



RSI

Fostering Equity in a Volunteer Mediator Roster:

**An Evaluation of the Center for Conflict
Resolution's Equity Audit Implementation**



Fostering Equity in a Volunteer Mediator Roster:

An Evaluation of the Center for Conflict Resolution's Equity Audit Implementation

Authors

Stephen Sullivan, Researcher

Jennifer Shack, Director of Research

Jasmine Henry, Research Associate

© 2025 Resolution Systems Institute. Reproduction for non-profit purposes only.

Contact RSI

11 East Adams St., Suite 500 Chicago, IL 60603
312 922 6475
info@aboutrsi.org
AboutRSI.org

Follow RSI

Facebook: [Facebook.com/AboutRSI](https://www.facebook.com/AboutRSI)
LinkedIn: <http://tinyurl.com/LinkedInToRSI>
Blog: <http://blog.aboutrsi.org/>
[Court ADR Connection \(e-newsletter\)](#)



Acknowledgments

We are grateful to CCR's Executive Director, Cassandra Lively, and CCR's Volunteer Director, Israel Putnam, for their guidance and support throughout the evaluation process.

We also appreciate the CCR board members, staff and volunteers who gave their time to talk with us and complete surveys.

We also wish to thank RSI Communications and Development Manager Sandy Wiegand for her expert editing.

RSI and CCR are extremely grateful to the American Arbitration Association-International Centre for Dispute Resolution Foundation for providing the funding that made this work possible.



Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Description of Project	1
Evaluation	2
Key Findings and Recommendations	2
Conclusion.....	4
Overview	5
The Center for Conflict Resolution – Mediator Mentorship Program.....	5
The Problem.....	5
Barriers to Achieving Diversity.....	6
Implementing Change to the MMP	8
Evaluation	9
Findings and Recommendations.....	10
Building Alignment and Revamping the MMP.....	10
First MMP Training Session.....	16
Matching Event	22
Initial Results.....	33
Conclusion.....	34
Appendix A: Methodology	35
Appendix B: First MMP Training Session Survey	37
Appendix C: Matching Event Survey for Applicants	40
Appendix D: Matching Event Survey for Station Runners	41
Appendix E: CCR Staff and Volunteer Interview Protocol	42



Executive Summary

Description of Project

The Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) engaged a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) consultant to conduct an equity audit of its Mediator Mentorship Program (MMP). The consultant worked with staff, board members and volunteers to uncover barriers preventing CCR's volunteer mediator roster from reflecting the diversity of communities the program serves and to determine how to address those barriers.

CCR staff and volunteers implemented major changes to MMP application, screening and recruitment processes over the course of three project phases:

Building Alignment (Phase 1):

- Developing a new mindset of “matching” applicants to the MMP
- Refining the way CCR describes the criteria and skillsets needed to succeed as a CCR volunteer mediator
- Defining what each element of DEI means within the MMP
- Introducing flexibility to meet program costs through a bartering system

Revamping the MMP (Phase 2):

- Replacing application essays with simple interest forms to reduce language and time barriers
- Creating Matching Events to screen applicants using skill-based activities relevant to mediation
- Crafting a new rubric with weighted criteria for screeners (“Station Runners”) to assess applicants

Training and Outreach (Phase 3):

- Facilitating trainings to prepare staff and volunteers to understand their new roles in the MMP process, run the Matching Events and score applicants using the new rubric
- Expanding outreach to recruit more diverse groups of applicants and form personalized community partnerships

Evaluation

Resolution Systems Institute (RSI) evaluated CCR's implementation of the equity project. Through surveys, interviews, observations and review of documents, we aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1) How well did CCR help staff and volunteers to understand the purpose of the MMP revamp?
- 2) How well did CCR prepare those who would be involved in selecting mentees to use the new system?
- 3) How well did the new system work for matching applicants to the MMP?
- 4) Did the new system increase the diversity of both applicants and those selected to be mentees?

Key Findings and Recommendations

Building Alignment and Revamping the MMP

Below are key findings related to how well CCR helped staff to understand the project's purpose (Q1):

- **The process fostered collaboration:** Staff and volunteers appreciated the opportunities to work together on project tasks and develop solutions that addressed multiple aspects of the MMP.
- **Communication felt inconsistent:** Some participants said they wanted more consistent updates about the project goals and progress.
 - *Recommendation: Maintain consistent communication about project progress, including information on what work has been done and will follow participants' involvement.*
- **Time was balanced:** Staff and volunteers felt the project effectively balanced time for reflection on existing issues and time dedicated to developing concrete solutions.
- **Interest remains strong:** Participants were excited to make major changes and affirmed their interest in CCR's plans to offer future opportunities to reflect and consider additional changes.
 - *Recommendation: Support the most recent changes to the MMP, and provide opportunities for further refinement as goals evolve.*

First MMP Training Session

Below are key findings related to how well CCR prepared Station Runners to use the new process (Q2):

- **Activities were effective:** Staff and volunteers felt the training activities provided them with an “excellent” understanding of the new MMP processes (64%–73% across activities).
- **Need for context:** Participants felt their understanding of DEI topics was more firm than their understanding of MMP-related topics, with some indicating they needed more information on the audit.
 - *Recommendation: Consider tweaking the training schedule and providing more information about how the training fits into CCR’s larger equity goals.*
- **Training was accessible:** Staff and volunteers were able to capably participate in the training whether or not they had prior knowledge of DEI topics.
- **Excitement for change:** Participants felt the project would benefit CCR in numerous ways.
 - *Recommendation: Build on the continued interest in equity-related work and the ways in which the training connected CCR’s equity goals to the skills of staff and volunteers.*

Matching Events

Below are key findings related to how well the new system worked for matching applicants (Q3):

- **Skill assessment was split:** While station runners felt very confident about their ability to assess applicants’ skills using the activities, applicants had mixed feelings about their ability to demonstrate skills.
 - *Recommendation: Continue to use skill-based activities to assess MMP applicants, while also soliciting feedback and making adjustments as necessary.*
- **More pre-event information was wanted:** Station runners wanted more information about what was communicated to applicants, while applicants wanted a preview of what the format involved.
 - *Recommendation: Ensure that station runners and applicants have a clear overview of the event format, schedule and expectations.*
- **Format was efficient:** Station runners and applicants felt the Matching Events were well organized and time efficient, with ample opportunities for connection.
- **Scorecard needs clarification:** Some station runners wanted more information about how to use the scorecard and were confused about the numerical rating system.

- *Recommendation: Provide station runners with more detailed instructions on how they should use the scorecard, and consider refining the rating system.*

Initial Results

To understand whether the system increased the diversity of incoming volunteers (Q4), we collected demographic data about the first set of applicants to use the new system. The data indicate that the new MMP application process appears to result in a diverse applicant and mediator pool. Of the 22 applicants who participated in the Matching Events, ten (45%) contributed to diversifying the mediator roster, based on criteria defined by the audit. Nine were ultimately selected to enter the MMP, with five (56%) contributing to diversifying the roster, based on the same criteria.

Given the timing of the evaluation and the small sample, we cannot draw definitive conclusions about the medium- to longer-term outcomes.

Conclusion

CCR's equity implementation project successfully engaged staff and volunteers to reflect on the barriers to the MMP and to develop innovative solutions to address those barriers. The project resulted in significant changes to MMP application and screening processes and recruitment strategies. Early results suggest these changes have had a positive impact on CCR's ability to recruit diverse sets of applicants and foster more equitable screening practices.



Overview

The Center for Conflict Resolution – Mediator Mentorship Program

The Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) is a Chicago-based community mediation center that provides free mediation and case management services in the Chicagoland area. CCR's Mediator Mentorship Program (MMP) is its intensive training program for onboarding new volunteer mediators to the organization. Upon completing the program, participants provide at least 18 months of mediation services through CCR's programs, which span many types of cases to serve over 15,000 clients annually.

The Problem

Community mediation centers have long recognized the benefits to having a diverse roster of mediators. When mediators bring a range of perspectives and lived experiences to mediation, it can foster [positive outcomes](#), such as better attunement to the specific needs of communities and the identities of individual party members. Conversely, a lack of diversity in mediator rosters can result in parties having [lower trust](#) in the mediation process — for example, if the mediator is perceived as being biased or lacking cultural competence skills. Thus, fostering more [equitable](#) mediator selection and training practices is critical to ensuring mediation is inclusive to parties from all backgrounds.

Although CCR's mediator roster has been diverse in many ways, it does not fully represent the diversity of the communities CCR serves. To address this discrepancy, CCR engaged a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) partner — inQUEST Consulting — to conduct an equity audit of the MMP. The consulting partners uncovered a number of barriers within MMP strategies for recruiting and assessing applicants that hindered effective recruitment of a diverse mediator roster. They also offered a set of recommendations to address those barriers. This project encompasses CCR's implementation of the consulting partners' recommendations for improving the MMP.

CCR's goals were the following:

- 1) Develop a process and structure for attracting, selecting and mentoring diverse mediators.
- 2) Improve cultural competence within CCR to help engage and retain diverse mediators.
- 3) Deepen community connection to reach mediators with diverse demographic backgrounds.

