

Colorado Bar Association
& Colorado Judicial Institute

DIVERSITY ON THE BENCH COALITION



ACTION PLAN
Short Version



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[INTRODUCTORY REMARKS TO BE INSERTED]

The Diversity on the Bench Coalition will work with the Colorado Judicial Department's Head of Judicial Diversity Outreach in the implementation of this Action Plan.

September 2020

GOAL 1 Promote Education Opportunities Prior to Law School

Strategy 1 | Educate students from elementary school through college on the role and importance of judicial officers and the steps to becoming a judge

Strategy 2 | Design a powerful message and prepare speakers

Strategy 3 | Offer mentoring opportunities to students and connect them with diverse attorneys and judges

GOAL 2 Conduct Robust Recruitment in Law Schools

Strategy 1 | Implement consistent engagement opportunities with law students to promote the judiciary as a career track

Strategy 2 | Create a judicial track program/curriculum at the law schools

Strategy 3 | Increase the number of judicial clerkships for diverse law students at all levels of the judiciary

GOAL 3 Recruit Diverse Candidates to Apply for Judicial Vacancies

Strategy 1 | Create opportunities for personal outreach to potential candidates to build a pipeline of diverse candidates

Strategy 2 | Ask sitting judges to help recruit judicial candidates

Strategy 3 | Replicate the Colorado Bar Association’s ACTNow Initiative (Appointing Critical Talent Now) in which the diversity bars sponsor one applicant per judicial appointment

Strategy 4 | Create an annual judicial recruiting event with each diversity bar association focused on pathways to the bench and resources to support applicants

Strategy 5 | Create talking points for individuals who are encouraging diverse candidates to consider serving on the bench

Strategy 6 | Engage with community organizations

GOAL 4 Support and Develop Diverse Candidates

Strategy 1 | Start recruiting and supporting candidates as early as possible

Strategy 2 | Develop formal training on becoming a judge

Strategy 3 | Train the trainers

Strategy 4 | Educate candidates on the basics, nuances, and successful strategies to navigate the application process

Strategy 5 | Help candidates develop resilience and persistence during the process so they are not discouraged if rejected

Strategy 6 | Create partnerships with groups in the legal community

GOAL 5 Promote Law Firm Responsibility to Encourage Diverse Attorneys to Apply

Strategy 1 | Increase law firms' encouragement and support of potential judicial applicants during the application process

Strategy 2 | Encourage law firms to provide employment opportunities to former judges to relieve concerns by candidates that there will not be opportunities when they leave the bench.

NOMINATING COMMISSIONS

GOAL 1 Recruit and Appoint Applicants for Judicial Nominating Commissions who are Committed to Diversity

Strategy 1 | Identify diverse lay people, as well as non-diverse lay people supportive of a diverse bench, to apply to serve on a Judicial Nominating Commission (JNC)

Strategy 2 | Educate and promote how the JNC application/appointment process works to help interested applicants and stakeholders understand the process

Strategy 3 | Improve notice of deadlines on JNC vacancies to the broader community, stakeholders, and coalition partners so they can recruit applicants

Strategy 4 | Work with the Judicial Branch to redesign the JNC webpage so JNC vacancies, rosters, deadlines, and JNC applications are prominent, obvious, and easy to navigate

Strategy 5 | Reduce the JNC term to less than 6 years since the term length may be a barrier for underrepresented communities

GOAL 2 Ongoing and Mandatory Training for Both New and Existing Members of Judicial Nominating Commissions

Strategy 1 | Develop a consistent set of best practices for the JNC

Strategy 2 | Training and education should entail a deep dive into the value of a diverse bench, the problem when diversity is lacking, and the solutions

Strategy 3 | Mandatory and ongoing implicit bias training for new JNC members and existing members

Strategy 4 | Encourage Supreme Court Justices who serve as ex-officios to help educate the JNC and play a more vocal role in the process

DECIDING OFFICIALS

GOAL 1 Educate Decision-Makers on the Importance of Having a Diverse Bench

Strategy 1 | Inform Judicial leadership, the Attorney General and political leadership about judicial deficits and the lack of diverse representation

GOAL 2 Create a Plan to Encourage Buy-In from Deciding Officials

Strategy 1 | Create a comprehensive plan to address deficits and gain buy-in from other leaders who are part of the decision-making process

Strategy 2 | Design strategies that are different from the historic solutions of having black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) candidates assimilate into a white power structure

GOAL 3 Target Influential Colorado Companies who have the Decision Makers

Strategy 1 | Recruit private business to help as they have the power and the platform to help spread the message, reach the broader Colorado community, and influence decision-makers

ACCOUNTABILITY & TRACKING

GOAL 1 Use Data to Bust Myths and Solve the Right Problems

Strategy 1 | Survey judicial applicants to track demographic data of candidates

Strategy 2 | Survey JNC members to track demographic data of commissioners

Strategy 3 | Track ongoing judicial appointments and JNC appointments to ensure that data is always accurate and updated

Strategy 4 | Track demographics of law students at DU and CU

Strategy 5 | Identify diverse lawyers in each judicial district

Strategy 6 | Compile census demographics for citizens in all judicial districts

Strategy 7 | Report out to the community on successful appointments of diverse judges

Strategy 8 | Eli Wald's survey on the history of all Colorado Judges

Strategy 9 | Poll potential judicial candidates to gather data on their assessment of the judicial appointment system:

GOAL 2 Make Data Easily Accessible

Strategy 1 | Create a public repository to easily access the demographics of Colorado state court judges and appointments

GOAL 1 Widely Publicize the Lack of Judicial Diversity

Strategy 1 | Educate and promote outside of the legal profession and across different sectors to places of worships, chambers, schools, community centers, private sector

Strategy 2 | Educate and promote more widely within the profession

Strategy 2 | Through the Colorado Bar Association and Supreme Court, develop messaging opportunities that emphasize the importance of making diversity on the bench a priority

GOAL 2 Use Empathy and the Power of Personal Stories

Strategy 1 | Invite non-minority decision-makers to a gathering where that person is the only non-minority

Strategy 2 | Use personal videos from individuals on the value of a diverse bench

Strategy 3 | Publish the written stories from judges on the value of diversity to the broader community and coalition partners

Strategy 4 | Publish the appointments of diverse judges while continuing to emphasize the need for additional appointments

GOAL 3 Publicize Accomplishments of Diverse Judges

Strategy 1 | Create videos and use print media, social media, TV media to tell the stories

Strategy 2 | Ensure the inclusion of diverse judicial nominees in awards

GOAL 4 Publicize the Work of the Coalition

Strategy 1 | Create a communications plan for the Coalition

Strategy 2 | Create a social media presence for the Coalition

Strategy 3 | Create a Coalition webpage on Colorado Bar Association & Colorado Judicial Institute websites

Strategy 4 | Present at the annual conferences of Coalition Partners and other community Stakeholders

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