



The signatures of the individuals below indicate that they have read and approved the project or thesis of Holly Hetherington in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Social Innovation.

Denise Goerisch

4-18-23

Denise Goerisch, Project Advisor

Date

Azfar Hussain

4-18-23

Azfar Hussain, Graduate Program Director

Date

Raymond Higbea, PhD

19 April 2023

Raymond Higbea, Unit Head /School Director

Date

Mentoring for the Retention and Promotion of Diverse Talent

Holly Hetherington

A Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of

Master of Arts in Social Innovation

School of Community Leadership and Development

April 2023

Abstract

Many companies employ mentoring as a tool for investing in employee development and for retention and promotion. However, women and marginalized groups often experience barriers to accessing mentors and to experiencing the benefits of mentoring. Companies can take measures to mitigate these barriers and help women or people from marginalized groups benefit from mentoring. Mentoring can become a tool for investing in diverse talent if companies are willing to consider alternatives to traditional mentoring approaches, provide the necessary training, and develop a supportive culture. This project draws on best practices from feminist perspective and critical race theory scholarship to evaluate the mentoring resources and practices at a design corporation. The researcher summarizes the current state of mentoring at the corporation, makes tangible recommendations for improvement, and develops training for mentors and mentees that can be implemented at the corporation.

Table of Contents

Research question 3

Background and Statement of the Problem 3

Disclosure/Researcher’s Positioning 5

Methodology 5

Current Offerings at Corporation 6

- External Mentoring Opportunities 6
- Internal Sponsorship Program 6
- Internal Mentoring Materials Available to All 7
 - Do the Materials Support Multiple Mentoring Formats? 8
 - Are the Materials Supportive of Mutuality?12
 - Do the Materials Address Power Dynamics and Bias in Mentoring Relationships?19
 - Do the Materials Support Challenging of Corporate Norms? 22
 - Do the Materials Help Overcome Barriers to Mentoring?25
 - Do the Materials Promote a Culture of Mentoring Throughout the Corporation?30

Conclusion 31

Summary of Current Gaps 3

Suggested Improvements 34

Training Agenda and Materials 36

References 62

Research question

Women and People of Color face barriers to finding suitable mentors and thus, to the many benefits of mentoring in the workplace such as leadership positions. The researcher's corporation is no exception to this rule. In the corporate setting, mentoring is an important tool for retention and promotion of talent. However, in order for diverse talent to benefit from mentoring, companies must examine practices, approaches, and mindsets best suited to create an inclusive program. This project addresses the following question: How can mentoring practices be improved at the corporation where the researcher works to better support the retention and promotion of diverse talent?

Background and Statement of the Problem

Many factors contribute to retention and promotion of talent, so why focus on mentoring? Mentoring provides two key things: career support and psychosocial support. Career support includes "exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and providing challenging assignments" (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 1). It is exposure to networks and career opportunities. Psychosocial Support includes "role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship" (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 2). It is a person who cares about an employee and their development and is willing to invest in them. These two elements are key to retention and promotion of talent (Groves, 2021, p. 67; Turner-Moffat, 2019, p. 18).

Companies are interested in using mentoring to support the retention and promotion of diverse talent, because women and minorities are underrepresented in leadership positions (Groves, 2021, p. 66). This is a recognized issue at the design corporation where the researcher is employed, and the reason the researcher was approached by Diversity, Equity and Inclusion professionals and Talent Management professionals to evaluate the current state of mentoring at

the corporation and find areas for improvement. Furthermore, discrimination at work can lead to reduced organizational commitment affecting retention (Ragins et al., 2017, p. 211). When it comes to using mentoring as a tool to combat low retention and promotion rates, it must also be considered that women and people from traditionally marginalized groups experience more barriers to accessing a suitable mentor and to experiencing the benefits of mentoring (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 1, 7; Mcglowan-Fellows and Thomas, 2004, p. 9; Gibson, 2006, p. 65).

Furthermore, many people experience discrimination in the workplace, particularly women, people of color, and other marginalized groups. This can affect organizational commitment, and have many detrimental physical and mental effects. Even witnessing or hearing about discrimination in the workplace can have these effects (Ragins et al., 2017, p. 212). Ragins et al. did a series of studies that showed that having a high quality mentoring relationship could buffer against those effects (Ragins et al., 2017, p. 211). This is an area where mentors could receive training in how to support those experiencing, witnessing, hearing about discrimination in the workplace (Ragins et al., 2017, p. 249).

Due to the limitations of traditional mentoring, corporations need to turn to social innovation to develop more equitable mentoring structures. Traditional forms of mentoring can support employees to success. However, to make an inclusive mentoring program, companies need to implement innovative and non-traditional mindsets and approaches. They must draw from knowledge from multiple disciplines as this project aims to do. By looking at literature and best practices influenced by feminism and critical race theory, companies can recognize the importance of power dynamics, societal biases, and diverse perspectives and their effects in the workplace. Companies must also take a learning stance and be willing to try new approaches and adjust based on results and feedback as social innovation models show.

Disclosure/Researcher's Positioning

The researcher is an intern at this design focused corporation where the mentoring materials will be evaluated. She has access to the materials because of her position as a talent management intern. The leadership in the corporation is male dominated and primarily white in terms of racial demographics. As an intern and a Latina, the researcher can offer somewhat of an outsider's perspective. Her identity and past experiences in the workplace also illuminate why this research and project are necessary. The researcher started out her career as the only woman in leadership at her site in a nonprofit, and the only Latina in at the site in general. She faced many challenges and barriers based on her identity, one of them being lack of access to suitable mentors. She believes this contributed to burnout in this position. She has also experienced both direct and ambient effects of discrimination in the workplace which affected her own organizational commitment and lead to burnout in another position at a nonprofit organization. These experiences contribute to the researcher's sense of urgency and her desire to see social innovation take place in this area.

Methodology

For this project the researcher conducted a content analysis of current mentoring materials available to all employees at the corporation and compared them to the best practices for mentorship that supports the retention and promotion of diverse talent that are laid out in the literature to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement. The researcher intentionally focused on literature influenced by feminist perspective and critical race theory scholarship. In the following pages the researcher will summarize a number of best practices and share her evaluation of the corporation's material. Then she will suggest improved practices that can be implemented and iterated on. Also included is a training slide deck for a training for mentors and

mentees to demonstrate how the corporation could begin to implement some of the suggested changes. The suggestions for improvement and the training are designed to be tangible, actionable steps that the corporation can implement and test with a reasonable amount of ease when they determine they have the resources to invest in improving mentoring.

Current Offerings at Corporation

The researcher's corporation has mentoring programs in place already. There are some targeted opportunities for mentorship from outside the corporation and a targeted sponsorship program. This project looks closely at the mentoring materials and supports available to the whole corporation rather than on these targeted programs. The targeted programs are briefly described below to provide context, but in depth analysis of them is outside the scope of this project.

External Mentoring Opportunities

The corporation has two partners that provide mentorship from outside sources. One of these external mentoring programs, which targets early career women employees, utilizes an individualized one on one mentoring approach, while the other, which targets racial and ethnic minorities, uses a group mentoring approach. Both leverage electronic platforms for mentoring meetings. The availability of external e-mentoring programs expands opportunities for mentorship by providing a larger pool of mentors for both women and racial minorities who often find a lack of suitable mentors in their internal company networks (Leck, J. D., & Elliott, C. 2016). These programs are not open to anyone who is interested in mentoring, but instead to a limited number of participants nominated by Human Resources.

