



Partners for Economic
& Community Help



Mentorship Program Guide

Steps to Starting Business Mentorship in Your Area

October 2003

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A MESSAGE FROM PEACH

Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) is the oldest area of the city of Vancouver, Canada and is characterized by its social and economic diversity. It is comprised of several communities, including Gastown, Victory Square, Chinatown, Oppenheimer Park, and Strathcona. Over the past several years, neighbourhood stability has been eroded by an increase in significant health and social problems, particularly those related to a high level of criminal activity, the drug trade, and safety concerns. Consequently, there has been a dramatic downturn in economic activity in the DTES, as evidenced by a decrease in legitimate economic endeavours and by business closures. This economic deterioration has caused a general and significant decline in the quality of life in the community. In fact, recent Canadian census statistics show that the DTES is the poorest urban postal code area in Canada.

PEACH (Partners for Economic and Community Help) works to create jobs and revitalize the economy of the Downtown Eastside, by providing loans to businesses run by DTES residents and/or to businesses operating in the DTES. We are the lender of last resort in the neighbourhood, and our lending is very risky. PEACH believes that a business mentorship program, in conjunction with other strategies, can provide support for community businesses and social enterprises in our area, and facilitate the development and expansion of human skill and competency in the Downtown Eastside. Mentoring is an efficient way to provide support, and to help change perspectives, and it offers an opportunity for individuals, businesses and corporations to take an active interest in their neighbourhood by participating in peer-to-peer business support.

Research supports the claim that mentoring has positive outcomes for mentors (who are experienced business people and/or professionals) and business operators (mentees), but there are definite organizing and knowledge challenges in mentorship as well. However, potential negative outcomes can be minimized by careful attention to sound program design and implementation. This said, it must also be kept in mind that, no matter how good the program, mentoring is a limited intervention within a broader strategy, not a cure-all.

This guide is a contribution from PEACH to the broader community of service providers. It is for those intent on contributing to socio-economic development in their regions and neighbourhoods through the provision of quality, cost effective business supports. As these providers know, this work is an ongoing process. We at PEACH are still learning about business mentorship, and like you we will continue to do so as our mentorship program grows.

Take liberty when using the resources in this guide. Adapt them and make them work for you in your work.

Good luck!

Mary Morgan
PEACH Executive Director

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Mentorship – A 21st century solution

Background

In the 21st century, globalization affects all national economies as it shifts markets and capital on a global scale. The consequent increase in free trade has affected the movement of goods and services, and industry's perpetual search for cheaper labour has resulted in displaced workers. The effects are global, but they are felt locally. In industrialized nations, for instance, entry level jobs in manufacturing and related industries have decreased as a result of these shifts. This has resulted in rising unemployment in these sectors, with little prospect of change.

Workers have to survive. Faced with decreasing employment opportunities, they have to look for other ways to generate income. For many people, this has come in the form of starting their own business, usually a small one. However, while the people who start these businesses have the skill and knowledge to produce or offer a service in the marketplace, capital resources are often scarce, and, the new entrepreneurs also typically lack skills in business management. Unfortunately, this lack of business skills results in poor business performance and, combined with the current risky and volatile economic environment, results in a failed business venture.

The end result is another unemployed individual, who still has a family to support.

This is where business mentorship comes in.

Response – A business mentorship program

While there are many factors affecting the performance of new businesses, it is clear that if micro, small and medium businesses had access to management or marketing expertise at a reasonable cost, their risk of failure could be minimized. Business mentorship can provide this access, and is one vehicle to mitigate the risk of business failure. It has been determined to be an effective action to assist businesses to further their development and to access management expertise.

Therefore, business support given through a mentor program has the potential to stimulate economic revitalization and supplement other economic development strategies. However, matching appropriate mentors with fledgling businesses and their particular needs requires a process that is deliberate. Before the mentoring can begin, a mentoring program with clear aims and measurable goals must be established.

This guide outlines the steps to establishing such a program.

Goal of a business mentorship program

The long term goal of a business mentorship program is to improve business performance through a facilitated business-to-business relationship.

Objectives of a business mentorship program

Specifically, the objectives of the program are:

- To identify potential participants:
 - Businesses that identify competency weaknesses
 - Business operators or professionals with skill and expertise to share
- To match expertise with business needs
- To provide support in order to ensure benefits to all participants

Expected outcomes

The end result of the program will be:

- Business retention and expansion
- Business growth
- Improved trade and business networks within any particular area and with other regions



Expected impact

A successful business mentorship program will lead to change at many levels.

At the individual business level:

- Increased sales
- Decreased costs
- Efficient and effective operations

At the community level:

- Provision of needed goods and services to the neighbourhood
- Enhanced neighbourhood pride
- Safer neighbourhoods
- Increased employment opportunities

At the regional level:

- Increased regional economic activity – for example, improved security that attracts more tourists, who will in turn spend in other regions and business sectors
- Increased tax revenue

Definitions

In this guide, a **business mentor (“mentor”)** is a business or a professional person with an interest and desire to share their knowledge and experience in a structured mentorship program.

A **business mentee (“mentee”)** is a business operator with a desire to improve operations.

Business mentoring is an equal relationship between a business mentor and a business mentee, where the mentor shares their knowledge and expertise with a mentee to help them improve their business operation. The relationship is guided by the business operator’s requirements and fulfilled by the mentor’s knowledge.

As you read this guide, you will expand and revise these definitions for yourself and your organization. We use “mentor” to mean “business mentor” and “mentee” for “business mentee.”

Service provider is the organization sponsoring the mentorship program

Other terms and symbols

Tools is the section of the guide (after page 32) with forms, letters, and other documents that you will need in your program. Please modify these examples to fit with your organization and area.

TOOL A-1 indicates that you should refer to a document in the **Tools** section

Appendices is the section of the guide (after page 32) with examples of systems used in other mentorship programs.



indicates a mentoring program lesson learned by PEACH, or a suggestion based on our experience



indicates a tip that the authors feel is very important.



