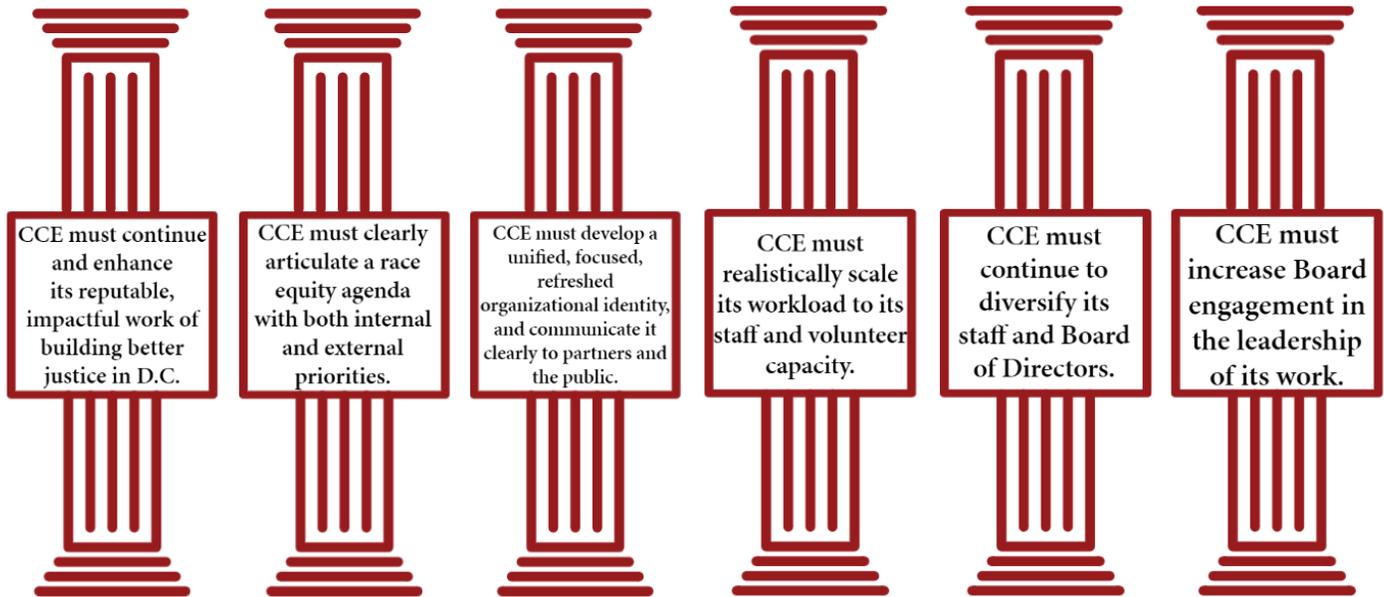


Council for Court Excellence Strategic Plan 2022-2024

Summary Edition

*Full Plan Adopted by CCE Board of
Directors December 9, 2021*

2022-2024 Strategic Plan Pillars



INTRODUCTION

The Council for Court Excellence (“CCE”) will celebrate our 40th anniversary in 2022. In our four-decade history, CCE has evolved substantially. At our founding, the organization was principally focused on improving the administrative functioning of the D.C. courts. Over subsequent years, CCE’s mission has expanded to encompass work across all justice system intercepts – including courts, executive agencies, and the community – in the areas of criminal, civil, and youth justice reform and education.

CCE’s greatest impact has been identifying and proposing justice system solutions for D.C. by: convening diverse stakeholders to deliberate on important issues in our community; evaluating current systems through extensive research and study; making evidence and data-driven law and policy recommendations; advocating for change to advance policy; and educating the public and increasing civic engagement.

As CCE turns the page into its next chapter, we must focus on continuing to hone our strengths while also evolving to more effectively serve the needs of the people of the District. To do that, the Strategic Planning Committee convened from August to October 2021, developing a plan to help CCE build upon its legacy of impactful work while clarifying its organizational identity and right-sizing its staff and Board capacities. Moreover, for the first time, both CCE’s internal and external priorities will be approached with an intentional focus on race equity.

