

Equitable Sponsorship & Mentorship Guide for Co-ops

How to create Mentorship & Sponsorship Programs to Leverage Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in the Co-op. This tool is part of a collection of resources to facilitate gender parity and meaningful representation of equity-deserving groups in leadership roles in co-ops. Learn more in our [Digital Library](#).

“What is needed is the development of people who are interested not in being leaders as much as in developing leadership in others.”¹

- Ella Baker, *civil rights & human rights activist and co-op hero*

1. Introduction

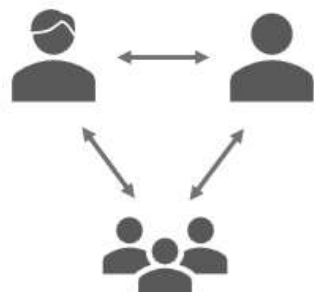
The #1 barrier to women’s advancement - and especially BIPOC women’s advancement - is lack of sponsorship.^{2 3} As mentors and sponsors tend to pick mentees/sponsees of the same race and gender as themselves, those relationships often favours groups of the same identities as the people who already hold the most power. But, if designed intentionally, mentor & sponsorship programs can be used as a tool to advance DEI outcomes in your organization. For that to happen, we must formalize and thoughtfully design mentor & sponsorship programs that aim to accelerate the change we want to see. This tool will help guide you in that process.

1.1. Mentorship vs. Sponsorship

Despite their distinct differences, Mentorship & Sponsorship are often grouped together and used interchangeably. It is important that organizations understand the difference and are intentional if they are promoting a mentorship or sponsorship program.



Mentorship: a mentor is a trusted advisor who provides guidance and feedback, shares knowledge, and engages in problem-solving with you. Mentorship is a two-way relationship to grow valuable skills.



Sponsorship: a sponsor is an endorser and ally who advocates for you, speaks your name publicly, provides access to their network, and recommends you for opportunities. A sponsor is in a position of higher seniority and tends to hold more power/privilege in our society; they use that power and influence to help a sponsee advance in their career.

¹ Ella Baker, [Developing Community Leadership](#)

² Dr. Rachael N. Pettigrew et al, [2022 Industry Report](#), DirectHer Network and Mount Royal University

³ Kimberly Lee Minor, [How Mentorship & Sponsorship Fuel DEI Success](#), Retail TouchPoints, 2023

1.2. Reflections to understand the starting point

Before diving into program planning for Sponsorship and/or Mentorship, take the time to reflect on where your organization is today and what the organizational and employee needs are. You may also want to identify systems, processes and initiatives in place today that could be built upon as well as what might be standing in the way of these programs being rolled out successfully. Get curious about the below:

<p>How the organization currently nurtures talent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What retention and promotion practices are in place? How do they uphold versus challenge the dominant culture? • What and whose talent is being nurtured? What and who is falling through the cracks? • Are vacant positions being filled internally? How? Are all qualified individuals considered? How do we know?
<p>How a culture of lifting up and advocating for workmates is encouraged vs. discouraged within current systems and culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the board and leadership showcase mentoring and sponsoring behaviour? How? • Are there informal mentorship or sponsorship relationships in place? Do people feel safe to seek out such relationships on their own? • Are employees acknowledged for mentoring and sponsorship undertakings?
<p>Organizational skills gap</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills do we need to grow in future leaders? • What and where are the important gaps we want to fill?
<p>How skills and knowledge is transferred within our co-op today (and across the co-op sector)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within working teams and cross-functionally? • Where do we have gaps in knowledge transfer? Why? • How do (or can) we utilize principle 6: <i>Cooperation Among Cooperatives</i> and exchange skills across the co-op sector?
<p>Employee engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do work satisfaction, engagement, retention and turnover look like? • What type of career development is requested by the employees?
<p>Board & leadership representation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the board and leadership composition look like? • Does it represent the membership as a whole? • Whose perspectives are we missing?