Assessment

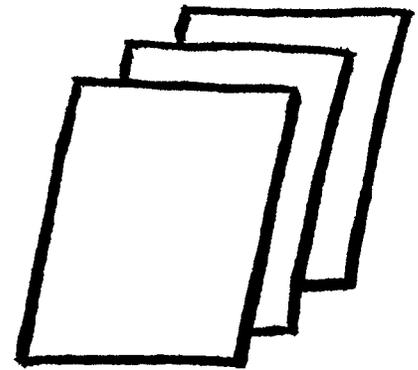
Is a mentoring program suitable for your area? Can your organization facilitate it? Who could benefit from it? How can you find the right mentors and mentees? To answer these questions, you will need to do a thorough assessment.

1. Conduct a literature review

Review existing reports regarding economic development strategies in your area, such as government reports, university reports, and strategy papers.

Analyze the data in these reports for:

- Physical attributes of the area
- Industrial and other formal sector activities
- Existing micro, small and medium economic activities
- Recurring and common issues faced by micro, small and medium businesses



The literature will also help you identify key stakeholders who can then be interviewed.

Where possible, speak with the authors of the reports, as they will have intimate details about stakeholders and the issues facing micro, small and medium business. Often the report authors will know not only the issues, but also the constraints and barriers to economic development in the area.

2. Identify potential mentees and mentors

Use the literature review to identify potential sources of mentees and mentors.

For example:

Mentors	Mentees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chamber of Commerce• Board of Trade• Business faculties in universities and colleges• Business associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community development corporations• Credit unions• Non profits that lend to businesses• Government banks• Business associations

3. Interview key informants

- Interview front line staff and directors from entities that provide financial and non-financial services to micro, small and medium businesses, to identify what would best serve their clients and customers. See **TOOL A-1** for interview questions for service providers.
- To identify mentor desires, interview representatives and members of entities where experienced business people network. See **TOOL A-2** for interview questions for mentors.
- Interview micro, small and medium business owners to identify what they would like to get out of a mentee relationship with a mentor. See **TOOL A-3** for interview questions for business operators (mentees).

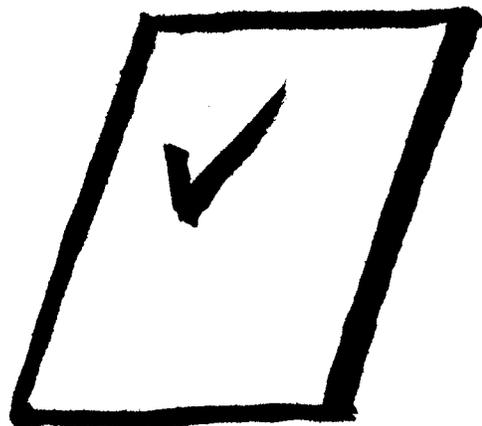
4. Analyze the data gathered

Further analyze the data gathered so far to determine the following:

- What are the needs of micro, small and medium businesses in your area?
- What do potential mentors want to get out of the mentorship relationship?
- To service the needs of business and the benefits sought by potential mentors in your area, what should the mentorship program's mandate be?

5. Refine your list

Use the information you now have to refine the lists you created in the second step. The result will be a list of potential sources of mentors and mentees that can be used during the Implementation phase of your program.



Establishing the program framework

Once you have determined that a mentoring program is an appropriate tool in your area, you need a framework for that program. The framework step is where you take the time to translate your commitment to socio-economic development into an effective mentorship program plan.

This is the step that is often overlooked or short changed because of compliance with a contract requiring you to start as soon as you get the money to implement your program. **Decide that implementation begins with this step** and take the time at the beginning to lay out your program. Design a program that demonstrates an understanding of mentoring as a process with defined, evolving stages. Developing all the necessary procedures and forms ensures a quality professional mentorship program that works.



The framework needs to be done before you publicize that you are offering a mentorship program.

1. Consult and define

Look back at your assessment, talk to staff and board members, and define the geographic area and the types of businesses your program will serve.

Take into consideration:

- Business operator (mentee) needs from various segments of the population (newly arrived immigrants, women, first nations, gays and lesbians, recently laid off employees who are starting a business, etc.)
- Availability of business expertise
- Economic impact you are trying to achieve
- Strength and experiences of existing business development supports (financial and non-financial) in the region
- Geographical region within which you have the capacity to work



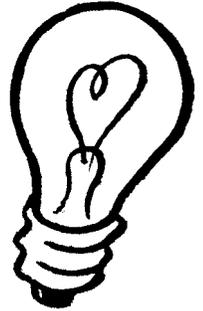
2. Clarify your purpose and mandate

Clarify the program's purpose and mandate with your staff and board members.

Purpose

If you are not sure what you want to accomplish, it will be difficult to set the course to accomplish it! To implement a strong quality program, decide what you want to accomplish with it. For instance:

- Strong businesses?
- Sustainable jobs?
- Job creation?
- Opportunities for experienced business people to give back to their community?



Take the time to figure out your purpose, and this will set the course for your program.

Mandate

Develop the purpose of your program into a written mandate statement. Ensure that the mandate:

- Expresses achievable goals that constitute real change
- Grows out of locally-defined needs
- Defines who your organization is serving, and why
- Can be understood, embraced and articulated by all concerned

In the writing of your mandate, take the time to ensure that it is:

- Specific and precise – not general, broad or obscure
- Concise – one or two sentences
- Clear – not vague, ambiguous or confusing
- Goal-oriented – stated in terms of desired outcomes



The mandate statement will be the message you convey in your promotional material to attract mentors, mentees and potential funders.

EXAMPLE

The following example of a mentorship program mandate is from the University of Toronto at Scarborough:

Program Mandate

Mentorship relationships will encourage and assist in the development and growth of students within the Division of Management and Economics at the University of Toronto at Scarborough. The program will help students develop career plans, understand the transition to the workplace, and build self-confidence and networking skills.

3. Articulate eligibility criteria

Articulate the eligibility criteria to participate in the program. Who will your mentors and mentees be? This will be defined by the decisions you have made so far. Now is the time to get very specific, to ensure your program participants fit your purpose and mandate.

