Mentoring Guide

This guide provides a roadmap for any company, no matter the size of the business or the industry—whether you’re just getting started or you already have a mentoring program that you want to expand for opportunity youth.

Get Started

1. If this is a new effort, it’s okay to start small. Regardless of scope, mentoring opportunities can be a win for both your business and young adults.

2. Partner organizations can significantly help you develop successful initiatives in many key areas, such as setting goals and recruiting young adults.
Mentoring Definitions and Benefits

Mentoring is a development strategy for a young person’s successful path to adulthood. It’s all about developing a structured, trusting relationship between a professional (mentor) and an aspiring professional (mentee).

Mentoring Definitions

Mentoring focuses on providing support and guidance around workplace skills and career exploration, as well as general encouragement on life challenges through meetings, activities and information communication.

Although this guide focuses on building a stand-alone mentoring initiative, best practices from other employment pathways on this website (school-to-work, internships and hiring) all include a mentoring component.

Ways to take small and big steps

1. One-on-one mentoring
2. Group mentoring
3. Team mentoring
4. E-mentoring (conduct as an add-on to any of the above)

The Business Benefits of Mentoring:

Mentoring can be a good step towards an internship or hiring initiative, since it can develop similar workforce and professional skills. Key benefits include:

1. Cost-effective Talent Development
   - Cultivate a talent pipeline through meaningful employee volunteerism
2. Enhanced Employee Engagement
   - Strengthen employee satisfaction and morale
3. Stronger Community Impact
   - Boost visibility with your community, your consumers, future leaders and potential talent
Step 1: Prepare from within

Creating a great mentoring model is not unlike developing a business. You’ve got to identify the right participants, define your ROI criteria and assess your resources to reach your goals. Here are the key ways to set you up for success.

Identify a partner organization.

Whether you are starting an initiative from scratch or modifying an existing mentoring program, you don’t have to do it alone. A partner organization in your community can help in many ways, including finding mentees, providing mentee screening, helping you train your mentors and offering insight about the potential issues that may arise with opportunity youth.

Assess needs and set goals.

These should be both realistic and measurable so you’ll be able to evaluate and optimize your efforts. Together with your partner organization, think about performance measures and what to include in initiative reports.

Good Questions to Help Define Your Goals Include:

• What do you hope to achieve with mentoring (e.g., build employee morale and engagement, develop future talent, strengthen your community outreach)?
• How will you measure success (e.g., number of mentors recruited, retention rate of mentors, fulltime conversion of mentees)?
• What tangible experiences/learnings will the mentees walk away with (e.g., expanded perspective, increased workplace skills)?
Potential mentor coaching opportunities

- Job shadowing
- Networking events
- Resume and interview prep
- Time management techniques
- Conflict resolution strategies
- Recommended reading

How ready are you?
Answering questions like these will help define how you can make the biggest impact with your available resources. With partner support, define an initiative within your capacity. (Note: these questions are geared towards larger employers.)

- Do you have access to an executive leader who can help champion your efforts?
- Do you have dedicated staff to oversee planning, development and implementation?
- Do you currently have systems to capture and track data to measure initiative outcomes?
- How much support do you have from key decision makers to bring this initiative to life?
- Do you have resources and training support from HR and supervisors who have the time to devote to mentees?

Best practice for larger initiatives:
An executive champion or “sponsor” who is invested in promoting your initiative internally and externally can enhance your efforts. This person may even be a mentor themselves. Do you have access to an executive leader who can help champion your efforts?

Designate a mentoring manager
within your company to oversee the initiative. This person will be responsible for day-to-day oversight and will usually liaison with your partner organization.

Determine mentors to recruit.
Will you extend your initiative to all interested employees (subject to a screening process)?
To managers only? To employees with specific skills? Your HR or hiring point person might be a good resource.
Step 2: Develop an Initiative

The day-to-day operations that you establish for your mentoring initiative will set the pace for a successful, sustainable model. Focus on consistency, compatibility, support and accountability as you shape the following guidelines for your initiative.

Determine a budget.

You’ll want to determine the type of mentoring initiative that best suits your needs (see below) and addresses the following key factors:

• Duration of the initiative
• Time commitment expected from mentors (suggested: four hours per month for 9 months if you’re working with a school-based program; otherwise 12 months is ideal)
• When and where mentoring will take place (factor in job shadowing and networking opportunities)
• System for recruiting, screening and selecting mentors

Best practice:

A one-year mentoring relationship is recommended. This is based on evidence that the longer the relationship lasts, the more positive outcomes are produced. Setting the commitment expectation is important to prevent relationships from ending prematurely.
Types of mentoring initiatives

• One-on-one mentoring: one employee is matched with one young adult
• Group mentoring: one employee is matched with a group of up to four young adults
• Team mentoring: several employees work with small groups of young people, with an employee-to-young-adult ratio no greater than one-to-four
• E-mentoring: one employee communicates with one young adult online at least once a week, with face-to-face meetings occurring at kickoff, at the middle, and at the end of the relationship (Note: this should be done as an add-on to any of the above)

Set supervision parameters.

