

TCDIP CONNECT: EXPANDING YOUR NETWORK



**2021
PROGRAM
GUIDE**

Twin Cities Diversity in Practice
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Why Did We Create TCDIP Connect?

The path to success for most lawyers is paved with relationships where colleagues offer each other guidance and opportunities. Relationship building is key for professional growth. At the same time, we know from listening to attorneys of color that not everyone has opportunities to build authentic relationship with key decisionmakers and leaders. To retain and advance more attorneys from diverse backgrounds, we need a better method to build relationships with law students and attorneys of color who are newer to the profession. This is where Twin Cities Diversity in Practice, a professional association of over 60 corporations and law firms focused on attracting, recruiting, advancing, and retaining attorneys of color in the Twin Cities, reimagined the traditional mentoring model.



The usual pairing of one mentor to one mentee often is burdensome, with lackluster results. Some mentors and mentees are frustrated that the people they have been paired with are unresponsive or show a lack of interest. At the same time, people are looking for deeper and more relevant and meaningful relationship building. We also know that law students and those newer to the practice of law crave strategic guidance and information from more experienced lawyers. And senior attorneys are interested in learning from and connecting with those newer to the profession. With hundreds of lawyers from across TCDIP's membership, there are great opportunities to address these issues.

In 2019, TCDIP took on the task of reimagining our mentoring program by gathering a diverse group of attorneys, law students and other professionals for our first Mentorship Hackathon. More than 50 professionals and students participated in a fun and energetic morning of quick thinking and brainstorming. Participants worked together to develop a sustainable concept for a mentoring program that will be a key piece of TCDIP's efforts to advance and retain attorneys of color in the Twin Cities.

TCDIP Connect Working Group Members

TCDIP collected the ideas generated at the Hackathon and handed them over to a dynamic working group to harness and refine. This is where TCDIP Connect was shaped over the course of several months. We would like to thank the group who put in hours of work to design this program. They brought together diverse experiences and expertise to create an innovate mentoring program.



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TCDIP Connect Core Values

Using a structured small group model, TCDIP Connect brings together attorneys of varying experience levels, local law students of color, and early career attorneys of color. The goal of TCDIP Connect is to develop meaningful professional interconnectedness between multiple people who may not have otherwise crossed paths.

TCDIP Connect is designed around three core values to ensure each person has a meaningful experience.

1. **Everyone is a leader.** There is minimal hierarchy in the program. Each person can contribute and offer value to others. Your TCDIP Connect team will include people with varying levels of professional experience and diverse viewpoints. Think about how you can personally show up as a leader, while also encouraging leadership in others.
2. **Take ownership.** You get to make TCDIP Connect what you want it to be. Meaning, your team and overall experience are shaped by how much energy you invest in the program and in others. Think about how you can create a sense of ownership for yourself and for your team.
3. **Be accountable.** With leadership and ownership comes accountability. In a team centered program, everyone is accountable to each other. As you start to develop relationships with your team members, think about how your actions (or inaction) may impact others and the overall team dynamic. Are the expectations that you have for others in line with what you expect from yourself?

How TCDIP Connect Works

Points System

To help foster a sense of team spirit, we will use a point system to track participation. The team with the most points at the end of the program will win a prize from TCDIP! There is no limit to the possible number of points. Points are awarded based on the number of team members who attend team meetings and activities and by meeting certain benchmarks.

Check out the Ideas for Team section for ideas. Points are only awarded if two or more team members attend a meeting or activity. For example, four team members meeting for a virtual coffee will receive four (4) points. Throughout the program there will be opportunities for teams to earn additional points. Keep a lookout for more information from the TCDIP staff!

Points will be recorded by your team Scorekeeper. The Scorekeeper will send monthly emails with group participation totals to info@diversityinpractice.org using the scoresheet. An editable version can be found [here](#). We suggest emailing individual participation in group activities to the appointed Scorekeeper.



