



2022-2023 Dream Team 2.0 Coaching Program

A joint program of the Center for Legal Inclusiveness and the Colorado Judicial Department

What is the Bench Dream Team?: In 2017, the Center for Legal Inclusiveness (“CLI”) and the Colorado Judicial Department created the Bench Dream Team, a group of state court judges dedicated to diversity and inclusion in Colorado’s judicial system. Over the years, the Bench Dream Team created programming to demystify the pathway to the bench for diverse applicants and updated an orientation video for our judicial nominating commissions, among other projects.

Dream Team 2.0: Today, more than ever, there is great interest in the legal community about the judicial application process and judicial diversity. Consequently, a number of major organizations are committed to multi-series trainings that address the same topics that were included in Pathways to the Bench.

While there are many presentations on how to be a judge, there is no formal program providing the one-on-one coaching for applicants – a critical component in being a successful judicial applicant. Currently, judicial applicants seek mentoring through their own social networks and by reaching out to individual Dream Team judges. To better meet the needs of judicial applicants and create coaching opportunities for diverse applicants, we developed a program that provides one-on-one coaching sessions for diverse judicial applicants.

We piloted this program in 2021 and 2022 with 10 judge coaches and 10 judicial applicants. The feedback that we received from the program helped us make this program even better. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the possibilities of their own unique path to the bench with an experienced judge and leave the program knowing exactly what they need to do.

The Program: 10 judge coaches and 10 judicial applicants will commit to a total of four coaching sessions within a six-month period from October 2022 to April 2023. Judges and participants will also commit to providing feedback to the program coordinators throughout the program to aid in program development.

Timeline of the 2022-2023 program:

Date	Event
Mon, August 1 – Thurs, September 1, 2022	Application period: Applications are available on the CLI website.
Fri, October 14, 2022 5 – 6:30pm	Kick-off program and First Meeting (in person event): The coach/participant pair will connect at the first meeting to establish rapport, get to know one another, schedule their upcoming coaching

	<p>sessions, and set goals for the second session. Participants will be asked to complete and share with their coach a first draft of the Judicial Application for the second meeting if they have not already done so and if they have an application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahead of the first meeting, judges will receive a copy of the candidate’s Dream Team 2.0 application, resume, a draft of the Judicial Application (if available). • Applicants will also be asked to complete a survey to identify areas they would like to work on.
To be determined by coaching pairs	Second Meeting (in person or virtual): Judicial Application review, if applicable, and coaching session.
November or December 2022	Fall Mixer for applicant participants only (in-person event): Judicial applicant participants will get a chance to check in with other participants and share successes and challenges.
To be determined by coaching pairs	Third Meeting: Mock interview or follow-up topic as agreed upon between the coaches and applicants.
To be determined by coaching pairs	Fourth Meeting: Next steps and follow-up.
April 2023	Dream Team 2.0 Closing Event (in-person event) for all participants. All participants will be asked to complete exit surveys as well.

Second, third, and fourth meetings are held at dates of the pair’s choosing and can take place virtually or in person. Pairs agree to hold their fourth meeting no later than April 30, 2023.

Participating Judge Coaches: The following judges will participate as coaches for the Dream Team 2.0 Coaching Program:

Hon. William Hood, Colorado Supreme Court
Hon. Terry Fox, Colorado Court of Appeals
Hon. Sueanna Johnson, Colorado Court of Appeals
Hon. Adam Espinosa, Denver District Court
Hon. Nikea Bland, Denver District Court
Hon. Don Toussaint, District Court, 18th Judicial District
Hon. Rayna Gokli, District Court, 17th Judicial District
Hon. Alfred Harrell, Denver County Court (Ret.)
Hon. Melina Hernandez, Arapahoe County Court
Additional coaches to be announced

- Judge coaches will be required to attend two training sessions:
 - 1) Introduction to the Dream Team 2.0 Program and Coaching vs. Mentoring, hosted by CLI (1 hour)
 - 2) Coaches Roundtable: A panel discussion of experienced judicial candidate coaches on best practices and helping others succeed (1 hour)
- In addition to the two training programs, coaches will receive an email newsletter each month with tips and resources to aid in your coaching experience.

Target Participants: Holding true to the original goal and purpose of the Dream Team, this program focuses on pipeline building efforts for diverse judicial applicants. For the purposes of the coaching program, the definition of “diverse” or “diversity” include: Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+.

Ideally, applicants for the coaching program have attended half-day programs about applying to be a judge and have a general understanding about the judicial application process. A target applicant is someone who plans on applying to the bench in the next 1-5 years, or has already applied in the past, but been unsuccessful. The applicant need not have applied previously, but if they did apply, they may have received no feedback on their application and/or are feeling “stuck.”

Potential participants will be required to fill out a short program application and submit a resume to assess their dedication to becoming a judge and commitment to the Dream Team 2.0 Coaching Program. After completing the interview process, selected participants will be paired with a judge coach as determined by Dream Team 2.0 coordinators.

Conclusion: CLI and the Judicial Diversity Outreach program believe that this coaching program fills a significant need for diverse judicial applicants and will serve the community in an important way. As indicated above, the long-term goal of this program is to provide structure to the coaching support that already exists at an individual level and to expand the Dream Team roster. Dream Team 2.0 Coaching Program is not a mentoring program; this is a time-limited, specific coaching program with clear objectives for coaches and participants.

Contact: For questions, please reach out to SJ Snyder at sjsnyder@legalinclusiveness.org and/or to Sumi Lee at sumi.lee@judicial.state.co.us.