Internal Sponsorship Program

This is a four month program where sponsors and participants meet once a month. Sponsors are similar to mentors. However, the hope with a sponsor is that over time they will build trust and gain an understanding of their partner's (the participant's) abilities, then use this knowledge and their position of power to advocate for their partner to gain opportunities for growth in the corporation. In this program participants are similar to mentees. Participants complete activities between each meeting to fuel the next month's conversation. The purpose of the program is to "make talent (employees) more known, [make] employee ambitions more visible, and [create] stronger connections between decision makers and aspiring talent" (Internal Sponsorship Guide Aware program guide). It is a targeted program for those earlier in their tenure, who "have aspirations beyond their roles today, but...may have limited access and exposure to other leaders within their functional areas" (Sponsorship Program Guide¹). Similar to the external mentoring opportunities above, this is not open to all who are interested as participants are nominated by Human Resources. At the end of the four months, pairs discuss if and how they would like to continue the relationship. They have the option to end the relationship all together, carry on the relationship on an as needed and less formal basis, or continue to meet regularly. No extra support is given from the corporation after the four month program ends besides the mentoring materials available to all on the company's employee site.

Internal Mentoring Materials Available to All

The corporation adapted mentoring materials from Perrone-Ambrose Associates, Inc. The Mentoring Handbook² walks through how to find a mentor, how to begin a relationship, choosing

¹ This is an internal document. In order to protect the confidentiality of the corporation the this document is not included in the references section of this paper

² The Mentoring Handbook will be referred to as the Internal Handbook. In order to protect the confidentiality of the corporation the Internal Handbook is not included in the references section of this paper

activities and topics, and how and when to close a relationship. This handbook is available on the internal employee site for anyone who wants to engage in a mentoring relationship. The handbook and subsequent materials align with definitions of an informal mentoring program described in relevant literature. Some departments, groups, or regions leverage the handbook to implement a more formal mentoring program primarily by providing support in matching mentors and mentees. However, matching support is not provided corporation wide.

Do the Materials Support Multiple Mentoring Formats?

In order to make mentoring tools or a mentoring program that is effective for women and minorities, companies need to examine what kind of mentoring will fit the needs of these groups in their workplace best. Companies must weigh the pros and cons of formal and informal mentoring. Informal mentoring relationships form organically in the workplace out of existing employee relationships and networks. With formal mentoring programs mentors and mentees are matched usually for a set period of time (Liu et al., 2021, p. 280). Informal mentoring has a higher satisfaction rate overall (Ragins et al., 2017, pp. 217-218). Though formal mentoring may result in more dissatisfaction for one party or the other, it has some distinct advantages. In a formal program those running the program can match people across networks with someone with whom they may not otherwise connect. This is especially important for women and minorities because they often face barriers to growing their networks (Mcglowan-Fellows and Thomas, 2004, p. 8). With formal mentoring there are also more opportunities for training and interventions. Formal mentoring also signals a company's commitment to mentoring and helping employees grow in this way (Groves, 2021, pp. 67 & 69). When it comes to informal mentoring the main advantage is that its lack of rigid structure leaves room for different mentoring formats such as having multiple mentors (Goerisch et al., 2019, pp. 1748 & 1753). Corporations can still

be supportive of informal mentoring by providing supporting materials and encouraging leaders to mentor. Both informal and formal mentoring have their advantages, and if corporations structure their programs strategically, they may be able to tap into the benefits of both.

As stated above, the current offerings at the corporation align with the definition of informal mentoring since there is no corporate level matching support, trainings, or ongoing support for those in mentoring relationships. Informal offerings could allow for multiple mentoring formats. Some possible formats include traditional mentoring, mentoring networks or having multiple mentors, and reciprocal mentoring or peer mentoring.

Traditional mentoring is defined as “A relationship between a senior member and a junior member of an organisation that is created to help the junior member develop in the organisation” (Round, 2021, p. 260). Some literature criticize traditional mentoring because it can perpetuate harm, by perpetuating mindsets of hierarchy, misogyny, or racism. (Goerisch et al., 2019,; Ghosh et al. 2020). If the goal is to teach someone the ways of the corporation and the corporation has a history of being white centered or male centered or of relying on top-down power structures and approaches to leadership, mentoring could pass on those values or be oppressive to someone who is not white or not male, especially if the power structures dictate that the traditional hierarchy should not be challenged. Programs that only allow for traditional mentoring reinforce “uneven power dynamics and binaries based upon status (Moss et al. 1999)” (Goerisch et al., 2019, p. 1748). These power dynamics that come with hierarchy are important to keep in mind especially when exploring the ways in which mentoring either contributes to or hinders the retention and promotion of diverse staff since traditionally marginalized groups already experience power differences in the workplace due to society’s discriminatory biases.

Instead corporations should accommodate mentoring formats that disrupt the traditional hierarchy often assumed in a mentoring relationship. For instance, having multiple mentors or mentoring networks allows for input and investment from supportive people with a diversity of perspectives and skills (Goerisch et al., 2019, p. 1745). Another alternative type of mentoring is reciprocal mentoring which is defined as “A non-hierarchical relationship specifically designed for the exchange of information and perspective” (Round, 2021, p. 261). Reciprocal mentoring removes hierarchy as a factor by matching peers to each other so they can learn from one another and exchange ideas. In Round’s study (2021) on reciprocal mentoring, the program was specifically designed for participants to learn and grow in their understanding of the challenges women and minorities face in the workplace. Reciprocal mentoring could help organizations be more ready to support women and minorities who are promoted into leadership (Round, 2021, p. 266). Alternative mentoring structures should be part of a corporation's plan to make mentoring more inclusive. Goerisch et al. (2019) go on to say that organizations can support informal and non-traditional mentoring “by establishing peer-to-peer mentoring spaces for faculty and staff, providing faculty with formal training in how to mentor each other and their students, offering additional professional development opportunities for staff, and recognizing the labor of informal mentoring in faculty and staff annual reporting” (p. 1753).

The researcher examined the Mentoring Handbook to determine if it is supportive of multiple mentoring formats. In the handbook, the definition of mentoring includes, “collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals” (Internal Handbook, Section 1, p.1). This phrase implies a mentoring relationship could have a different format than just the traditional mentor/mentee dyad, that there could be multiple mentors or mentees. However, if these varying formats are not supported throughout the materials, this nod may not

be enough to support the best practices. In the section on finding a mentor there is space for a mentee to clarify the professional characteristics they desire and there are places to check “peer” and “someone from outside [the company]” (Internal Handbook, Section 3, p. 1) which are less traditional forms of mentoring. However, there is no option for multiple mentors, a mentoring network, or a group mentoring experience. Without being explicit about these options, the materials push users toward a traditional mentoring dyad format.

Existing materials at the corporation generally point users toward a traditional mentoring format, and do not provide any of the additional support, acknowledgements, or training and development opportunities suggested by Goersich et al. (2019). In order to have a program supportive of multiple mentoring formats, the materials would need to include references to a variety of forms of mentoring throughout, and the corporation would need to provide training and acknowledge the value of alternative mentoring formats.

Another mentoring format that corporations should invest in is e-mentoring. This is important at this time for many reasons, but one of them is that the COVID Pandemic pushed many companies to shift to virtual spaces for meetings and communications. While some may view a lack of face to face connection as a difficulty in mentoring, it has many advantages. It is a tool to help people connect with those outside of their region or with those to whom they may not have otherwise had access. It also gives more options for those working remotely or those who have disabilities (Leck and Elliot, 2016, pp. 7-8). Leck and Elliot (2016) even suggests that it could mitigate some bias if more interactions are electronic (p. 8). With the many ways e-mentoring could break down barriers, corporations need to view it as an asset in their program design. Currently the researcher’s corporation relies on hybrid work formats and online spaces for meetings, so it is well positioned to make this a part of a mentoring program, though program

designers would need to keep equitable access to technology in mind throughout the design process to maintain the benefits of e-mentoring for all.

Are the Materials Supportive of Mutuality?

