TCDIP CONNECT: EXPANDING YOUR NETWORK

2022 PROGRAM GUIDE

Twin Cities Diversity in Practice
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Contents

Why Did We Create TCDIP Connect?

Welcome to Season 2 of TCDIP Connect! This guide will give you an overview of the program and how you can get the most out of your experience. Skim this guide, especially the sections towards the end that provide best practices for communications, handling interpersonal conflict, and building an inclusive team.

You're joining a program that was built by lawyers and students. We reimagined TCDIP's mentoring programs because we know that 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 70 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 reimaging 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

Thank you to the TCDIP Connect Working Group Members who helped us improve and strengthen the program for Season 2. The Working Group harnessed information and feedback from Season 1 to refine the program and create a more meaningful experience for Season 2 participants.

	**Caryn**	**Boisen**	**Larson King**
	**June**	**Cheng**	**Fredrikson & Byron**
	**Usha**	**Neelakantan**	**3M**
	**Liz**	**Niemer**	**Twin Cities |Diversity in Practice**
	**Alison**	**Plavin**	**Taft Law**
	**Summra**	**Shariff**	**Twin Cities Diversity in Practice**
	**Heidi**	**Silton**	**Lockridge Grindal Nauen**
	**Joy**	**Wang**	**University of Minnesota Law School**
	**Jamison**	**Whiting**	**Faegre Drinker**

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. Every other month, Teams will tally points and the team with the most points will win a prize! 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 completing the level setting worksheet in the benchmark section.

Scoring Reference Guide:

Activity with 2 – 5 members participating:	5 points per activity
Activity with 6 to 10 members participating:	10 points per activity
Level Setting Worksheets:	10 points per worksheet

Check out the Ideas for Team section for activity ideas on pages 8-9. Points are only awarded if two or more team members attend a meeting or activity. 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.

Benchmarking

TCDIP Connect has several benchmarking practices in place to help the teams. Each team will complete the Level Setting Worksheet (Form A) twice: once at the beginning of the program (due March 4, 2022) and another about halfway through the program (due May 13, 2022). Teams will receive **10 points** each time they complete 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! Teams are encouraged to rotate Captains and Assistant Captains throughout the program to further team engagement. 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 role is open to any attorney regardless of years of experience. The Captain should organize initial communications and help 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. The Assistant Captain should be mindful of the time commitment required, and this position is not recommended for law students in their first year.

Scorekeeper. The Scorekeeper will keep track of attendance and participation points throughout the year. Using a scoresheet provided by TCDIP, the Scorekeeper will need to 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. The agent, if needed, will work with team members to rehabilitate interpersonal relationships and resolve any conflicts. 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 at 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 turns 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 your team using the Form A: Level Setting Worksheet.
- Review the 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 accordingly. 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.
   - 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 a hybrid 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 checking out a local restaurant
- 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 to 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. If this happens, 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. Before you decide that you can no longer participate in the program, we hope that you will reach out to the Liz Niemer our program and events coordinator at events@diversityinpractice.org. TCDIP staff are here to support you!

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 first season of TCDIP Connect launched while legal professionals are working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. Season 2 is starting at a time of transition. We are mindful that for the foreseeable future many people are navigating a changed landscape for work and school and that some will continue to work from home, while others transition to working from the office or attend school in person. The mentoring program can work with people interacting through video conferencing and other virtual communication means.

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 calls 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 a 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. Some law students and early careet attorneys may feel anxious about asking for help or being a "burden." Be open, generous, and forthcoming with information that will help your team members 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 team members with problem-solving, building trust, and encouraging 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. Team members 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 team members have for your team dynamics. 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 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 members' backgrounds and interests outside of their jobs. Getting to know your team members as individuals allows you to build stronger relationships and to tailor your advice to their personalities 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 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 or Hybrid 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 your 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 on 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.