

This document provides steps and tips in developing formal mentoring programs. A sample mentoring program document has also been provided to assist you set up your own program.

**MENTORING PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

A formal mentorship program can yield great benefits for an organization. It is one of the best ways to transfer tacit knowledge, improve careers, contribute to employee growth, develop leadership skills in both mentors and mentees, improve employee engagement and retention, and build organizational capacity.

# how to start a workplace mentoring program

1. **Define your goal(s)**

Use your strategic plan as a starting point. What are the main workforce strategies and activities that have been identified? This will help you define your business objectives in starting a mentoring program. Perhaps, you have a high turnover rate, internal promotions are low, a significant number of key people are nearing retirement, or you want more diversity at the different leadership levels. Based on your organization’s workforce demographics and needs, ensure you define the primary goals of the mentoring program.

1. **Identify the program’s details**

Your organization needs to determine the program’s details. You can start with asking the following questions:

* Who will oversee and manage the mentoring program?
* Will applications for the mentoring program be accepted throughout the year or will there be a specific start and end date for the mentoring program. For example, will it run from Sept to June each year?
* How will mentees apply for and participate in the program?
* How will mentors be selected?
* Can a mentor take on more than one mentee?
* How will mentors and mentees be matched?
* Will the mentor-mentee relationship be project-based, group based, or one-on-one?
* How long will the mentorship last?
* When and where would mentors and mentees meet?
* How often should mentors and mentees meet?
* How will you track the program’s success?

Successful mentoring programs offer both structure and flexibility.

1. **Attract participants for the mentoring program**

When formal mentoring programs are introduced, don’t assume you will automatically have high participation rates. And don’t assume mentors and mentees will understand the benefits. Ensure you promote and communicate these benefits effectively to your talent pool. This should be done from the CEO/ED as well as other leaders. Potential mentors are often the ones that are very busy and may have limited time. Therefore, it is important that as an organization, you prioritize the program and ensure that participants are given the time and resources to participate. You may also want to have your existing leaders include mentoring as part of their own developmental goals in their performance plans.

1. **Select the program’s participants**

Identify the eligibility criteria that program participants will have to meet to be a part of the program. It is important to involve participants from diverse backgrounds, skills, and work experience. This is important for both mentors and mentees.

1. **Carefully match mentors and mentees**

In the application process, it may be worthwhile to ask the mentee the following questions to help in the matching process:

* Do you want someone who has gone on the same career path you would like to follow?
* Do you want someone from a different department and broaden organizational knowledge?
* Do you want someone who has modeled the competencies you would like to strengthen?
* Do you want someone who has skills you currently don’t have but wish to acquire?
* Do you want someone who will be a good sounding board for your professional goals?
* Do you want someone who is an expert on a particular topic you are interested in?

The applicant may answer yes to more than one of the above and perhaps one specific mentor may be a good fit to support the mentee in achieving multiple goals in the program. However, if the applicant has a specific focus, that may help narrow down the number of suitable mentors in the matching process.

A major part of mentoring is the frequent and informal opportunities to connect. If possible, put mentors and mentees together where it is easier for the mentee to access the mentor. If mentees have difficulty accessing their mentor, the mentoring experience will not be as beneficial for them.

1. **Guide mentoring relationships**

Now that your participants are matched, ensure that your point person managing the mentoring program does periodic check-ins with participants. You may also want to do a program launch with mentors and mentees together to discuss expectations for participants. It will give an opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet and plan how and when they will proceed with future meetings.

1. **Evaluate and measure your mentorship program**

Investing in a mentoring program consists of program management and the valuable time of participants, so it is worthwhile to set some measures to assess if the program is successful and producing the kind of results you intended. Mentoring programs should be evaluated on three fronts: the program, the mentoring relationship, and the individual impact. This will help your organization understand what is working well, identifying roadblocks, and gauging the impact it is having at the organizational and individual levels.