There are many different approaches that individuals or programs can take to mentoring. These can be characterized as different mindsets. The first is a relational mindset. This is in some ways opposed to a traditional mindset. With a traditional mindset the assumption is that the mentor pours into the mentee and the mentee does not have much to offer the mentor or that it is not their place to do so. With a relational mindset, the assumption is that both mentor and mentee bring valuable insights and they can learn from each other (Ghosh et al. 2020, p. 320). Approaching mentoring with a relational mindset leads to mutuality which allows for disruption of the potentially harmful hierarchical power dynamics assumed in a traditional mentoring mindset even for those in traditional mentoring relationships. Mutuality means approaching the relationship with the understanding and expectation that both mentors and mentees have valuable perspectives to offer, and that both can learn from the relationship, and providing opportunities for both mentors and mentees to do just that. It might look like a mentor actively working to learn from the experiences or skills of a mentee instead of only taking the stance of the teacher, and mentoring program materials could prompt mentors and mentees to look for opportunities to establish mutuality or lean into a relational mindset. One kind of mentoring that demonstrates how mutuality can grow over time is synergistic co-mentoring. These relationships may begin with a traditional format or one of the other formats explored above. Synergistic co-mentoring often develops over years of a mentoring relationship where both parties begin to share resources and learn from each other. They have shared goals and in many ways the hierarchy disappears. This does not happen naturally with every mentoring relationship, and mentoring relationships

do not need to reach this level to be effective or successful, but it is a potential outcome that could create long term support for both parties (Deptula and Williams, 2017, p. 390). Both Ghosh et al. and Deptula and Williams suggest explicitly training mentors and mentees about holding relational mindsets and looking for opportunities for synergistic co-mentoring.

Since the corporation does not offer formal training for mentors or mentees, this is obviously not a part of the current program or offering. However, materials could prime mentors and mentees toward these mindsets and approaches. As mentioned before, the definition of mentoring in the Mentoring Handbook includes the phrase, “collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals” (Internal Handbook, Section 1, p. 1). Here, the handbook implies some level of mutuality, but unless the handbook explicitly encourages exploration of mutuality and relational mindsets throughout the materials, it does not disrupt the traditional, hierarchical mentoring mindset where the mentor is the wise one, the bestower of knowledge, and the mentee is the one who receives.

Other places in the Mentoring Handbook give some suggestions for making a relationship somewhat mutual. For instance general guidelines for meetings suggest, “Try to ensure that your interchanges are conversational in tone, striving to establish a two-way exchange, with neither party dominating the discussion” (Internal Handbook, Section 4, p. 2). This guideline fosters a certain level of mutuality as each person should contribute to the conversation. However, it does not suggest any mutuality in responsibilities outside of the amount of talking and listening that happens in a conversation. Later when the handbook instructs the mentor to help an employee “look outward” by “providing the mentee with a sounding board for solving problems, making decisions, and handling challenging situations” (Internal Handbook, Section 2, p.1) The mentor is positioned as more of a thought partner than the one with all the answers. In some ways the

idea of being a sounding board prompts the mentor to trust the mentee's expertise instead of asking the mentee to conform to the mentor's or the corporation's way of decision making.

There are some prompts throughout the handbook that mentors and mentees could use to discuss their roles and mindsets as they pertain to mutuality, but the handbook does not take the extra step of explicitly suggesting discussion of mindsets or suggesting mutual learning might be appropriate. For early in the relationship, the handbook provides a *Setting Expectations* worksheet which states "A key to a successful mentoring relationship is having clear expectations from the very beginning" (Internal Handbook, Section 5, p. 1). Discussion of mutuality and mindsets could take place during a conversation about expectations. Suggested topics for this conversation begin with some basics such as "Expected length of overall mentoring relationship, frequency of sessions, length of sessions, session format" (Internal Handbook, Section 5, p.1). As the prompts in the worksheet go on, they get a little deeper with questions like, "How will we know the relationship is working?... What steps will we take if one of us is not satisfied with how our relationship is going?" and "How will we ensure confidentiality of our relationship?" (Internal Handbook, Section 5, p1). Questions like these help set expectations early and build trust which is a foundational element of mutuality. Another question that could be an opportunity for trust building is, "What important information do we share about ourselves to help shape a fulfilling partnership (personal work style, personal/professional values, communication style, etc.)?" (Internal Handbook, Section 5, p. 1). Both the mentor and mentee sharing important information in response to the prompts above could lead to a discussion of how much mutuality each party expects out of the relationship, but the prompts does not explicitly call for a discussion of mutuality. This worksheet stops short of encouraging discussion of mutuality and mindsets that mentor and mentee bring to the

relationship. If mentors and mentees were looking for opportunities to discuss mutuality, they could do so in response to some of the materials, but the materials do not push them to think outside of a traditional hierarchical mentoring relationship.

In the handbook there is a worksheet for the mentee to use called “Preparing for and Conducting Your First Mentoring Meeting”. This first meeting could also be an occasion to discuss roles in the relationship, and mindsets. Some of the questions open the door for more varied goals and approaches to mentoring. One question on the worksheet reads, “What do I hope to achieve out of this new relationship? What exactly do I hope my mentor will provide me?” (Internal Handbook, Section 4, p. 1) The open-ended nature of these questions means that answers to these questions could include anything from wanting support in a certain identity or intersection of identities to a desire for psychosocial support. Mentors could also include that they want a chance to discuss how the organization needs to change to be ready for diverse leadership, or how they want to learn to improve their own leadership, or something similar, but again these questions do not explicitly invite such answers. The same is true under the *Establish Rapport* section on the same worksheet. There is no explicit invitation to discuss values or identity and ways those might impact the relationship or how the mentor can contribute beyond the traditional role of imparting wisdom and knowledge (Internal Handbook, Section 4, p.1). Open ended questions on their own do not go far enough to overcome the assumed hierarchy of the mentoring relationship.

Throughout the Mentoring Handbook, discussion prompts give opportunities to build trust between mentors and mentees. Trust is foundational to developing mutuality in a relationship, but again, these prompts may not go far enough. Under the section *Recommended Actions for Helping the Mentee Look Inward* there is a guideline for the mentor to “Regularly

talk about your own development and what you have done to look inward” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p.3) This could prompt mentors to be open and honest about their experiences, and be a helpful way to build trust. In recommended actions to help the mentee look outward, mentors should “Help your mentee understand the dynamics and culture of the organization by sharing with the mentee mistakes you made along the way and what you learned from the experiences” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p.4). This suggestion invites vulnerability from the mentor, which again, can build trust. However, though building trust is valuable and is a key component to encouraging mutuality, the Mentoring Handbook does not take the extra step of explicitly encouraging mutuality outside of some occasional opportunities for vulnerability from the mentor. The prompts quoted here may build some trust, but they do not invite mutuality in stronger ways such as a mentor asking a mentee for feedback or perspective or taking a learning stance at times.

In fact, there are many times where the Mentoring Handbook reinforces a traditional, hierarchical mentoring mindset without giving alternatives which works against encouraging a relational mindset and the development of mutuality in a relationship. At the beginning of the Handbook under the section *Why Be A Mentee* it states that, “employees have the opportunity to receive career guidance from role models in the organization, and to enhance their personal development through the sharing of insights and knowledge that have been gained through the mentors’ experiences.” (Internal Handbook, Section 1, p. 1). This explanation of benefits to the mentee positions them as the receiver in the relationship and does not leave much room for them to contribute their own valuable perspective. The section called *Why Be a Mentor* says “A mentor has an opportunity to positively impact the organization by shortening the mentee’s learning curve, increasing the mentee’s job satisfaction and engagement, and ultimately

improving overall productivity and quality” (Internal Handbook, Section 1, p.1). It also lists internal satisfaction, learning about other areas of the organization, and organizational recognition of skills. Again all of these are benefits worth mentioning, but it fails to mention other benefits like gaining insight and feedback from a mentee, learning from someone different, or even learning the needs of employees and using those to shape personal leadership approaches and corporate practices. Instead these “Why” sections firmly set the mentee up as one being shaped, and the mentor up as the one shaping the mentee. By excluding benefits that emphasize a mentee's opportunity for impact and a mentor's opportunity to learn, the handbook works against the development of mutuality and a relational mindset.

