

**The Conference  
Board of Canada**

# Empowering Inclusion in the Workplace

Mentorship Program Toolkit for Employers



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# Mentorship business case

The Conference Board of Canada and the Canadian Association for Supported Employment (CASE) through its MentorAbility Canada initiative collaborated to create an employer toolkit that provides practical guidance, templates and documents to Canadian employers. This toolkit is aimed at helping organizational leaders develop and improve the inclusivity of their mentorship programs for people with disabilities.

To develop a comprehensive toolkit, we incorporated findings from our research to ensure resources and recommendations are comprehensive, evidence-based, practical, and informed by lived experience. These tools can be used or adapted to increase access to mentorship for all employees, ultimately leading to more inclusive workplaces.

Given the rate of unemployment and underemployment for people with disabilities, workforce inclusion continues to be a pressing need in Canada. Statistics Canada survey data from 2022 highlights that the employment rate for people aged 15 to 64 without disabilities is 15 percentage points higher than the rate of people with disabilities (80.1 versus 65.1 per cent).<sup>1</sup> The employment gap is especially pronounced for people with severe disabilities, where their employment rate was 40.1 percentage points lower than for those without disabilities (26.8 versus 66.9 per cent).<sup>2</sup>

People with disabilities are more likely to work part time<sup>3</sup> and have a median hourly wage that is 5.9 per cent lower than that of people without disabilities.<sup>4</sup>

Where does mentorship fit in? When inclusive mentorship initiatives are strategically embedded in organizations, it can drive innovation, enhance employee engagement, and strengthen organizational capacity. By encouraging diverse viewpoints through mentorship, businesses can make better decisions and solve problems more effectively, leading to numerous competitive advantages.

1 Statistics Canada, "Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities in 2022: Results from the Labour Force Survey," August 30, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230830/dq230830a-eng.htm>.

2 Statistics Canada, "Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities, 2023," June 13, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2024002-eng.htm>.

3 Statistics Canada, "Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities in 2022: Results from the Labour Force Survey," August 30, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230830/dq230830a-eng.htm>.

4 Statistics Canada, "Labour market characteristics of persons with and without disabilities, 2023." June 13, 2024, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-222-x/71-222-x2024002-eng.htm>.

## Mentees

- **Boost feelings of inclusion:** Boston Consulting Group's 2023 study found that mentorship boosts feelings of inclusion by eight points using their Bias-free, Leadership, Inclusion, Safety and Support (BLISS) Index.<sup>5</sup> Inclusive workplace opportunities (i.e., mentorship) are valuable for persons who experience disability as these can foster a sense of belonging within organizations.
- **Increase informed and voluntary disclosure:** People with disabilities who have mentors are 11 per cent more likely to voluntarily disclose their disability to their employer compared with those without mentorship.<sup>6</sup> This underscores the value of inclusive workplace experiences, such as mentorship, in fostering trust and psychological safety—creating an environment where people feel safe to disclose voluntarily.
- **Improved self-esteem:** Mentor Canada's 2022 study found that two-thirds of people with disabilities (66.6 per cent) who previously had a mentor in their teenage years reported their most impactful mentor as having a “significant influence” on their self-esteem.<sup>7</sup>
- **Foster sustainable mentor pipelines:** We found that many mentees with disabilities later transition to mentorship roles in response to their previous positive experiences.<sup>8</sup> This creates sustainable mentor pipelines within the workplace, where people with disabilities feel empowered and inspired to contribute to others' success as mentors.
- **Improved job satisfaction:** A 2025 study found a link between job satisfaction and having a mentor. In this study, 90.0 per cent of employees with a mentor reported that their mentor was either very or somewhat helpful in having improved their job satisfaction.<sup>9</sup>



- 5 Hillary Wool and others, “Your Workforce Includes People with Disabilities. Does Your People Strategy?,” Boston Consulting Group, May 4, 2023, <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2023/devising-people-strategy-for-employees-with-disabilities-in-the-workplace>.
- 6 Hillary Wool and others.
- 7 Mentor Canada, *The Mentoring Effect: Youth Experiencing Disabilities*, accessed June 2, 2025, [https://www.mentoringcanada.ca/sites/default/files/2022-08/The%20Mentoring%20Effect%20Youth%20Experiencing%20Disabilities%20EN\\_new.pdf](https://www.mentoringcanada.ca/sites/default/files/2022-08/The%20Mentoring%20Effect%20Youth%20Experiencing%20Disabilities%20EN_new.pdf).
- 8 The Conference Board of Canada, “Fostering Inclusion for People with Disability Through Mentorship: A Call to Action,” forthcoming.
- 9 Victoria Barford and Andrew Parkin, *Mentorship in the Workplace: Employee Participation and Perspectives*. Environics Institute, March 2025. <https://fsc-ccf.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/mentorship-in-the-workplace-employee-participation-and-perspectives-1.pdf>.

