

## **What is Mentoring?**

Mentoring is intended to assist individuals to function more effectively and to maximise their potential.

Mentoring can be defined in various ways:

1. A learning and or counselling relationship between an experienced person who shares his or her professional expertise with a less experienced person in order to develop the skills and abilities of the less experienced party. (Treasury Board of Canada)
2. Typically a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and a less experienced employee which is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share. (ODEOPE)
3. A mentoring partnership will not provide ready-made decisions or answers to everything. It should not be directive. It should not create unrealistic expectations. Being involved in mentoring will not guarantee advancement or promotion. Individuals are responsible for their own career. Mentoring will provide a structured support base for staff and career development. (CSNSW)

## **Features of Mentoring Programs**

Mentoring programs typically have the following characteristics:

1. A clearly defined purpose.  
Successful mentoring programs have:
  - a. a clear definition of mentoring;
  - b. a clearly defined purpose or set of expectations; and
  - c. commitment to these being universally understood by all decision-makers and participants in the mentoring program.
2. Visible support and endorsement of senior management (see management commitment). This ensures the mentoring program is perceived as credible and valued, and therefore attracts a high level of participation from employees.  
The support of managers and widespread organisational support is facilitated by:
  - a. Managers playing an active role in promoting the program and taking part in activities such as information sessions and the evaluation process.
  - b. Explaining the program to all employees. This is especially important for programs that target affirmative action groups only (women, Aboriginal people, NESB).
3. Consistency with and support by the existing culture of the organisation. If a program is specifically designed for a particular group it is important to gain acceptance of this within the wider organisation. It is also essential to determine that this is what that particular group in the organisation want!
4. Be designed with an understanding of the cultural effects on mentoring.
5. Be voluntary.
  - a. This ensures that participants are committed to the mentoring process.
  - b. Each party should feel free to withdraw from the program at any time.
6. Involve training.  
A program which specifically targets a particular group should aim to achieve:
  - a. Understanding of mentoring
  - b. Understanding of the issues facing that particular group in the organisation. Analysing the impact of stereotyping and prejudice is an

- important part of this process.
7. Off-line relationships.

### **Mentoring and Supervision**

1. A mentee's immediate supervisor should not be their mentor.
  - a. Mentors should be aware that mentoring demands an investment and commitment beyond day-to-day supervision.
  - b. Supervision emphasises immediate tasks and short term needs, while mentoring is concerned with the professional and long-term needs.
  - c. Mentoring is concerned with developing the whole individual rather than just one or two performance aspects.
2. Be part of a wider learning and development tool and diversity strategy. While mentoring is essentially a partnership between two people, it is important to remember that this operates within the context of an organisation. Mentoring needs to be integrated into a broader learning and development plan, employment equity/diversity policies or training programs.
3. Skills required for mentoring need to be developed through other learning and development tools such as training courses in diversity issues, gender equity and management skills.
4. Mentors and Mentees need to be chosen and matched appropriately.

### **Resourcing and supporting mentorship programs.**

1. A coordinator or administrator is needed to provide on-going support.
2. Have a time limit to the process. This can vary, but is best for about 12 months.
3. Ensure that management provides funding for training of mentors and for the training that results from the mentoring process.
4. Mentoring sessions are usually provided during business hours.
5. Consider ways of evaluating mentoring considered from the outset.
6. Demonstrating the effectiveness and efficiency of the program is important to obtain the continuing support of senior management and sustain the program.
7. Measurement criteria are defined in advance.

### **Elements of a Mentoring Program**

1. Criteria for selection of mentors;
2. Creating a professional learning environment;
3. Sharing their skills, knowledge and experience;
4. Encouraging workplace visits to areas of interest;
5. Providing professional advice and guidance;
6. Facilitating career planning and development;
7. Being a professional role model;
8. Redirecting enquiries to other staff where appropriate (assisting with networking);
9. Encouraging self learning;
10. Maintaining regular contact.

### **Ideas**

1. Train mentors: This is of crucial importance for the success of the program.
2. Key elements of mentor training include:
  - a. Discussion and consideration of the purpose of mentoring, possible alternative models
  - b. What mentoring is and what it is not.

- c. The essentials: Self awareness and reflection.
- d. Tools for increasing self awareness:
  - i. DISC analysis
  - ii. Personality analysis
  - iii. Signature Strengths
  - iv. Brain Wiring Test
  - v. Information Receptor Preference
- e. Cultural issues and mentoring
- f. The importance of relationship building
- g. The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Stephen Covey
- h. Influencing Skills: Robert Cialdini
- i. Managing Interpersonal Conflicts
- j. Skills for Mentors:
  - i. Listening Skills
  - ii. Questioning Skills
  - iii. Feedback Skills
  - iv. Engaging Your Heart to Make Decisions
- k. Perspective Shifting techniques such as *Stand in Their Shoes* and the *Three Chair Activity*
- l. GROW Model applied to mentoring
- m. Setting SMART Goals and a Development Plan.

### **Lao Tzu**

*To lead people walk beside them...As for the best leaders, the people do not notice their existence. The next best, the people honour and praise. The next, the people fear; and the next, the people hate...When the best leader's work is done the people say, "We did it ourselves..."* From the Book of the Way

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