# responsibilities of mentors and mentees

**Mentors**

* Commit to meeting with mentee and engage in mentoring activities for the duration of the program
* Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during the length of the program
* Ensure there is uninterrupted time for the sessions and give full attention to the mentee
* Share experiences including successes, mistakes, and lessons learned
* Share resources that may be beneficial for the mentee
* Prepare for sessions which may include reviewing notes that were taken at a previous session or the mentor’s toolkit
* Look for experiences that will stretch the mentee (i.e., job shadowing, suggested reading, etc.)
* Be an active listener
* Be a sounding board
* Provide open and candid feedback
* Offer encouragement through genuine positive reinforcement
* Be a positive role model
* Keep conversations confidential and create a safe environment for honest and open discussions
* Let the person managing the mentoring program know as soon as possible if there are problems connecting with the mentee

**Mentees**

* Commit to meeting with mentee and/or engage in mentoring activities for the duration of the program
* Be proactive about contacting mentor and scheduling meetings
* Commit to self-development
* Be receptive to constructive criticism/feedback and ask for it
* Assume responsibility for acquiring or improving skills and knowledge
* Discuss individual development planning with the mentor
* Be open and honest about goals, expectations, challenges, and concerns
* Don’t be shy about asking questions and what you want to know the most
* Take notes including any commitments you make in doing before the next session
* Prepare for meetings and come with an agenda
* Actively listen and ask questions
* Keep your conversations confidential
* Respect the mentor’s time and resources
* Comfortably give feedback to the mentor on what is working or not working in the mentoring relationship
* Let the person managing the Mentoring Program know as soon as possible if there are problems connecting with the mentor

**APPENDIX A – SAMPLE MENTORING PROGRAM GUIDE**

**Overview**

At Discovery Agency, we pride ourselves in being a learning organization and strive to provide as many growth and development opportunities for our staff as possible. Mentoring is a proven approach to drive rich learning and development for both mentors and mentees.

The goals of the mentoring program are as follows:

1. To develop future leaders and ensure that we have a ready talent pool of diverse candidates for career advancement and growth at all levels
2. To help transfer tacit knowledge within the organization
3. To give our senior, more experienced leaders the chance to grow in their own leadership skills

**Program Duration**

The mentoring program runs from October 1, 2022, to April 30, 2023.

Applications are due by July 31, 2022, and mentors and mentees will be matched by September 1, 2022. Please submit your application to:

Jane Smith

HR Manager

Janesmith@discovery.org

If you have any questions about the program, please contact the HR Manager by email or by phone (403) 222 1234.

**Eligibility Criteria for Mentees**

Participation is limited to:

* Full-time, permanent employees that have been with Discovery Agency for at least 6 months
* Employees that have consistently met or exceeded expectations in performance reviews
* Employees that have expressed interest in career advancement

**Eligibility Criteria for Mentors**

Participation is limited to:

* Formal and informal leaders that have consistently met or exceeded expectations in performance reviews
* Full-time, permanent employees that have been in a formal leadership role for at least one year, or
* Full-time, permanent employees that are considered subject matter experts on a particular topic

**Please note**: each mentor will be given a mentor’s toolkit prior to the launch of the program.

**Matching**

Based on the information provided on the application forms, careful consideration will be given to ensure that the best matches possible are made.

Discovery Agency encourages mentees to learn different leadership styles and perspectives through this process. Therefore, mentees will not be matched with their direct supervisors as there should already be ongoing coaching and mentoring resulting from the direct supervisor/subordinate relationship.

**What if there is a mismatch?**

If it is not a good match between the mentor and mentee, then this should be communicated to the HR Manager as soon as possible with rationale as to why it is a mismatch. If a mismatch is identified early enough in the program, the mentee may be reassigned to a new mentor, provided a suitable alternative is available. If there isn’t another mentor available, the mentee can reapply when the program starts again the following year.

**Mid-program review**

A mid-program review will be done in January 2023 by the HR Manager to assess how the mentoring program is working for all mentors and mentees. At this point, a mentor and mentee can decide to continue with more mentoring sessions until April 2023 or to end the mentoring relationship. If it is decided that the mentoring relationship will conclude in January 2023, the mentee may apply for a new mentor if one is available.

**MENTEE APPLICATION FORM**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Full name:**  | **Date:** |
| **Position:** | **Department/Team:** |
| **Years of service in current role:** | **Years of service with organization:** |
| **Educational background:** |

1. **Why do you want to participate in the mentoring program?**
2. **What type of mentoring relationship are you seeking?**

Do you already have a mentor in mind?