## Mentors

- **Position emotionally intelligent leaders:** A 2024 study indicated that peer mentorship significantly supports enhancing empathy in leaders.<sup>10</sup>
- **Facilitate partnership:** Our research study found that mentors with disabilities act as co-navigators and teachers in the workplace for their mentees, offering specialized support to people with disabilities that would not be accessible otherwise.<sup>11</sup>
- **Broadened perspectives:** A 2023 qualitative study that piloted mentorship among faculty and staff in a public university saw mentors deepen their understanding of disability inclusion.<sup>12</sup> This allowed faculty and staff to recognize systemic barriers that were impacting the learning of students with disabilities, leading some to champion inclusive teaching practices.
- **Rejuvenate career for experienced employees:** A 2016 qualitative study found that seasoned senior-level employees may benefit from sharing their experiences and knowledge with mentees.<sup>13</sup>
- **Robust personal reward:** We found that mentors gain valuable personal rewards by fostering talent development, offering guidance to mentees, and

engaging in shared learning that strengthens their motivation to continue mentoring others, which is supported within the wider research literature.<sup>14</sup>

## Organizations

- **Improve job retention:** Employees with disabilities who work for organizations that invest in employee-centred programs, such as mentorship, are 1.5 times less likely to leave their jobs.<sup>15</sup>
- **Enhance organizational culture:** Mentorship can improve workplace culture through professional relationships formed within the workforce. These connections can enhance collaboration between departments and familiarize employees with the broader impact of their organization.<sup>16</sup>
- **Build psychologically safe workplaces:** Employee's mental health can be strengthened by creating a workplace where employees feel valued and heard.<sup>17</sup>
- **Ensure sustainability through cross-training:** One of the unique advantages of mentorship is the opportunity for employees to cross-train, allowing for greater flexibility and creativity in the ideation and execution of tasks.<sup>18</sup>

10 Katharina Prummer and others, "The role of mentoring in developing leaders' emotional intelligence: exploring mentoring types, emotional intelligence, organizational factors, and gender," *Frontiers in Education* 9 (June 5, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1393660>.

11 The Conference Board of Canada, "Fostering Inclusion for People with Disability Through Mentorship: A Call to Action," forthcoming.

12 Laura M. Heron and others, "Mentoring Postsecondary Students with Intellectual Disabilities: Faculty and Staff Mentor Perspectives," *Education Sciences* 13, no. 2 (February 2023): 213, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13020213>.

13 Jocey Quinn, "Mentoring: progressing women's careers in Higher Education, report for Equality Challenge Unit," accessed June 2, 2025, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304025152\\_Mentoring\\_progressing\\_women's\\_careers\\_in\\_Higher\\_Education\\_report\\_for\\_Equality\\_Challenge\\_Unit/link/5763e80408ae1658e2ea1f82/download?tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InNpZ251cClslInBhZ2UiOiJwdWJsaWNhdGlvbiJ9fQ](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304025152_Mentoring_progressing_women's_careers_in_Higher_Education_report_for_Equality_Challenge_Unit/link/5763e80408ae1658e2ea1f82/download?tp=eyJjb250ZXh0Ijp7ImZpcnN0UGFnZSI6InNpZ251cClslInBhZ2UiOiJwdWJsaWNhdGlvbiJ9fQ).

14 The Conference Board of Canada, "Fostering Inclusion for People with Disability Through Mentorship: A Call to Action," forthcoming; and Tara Loeper and Ariel E. Schwartz, "'Being a part of something': Experiences and perceived benefits of young adult peer mentors with intellectual/developmental disabilities and co-occurring mental health conditions," *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 36, no. 5 (2023): 1067–75, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.13117>.

15 Hillary Wool and others, "Your Workforce Includes People with Disabilities. Does Your People Strategy?"

16 Canadian Association for Supported Employment, "The Benefits of Mentorship," February 28, 2024, <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/the-benefits-of-mentorship/>.

17 Canadian Association for Supported Employment.

18 Canadian Association for Supported Employment.

# Definitions for mentorship

Mentorship is defined by CASE as a relationship between a mentor and mentee tied to specific context, such as employment, entrepreneurship, or education.<sup>19</sup> Mentorships are mentoring experiences that are typically time-bound, interactive, and are focused on achieving both mentor and mentee goals through a broad range of activities (career development, emotional support, etc.). This toolkit is designed to support inclusive mentorship within the workplace aimed at enhancing the professional and personal development of both the mentor and mentee. A mentorship is an example of a mentoring experience.

Mentors support their mentees by sharing insights, offering guidance, and exchanging knowledge, such as when mentees are making their own informed career decisions. Our research underscores that mentors act as collaborative partners, helping mentees navigate different aspects of their lives while fostering growth in skills, knowledge, and confidence.<sup>20</sup> Through this collaborative and reciprocal relationship, mentors also gain valuable skills (e.g., leadership, communication), further broaden their knowledge, and expand their networks.

Mentees engage in mentoring relationships to co-create their journeys with their mentors as partners. As part of shaping their paths, mentees take an active role in discussing and planning their goals in a self-directed way, rather than following the explicit direction of a more experienced individual.<sup>21</sup>

Mentoring relationships are a continuous, personal, and reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees.