The handbook goes on to use language that shows that the role of the mentor is to extract higher performance from the mentee laying out the mentor's role to “inspire and challenge a mentee to achieve his/her development objectives and become a more productive member of the organization” (Internal Handbook, Section 2, p1). Supporting a career goal is supportive of the mentee, but it also helps the corporation retain that individual. The second part about becoming a more productive member of the organization is fairly blatantly extractive. Though it is true that this is part of the corporation's goal, and it may be helpful to be transparent about that, there could be more for the mentor to consider. If the goal of mentoring is mainly extractive, then if a mentor by helping a mentee in their development helps them to see, for example, that it would be healthier for the mentee if they left the corporation, then it would seem that the mentor failed. The role of the mentor could include so much more than the handbook lays out. For instance, the handbook could include learning responsibilities for the mentor or point out the mentor's responsibility as a person with power in the corporation to support the mentee and to use what

they learn through mentoring to make change in the corporation. Instead this extractive approach detracts from the development of mutuality in a relationship.

The handbook continues to miss opportunities to prompt mentees to share perspectives and for mentors to learn from the relationship. Under *Recommended Actions for Helping the Mentee Look Inward* the handbook suggests that mentors, “Look for opportunities to observe the mentee ‘in action’ (e.g., when the mentee leads or participates in an important meeting or makes a presentation) and provide feedback.” and “Identify opportunities for the mentee to observe you ‘in action’ (e.g., at an important meeting) and debrief learnings” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p.3). This set of suggested actions demonstrates a one sided relationship between the mentee and mentor. There is no indication that it might be helpful to the mentor to also receive feedback from the mentee about their role in an important meeting.

This same pattern continues when the handbook gives guidelines for ongoing meetings including suggestions for connecting the current meeting to the previous meeting. It prompts the mentee to share “Reflections on the previous meeting, What he/she feels has happened of significance since the last meeting, Progress on commitments made during the last meeting.” The mentor then shares, “Any additional thoughts from the previous meeting, Anything else that he/she would like to discuss during this meeting” This format assumes the mentor did not make any commitments in the last meeting. There is an open-ended prompt to discuss “anything else” that would allow for the conversation to go in any direction, but again no explicit invitation to practice more mutuality in the relationship. Later in this section the guidelines prompt the mentor and mentee to “decide what actions the mentee will take prior to the next meeting” (Internal Handbook, Section 4, p. 2) reinforcing a very specific power dynamic and placing responsibility for action only on the mentee. Statements like this assume a traditional hierarchical relationship

which does not encourage mentors and mentees to explore other options even when there are occasional open ended prompts or questions.

In conclusion, if mentors and mentees approached the handbook looking for open ended questions and opportunities to break down the traditional hierarchical nature of mentoring relationships, there are some prompts in the handbook that would allow them to do so. However, overall, the Mentoring Handbook assumes a hierarchy with mentor over mentee and does not explicitly encourage exploration of a relational mindset or of practices that encourage mutuality. This narrow approach falls short of the standards set in literature that are most supportive of diverse talent and creating an inclusive mentoring program.

Do the Materials Address Power Dynamics and Bias in Mentoring Relationships?

Underpinning the idea of discussing and practicing mutuality in a mentoring relationship is the idea of how power dynamics and bias interact, and how not addressing this could bring about harm, especially for mentees who often have less power in the corporation and in the mentoring relationship. As laid out in an earlier, the handbook assumes a power dynamic where the mentor is the giver of knowledge and the mentee is the receiver. It does little to promote mutuality in the relationship or to acknowledge that both parties can learn from one another. Setting up this dynamic is especially dangerous when combined with a lack of discussion of how bias can affect a relationship and a lack of resources for learning about and addressing bias as it comes up in a relationship.

There are places throughout the Mentoring Handbook where it could prompt mentors and mentees to explicitly recognize power dynamics. For example, the Setting Expectations worksheet that mentors and mentees complete at the start of a relationship would be a helpful place to begin this power dynamics conversation. However, it does not include any questions

about navigating power dynamics. For instance, a question like “how does each party view their role in this relationship?” followed by a parenthetical prompt “This could be influenced by culture, personality, goals of the relationship, etc” would promote discussion of mentors’ and mentees’ approaches to mentoring relationships. Do they prefer more give and take on both sides? Does the mentee expect to be primarily a learner, or do they want to speak up about harmful dynamics in the corporation or share knowledge and wisdom in other ways? Beginning with a discussion on expectations and mentoring approaches would be one helpful practice, a step in the right direction.

Another area of the handbook that leaves out discussion of how power dynamics and biases may come together to cause harm is in the Mentoring Framework, *Looking Inward* section that advises the mentor to engage in the following ways: “Giving Feedback on Strengths and Development Areas, Giving Feedback on Others’ Perceptions of the Mentee, Giving Feedback on Viability of Career Goals, Getting the Mentee to Explore Alternatives” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p 2). First, there is strong emphasis on the mentor giving feedback and none on the mentee giving the mentor feedback. Second, it does not give space for the mentee to process and evaluate the feedback they receive or to push back on that feedback. The mentor’s feedback could be heavily based in their biases, and there is no way mentioned for the mentee to evaluate that. Without proper anti-bias training, inviting this kind of feedback from a mentor without a way for the mentee to evaluate or push back opens the mentee up to receiving potentially biased, racist, or sexist feedback. This could reinforce a harmful corporate culture and pushes for conformity rather than diversification.

Another potential pitfall is that the handbook does not say much about addressing issues in the relationship in general, and gives no helpful advice on how to address bias if it comes up

in the relationship.. The FAQ section gives some guidance by first pointing out what problems can occur throughout the course of a mentoring relationship including “Not enough time and energy to spend on the mentoring relationship can be problematic. When mentees do not clearly define the objectives of the relationship and/or when there is not an agreement between the mentor and the mentee, it becomes difficult to determine whether or not true progress is being made. Also, when the mentor lacks the appropriate mentoring skills, it can be detrimental to the entire experience” (Internal Handbook, Section 8, p.1) This rightfully points out that clear expectations and communication are crucial to a successful mentoring relationship just as the literature says (Turner-Moffatt, p. 18-19). The handbook also says lack of mentoring skills can be harmful. However, it does not mention any resources for receiving support or training if the mentor lacks skills. The handbook does include a list of supplementary materials, more books and handbooks, but it appears that the authors of the books are primarily white and male. (Internal Handbook, Section 7, p. 2). This list could use some updates both to diversify the author list and include some books that specifically help mentors understand more about unconscious bias and power dynamics and how they play out on an individual and systemic level. If mentors lack the ability to navigate power dynamics and inspect their own biases, they could continue to perpetuate oppressive cultural norms (Round, 2021, p. 261; Leck and Elliot, 2016 , p. 4-6). If the corporation does not provide resources to support mentors in this way whether through training or supplemental resources, it opens mentees up to harm, especially minorities and women. Relying on the mentee to give the mentor feedback about their biases to solve problems between the two creates risk for the mentee who in most cases has less power in the corporation and in the relationship.