Some ideas:

Mentor selection criteria	Mentee selection criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A minimum five years professional or business experience and/or professional or business expertise developed through education and training• An interest in giving back to the community• Good communication skills, patience and a non-judgemental manner• Empathy for a mentee and their business• The ability to support and guide the mentee by using effective questioning techniques• Availability to meet regularly with a mentee• Availability to attend a mentor orientation and training meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has been operating their current business for at least one year• Is willing to participate in a business assessment that will identify business strengths and weaknesses• Has a legal business• Business has potential for growth• Is willing to set a business goal that is based on the business assessment• Is willing to follow a work plan• Is open to input that will guide them towards their goals

4. Define the terms for your context

When the program gets underway, your organization and the participants in your program have to use the same terms when they communicate. Take some time now to make sure that everyone agrees on what the terms mean.

The definitions below are the ones PEACH developed for our business mentorship program. You might want to add details that are specific to your context. Discuss this with staff and board members.



*It is extremely important to agree on what mentoring is not!
Mentoring is not free labour or business consulting.*

- *Mentoring* is an equal relationship between two people. The relationship is guided by the business operator's requirements and fulfilled by the mentor's knowledge.
- A *mentor* is a business or a professional person with an interest in and desire to share their knowledge and experience in a reflective manner, through the provision of opinions, advice and ideas.
- A *mentee* is a business operator with a desire to improve operations.

Developing the program infrastructure

If your organization is going to undertake a mentorship program, you need the infrastructure to handle it. This guide assists you in the development of the systems you will need to put in place. It is a good idea at this point to appoint a mentorship co-ordinator from the staff or board, who will oversee implementation.

1. Identify stages

Identify the stages in the program for both mentors and mentees:

- Recruitment
- Selecting
- Matching
- Monitoring

How will the different parts fit together? You and your group need to understand the big picture.



At PEACH we developed a **flowchart** to assist us in deconstructing and visualizing the mentorship program process. We found this a very useful aid in developing our mentorship program. We strongly suggest that you brainstorm and take the time to develop a flowchart to assist you in developing your program. See Appendix 1 for an example of the PEACH Mentorship Program Flowchart.

As you will see in the following chapters/steps, each of the four stages above has several parts, and each part needs a system.

2. Develop documentation

Once you have clarified your systems, you will have an idea of the information you will need to document along the way. In the Tools section of this guide are examples of forms that are essential for each of the four stages. Choose those that match your framework, and modify them to fit your program.

See **TOOLS A-1 TO M-3** for developing recruitment, selection, matching and monitoring documentation. A list of these tools is provided on page 32.

3. Set performance standards

Set performance standards to guide the program, so you can assess it as you go.

For example, decide now:

- Number of businesses to be recruited per quarter
- Number of mentors to be available per quarter

- Improvement in business operations of participating mentees, such as:
 - Sales have increased
 - Financial management systems are in place
 - Operational systems are in place (i.e. customer tracking, marketing schedules, human resource policies and procedures)
 - Number of employees has increased

4. Keep track!

Develop a Management Information System (MIS) for the program, where whatever is in the application forms is somehow part of the MIS.

Try to do your MIS using software such as Microsoft Access, a database program where you can make fields relate and pull out reports that can be used for marketing. You will need to identify:

- Fields needed to track businesses applying to get mentors
- Fields needed to track professionals and business people applying to be mentors
- Indicators you would like to track to measure impact of the mentoring with the businesses participating as mentees. This could be increase in sales, in employees, more contracts, etc.

5. Create promotional materials

With your purpose, mandate, framework and infrastructure in place, now is the time to find participants for your program. The program begins with recruitment, and consistent promotional material will give you consistency in your recruiting.

Identify points that will sell the program and attract desirable mentors and mentees.

Brochure

Prepare a brochure that includes:

- The purpose and mandate of the mentoring program
- The criteria needed to participate as a mentor or mentee
- The benefits of being a mentor or mentee
- The process through which one participates in the program in either capacity
- The characteristics sought in mentors and mentees
- The location where people can find more information (your office, your website, etc.), See **TOOL R-1** for an example of a brochure for a mentorship program.

Website

If you have a website, create links to information on the mentoring service within your website to other related sites in your area (e.g. business incubators, business organizations, business associations, etc.).



Recruitment

For effective recruitment, the service provider needs both:

- A systematic recruitment plan that specifies time frames and tasks
- A strategic recruitment plan with specific targets

Again, identify points that will sell the program and attract desirable mentors and mentees.

This section provides you with some recruitment steps to follow. This is where you will use the promotional material you developed in the last chapter.

1. Making contact

Contact organizations, associations, and institutions that would be appropriate for mentors and mentees.

Mentors	Mentees
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chamber of Commerce• Board of Trade• Business faculties in universities and colleges• Business associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community development corporations• Credit unions• Non profits that lend to businesses• Government banks• Business associations

When you contact these organizations,

- Start with a call or email. Send information about the program electronically, by fax, or in a package.
- Set up an appointment to discuss the process of the mentorship program with a staff person. This is very important, as having people from other institutions promote your program will make it easier to get people excited and interested.
- Provide brochures to the referral agencies so they can promote the program to their members or clients. (See **TOOL R-1** for a sample brochure.)
- Set up a time for an information session where you can speak directly with potential participants.
- Start your list of contacts for sources of mentors and mentees (the businesses that would be interested in having a mentor).



PEACH found it was easier to start by recruiting mentees – businesses that wanted mentors. The specific needs for mentors were then identified and a targeted recruiting effort conducted. If you use this approach, a positive outcome will be that the MIS will have a pool of mentors to draw from with various areas of expertise.

2. Inquiries at your office

Your brochure, website, and word of mouth will lead people to you. You need to be prepared.

- *For in-person inquiries*, provide a brochure and appropriate cover letters and application forms (depending on whether they are a mentor or mentee). Take contact information if the party wants to be contacted by mentoring service staff.
- *For phone and email inquiries*, direct them to the website, and send a brochure and appropriate cover letters and application forms. Take contact information if the party wants to be contacted by mentoring service staff. Have digital media versions of documents that can be sent as email attachments.
- See **TOOL R-2** for an example of a mentor application cover letter, **TOOL R-3** for a mentor application form, **TOOL R-4** for a mentee application cover letter, and **TOOL R-5** for a mentee application form.