## Program structure

This toolkit helps in the creation and implementation of one-on-one mentorship programs in the workplace. However, these tools and resources can be adapted to support many different types of mentorship models. We encourage program developers to explore various mentorship models as part of their program design, including those shown in the table below:

Mentorship model	Brief description
Career mentorship	Mentorship that takes place in the workplace for the purpose of the personal and/or professional development of the mentee.
Group mentorship	One to two mentors partner with a small group (up to five) mentees concurrently. <sup>22</sup>
Peer mentorship	Mentees and mentors are matched based on similar roles or experiences. <sup>23</sup>
Reverse mentorship	Junior employees act as a mentor for their senior counterparts, such as those in leadership positions. <sup>24</sup>
MentorAbility	Mentorship that takes a unique approach to short-term mentorship (from one hour to one day) between employers and people with disabilities. <sup>25</sup>
Speed mentorship	A form of mentorship where mentees have brief conversations with multiple senior individuals, typically during a single event (e.g., workshop, conference). <sup>26</sup>

19 Canadian Association for Supported Employment and Mentor Canada, *Mentoring for Persons Experiencing Disabilities: A Review of the Literature*, Canadian Association for Supported Employment, March 2024, <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Mentoring-for-persons-experiencing-disability.pdf>.

20 The Conference Board of Canada, "Fostering Inclusion for People with Disability Through Mentorship: A Call to Action," Forthcoming.

21 Jennerdene L. Rubbi Nunan and others, "Mentoring in the workplace: Exploring the experiences of mentor-mentee relations," *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology* 49 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v49i0.2067>.

22 Canadian Association for Supported Employment and Mentor Canada, "Mentoring for Persons Experiencing Disabilities: A Review of the Literature."

23 Canadian Association for Supported Employment and Mentor Canada.

24 Suneil A. Raju and others, "Does reverse mentoring work in the NHS: a feasibility study of clinicians in practice," *BMJ Open* 12, no. 11 (November 1, 2022): e062361, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-062361>.

25 Canadian Association for Supported Employment, "MentorAbility Canada," December 28, 2020, <https://www.supportedemployment.ca/initiatives/mentorability/>.

26 David A. Cook and others, "Speed mentoring: An innovative method to facilitate mentoring relationships," *Medical Teacher* 32, no. 8 (2010): 692–94, <https://doi.org/10.3109/01421591003686278>.

## Program duration

The duration of the mentorship program will be aligned to reflect the intended outcomes and intensity of the program. While most mentorship programs that were reviewed as part of this research were between three and 12 months in length, program duration will ultimately reflect the amount of time required for mentees and mentors to reasonably achieve program goals.

The post-program evaluation survey can help organizations evaluate the program's duration, ensuring that the program is neither too long or too short for participants.

## Ownership and coordination

When programs are unsuccessful, employers indicated it is often because they didn't fully consider the ownership and administration tasks for the mentor program. Who will be responsible for coordinating the mentorship program? While the answer will vary from organization to organization, we recommend assigning a team or individual to coordinate the program.

In our research, people with disabilities spoke about challenges seeking answers from co-workers who did not have proper training or a background in working with people with disabilities. As a result, we recommend the person or team responsible for coordinating the program be trained in creating inclusive environments for people with disabilities. This could include enrolment in programs such as sensitivity and disability awareness training, as well as training on properly handling confidential information (e.g., personal or health information).

If this is not available in-house, organizations can seek out external organizations or consultants who have expertise in administering inclusive mentorship programs.

## Administering the program using cohorts

There is value in setting up smaller cohorts when establishing your mentorship program. This can ensure that each mentorship experience can be properly supported with adequate resources. For example, if 40 mentors and 60 mentees apply for the program, one approach is to start with a cohort of 15 mentors and 15 mentees rather than managing all 100 participants at once.

To mitigate waiting times between cohorts, organizations are encouraged to incorporate group mentorship or other mentorship models while participants wait for a formal match. One employer highlighted events-based mentorship, where individuals were encouraged to attend disability-inclusion-focused events for all staff, for the purpose of encouraging their staff to participate in mentorship.

## Time commitment

Be transparent about the expected time commitment for participating in the mentorship program. Time required for training, orientation, preparation, meeting, and other components of the program should be included in communications with potential participants. Clarity on time commitments for mentors and mentees ensures they can make informed decisions about their ability and capacity to participate.

## Mid-point check-in

For longer-term mentoring relationships, we encourage program administrators to facilitate mid-point check-ins with participants. Mid-point check-ins are particularly effective to shift program policies or resources to better meet the unique needs of participants. Questions can include:

1. What is working well in your mentoring relationship?
2. How could we improve your mentorship experience?
3. Have you made progress toward your goals?
4. Have your goals shifted since starting the program?
5. Are you still a good match for your mentor/mentee?

## Disclosure is not required to participate

Since disclosure is a personal and voluntary decision, disability disclosure can never be a requirement for participation in a mentorship program. Mentorship experiences need to create an environment where mentees and mentors feel safe, respected, and supported—whether or not they choose to disclose. Disability disclosure conversations must be approached with care, confidentiality, and respect for personal boundaries.

Participation within the mentorship program should be open to all individuals who are interested—especially for those who hold diverse identities and lived experiences.

If lived experiences with disability arise in conversation (e.g., if one or both participants choose to disclose), that conversation needs to be held from a disability inclusion lens. Mentors should be provided with opportunities to increase their disability awareness prior to mentorship. For example, a mentor working with a mentee with disabilities should understand how to navigate disability discussions, including taking a person-centred approach that reflects the same language that their mentee chooses. Organizations must provide training and resources as part of the mentorship program to ensure each relationship is rooted in respect and inclusion. These training sessions and resources can be provided to mentors/mentees before their first meeting with their counterpart.