TCDIP Connect Scoresheet Example

Group Name: _____

	Date and activity Ex. 1/27 Met as a big group via Zoom	Date and activity Ex. 2/15 Virtual Coffee					
Member 1	X	X					
Member 2	X	X					
Member 3	X						
Member 4	X						
Member 5	X						
Member 6	X	X					
Member 7	X						
Member 8	X						
Member 9	X						
Member 10	X						
Total							

Benchmarking

TCDIP Connect has several benchmarking practices in place to help our team. Each team will complete the [Level Setting Worksheet \(Form A\)](#) twice: once at the beginning of the program (due February 15, 2021) and another about halfway through the program (due April 30, 2021). Teams will receive **10 points** for completing the Level Setting Worksheet.

TCDIP will also send periodic surveys to all participants to help gather feedback on the program. Surveys will be sent weekly for the first six weeks of the program and will move to monthly after that for the remainder of the program. Surveys will be anonymous.



Roles

Teams will need a few people in defined roles to help with keeping the group on track. You can create additional roles as needed. This is flexible, and the more ways each team can find to engage members, the better! Please take an active role in defining the positions on your team.

Team Captain. The Captain will help keep the team moving forward. The Captain should organize initial communications and get the group get started. Team Captains are invited to delegate as many tasks and positions as needed, with an eye toward including and engaging all team members. For example, the Captain could ask one or two teammates to handle social gatherings or choosing discussion topics.

Assistant Captain. The Assistant Captain can be a law student tasked with supporting the team captain and the group as needed. For example, the Assistant Captain can help monitor the chat function during online meetings, do research about meeting topics, or assist with team communications. The Assistant Captain will also serve as a liaison with other law students on the team, other law students in the program, and the law schools as needed.

Trainers. There will be attorneys with 0-8 years of experience on each mentor team. If needed, these attorneys will work to rehabilitate interpersonal relationships and resolve any conflicts. Teams can also designate other attorneys or students to this role, if needed. TCDIP staff will be available to provide support as needed.

Scorekeeper. The Scorekeeper will keep track of attendance and participation points throughout the year. Using a scoresheet provided by TCDIP, the Scorekeeper will need communicate with their team to keep the scoresheet updated and submit it to TCDIP at pre-designated times.

Agent. Liz Niemer, TCDIP's Programs Coordinator will be your team's agent. The agent will be the team's liaison and can help with any administrative or program questions that may arise. You can reach Liz at events@diversityinpractice.org.

Getting Your Connect Team Started

Level Setting Activity

This is an opportunity for your team to get on the same page before the beginning of the program. Using the [Form A worksheet](#), your team should discuss how to deal with potential issues, commitment levels, confidentiality, communications, etc. [The Form B worksheet](#) is a guide for you to use as an individual to think about your personal goals for the program.

Your Team's First Meetings

Member Introductions: You can do introductions in a few different and fun ways for the first couple of times your team meets. Use the introductions as a way to get to know each other. For instance, each member may complete a one-page PowerPoint slide that exemplifies who they are. They can be photo collages, a bulletin board, etc. During the initial meeting, members can take turn introducing themselves and explaining their slide. Your team is welcome to come up with another method for introductions.



During your first few meetings, your team should also:

- Review the playbook (this guide).
- Create a name for your team.
- Create goals for the team using the [Form A: Level Setting Worksheet](#).
- Review team member roles section and select members to fill each role.
- Decide logistics, including:
 - What platform will you use for communications?
 - How often will you meet? Who will circulate calendar invites?
 - What are the activities or communications for each team meeting?

Team Activities

When choosing group activities, setting schedules, and choosing icebreakers, please be mindful that people may have different comfort levels with in-person activities and different time constraints. We encourage you to have an open discussion early on regarding how each member feels about the various options and set the team schedule and activities. You may consider having members rank their preference of the options and/or choose one member to pick an activity/topic for each meeting.

Ideas for Discussion Topics, Icebreakers, and Activities

We have included some discussion topics and icebreakers to help structure your first meetings. Feel free to use these as you get to know each other!

1. **Icebreakers:**

- Take turns to choose a “theme song” for each team meeting.
- Two Truths and a Lie: Participants list three things about themselves, two are true, and one is a lie. Others guess which is which.
- 10 Things in Common. Divide into partners with instructions to discover 10 things that you have in common.
- Scavenger Hunt - Quarantine Style. Create a scavenger hunt for things you can find around your home.
- Show and Tell. Show the group a unique/meaningful object you keep on your desk; put up a photo as your Zoom background and tell the group about it; etc.
- Introduce your “co-worker” while working from home.
- You may find online icebreaker games and platforms, such as this [Icebreaker video](#), helpful.

