



Women in Cycling Leadership Mentorship Program

*Design and Implementation Guide
2026 Pilot Cohort*

1. Program Overview

The Women in Cycling Leadership and Mentorship Program is a new Ontario Cycling initiative that provides structured mentorship, pathway support, and peer community for women who want to build leadership roles in cycling, as coaches, commissaires, club board or committee members, or sanctioned ride leaders.

The 2026 pilot cohort will bring together 5 to 8 women across Ontario in a 6-month supported program running from July to December. This program is anchored in models developed by the Coaching Association of Canada and the Coaches Association of Ontario, both of which have documented strong outcomes for women's retention and advancement in sport leadership.

This program does not require participants to be current elite athletes or experienced leaders. It is designed for women who are interested in stepping into a leadership role and want support to get there.

1.1 Program at a Glance

Program Name	Women in Cycling Leadership and Mentorship Program
Pilot Year	2026
Cohort Size	5 to 8 mentees (pilot)
Duration	July to December 2026 (6 months)
Format	1-to-1 mentoring with group cohort sessions (virtual and/or in-person)
Cost to Participants	Free
Eligibility	Women (18+) who are OC members; all experience levels welcome
Applications Open	May/June 2026
Cohort Start	July 2026
Program Coordinator	OC Staff lead (to be designated)
Contact	pam.julian@ontariocycling.org

2. Evidence Base and External Partnerships

This program draws directly from established models and resources in the Canadian sport sector. Ontario Cycling does not need to build this from scratch, the tools and frameworks below are available at no cost and have been designed specifically for programs like this.

2.1 Coaching Association of Canada (CAC)

The CAC Female Coach Mentorship Model was piloted with Basketball, Tennis, Wrestling, and Hockey Canada and evaluated by the University of Toronto. It provides a three-role framework (mentee, mentor, and sport administrator) and has produced free, downloadable tools:

- Building an Effective Mentorship Program - program design guide
- NCCP Mentorship Module - training resource for mentors
- Training for Effective Mentees - three workshops with a Mentee Workbook, Facilitation Guide, and PowerPoint slides (no NCCP number or cost required)

The CAC also runs a High-Performance Women in Coaching Mentorship Program (active since 2020), featuring 1-to-1 mentoring, professional development planning, and virtual delivery. The 2024-25 cohort is currently active.

2.2 Coaches Association of Ontario (CAO)

The CAO Coach 2 Coach (C2C) Female Mentorship Program is the most immediately practical local resource for this program. It offers:

- 1-to-1 matching (male and female mentors both accepted)
- Free workshops and NCCP pathway support
- A \$250 professional development honorarium plus coaching gear for apprentice coaches
- Priority matching for equity-deserving groups
- Runs on a June to December timeline (directly aligned with this program)

Recommended action: Contact Sarah Kelly at the CAO (sarah@coachesontario.ca / 416-426-7064) in early 2026 to explore whether OC coaching stream participants can access C2C matching directly, or whether a cycling-specific stream can be developed.

3. Program Streams

Participants self-select into one or more streams based on their goals. Each stream has a defined development target, training pathway, and mentorship focus. A participant may be in one stream only or may combine streams if their goals overlap (e.g., a woman who wants to become both a ride leader and a club committee member).

Stream 1: Coaching

- **Goal:** Complete NCCP Community Sport Coaching certification or advance to next NCCP level
- **External pathway:** NCCP Community Sport module via coach.ca
- **Mentorship:** Paired with an experienced NCCP-certified coach in the same discipline where possible

- **CAO connection:** Participants encouraged to apply directly to CAO Coach 2 Coach program
- **OC role:** Provide introductions to NCCP, facilitate mentor matching, track progress

Stream 2: Officiating (Commissaire)

- **Goal:** Complete Cycling Canada Level C Commissaire e-learning module; gain shadowing experience at OC events
- **External pathway:** OC General Commissaire Course, Free Level C e-learning at edu.cyclingcanada.ca (no prior experience required)
- **Mentorship:** Paired with an experienced commissaire for event shadowing, minimum 2 OC-sanctioned events
- **OC role:** Identify shadowing opportunities at OC events; coordinate with Commissaire Committee
- **Note:** There is currently no women-specific commissaire program in Canada. This stream fills that gap.