Notes:

# Reflection: How will we implement a workplace mentorship program?

The first step for creating an effective mentorship program is to clearly outline key considerations for implementing the program in the first place. Reflecting on these questions is crucial for organizations early in their mentorship journey to piece together program goals, priorities, and how the program will be inclusive

to people with disabilities—such as how they will be involved in co-designing the program and what steps and processes are available to ensure accessibility.

Use the questions in the table below to reflect on how your organization will implement a workplace mentorship program.

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General implementation questions	Reflection
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What do we want to achieve through this initiative?

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How can we align program goals with our participant and organizational objectives?

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How can we build capacity to run this program effectively?

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What current processes can we leverage to help manage the administration of the program internally?

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What can we do to create new processes if none exist?

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What external organizations can we partner with?

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How will we define the target audience for the mentorship program?

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(continued ...)

(cont'd)

**General implementation questions**

**Reflection**

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What key performance indicators will be measured to demonstrate success?

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At what stages of the mentorship will evaluation occur (e.g., mid-, post-mentorship)?

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How much time is needed to meet the foundational objectives of the mentorship program (i.e., 3 to 6 to 12 months)?

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What criteria are we using to match mentors and mentees to ensure alignment with program objectives?

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How will we balance mentor/mentee job responsibilities with the mentorship program?

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Notes:

# Mentorship program charter: Program details and accessibility

Clearly outlining non-negotiable standards—time commitments, expectations, and accommodations—not only ensures consistency, but helps align participant and program goals.

Program developers can use the table below to outline the essential components of the program in a way that is intentional and inclusive.

Charter components	Reflection
What is the time commitment for the program?	
What preparation is required to participate in the mentorship program?	
How many hours per week should participants expect to dedicate to the mentoring relationship?	
What is the expected duration of the mentoring relationship?	
What are the steps to follow if a mentoring relationship isn't working out?	
How will we ensure there is a defined process for ending a mentorship early?	
How can the mentorship be tailored to meet individual accommodation needs?	
What accessibility options are available to those who participate?	

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(continued ...)

(cont'd)

**Charter components**

**Reflection**

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How will we make these accessibility options widely known to potential and current program participants?

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How will we involve people with disabilities in designing our mentorship program to ensure it's inclusive of their needs?

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How will we ensure accessibility within the mentorship program?

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What resources will we provide for those in the mentoring relationship to navigate disability-focused conversations?

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Notes:

# Matching guidelines for mentorship programs

## Match participants based on predetermined criteria

The success of mentoring relationships is partially determined by matching mentors and mentees with similar goals, interests, or desired outcomes for the mentorship. Allowing mentees and mentors to assess compatibility alongside administrator-pairing provides a thoughtful approach that can help ensure more impactful mentorship. Our research with people with disabilities underscores the following considerations that can strengthen pairings between mentors and mentees. These considerations can be adapted to the needs and goals of participants.

- **Availability:** A simple yet essential factor: if participants cannot commit time to meetings or communication, the mentorship will be less effective.
- **Goals for the program:** Alignment on goals enhances the mentoring relationship, but mentees and mentors do not have to share identical goals to be a good match. For example, a mentee focusing on career growth could be complementary to a senior colleague looking to develop leadership skills.
- **Job role or function:** Shared experience provides common discussion points during the program. However, this can be flexible, as individuals may form relationships with those outside of their immediate circles (e.g., other teams or departments).
- **Location and time zone preferences:** Participants reported that they would prefer to be matched based on their location (i.e., in-person, virtual) and time zone preferences.
- **Lived experience:** In our research, we heard from mentees with disabilities that they preferred mentors who shared a similar lived experience. As a result, mentee preferences for matching should be considered during the matching process, recognizing that it isn't always feasible to find a match who meets all of the desired criteria.
- **Outside interests:** Common interests can help strengthen relationships but are not essential for successful mentorship.

## Mentor-led interviewing

Matching should not be left solely to the program administrator. Our research found that many mentors value a vetting process, where they interview their counterpart to understand their interests, past experiences, and goals for participating in the mentorship program. This helps both participants assess whether they are the right fit as a mentor or mentee. For example, mentors can quickly identify whether they have the necessary experiences to support the mentee's goals.

## Matching people with disabilities considerations

By speaking to mentors and mentees, we found that mentees experiencing disability find having a mentor with similar lived experiences valuable. Mentors who experience disability may offer a unique sense of understanding or shared experience. This can lead to increased knowledge around navigating workplace barriers or challenges and self-advocacy. Speaking with someone with shared experience can also lessen the impact on the mentee in educating others around inclusion, accessibility, and disability.

## Supervisor–employee mentorship considerations

Mentorship programs are not ideal spaces for mentees to be mentored by their direct supervisor. Mentees may feel uncomfortable sharing personal details with their manager due to concerns around confidentiality and conflicts of interest that may compromise the mentoring relationship.

# Sample implementation timeline

Program developers are encouraged to adjust the sample implementation timeline to the requirements of their mentorship program.