Develop a written document that outlines the duties and expectations of your mentoring manager. For more details, see Step 4.

Set mentor and mentee parameters.

Determine baseline criteria for mentors, such as years employed with your company, managerial experience and/or relevant skills. For mentees, think about age, education and geographic area. Prepare surveys for mentors and mentees to complete at certain initiative milestones.

The mentor’s pledge:

• Fulfill a monthly time commitment (recommended: four hours)
• Act as a confidante and role model
• Expose mentee to relevant information and experiences (Note: if you have a partner, they will be able to help you understand your mentees’ goals)
• Fill out forms required by mentoring manager to effectively evaluate the initiative

Set training parameters.

Determine how mentors will be trained and generate a list of helpful skills that will be involved in developing your mentees. A partner organization can offer valuable information for training both parties.
Set evaluation parameters.

You’ll want to learn from your challenges and successes, so it’s important to regularly evaluate your mentors, mentees and the initiative, from beginning to end. Be realistic in tracking modest successes. A well-edited resume and mastering one relevant skill is a win for everyone. Consider measuring the following.

With your initiative:
- Defined goals met
- Number of mentors recruited/retained
- Fulltime conversion rates of mentees

With mentors:
- Commitment level
- Satisfaction level
- Success with inspiring positive results in mentees

With mentees:
- Satisfaction level
- Skills, knowledge and developmental experience acquired
- Great mentor traits
- Maintains a consistent presence in mentee’s life
- Focuses on mentee’s needs
- Possesses strong management skills
- Recognizes need for fun
- Allows time to develop trust

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Develop partner guidelines.

Your partner organization will be a huge asset during initiative development. Make sure to agree on a common mission from the outset. You should also establish roles and responsibilities, preferred communication channels and clearly defined procedures. There's a wealth of useful information and tips about building a partnership in the Partner Guide.

Create an effective communication plan.

How will you promote your initiative internally and externally? Your communication plan should be part of your mentoring manager's overall budget and schedule so that key dates for deliverables are met.

Communication plan Do's

• Set a positive tone
• Include facts on the population you’re serving
• Link initiative to company mission
• Describe activities and benefits
• Include a success story

Identify key milestones.

This is an important part of phase planning. Milestones include but are not limited to a pilot launch date (if you're doing one), a scaled up launch initiative date and end date, as well as mid-way and final evaluations.

Step 3: Implement Your Initiative

Now that you have a plan in place, it's time to bring your vision to life. Remember that the beginning days of an initiative are the defining days. Successful mentoring initiatives need ongoing support and monitoring to ensure that relationships thrive. Again, partner organizations can significantly help you with many action items in this step, particularly if you're a smaller company.

Take full advantage of your partner's expertise, especially when it comes to recruiting and screening prospective mentors and mentees, as well as planning orientation and training sessions for them. Use these guidelines to shape your efforts.
Recruit your mentors.

Based on your established criteria and in collaboration with your partner organization, target appropriate mentors within your company. Realistically describe the program’s goals and expected outcomes and provide candidates with a written statement that outlines eligibility requirements.

Recruit your mentees.

Your company may not have ready access to young adults who are interested in participating in a mentoring program. This is where a partner organization can play a critical role in reaching out to young adults whose needs and interests would benefit most from your initiative (young adults may also be engaged with another program). Provide prospective mentees with a written statement that outlines the eligibility requirements for the program. The most significant predictor of positive outcomes from mentoring is a close, trusting relationship between mentors and mentees.

Screen your mentors.

Determine if they have the time, mindset and commitment to be successful. Make sure they're willing to commit to a few hours per month. Conduct at least one face-to-face interview per candidate, as well as a reference check. (Note: in a best case scenario, a partner would help with screening because they have the experience and infrastructure.)

Screen your mentees.

Be sure they’re ready to commit the time to a relationship and have a positive attitude about being mentored. Again, a partner organization will be a great asset here.

Conduct mentor training.

Hold a two-hour training session that will provide mentors with the basic knowledge and skills needed to build an effective mentoring relationship (this will also offer mentors a chance to meet one another, planting the seed for a future support network). Training should include a focus on mentor’s expectations, with an emphasis on keeping them realistic. Your partner can help you tailor your training sessions to address specific concerns for opportunity youth.

Conduct mentee training.

Before matches are made, make sure mentees understand the role of their mentors, their responsibility to communicate regularly and appropriate behavior during meetings. A partner organization can help prep mentees.
Checklist: successful mentor training

- Walk through initiative goals and expectations
- Discuss mentor obligations and roles
- Provide tips for relationship development and maintenance
- Cover ethical issues
- Provide support resources and assistance information
- Discuss effective commitment length and closure of the mentoring relationship

Make the match.