2. Sponsorship through an equity lens

Women and other members of equity-deserving groups tend to get over-mentored and under-sponsored. This has led to the continued growth of highly qualified people who are not

getting the career advancement that they deserve.⁴ Multiple reports show that highly qualified individuals from equity-deserving groups are not being considered for new openings. A key reason for that is affinity bias among sponsors - the tendency of people in power to favour people similar to themselves. Let's take a look at some stats:

- **71%** of sponsors are of the same race and gender as their primary sponsees.⁵
- **“91% of White executives do not have a single person of colour in their professional network”**. Yet, **78%** of them use that into their homogeneous network when filling vacant roles.⁶
- Sponsorship also ties into pay equity; people who are sponsored by White men get higher pay. As an example, “[Latinx*] women with a [Latinx] sponsor made **15.5%** less than [Latinx] women with a White sponsor.”⁷
 - **Note that we have replaced the word “Hispanic” (which was used in the quoted source) with “latinx” as an effort to avoid terms that are eurocentric and colonial.*⁸

Given the lack of diversity in boards and C-suite, equity-deserving groups need to be sponsored, and they need White men as their sponsors.

2.1. The ABCDs of Sponsorship

Sponsorship tactic	Example behaviours	Intended goal
Amplify - promote the sponsee.	Spread awareness and talk positively about a sponsee's accomplishment. Amplify their voice; <i>“X had a great idea, I wanted to echo it”</i> ⁹	Create or increase an audience's positive impression of them.
Boost - underwrite the sponsee's future success.	Write letters of recommendation for the sponsee. Nominate them for board positions or other opportunities.	Increase others' expectations of the sponsee's potential and readiness for advancement.
Connect - facilitate new relationships and access to networks.	Invite the sponsee to events or meetings. Introduce them to individuals with high status/decision-making power.	Increase the sponsee's visibility and create positive impressions of them through the “halo” effect.
Defend - challenge other people's negative perception of the sponsee. <i>This sponsorship tactic is the riskiest.</i>	Protect a sponsee from harmful exposure. Speak up against someone's unfair criticism of a sponsee such as being “too emotional” or “bossy” or in other ways not acting according to unwritten rules.	Reverse or neutralize others' negative perceptions of the sponsee.

This table is inspired by and adapted from Rosalind Chow's ABCDs of Sponsorship¹⁰

⁴ Dr. Rachael N. Pettigrew et al, [2022 Industry Report](#), DirectHer Network and Mount Royal University

⁵ [The Sponsor Dividend](#), 2019, Coqual

⁶ Rumbi Petrozzello, [Why Women Need Effective Sponsorship to Advance Their Careers](#), 2023, Seramount

⁷ Rumbi Petrozzello, [Why Women Need Effective Sponsorship to Advance Their Careers](#), 2023, Seramount

⁸ David Gonzales, [What's the Problem with 'Hispanic'? Just Ask a 'Latino'](#), 1992, New York Times

⁹ Ruchika Tulshyan, [What “Lift As We Climb” Means](#), 2023

¹⁰ Rosalind Chow, [Don't Just Mentor Women and People of Colour. Sponsor Them](#), 2023, HBR

Sponsorship isn't just about advocating for opportunities but also defending them to others. This is especially important for women or racialized sponsees as they are more likely to be criticized for interpersonal skills; "too bossy" or "not assertive enough", "too emotional" or "too cold"... That's when it's critical to have a sponsor stepping in. "Defending comes with a certain amount of risk, and it's the responsibility of the most powerful sponsors — typically white men — to take on that risk."¹¹

So, how do we create those connections and enable sponsorship relations that are effective and promote psychological safety despite the power and privilege dynamics between the sponsor and the sponsee? Let's explore this together in the next section.