Overview of CCE's 2022-2024 Strategic Plan

The 2021 SP Committee identified several core questions for CCE to answer as we grow into our next chapter. *What is our role in advancing justice in our community? What is CCE's commitment to race equity, and how does it inform all aspects of our work and other values? What, if anything, needs to change about how CCE makes decisions? How does CCE align its commitments with its capacity?*

The 2021 SP Committee identified six pillars for CCE to pursue in its 2022-2024 Strategic Plan. It is important to note that, although articulated separately, these pillars overlap and are meant to be approached holistically. To achieve these important goals over the next three years, the Committee recommends that CCE appropriately scale our programmatic work and new projects to ensure adequate capacity for the staff and Board Directors to devote substantial time and energy to the internal priorities detailed in the Plan. Addressing these internal priorities is critical to CCE being able to successfully sustain and expand upon our programmatic work in the future.

Focus on Race Equity

CCE must prioritize race equity because, in a city where Black people are more likely to be impoverished, more likely to go to court without an attorney, and more likely to be arrested and incarcerated, CCE cannot – and should not – continue to interface with the justice system in the District of Columbia without grappling with interpersonal, institutional, and systemic issues of race more deliberately and comprehensively.

Stakeholder members of CCE's program Committees have called on CCE to center Black and directly impacted people in our work. While our research, policy development, advocacy, and education projects are highly regarded, and a variety of CCE's past accomplishments have contributed to the goal of race equity, it is clear that CCE must do more to ensure that we approach our external work and organizational development with a race equity lens. This decision to utilize a race equity lens is not intended to be simply a reflection of a moment in time, but rather a reflection of CCE's lack of clear understanding or explicit agreement internally as to what our commitment to race equity should be, and the extent to which it should inform our work.

We acknowledge that the traditional demographics of CCE's leadership and the reality of inherent and implicit biases compel our reflection on how CCE makes decisions and selects priorities. We are committed to focusing on CCE's approach on these issues and to improving our knowledge and understanding of how to address race equity across our organization, including how we handle problems related to implicit bias or discrimination. Unless we specifically name these challenges, and do the work to be an inclusive and safe space, these issues will continue to have a negative impact on our Black, Indigenous, and people of color ("BIPOC") staff, Board Directors, Committee members, and broader community partners.

In order to frame the Pillars and Goals in this Strategic Plan, the Committee agreed that, as an organization, we need to come to a common understanding of and agreement regarding the definition of race equity, what it means in theory and in practice, and how it applies to CCE's work. We use the term "race equity" frequently throughout this document. This is the Committee's working definition:

Race equity is both an outcome and a process.

As a process or lens, organizations apply race equity when the people who are most adversely impacted by structural racism are at the center of the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives, including the power to determine which solutions make the most sense, what counts as a “win” or a “loss,” and ultimately how organizations can or should relate to their community. CCE can use a race equity process to look at both the procedural and substantive outcomes of our justice policy work and our internal organizational funding models, decision-making structures, and more.

As an outcome, race equity is the condition that would be achieved if a person’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how they fare. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of race justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them.

The Next Chapter

As an organization entering its 40th year anniversary, CCE has much to be proud of. To sustain our positive impact on the District and grow with our constituents, there is more work to be done. This Strategic Plan aims to build upon CCE’s legacy of impactful work while clarifying its organizational identity and right-sizing its staff and Board capacities.

To be clear, this plan does not propose changing or overhauling the type of substantive work CCE fundamentally does. This organization plays a unique role in improving D.C.’s justice systems, and we should maintain that mission. But it is time to examine CCE’s systems and approaches to make sure we are infusing our values and principles into all aspects of the work we do. There may be challenges ahead, but we can build upon our collective values and strengths to continue making progress toward our vision of a justice system in the District of Columbia that equitably services its people and continues to be a model for creating stronger and more prosperous communities.