Barriers to Achieving Diversity

CCR staff worked with their consulting partners to determine what was preventing CCR's volunteer mediator roster from more fully reflecting the diversity of the communities the organization serves. The consulting partners conducted a comprehensive review of CCR's materials and processes and solicited feedback via interviews with leadership, program staff, mentors, applicant screeners, MMP participants and MMP applicants.

The audit uncovered mindsets and other barriers to achieving CCR's diversity goals. They included the following:

Overall Mindset

Although CCR's existing processes demonstrated an eye toward inclusivity, the organization's approaches were weighted toward building "equality" rather than "equity." The difference is that equality means giving individuals the same resources or opportunities, whereas equity recognizes structural barriers to accessing the program and thus aims to meet individuals' specific circumstances. Under an equality-based framework, it is assumed that all participants should go through the MMP process the exact same way; in an equity-based framework, CCR would personalize the program process to meet the needs of applicants from a more diverse range of experiences, without sacrificing rigor.

The consulting partners uncovered other mindset limitations in the language CCR was using to describe the application process. For example, existing screening processes had an ethos of "selection" in which the goal was to weed out applicants, rather than a more welcoming mindset, such as "matching," in which the goal is to discover ways to fit promising applicants into the organization based on their distinct skills and experience.

Time and Cost

Entry into the MMP involves a \$900 fee and a commitment to mediate at least twice per month for 18 months at CCR, with scholarships available. Applicants are also required to have completed a court-approved 40-hour Mediation Skills Training prior to entering the MMP. At CCR, the cost of the 40-hour training ranges from \$1,650 to \$1,750, with a limited number of scholarships available. The time and cost commitments involved with the program and its prerequisites were found to prevent younger individuals from participating. The consulting partners also highlighted direct costs and opportunity costs as distinct but interrelated barriers to creating a diverse roster. For example, responses to the consulting partners' surveys from people of color, LGBTQ+ and younger individuals were more likely to describe cost-related

barriers as opportunity costs — that unpaid volunteer work required too much time away from other paid work opportunities.

Application Form

Previously, CCR required applicants to complete a written application form. Within the form, applicants answered a series of questions about their interest in mediating at CCR, personal and professional background, and examples of how they would address conflict. This was found to be time-consuming both for applicants completing the forms and for screeners reviewing them.¹ The consulting partners noted that use of a writing-intensive application may also be biased toward native English-speaking applicants. Additionally, using application essays creates the potential for bias toward those whose written communication styles match the preferences of individual application reviewers. CCR also used a “blind” application form to reduce bias. The form instructed applicants to refrain from mentioning their place of employment, where they went to school and where they received training. But this meant applicants had to be much more careful how they described their backgrounds, which may have precluded them from discussing experiences important to them vis-à-vis their social identities.

Screening Processes

Existing interview protocol and rubrics did not consistently reflect what was required to succeed as a CCR mediator. In addition, screeners felt the criteria within the rubrics were not entirely clear, which resulted in considerable variation in scoring. Interviews were conducted one-on-one, meaning each CCR interviewer was solely responsible for assessing and advocating for or declining their individual applicants. Some screeners were uncomfortable with that.

There were also opportunities to better align the screening processes with the needs of the program and thus make the overall application process more useful for both screeners and applicants. The consulting partners noted that existing criteria were all given equal importance to produce an average score, which flattened applicants’ experiences and prevented CCR from adequately gauging their distinct skillsets. For example, weighing interviewee skills and experience items equally (e.g., “adaptability to new technology” and “educational background”) may not provide an accurate or wholly relevant rendering of an applicant’s potential to be a CCR mediator.

¹ CCR provided RSI with an anonymized example of a completed application form. The applicant’s responses totaled 1,200+ words, suggesting a substantial amount of time went into writing them.

Awareness of the Program

The consulting partners found that the majority of people surveyed discovered the MMP via direct referral or network connection. They suggested expanding beyond current networks to help attract more diverse groups of applicants, especially younger people who may not yet have access to these networks.

Implementing Change to the MMP

To address the above barriers to the program, CCR staff worked with the consulting partners to implement major changes to the MMP. The consulting partners recommended a three-phase approach that involved building alignment within CCR, revamping the MMP application and selection process, and developing a new strategy for outreach.

Building Alignment (Phase 1)

First, CCR developed a plan to reimagine program processes, focusing on the needs of its current program staff and volunteer roster. CCR leadership engaged staff and volunteers in a series of workshops and meetings co-facilitated by the consulting partners. During these sessions, staff and volunteers collaborated to define what each element of DEI means at CCR, identify the skills needed to become a successful CCR mediator, and rank those skills in order of importance. Program leaders also introduced flexibility in meeting required MMP time and cost commitments through new methods such as a bartering program. Within this program, applicants could propose a barter with CCR to cover the cost of their training, such as providing additional hours of mediation or offering a training to staff in an area in which the applicant has expertise.

Revamping the MMP (Phase 2)

Next, CCR staff began rebuilding the screening processes, most notably by developing a new application process that addressed the barriers within the old process. This rebuild involved a series of meetings in which CCR leadership, program staff and volunteers developed new metrics by which to gauge applicants' potential as a CCR volunteer mediator and community member. As a result, CCR staff removed the previous written application in favor of a simple volunteer submission form that asked for intentionally specific information such as demographics, experience/skills and time availability. The new submission form takes approximately 10 minutes to complete and stays on file for three years, so applicants do not have to resubmit application materials should they not be matched the first time they apply.

CCR staff also determined four overarching criteria most relevant to succeeding as a CCR mediator and broke down those criteria into a set of defined behavior-based skills. These criteria became the basis for CCR's new approach for screening applicants. This approach used "Matching Events," which were designed to determine if applicants' skills and values matched those required by CCR. In place of the traditional interview, applicants participate in multiple "stations," in which two CCR facilitators (or "Station Runners") use activities to assess applicants on the four criteria mentioned above.

Training and Outreach (Phase 3)

Finally, CCR and the consulting partners began training CCR staff members and volunteers on the new strategies, language, processes and criteria they would implement into the MMP. In the first MMP training session, staff members and volunteers learned of their new roles in these processes and were able to practice the new applicant assessment techniques. CCR also held a Matching Event orientation prior to the first set of Matching Events to train station runners on how to run the activities and assess applicants' skills.

To address the issues around community awareness of the MMP, CCR leadership tasked an existing outreach committee to communicate the revamped MMP to new audiences. The committee also conducted outreach to existing networks to alert them of the changes to the MMP. Finally, CCR also created a new required-viewing informational video for potential applicants to the MMP. The video replaced CCR's former required information session.

All of this work culminated in the first ever set of Matching Events, which took place during spring 2025.

Evaluation

RSI's evaluation focused on assessing CCR's implementation of its consulting partners' recommendations for building more equity in the MMP volunteer mediator roster. Our goal with the evaluation was to uncover what strategies and approaches were effective, which were not effective, and what staff would do differently based on their experience. We focused on the process of changing the MMP and immediate outcomes; given the timing of the evaluation, there is not yet sufficient data to draw major conclusions about the medium- to longer-term outcomes of these changes on the CCR volunteer roster. See Appendix A for the methodology we used in the evaluation.

Our evaluation questions were the following:

- 1) How well did CCR help staff and volunteers to understand the purpose of the MMP revamp?
- 2) How well did CCR prepare those who would be involved in selecting mentees to use the new system?
- 3) How well did the new system work for matching applicants to the MMP?
- 4) Did the new system increase the diversity of both applicants and those selected to be mentees?

Findings and Recommendations

Building Alignment and Revamping the MMP

Based on the recommendations of their consulting partners, CCR leadership developed and implemented the three-phase approach outlined above, delegating board members, staff and volunteers to participate in different phases of the implementation process.

We interviewed CCR board members, staff members and volunteers who participated in the Phase 1 workshops with the consulting partners and in internal CCR meetings during Phase 2. Our goal was to assess the effectiveness of CCR's approach and how well CCR helped staff and volunteers to understand the purpose of the MMP revamp. We asked interviewees questions about the overall process of implementing the audit, what was most effective and what could have been done differently.

Implementation Process: What Was Effective

Opportunities to collaborate benefited participants and their contributions to the project

Overall, interviewees found CCR's **collaborative approach** to carrying out the equity audit implementation to be productive and meaningful. They appreciated the opportunity to participate in workshops and meetings with other staff members and volunteers, especially those they had previously not known. Having "different stakeholders involved," as one interviewee put it, meant that everyone could voice concerns related to their specific roles, ensuring that different aspects of the MMP were addressed.

Collaboration was especially important during Phase 1 work, since it laid the groundwork for the more concrete changes to the MMP made during Phase 2. As a participant in Phase 1 put it:

“(I)t was really important at that phase that we had representation from staff, from our mentors, from our volunteers that ... had gone through the program and were actively mediating.” A participant in Phase 2 appreciated the opportunity to act on the work that Phase 1 participants produced: “I wanted to have high impact, so participation [during Phase 2] was right up my alley ... rather than reviewing everything, I wanted to get to the meat of it.”