If yes, please provide the name and why you chose this person

If no, please check the appropriate box(es) as to what type of mentoring relationship you are seeking:

[ ]  Do you want someone who has gone on the same career path you would like to follow?

[ ]  Do you want someone from a different department and broaden organizational knowledge?

[ ]  Do you want someone who has modeled the competencies you would like to strengthen?

[ ]  Do you want someone who has skills you currently don’t have but wish to acquire?

[ ]  Do you want someone who will be a good sounding board for your professional goals?

[ ]  Do you want someone who is an expert on a particular topic you are interested in?

Please describe your ideal mentor:

1. **What knowledge and/or skills are you hoping to gain from the mentoring relationship?**

**Role of a Mentee**

* Commit to meeting with mentee and/or engage in mentoring activities for the duration of the program.
* Be proactive about contacting mentor and scheduling meetings
* Commit to self-development
* Be receptive to constructive criticism/feedback and ask for it
* Assume responsibility for acquiring or improving skills and knowledge
* Discuss individual development planning with the mentor
* Be open and honest about goals, expectations, challenges, and concerns
* Don’t be shy about asking questions about what you want to know the most
* Take notes including any commitments you make in completing before the next session
* Prepare for meetings and come with an agenda
* Actively listen
* Keep your conversations confidential
* Respect the mentor’s time and resources
* Comfortably give feedback to the mentor on what is working or not working in the mentoring relationship
* Let the person HR Manager know as soon as possible if there are problems connecting with the mentor

I understand the role of a mentee and commit to all the conditions of participating the program as listed above.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| Signature |  | Date |

**MENTOR APPLICATION FORM**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Full name:**  | **Date:** |
| **Position:** | **Department/Team:** |
| **Years of service in current role:** | **Years of service with organization:** |
| **Educational background:** |

1. **Why do you want to be a mentor in the mentoring program?**
2. **What strengths do you bring as a mentor?**
3. **What type of mentee do you think you will be the most effective with?**

[ ]  A less experienced employee with potential for leadership, but needs guidance and support

[ ]  A seasoned employee that has been identified as a likely future leader

[ ]  An employee already in a leadership role, but desires to move into a more senior role

[ ]  An employee that would like to become an expert in a topic in which you are viewed as an expert

Comments

**Role of a Mentor**

* Commit to meeting with mentee and engage in mentoring activities for the duration of the program
* Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during the length of the program
* Ensure there is uninterrupted time for the sessions and give full attention to the mentee
* Share experiences including successes, mistakes, and lessons learned
* Share resources that may be beneficial for the mentee
* Prepare for sessions by reviewing the mentor’s toolkit and may also include reviewing notes that were taken at a previous session
* Look for experiences that will stretch the mentee (i.e., job shadowing, suggested reading, etc.)
* Be an active listener and a sounding board
* Provide open and candid feedback
* Offer encouragement through genuine positive reinforcement
* Be a positive role model
* Keep conversations confidential
* Create a safe environment for honest and open discussions
* Let the HR Manager know as soon as possible if there are problems connecting with mentee

Please check the box if applicable:

[ ]  I am available to mentor more than 1 employee

I understand the role of a mentor and commit to all the conditions of participating the program as listed above.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |
| Signature |  | Date |

**MENTORING PROGRAM EVALUATION FORM**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mentee full name:**  | **Date:** |
| **Position:** | **Department/Team:** |

Please complete this section by checking the box  that best describes how much you agree with each item.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Strongly Disagree** | **Disagree** | **Somewhat Agree** | **Agree** | **Strongly Agree** |
| 1.  | The mentoring relationship met my expectations |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. | My mentor was easy to approach and talk to |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. | We were able to meet regularly throughout the program |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. | I was happy with the frequency of meetings |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. | We completed the goals we planned  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. | My mentor offered me valuable feedback and advice |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. | I feel more equipped to move forward in my career |  |  |  |  |  |

1. What is the most beneficial change(s) you identified in yourself because of the mentorship?
2. Has the program helped you to make any decisions about your career? If yes, please explain.
3. Recommendations, if any, you would make to improve the program