NOTE: In this Summary Edition of the [2022-2024 Strategic Plan](#), we shortened the prose sections and removed some of the details provided under each Pillar and Goal in order to provide a condensed overview version for CCE’s external partners. The full Strategic Plan is a detailed and specific roadmap for how CCE’s staff and leadership can achieve its goals, which includes details on the intended Outcomes, Measurements, Steps, and Resources needed.

PILLAR 1: CCE must continue and enhance its reputable, impactful work of building better justice in D.C.

There is a strong consensus, both internally among staff and Board Directors and externally with key stakeholders and community partners, that CCE does well-regarded and meaningful work improving justice policy, practices, and outcomes in D.C. Together, CCE's four program Committees – Criminal Justice, Civil Justice, Youth Justice, and Justice Education – completed more than two dozen [projects](#) during the last five-year Strategic Plan period.

In our recent survey of external stakeholders, 75% agreed that CCE effectively engages community partners and programs, 76% agreed that CCE successfully delivers on its initiatives, and 91% agreed that CCE's initiatives positively impact people in our community. Comments included:

- *“Really well thought out and informed set of recommendations to informed issues.”*
- *“Ability to get programming, studies and reports together that reflect the input of agencies and people from different sides of the policy spectrum.”*
- *“CCE knows the landscape of the justice system very well.”*
- *“Very organized and polished comparatively to other organizations of our size.”*
- *“We bring people on different sides of justice issues together.”*

In order for our substantive work to be sustainable and remain impactful going forward, it is vital that we simultaneously take the steps detailed in every pillar because of the growing need for a clear race equity agenda, focused and clarified organizational identity, realistic expectations for staff capacity, improved staff and Board diversity, and increased Board engagement.

GOAL 1: Each program Committee will develop a Program Plan for 2022-2024, including guiding principles, policy drivers, and proposed projects.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. New projects are guided by CCE's values, mission, vision, and clear policy drivers.
2. New projects are designed for maximum impact on significant and timely issues.
3. New projects are conceived of and executed using a race equity lens, in order to include considerations of inclusion and equity in project planning and execution.
4. New projects are tailored to staff and Committee member capacity, expertise, and interest.
5. New projects are financially sustainable.

GOAL 2: Each program Committee will develop and execute a plan for recruiting and supporting the engagement and leadership of members who are directly impacted by the issue areas addressed in its Program Plan.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Increased participation and leadership in CCE by people directly impacted by the policy issues being addressed.
2. Greater alignment of project process and substance with CCE's values and mission of equitable justice for all by incorporating more directly impacted people into our decision-making and planning processes.

GOAL 3: Each program Committee will review and refine its charter, including purpose, roles and responsibilities of members, Chairs, and staff, principles and processes for engaging one another, and decision-making structures.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Committee charters include clear race equity principles.
2. Per the work identified in Pillar 3 about organizational identity, Committee charters are aligned with CCE's new values and revised mission and vision.
3. Committee charters are aligned with CCE's revised roles for staff, Board, and Committee members.

PILLAR 2: CCE must clearly articulate a race equity agenda with both internal and external priorities.

Systemic racism, including implicit bias, is a national problem that pervades our society and institutions, but it is especially insidious within the legal system. The District of Columbia is no exception. Throughout D.C.'s justice system – criminal and civil – people of color, especially Black people, are disproportionately negatively impacted. For example:

- *While Black people make up 47% of D.C.'s population, they make up 86% of the people arrested, 90% of those jailed, and 95% of those in prison. For people with a criminal record, punishment does not end when court supervision or incarceration ends. The collateral consequences of convictions can have major impacts on the lives of D.C. residents, the District's economy, and its administration of justice.*
- *Students of color in D.C. are nearly 15 times more likely to be disciplined than white students.*
- *Residents with limited English proficiency are less likely to access vital resources.*
- *In 2017 at D.C. Superior Court, 97% of plaintiffs in small estate probate cases, 83% of plaintiffs in divorce and custody cases, and 75% of plaintiffs in housing conditions cases in the lacked counsel, and the majority of those were people of color.*
- *Residents of the Wards with the highest levels of poverty and unemployment have predominantly Black populations; across D.C., Black residents are almost eight times more likely than whites to be unemployed.*

CCE historically has been a largely white-led organization that has strived for diversity but not always succeeded in its efforts to include or center people directly impacted by D.C.'s justice system, who are overwhelmingly Black. Nor has CCE always responded effectively when holding individuals and systems accountable after instances of racism at or within CCE.