Interviewees highlighted the **distinct roles and skillsets of their colleagues as beneficial to small group conversations**, including: defining DEI at CCR, addressing program needs and building more effective processes. For example, an interviewee involved with the Phase 1 workshops said: “I think it was good that the groups were made of different people, like staff, board members. So it gave us the opportunity to work with people that maybe on a day-to-day basis I don’t see.” A different interviewee involved with the Phase 2 revamp highlighted the distinct language skillset of one colleague and the institutional knowledge of another colleague as enhancing the process of crafting the new applicant rubric.

Implementation processes balanced reflection and action

In general, interviewees felt the implementation process struck **a good balance between opportunities to reflect on issues with the previous processes and to actualize change**. These opportunities for reflection and action extended beyond individual meetings and workshops to participants’ work on the project as a whole. Participants described the assigned “homework” (such as reviewing surveys and their results) between Phase 1 workshops as benefiting the process: “I thought [the homework] was an efficient use of time.” In Phase 2, participants effectively used tools such as a shared Google Doc to “bounce ideas off of each other” and “build on ideas that were already there” when creating the new assessment materials.

Others spoke about how the Phase 1 **small groups were effective at funneling reflection into action**. As one participant described, “We were split up with different groups, and then we were assigned different questions or things to review as a whole, and then come up with what we thought of these 10 ideas, what would be the top three, or where should we focus?” Another participant felt that even when disagreements arose in group discussions, staff and volunteers were able to build consensus by reminding one another of shared goals: “We decided that consensus was the best idea. You know, like the majority of the people who preferred a specific language or a specific terminology.”

Staff and volunteers were excited about the opportunity for major change

In general, when we asked whether participants were excited or nervous about changing the MMP, most said their **feelings of excitement tempered any nervousness they had about the project and its outcomes**. Many shared that they were glad CCR was able to create this opportunity and that there were resources and staff interest to support the work. For example,

one interviewee said, “It was nice to know that we were going to go through [this audit] and really take this seriously, because ... it’s certainly important to identify what your areas of focus need to be, but to actually do the work is a very different step.” Another recognized that a project of this importance needed sufficient resources, saying, “I think it has always been a project that I wish we had the resources to do before. I mean, the need for more mediators, a diverse pool — there is that need.”

Some interviewees also discussed their **appreciation that CCR leadership gave staff permission to make large changes to the program**, including the possibility of starting from scratch. As one interviewee described, “Knowing that option was available was helpful, but given our experience with [the program], it wasn’t necessary.” Another interviewee also appreciated the potential to make major shifts, while noting that this leeway did not derail the project: “Sometimes, when the sky is the limit, you can really do whatever you want. [That] can feel almost a little debilitating, because you don’t know where to take it. But once we kind of started to think through this, like workshop tryouts ... that then made it very easy ... We quickly were able to arrive at that starting off point together with, like, that format that we all thought would be really wonderful.”

Process Challenges and Concerns for the Future

Communication about project progress was inconsistent

Some interviewees felt CCR did not maintain consistent enough communication throughout the implementation process about the work that had been done and the work that would follow individual meetings or sessions. One interviewee felt there was clear communication “at the beginning” of the process but that it dropped off: “At the very early stages of involvement, they did a really good overview of who is doing what in the process ... But then there was never a revisiting of like ‘and here’s where we are on the map.’” Another felt they were not provided with sufficient information about the audit prior to their involvement.

One interviewee described **consistent communication as important to maintaining staff and volunteer investment** in the project. They shared: “The times that I’ve seen the staff and the overall community get the most excited is when there’s been some transparency around where we are in the process and what needs to happen next, or maybe where the roadblocks are.” Another interviewee felt **steadier communication could have improved participants’ abilities to be time efficient** and helped them to process large amounts of information; for example, they wished they had been provided consistent summaries of previous sessions and an outline of expectations for future sessions: “We spent as much time as we could outside of work doing this, but it was a lot of information.”

Participants fear limited capacity and flexibility for continued progress

Interviewees also raised **ongoing logistical and capacity-related challenges** and recognized certain **limits of making changes to accommodate applicants** when there are still baseline time and cost requirements involved. These remain challenges to building on the project and driving CCR's equity goals further.

In terms of ongoing logistical challenges, participants noted that major changes to longstanding processes **will take substantial staff time to further develop**. One interviewee shared, "I think it's gonna take a while ... it's also just capacity and resources." This was a similar sentiment shared by a different participant: "(W)e don't have endless resources, and we don't have endless time." One interviewee also noted that while this project required a lot of time, it was beneficial to the process: "I am a bit frustrated with how long collaboration can take, but I think I have seen throughout this process the benefit of taking that additional time and taking those additional steps."

Regarding limitations of change, interviewees described the **balance between maintaining program standards and introducing more flexibility** as an issue that will continue to impact future equity conversations. As one interviewee put it, "I think that what always has to stay the same is that you have to make the certification standards right, so how you ... get involved ... get brought into the volunteer community at first, I think that that can be changed and even changed again several more times in years to come." Another interviewee felt that while it has been important to make the application and recruiting processes more accommodating and time efficient, it will be more difficult to address components such as the three-month mentorship period and certifying process. "It's hard for people to find the time to meet with their mentor at a specific time, specific date, and sometimes we lose people during that time ... are there other ways we can make this [better]?" One other interviewee noted that outreach also has its limits: "No matter how much outreach you do, no matter how creative you get looking to different populations ... [dedicating] a huge amount of time without pay for something is a definitional funnel."

Concern exists about maintaining interest in evolving the MMP

A concern we heard from some interviewees was **whether and how CCR plans to sustain these changes** or create opportunities for more change. We also noted a desire for continued reflection on barriers to equity once this particular project concludes. As one participant put it, "(E)ven a super inclusive organization like CCR can still continue to improve. And [it is] better to have more people seated at the table when making these decisions." A different participant also noted the possibility of including more voices in future discussions.

Interviewees also reflected on the **need to continually reassess what the goals of equity-based recruitment are, and which populations CCR should strive to reach** under these terms: “DEI is not just about race and gender but also age as well,” one interviewee noted. A different interviewee offered a similar comment, emphasizing the importance of an intersectional conception of diversity: “(W)e need to talk about gender expression, we need to talk about race, we need to talk about immigration status ... people who just finished high school ... through those lenses.”

Participants’ comments spoke to the challenges of **maintaining interest in this work once CCR staff are no longer working with the consulting partners**. One of CCR’s stated goals has been to evolve the Matching Event process, including the stations, as needed; staff reiterated the importance of this. For example, one interviewee said, “I think those stations don’t need to be set in stone the way this MMP has been set in stone for so many years ... All of those aspects should be open to change as long as each cohort is assessed in the same way.” Another felt that continued focus on the MMP is critical to CCR’s equity-related goals, because they see it as the CCR program with the most room for improvement.

Definitions of Success: What to Look for in the Future

We asked interviewees two questions related to determining whether changes to the MMP are successful: first, how to effectively track progress (related to recruiting and reaching equity goals); and second, what they felt “successful” outcomes would look like. Interviewees discussed what “success” looked like in a variety of terms: **increased number of applicants from diverse backgrounds, better alignment between CCR’s volunteer mediator roster and the communities that CCR serves, increased retention and more effective support systems** for existing volunteers. These will be important criteria for CCR to measure in the future, since determining such longer-term outcomes is beyond the scope of this project.

Regarding definitions of success, interviewees noted a need for a robust support system to support mentees: “It’s also our job and our responsibility to make sure that we have [the needs of mentees met] as well when we’re talking about inclusion.” Another focused on further improving the extent to which the volunteer mediator roster reflects the diversity of communities CCR serves: “There’s a huge disconnect right now between, like, the identities of our volunteers and then the parties that we work with, which I would imagine is fairly consistent across community mediation centers.” A different interviewee felt they would be looking toward the “numbers going up” in terms of demographic diversity of applicants.

Recommendations

Communication

Maintain consistent communication on future updates: To ensure staff and volunteers are able to efficiently carry out further equity-related work, provide consistent updates on equity-related changes to the MMP. It may help to provide brief summaries of previous meetings or workshops to those not in attendance, including: what was discussed, any issues that arose, outcomes of the sessions and future work planned.

Building on Successes

Ensure the program changes are sustained: Staff and volunteers felt excited about participating in this project and were appreciative of the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in various capacities. Many felt the project was overdue and that additional work is needed. Determine how the organization can continue building on the successes of the revamped MMP while addressing any lingering issues. Ensure that data regarding recruitment efforts and applicant demographics continues to be collected.

Consider further change as needs evolve: CCR's equity goals may evolve depending on whether and how the volunteer roster diversifies. From the outset, CCR recognized that any changes made to the MMP as a result of this project are not set in stone. They have developed plans to create opportunities for future reflection and revision; staff and volunteers share a similar interest in continually assessing these processes and any future barriers that may arise.

Ensure there are resources to support staff: We heard from staff and volunteers that they appreciated the facilitation provided by the consulting partners and found the project's working sessions to be productive. They felt the process balanced time for reflection with time for actualizing change. Consider how best to engage staff in further conversations about equity, whether those involve external facilitation or not.