Use clear language and avoid jargon when people are inquiring about the program. This is an opportune time to market your program and really get people interested.

Cover the following in your conversation with people inquiring.

Mentors	Mentees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe mentoring as an opportunity for stewardship and social responsibility and, an opportunity specific to your program area • Outline benefits to mentors, such as networking, learning opportunities, and an increased individual and business profile • Include the background and mission statement of your organization • State that skills training and supports are provided for mentors • State that mentees are screened to ensure their motivation to learn, change, and to keep goal and time commitments • State that a mentee business assessment will need to be conducted to identify clear mentoring objectives and determine that the business has growth potential • Outline liability and confidentiality policies and agreements • Be clear about mentor time commitments for all parts of the mentoring process • Outline the selection criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggest business areas for which assistance is available, e.g. accounting/finance, marketing, business planning • State that the program is specifically for the area your organization is servicing • Clarify that there is no cost • State that mentors are screened, skilled and experienced volunteers who are given mentoring training • State that assistance is provided to identify specific, realistic business goals • Emphasize mentoring as a reciprocal relationship, not top-down • Include the background and mission statement of your organization • Outline liability and confidentiality policies and agreements • Be clear about mentee time commitments for all parts of the mentoring process • Outline the selection criteria



When PEACH conducted a mentoring service survey, the points in the above table were identified as being of primary concern and interest to potential mentors and mentees – what they wanted to know before attending an information session. Including these points when promoting the mentoring service will increase the potential for attracting participants to the program.

3. Information meetings

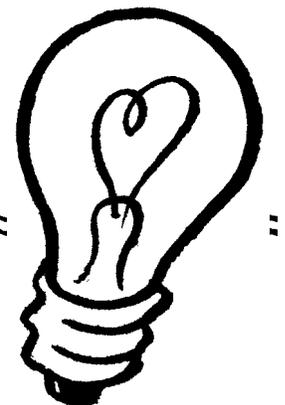
Schedule a meeting, and invite everyone who has expressed interest in the mentorship program. Be prepared with a PowerPoint presentation or flipchart. Be sure to have application cover letters, application forms, and brochures on hand. See **TOOL R-2** for an example of a mentor application cover letter, **TOOL R-3** for a mentor application form, **TOOL R-4** for a mentee application cover letter, and **TOOL R-5** for a mentee application form.

These information meetings are usually 30 to 40 minutes.

The session should cover the following:

- Introduction to the organization and program
- Program features
- Eligibility
- Components of the program and process overview
- Recruitment
- Selection for mentees and mentors
- Matching
- Mentoring
- Evaluation
- Time commitments
- Conclusion

See Appendix 2 for a Mentorship Program Information Session outline.



Selection

To create a program that is effective and achieves impact, careful attention and time will be needed in selecting participants. If you select mentors who are not interested in dialogue and a mutually respectful relationship, your program may do more harm than good with the business operators you hope to support. And if you select mentees (business operators) who are not interested in doing the work themselves, with supports from someone with expertise, your program could lose credibility in the business world.

Before you begin selecting, review the eligibility criteria you established earlier, and modify them as needed. Be systematic in your selection process. This conveys professionalism and minimizes subjective selection.



PEACH designed a program that is very rigorous in its selection process and this has resulted in success. Parties selected to participate in the PEACH Mentorship Program must meet the following eligibility criteria.

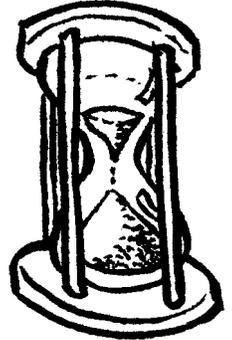
Mentor selection criteria	Mentee selection criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A minimum five years professional or business experience and/or professional or business expertise developed through education and training• An interest in giving back to the community• Good communication skills, patience and a non-judgemental manner• Empathy for a mentee and their business• The ability to support and guide the mentee by using effective questioning techniques• Availability to meet regularly with a mentee• Availability to attend a mentor orientation and training meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has been operating current business for at least one year• Is willing to participate in a business assessment that will identify business strengths and weaknesses• Has a legal business• Business has potential for growth• Is willing to set a business goal that is based on the business assessment• Is willing to follow a work plan• Is open to input that will guide them towards their goals

Selecting mentors

1. Application

Upon receipt of a mentor application:

- Start a Mentor Application Checklist for the applicant. See **TOOL S-1** for a sample checklist.
- Check that the application is complete; if not complete, communicate this to the applicant.
- Assess the application:
 - Assess the application to determine whether the applicant's experience, qualifications, skills, community experience, and time availability fall within the mentor criteria. (See Part 1 of **TOOL S-2** for a sample mentor application assessment form.)
 - Respond to the applicant within two business days.
- If rejected, send a written reply. (See **TOOL S-3** for a sample mentor application rejection letter.)
- If approved, call and set a date and time for an interview.



2. Mentor interview

- Ask interview questions that gauge communication skills, patience, manner, and empathy, as outlined in selection criteria. (See **TOOL S-4** for sample mentor interview questions.)
- As a follow-up to the interview, conduct a reference check. Do not underestimate the importance of this step! See **TOOL S-5** for a sample mentor reference check guide.
- Assess the interview and reference responses using the sample mentor application assessment form in **TOOL S-2**.

3. Mentor applicant is accepted or rejected

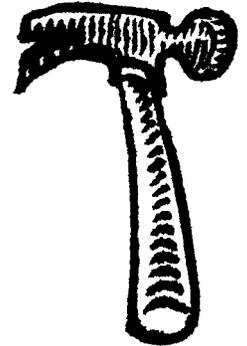
- If rejected, phone and then send written notification (**TOOL S-3**).
- If accepted, phone to notify the applicant and to let her or him know when the next mentor training and orientation session will be. Follow up by sending written notification. (See **TOOL S-6** for a sample mentor application acceptance letter.)