One important feature that sets CCE apart is our ability to bring together groups of people from many sides of an issue to work together to improve our justice system. We do not want to lose this quality. What we do want is to develop principles and processes for engaging in generative, respectful disagreement and debates over policy. To be clear, the Committee is not suggesting that we change our mission's focus from improving justice to focus exclusively on race equity issues. However, we cannot ignore how embedded issues of race are in D.C.'s justice landscape. It is important that CCE infuses our values and principles into all the work we do. This means ensuring that our organization intentionally considers all internal and external priorities through a race equity lens.

While we are specifically highlighting race equity in this pillar, we want to be clear that CCE maintains a commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) across this Plan and all of our work. We are committed to diversity across gender, disability, age, and other identities. However, CCE has significant room for growth in confronting racism and implicit bias.

GOAL 1: Develop a shared understanding of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) principles and how to implement a race equity agenda at CCE.

• OUTCOMES:

1. The staff and Board Directors have a shared understanding of race equity and its importance in CCE's work.
2. All staff, Executive Committee members, and Committee Chairs demonstrate skills

- necessary to apply a race equity lens to internal processes.
3. All staff, Executive Committee members, and Committee Chairs demonstrate skills necessary to apply a race equity lens to external work.
 4. Discussions of race equity are normalized among staff, Board Directors, and Committee members through building comfort with difficult subjects; developing trusting relationships across race and power differences; engaging one another openly and vulnerably; and centering people of color, especially Black people impacted by D.C.'s justice system.

GOAL 2: Adopt an organization-wide policy for addressing insensitive language, discrimination, harassment, abuse, and other inappropriate, harmful, or offensive behavior.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Policy that provides a clear process for reporting and investigating reported behaviors at any CCE-sponsored meeting or event or by an individual acting in their capacity as a representative of CCE.
2. Policy that provides guidelines for accountability for individual actors and CCE as a whole.
3. An organizational culture that supports transparency, accountability, and repairing harm.

GOAL 3: Develop a rubric for evaluating CCE's programmatic work through a race equity lens.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Clear process for evaluating race equity of CCE's processes and approaches to programmatic work, including the collection of data, inclusion and leadership of impacted people, and framing of research questions.
2. Clear process for evaluating race equity impact of programmatic work, including framing of evaluations, recommendations, and advocacy campaigns.
3. Guidelines for staff, Board, and Committee members to engage respectfully in debates on CCE's project work and policy positions.
4. CCE consistently centers Black people, and other people of color, who are impacted by D.C.'s justice system in our research, policy development, advocacy, and community education work.

GOAL 4: Develop a rubric for evaluating CCE's organizational policies through a race equity lens.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Clear process for evaluating race equity of CCE's organizational policies and practices, including but not limited to the personnel handbook, staff evaluation and review, teleworking policy, salary transparency, recruiting and hiring practices, and process for selecting contractors.
2. Creation of new organizational decision-making practices using race equity lens; evaluation and revision of existing organizational decision-making practices using race equity lens.
3. Evaluation, revision, and/or creation of at least four organizational policies using race equity lens.

GOAL 5: Publish CCE's race equity metrics and set up a transparent process to share progress annually and be publicly accountable.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Publicly available race equity metrics and progress measurements.

PILLAR 3: CCE must develop a unified, focused, and refreshed organizational identity that infuses our values into our internal processes and external work, and communicate that identity clearly to partners and the public.