2.2. Equitable Sponsorship Guide

1. Plan & Design

	Checklist & Questions to Consider
Why & Target Population - who is it for? <i>Responsible: DEI Team</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define clear motivations behind starting a sponsorship program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why are we doing this? <input type="checkbox"/> "Run a diagnostic to understand which talent cohorts would benefit most from sponsorship"¹² and identify important leadership gaps. Use a mix of qualitative and quantitative data to answer the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whose perspectives are we lacking in the current leadership, senior leadership, and/or board positions? Which equity-deserving groups are not represented? ○ What types of leadership positions will we need to fill in the foreseeable future? ○ Which groups are not getting the "hot jobs" or other advancement opportunities?¹³
Scale, Duration & Structure <i>Responsible: DEI Team and HR</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the number of sponsee-sponsorship pairs and the number of departments or functions involved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It's recommended to start small and then increase the number for future cohorts once ready. Think quality over quantity. <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the length of the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It's recommended to have them run at least 9 months. Past that, the sponsorship pairs may decide to continue working together outside of the formal program.

¹¹ Rosalind Chow, [Don't Just Sponsor Women and People of Colour - Defend Them](#), 2023, HBR

¹² [Sponsorship Guide](#), 2015, Catalyst

¹³ [Sponsorship Guide](#), 2015, Catalyst

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the structure in terms of organized meet-ups, educational sessions and how support will be offered <input type="checkbox"/> Define commitment from sponsors and sponsees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review how workload may be adjusted for sponsors and sponsees to meaningfully participate in this program and allocate time towards it.
<p>Stakeholder Buy-in</p> <p><i>Responsible: DEI Team and HR (approved by board/ exec. team)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the board and other key stakeholders are on board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How will this program benefit the co-op as a whole? (e.g. retention rates, DEI outcomes..) <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure adequate budget, time and other resources are allocated towards this. <input type="checkbox"/> How can executives (not part of the cohort) help to model sponsorship behaviours in the organization as a whole? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider all four parts; the ABCDs of sponsorship (page 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Plan how to encourage people to sign up as sponsors and sponsees
<p>Success Metrics</p> <p><i>Responsible: DEI Team and HR</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define how you will measure the success of the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are we trying to achieve here? ○ Align metrics to the co-op’s overall mission. ○ Align metrics to DEI goals. Make sure to not only consider demographic representation; center employee experiences, well-being, engagement, psychological safety or other metrics tied to equity and inclusion. ○ Consider both quantitative and qualitative metrics

2. Identify Participants & Match Sponsorship Pairs

After designing the framework for the sponsorship program, it’s time to identify sponsees and sponsors and match them well. If time and resources allow, it might be a good idea to design an application process and let people apply to the program. If so, make sure the process is clear and accessible and that everyone is informed about it. Otherwise, you can select individuals from the target population you defined in the previous section and invite them directly.

- Identify sponsees. Consider:
 - Which high-potential individuals are not getting the “hot jobs” or other advancement opportunities?¹⁴
 - Review and challenge what your organization means by “high potential”. Value perspectives and behaviours outside of the dominant narrative, not just people who mirror current leaders.
 - Don’t just use performance reviews and manager feedback but also peer reviews and other qualitative information.
 - Are they eager to advance their career? (ask them!)
 - Other target criteria defined as per the organization’s need
- Invite the sponsees and let them accept or decline.

¹⁴ Catalyst, [Sponsorship Guide](#), 2015



- Clarify the program’s purpose and be clear about expectations, commitment and benefits of being a participant.
- Ask the sponsees what they are looking for in a sponsor, and what they need in order to feel safe and empowered in their role as a sponsee. → Use these insights when matching sponsorship pairs as well as when designing workshops and other support systems throughout the program.
- Identify potential sponsors. Consider:
 - Which individuals with influential stakeholder positions are suitable to sponsor? A great executive doesn’t automatically mean a great sponsor. Consider:
 - Are they invested in and taking action to achieve the co-ops’ DEI goals?
 - Are they ready to provide culturally intelligent and meaningful sponsorship?
 - Do they showcase behaviour to promote psychologically safe spaces for people? (You may find [this resource](#)¹⁵ helpful)
 - Do they have the capacity for this commitment?
- Invite the sponsees and let them accept or decline.
 - Clarify the program's purpose and be clear about expectations and commitment.
- Match sponsees with sponsors.
 - Consider experience, preferred working/communication style, network and area of expertise. Other factors as requested by sponsees may also be considered.
 - Does the sponsor have the influence needed to make the specific move happen for the sponsee?
- Announce the cohort.