2. **Discussion Topics.** Here are some ideas for getting the discussion started!

- How to set professional and personal goals
- What are some ideas for how to create a successful career trajectory?
- What does business development look like for you?
- Is work/life balance possible? How?
- Tips for authentic networking
- How do you take care of your mental health and overall well-being?
- How do you stay informed of changes in your industry and practice area(s)?
- What’s been your past experience with being a mentor or mentee?



3. **Team activities.** Here are a few things your team can do together or in smaller groups. Think about how you can make these activities work in an remote-work environment. Please be mindful of each team member's comfort level and constraints regarding in-person meetings.

- Virtual dinner party or happy hour
- Host a discussion about a book, podcast, or movie.
- Offer to help someone with a mock interview
- Invite a guest speaker to a meet up
- Attend CLEs, industry events, or TCDIP events and hold a subsequent group discussion
- Group coffee break
- Speed networking style get togethers. Try utilizing the Zoom Breakout Rooms feature.
- Pictionary, trivia, and other social games
- Virtual Escape Room, karaoke, board games, video games, cooking classes, and more!
- Picnic get-togethers or other socially distanced outdoor activities
- Volunteering activities, such as through a legal clinic or a community service partner (Feed My Starving Children, Second Harvest Heartland, WILD volunteering opportunities.)



Calendar of Events

Here is a list of online calendars for you check out – consider attending events from these groups with your team!

- [TCDIP events](#)
- Law school events: [Mitchell Hamline](#), [St. Thomas](#), [University of Minnesota](#)
- Affinity bar events
 - [Minnesota Women Lawyers](#)
 - [MNAPABA](#)
 - [MABL](#)
 - [MHBA](#)
 - [MAIBA](#)
 - [MLBA](#)

Exiting TCDIP Connect Before the End of the Program

It is our hope that each participant will have an outstanding experience. However, we know that life happens and sometimes people may get overwhelmed or feel that they can no longer participate for a myriad of reasons. In these times, first turn to the expectations that your team set for supporting each other during the tough times. Each team should discuss at the beginning of the program how to lean on your group during tough times. Relying on your network is a great way to manage those issues.

We want everyone to get the full experience of the entire program. Thus, before you decide that you can no longer participate in the program, we hope that you reach out to [Trainer](#) in your group or for our law student participants, you can also reach out to your designated Law School Liaison to talk through ways the group can be a better support. If you cannot speak with the Trainer or Law School Liaison, then please contact the [Agent](#) assigned to your team (TCDIP staff).

If after speaking with your Agent, you decide that leaving the program is in your best interest, we ask you to reach out to your team and let them know that you need to take a step back. If you are not comfortable sending such a message, TCDIP staff will do their best to communicate the news to the group on your behalf and with your professional interest in mind.

Navigating TCDIP Connect During a Pandemic

The TCDIP mentoring program was designed while legal professionals are working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are mindful that for the foreseeable future many legal professionals will continue to observe physical distancing recommendations, and some will continue to work from home, while other transition to working from the office. The mentoring program can work with people interacting through video conferencing and other virtual communication means. In fact, it is more important than ever for lawyers to connect with each other during physical distancing. Since developments regarding COVID-19 rapidly change, it is important for team members to use good judgement and keep the health and safety of group members top of mind.



Each mentoring group should think about how to be inclusive of all group members. Here are some questions for the groups to consider:

- Discuss if group members are comfortable meeting in person or by video conference. What are the health, social, family, and other considerations for each group member that may impact whether they are comfortable meeting in person or by video conference?
- If you meet by video conference, decide which platform is accessible by all group members.
- If some group members are meeting in person and other are not, how do you make sure no one is left behind?
- How do you make video conferencing call more engaging? Think about how to make sure everyone is participating and feels welcomed.

Each group should consider these questions with inclusion as a core value.

TCDIP Connect Best Practices

TCDIP Connect offers the opportunity for each participant to serve as both a mentor and mentee. We encourage all members to consider themselves in both roles and review the following tips with that framework in mind.