Conclusion

Overall, board members, staff and volunteers found the three-phase approach effective for implementing the audit recommendations. They appreciated the opportunity to collaborate, found that the process struck the right balance of time to reflect and make change, and were excited to make fundamental changes to longstanding processes. Participants shared their desire for this work to continue and for resources and time to be allocated for further discussion of equity goals. Future work can benefit from more consistent communication about CCR's equity goals and progress toward those goals.

First MMP Training Session

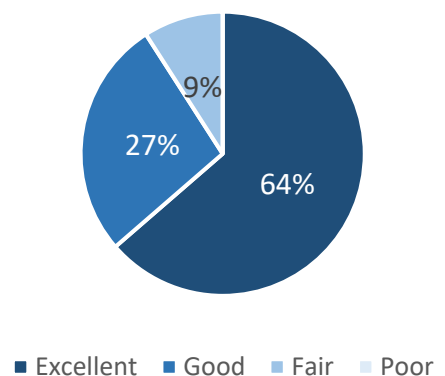
CCR organized an initial training event on December 4, 2024. The purpose of the training was to help trainees understand the rationale for the new MMP selection process and to start preparing them for their roles in selecting new mentees. The training was facilitated by their consulting partners and was divided into two main parts. First, the facilitators provided an overview of what was learned during the MMP audit regarding barriers to the program and how CCR staff and volunteers had since defined DEI within the organization. Second, the facilitators described how CCR had begun reimagining the MMP, including the new language and application processes to be used. The facilitators provided explanations for the different criteria by which CCR would gauge applicants' skills. They also discussed trainees' roles in facilitating the new processes.

During the training, the facilitators used a variety of large- and small-group activities to help trainees begin to understand and operationalize the new criteria. These activities included: cultural introductions, a discussion exploring the new criteria, a discussion on challenging assumptions and biases, and matching criteria role play.

CCR program leaders also held a Matching Event orientation a few days before the first set of Matching Events took place. The two-hour orientation was designed as a primer for the Matching Event. During the two-hour orientation, participants in the first MMP training session and other volunteers learned how they would facilitate the Matching Events as Station Runners, the format and questions involved with the station activities, and the scoring method they would use to assess applicants. The meeting was also recorded on Zoom and shared with those unable to attend the session live.

To evaluate CCR's first MMP training session, RSI invited all participants to complete a paper survey at the end of the session. We crafted questions to gauge participants' level of familiarity with work in DEI and with the DEI audit at CCR, their understanding of the training topics, their perception of the effectiveness of training activities, how participants might use what they learned, and their opinion of the quality of the training overall. We received responses from 13 participants out of the 16 who attended, with completed surveys from 11 out of 13 of these participants.²

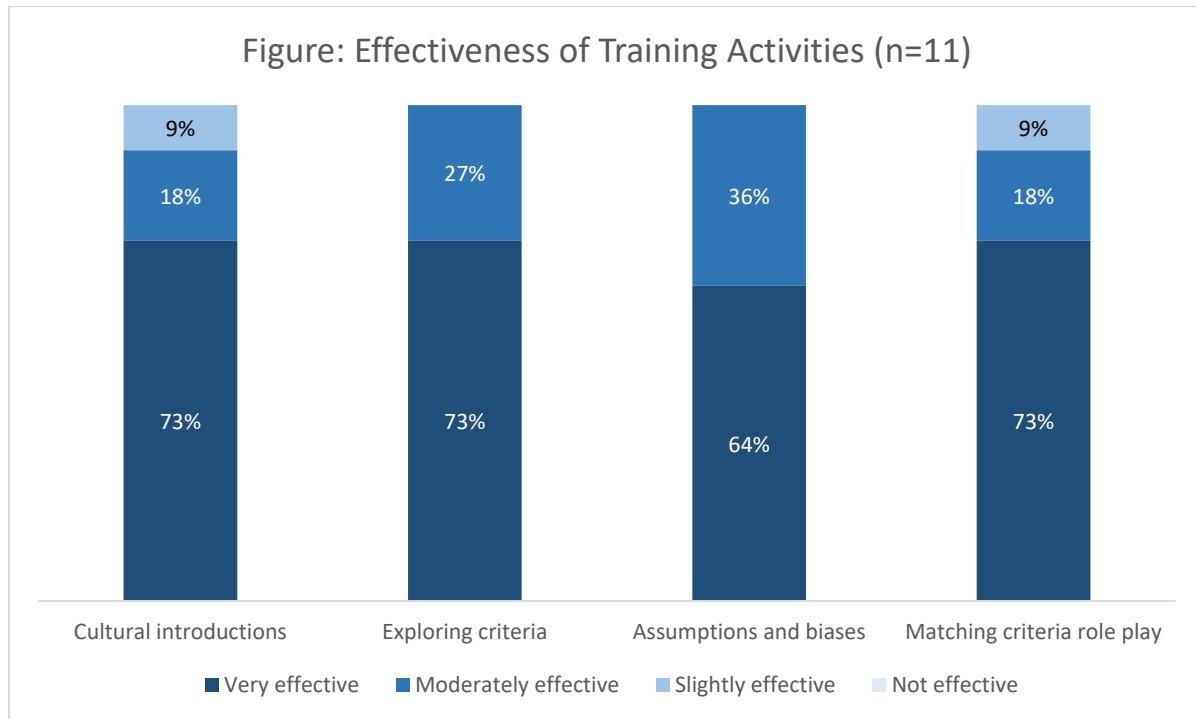
Figure: Training Quality
(n=11)



² Two of the survey respondents did not complete the second page of the survey.

The majority of participants (64%) felt the training was excellent. A little more than one-quarter of participants felt the training’s quality was good (27%), and only one participant (9%) felt its quality was fair. None of the participants felt the training’s quality was poor.

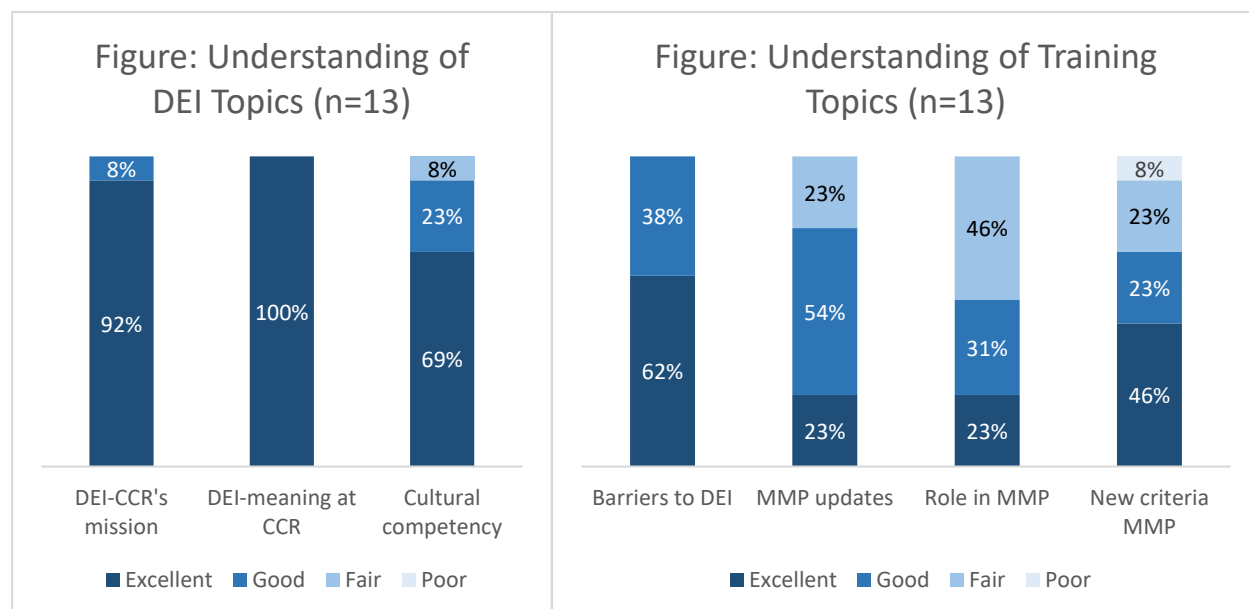
Participants Found Training Activities To Be Effective



Overall, most participants found each of the activities to be very effective at helping them to understand the new MMP process (64%–73%). A little more than one-third of participants found the challenging assumptions and biases activity to be moderately effective at helping them to understand the new MMP process (36%). No participants felt that any of the activities were not effective at helping them to understand the new MMP process.

In written comments, some participants suggested there should have been less time allocated to the cultural introductions activity and more time spent practicing facilitation. We discuss this feedback below.

Trainees Had Stronger Understanding of DEI Topics Than MMP Changes



We asked training participants to assess their understanding of several key topics covered during the training session. Topics included those about DEI at CCR generally: how DEI relates to CCR's mission; what diversity, equity and inclusion mean at CCR; and the importance of cultural competency in mediator selection. There were also topics specific to the MMP audit, such as: barriers to diversity in the MMP identified through the DEI audit; updates to the MMP matching process; participants' role in the MMP matching process; and the new criteria by which CCR will screen applicants.

The majority of participants felt their understanding was “excellent” for each of the DEI-related topics (range 69%–100%). All participants came away from the training feeling they had an excellent understanding of what DEI means at CCR, and nearly all participants said they had an excellent understanding of how DEI relates to CCR's mission.

