



AMERICAN ARBITRATION ASSOCIATION®

# HIGGINBOTHAM

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## **FELLOWS** PROGRAM

2025  
GUIDELINES *and* APPLICATION

The AAA recognizes the importance and contribution of a diverse work force, a diverse Panel, a diverse Board, and commits to respect and to increase diversity in all its endeavors.



## PURPOSE OF PROGRAM

The American Arbitration Association® (“AAA®”) is the global leader in conflict management and dispute resolution with 26 offices in the United States, in addition to Singapore. Because of the breadth of its work and the global reach of its services, the AAA recognizes the importance and contribution of a diverse work force, a diverse Panel, a diverse Board, and commits to respect and to increase diversity in all its endeavors.

In 2009, the AAA created the AAA A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. Fellows Program (“AAA Higginbotham Fellows Program”) in order to provide training, mentorship and networking opportunities to up-and-coming diverse alternative dispute resolution professionals who have historically not been included in meaningful participation in the field of alternative dispute resolution.



AAA Higginbotham Fellows,  
Class of 2023

## BECAUSE OF THIS COMMITMENT

and to assist us with our diversity efforts, the AAA established an Advisory Committee on Diversity with a mission to increase the inclusiveness of ADR, specifically to those who have historically not been included in meaningful participation. One of the challenges that the Committee identified as discouraging diversity in ADR was the dearth of opportunities for diverse professionals to become future ADR leaders.

**Through the Fellows Program, we are seeking to address this challenge by:**

- Enhancing the Fellow’s knowledge and skills in the area of alternative dispute resolution by providing training and seminars on a variety of dispute resolution topics and through participation in mock arbitrations and mediations facilitated by leading advocates and panelists.
- Providing networking opportunities in the area of alternative dispute resolution, including the opportunity to learn from their peers and senior practitioners.
- Providing Fellows with serious mentorship opportunities specific to their areas of interest.



The AAA Higginbotham Fellows Program is a one-year program designed to offer the full breadth of the AAA resources to up-and-coming diverse alternative dispute resolution professionals and to allow the participants to immerse themselves in all aspects of alternative dispute resolution. The Program begins with a self study component, followed by a 5-day intensive interactive training to be held at the AAA's Midtown office in New York, NY during the week of May 5, 2025.

## JUDGE HIGGINBOTHAM

The AAA's Higginbotham Fellows Program has been named in honor of Judge Aloysius ("Leon") Higginbotham, Jr., a prominent African American civil rights advocate, author, and federal appeals court judge. Judge Higginbotham was the seventh African American Article III judge appointed in the United States, and the first African American judge on the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. He served as Chief Judge of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals from 1990 to 1991.

Judge Higginbotham had an exceptionally distinguished career and was a man of many "firsts". For example:

- Judge Higginbotham attended Lincoln School, a segregated high school in Trenton. Prior to Judge Higginbotham, no African American student had been put on the academic track (which was a significant step towards attending college).
- In 1969, as the first African American to become a trustee of Yale, he advocated opening the university to women.
- In 1953 he was hired by then District Attorney Richardson Dilworth as an assistant district attorney. Prior to Dilworth's arrival, no African American lawyer had ever argued on behalf of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the Courts of Common Pleas. Judge Higginbotham was given the opportunity to argue both in front of the Court of Common Pleas, and the Superior Court of Pennsylvania.
- In 1954 Judge Higginbotham went into private practice as a member of the first African American law firm in Philadelphia, Norris, Schmidt, Green, Harris, and Higginbotham.
- President John F. Kennedy appointed Judge Higginbotham to be a commissioner on the Federal Trade Commission in 1962, the first African American appointed as a commissioner on any regulatory commission.
- Judge Higginbotham was involved in the transition to open democratic elections in South Africa. He founded the South Africa Free Election (SAFE) Fund, raising several million dollars to support fair elections in South Africa, and served as one of the international mediators of the first inter-racial elections in South Africa in 1994. After the conclusion of the election, he helped South Africa's newly elected government draft a new constitution.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM  
OR APPLICATION PROCESS MAY  
BE DIRECTED TO:

AAAHigginbothamFellows@adr.org

TO APPLY, **CLICK HERE** TO SUBMIT  
THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Application form
- Cover letter
- Resume
- A letter of recommendation



## ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

The AAA Higginbotham Fellows Program is open to lawyers, arbitrators and mediators and other alternative dispute resolution practitioners who have demonstrated an interest in, and commitment to, alternative dispute resolution, and who demonstrate promise for an outstanding career in the field of alternative dispute resolution. This achievement and commitment may be demonstrated through work experience, pro bono work, recommendations, academic achievements, personal essays or articles, and current work plans.

In addition, applicants are encouraged to describe in their cover letter how they align with the criteria of belonging to a group that has historically been excluded from meaningful participation in the ADR field.

The Fellows are selected by a subcommittee of the AAA's Diversity Committee. Applicants must be available to travel to the AAA's New York office for a one-week program beginning May 5, 2025 .

The AAA Higginbotham Fellows Program is a non-paid Fellowship, and attendees will also be expected to cover all travel related expenses. Given the professional enhancement this Program will provide to the Fellows, we expect the organizations which employ the Fellows to continue to pay their salaries during the time period of the week long program.



## APPLICATION MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

**[CLICK HERE TO APPLY](#)**

Applications consist of the following documents:

- Application form
- Cover letter, which should detail the applicant's interest, experience and achievements in the field of alternative dispute resolution.
- Resume
- A letter of recommendation, preferably from an individual with direct knowledge of the applicant's alternative dispute resolution interest and experience.
- Applications should be received no later than Monday, January 27, 2025.
- Limited scholarships available. Request for scholarship should be made at the time of application outlining financial need.
- Fellows must be able to attend all 5 days of the program.
- The AAA-ICDR is unable to provide Visa assistance.



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