4. Mentor training and orientation

This step is part of the selection process, as you will use the orientation session to learn more about the individual mentor's personality and communication style in order to make effective matches. Your training and orientation session might include:

- Overview of mentoring. Be sure to let mentors know that you will use their skills effectively, and that more than one mentor may support a single mentee with different aspects of their business.

- General characteristics of businesses in the area being serviced by the program – diversity, problems faced, advantages – and how these might affect the mentoring relationship.
- Case studies of examples of common mentee issues. Working in small groups, have mentors come up with plans to address the issues.
- An example of a mentee not being prepared for a mentor session after the mentor has put in lots of time to prepare. Discuss possible responses.
- A review of adult education principles:
 - Adults are autonomous and self-directed
 - Adults have accumulated a foundation of life experiences and knowledge that may include work-related activities, family responsibilities, and previous education
 - Adults are goal-oriented
 - Adults are relevancy-oriented – they must see a reason for learning something
 - Adults are practical, focusing on the aspects of a lesson most useful to them in their work
 - As with all learners, adults need to be shown respect.



See Appendix 3 for an example of a Mentor Orientation and Training Session. At the end of this training, make notes about each mentor's style and skills.

Selecting mentees

1. Mentee application

Upon receipt of a mentee application:

- Start a Mentee Application Checklist for the applicant. See **TOOL S-7** for a sample checklist.
- Check that the application is complete; if it is not complete, communicate this to the applicant.
- Assess the application to determine that:
 - The applicant's business is not a start-up
 - The business is legal and registered
 - The applicant is willing to participate in a business assessment
 - The applicant has some idea of the kind of mentor expertise required
 - The applicant is willing to commit time to the process. See Part I and II of the Mentee Application Assessment Form in **TOOL S-8** for an example.
- Respond to applicant within two business days
 - If rejected, send a written reply. See **TOOL S-9** for a sample mentee application rejection letter and if approved, call and set a date and time for an interview at the applicant's place of business.

2. Mentee interview

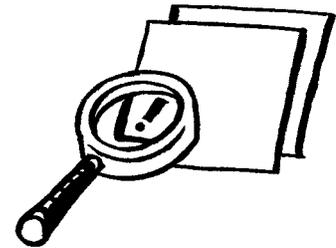
Interview the applicant at their place of business. This will give you an idea of the state of the mentee's operation. You might be surprised at what you can discover about organizational capacity and marketing capacity just by the appearance of the office or shop.

- Ask interview questions that gauge ability and willingness to work with a mentor as outlined in selection criteria, and explain the next steps. (See **TOOL S-10** for sample mentee interview questions.)
- Assess the interview using the mentee application assessment form in **TOOL S-8**
- Reject or continue with the process:
 - If the applicant does not meet the eligibility requirements and your assessment indicates that she or he will not benefit from the process, phone the applicant and let them know the reasons. Follow up by sending a letter. (See **TOOL S-9** for a sample letter.)
 - If the applicant continues to be eligible, phone them to set up an appointment to do a business assessment. Explain how it will work and that it will take at least two hours. Make sure that she or he gets a list of the documents to bring to the first assessment meeting. (See **TOOL S-11** for a listing of mentee business assessment items.)

3. Mentee business assessment

The business assessment is the core of the mentorship program. The *Business Assessment Guide* in the Tools section provides information to help you determine the weak areas of the mentee's business. This guide helps you to assess how much the business operator understands their market and how their business operates. The guide is divided into the following areas:

- General information
- Business description
- Market
- Marketing strategy
- Financial management
- Organization



The process of conducting a business assessment *must* be interactive. It is conducted as a dialogue with the tool acting as a guide for the dialogue. For many business operators, this may be the first time they have been asked to articulate some of the details of how their business operates. The process discloses where any disorganization and confusion lies. See **TOOL S-12** for a sample business assessment guide template.

Reject or continue with the process:

- If your experience with the applicant during the business assessment process indicates that she or he will not benefit from the business mentorship process, phone them and let them know the reasons. Follow up by sending a letter and a

copy of the completed business assessment. (See **TOOL S-9** for an example of a mentee rejection letter.)

- If the applicant continues to be eligible, communicate with them by phone or in person about the next step – developing the work plan. *At this point in the process they are an approved mentee! You will be working closely with them.*
- Regardless of whether the applicant has been accepted, provide them with a copy of the completed business assessment, with a cover letter summarizing the findings. It is critical that you be transparent and accountable in your process. For many business operators (mentees), the assessment will be the first time they have seen something in writing letting them know how their business works, or on the contrary does not work.

4. Development of the mentor work plan

This is where the mentee's business assessment provides the information to develop a plan which will guide the mentoring process.

- Identify the weak areas of the operation from the data gathered from the business assessment.
- From the data, deconstruct the weak areas into specific tasks that can be accomplished. This will give you a mentor work plan for this mentee. This plan may involve different mentor expertise areas, and different mentors.
- Have the mentee review and agree to the plan. Explain that the work plan will be used to find the right mentors for the specific areas of expertise required for the mentee's business.



*Specific tasks make it easy to develop SMART goals: **Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Reliable and Timely.** This will help to provide focus for the mentor and mentee and contribute to a more successful mentoring relationship.*

CASE STUDY | SAMPLE DEVELOPMENT OF A MENTOR WORK PLAN

The business assessment reveals that the business operator (mentee) does not know how many sales she needs to cover costs and break even. There is no bookkeeping system, which makes it impossible to generate financial statements. The statements would reveal how many sales she needs to cover the cost of doing business. With access to financial statements, she could develop a marketing plan with sales targets to start making a profit.

The following activities are then laid out in a work plan:

- Set up bookkeeping system
- Create receipt-filing system
- Develop chart of accounts with sub accounts
- Create chart of accounts in accounting software program
- Data entry of receipts and invoices into accounting software program
- Generate Income and Cash Flow statements for the past six months
- Determine break even point
- Develop cash flow projections for the next six months

See Appendix 4 for a sample Mentor Work Plan developed for a mentee by PEACH.

Matching

With a group of approved mentors and mentees in the MIS, it is time to match them up.