In CCE's 40-year history, the mission and scope of the organization's work have evolved substantially. As we prepare for the next 40 years, it is important that CCE clarify our values and mission, and then develop a new name and associated branding to accurately reflect our modern mission and scope of work. Our decision-making and work focus should flow from clearly articulated values. If we lack consensus, even among staff and Board Directors, as to CCE's core identity and values, we likely are not clearly communicating our work to stakeholders, potential staff, Board Directors, and funders, not to mention the larger community our work is meant to impact. Clearer branding will make the organization more visible to people. Clarifying CCE's identity is critical because the narrow scope of "court" and vague descriptor of "excellence" inhibits other areas of growth.

GOAL 1: Develop CCE's core values and review our existing mission and vision statements to ensure that they clearly guide our work, and re-brand CCE with a new name that better reflects the evolution of our work, values, and identity.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Our values, mission, and vision statements are aligned and utilized to guide and focus our work.
2. CCE's branded identity clearly aligns with our ongoing work and values, making it easier for external parties to understand CCE's role and impact in D.C.
3. Staff and Board have a shared understanding of the values, mission, and vision.
4. Operating practices are re-aligned with CCE's newly articulated values.
5. The values, mission, and vision for the organization are clearly communicated to everyone involved in or impacted by our work.
6. CCE's branded identity is easily recognizable and helps to raise our profile in D.C.
7. CCE'S branded identity is consistent across all external facing platforms.

GOAL 2: Complete a professional website redesign that better addresses the needs of CCE's many audiences.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Website is professional, mobile-friendly, easy to read and navigate, and positions CCE as a leader in the justice reform space.
2. Website is easy to update by staff, without requiring technical staff or contractor support.
3. Website easily and quickly responds to the needs of D.C. residents seeking information about the legal system or CCE's suggested reforms, potential and current donors, potential and current Board Directors, media, policymakers, and others interested in CCE's work.

GOAL 3: Evaluate CCE's formal and informal decision-making processes and ensure that they are aligned with CCE's new stated values.

• **OUTCOMES:**

1. Clarity around what decisions are made on a staff, ED, President, Officers, EC, Committee Chair, or full Board level beyond what is detailed in the organizational Bylaws.
2. When making any significant organizational decisions, leaders consult CCE's values and make choices to move CCE ever-closer to embodying its stated values.

PILLAR 4: CCE must realistically scale its workload to be sustainable and to correspond to its staff and volunteer capacity.

One theme that emerged from the Committee's evaluation of the 2017 Strategic Plan was how stretched thin the staff has been. While CCE produces high-quality, reputable work, it is at the cost of wringing the staff dry and risking burn-out. The current workload is not sustainable. We have lost – and are in danger of continuing to lose – valuable staff members as a consequence, and have experienced a particularly high attrition for Black staff members.

GOAL 1: Expand CCE's staff from six to ten.

- **OUTCOMES:**

1. Increased policy, advocacy, evaluation, and analysis expertise and capacity among staff in each of our substantive areas of work.
2. Increased community engagement expertise and capacity among staff.
3. Increased capacity for ED and DD leadership and management roles.

GOAL 2: Continue to diversify and grow CCE's funding, focusing especially on unrestricted general support funds.

- **OUTCOMES:**

1. A clear, written fundraising strategy that guides CCE's development efforts each year.
2. Improved fundraising operations infrastructure.
3. Greater quantity and amount of individual contributions, with a focus on major donors, planned/legacy giving, and monthly giving.
4. Increased general, unrestricted support funding from private foundations.
5. Increased corporate giving from law firms and businesses in sponsorships and general contributions.

PILLAR 5: CCE must continue to diversify its staff and Board of Directors.

As an organization that engages in advocacy on behalf of the community – and vulnerable, impoverished, Black people involved in the justice system, in particular – we would enhance our credibility and effectiveness if our staff and Board representation were more reflective of the demographics of D.C. and the people we serve. CCE’s current Board of Directors is majority male, white, professional, and older. CCE prides itself on being an inclusive (“big tent”) organization where diverse skill sets are valued. While efforts have been made to diversify and expand both staff and Board Directors during the 2017 Strategic Plan period, it is unclear how much, if any, success was achieved since CCE did not collect demographic information from 2016 and before.