Participants had a less firm understanding of the MMP-related topics. Barriers to DEI fared the best, with 62% of participants indicating they had an excellent understanding of this topic. The majority of participants indicated they had a “good” understanding of the MMP updates (54%). The topic participants struggled most with was understanding their role in the MMP; a plurality (46%) indicated they only had a “fair” grasp of this topic. Responses to the new criteria topic were mostly positive but mixed, with a plurality of respondents indicating they had an excellent understanding of the topic (46%) and the rest indicating they had a good (23%), fair (23%) or poor (8%) understanding.

These results suggest that participants were more likely to understand the general topics surrounding DEI at CCR than they were the specific issues and changes to the MMP as a result of the audit. Although we did not ask participants to elaborate on their responses to questions about their understanding of training topics, answers to other questions may provide some explanation of this pattern. Some participants wanted more background information about the audit to contextualize the trainings. For example, one participant wanted a separate “orientation” before the training to understand CCR’s goals and the logistics of the project in order to process the training information and their role in facilitating change. Participants also wanted to hear more about “next steps” and opportunities to practice some of the new processes.

What Participants Learned from the Training

We asked participants how they might see using what they learned at the training in their other roles at CCR. Eight participants provided answers to this open-ended question.

Trainees saw the training as enhancing their mediation skills

Some participants felt **the training and the topics it covered productively built off their existing mediation skills and work already ongoing at CCR**. For example, one participant responded, “This was another example of how to put mediation skills to use. Thinking more broadly about people’s skills/backgrounds and how to learn about them ...” Another participant connected the training topics to mediation practice, writing, “As a mediator ... understanding there are different traits and backgrounds to be aware of which will help me help them.”

Training offered a new perspective on potential volunteers

Participants reflected on **how the changes will enhance mentorship**. For example, one participant wrote, “It’s cool to see how DEI sounds at CCR. I also stole some strategies/examples to help us better train ourselves!” Another participant commented on the **potential impact on volunteer recruitment and engagement at CCR**: “New perspective on the ways in which volunteers might be most accommodated and where they might need more support.” One other participant shared a similar sentiment: “It was an eye opener into how we can invite others to join into [the] organization, other than mediation.”

Emphasis on mediation skill development and mentorship also matches what we heard during interviews. For example, a staff member felt these were core drivers of the equity project generally: “what we need to figure out is, can we try to recruit mediators that are going to be strong mediators and ... be taught the skills that are needed, and then also, do they help us fill some gaps in terms of the lived experiences and identities that are not represented?”

Respondents' stated benefits reflected CCR's DEI values

Participants identified a common set of potential benefits, all of which demonstrated the participants' appreciation of CCR's goal to diversify its mediator roster. The identified benefits included: **greater alignment between CCR volunteers and the community they serve, greater flexibility and opportunity in attracting diverse applicants, fostering a more transparent and inclusive process, and reducing existing barriers to the program.** During an interview, a staff member expressed excitement for having the opportunity to actualize these changes, reduce barriers and reach people with different backgrounds: "I think it has always been a project that I wish we had the resources to do before."

Participants Expressed Concern Over Next Steps

Trainees saw challenges to implementation

Some of the participants also identified a set of potential challenges that the new MMP matching process may present to CCR; these comments explain the mixed responses to the topic of participants' role in the MMP. These challenges mainly focused on implementation of the new process, such as **the need for further refinement, that the new process may require more time and staff resources, and uncertainty about how the changes would look in practice.** One indicated their concern about sustainability: "After creating an inclusive space for more diverse folx, how do we maintain that?" This comment reflected similar sentiments we heard during interviews about ensuring that equity-related work continues beyond this project.

Trainees Without a DEI Background Were Able to Effectively Understand the Training

We did not find any clear pattern between participants' level of familiarity with DEI or the DEI audit prior to the training and the extent to which they understood the training topics. This suggests that **participants need not have existing knowledge of DEI concepts to effectively participate in a DEI training.** However, it also suggests that prior knowledge of DEI concepts does not guarantee that participants will walk away from single training sessions with a complete understanding of how DEI is being implemented in their program. In practical terms, this means that CCR does not need to ensure that trainees have a high level of understanding of these topics prior to training, but that it also should not rely on trainees' knowledge and bypass these topics in the future.

How Training Should Change

We asked participants two open-ended questions at the end of the survey about how they thought the training could be improved. The first question asked what could be improved about the training, and the second provided space for participants to offer any other feedback about the training. Ten participants provided answers to the first question, and three provided answers to the second question.

Participants identified two overarching ways in which the training could be improved: more or different use of time and more information or context about how the training fit into CCR's process.

Respondents wanted more time or time spent differently

"More time" for content was the main request, including those who requested time be moved from the introductions to small-group work so they could practice more. One respondent also wanted longer breaks. Another respondent wished it was a full-day session.

Respondents wanted more information about the bigger picture

Those who wanted more information or context tended to want more background information about how the MMP fit into CCR and what the next steps would be. For example, one respondent said they would have liked "an orientation ... to what the MMP has to accomplish ... to processing how the changes achieve that while also achieving our DEI goals" so that they could understand "whether applicants still ultimately get narrowed." Others mentioned wanting more information about the future, such as "logistical info about the process/our roles in the process," "next steps ... and how we could support building off this training" or "what's next for CCR's programming."

Recommendations

Based on training survey results and participant feedback, we recommend that CCR takes the following approaches to future training sessions:

Schedule of Training Sessions

Provide more time for training: Participants wanted more time to understand training topics and practice new processes. CCR may wish to achieve this by splitting the initial training into two parts. The first can cover DEI concepts, definitions and their relationships to the organization's mission and work, and the second can cover specific proposed or ongoing changes to programs or processes with time for practice. Another option is to limit the time spent on introductions to have more time for practice.

Connection to Ongoing CCR Work

Connect training topics to existing experience and skills: Participants appreciated the ways training topics built on their expertise in mediation and program work they were already engaged in. Building on the existing skills and experiences of CCR’s staff and volunteer community can enhance interest and motivate investment in the process.

Provide context for how trainings fit into organizational goals and processes: Some participants felt they wanted more information to contextualize how the trainings fit into CCR’s larger DEI-related goals and work. They wanted to know what work came before and what work would follow the training. It may help to include an orientation prior to training sessions and/or follow-up correspondence on next steps after training sessions.

Conclusion: CCR Builds Alignment and Trains Staff to New MMP Strategies

Based on feedback from the CCR training session and interviews with program staff and volunteers, CCR effectively engaged staff and volunteers at different levels and during different phases of the project to build alignment on the audit implementation. The first MMP training session effectively conveyed information about how DEI is defined at CCR and relates to the organization’s goals, and it educated staff and volunteers about the new mindsets, strategies and processes involved with the new MMP. The training session could be improved by providing participants with more information about CCR’s goals and next steps, as well as by increasing the time spent on practice.

Matching Event

CCR’s staff reimagined the screening process for applicants to the MMP, moving away from a traditional interview-style format to a Matching Event composed of different stations of activities for applicants to participate in. They designed the stations to assess applicants’ capacities to meet specific criteria. For example, to demonstrate capacity for empathy and comfort with conflict, applicants were asked to watch a movie clip from *Inside Out* (first film) and then discuss the conflicting emotions that characters expressed.

CCR organized its first two Matching Events for March 19 and April 3, 2025. A total of 22 applicants were invited to participate.³ A few days prior to the Matching Events, CCR held an

³ For the first set of Matching Events, all pending applicants were invited. In the future, CCR will determine whether and how to winnow down the number of applicants invited to the Matching Event stage.

orientation in which they provided information on the new process and prepared Station Runners to run their stations.

RSI evaluated CCR's new MMP Matching Event using three methods. First, we administered two different surveys: one to the CCR Station Runners about their experience facilitating the Matching Events, and another to the volunteer applicants about their experience participating in the Matching Events. Second, two members of the RSI research team conducted observations of the Matching Event held on April 3. The researchers each observed the three Matching Event stations individually, taking notes on the overall process, interactions between Station Runners and applicants, as well as notes on which activities and questions were effective and which were not. Finally, we conducted interviews with Station Runners who had participated in the previous applicant screening process to gauge what was more effective and less effective about the new matching process.

Skill Assessment: Station Runners Confident; Applicants Split

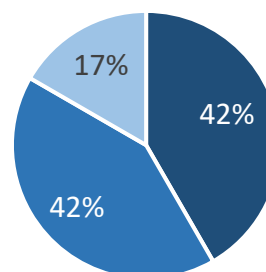
The primary objective of the Matching Events was to provide an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their skills and for Station Runners to assess those skills using the activities and the revamped criteria established by CCR staff and volunteers. Through surveys, we asked applicants about their ability to demonstrate skills to Station Runners and Station Runners about their ability to assess candidates' skills. **Overall, we found that Station Runners rated their ability to assess skills higher than applicants rated their ability to demonstrate them.** These results illustrate a positive initial result but suggest that there are opportunities to enhance the experience of applicants.