Matches should be made based on common interests. Similarities such as gender, race and ethnicity are often recommended, but studies show that common interests trump all. Most important is the mentor’s ability to tune into the mentee’s interests and needs.

Offer follow-up training, evaluation and problem-solving support.

In order for your initiative to be a success, matches should be evaluated throughout the duration of the program. Inevitably, challenges will arise. Be there for your matches when they need help solving problems and offer training opportunities for the duration of the relationship. Your partner will be a huge help with this. Also, consider setting aside time for check-ins with your mentors, too.

End on a high note.

Make sure the formal relationship between mentor and mentee concludes with a sense of closure, giving everyone a chance to reflect on the experience. A big event at the end of a mentoring experience is a nice touch. Test your plan with a pilot. You’ll learn a lot during the pilot phase, and it will give you the flexibility to refine your program prior to a broad scale launch.

Best practices for step 3

- Set clear expectations about time commitments and activities for both mentors and mentees
- Hold orientation sessions to ground everyone with a common roadmap
- Reimburse mentors (and mentees) for reasonable expenses to keep morale high
- Have a procedure in place for handling challenges (e.g., when either party isn’t fulfilling its roles and responsibilities)
- Provide mentors with a list of recommended mentee activities/topics that align with initiative goals to help them get started
Step 4: Manage your initiative

Identifying a mentoring manager to lead your initiative will provide the vision and leadership for your mentoring initiative. He or she should be committed to its success for many years to come and have a good system in place for tracking and communication. Here are the keys to overseeing a successful initiative.

**Monitor and evaluate the initiative.**
Ensure that your initiative is following established policies and staying within budget and scope.

**Monitor and support mentor/mentee relationships.**
Make sure that the initiative is going well and that mentors and mentees are having a rewarding experience.

**Manage the partner relationship.**
Set aside frequent, designated times for check-ins with your partner. Remember that ongoing communication is essential to success. Make sure to incorporate feedback into a continuous improvement strategy.

**Mentoring manager functions:**
- Define an overall vision for the initiative
- Act as a liaison with the partner organization
- Create a communications plan
- Plan and schedule events and activities
- Evaluate the overall success of the initiative
- Oversee training and orientation sessions
- Maintain an initiative budget

**Report program results.**
Choose a time during the internship period to report preliminary findings to key stakeholders and/or supervisors. This may relate to internship and employee satisfaction, productivity and/or smooth communication between interns, mentors and teams. Create an internal system to track mentoring activities and outcomes that include date, activity and assessment.
Quick reference list

Try to actively manage the following materials (you don’t have to do it all alone—your partner can help).

- Initiative finances
- Initiative schedule
- Mentor records
- Risk management procedures
- Initiative activity
- Evaluations

Step 5: Measure your initiative

The ability to assess an initiative’s effectiveness—and make adjustments as needed—is vital to its success. Remember to refer back to your initial goals to measure performance and your ROI.

Measure Performance.

Performance measures should align with initiative goals. You’ll want to evaluate the process/implementation of your initiative (e.g., dedicated hours, training) as well as the outcomes (e.g., effectiveness with respect to impact on mentors and mentees). Mentoring program performance should be evaluated at least annually to make sure the results align with the goals. Work with your partner to determine how you might be able to scale up or make improvements to your program. Additionally, try to assess both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Quantitative measures

- Number of mentors/mentees engaged in the initiative
- Number of mentees successfully completing the initiative
- Number of new skills and experiences acquired by mentees
- Number of hiring prospects identified from mentee pool

Qualitative Measures

- Satisfaction levels of mentors and mentees
- Professional growth of mentee
Get the right people to evaluate measurement.

Initiative evaluation can be internal or external. Internal evaluation should include the mentoring manager, the executive champion and any other relevant employees/mentors with the passion to support the initiative. Once a program has gained traction, an external evaluation involving a non-biased, third party consultant can be valuable.

Evaluate future potential.

If your mentoring pathway is successful, you’ve just nurtured future talent for your company. Consider each mentee for full- or part-time positions with your company. When you’re ready to take the next step to grow your program, defining what “growth” looks like is important. Although a more formal program could mean bigger numbers, it doesn’t have to. Work with your partner

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<th>Evaluation questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>• How well did the program achieve its objectives?</td>
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<td>• What challenges did the team experience and how were they resolved?</td>
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<td>• What improvements can be made?</td>
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<td>• What were effective strategies?</td>
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<td>• How can the program be scaled-up to other business units?</td>
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Use your learnings to optimize your next effort.

Remember, the best-laid plans make the best programs and create the most value for employers, mentors and mentees.