Furthermore, many people experience discrimination in the workplace, particularly women, people of color, and other marginalized groups. This can affect organizational commitment, and have many detrimental physical and mental effects. Even witnessing or hearing about discrimination in the workplace can have these effects (Ragins et al., 2017, p. 212). Ragins et al. did a series of studies that showed that having a high quality mentoring relationship could buffer against those effects (Ragins et al., 2017, p. 211). Facing barriers at work and experiencing discrimination may be prominent reasons that a person seeks out a mentor in the first place. However, if mentors are the ones reinforcing harmful culture or stereotypes, or acting without awareness of bias, this buffering effect is lost, and this would affect the organizational commitment of mentees. This obviously works against the retention and promotion of diverse talent.

Do the Materials Support Challenging of Corporate Norms?

In addition to the importance of addressing bias in a mentoring relationship, it is also important to address how a corporation's norms can perpetuate society's biases and inequities. Corporations want to use mentoring to help overcome some of these inequities such as underrepresentation of women and racial and ethnic minorities in leadership. However, Round (2021) points out that, "women focused initiatives" are often "rooted in helping women to change, to fit in, arguably, to be more like men" and these initiatives "as demonstrated by the data" have "limited success" (p. 261). Traditional mentoring can perpetuate rather than mitigate inequity. Rather than focusing on "creating organizations fit for women", they focus on shaping women to fit into the organization (p. 261). While Round focuses on women in this study, Mcglowan-Fellows & Thomas (2004) make the case that corporations must also be fit for racial minorities pointing out that "there is a strong link between an organization's productivity and

efficiency and the degree to which its staff is diversely composed” (p. 7). They also make the important point that the problem is systemic at the corporation level as corporations should highly value diversity of perspectives, “Yet, statistically, black female executives have not been welcomed into the high-ranking, corporate relationships that include information sharing and one-on-one professional training or mentoring, which have traditionally been precursors to transfers of power from the senior executive ranks” (p. 6). Round (2021) and Mcglowan-Fellows & Thomas (2004) emphasize that companies need to change to be more welcoming and supportive of diverse talent, especially at the senior or executive level. While mentoring cannot be the only effort to make change, the corporation should explore how it can design a program that supports peer to peer learning relationships, encourages open exchange of perspectives in all mentoring relationships, and creates opportunities for mentors and mentees to explore how they might participate in creating organizations fit for women and minorities. The corporation should also not hesitate to name that discussion of barriers that these groups face plays an important role in improving the corporation and the experience of diverse talent. Those discussions should happen in many places, including in mentoring relationships.

In analyzing the Mentoring Handbook, the researcher found that overall it assumes the mentor will help the mentee navigate the company as it exists, and it makes little reference to how a mentor and mentee could challenge norms in the corporation or advocate for change. This assumes that if mentors help mentees grow and improve so that they can stay in the corporation and seek promotions or leadership positions, that the corporation could support them in those roles. However, if there are certain norms, practices, or systems in place that create an unsupportive or hostile environment for women or minorities, then this is a false assumption. Mentoring, of course, cannot solve these problems alone. However, it could be an excellent way

for leadership to understand the challenges these groups face and use their influence to support change, whether that is supporting the mentee as they pursue change or advocating for change in upper levels of the corporation where they function. It also gives mentees a venue to advocate for changes they see as necessary. The Mentoring Handbook largely misses the opportunity to promote this idea. However, there are a couple of places that could easily be modified. In the *Mentoring Framework* section there are strategies for the mentor to help the mentee look outward. Recommended actions include, “Role play strategies for handling difficult situations” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p. 4) and having “‘how did it go?’ debrief discussions after the mentee has handled a challenging situation” in which the mentor would, “Ask the mentee to discuss learnings, what worked effectively, and what he/she would do differently in the future to be even more effective” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p. 4). Conversations like these could provide space for the mentee and mentor to discuss challenging norms in everyday situations if that is related to the difficult situation the mentee faces. However, the handbook would need to specifically suggest this as a possibility. When suggesting additional mentoring ideas and activities the handbook lists, “Discuss any cultural values that are important to you and what you do to hold true to these values within a professional setting” (Internal Handbook, Section 7, p. 1) and “Discuss some of the ‘unwritten rules’ each of you have observed at [the company]. What are the implications of these ‘unwritten rules’ and what adjustments, if any, have you had to make due to them?” (Internal Handbook, Section 7, p. 1). These two suggestions could be changed slightly to support women and minorities in a mentoring relationship. The first could also include a prompt to discuss if company culture clashes with the mentee’s cultural values and how they choose to handle that. The second suggestion could add a prompt to talk about challenging unwritten rules at various levels of the corporation from personal to systemic rather

than assuming that the mentee is the one that needs to adjust. This idea should be more prominent throughout the handbook and any training materials, not just in these two places.

The handbook also misses the opportunity to suggest that mentors could commit to actions based on norms they see need to change. In the *Mentoring Framework, Looking Outward* section it explains, “Looking outward involves gaining insight into the organization’s strategic direction, values, culture, politics, unwritten rules, and unspoken assumptions to better understand the organization’s strategic direction and the resources available to help you perform in your position” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p. 3). This is valuable insight that a mentor can provide. What is missing is the opportunity for a mentee to give insight into how to make change in the corporation or for the pair to discuss different approaches for addressing norms that may actually be oppressive or harmful. The mentee may also have additional insight around unwritten rules, culture, and values depending on the different identities they hold. This could be valuable knowledge for the mentor and a chance for them to introspect and see if they are reinforcing harmful practices, and for them to consider how they might advocate for systemic change. However, the handbook gives no prompt for the mentor to take this opportunity. If the relationship has an adequate level of mutuality established and the mentor and mentee have adequate training around topics like anti-bias and making change, these could be fruitful discussions that identify the unique strengths of the mentee and how they may be uniquely qualified to contribute valuable diverse perspectives and disrupt or make change, and how the mentor can use their position in the corporation to advocate for change as well.

Do the Materials Help Overcome Barriers to Mentoring?

Barriers to suitable mentoring for women and minoritized groups is a critical consideration for designing an inclusive mentoring system. Conscious or unconscious biases and

stereotypes toward many groups create significant barriers to finding a suitable mentor in the first place and to accessing the important benefit of network expansion that mentoring can offer.

Society's stereotypes stand in the way of many minoritized groups accessing quality mentors. Women looking for mentors may find that potential mentors fear that a cross-gender mentoring relationship may be misconstrued (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 4). For women, visible minorities, and immigrants, discriminatory attitudes or lack of cross-cultural understanding leads to possible mentors underestimating potential or perceiving a lack of skills in possible mentees (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 5). For people with disabilities there was less information in the literature but Leck and Elliot (2016) note that people with disabilities often rely on friends and family for mentorship due to a lack of other suitable mentors and perhaps a reluctance of potential mentors to engage (p. 6). This project focuses on women and racial minorities, but it would be remiss to ignore barriers that other marginalized groups (such as people with disabilities) face, because many people have multiple marginalized identities to consider. Companies must understand this intersectionality and that these barriers compound with each other, but also that someone with the diversity of multiple identities offers valuable insight and unique leadership skills. Corporations should value the retention and promotion of people with these unique perspectives.

While literature shows that women and minorities face many barriers both to accessing mentors, and to experiencing all of the benefits of mentoring (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 1, 4-6; Mcglowan-Fellows and Thomas, 2004, p. 9; Gibson, 2006, p. 65), the corporation's mentoring materials do little to mitigate these problems. The Mentoring Handbook clearly states in multiple places that the mentee is responsible for forming and maintaining the mentoring relationship.

Early on it lists expectations for the mentee including, “Clarify their needs, preferences, and expectations before seeking out any potential mentors,” and "Identify and contact potential mentors that meet their needs, preferences, and expectations” (Internal Handbook, Section 2, p. 2). This clearly sets up a scenario where the mentee has to take initiative to find a mentor. For some this may be feasible, but because additional barriers to obtaining a mentor exist for minorities and marginalized groups, relying solely on this method for the formation of mentoring relationships leads to a perpetuation of that status quo. Another section of the handbook provides ideas for sources for finding a mentor:

Referrals: Ask people whom you trust for their recommendations about a potential mentor for you.