3. Kick-off: Expectations & Building Trust

Once the cohort is announced, invite them to an introductory session. Emphasize expectations for each role and provide clarity on what support will be provided throughout the program. You may use the Role/Responsibility Chart below and adjust it as per your needs.

Who	Responsibilities	Benefits
Sponsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet with the sponsee on a regular basis and in alignment with set sponsorship agreement. ● Evaluate sponsee based on their value-add, potential, and performance.¹⁶ ● Deliver on advocacy as per the ABCDs of sponsorship. ● Recommend sponsee for opportunities that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased organizational awareness and insight to other functional areas.¹⁷ ● Growth of leadership skills. ● Increased work

¹⁵ [Psychologically Safer Spaces Assessment](#), 2023, BCCA and ACCA

¹⁶ [The Sponsor Dividend](#), 2019, Coqual

¹⁷ [Sponsoring Women to Success](#), 2019, Catalyst

	<p>match their skillset and aspirations. <i>Note: It's not your job to get them a promotion but to help advocate for their advancement in alignment with their goals.</i></p>	satisfaction. ¹⁸
Sponsee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with the sponsor on a regular basis and in alignment with set sponsorship agreement. Provide clarity on career objectives by being transparent and articulating specific goals. Share milestones and updates about work that you are proud of with your sponsor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of network and access to senior leaders. Increased visibility and chance to advance in alignment with career aspirations.
DEI Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diagnostic of sponsorship opportunities and identification of target group. Program design and matching of participants, alongside HR. Support throughout the program and regular check-ins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to accelerate DEI outcomes and reach the 50-30 Challenge goals.
HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program design and matching of participants, alongside DEI Team. Program budgeting. Embed sponsorship into succession planning and performance reviews to drive accountability.¹⁹ Organize training as needed for the sponsees to grow certain skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased employee satisfaction and organizational commitment; lower turnover.^{20 21} A springboard to achieve succession planning goals.

Ok, so we got the responsibilities figured out - how about trust? “The foundation of a successful sponsorship is trust. Many sponsorship programs fail because senior leaders feel like they are being forced to put their reputation on the line to vouch for someone who they don’t know well or fully believe in. Sponsees must also trust that their sponsors have their best interests in mind and are truly invested in their success.”²² To set the sponsorship pair up for (higher likelihood of) success, follow the recommended checklist below.

Build Trust Between Sponsors & Sponsees:

- Have a DEI Professional or other qualified facilitator hold a workshop on cultivating a safe and trusting relationship.
- Practice Accountability. Have an accountability process set and communicated at the beginning of the program. (This resource on [Accountability Practices](#)²³ may be used for guidance).

¹⁸ [Sponsoring Women to Success](#), 2019, Catalyst
¹⁹ [The Sponsor Dividend](#), 2019, Coqual
²⁰ [The Sponsor Dividend](#), 2019, Coqual
²¹ [Supporting careers: mentoring or sponsorship?](#), 2014, Workplace Gender Equality Agency
²² [6 Tips for a Successful Sponsorship Program](#), Her New Standard,
²³ [Co-ops DEI Toolkit: Accountability Practices](#), 2023, ACCA and BCCA



- Promote clear and authentic communications, transparency, vulnerability and honesty. Have leaders in the organization model these behaviours.
- Provide the following materials to sponsorship pairs:
 - Template to create a sponsorship agreement/rules of engagement with specific prompts including:
 - How will we show up in this space, guidelines for cultivating a safe/brave space, objectives, priorities, availability and boundaries, method of communication, and frequency of meetings.
 - [This Community Agreement](#) for Equity & Inclusion in Co-ops Community of Practice sessions may be used for inspiration
 - Template to define professional goals and road map:
 - The sponsee defines what and why
 - The sponsor and sponsee problem-solve the how (to achieve them)
- Perhaps most importantly, combine the sponsorship program with other DEI initiatives.
 - Sponsorship is *one* effective tool to help your organization move in the right direction, but it won't by itself achieve your DEI goals.²⁴ It's critical that your organization take a wider approach to address inequities in culture, governance systems and other systems of the co-op. It will be hard (impossible?) to build trust between sponsors and sponsees if trust is broken in the organization as a whole.