Applicants

We asked applicants whether they felt they were able to demonstrate their skills to CCR during the Matching Event. Participants responded on a three-point scale, where 1 = No; 2 = Yes, but not as much as I wanted; and 3 = Yes, very much. Twelve of the 22 applicants responded to the survey. **Overall, applicants were split: Five applicants (42%) felt they were able to demonstrate their skills to CCR very much, and five applicants (42%) felt they were able to demonstrate their**

skills to CCR but not as much as they wanted. The two remaining applicants (17%) felt they were not able to demonstrate their skills to CCR during the Matching Event.

Figure: Did you feel you were able to demonstrate your skills to CCR during the Matching Event?



■ Yes, very much ■ Yes, but not as much as I wanted ■ No

We asked participants to explain their answers to the above question. **Three of the five participants who responded “yes, very much” referenced the variety of stations, time efficiency of the event and positive demeanor of the Station Runners.** For example, one participant said, “Each session touched on a different skill set. I thought it was very well done.” Another said, “The facilitators were kind and patient and explained their expectations.”

Participants who responded “yes, but not as much as I wanted” referenced their own **performance anxiety** or being **thrown off by the format**. Among these participants, two out of five focused on personal performance. For example, one participant said, “I think some of the time I was very surface level but also with little details or context, many times it’s hard to know what to say.” Or another, “This was due to my own performance anxiety. My desire to ‘get it right’ crept in at times, instead of just leaning in to responding in my natural manner.” Regarding uncertainty about expectations, a couple of participants offered comments. For example, one participant wrote, “One question in the last module was confusing, and yet the interviewers expressed impatience. I did not think that their questions were entirely clear. I was unsure as to what they were requiring.” Another participant commented on difficulties of the format: “I think I was caught off guard by the switching back and forth from different screens.”

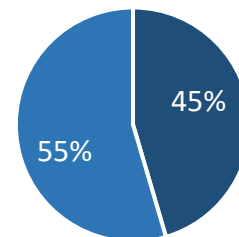
The two participants who responded “no” referenced feeling **personally unprepared** or **frustrated at the timing of the event relative to their training**. For example, one participant wrote, “I mentioned feeling rusty, or unprepared. I had reviewed some of the class material

prior to the event, but that certainly didn't give me much inner confidence." The other participant expressed confusion over not being selected and frustration that the Matching Event was scheduled too long after their 40-hour training (over one year later).

Station Runners

We asked Station Runners to what extent they felt the activities helped them to gauge the capacity of applicants to become successful CCR volunteer mediators. Participants responded on a four-point scale, where 1 = Not at all, 2 = Very little, 3 = Somewhat, and 4 = To a great extent. Their responses were generally positive. **Overall, six Station Runners felt they were somewhat able to gauge the capacity of applicants to grow into being CCR volunteer mediators (55%).** The remaining five felt that they were able to gauge the capacity of applicants to grow into being CCR volunteer mediators to a great extent (45%).

Figure: To what extent did you feel the activities helped you to gauge the capacity of applicants to grow into being CCR volunteer mediators?



■ To a great extent ■ Somewhat ■ Very little ■ Not at all

We also asked Station Runners to explain their answers to the above question. Those who responded "to a great extent" referenced the **focus on specific skills or values** and **efficacy of the activities**. For example, one Station Runner responded, "The focus on specific values and combination of questions and activities compelled me to be more thoughtful. It likely also allows a broader set of values to be assessed than previous approaches that left more up to the individual interviewer." Another highlighted a specific activity as effective in enabling one to assess relevant skills: "I feel like the simulation activity and follow-up questions were extremely well suited to yielding information about the managing self-criteria."

Station runners who responded "somewhat" referenced the **limited scope of individual stations to specific skills** and the **potential for more flexibility needed to assess applicants**. For example, one Station Runner shared: "We were told to focus on certain character traits, so I tried to consciously NOT make an overall assessment." Another felt that, "we were limited in evaluating applicants based on CCRs core principles. Many of these characteristics are not inherent, but are learned through volunteering with CCR." Regarding the potential for more flexibility, one Station Runner said, "If an applicant had no idea what to say or how to approach a situation it was hard to gauge potential capacity — more clarity on if we could ask them to

‘say more’ or probe a bit more would have been helpful.” Another felt their station “needed more questions that we could ask the participants.”

The applicants’ and Station Runners’ responses indicate that the format did provide an appropriate forum for demonstrating and gauging applicant skills. However, there is room for improvement, as some applicants indicated they were confused or rusty, and some Station Runners wanted more clarity as to what they could ask. Additionally, Station Runners could use greater clarity on how they are to evaluate applicants.

Matching Event Format: What Worked Well

The Matching Event was well organized and time efficient

Both applicants and Station Runners found the Matching Events to be **time efficient**.

Applicants’ comments highlighted the flow of the event, promptness of the introduction and adequate use of time as beneficial to their experience. As one applicant put it, “At first, the 90-minute time period seemed daunting, but once you were in it, the time flew by.” Another simply noted that they “appreciated that it was run efficiently and held to schedule.”

Station Runners’ comments shared a similar sentiment about time efficiency. Their comments focused on the format’s benefits to meeting many applicants and doing so in a way that felt meaningful. For example, one Station Runner said, “I loved having a chance to connect with the applicants, and thought the activities at each station were awesome. I think it allowed us to get so much more information about so many more people (and from so many more people!) than we otherwise would have been able to do.” Another Station Runner noted that “We had plenty of time to get through everything, often finishing early with time to fill out the scorecard.”

Co-facilitation enhanced Station Runners’ ability to assess candidates

Survey comments and interviews with Station Runners suggested that **co-facilitation was highly beneficial to building rapport with and assessing candidates**. These benefits included: obtaining meaningful responses from applicants, maintaining a smooth flow and having an opportunity to touch base with one’s co-facilitator. As one Station Runner described, “Working with a partner as a Station Runner was very helpful in keeping the conversation moving, aiding in taking notes, having a partner to figure out the new system with, and a sounding board to debrief reactions.” Another focused on the benefits to applicant assessment: “Pairing up with another ‘interviewer’ was nice. It provided a broader perspective and likely elicited a more complete response.”

Station format enabled meaningful exchanges between Station Runners and applicants

Several survey comments and feedback from interviews focused on how the **station format enabled meaningful exchanges** between Station Runners and applicants. Station Runners highlighted the **clearly defined criteria and focused nature of the activities as helping them to get to know the applicants on a personal level**. For example, one Station Runner wrote, “The new selection process gave me information about each applicant that goes beyond their past accomplishments. I feel like I got a decent sense of characteristics like the candidate’s emotional intelligence, empathy, enthusiasm and ability to adapt to having new and unexpected things thrown at them.” We also heard that the information gleaned from the stations was more meaningful than that obtained via the previous process; one Station Runner said, “You get a good sense of the person ... A huge part of the [previous process] was writing 7-8 essays, and [I] thought there was a disconnect.”

Applicants appreciated the ways that the format provided them the opportunity to connect with Station Runners. They described feeling comfortable with the rooms and liking the ability to connect with multiple Station Runners. One applicant summarized this sentiment: “I appreciated the way the process and plan for the session was explained to the participants in the beginning. I felt real connection and clarity during each breakout session.” Another focused on the benefits of having multiple stations: “I liked the opportunity to meet with the six different people in the breakout rooms. Thought that was very effective.”

CCR also identified opportunities for applicants who were not selected for the MMP to connect with the organization in other capacities. The station format made this possible. Station Runners connected with applicants on a more personal level; this enabled Station Runners to consider how applicants’ distinct skills and experiences could benefit the program beyond mediation. After debriefing with the Station Runners, CCR leadership met with two potential volunteers to offer them volunteer opportunities that matched their skillsets, such as language interpretation and administration.

Matching Event Activities: What Worked and Needs Improvement

Effectiveness of Station Activities: What Worked and Didn't

Less effective activity

Cultural competence activity (Part One): To assess applicants' capacity for cultural competence, Station Runners asked them to share their "social location." This involved applicants naming and reflecting on their identities that they felt comfortable sharing. Station Runners modeled the activity first before asking applicants to respond. However, our own observations and feedback from Station Runners and applicants indicated there was a great deal of confusion about the language of social location. This was not an intuitive term to applicants; we observed that the question was received as awkward and broke the flow of the station. For example, during one of our observations, one of the Station Runners said they didn't quite understand what the term meant and asked if the other Station Runner would explain it to the applicant. In the other observation, the applicant expressed her confusion about the question, describing it as a "hard question" and something she had never articulated before.

The activity also lacked a clear objective — it was unclear what skills were meant to be demonstrated, or outcome produced, by sharing one's social location. We heard from Station Runners that the activity could still be retained in some form but would need to be refined with more accessible language to better capture applicants' cultural competence skills. In contrast, we observed that the scenario-based cultural competence activities were clear and easy to understand and led to productive discussion.

Recommendation: Ensure that interview activities use common, easy-to-understand language to avoid the amount of time used to explain questions. Modeling can be an effective tactic to help applicants understand questions and feel comfortable sharing, but it can also be time-consuming and insufficient for understanding new terms or clarifying the objective of the activity.