Reputation or acquaintance: You may know, or know of, someone whom you feel would make a good mentor,

Associations/Groups: Consider whether industry associations, local business groups, online forums, professors, or other groups might be able to provide information about or access to potential mentors....Please note that your Human Resources Business Partner may be able to provide you with some guidance/direction in your search for a mentor, but he/she will not be responsible for making the actual match (Internal Handbook, Section 3, p 2).

These methods rely on existing networks which, again, maintain the traditional barriers to mentoring faced by women marginalized groups. It is important to note that in the *Finding a Mentor* section under personal characteristics, the handbook calls out specific demographics including age, race, gender, years of experience, personal values, communication style, accessibility, and accomplishments/expertise (Internal Handbook, Section 3, p. 1). Explicitly

naming and addressing these needs is important. It shows that the corporation recognizes them as needs. However, without the proper support in finding a mentor, it could be difficult for an individual to find someone with these characteristics, especially because women and racial minorities often cannot find a mentor of the same identity as them (Leck and Elliot, 2016).

The *Frequently Asked Questions* section is another place in the handbook that states that the mentee is responsible for initiating and managing the relationship, saying, “Since employees ‘own’ their development at [the corporation], mentees are responsible for managing the mentoring relationship. Mentees generally initiate the relationships, identify what they would like to get out of the experience, negotiate the arrangements, and determine how to best transition out of the relationship if and when that time comes” (Internal Handbook, Section 8, p.1) This mentality could perpetuate existing barriers to mentorship. Since literature tells us that women and minorities often lack the network to find a suitable mentor, and that potential mentors have negative biases toward these groups (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 1, 4-6), putting the mentee, the person with less power in the corporation, in charge of initiating and maintaining the relationship does not overcome barriers to quality mentorship.

Visibility and exposure are two key supports that mentoring provides to mentees according to Leck and Elliot (2016, p. 1). That visibility and exposure could be limited to a relationship with a mentor, but it could also go beyond that level and help broaden the mentee’s network and career opportunities. This is especially important for women and minorities who face barriers to expanding their networks because of exclusion from dominant culture circles, because they lack opportunities like “having a drink after work, networking on the golf course” with people in dominant culture (often white males) who occupy leadership positions (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 2). Leck and Elliot’s (2016) research shows that broadening a mentee’s network

is especially important for women. “Some research has identified specific mentoring behaviors that differ in importance for men and women. For instance, a common mentoring function is introducing the mentee to the mentor’s close network of contacts, also known as the ‘advice network.’ The size of the advice network is more strongly related to career success for women (van Emmerick 2004)” (p. 3). Furthermore, because mentors continue to underestimate women and people of color who are mentees, “mentoring becomes a ‘let’s just have a coffee’ approach instead of a concerted effort and dedicated sponsorship”. However mentoring is most successful when mentors provide “career-related” support, not just psychosocial support (Leck and Elliot, 2016, p. 7). So, not only do stereotypes and biases create barriers to obtaining a mentor in the first place, they also continue to be a barrier to the benefits of mentoring once a relationship is established, particularly to the benefit of expanding the mentee’s network and career opportunities in the corporation.

The Mentoring Handbook makes some references to the practice of broadening a mentee’s network. For example, in the *Mentoring Framework* under ways to help the mentee look outward, a recommended action is to, “Introduce the mentee to people inside and outside the organization to build his/her network.” and “Encourage the mentee to network actively” (Internal Handbook, Section 6, p. 4). Later in the handbook under *Additional Mentoring Ideas and Activities* one suggestion leans more towards a sponsorship role. It suggests, “Conduct[ing] informal networking by having the mentor introduce the mentee to at least two people who could prove helpful to their careers” (Internal Handbook, Section 7, p. 1). This touches on an important part of mentoring and a practice that could help diverse talent succeed and advance at the corporation, yet it only scratches the surface of how a mentor could help broaden a mentee’s network. Once a mentoring relationship has an established trust, a mentor may feel comfortable

doing more and even taking on more of a sponsorship role for their mentee. The handbook and training materials could prime mentors to think more about how they could help grow a mentee's network. Mentors can take decisive steps to highlight the mentee's work with colleagues. In addition to making introductions, the mentor could, for example, suggest the mentee's name for projects, promotions, or other opportunities that would increase visibility and exposure on a deeper level.

Do the Materials Promote a Culture of Mentoring Throughout the Corporation?

Literature shows that for mentoring to be most effective, the corporation needs to foster a culture of mentoring and a generally supportive culture (Turner-Moffat, 2019, pp. 18-19; Gibson, 2006, pp. 68-70). A generally supportive culture is outside the scope of this project. Instead the researcher focused on how current materials support a culture of mentoring. The handbook itself contains some phrases that imply the importance of an overall culture of mentoring, but if these are not reinforced by practices throughout the corporation, then simply making materials available may not be enough. The corporation does have other programs for mentoring targeted populations, but if it is not widely available to all, again, is it enough to say the corporation has a mentoring culture? For instance, in the handbook in a list of benefits to the mentor it says, "Organizational recognition for his/her capabilities as a teacher/advisor" (Internal Handbook, Section 1, p. 1). However, it does not make suggestions in the handbook for what this recognition might look like. Does it happen organically? Is it a formal recognition from the corporation? If this is not backed up by any practices, at the corporate level is it really a benefit? Furthermore, the *FAQ* section of the handbook addresses the question "What is the business rationale for mentoring?" with the answer,

Embedding mentoring into the culture benefits the organization in a variety of ways. [It] [f]acilitates knowledge sharing and utilization, [e]mphasizes the value of continuous learning, [i]mproves employee performance and increases employee loyalty/retention, [h]elps increase the organization's bench strength and develop the next generation of leaders, [h]elps reinforce mentoring as a leadership competency (Internal Handbook, Section 8, p. 1).

The answer implies that these benefits only follow after mentoring has been embedded into the corporation's culture, but again does not say what additional steps a corporation should take to fully embed mentoring into the culture. This takes more effort on a corporate scale than simply making materials available. This is an aspect of the program that needs to be strengthened.

Conclusion

Mentoring can be a powerful tool for retaining talent and helping employees advance in their careers to the benefit of mentors, mentees, and the corporation. However, the same inequities that permeate society play out in corporate mentoring programs, creating barriers to success, causing harm, and perpetuating oppression. By using the lens of social innovation, and by bringing in best practices influenced by feminism and critical race theory, corporations can begin to address the limitations of traditional mentoring. With continued openness to prototyping and iterating with input from diverse perspectives and from participants, corporations can create inclusive mentoring programs that foster the retention and promotion of diverse talent.

The following pages contain a summary of current gaps specific to the mentoring materials available at the corporation where the researcher works, followed by suggested improvements. Finally there is also a slide deck that can be used by the corporation for

mentoring program orientation sessions for mentees and mentors. The slide deck is meant to give insight into how materials and supporting resources could work together as a system for mentors and mentees. Many of the resources and supports mentioned in this orientation would need to be created at the time when the corporation is ready to invest time and resources in improving its mentoring program. Each of these things, the summary of gaps, the suggested improvements, and the orientation slide deck are intended to give the corporation a strong starting point for an inclusive mentoring program.