4. [Support, Training & Check-ins](#)

- Schedule formal training sessions and provide educational resources as needed; in alignment with the sponsees' goals and in-demand skills for future leaders as identified by the initial diagnostic.
- Collect feedback in various ways throughout the program
 - Set up ways for participants to provide feedback anonymously. For example:
 - Survey for all participants (not just at the very end)
 - Anonymous feedback form for people to, at any time, bring attention to something that should get addressed by the DEI Team
 - Schedule check-ins throughout the program
 - One-on-one
 - With the sponsor-sponsee pairs
- Recognize when sponsor relationships don't work. Despite the efforts put into sponsor-sponsee matching, not all pairings will be a good match.
 - Dissolve, review and avoid generating blame. Try again with a different pairing.
 - Important to remember is that "people might not want to terminate a relationship that isn't working, or speak up about inappropriate behavior, for fear that it might damage their careers."²⁵ To mitigate this risk it's

²⁴ Lily Zheng, DEI Deconstructed, 2023

²⁵ [Invest in sponsors to invest in your employees' careers](#), Project Include

important to pick sponsors and match pairs carefully and have different ways of gaining insights and understanding how the sponsorship is going throughout the program.

- Manage risks and address criticism.
 - A common one is the perceptions of favouritism and nepotism - people who are not part of the program might think that sponsorship is formalizing favouritism.²⁶ Be transparent about the program and provide clarity on the purpose; to level the playing field and create equal opportunities.

5. Evaluation

- Celebrate the sponsors and sponsees! Show appreciation for their work.
- Make a thorough assessment of the program
 - Gather sufficient data
 - A mix of quantitative/qualitative
 - Include any feedback/check-in notes/other input from throughout the program
 - Review success metrics
 - Did we achieve our goals? Why/why not?
 - Identify key learnings
 - Any new insights revealed? Any unexpected outcomes?
 - What are the most prominent areas to focus on?
 - Let insights and learnings feed into improving the next sponsorship cohort
 - What improvements can we make and how?
 - What actions do we commit to take? What time and resources are needed?
 - How will we measure the outcome and who is responsible?

²⁶ Mulnat Zubalr, [What are sponsorship programs in the workplace?](#)

3. Mentorship through an equity lens

Meaningful mentorship promotes skill development and knowledge transfer, creates connections and helps shape a sharing-is-caring culture - things that benefit everyone in the organization. “Mentorship can mutually support the goals of leaders while simultaneously inspiring confidence, engagement, passion, and connections amongst the workforce.”²⁷ The key is to ensure that mentorship relations formed in your organization are uplifting and engaging, particularly for people belonging to equity-deserving groups. This includes looking at how to develop skills and create connections in a way that challenges the dominant culture.

First, you’d want to understand different types of mentorship and which ones are the best fit for your organization. See a brief summary of some different types in the chart below.

Type	Description	Benefits
One-on-one mentorship	One mentee works with one mentor. The most common mentorship structure.	Building trust and navigating group/power dynamics as well as logistics are often easier here compared to group mentorship.
Group mentorship	Mentorship groups consist of more than two people. Example: One mentor and two mentees.	Can increase the impact of a person's time spent mentoring by letting more people take part in sessions. Allows for more connections to be built and more perspectives heard.
Reversed mentorship	A mentee/less senior person offers guidance to a mentor/more senior person.	Helps build reciprocal relationships and values everyone’s skillset despite seniority. Can for example be used for older generations to adapt to new technologies or get insights on trends and expectations from younger generations.
Manually matched mentorship (Formal)	Mentees and mentors are paired/grouped by mentorship program.	An inclusive way to provide mentorship to all and break patterns of affinity-bias. Doesn’t put the pressure on employees to self-advocate to find a mentor.
Self-matched mentorship (Informal)	People establish their own mentorship relationship	Time & resource-efficient for the organization as a whole. <i>Please see note below*</i>