For the last five years, CCE has budgeted for six full-time staff members annually. The majority of past and present staff members are white, and the average tenure of Black staff is shorter than others (0.8 years versus 1.5 years). While CCE should continue to strive to recruit diverse staff members, this data point also suggests that it is worthwhile for CCE to closely examine our hiring and salary policies, our workplace culture, and the ongoing support provided to employees to better ensure the long-term success and retention of Black staff members. CCE must ensure that staff members, particularly Black staff members and others with minoritized identities, can thrive at CCE.

GOAL 1: Diversify CCE’s Board of Directors across all identities and experiences.

• OUTCOMES:

1. A greater diversity of perspectives, demographics, and experiences on our Board that are more representative of the community in which we operate and the people impacted by D.C.’s justice system.
2. A strong pipeline for the next generation of Board Directors from law firms and businesses that have historically supported CCE.
3. Board recruitment targeted to previously unrepresented organizations, including legal support businesses and nonprofit organizations aligned with CCE’s mission.

GOAL 2: Build a leadership pipeline to recruit diverse Board Directors to Executive Committee and other leadership positions and support them in those roles.

• OUTCOMES:

1. When considering nominations for the EC and other leadership positions, CCE has a robust pipeline of diverse potential candidates.
2. New and less experienced leadership candidates feel comfortable in the expectations and execution of their roles and supported by the organization.
3. Non-traditional Board Directors (such as those outside the legal or business sectors) feel welcome, valued, and are supported, where desired, to develop the skills and experience to serve in leadership roles at CCE.

GOAL 3: Develop policies designed to recruit, retain, and support diverse staff and interns.

• OUTCOMES:

1. Targeted recruiting methods to reach diverse candidates across all identities and experiences.
2. Equitable and inclusive interviewing, hiring, and promotion policies and practices.
3. A strong, healthy workplace culture where diverse staff and interns thrive.

PILLAR 6: CCE must increase Board engagement in the leadership and execution of its work.

As previously noted, only a small subset of Board Directors are actively involved on a regular basis in CCE's programmatic projects or governance committees, with much of the active workload being staff-led. While it is reasonable that volunteers fulfill different roles than staff, many accomplishments during CCE's 40-year history have been because of the substantive and organizational contributions of Board Directors. There is great value in this unique model, which, when effectively employed, allows CCE to have an outsized impact for a small organization. Therefore, we need to revisit the past iterations of Board engagement, evaluate what type of Board engagement is the best fit for our current organization today, and work to reignite active Board participation in vital areas. Additionally, we want CCE to clarify its expectations of Board Directors and their level of individual involvement.

GOAL 1: Review what historically have been the roles of the Executive Committee, standing Committees, and full Board at CCE, and establish how those roles should possibly change as CCE enters its next chapter.

• OUTCOMES:

1. A clear understanding of what CCE's current levels of Board engagement are (i.e. attendance at Board meetings; Committee memberships; individual giving)
2. Clarification of what role we expect of the Board with regards to CCE's financial, sustainability, governance, and programmatic work beyond what is specified in the organizational Bylaws
3. Clearer expectations for Board membership as well as EC membership and standing Committee membership.
4. Clarity on who should be recruited to serve on the Board and in leadership positions, and how the recruiting process should be improved.
5. Clarified functions of Board-led programmatic and governance Committees and explicitly delineate the differing responsibilities of staff who support the Committees and Board Directors who serve on the Committees.
6. A formal Board agreement for all Board Directors, which is renewed annually.

GOAL 2: Revise and communicate expectations of Board membership to all Directors and develop accountability measures to encourage participation.

• OUTCOMES:

1. All current (and new) Board Directors have a clear understanding of the expectations of their level of Board membership and what it entails.
2. A Board giving policy focused on 100% participation and increase personal contributions from Board Directors.
3. Re-engagement with existing but inactive/low activity Board Directors and increase their overall depth of Board participation or discuss transition to new members in line with diversification goals.
4. A process for handling non-engaged Board representatives.
5. A culture of engaged Board membership, whether that is programmatic, governance or financial.
6. Accessible options for directly impacted and other minoritized identities to be able to engage in the Board experience.