Timeline	Activity	Purpose	Owner	Notes
Weeks 0–3	Pre-proposal program planning	Outline program objectives and goals. Compile evidence to support the implementation of the program at your organization for senior leaders. Develop an overview of program resource requirements (personnel, time, and budget).	Example: Senior HR manager, employee resource group.	
Months 1–2	Proposal and approval	Submit a formal proposal for consideration.		
Month 2	Program retrofit	Make any adjustments to the mentorship program and retrofit the tools to the organizational reality.		
Month 3	Communication plan implementation	Communicate program objectives, purpose, and value to everyone in the organization.		
Months 4–5	Recruitment	Identify an initial cohort to participate in the mentorship program using a questionnaire to collect information on participant goals and interests.		
Months 4–5	Matching and program launch	Match mentees and mentors with each other and facilitate orientation sessions for training on the program.		

# Sample communication plan

Our research shows that employers face challenges in engaging and recruiting participants for inclusive mentorship programs involving people with disabilities. One effective strategy we recommend is launching an internal communication campaign to promote the mentorship program. This could include all-staff presentations, email campaigns, and resources for those who may be interested in participating.

Communication	Audience	Format	Purpose	Owner	Task
Mentorship program announcement	All staff	Email/intranet	Introduce the mentorship program to the organization and establish date for the introductory presentation to the program.	Program manager	Prepare Q&A sheet to share within the email.
Mentorship presentation reminder	All staff	Email	Follow-up email to remind staff of the presentation date.	HR/Program coordinator	Write email, design events/presentations/surveys to recruit participants.
Mentorship presentation	All staff	Virtual/in-person meeting	Guide the audience through the program, such as introducing the framework, implementation timeline, and other important resources.	Program manager	Prepare a presentation for all staff, deploy recruitment survey.
Orientation meeting	Mentors and mentees	Virtual/in-person meeting	Provide training to cohort on how to use the program resources.	HR/Program coordinator	Prepare orientation meeting.
Matching	Mentors and mentees	Email/Intranet	Collaboratively support matching by involving program administrators and participants (e.g., suggesting matches, collecting preferences, affirming mentee/mentor matches).	HR/Program coordinator	Write email.
Meeting reminders	Mentors and mentees	Email	Remind each participant to schedule their first meeting.	HR/Program coordinator	Write email.
First meeting check-in	Mentors and mentees	Email	Email all participants in the mentorship program to check in after the first meeting.	HR/Program coordinator	Write email.

Notes:

# Sample mentorship responsibilities and resources

Stage	Mentor responsibilities	Mentee responsibilities	Resources
<b>Initial responsibilities</b>			
Before first meeting	Reflect on your goals for being a mentor.	Reflect on your goals for being a mentee.	n/a
	Review the mentee's LinkedIn to get an understanding of their career.	Review the mentor's LinkedIn to gain an understanding of their career path.	n/a
During first meeting	Complete the mentorship agreement (i.e., help the mentee with their goals).	Complete the mentorship agreement (i.e., set goals, discuss mentor's goals).	Mentorship agreement
First meeting reflection	Complete first meeting reflection.	Complete first meeting reflection.	First meeting reflection
	Document action items in partnership with the mentee.	Document action items in partnership with the mentor.	Communication log
<b>General responsibilities</b>			
Throughout the relationship	Provide support, feedback, and guidance to the mentee based on your experiences or knowledge.	Guide conversations with the mentor through questions or topics.	Conversation guide
	Demonstrate professionalism in the relationship through adherence to organizational policy.	Demonstrate professionalism in the relationship through adherence to organizational policy.	n/a
	Support the achievement of the mentee's goals.	Set goals and explore the mentor's goals.	Mentorship agreement
	Support the mentee in navigating obstacles when relevant to the program.	Seek support from the mentor or program facilitator when encountering obstacles.	n/a
	Offer flexibility in communication where possible.	Respect the mentor's time by following the mentorship agreement.	Mentorship agreement
	Check in with the mentee about progress with goals and action items.	Check in with the mentor about progress with goals and action items.	Mentorship agreement Communication log
	Keep track of the mentorship's progress to complete program resources as required.	Keep track of mentorship's progress to complete program resources as required.	Communication log

n/a = not applicable

Notes:

# Sample mentorship agreement

One way to make the mentorship experience more effective is for mentees and mentors to establish clearly defined expectations for how the relationship will work.

Use this template to create a mentorship agreement by defining expectations, goals, and any accessibility and/or accommodation requirements. Ensure that participants discuss each other’s communication accessibility preferences.

Alternatively, program administrators may consider implementing a short-term program, which will significantly reduce the length of this document. In this case, we recommend streamlining the agreement to focus on key areas, such as accessibility, confidentiality, and accommodation.

Program administrators must ensure that the agreement is provided in accessible formats: Word documents compatible with screen readers, tagged PDFs with alternative text, defined reading order, and navigational aids like headings. Resources are provided at the end of this toolkit to ensure accessible documentation is provided to support all users.