Top Tips for Being a Good Mentor and Mentee.

- **Give information and advice generously.** Don't treat the mentoring relationship as a test or make team members "earn" information. Many mentees already feel anxious about asking for help or being a "burden" to their mentor. Be open, generous, and forthcoming with information that will help your mentee(s) navigate their legal career - and let them know you are happy to do so. This includes sharing your own mistakes and failures, which will help mentees with problem-solving, build trust, and encourage them to seek advice as they encounter new professional challenges.
- **Take ownership of the relationship.** Remember that you are ultimately responsible for your own learning and development. Mentors can give you tools and guidance, but you must be an active driver of the relationship. Reach out, ask questions, and absorb feedback.
- **Set boundaries and expectations early.** Be open about your communication preferences. Discuss the goals you and your mentee(s) have for your relationship. Be clear about expectations of confidentiality. Consider how you will hold each other accountable to the mentoring relationship.
- **Be present and reliable.** Attorneys and law students are busy people, and school or work needs can often send other things to the back burner. Make sure your mentoring relationships don't get lost in the shuffle. When you are meeting with a team member, close your email and silence your phone so you can really focus on the conversation. If you're swamped with billable work and don't have time to thoughtfully answer a question from a team member, consider a quick response acknowledging their message and letting them know when you can get back to them.
- **Get to know your TCDIP Connect team members as individuals.** Take some time to understand your team member's background and interests outside of their job. Getting to know your team members as individuals allows you build a stronger relationship and to tailor your advice to their personality and goals. If there is a member of your group you

haven't connected with through group gatherings, consider reaching out individually to get to know them.

- **Listen and ask questions.** Law students and early-career attorneys may be intimidated by a more senior team member's status and success and tend to shy away from talking "too much". Be sure to allow people to complete their full thought, take a pause, and then respond. Additionally, they may not always have enough context or professional experience to have fully formed, specific career related questions. Listening carefully and asking follow-up questions will help you avoid assumptions and provide the most effective advice and guidance.
- **Provide honest and constructive feedback.** The best mentors have a gift for telling mentees what they need to hear without coming across as overly harsh or critical. This may mean taking time to provide the most effective responses or feedback.
- **Demonstrate ongoing learning & growth.** Good mentors demonstrate that even the most experienced professional still doesn't know everything or have every skill mastered. Model being open to feedback and show your mentees the ways in which you practice ongoing learning and professional development. Look for and share opportunities for mentees to develop the skills they have been hoping to learn. Consider inviting them to join you at a CLE or networking event.
- **Lead by example.** Mentees learn a lot just by observing how you behave and interact with others. Seeing you model clear communication, relationship-building skills, problem-solving techniques, time-management practices, and more will help mentees practice and develop these skills for themselves.
- **Embrace "reverse mentoring."** Mentoring doesn't have to be a one-way street. Mentees are eager to add value to the relationship and many mentors find that they learn quite a bit from their mentees! More senior team members should be ready to learn from more junior lawyers and law students, just as junior lawyers and law students should be ready to teach more senior lawyers.



Top Tips for Working Through with Interpersonal Conflict

- **Focus on building a strong relationship before conflict arises.** Strong mentoring relationships are built on mutual trust and respect, which often stems from open and frequent communication.
- **Revisit your mentoring group's commitment statement.** What did your team and/or individual agree to do in the event of conflict? That should be your primary guide in how to address any interpersonal conflict within the team.
- **Remain calm and take the time you need to respond.** In times of conflict, it can be easy to respond quickly, letting our emotions influence how we respond. Regardless of the situation, it's helpful to focus on what you can control, which includes how you decide to respond in the moment and later.
- **Remember to see the person with whom you are having a conflict as a person.** We are all human, everyone makes mistakes, and we all need grace at times (due to circumstances which may or may not be obvious in the moment). Try to give everyone the benefit of the doubt when there is a conflict and assume that the person does not have ill intent.
- **Seek out advice from a trusted advisor.** It can be helpful, after doing self-reflection, to get the opinion of a trusted advisor to react to the situation and how you plan to respond. This includes people on your team who you trust or someone on the TCDIP staff. For law students, you may want to reach out to someone at your Career Office.
- **Consider approaching the person with whom you are having a conflict directly, subject to what your team's commitment statement provides.** It may be easier to gain additional information and resolve the conflict directly, rather than including others in the situation.