Summary of Current Gaps

The above analysis identifies a number of current gaps in the corporation's current mentoring materials:

- The Mentoring Handbook is only minimally supportive of multiple mentoring formats such as having multiple mentors, peer mentoring, or group mentoring. The handbook generally assumes a one on one relationship between an experienced mentor and a less experienced mentee.
- The Mentoring Handbook positions the mentor as the giver of knowledge and wisdom, and the mentee as the recipient. There are few implications that the mentor and mentee could work towards a more mutual relationship.
- The existing materials do not support the mentor or mentee in challenging norms at the corporation. There are some prompts to discuss how to navigate unwritten rules and other aspects of the company, but there is no explicit reference to challenging norms that may be oppressive or harmful.
- There could be more prompts in the Mentoring Handbook for the mentor to consider filling a sponsorship role for the mentee once trust is established in the relationship, more explicitly helping the mentee network and suggesting them for opportunities to increase their visibility and growth.
- The Mentoring Handbook mentions a mentoring culture, but the corporation would need to take more steps to embed mentoring into its culture. Simply making materials available on the employee site is not enough.
- The Mentoring Handbook on its own does not overcome barriers to mentoring. Though it provides some guidance along the way, it does not address the difficulties many women

and minorities face in even initially finding a suitable mentor, or to overcoming negative biases mentors may hold once a relationship is established.

- By not accounting for biases or power dynamics, the Handbook on its own runs the risk of putting mentees in the position to experience harm and oppression in the mentoring relationship. Without additional resources for both parties around these topics, mentoring will simply perpetuate the status quo.
- The handbook also does not include the following
 - Trainings
 - Ongoing resources distributed at the corporate level
 - Tracking/data collection to see effectiveness mentoring
 - Way to identify who may benefit from a mentor
 - Opportunities to be a part of a mentoring community

Suggested Improvements

Mentoring Handbook Improvements

- Modify the handbook to have a broader definition of mentoring including
 - Less focus on creating a career development plan
 - More mentoring formats promoted throughout materials
 - Definition of roles for the mentor and mentee that promote more mutual exchange of wisdom and knowledge
- Include prompts for mentors and mentees to consider how they can challenge norms and make change in the corporation, especially to make the corporation ready for the promotion and retention of diverse talent.

- Include prompts for mentors to look for ways they can act to help mentees to have more opportunities and visibility to mentors' networks
- Include language around power dynamics and prompts to discuss them within the relationship. It should also instruct the mentor to consider their own biases.
- Add activity suggestions to promote more mutual exchange of ideas, wisdom, knowledge, and feedback.

Corporate Level Additional Resources (managed by Talent Management)

- Provide ongoing power dynamics and anti-bias training.
- Provide mentees access to resources and support that they can tap into for advocacy if they feel they are experiencing biases in the relationship that they do not feel comfortable addressing on their own.
- Provide matching support for those who may need it by creating a pool of diverse potential mentors. Then give individuals a way to reach out to Human Resources and receive different levels of support in finding a mentor. Some may already have someone in mind and be capable of starting the relationship on their own. Others may need some help making an initial introduction. Still others may know what they need in a mentor but not know how to find one. These employees could be connected with a mentor from the existing pool.
- Provide consultation and support for groups who want to conduct a more formal mentoring program within their group, function, department, region, etc., meeting with them regularly or as needed to help them navigate tools the company offers.

- Partner with the DEI team and the data analytics team to come up with metrics and surveys to track the success of mentoring at the corporation and specifically the effects it has on the retention and promotion of diverse talent.

Improvements to Build a Mentoring Culture

- Publish blogs highlighting mentor and mentee experiences
- Offer ongoing trainings to give mentors and mentees the opportunity to learn how to make the most of their relationships and overcome difficulties
- Create an online community through a tool like Microsoft Teams to give mentors and mentees visibility to what other mentors and mentees are doing
- Host in-person or virtual social gatherings for mentors and mentees to provide networking opportunities, and to celebrate participants in the program, acknowledging the investments all parties have made.

Talent Management should prototype and be open to iterating on the improvements suggested above based on user feedback and data collected.

Training Agenda and Materials

An important output to this project besides the specific suggestions for improvement provided above, is an orientation training that Talent Management professionals would provide for mentors and mentees. This would be required at the start of a mentoring relationship. A recording of this training would also be available for those who need to take it asynchronously or for a group that might want to hold their own training. This training is intended for mentors and mentees to attend or watch together after being matched.



Add Company Name

Mentoring

an introduction to mentoring at [company]



Welcome! We are so excited to get you connecting to our mentoring resources and community

[Facilitator Introductions]

[Shout outs to any groups or departments who sent mentors/mentees to this training]

Agenda

- What is mentoring?
- Why is mentoring important?
- Interview with mentor and mentee
- Resources and support
- How to get started: setting expectations
- Breakout groups
- Key Dates
- Contact
- Anti-Bias Training by consulting partners

Here is our agenda for today. We'll cover some of the basics of mentoring at the company, interview some mentors and mentees, introduce you to important resources, give you some tips on how to get started. [Then you'll have a chance to chat with some colleagues in breakouts.] We'll finish by sharing some key dates and ways to contact us before handing it over to our consulting partners who will take us through anti-bias training. [If you have questions throughout, feel free to use the chat]

What is Mentoring?

Possible formats and roles

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Possible Formats



1:1
one mentor with one mentee



Peer Mentoring
Two colleagues mentoring each other



Group Mentoring
Multiple colleagues come together to mentor each other



Mentoring Network
One person may have multiple mentors, or multiple mentees

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

You have probably seen these definitions before especially if you leveraged our intake form or watched the mentoring promotional video.

We start with what is often seen as the traditional format, one mentor and one mentee. We also have peer mentoring where two colleagues support and advise each other. Group mentoring can have a couple dynamics. All the members may act as peers, or there may be designated mentors and mentees. Finally we have mentoring networks where one person may have multiple mentors. The benefit to this format is that you get a variety of perspectives and kinds of expertise.

Materials and trainings at the company support all of these kinds of mentoring as we know that needs vary from person to person and from setting to setting.

Roles

Mentor

Often an experienced member of the company who meets regularly with a mentee, multiple mentees, or mentoring group to support their growth and development and provide psychosocial support

Mentee

Often a less experienced or newer member of the company who meets regularly with a mentor, network of mentors, or a group to gain both psychosocial support and growth and development support, and often to offer their own feedback and perspective

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

I want to highlight a few things about these definitions. 1) Growth and development - also known as career support, and psychosocial support are both included.

Career support includes things like support in career goals, navigating the company, and exposure to networks and career opportunities

Psychosocial support is more of that personal side of the relationship providing acceptance and counseling, caring for and investing in a person.

2) Traditionally we often think of the mentor as the giver and the mentee as the recipient. At this company we encourage mentors and mentees to explore different levels of mutual contribution. This depends on what you are comfortable with, but it is important to recognize that both mentors and mentees have valuable perspectives to contribute. Sharing of wisdom, knowledge and experience from both roles encourages learning and trust.

Roles

Talent Management

Professionals from Talent Management are available to support you in your mentoring journey. Their main role is to help you find resources, provide ongoing training, and stay connected to the broader mentoring community at the company.

Additional Support

You can also seek support from your local or functional HR Partner, or from the mentoring point person for **your group** (such as your Business Inclusion Group if that is how you became involved in mentoring)

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

You have support! Your go-to person might be your local/departmental/or functional HR partner, or the point person from your group. If you have questions about the broader program or community, or don't know how to get connected with one of the people I just listed, Talent Management is the place to go. We'll share how to contact us toward the end of this training.

Why is Mentoring Important?

Benefits to mentors, mentees, and the company

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentee

- Improved self-awareness
- Increased level of engagement
- Enhanced knowledge and skills
- Expanded personal network
- Increased understanding of organization's culture
- Accelerated career mobility
- Psychosocial support
- Opportunity to give feedback and share knowledge and skills

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

There are many great benefits to being a mentee. You are probably coming in with your own goals and expectations for what you would like out of the relationship, too, so you may put more emphasis on some benefits over others. Please notice the last benefit listed. Again, here we believe that mentees have important perspectives that can influence mentors and company practices.