**This agreement is a live document (except for the privacy, termination, and authority clauses) and can be adjusted as necessary by both participants.**

## Expectations

1. What is our preferred way to communicate with each other? (Select all that apply)
  - a. Email
  - b. Video calls (e.g., Zoom, Teams)
  - c. Phone calls
  - d. Text messaging
  - e. In-person meetings
  - f. Other, please specify
2. Do we have any communication accessibility needs? For example, use of closed captioning in video calls or screen reader-friendly materials.
3. How often would we like to meet?
  - a. Once a week
  - b. Every two weeks
  - c. Once a month
  - d. Other, please specify
4. If a meeting needs to be cancelled or rescheduled, we will let each other know by
  - a. Phone
  - b. Email
  - c. Other, please specify
5. The formal mentoring relationship will last for
  - a. 3 months
  - b. 6 months
  - c. 12 months
  - d. Other, please specify
6. The formal mentoring relationship will end on:

## Goals

1. What are the mentee's goals for this mentorship experience? How can the mentor support the mentee in achieving these goals?

	Mentee's goals	Action steps
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		

What are some topics you would like to focus on?

---

2. What are the mentor's goals for this mentorship experience? How can the mentee support the mentor in achieving these goals?

	Mentor's goals	Action steps
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		

What are some topics you would like to focus on?

---

## Accommodation

This section is optional. Participants are encouraged to share any accommodations or support that would help them succeed in the program.

**Mentee accommodation**

**Mentor accommodation**

### Privacy and confidentiality

Both the mentee and mentor are bound by the duty of privacy and confidentiality. Any sensitive issues that are discussed will be held in the strictest of confidence, except in accordance with the law or organizational policies (i.e., harassment or sexual misconduct).

### Position of authority

Challenges often arise when an individual is mentored by their direct supervisor. We recommend avoiding these types of mentoring relationships. However, if the mentor/mentee is more removed, such as a department vice president, these challenges can be better managed.

**Does the mentor/mentee hold a leadership position within your department (e.g., vice president/director)?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, please outline the steps that will be taken to ensure that the position of authority does not negatively impact the growth of the mentor or mentee.

### Program termination

While the mentorship program is designed to last for the full program cycle, we recognize that some mentorships will end earlier than agreed upon. If either the mentor or mentee finds the mentoring relationship unproductive and asks that it be terminated, both parties agree to honour that individual's decision without question or blame. For example, some mentorships reach all their goals quickly within the relationship, or their goals shift over time. In these cases, ending the relationship early may be the best outcome.

When ending a mentorship early, the participant initiating the decision is responsible for the following steps:

- 1. Communicate the decision:** Communicate your decision to the mentor or mentee, such as through an email or virtual meeting.
- 2. Notify program administrator:** Email the designated program contact to notify them that the relationship has ended early. This allows the contact to evaluate the context and offer support to both participants.
- 3. Support to re-match the mentee or mentor:** If desired, ask the administrator to be paired with a new mentor or mentee.

Both the mentee and mentor have agreed upon the terms of their relationship as outlined above.

Mentor signature

Mentee signature

Date

Date

# Sample first meeting reflection

Mentors and mentees can use the table below to reflect on the first meeting after it has occurred. These reflections can then be used to determine if a longer-term relationship is preferred, or if one or two meetings is sufficient for either the mentor or the mentee. This acknowledges that some participants may not be looking for or able to commit to a longer-term relationship.

We recommend mentees and mentors complete this individually and provide feedback to the program administrator.

Questions on your first meeting	Reflection
Did the meeting with the mentor/mentee go as expected? Why, or why not?	
What are your observations on the flow and direction of your first conversation?	
How was the process of filling out the mentorship agreement?	
What aspects of the mentor or mentee's goals and objectives for the relationship best match your own?	
What could be done to make your future meetings more accessible?	
What topics would you like to address in the next meeting?	

# Sample mentorship conversation guide

This guide can help to foster rapport between participants and provides suggestions for career-focused mentoring discussions. Our research with mentors in formal mentoring relationships suggests that providing guidance for discussion topics was helpful to guide conversations for participants, irrespective of mentorship models (e.g., one-on-one, group mentorship). While providing mentors with access to suggested topics is beneficial, many often enjoyed the flexibility of exploring new topics through unstructured conversations. This can be quite powerful for group mentorship, as participants tap into topics brought up by others, creating a self-sustaining cycle. This highlights that while structure is important, ensuring flexibility based on participant goals and interests is paramount.

## Beginning to establish a mentoring relationship

**Themes:** Mapping the connection and setting boundaries

**Objectives:**

- Get to know each other.
- Establish expectations, communication preferences, and boundaries for the relationship.
- Discuss goals for both the mentor and mentee.

**Before the first meeting:**

- **Boundary setting:** In communication leading up to the first meeting, participants are encouraged to set boundaries, including any preferences and topics that are off-limits topics. Confirm what information can be shared outside of the mentoring relationship.

**During the first meeting:**

- **Ice breakers:** A good place to start the introductions is sharing about your backgrounds, interests in mentorship, and fun facts you're willing to share.
- **Mentorship agreement:** The first meeting is the ideal point to fill out the mentorship agreement together. This document will outline preferences, goals, and confidentiality expectations.
- **First meeting reflection:** Reflect on the first meeting using the first meeting reflection resource.

## Cultivation of the relationship

### Month 1—Career vision

**Theme:** Career development

**Discussion guide:**

- **The key:** Ask each other where you see yourself in five years.
- **Strengths:** Discuss your professional strengths and any skill areas you feel could use further development.
- **Mentor pathway:** Ask each other about your career paths. Does your mentor have a similar career journey? Explore any similarities or differences.