Tips for Increasing Inclusion During a Remote Mentoring Program

- **Ensure that everyone can participate and be mindful of barriers or potential barriers to full participation.** Keep in mind barriers that may impact a person's ability to fully participate in TCDIP Connect, whether that might be scheduling conflicts, technology issues, comfort level in speaking up in a group setting, or responsibilities outside of work. Do your best to understand and eliminate individual barriers that prevent participation by all group members.
- **Invite input and participation from all team members.** If certain group members are not proactively sharing or participating, be sure to invite those who have not contributed to join the conversation so that there is room for all group members to participate. Pay attention to who is actively participating and who is not and encourage participation by all.
- **Fully commit to your TCDIP Connect team and encourage fellow team members to do the same.** The group is designed to have active participation by all group members, but that cannot happen without everyone attending meetings. Make a commitment to attend all possible mentoring group meetings and consider the meetings to be as important as a client meeting.
- **Consider your personal preferences for working with you TCDIP Connect team and consider how those may be informed by implicit bias.** All of us exhibit bias, and the key to combating bias is to recognize and address it. In a mentoring context, this could translate to gravitating towards someone who seems like an older or younger you. Be aware of and fight against that affinity bias, as we often learn the most from those who have different backgrounds and experiences.
- **Educate yourself, as needed.** Keep in mind that diverse individuals are often asked to explain their "difference" to others, whether that's to educate others on an aspect of their identify (i.e., what holidays are important in their religion, what they feel about certain events in the news impacting people of a certain race or ethnicity, etc.), and that creates an additional burden on those individuals. Remember that if you are not well versed on a particular topic, you can and should do your own research, rather than asking others in the group to educate you. If you establish a trusted relationship with someone who wants to share with you proactively, recognize the gift that is and listen attentively.



Communication Best Practices

- When deciding on a communication platform, consider each person's access and familiarity with each platform. Choose a platform that is easily accessible to everyone or offer to help team members who may not be as familiar with a platform.
- Solicit input from all team members of scheduling. Be sensitive to competing scheduling demands and consider rotating times to ensure meetings are convenient for all.
- Create an agenda and send in advance. Include a topic for discussion which can be a mixture of group activities (see below) and specific discussion topics.
- Build in time for recognition. This could be a space for participants to highlight key accomplishments and allows for team members to celebrate their successes.
- Add time for connection to the beginning of each meeting. This could be in addition to the group activity or could be the focus of the group activity.
- Alert attendees of their need to contribute. What, if anything, do participants need to do in advance? This also allows people who need time to "noodle" a specific topic before speaking up, the time to do this in advance.
- Identify a person to lead the meeting. Consider rotating this role. Begin with introductions every time.
- Use the phrase "we haven't heard from..." in order to include people who may not have spoken up during a meeting.
- Use video to engage visually.
- Solicit feedback regarding how meetings and communication is working and modify as needed.



Form A: Team Commitment Statement, Expectations, and Goals

Group Name:

Date:

1. Commitment Statement: At the beginning of the program, each team will develop a commitment statement to bring clarity to goals and expectations for your team and set forth a structure to ensure accountability between group members. A sample Commitment Statement is included below. You can adapt this as needed for your team. Feel free to add to this worksheet as needed.

Sample Commitment Statement: We are entering into a mentoring group, which we expect to be beneficial to all team members. By signing below, we each agree to the following considerations regarding expectations, confidentiality, participation, and communication efforts.

Team Commitment Statement:

2. Goals and Objectives: Discuss and establish key goals and desired objectives or outcomes for your team. A goal is a desired result your team would like to achieve. A goal is typically broad and long-term. Identify 1 to 3 goals for your team. For each goal, also identify objectives. Objectives are the specific, measurable actions each team member will take to achieve the overall goal. Identify 1 to 3 objectives for each goal for your team.

What are you team's key goals and objectives? What does your group want to achieve by participating in TCDIP Connect? Be realistic about what your team can accomplish over the course of the next 9 months.