**If your co-op is looking to encourage informal mentorship commitments, make sure that the culture and organizational readiness allow you to do so in a way that is inclusive and equitable. If employees don’t feel safe and empowered to self-advocate for their needs or ask more senior colleagues for their time and as a mentor, it is likely that informal, self-selecting mentorship will favour people who hold the most power and privilege in the organization and leave equity-deserving groups behind. You may use this resource - [Organizational Readiness](#) - to help guide this assessment.*²⁸

²⁷ Chantal Brine, [Multi-Generational Mentorship](#), Women of Influence

²⁸ [Organizational Readiness Checklist](#), 2023, BCCA and ACCA

3.1. Equitable Mentorship Guide

Note that this guide is made to help you design a *formal* mentorship program where people apply to the program and are matched into pairs/groups based on their needs, experience and interests. If your organization decides to go the informal route, steps 1 and 2 in the following guide can be dismissed but steps 3-5 should be considered as they cover ways to provide support for mentors and mentees that will be valuable even for self-matching mentorship.

1. Plan & Design - Formal Mentorship

	Checklist & Questions to Consider
Why <i>Responsible: DEI Team & HR</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define clear motivations behind starting a mentorship program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why are we doing this? <input type="checkbox"/> Understand what employees are looking for and how they want to engage in this program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the motivations to sign up as a mentor? As a mentee? ○ What input do potential mentors and mentees have in terms of program structure? What would make them feel safe to participate and committed throughout? <input type="checkbox"/> Define what types of mentorship (for example, group vs. one-on-one) is most beneficial.
Scale, Duration & Structure <i>Responsible: DEI Team and HR</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the number of mentorship groups and if the number of departments or functions involved. Consider designing a mentorship program in partnership with other co-ops, building on principle 6: <i>Cooperation Among Cooperatives</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Which other co-ops do we trust and work well with? In what ways could a mentorship program benefit from partnering with them? What might that look like? ○ Are we able to offer mentorship to the whole organization? If not, how can we start small and scale the program for the next cohort? Where do we start? <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the length of the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It's recommended to have them run at least 9 months. Past that, groups may decide to continue working together outside of the formal program. <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on the structure in terms of organized meet-ups, educational sessions and how support will be offered <input type="checkbox"/> Define commitment from mentors and mentees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review how workload may be adjusted for mentors and mentees to meaningfully participate in this program and allocate time towards it.
Stakeholder Buy-in <i>Responsible:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the board and other key stakeholders are on board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How will this program benefit the co-op as a whole? (e.g. retention rates, DEI outcomes..)

<p><i>DEI Team and HR (approved by board/ exec. team)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure adequate budget, time and other resources are allocated towards this. <input type="checkbox"/> How can executives (not part of the cohort) help to model mentorship behaviours in the organization as a whole? <input type="checkbox"/> Plan how to encourage people to sign up as mentors and mentees.
<p>Success Metrics</p> <p><i>Responsible: DEI Team and HR</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Define how you will measure the success of the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are we trying to achieve here? ○ Align metrics to the co-op's overall mission. ○ Align metrics to DEI goals. Make sure to not only consider demographic representation; center employee experiences, well-being, engagement, psychological safety or other metrics tied to equity and inclusion. ○ Consider both quantitative and qualitative metrics

2. Invite Participants to Apply & Match Pairs/Groups - Formal Mentorship

After designing the framework for the mentorship program, it's time to invite people to apply to the program and match mentors with mentees as per their interests, needs, objectives and expertise. Make sure the application process is clear and accessible and that everyone is informed about it. Be mindful of how you design the application form to make it easier to match the mentees and mentors into pairs or groups. See the (non-exhaustive) check-list below of things to consider and adjust it as per your organizational needs.

