PROGRAM COORDINATOR HANDBOOK

Introduction

Mentoring relationships are wonderful opportunities for growth and development, expanding perspectives, learning new skills and abilities, taking risks, and discovering new frontiers. When done well, a mentoring relationship truly can have life-changing effects.

Thank you for making this valuable and valued contribution to your organization. You truly are making a difference!

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a developmental **relationship** based on **intentional** conversations.

Role of the Program Coordinator

Planning a mentoring program is as important as the program itself. Taking the necessary steps and investing the time now, before implementation, will ensure a successful program in the future. **Start small and develop early successes.**

Key Components to an Effective Mentoring Program Plan:

1. **Program Goals** – Have clearly-defined goals for your mentoring program: What, specifically, are you trying to achieve? How will your participants benefit as a result of participating in this program? What strategic needs does it meet? Is mentoring the right strategy to meet those needs?

2. **Program Design** – There are many factors to consider in the design of your program, including the budget, the timeline from recruitment to evaluation, communication, expectations, and overall management of the program.

3. **Recruitment** – How many mentors and mentees will you need? Where you will find them? How you will recruit them to participate? How will you match mentoring pairs?

4. **Training** – Provide, at a minimum, orientation training for both mentors and mentees to introduce them to the expectations of your mentoring program and effective mentoring practices.

5. **Feedback** – How and when will you check in with your mentor pairs to assess progress? How can you provide ongoing support to both mentors and mentees? Gathering feedback helps to maintain open communication with your participants and to make needed changes to improve the program over time.

6. **Celebration and Closure** – Do not ignore the importance of recognizing the end of your mentoring program. Develop an event to celebrate accomplishments, thank your mentor pairs, and formally close the program.

Program Goals

Any well-planned and well-executed program begins by developing goals. Begin with the end in mind. What is the purpose? What are you trying to achieve? How will you know when you have achieved it? Goals provide direction, accountability, and a means for measuring progress. Additionally, goals will help you focus your thinking: what is it, specifically, that you are trying to achieve?

Well-written goal statements follow the SMART goal model:

Specific – The goal statement should be concrete and action-oriented. What, specifically, are you trying to accomplish? Ask: What do you mean by that? Are there ways to restate the goal to remove any misunderstanding? Does the goal start with an action verb (for example: develop, improve, create)?

Measurable – How will you know when you have achieved the goal? How will you track and measure progress? How will you measure your program's success?

Achievable – The goal should require work, but be attainable. Is the goal too big (setting up your program for failure) or too limited (not requiring you or your participants to stretch)?

Realistic – Is this something that can and will be done? What additional resources, of time, money, or capability will be needed to reach the goal?

Timely – There should be a specific time-frame for achieving the goal.

Mentoring is a strategic intervention for the purpose of facilitating the growth and development of the mentees. Ask yourself, is mentoring the right strategy to achieve your goal(s)? Your goals should guide all other aspects of your program, from design to recruitment to training to evaluation.

Program Design

Once you have set some strategic goals, spend time thinking about the design of your program, from implementation to evaluation. Each of these factors should explicitly connect back to your goals. Some questions to consider:

- When will the program begin and end?
- When will you market the program to mentors and mentees?
- How will you communicate expectations?
- What is your budget?
- Who will provide oversight for the program?

The more that you plan on the front-end, the better off you will be to manage the program and handle unexpected circumstances as they arise.

Recruitment and Matching

Your program goals should guide your decisions regarding recruitment and matching. First, set clear expectations for what your participants will do during the program. These should include how often they will meet, for how long, and what they will talk about during those meetings. Use these expectations and your goals to identify your pool of potential mentors and mentees.

Depending on your needs and pool, you might want to create an application for potential participants to fill out, expressing interest, background, personal/professional goals, or other criteria that are relevant to your program. You can then use this application information to select and match mentoring pairs.

When it comes to matching, don't overthink this process. Sometimes it can be important to match on specific criteria. But research and best practices tell us that, time and again, the best match is between two people who are committed and invested in the relationship.

Training

No matter the form of recruitment or matching process that you select, you must provide training and orientation to your mentors and mentees so that they are clear on what is expected of them, what they are committing to, and what they should do during the mentoring relationship.

Orientation: Tell them the goals for the mentoring program, your expectations for how often the mentoring partners will meet and what they will discuss during those meetings, and the beginning and end dates to the mentoring program. If you have other requirements or expectations, for example, a mid-point group meeting, you should communicate this upfront as well.

Initial Training: At the beginning of the program, conduct training sessions for your mentors and mentees. You can either hold separate sessions for both groups, which will allow them to ask questions specific to their role in the process and to network a bit with their fellow mentors or mentees, or you can provide a joint training which will allow mentoring pairs to meet for the first time in a structured environment.

While the orientation and initial training session are extremely important, do not forget about other opportunities to provide training for your participants. For example, **a mid-program check-in** is very helpful, both to see how the participants are doing, but also to provide training on a topic of interest and value to the participants, including best practice sharing and troubleshooting. Additionally, do not miss the opportunity to **use the closure of your program as a training event** as well.

Feedback

Develop regular points to check-in with both the mentors and mentees, individually, to see how the relationship is progressing. Do not assume that "no news is good news"; too much time may pass before you discover that a mentoring pair has not been meeting or that the relationship is not working out when you could have fixed the situation.

If your program is a year or longer, you should check-in with the mentoring pairs at least quarterly; shorter programs will require more frequent contact. This can be accomplished through a short in-person meeting, a phone call, or, if necessary, email contact.

Questions to ask:

- Are you meeting with your mentoring partner?
- What is working well in the relationship?
- What is not working well in the relationship?
- How can I help?

At the conclusion of your program you should request a confidential evaluation from both the mentors and the mentees. Additionally, it is good practice to do a mid-point evaluation to make sure that everyone is on track. Your specific program evaluation, like everything else, should be directly linked to the goals for your program.

As the Program Coordinator, you are the main point of contact and source of support for your program participants. You should provide them with your contact information, in case they have concerns about the relationship, need ideas on conversation topics or activities, or need other assistance. Also, you should think of ways in which you can provide support during the program. Suggested activities include:

- Provide periodic informal training sessions
- Bring in speakers and provide other networking opportunities
- Send out regular emails that include tips, strategies, and resources

The possibilities are almost endless! Remember, the participants in your program, both mentors and mentees, are expecting to hear from you. Communicate with them regularly. It will go a long way to keeping everyone engaged and enthusiastic about the program.

Recommended Resources

Dungy, T., & Whitaker, N. (2010). *The mentor leader: Secrets to building people and Teams that win consistently*. Winter Park, FL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Johnson, W. B., & Ridley, C. R. (2008). *The elements of mentoring*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Maxwell, J.C. (2008). *Mentoring 101*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

McWilliams, A. (2017). *Five for your first five: Own your career and life after college.* Winston-Salem, NC: Library Partners Press.

Mentoring Works. http://mentoring-works.com/

Shea, G. F. (2002). *Mentoring: How to develop successful mentor behaviors*. Menlo Park, CA: Crisp Learning.

Zachary, L. J. (2000). *The mentor's guide: Facilitating effective learning relationships*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Zachary, L.J., & Fischler, L.A. (2009). *The mentee's guide: Making mentoring work for you.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.