Stream 3: Club Governance (Board and Committee)

- **Goal:** Join or become more effective in a club board or committee role
- **Development content:** Governance fundamentals, meeting structure, financial oversight basics, safe sport responsibilities
- **Mentorship:** Paired with an experienced club president/Chair, OC President & CEO
- **Activities:** Observation of club board meetings (with permission); supported first term in a committee role
- **OC role:** Facilitate mentor matching; provide governance resources

Stream 4: Ride Leadership

- **Goal:** Become a sanctioned OC ride leader at the club level
- **External pathway:** OC Ride Leader Training (mandatory for sanctioned rides)
- **Mentorship:** Paired with an experienced ride leader for co-leading rides and debrief sessions
- **OC role:** Ensure ride leader training opportunities are accessible; provide mentor matching
- **Entry point:** This stream is the most accessible for women new to volunteering in cycling leadership

4. Mentorship Structure

4.1 Matching Process

Mentor-mentee matching is the most critical element of program design. Poor matches are the most common reason mentorship programs fail. The following process is recommended:

1. During the application process, both mentors and mentees complete a brief profile including cycling background, geographic location, goals, availability, and communication preferences.
2. OC Staff review profiles and propose matches based on goal alignment, sport discipline overlap, geographic proximity where possible (to enable in-person contact), and complementary communication styles.
3. Both mentor and mentee are introduced via email and have an optional brief call before confirming the match. Either party may request an alternative match within two weeks.
4. Confirmed pairs are sent a Program Orientation Package and scheduled for an onboarding call with OC Staff.

4.2 Mentee Commitments

- Complete a Personal Development Plan (PDP) within the first month of the program
- Meet or connect with their mentor at least once per month (virtual or in-person)
- Attend at least two group cohort sessions during the program
- Complete a mid-program check-in survey (September) and a program evaluation survey (December)
- Actively pursue the development goals identified in their PDP

4.3 Mentor Commitments

- Meet or connect with their mentee at least once per month
- Review and provide feedback on the mentee's Personal Development Plan
- Attend the program orientation session and at least one group cohort session
- Complete a mentor reflection survey at program end
- Where applicable (commissaire stream), facilitate at least 2 event shadowing experiences

Mentors are volunteers. Their time should be respected, and the monthly connection commitment is intentionally modest. Quality of engagement matters far more than volume.

4.4 Personal Development Plan

Each mentee completes a short Personal Development Plan (PDP) in their first month. The PDP covers:

- Current cycling background and volunteer experience

- Leadership goal for this program (specific, not vague: 'Complete NCCP Community Sport by October' not 'get better at coaching')
- Steps to reach that goal, with timeline
- What they need from their mentor
- What they need from OC
- How they will know they've succeeded

The PDP is a living document, not a formal assessment. Mentors and mentees review it together at each monthly meeting.

5. Program Timeline: 2026 Pilot

Period	Phase	Key Activities
March to April	Design and Preparation	Finalize program design; identify and confirm mentors; draft application form; contact CAO and key commissaire mentors; set up program coordinator role
May-June	Recruitment	Open applications via OC social media, member club communications, and ocvolunteer@ontariocycling.org ; promote through club networks
July	Selection and Matching	Review applications; propose mentor-mentee matches; confirm pairs; send orientation packages
July	Launch	Program kickoff (virtual group session); individual onboarding calls; Personal Development Plans initiated
July to November	Active Mentorship	Monthly mentor-mentee meetings; group sessions quarterly; commissaire event shadowing; NCCP and governance work underway
September	Mid-Program Check-in	OC Staff checks in with all pairs; adjustments made as needed; mid-program survey sent
November to December	Closing	Final group session (celebration and reflection); completion recognition; evaluation surveys sent
December	Evaluation	Compile survey results and progress data; write pilot evaluation report; design 2026 program

6. Group Cohort Sessions

In addition to 1-to-1 mentoring, the program includes group sessions for all participants. These sessions serve the peer community function, reducing isolation and building a network of women in Ontario cycling leadership.

Session	Timing	Content
Kickoff Session	July 2026	Introductions; program overview; PDP workshop; what to expect from mentorship; Q&A
Mid-Program Session	September 2026	Progress sharing; peer learning on navigating challenges in cycling leadership; guest speaker (woman in cycling leadership)
Closing Celebration	November/December 2026	Cohort reflection; recognizing achievements; setting goals for 2026; networking

All group sessions will be delivered virtually (video call) as the default, with an in-person option offered if a suitable event or gathering provides a natural anchor (e.g., a major OC event).

