



Building a Mentorship

This practice is divided into two sections. The first is to facilitate needs assessment and identifying potential mentors to help strengthen those needs. This section is useful for anyone and especially so for those who work in organizations that do not have an embedded mentorship process.

The second section then provides some initial action steps and activity recommendations to keep the mentorship building and encouraging growth. These are meant to be used incrementally throughout the relationship so return to this activity as needed.

Section 1: Identifying a mentor

Set a time for 1-2 minutes and give yourself uninterrupted time to reflect on who you want to be as an adult and professional. If you have completed the values module already, draw from that experience. Identify a few key values and goals and behaviours you want in your adult life. Write them below in the heading of each column. Use another piece of paper or, if completing digitally, add another row of columns if you need more space.

~~Take some time~~

Under each value, goal, or behaviour you want, identify what skills you need to succeed (if you completed the Bullseye activity from the Values module, you can use those skills too).

~~Take some time~~

Finally, in the lower heading of each column, identify one individual in your life (professional and personal) that has demonstrated competency in those values, achieved similar goals, or behaves similarly. If you can identify someone you know that could mentor you in multiple areas, fantastic **but it is not expected that one person meet all your needs**. Be prepared to build a mentorship network.

What do you want?	<i>Ex: Writing a book</i>				
What do you need?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help managing writing time • Structure to develop plots • Creating realistic characters • Developing my prose • Navigating publishing processes • Marketing my book 				
Who can provide?	<i>Successful author I know</i>				

After you have identified your potential mentors, start with one. Approach them, share your wants, and ask if they would be willing to mentor you.

Section 2: Mentorship activities

Below is a list of activities to engage in once a mentorship relationship is established. Some of these are best completed early in the relationship and periodically reviewed, while others are great to use throughout the relationship.

Identify goals: Complete this at the beginning of a mentorship as well as periodically throughout so that both mentor and mentee know what they are working toward

Action plan: For each goal, create an action plan. An effective action plan targets a goal, acknowledges the “why” of that goal (i.e., why is that goal important or what value does it actualize), acknowledges barriers to that goal, develops if-then plans for when that barrier emerges, and then builds in rewards for making progress toward goal.

Identify challenges: This is similar to identifying barriers in the action plan and is focused on identifying new challenges as they arise.

Role play: Role play can be uncomfortable. And yet it remains one of the most effective methods for developing skill and fluency with a process.

Shadow: We learn a lot by first observing others doing a job. Find time for the mentee to shadow the mentor.

Provide networking opportunities: One of the biggest benefits for a mentee is an expansion of their personal and professional networks. Mentors can facilitate this by connecting mentees with individuals directly or inviting them to events where networking might naturally happen.

Provide feedback (written & oral): Feedback is a great way to share expectations and bring attention to specific areas of improvements AND areas of strength.

Share career history: Mentees can often find themselves in a place of uncertainty about their career trajectory. Mentors who share their history can give mentees a realistic model for the career process.

Review materials: Mentors often have little “nuggets” of knowledge that can help improve documents and instructional materials.

Read up: Select reading material for both mentor and mentee to read and discuss.

Identify strengths and focus on using those: Both mentor and mentee should continually assess the mentee’s strengths and find ways to tailor projects and activities toward those strengths.

Identify weaknesses and support them: Weaknesses are just a step away from being lesser strengths. Although it might not be effective to build activities that are high-stakes

(e.g., whole class lessons) and require the use of a skill or knowledge area that the mentee is currently weak in, practice activities can be used to build up the weakness until the mentee can incorporate that knowledge or skill into “real world” practice.

Build in exposure to challenges: In order to grow, mentees need to be faced with challenges that are just beyond their current skills, much like how a muscle grows when overly stressed. These need to be purposefully built into a training experience.

Closing the relationship: Once the mentee has met their goals, the mentor and mentee should meet to close the relationship and decide, in what way, the relationship evolves.