Conference, San Diego Chapter of the American Marketing Association, November 2020
- Regulatory Compliance for Nonprofit Organizations in California, Half Moon Bay Education, October 2020
- Social Good Partnerships, Forming and Operating a Sports Based Nonprofit Organization, USA Rugby National Development Summit, January 2016

TEACHING ENGAGEMENTS

- Nonprofit Legal Issues and Risk Management, University of San Diego, School of Leadership & Education Sciences, (2018 - Present)



PUBLICATIONS

- Problems with Prozac: A Defective Product Responsible for Criminal Behavior?, 10 J. CONTEMP. LEG. ISSUES 359 (1999)
- The Modern Lanham Act and the Death of Common Sense, 12 J. CONTEMP. LEG. ISSUES 32 (2001)
- “Scandalous” or “Disparaging” Should Make a Difference, 12 J. CONTEMP. LEG. ISSUES 44 (2001)
- TRIPs: Historical Overview and Basic Principles, 12 J. CONTEMP. LEG. ISSUES 454 (2001)