7. Application Process

7.1 Who Can Apply - Mentees

- Women (18+) who are current OC members
- All cycling disciplines and experience levels are welcome
- No prior leadership or coaching experience required
- Applicants must identify a specific leadership goal they want to work toward
- Priority given to women from underrepresented communities (BIPOC, newcomers to Canada, persons with disabilities)

7.2 Who Can Apply - Mentors

- Women in cycling leadership roles (coaches, commissaires, club executives, ride leaders) who are OC members
- Minimum 2 years of experience in their relevant role
- Willing to commit to a monthly check-in with a mentee for 6 months
- Completed OC Safe Sport training

7.3 Application Questions - Mentees

The application form should be brief (15 minutes to complete). Recommended questions:

1. Your name, club affiliation, cycling discipline, and geographic location in Ontario.
2. Which program stream(s) are you most interested in? (Coaching, Officiating, Governance, Ride Leadership)
3. Describe your current involvement in cycling. How long have you been involved, and in what capacity?
4. What leadership goal do you most want to work toward in this program?
5. What is one challenge or barrier you face in stepping into that role?
6. What would a successful 6 months look like for you?
7. Is there anything else you would like us to know about you or your goals?

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
OC Program Coordinator	Overall program management; application review; mentor-mentee matching; group session facilitation; check-ins; survey administration; evaluation report
Mentors	Monthly meetings with mentee; PDP review and feedback; orientation attendance; reflection survey; event access facilitation (commissaire stream)
Mentees	Personal Development Plan; monthly mentor meetings; group session attendance; active pursuit of development goals; survey completion
OC Officials Coordinator	Identify commissaire shadowing opportunities at OC events; brief Chief Commissaires on program; ensure access for officiating stream participants
OC Events Team	Notify event organizers of program participants attending for shadowing; ensure volunteers are accommodated at events
CAO (Partner)	Facilitate C2C program access for coaching stream participants; provide workshop resources; co-promote program to coaches in Ontario

9. Evaluation - Measuring Pilot Success

The 2026 pilot will be formally evaluated to inform the 2027 program design. The following metrics will be tracked:

9.1 Participation Metrics

- Number of applications received (mentees and mentors)
- Cohort composition: streams selected, disciplines, geographic distribution, community representation
- Retention rate: percentage of participants who complete the full 6-month program
- Attendance at group sessions

9.2 Outcomes Metrics

- Number of mentees who complete their stated development goal by December
- Number of women who achieve NCCP Community Sport certification (coaching stream)
- Number of women who complete Cycling Canada Level C Commissaire (officiating stream)
- Number of women who take on a club board or committee role (governance stream)
- Number of women who lead their first sanctioned club ride (ride leadership stream)

9.3 Experience Metrics (Surveys)

- Mentee satisfaction: Did the program meet your goals? Did you feel supported? Would you recommend it?
- Mentor satisfaction: Was the time commitment manageable? Did you find mentoring rewarding?
- Perceived barriers: What made participation harder? What should OC change for 2027?

The pilot evaluation report will be completed by January 2027 and shared with OC senior leadership and the Board. The goal is to present a recommendation for the 2027 program, whether to scale, adjust the model, or deepen particular streams.

10. Promotion and Recruitment

Because this is a new program with no track record, promotion needs to be personal and specific, not just a generic announcement. The following approach is recommended:

10.1 Reaching Potential Mentees

- OC Instagram and Facebook: Short-form posts featuring a specific scenario ('Do you want to become a commissaire but don't know where to start? This program is for you.')
- Club communications: Ask club presidents and communications leads to share the opportunity directly with women in their club who they think would be a good fit, a personal invitation is far more effective than a general call
- OC event presence: Have program materials available at OC-sanctioned events in spring; brief volunteers who are working registration to mention the program to women who are picking up their bib
- Word of mouth: Ask known women leaders in Ontario cycling (coaches, commissaires, board members) to personally invite one or two women they know

10.2 Reaching Potential Mentors

- Direct outreach to known women commissaires and experienced coaches
- CAO network: Sarah Kelly at CAO can connect OC to coaches already engaged in C2C who may be willing to mentor cycling participants
- Club presidents: Ask each club to nominate one potential mentor from their leadership team