- Create an accessible application process.
 - Gather information about:
 - Career goals
 - Areas of interest and desired skills to learn (for mentees) or share (for mentors)
 - What they are looking for in a mentor/mentee, what would make them feel safe and empowered in their role and preferred learning environment
 - Questions regarding applicants' ability and readiness to promote psychologically safe spaces²⁹ and culturally intelligent mentorship
 - Applicants' commitment to achieving DEI goals
 - Level of commitment and capacity as a participant in the program
 - Support they may need to fully engage in the program
 - Offer different ways of submitting an application. Challenge the dominant culture that puts a lot of emphasis on the written word and consider videos or other means as per employee requests.
- Open up for applications & encourage people to apply.
 - Clarify the program's purpose and be clear about expectations, commitment and benefits of being a participant.

²⁹ [Psychologically Safer Spaces Assessment](#), 2023, BCCA and ACCA

- Engage with potential applicants to understand barriers to apply; remove as many barriers as possible.³⁰ Guide managers to review how workload may be adjusted to open up time for involvement in the program.
- Match mentors with mentees.
 - Consider experience, preferred working/communication style, area of expertise and other factors as requested in the application.
 - Consider different types of mentorship configurations - pairs, groups, and reversed mentorship model.
- Announce the cohort and make the pairings and work visible in the organization. This step cultivates transparency and the celebration of the collective sharing of knowledge in the co-op.

3. Kick-off: Expectations & Building Trust - Formal & Informal Mentorship

Once the cohort is announced, invite them to an introductory session. Emphasize expectations for each role and provide clarity on what support will be provided throughout the program. You may use the Role/Responsibility Chart below and adjust it as per your needs.

Who	Responsibilities	Benefits
Mentor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet with the mentee on a regular basis and in alignment with mentorship agreement. ● Give relevant, non-judgemental feedback aligned with mentee's goals and learning style. ● Provide guidance and engage in problem-solving with the mentee; don't "give them the solution". ● Help build mentee's skills & confidence; don't create a dependence on the mentor.³¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Growth of leadership skills. ● Increased work satisfaction. ● Increased organizational awareness and insight to other functional areas. ● Potential to learn new skills through reverse mentoring.
Mentee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meet with the mentor on a regular basis and in alignment with mentorship agreement. ● Provide clarity on learning objectives by being transparent and articulating specific goals. ● Ask for guidance and feedback. ● Take responsibility for your own learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build and refine skills that prepares you for career growth. ● Ask questions and get guidance in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.
DEI Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Program design and matching of participants, alongside HR. ● Provide guidance on cultivating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity to increase psychological safety and employee wellbeing.

³⁰ <https://guider-ai.com/blog/how-to-start-a-mentoring-program/>

³¹ Julie I. Johnson, [The Mentor and the Protégé: What, Who, and How?](#), 2017, Dimensions

	<p>safe/brave spaces within the mentorship pairs/groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support throughout the program and regular check-ins. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to accelerate DEI outcomes and reach <u>50-30 Challenge</u> goals.
HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program design and matching of participants, alongside DEI Team. • Program budgeting. • Embed mentorship engagement into performance reviews and succession planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employee satisfaction and decrease turnover.³² • A springboard to achieve succession planning goals. • Preserve organizational knowledge and break cross-functional silos^{33 34}

Build Trust Between Mentors and Mentees

Trust is essential for mentorship programs to be able to reach the positive outcomes they set up to achieve. Lily Zheng refers to Trust as “the currency of change”. “Without trust, coalitions and movements will never get enough steam to turn intentions into actions into outcomes.”³⁵ Their book DEI Deconstructed does a deep dive into how to build and harness trust in an organization as a whole. To cultivate trust between mentors and mentees, you may also follow the steps listed under “Build Trust Between Sponsors & Sponsees:” on pages 6-7 in the Sponsorship section of this guide.

4. Support, Training & Check-ins - Formal & Informal Mentorship

Refer to this segment in the Sponsorship section of this guide (pages 7-8).

5. Evaluation - Formal & Informal Mentorship

Refer to this segment in the Sponsorship section of this guide (page 8).

³² [The Sponsor Dividend](#), 2019, Coqual
³³ [Discussion Guide: Being the Ideal Mentor](#), Mentorship Moment
³⁴ Chantal Brine, [Multi-Generational Mentorship](#), Women of Inclusion+
³⁵ Lily Zheng, DEI Deconstructed, 2023, page 203.