More effective activity

Video clip activity: To assess applicants' capacity to identify emotions, Station Runners asked questions about a scene from the movie *Inside Out*. Applicants first watched the video on their own screens, without sharing their screens. Then, Station Runners asked them to name a few emotions that the main character was feeling, as well as the

approaches they would use as a mediator to contend with an emotionally distraught party.

We heard from applicants that they found the activity to be “engaging,” and Station Runners found it to be effective and “fun” to facilitate. Based on our observations, we found the activity to be purposeful and relevant and that it produced substantive discussion between Station Runners and applicants. It had a clear objective and felt appropriate to assessing the skills that were relevant to that station (empathy, adaptability, comfort with conflict). In one of our observations, the applicant appeared comfortable elaborating on their responses to the Station Runners’ questions and connecting them to past professional and personal experiences with conflict.

Recommendation: Continue to include this activity in future Matching Events. The short video clip helped to ground facilitator questions and applicant responses around a specific conflict and set of characters. The delivery of this activity felt approachable and engaging for all involved. It may also benefit from having applicants and Station Runners watch the clip together, so that there is a less of a disruption to the feeling of sharing the virtual space.

Matching Events: What Participants Thought Could Be Improved

Applicants and Station Runners wanted clearer expectations and information

Applicants felt the Matching Event could be improved by **implementing clearer communications** about what the event entailed. “More information about expectations” was the main request applicants had for the Matching Events. Their comments suggested that although they ultimately found the format to be engaging and effective, they initially did not know what to expect, and some were thus caught off guard. One applicant suggested that CCR share a “roadmap or outline of activities” to know what to expect; another wanted a “preview” of what to expect from the event.

Station Runners wanted clearer **communications about the information provided to applicants** prior to the Matching Events. For example, one Station Runner shared, “It would also be helpful to know what the applicants were told to expect from the matching process. When kicking off the simulation in station one, we felt unsure of how familiar each applicant was with opening statements (had they all taken 40-hour trainings before? all through CCR?) and how much guidance to give them in terms of what to do (versus how much to expect them to know from

having done a training).” A different Station Runner shared a similar sentiment: “I also don’t know what participants were told to expect and would have loved to know that information.”

Introductions/icebreakers were inconsistent

Some applicants and Station Runners felt the **delivery of icebreakers was inconsistent**. We heard from one applicant and two Station Runners that there was too much time allotted to icebreakers relative to the rest of the station activities. Through our observations and based on feedback from Station Runners, we found that it also felt awkward to have only one Station Runner participate in the icebreaker. Finally, one of the applicants said the Station Runners did not consistently introduce themselves and their roles, and wished they had done so. We also received specific feedback on the movie-related icebreaker. A Station Runner shared that it was not well received by a couple of applicants, one of whom was older and did not go to the movies and another who was foreign-born and found it difficult to answer. One of the applicants described the movie-related icebreaker as confusing.

Station Runners asked for breaks between breakout rooms

Station Runners felt the Matching Event could be improved by **including more time between applicants or stations** to check in with co-facilitators or take a break. For example, one Station Runner shared, “It would have been helpful to have more of a chance to check in with our station partners, both before and during and after ... maybe next time plan for only 20 minutes in the room so you have 5 minutes on the top and 5 at the end?” Another asked for “5 or 10 minutes between each session” to give both the applicants and the Station Runners a break between rooms. Two Station Runners focused on the challenges of interviewing six candidates back to back: One felt it made the event feel “rushed,” and the other said it felt “exhausting” to facilitate and that their performance may not have been as strong by the sixth candidate as it was for the first two.

Some Station Runners wanted clarification about the scorecard

We asked Station Runners whether they had any difficulty using the Matching Event Scorecard to grade how applicants met the station criteria. In response to this question, 45% of Station Runners replied “yes,” whereas 55% of Station Runners replied “no.”

Station Runners who responded “yes” to having difficulty with the Matching Event Scorecard referenced **not having enough numbers on the scale** and some **confusion over what information would be most useful to include**. For example, regarding the scale, one Station Runner wrote, “The scorecard only accepted 0,1,3,5. I would have found it useful to include 2 and 4 as well to be more nuanced and have more options for balancing where certain criteria excelled and others were lacking.” Another Station Runner offered a similar comment, saying, “It was tough when say someone seemed better than a 3, but not quite a 5.” Regarding some

confusion over the information that would be most useful to include, one Station Runner explained: “Wasn’t sure what would be helpful to write in the comment section — how direct we could be.” A different Station Runner shared: “I would have liked the chance to list who I thought was the best applicant of the day.”

Half of the Station Runners who responded “no” to having difficulty with the Matching Event Scorecard offered an explanation of their answers. These Station Runners felt the Scorecard was “straightforward” and that they “didn’t have any difficulty using it,” but offered some comments about how it might be improved. One Station Runner wrote, “(T)here was a lot of confusion with which sections people were expected to fill out ... This feels like something that could be corrected for in both design and instructions.” A different Station Runner felt “there could have been more targeted questions to gauge the applicant in the various stages/rooms.” One other Station Runner said that it was “especially useful to discuss the applicants with our partner. It was a good reminder of ‘grade inflation.’”

Recommendations

Based on Matching Event survey results and participant feedback, we recommend that CCR adopts the following approaches to further refine screening processes:

Delivery of Station Activities

Continue to include a variety of activities to gauge applicants’ skills: Both Station Runners and applicants felt CCR’s multiple and varied screening activities were effective. Station Runners felt this provided them a deeper engagement to assess applicants’ skills, and applicants appreciated the creativity of the activities, finding them to be an engaging and inviting way to demonstrate their skills. We heard from Station Runners that the station format was a significant improvement on the previous written application assessment and should be kept and iterated on.

Solicit feedback and adjust activities as needed: Although we did not ask Station Runners or applicants to provide feedback specific to individual activities, some offered comments on how they could be improved. For example, the cultural competence activity about “social location” was found to be confusing as a result of inaccessible language and a perceived lack of purpose, whereas the cultural competence activity involving two mediation scenarios was much more concrete and approachable. We also heard that the icebreakers were inconsistent in terms of inclusivity and delivery. We suggest continuing to solicit feedback from Station Runners and applicants in order to refine activities so they have clearer objectives and more effectively assess applicants’ skills and meet the needs of CCR staff.

Adjust the schedule to allow for more debrief between Station Runners: Some Station Runners felt there was insufficient time for them to debrief between meeting candidates. Others simply felt the back-to-back stations were grueling for both applicants and Station Runners. Consider adding a brief amount of time between stations, to avoid breaking the flow while also providing opportunities for all participants to take short breaks.

Expectations for Station Runners and Applicants

Provide facilitators and applicants with a schedule of events and activity preview: We heard from both Station Runners and applicants that they would have liked more information on the schedule and nature of the Matching Event. Station Runners wanted to know what applicants were told to expect from the matching process, and applicants wanted some indication as to what the activities entailed, given the Matching Event's innovative format.

Continue refining the Matching Event Scorecard: Approximately half of the Station Runners had some difficulty using the Scorecard to rate the applicants. We suggest providing more instruction about how CCR expects Station Runners to use the scorecard, including which parts they should fill out and what kind of information would be useful to include in the open-ended response. Consider including a separate sheet with the stations and their criteria, skills and definitions listed as a refresher to Station Runners. Finally, CCR may consider whether the scorecard would benefit from a more granular rating system.

Consider the effect of “rustiness” on applicant performance: Two applicants mentioned that they had not mediated since taking CCR's basic training a year earlier. As CCR will now maintain applications for three years, it may be helpful to consider whether and how to take into account the length of time from training to applicant screening.

Conclusion: CCR Creates and Implements New Application and Screening Tools

Feedback from Station Runners and applicants suggests that the new screening materials and processes were a marked improvement over the old processes. CCR staff created a new submission form to streamline the process of applying to the MMP. In contrast to the previously lengthy written application, the new form takes approximately 10 minutes to complete and is held on file for three years after initial submission. CCR staff and volunteers also planned and implemented their first ever set of Matching Events, which invited 22 applicants to participate in various activities, in lieu of the more limited interview format that CCR used previously. While there is room for further refinement in terms of the language and format of activities and the scorecard, these new tools indicate an improved alignment between MMP strategies for recruitment and program needs.

Initial Results

To understand how well the new system worked to increase the diversity of applicants and, ultimately, mentees recruited by CCR, we examined anonymized demographic data of the applicants who participated in the Matching Events. We did not have data to make a comparison to a recent pre-revamp cohort, since CCR did not collect demographic data on previous incoming cohorts.

CCR Begins to Enhance the Diversity of its Mediator Roster

CCR invited a total of 22 applicants to the MMP to participate in the first set of Matching Events.⁴ Nine were ultimately accepted into the MMP. CCR collected demographic information from each applicant. Below are the self-reported demographics of all applicants.