3. Expectations: Setting expectations is an important tool to prevent misunderstandings and frustrations down the line. Expectations will be unique to each team. Below are some examples for reference purposes. Modify and/or develop your own as appropriate for your team.

Examples:

- *Accountability.* Each member is an equal, contributing member of the team. Each member takes responsibility for participating and getting what they need out of the team.
- *Development & Guidance.* Provide perspective and advice on career related topics and offer suggestions, feedback and encouragement to our team members.
- *Facilitate Networking.* Serve as a resource for our team and help facilitate connections with other professionals. These professionals may be internal or external to your organization and can be at any level. What are the expectations for sharing your network?
- *Be an Active and Engaged Listener.* Listen to team members and provide an accepting and supportive atmosphere.
- *Commit to Entire Program.* Commit to actively participate throughout the entire duration of the program. Attend scheduled events and keep scheduled appointments with our team.
- *Be Prepared.* Ensure that goals are established, topics are identified, agendas are created, and questions are prepared for each meeting.
- *Be Receptive to Feedback.* Accept feedback and suggestions from our team.
- *Show Professionalism.* Uphold a high standard of professionalism. Promptly return telephone calls and e-mails. Be present, no multi-tasking during meetings.
- *Maintain Respect.* Uphold core relationship values including privacy, confidentiality, honesty and integrity.

What are the expectations for our team?

4. Confidentiality: How will your team treat information shared within the group and between individual team members? Outline your team's confidentiality statement.

5. Participation: Every group will have different expectations about how much time each team member is expected to devote to TCDIP Connect activities. Based on the expectations, goals and objectives identified by your team, determine a meeting schedule and preferred format(s) for meetings. Some things to consider:

- How often does the team want to meet?
- How structured does the team want the meetings to be?
- Preferred location/platform for meetings?

6. Communication: Using the [Communications Best Practices](#) above, identify communication cadence and preference. What is your team's communication plan?

7. Other Ground Rules

Take time to consider other ground rules that your team will follow to avoid any misunderstandings and frustrations further down the line and to give your team the best chance of success. Below are some things to consider when setting additional ground rules. For additional considerations, see [Mentorship Best Practices](#).

- What process will be followed if a member is frequently late or absent?
- How many times may a member be absent or late and still remain in the group?
- If a member is not engaging or responding, what is the process for connecting with that member? What are the steps for re-engaging that member or determining if that member should step away from the group?
- Is the group interested in bringing in additional resources (e.g. speakers)? If so, what is the process of reviewing/approving external resources?

Group Name:

Member Signatures:

Form B: Individual Team Member's Goal Statement

Name:

Date:

At the beginning of the program, each team member is asked to think about their goals and expectations on an individual basis. Each team can decide whether members will be asked to share individual statements with each other, or whether the team would prefer to keep statements private. What do you as an individual want to achieve as a result of the mentoring program?

- 1. What are your goals for participating in TCDIP Connect?**
 - a. What skills do you want to build?
 - b. What connections would help?
 - c. What experience do you need?

- 2. What do you plan to contribute to the team?**
 - a. What skills or expertise can you offer?
 - b. What connections can you offer to your team?
 - c. What experiences do you have that will be helpful to other team member?

- 3. Where do you see yourself in one year? 3 years? 5 years? What will you be doing professionally? How is it different from today?**

- 4. Based on your response to No. 3, what are your longer-term goals?**

- 5. What will it take to achieve these goals? What are your needs along the way? What will you need to learn? Who will you need to know? What experiences will you need to have had?**

TCDIP Connect Scoresheet

Group Name: _____

	Date and activity	Date and activity	Date and activity	Date and activity	Date and activity	Date and activity	Date and activity
Total							

The Scorekeeper will keep track of attendance and participation points throughout the year. Using a scoresheet provided by TCDIP, the Scorekeeper will need communicate with their team to keep the scoresheet updated and submit it to TCDIP at pre-designated times.

To use this scoresheet:

1. Replace “Member #” with team member names.
2. Add the date and short description of activity in the “Date and activity” section.
3. Mark off which team members were present for the activity.
 - a. You can submit multiple scoresheets if you run out of columns.
4. Record the total number of participants in the "Total" row after each activity.
5. Send the completed scoresheet to info@diversityinpractice.org no later than the fifth (5) day of the month.