### Month 2—Skills

**Theme:** Skills-building

**Discussion guide:**

- **Skill gap identification:** Discuss any skill gaps that you experience in navigating the workplace (e.g., finding employment, building technical skills).
- **Skill-building:** Discuss skills that you have learned in your career that may be helpful for your mentor/mentee and how you can support their growth in addressing any skill gaps.
- **Knowledge transfer:** Share knowledge on resources, courses, or training that you have found useful.

## Month 3—Professional development

**Theme:** Communication skills in the workplace

**Discussion guide:**

**Strategic communication:** Discuss how you frame ideas, communicate frustrations about processes, or your needs within the workplace.

**Upward communication:** Identify how you have provided feedback to senior leadership. What has or hasn't worked well?

**Mock presentations:** Practise presentations or other speaking engagements.

**Discussion guide:**

**Month 4, 5, 6, etc.**—Organizations can continue to fill in the months based on their program's objectives.

## Transition

**Theme:** Reflection and next steps

**Discussion guide:**

**Discuss key takeaways:** Explore experiences, learnings, or insights that have stayed with you (e.g., a piece of advice you found particularly helpful).

**Final insights:** Reflect on the mentoring relationship. What did you learn from each other? What questions do you still have?

**Next steps:** This last conversation is a great place to discuss your plans for after the mentorship has ended. These plans can help shape the following transition discussion.

**Transition:** Have an honest conversation together on whether you may want to maintain an informal connection post-mentorship.

After the program ends, both participants will receive an evaluation survey to complete.

Notes:



# Sample mentorship program evaluation survey

The following set of survey questions is designed to provide organizations with a standard tool to evaluate the effectiveness of its mentorship program.

The survey gathers feedback that can be used to profile mentees and mentors, design changes to the program, and to measure success. This survey combines mentees and mentors into a single sample, using skip and branching logic to garner two perspectives on the mentoring relationship. Some questions are shown to both mentors and mentees to enable comparative analysis between the two groups.

This survey can be developed in any common survey platform that allows for skip and branching logic.

## Survey items

### General information

1. I participated in this program as a:
  - a. Mentor
  - b. Mentee
2. How long was the mentorship? \_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_ months
3. Did the mentoring relationship end early?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
4. [if 3a] Why did the mentorship end early?
  - a. I achieved my goals
  - b. I no longer had time to continue
  - c. I did not feel that it was meeting my needs
  - d. I did not like my mentor/mentee
  - e. I mutually agreed with my mentor/mentee to end the relationship; please specify why \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- [logic to end survey]
5. [if 4b] Why did you no longer have time to continue the mentorship?
6. What would have been your ideal length for your mentoring relationship?
  - a. No amount of time (I did not want a mentoring relationship)
  - b. 1–2 months
  - c. 3–4 months
  - d. 5–6 months
  - e. 7–9 months
  - f. 10–12 months
  - g. More than 12 months
  - h. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
7. How frequently did you meet with your mentor/mentee?
  - a. More than once a week
  - b. Once a week
  - c. Once every 2 weeks
  - d. Once a month
  - e. Once every 3 months
  - f. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Would you have preferred to meet with the mentor/mentee more frequently?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
9. [if yes] How frequently would you have preferred to meet with your mentor/mentee?
  - a. More than once a week
  - b. Once a week
  - c. Every 2 weeks
  - d. Monthly
  - e. Quarterly
  - f. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### Experience outcomes

10. How would you rate your overall experience with the mentorship program?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Moderately dissatisfied	Neutral	Moderately satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied

**Engagement:** Engagement within a mentoring relationship refers to the level of meaningful participation and interaction between mentors and mentees, such as collaborating, following up on commitments, and being responsive.

11. What was your level of engagement within the mentoring relationship?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely disengaged	Very disengaged	Moderately disengaged	Neutral	Moderately engaged	Very engaged	Extremely engaged

12. Do you feel that the benefits you received from participating in the mentorship program were worth the time and effort you invested?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree

13. Did you have access to adequate resources (time, training, materials) to support you for the duration of the mentoring relationship? (Select all that apply)

- a. Yes, I had access to adequate resources
- b. I needed more time to interact with my mentee/mentor
- c. I needed more training (e.g., on resources, responsibilities)
- d. I needed additional materials to help navigate the relationship (e.g., conversation templates)
- e. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mentee-specific questions

[Hide for those who selected mentor]

14. How effective was the mentor in supporting you in achieving your goals?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely ineffective	Very ineffective	Moderately ineffective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Moderately effective	Very effective	Extremely effective

**Engagement:** Engagement within a mentoring relationship refers to the level of meaningful participation and interaction between mentors and mentees, such as collaborating, following up on commitments, and being responsive.

15. How engaged was your mentor in the mentoring relationship?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely disengaged	Very disengaged	Moderately disengaged	Neither engaged nor disengaged	Moderately engaged	Very engaged	Extremely engaged

16. What benefits did you gain from having a mentor? (Select all that apply)

- a. Obtained career advice/guidance
- b. Developed new skills (e.g., communication, technical skills)
- c. Gained new knowledge (e.g., industry best practices)
- d. Expanded professional network
- e. Received emotional support
- f. Increased confidence
- g. Increased self-esteem
- h. Learned from a mentor with lived experience
- i. Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mentor-specific questions

[Hide for those who selected mentee]

17. Did you feel you were sufficiently prepared to mentor the mentee?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

18. [if no] What else could the program have done to better prepare you to be a mentor?