Matching should consider the following:

- Matching business needs with mentor skills
- Matching business needs with mentor time availability
- Matching business operator gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status with the appropriate mentor gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status

1. Identify potential mentors

Identify potential mentors to match a mentee's need for expertise.

The mentorship program in this guide is mentee-driven. Begin with your list of mentees, choose one, and identify potential mentors for them.

- Search the MIS for potential mentors.
- If a mentee needs skills that cannot be matched with current mentor candidates, start a mentor search with industry specific or professional associations.
- When a potential mentor is identified who you think would be appropriate for some aspect of the mentee's work plan, provide the profile to the mentee.
- If the mentee would like to meet the identified mentor, contact the mentor and provide the individual with a profile of the mentee's business and work plan.
- Ask the potential mentor to review the work plan to ensure that the mentoring goals, the specific tasks, and the time frame involved are clearly understood and that the mentor agrees with them.
- The mentor gives feedback on the plan, making suggestions for changes in proposed activities for his or her area of expertise, or in the timeline. If changes are suggested, communicate to the mentee what changes are proposed and the reasons why.
- Both parties agree to the work plan details before a matching meeting is arranged. If there is no agreement, then a matching meeting should not be planned.



This is the mentor's initial involvement with the mentee's business. It is an opportunity to gauge the potential mentor's interest as well as an opportunity to provide assistance to a mentor in how to develop appropriate mentoring tasks to ensure the mentee's business challenges are addressed.

- If both the mentor and mentee are interested, a meeting is set up for them. The mentorship coordinator will be present at this meeting.

2. Introductions

The Mentorship needs to be prepared for this meeting. Ensure that you have the following documents prepared:

- The confidentiality and Liability Form. See and **TOOL MA-2** for a sample confidentiality and liability agreement.
- A mentorship agreement form which has the goals, tasks, dates assigned for the tasks to be completed, and time and a space on the agreement for them to fill in the date and place of their first mentoring meeting. Three copies are made for the meeting. This information will come from the work plan which has been discussed, modified and agreed upon by both the potential mentor and the mentee. See **TOOL MA-1** for a sample mentoring agreement. Include a statement about monitoring in the mentoring agreement. See **TOOL MA-1** for a sample form.

At the first meeting, each party introduces themselves – the mentee describes their business and the mentor describes their expertise and skills.

3. Parties decide whether to enter into an agreement

When a mentee meets a mentor, the two of them will probably decide at that meeting whether they can work together.



- If both parties decide at the first meeting that they want to begin to work together, the confidentiality and liability form is signed by both parties. The mentorship agreement is signed and dates assigned for the tasks to be completed. This is signed by all three parties: Mentor, Mentee and Mentorship Coordinator.
- At the first meeting, either party may also request a specified reasonable time to consider the match. In this case, you, as the mentoring coordinator, will contact both parties within the specified time frame and arrange a second meeting to complete the mentorship agreement. If they decide to go ahead, proceed with the development of the agreement.
- If one or both parties do not feel the match is right, the process starts again with a new search for an appropriate mentor.

Mentoring and monitoring



This is your opportunity to see your mentorship program in action. The mentors and mentees that you brought together can begin to follow the work plan. The mentorship coordinator should stay in touch with them to see how it is going and assist where appropriate.

1. Mentor and mentee monitoring

The mentor and mentee will provide your most valuable feedback.



At PEACH we have learned that once the match is made, encouraging the mentor and mentee to work through problems directly with each other contributes towards building open, honest and productive mentoring and makes for a stronger program. Frequent intervention by the mentoring coordinator that is unsolicited can weaken a mentoring relationship.

2. Contact is made with the mentor and mentee

- Within three business days of the first scheduled mentor/mentee meeting
- Every two weeks for the first two months, or more frequently if necessary
- Random contact over the mentoring agreement period
- More frequent contact if problems arise that requires intervention.

It is important that both parties know they can contact the mentorship coordinator at any time. They also need to know that they have the option of discontinuing the mentoring relationship for any reason, but that this decision should be discussed with the mentorship coordinator before the relationship is terminated.

Program evaluation

The purpose of evaluation is to measure outcomes. This is where you find out how your program is working, so you can make changes if you need to.

1. Evaluations by mentors and mentees

With mentor and mentee evaluations, you can make improvements to service in the areas of recruitment, selection and matching. This is how your organization can develop a market driven (mentee driven) program!

Both parties complete a program evaluation when a mentor completes his or her agreement tasks. See **TOOL M-2** for a sample program assessment questionnaire for mentors and **TOOL M-3** for a sample program assessment questionnaire for mentees.

2. Quarterly reports

Quarterly reports might include:

Impact on business

- Jobs created
- Revenue increased
- Mentoring goals achieved

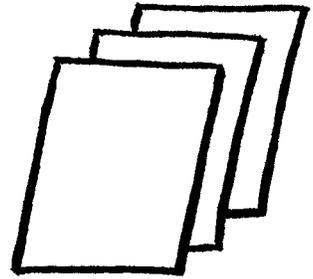
Mentor and mentee data

The number of mentors and mentees who:

- Attended information sessions
- Applied to the program
- Were approved
- Dropped out during the process
- Completed a mentorship agreement
- Were satisfied or dissatisfied with the program

Program data

- Mentors participating, categorized by skill set and/or profession
- Mentees participating, categorized by types of business or sectors
- Average number of hours mentors and mentees spent preparing for and completing work plans
- Number of mentees who changed their mentor goals during the process



Best practices

With these suggestions, you can build on the experiences of other mentoring programs.

1. General

- Provide appropriate and adequate staffing, training and support resources for program development and operation.
- Clarify the program's mandate and goals, since these will guide program development, ensure it is on track, and help measure outcomes.
- Fit all aspects of the program to the service provider's setting and mission.
- Design a program that demonstrates an understanding of mentoring as a process with defined, evolving stages including orientation, relationship development, and dissolution.
- Develop a structure and plan for the mentor/mentee relationship – neither mentor nor mentee should have to do this.
- Prepare and support each participant throughout the process.
- Develop the program as a marketable product – for funding as well as promoting to potential business mentors and mentees.