Matching Event Demographics (N=22)				
Age			Education	
Under 35	1	5%	Collegiate-level or undergraduate	3 14%
35-54	13	59%	Post-collegiate or graduate	19 86%
55+	7	32%		
Prefer not to disclose	1	5%		
Race/ethnicity			Gender identity	
White or Caucasian	16	73%	Man	9 41%
Multi-racial (two or more races)	1	5%	Woman	13 59%
Black or African	2	9%		
Hispanic or Latino/a/x	1	5%	LGBTQ+	
East Asian	1	5%	Yes	2 9%
Prefer not to disclose	1	5%	No	20 91%
Employment				
Unemployed	2	9%	Disability	
Self-employed	5	23%	Yes	3 14%
Employed	13	59%	No	19 86%
Retired	1	5%		
Other	1	5%	Public assistance	
			Yes	1 5%
			No	21 95%
			Language ability (other than English)	
			Yes	5 23%
			No	17 77%

⁴ CCR had 22 active applications at the time that invitations went out, meaning all applicants were invited to participate in the Matching Events.

Among the 22 applicants, ten (45%) contributed to diversifying the mediator roster based on the criteria identified by CCR's consulting partners (under 35, people of color, LGBTQ+, disabled, language ability other than English and/or have qualified for public assistance). Of the nine applicants selected, five (56%) contributed to diversifying the mediator roster under these same criteria.

These results suggest that CCR's new processes were effective at attracting a diverse group of applicants to the MMP. The applicants also represented different types of diversity, as demonstrated in the above chart. Finally, those selected were just as diverse as the overall group of applicants, suggesting that the matching process was ultimately effective at recruiting volunteers from a range of experiences.

This is only the first set of new applicants to undergo the new MMP application and screening processes, so we are unable to make any definitive conclusions about how this will impact the volunteer mediator roster longer-term. The data suggests there is still opportunity to conduct outreach to individuals under 35, LGBTQ+ individuals and people of color. However, the results represent a positive initial outcome, with the ratio of those contributing to diversity among all applicants being similar to the ratio of candidates meeting diversity criteria who were selected as mentees.

Conclusion

CCR has made significant changes to the structure of the MMP and its recruiting, application and screening processes for new volunteer mediators. Overall, the results of these changes have been positive in terms of: revamping application and interview formats; introducing flexibility to meeting program requirements; clarifying the criteria by which CCR assesses applicants; shifting the mindsets of staff and volunteers; preparing staff and volunteers to carry out equity-minded change; and beginning to expand the diversity of the volunteer mediator roster. There are opportunities to build on these successes. CCR should focus on: providing adequate time for future training sessions, refining Matching Event activities and the Matching Event Scorecard, communicating future equity-related goals and plans to staff and volunteers, and soliciting continuous feedback from staff, volunteers, Station Runners and applicants.

Appendix A: Methodology

RSI assessed the progress of CCR's efforts using the following methods:

Surveys

RSI evaluated the first MMP training session with post-training surveys distributed to all attendees. Our goal was to understand the extent to which the training helped staff and volunteers to understand the new MMP criteria and their role in facilitating the new application processes.

For the Matching Event, we created a survey for the Station Runners and a survey for the applicants. Our goals were to understand how effective the activities were for Station Runners to gauge the skills of applicants, as well as to understand whether applicants felt they could demonstrate their skills effectively. We also asked for feedback on what worked well and what could be improved in the future.

Interviews

RSI conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 key staff members and volunteers. Our goal was to understand the perspectives of individuals who participated in different phases of the implementation process. To that end, we interviewed those who participated in the Phase 1 meetings and workshops to build alignment, those who crafted the new Matching Event process and criteria in Phase 2, and those who conducted outreach and were Station Runners in Phase 3. Interviews lasted 30–60 minutes.

We created an interview protocol that we adapted based on the interviewee's work on the project and role at CCR, which included leadership, program staff, mentors and volunteers. We asked interviewees questions about how they became involved in the MMP, what work they did in the DEI audit/implementation, what parts of the process worked best and were less effective, as well as what advice they would give to staff at other community mediation centers (CMCs) interested in doing this work (see Appendix E for the full interview protocol). We coded interview transcriptions to identify key themes, successes and challenges with the implementation.

Observations

Two members of the RSI research team conducted observations of CCR's new Matching Event on April 3, 2025. Each researcher observed the three stations separately and took notes on

which activities were effective and which were not, as well as observations on the flow of conversation, facilitation of the stations and overall structure of the Matching Event. The researchers analyzed and discussed their notes to identify a set of key findings. We then cross-referenced the observations with survey feedback from Station Runners and applicants.

Document Review

RSI reviewed a number of materials shared by CCR and its consulting partners to understand how staff approached changing MMP processes. This included the audit report with findings and recommendations, training documents and presentation slides, previous and new screening rubrics, the Matching Event guide for Station Runners, and previous and new application forms.

Appendix B: First MMP Training Session Survey

CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION Mediator Mentorship Program Post-DEI Training Survey

Resolution Systems Institute is conducting an evaluation of CCR's efforts to diversify its volunteer roster. Please help us to do this by taking the time to answer the following questions. Your responses will remain anonymous and will only be used for evaluation purposes. Thank you!

1. How familiar were you with work in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) before this workshop?

☐ Very familiar ☐ Somewhat familiar ☐ Not at all familiar

2. What was your level of awareness of CCR's DEI audit of the Mediator Mentorship Program (MMP)?

☐ Very aware ☐ Somewhat aware ☐ Not at all aware

3. Please rate your understanding of the following topics from today's training:	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
How DEI relates to CCR's mission	☐	☐	☐	☐
What diversity, equity and inclusion mean at CCR	☐	☐	☐	☐
The importance of cultural competency in mediator selection	☐	☐	☐	☐
Barriers to diversity in the MMP identified through the DEI audit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Updates to the MMP matching process	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your role in the MMP matching process	☐	☐	☐	☐
The new criteria by which CCR will screen applicants	☐	☐	☐	☐



4. What benefits and challenges does the new MMP matching process present to CCR and the community it serves?

5. Please rate how effectively today's training activities helped you to understand the new MMP process:	Not effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Very effective
Cultural Introductions	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exploring the Criteria discussion	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenging our Assumptions and Biases discussion	☐	☐	☐	☐
Matching Criteria Role Play	☐	☐	☐	☐

6. How might you see using what you learned at this training in your other roles at CCR?

7. Please rate the quality of today's training:

☐ Poor

☐ Fair

☐ Good

☐ Excellent

8. What could be improved about today's training?

9. Any other comments or feedback about the training:



Appendix C: Matching Event Survey for Applicants

CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION Mediator Mentorship Program Matching Event Survey – Applicants

Resolution Systems Institute is conducting an evaluation of CCR’s efforts to diversify its volunteer roster. Please help us to do this by taking the time to answer the following questions. Your responses will remain anonymous and will only be used for evaluation purposes. Thank you!

1. What went well during the matching event?
2. What could be improved about the matching event?
3. Did you feel you were able to demonstrate your skills to CCR during the matching event?

☐ Yes, very much

☐ Yes, but not as much as I wanted

☐ No

Please explain.



Appendix D: Matching Event Survey for Station Runners

CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION Mediator Mentorship Program Matching Event Survey – Station Runners

Resolution Systems Institute is conducting an evaluation of CCR's efforts to diversify its volunteer roster. Please help us to do this by taking the time to answer the following questions. Your responses will remain anonymous and will only be used for evaluation purposes. Thank you!

1. What went well during the matching event?
2. What could be improved about the matching event?
3. To what extent did you feel the activities helped you to gauge the capacity of applicants to grow into being CCR volunteer mediators?

☐ Not at all ☐ Very little ☐ Somewhat ☐ To a great extent

Please explain.

4. Did you have any difficulty using the Matching Event Scorecard to grade how applicants met the station criteria?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Please explain.



Appendix E: CCR Staff and Volunteer Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

About interviewee

1. Could you please describe your role in/relationship to CCR's Mediation Mentorship Program?
 - a. How long have you been involved with the MMP?
 - b. What other roles do you have at CCR?

Participation in the DEI audit

2. How did you become involved in the DEI audit?
 - a. What did you understand CCR's goals with the audit to be?
3. Who or what teams did you work with during your involvement with the audit?
 - a. Did you engage with the consulting partners in any capacity?
4. What activities, events, or discussions did you participate in?
 - a. What were the objectives and outcomes of these sessions?
5. Did you participate in any discussion of how to measure or track DEI audit outcomes?
 - a. If so, what approaches did you feel would be most effective?

Process Questions

6. Regarding the process of doing and implementing the audit, what worked best for you?
 - a. Did anything frustrate you about the process?
 - b. What do you wish was done differently?
7. Did the process allow the consulting partners to effectively identify issues about the MMP?
8. How did the team plan out and prioritize implementation tasks?
9. Were there any disagreements among staff/volunteers about how to tackle issues raised by the consulting partners? If so, how did you work through those?
10. What aspects of the MMP were easiest to begin changing?
11. Which aspects of the MMP were the most challenging to tackle?

Takeaways

12. What was the biggest thing about diversity, equity, and/or inclusion you learned from doing this work?
13. What assumptions or ideas did the DEI audit challenge for you in regard to how the MMP has worked or should work?



- a. What assumptions or ideas did the audit support for you in regard to how the MMP has worked or should work?
14. Longer-term, from your perspective what would a “successful” implementation of the DEI audit in the MMP look like?
15. What two or three items of advice would you give to staff at other CMCs interested in doing a similar DEI revamp?
16. Any other comments?