19. How engaged was your mentee in the mentoring relationship?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Extremely disengaged	Very disengaged	Moderately disengaged	Neither engaged nor disengaged	Moderately engaged	Very engaged	Extremely engaged

### Final questions

20. Did the length of the mentorship program meet your needs?

- a. Yes
- b. No, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

21. What challenges did you face?

22. What would you improve?

23. What can be done to make the mentorship program more accessible?

24. What was the most effective part of the mentorship program?

Notes:

# Reflection: How can the program be improved?

This reflection aims to equip program developers with key questions to consider after analyzing the mentorship program evaluation survey. Insights from this reflection can then be used to help refine the program for the next cohort.

Questions to consider	Data source	Reflection
How well have the organizational objectives for the program been met?	Internal discussion	
What changes to the eligibility criteria could be made for cohort two?	Internal discussion	
What observations do mentors and mentees have on the length of the program?	Program evaluation survey	
What observations did mentors and mentees have on the resources that they needed to successfully participate in the mentorship?	Program evaluation survey	
How can the program be made more accessible based on identified gaps?	Program evaluation survey	
How did our resources on equipping mentors to support mentees with disabilities perform?	Program evaluation survey	
What are participants reporting on the quality of their mentorship experience?	Program evaluation survey	
What aspects of the mentorship program have been the most impactful for participants?	Program evaluation survey	
What suggestions have been advanced to improve the program?	Program evaluation survey	
Which of these suggestions for improvement will we put in place for the next cohort?	Internal discussion	
What improvements to the program have people with disabilities recommended to enhance accessibility?	Internal discussion	

# Mentorship program alumni key metrics

Organizations further along in implementing mentorship programs may be looking for new ways to measure the initiative's success. This can be accomplished by using data-driven techniques, such as monitoring key HR metrics for those who have successfully completed the mentorship program. A non-exhaustive list of examples of HR metrics that can be used to measure success include:

<b>HR metric</b>	<b>Data collection method</b>
Turnover	Adjusting quarterly or annual turnover measures to include mentor and mentee group comparisons
Absenteeism	Mentor and mentee tracking in Human Resources Information System attendance records
Internal career progression	Tracking whether alumni of the program are advancing within the organization
Employee engagement	Adjusting employee engagement survey to include mentor/mentee groups
Retention	Using mentor/mentee data to determine retention levels versus non-program participants

Notes:

# List of resources

## Additional resources on mentorship programming

[Guide to starting a mentorship program](#)

[Society of Quality Assurance mentorship model](#)

[National program for employers, service providers and job seekers](#)

[Mentor Connector](#)

## Disclosure

Disclosure resources for employers and employees.

[Supporting disability disclosure](#)

[Decision-support for communication about non-apparent disabilities](#)

[Disclosure guide for the workplace](#)

## Accommodation

Links to accommodation guides, summaries for those interested in workplace accommodation, and general processes.

[Canadian Human Rights Commission guide for how accommodations work](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Commission duty to accommodate](#)

[Accommodation process for managers](#)

[Developing accommodation policies guide](#)

## Accessible documentation

Links to guides on ensuring that documentation is accessible:

[How to comply with the latest standards](#)

[Microsoft Word accessibility for people with disabilities](#)

## Courses

Online courses offer employers, staff, persons who experience disability, and the public an opportunity to be more aware and sensitive toward equity-deserving groups within the workplace. Courses on supporting workers with disabilities are available through multiple organizations, including:

[LinkedIn Learning: Supporting Workers with Disabilities](#)

[March of Dimes Canada: Accessibility Awareness](#)

[Supports for your disability at school and work](#)

## Government websites and legislation

Links to various government websites and legislation.

[Employment and Social Development Canada \(ESDC\) Employment Strategy for PwD](#)

[Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

[Canadian Human Rights Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. H-6](#)

[Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)

[Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Dimensions Charter](#)

[Government of Ontario - Bullying](#)

[Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#)

[United Nations Human Rights Office of the Commissioner](#)

## Research

A list of disability inclusion within the workplace separated into scholarly and non-scholarly research.

### Grey literature

[Identities of PwD: How to support](#), Boston Consulting Group, 2004

[Profile of people with disabilities aged 15 years and over](#), Statistics Canada, 2024

[Your workforce includes people with disabilities](#), Boston Consulting Group, 2023

[Canadian survey on disability, 2017-2022](#), Statistics Canada, 2023

[Challenges, Trends, and Best Practices with disability in the workplace](#), Hire for Talent, 2022

[Benefits of a mentoring relationship](#), University of Plymouth, 2016

### Journal articles

[The positive consequence of workplace mentorship: practical considerations](#), *Journal of Career Development*, 2022

[The experiences of mentor-mentee relations in the workplace](#), *Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 2023

[The positive psychology of mentoring](#), *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 2019

[Workplace mentorship: a critical review](#), *Journal of Career Development*, 2020

[Disability disclosure and workplace accommodations among youth with disabilities](#), *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 2019

[Does it matter what your reasons are when deciding to disclose a disability at work?](#), *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 2021

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## Empowering Inclusion in the Workplace: Mentorship Program Toolkit for Employers

The Conference Board of Canada

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