2. Recruitment

For effective recruitment, the service provider should:

- Have a systematic recruitment plan that specifies time frames and tasks.
- Have a strategic recruitment plan with specific targets.
- Identify points that will sell the program and attract desirable mentors and mentees.



*For mentees**

- Highlight the benefits of being mentored, as related to business development, motivation, planning and advice.
- Focus on skill and performance improvement as a secondary benefit.
- Make networking, access to resources, and information a third level of benefits.
- Avoid or make minimal references to personal benefits such as support, understanding, and encouragement. Avoid references to psychosocial functions such as role modelling, acceptance or friendship.
- Target isolated businesses that don't have good connections or know how to get them. These may tend to be smaller inner city enterprises, since larger ones may be more likely to have support or mentoring resources.

**The order of this list reflects the positive outcomes most reported by mentees.*

For mentors

- Highlight benefits related to networking, collegiality, and reciprocity.
- Focus on career satisfaction, motivation or promotion of their businesses as a secondary benefit.
- Make improved skills and job performance a third level of benefits, along with pride or personal satisfaction.
- Avoid reference to benefits such as insight into others' roles, personal / interpersonal development, or confidence, since these are the least reported positive mentor outcomes.
- Identify and describe mentor responsibilities and eligibility requirements, as this will assist in self-screening.
- Make mentor definitions or requirements sufficient to meet the mentees' needs, but not much more advanced than that. This will increase the mentor pool, and make matching easier.
- Emphasize the needs and characteristics of the business operators who will be mentored.
- Engage the mentor's interest by providing value such as learning and growth; provide skill training, mentor interaction, brainstorming, or networking opportunities.
- Network with other organizations for help with recruiting.
- Encourage "word of mouth" recruiting since it is more effective than a general advertising strategy for finding good candidates.
- Have recruitment strategies for specific demographics (i.e. male mentors).
- Make recruitment "customer friendly" and appealing to the mentor.
- Find mentors who have direct or related experience with the issues in your area.

3. Selection

- Make the selection process "customer friendly" and appealing. It should be encouraging and welcoming to appropriate potential mentors and mentees, and effective at deterring others.

For mentees

- Consider the mentee's experience and confidence to accept and engage in a professional mentoring relationship.
- Assess if the level of business understanding is sufficient to benefit from professional advice.
- Determine the ability to establish and achieve business objectives.
- Determine whether the business operator requires learning resources or formal/informal education to prepare for or enhance mentoring, or instead of mentoring. Support the mentee in finding these resources.



- Assess the business operator's openness and willingness to learn; determine whether expectations with regard to time and effort commitments are realistic; assess willingness to be accountable to the mentor, to maintain contact, and to follow through with tasks.
- Determine if and to what extent complexity of personal issues or issues of socio-economic disadvantage will affect the degree and pace of mentoring.
- Ask about the perspectives and past experiences of the mentee with assistance/consulting/mentoring (what helped, what hindered) as a means to assess preparation and training needs before mentoring begins.
- Designate pre-matching business or mentoring tasks that demonstrate to the mentoring program and to mentors the mentee's desire to be mentored. For example, completing a questionnaire or assessment, or participating in an orientation session.

For mentors

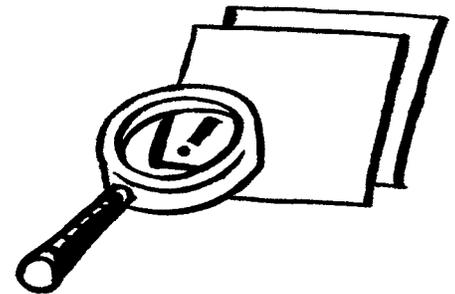
- Base screening on program goals, context and approach.
- Develop mentor screening procedures from the perspective of the needs and characteristics of the business operators (mentees).
- Determine the appropriateness of the applicant's motivation to be of assistance, and their level of interest.
- Assess the applicant's openness and self-awareness. Ask about perspectives and past experiences with helping/mentoring (what helped, what hindered) as a means to assess preparation and training needs before mentoring begins.
- Screen potential mentors with regard to their willingness to learn and grow, as well as their ability to appreciate a mentee's uniqueness, talents and experience.
- Assess awareness of the problems affecting your area.
- Assess behaviours or characteristics that may inhibit mentee growth. These should include expectations that the mentee conform to mentor expectations ("cloning") or an unwillingness to recognize mentee autonomy.
- Assess whether the applicant has realistic expectations regarding the time required to carry out the mentoring role or if mentoring will create added pressure or conflict for the mentor.
- Determine the applicant's time availability and proximity to mentees.
- Assess the applicant's understanding of the mentoring program goals and expectations.
- Assess the applicant's listening, coaching, counselling, facilitating, and networking skills.
- Determine the type and degree of training the mentor applicant would require to be an effective mentor (e.g. communication skills).
- Assess the mentor's business knowledge and experience to determine whether it is current and useful.
- Assess the mentor's ability to provide sensible, manageable and realistic business advice.

- Ensure that the applicant understands the matching process. Demonstrate that program mentees have a positive attitude toward mentoring, are capable of trust and cooperation, and have realistic expectations.

4. Orientation, training, and skill development

For mentors

- Provide training to mentors on how trust is developed with the mentee and what constitutes best outcomes from a mentee's perspective.
- Identify knowledge and skills mentors need, and develop training materials and activities specific to program context and issues.
- Use adult education principles in training mentors. These include participatory techniques that encourage engagement and ease, starting from the participant's experience and being task/goal oriented.
- Set up the mentoring structure, including time, boundaries, clear expectations, and on-going support.
- Ensure that the mentor's time is spent working with the mentee and not in setting up the mentoring structure.
- Identify requirements for support and monitoring. Include materials such as written program descriptions, mentoring handbooks, description of mentoring stages, orientation meetings, etc.
- Address as many mentoring relationship issues as you can during program orientation and training, and provide strategies for avoiding pitfalls and creating success.
- Ensure that the mentoring focus is task-based rather than social because the mentoring relationship develops out of tasks.
- Train mentors with respect to the needs and characteristics of the business operators.
- Ensure mentors develop a clear understanding of their roles and develop strategies for building an effective relationship with the mentee.
- Design a trust-building component into the program for the mentor, i.e. welcoming, introducing, ice-breaking. The mentor needs to feel safe.
- Develop mentor skills, including communication skills and the importance of active listening.
- Maintain the mentor's interest by providing opportunities for learning and growth, such as skills training, mentor interaction, brainstorming, or networking.
- Provide ongoing mentor training and support that involves the active and reflective participation of mentors. Include training on values, cultural differences, cultural biases, and cultural diversity. Develop mentors' awareness of personal and cultural values and how these may affect the relationship with the mentee.



5. Matching

- Understand that mentor/mentee matching is critical to the program's success and that opinion regarding best matching strategies varies and can be contradictory. Some suggest matches not be based on similarities, but rather on the mentor's ability to understand and accept the mentee's experience. Others suggest conflicts arise when similarities are not considered. Both technical and personal fit should be equally considered.
- Consider issues related to gender and race when making matches. Reported negative mentoring outcomes often involve misunderstandings and incompatibility related to gender/cultural biases – particularly noted are female mentee/male mentor and black mentee/white mentor pairs (study based primarily on U.S. data).
- Consider socio-economic differences when matching. Some literature suggests this is a more important issue affecting match compatibility than race or gender.
- Take more care in matching where the mentoring relationship will be of a longer duration.
- Be guided by the principle that matches should be made from the mentee's perspective, while considering mentor preferences.
- Identify matching procedures and guidelines and make them contextually sensitive.
- Increase matching success by allowing both parties to have input and choice. Provide an opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet informally, for example, in a group setting.

For mentees

- Provide an opportunity for the mentee to select the mentors they would like.

For mentors

- Before matching, provide evidence to the mentor of mentee desire to participate in a mentor relationship.
- Consider having two mentors work with a mentee, even if they are both providing mentoring on the same business goals. This is a way to provide support to mentors. If more than one mentor is involved in the work plan, arrange for them to meet. They will be able to provide support to each other, share information, and ensure work plan continuity.

6. Mentoring and monitoring

- Start with a short-term commitment (three months) that is clear and structured.
- Start with a goal focusing on one small aspect of the business that allows for a process of problem analysis, opportunities for change, and an action plan (discovery, planning, action). Establish a clear, uncomplicated goal and ensure that it can realistically be accomplished during the term of commitment.
- Set time limited, structured commitments rather than vague, open-ended commitments. Mentors are more willing to agree to this arrangement. This also creates an opportunity for the relationship to continue beyond the initial time limit since an ongoing mentor commitment will depend on the success of the initial commitment.
- Ensure the mentoring relationship maintains a task-based focus. This will help the mentoring relationship develop and will increase the potential for successful outcomes.
- Provide ongoing feedback mechanisms for mentees and mentors.

7. Program evaluation

Measure outcomes such as:

- Match quality (reported participant satisfaction)
- Reported changes in knowledge or skills
- Achievement of stated mentee goals
- Percent of recommendations that were implemented
- Number of business changes
- Number of personal changes
- "Bottom line" results

Program productivity can be measured by:

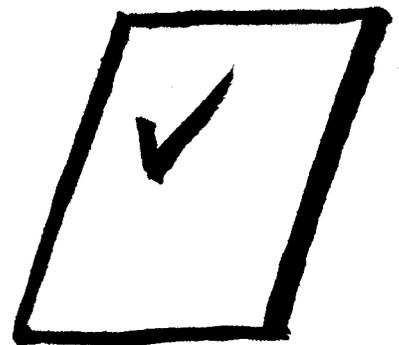
- Participant retention
- Duration of match vs. expected/planned duration
- Mentor hours
- Number of matches
- A cost/benefit analysis can be done (program cost vs. mentor hours created, mentor hourly cost vs. paid consultant hourly cost).
- Define concrete and measurable outcomes. Measure as objectively as possible.
- Have a data-collection strategy that is simple, integrated and ongoing.
- Always evaluate the program from the mentee's point of view and against the program goals.
- Use outcome measurement as a guide for program improvement and a means to demonstrate success to the community and funders.
- Measure impact during and after program participation.

For mentees

- Enhance mentee self-confidence by ensuring that problem-solving and planning skills are developed and thereby available after mentoring.

For mentors

- Ensure that the relationship with the mentee is experienced as reciprocal and interactive.
- Recognize mentors for their efforts.



APPENDICES AND TOOLS

Appendices

- Appendix 1: PEACH Mentorship Flowchart
- Appendix 2: Mentorship Program Information Session Outline
- Appendix 3: Mentor Orientation and Training Session Outline
- Appendix 4: Example of Mentor Work Plan

Tools

Assessment

Interview Questions for Service Providers	Tool A-1
Interview Questions for Mentors	Tool A-2
Interview Questions for Mentees	Tool A-3

Recruitment

Mentorship Brochure	Tool R-1
Mentor Application Cover Letter	Tool R-2
Mentor Application Form	Tool R-3
Mentee Application Cover Letter	Tool R-4
Mentee Application Form	Tool R-5

Selection

Mentor Application Checklist	Tool S-1
Mentor Application Assessment Form	Tool S-2
Mentor Application Rejection Letter	Tool S-3
Mentor Application Interview Questions	Tool S-4
Mentor Reference Check Guide	Tool S-5
Mentor Application Acceptance Letter	Tool S-6
Mentee Application Checklist	Tool S-7
Mentee Application Assessment Form	Tool S-8
Mentee Application Rejection Letter	Tool S-9
Mentee Application Interview Questions	Tool S-10
Mentee Business Assessment Items	Tool S-11
Mentee Business Assessment	Tool S-12

Matching

Mentoring Agreement	Tool MA-1
Confidentiality and Liability Agreement	Tool MA-2

Monitoring and assessment

Mentor Assignment and Monitoring Form	Tool M-1
Program Evaluation Form for Mentors	Tool M-2
Program Evaluation Form for Mentees	Tool M-3