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentor

- Greater internal satisfaction and fulfillment
- Increased ability to develop leaders and talent within the organization
- Opportunity to learn about other areas within the organization
- Organizational recognition for capabilities as a teacher/advisor
- Opportunity to help shape an employee's future at the company
- Improved self-awareness
- Enhanced knowledge and skills
- Expanded personal network
- Increased understanding of organization's culture

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

There is some overlap in benefits for mentors and mentees as both should treat this as a learning relationship.

Benefits of Mentoring

Company

- Increased job satisfaction
- Increased engagement
- Positive impact on retention
- Foster's relationships across departments
- Creates visibility for employees
- Fosters opportunities to learn more about company's talent including their needs and barriers they face

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Finally mentoring has benefits for the company too. Not only is it an enriching experience for participants, it is also good business. We want you to grow here and use your skill here. You also have a hand in shaping the company and its culture and mentoring can be a vehicle for that.

Interview with a Mentor and Mentee

Meet (Names)

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Meet some mentors and mentees!

[Back to Agenda Page](#)



Name
Role



Name
Role



Name
Role

Next we have some mentors and mentees who have joined us so you can see how others have leveraged the resources and the program and have benefitted from mentoring. [Proceed to spotlight mentor/mentee guests and conduct interview]

Resources and Support

How to find what you need, when you need it.

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

The next couple slides will give you a quick overview of available resources and when to leverage them. You will receive this slide deck as part of your welcome packet, so you will have links to all of these going forward.

Mentoring Resources

Your journey

Match

with mentor(s)/
mentee(s)/ group

Orientation

to resources and
mentoring community

Getting Started

initial meetings



You are here

Resources

Match

HR partner, group point
person, or Talent Health
intake form

Orientation

This training,
welcome packet

Handbook

Setting expectations
worksheet, first meeting
guide



The top row lays out your journey as a mentor or mentee, and the bottom row shows the relevant resources at each point in time.

The first step is matching which you have already done, but the resources are listed in case you want to share them with colleagues.

You are currently at orientation and will receive a welcome packet via email later this week.

After this training you'll set up your initial meeting with your partner or group. You may have already had an informal one, but at this time you will want to leverage the setting expectations worksheet which you will fill out ahead and bring to your first meeting so you can negotiate and agree on expectations going forward. We'll talk more about this tool later. There is also a first meeting guide that will help you get started and cover important topics.

Mentoring Resources Continued

Your journey



Resources

Handbook

Mentoring framework, suggested ongoing agenda, activity suggestions, relationship assessment

Community

Optional training and gatherings, blog, teams channel, newsletter, feedback surveys

Navigating Difficulties

HR Partners, other point person, survey to request advocacy/support

Handbook & Survey

Closing relationship guide, end of relationship survey

After your initial meeting you'll continue to develop the relationship(s), building trust will be important especially early on. In the handbook there are resources such as a suggested meeting agenda, additional activity suggestions if you don't want to do the same thing every time, and a relationship assessment to help you continue to talk about how things are going for everyone involved.

You'll also receive an invite to our teams community so you can connect with other mentors/mentees and maybe see what they are up to. Newsletters and blogs will also help with this. We also offer events and trainings which are available live and as videos if you can't make it. Twice a year you'll receive a survey about your mentoring experience. I cannot emphasize how valuable your feedback is. We are always trying to improve and meet your needs.

Finally, also remember that we are here to help. Reach out to your HR Partners, or other point person, or fill out a request for support.

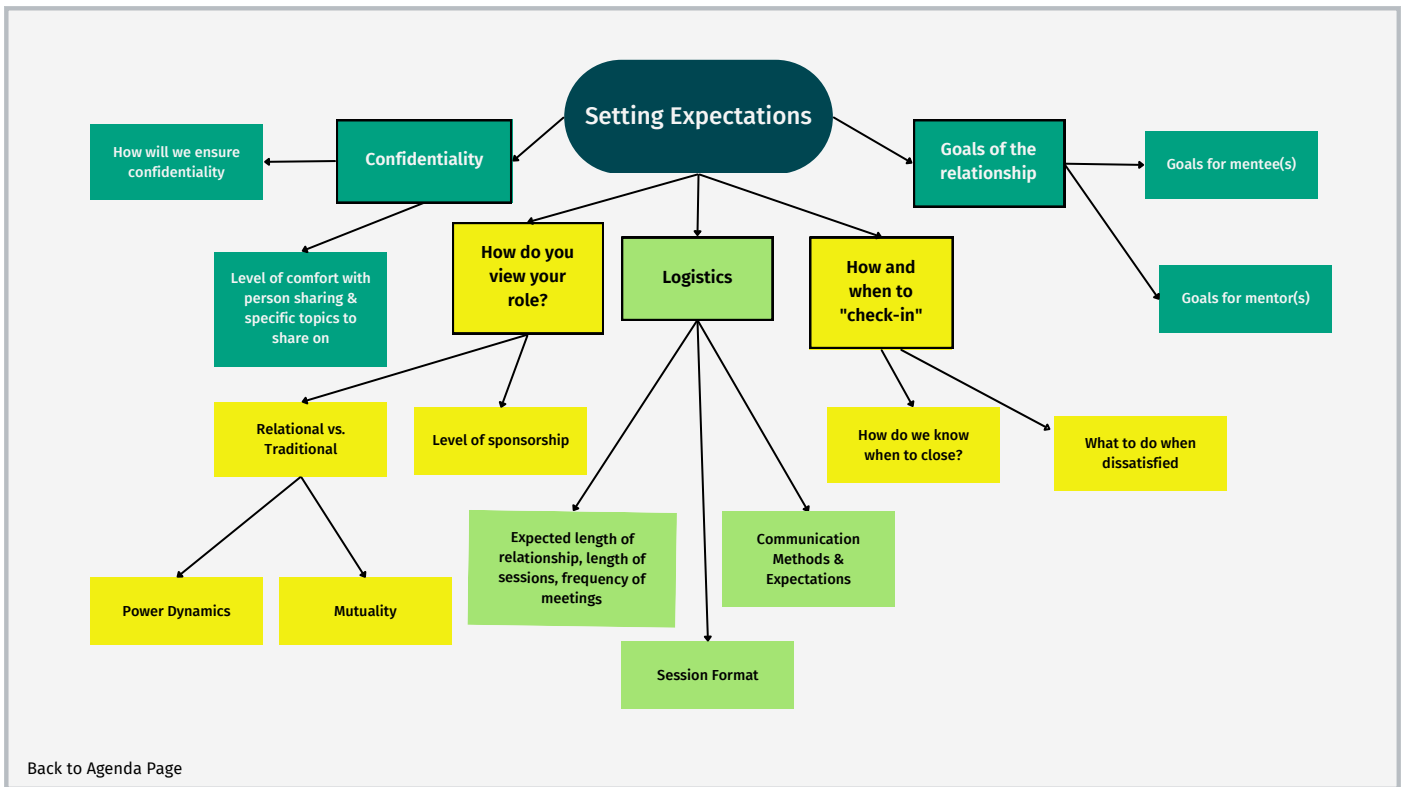
Finally, when it's time to close a relationship - maybe you set an end date, or your focus changes, or you just know it's time - you want to end well, so we've provided a conversation guide, and a final survey to help with the process. The company does not set a time limit on your relationship. Your group or function might have set one, but generally relationships can go on as long as you agree is appropriate.

How to Get Started

Setting expectations

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Now we are going to focus in on your next step: Setting expectations.



Setting clear expectations is key to a successful relationship. It's a part of clear communication.

In the handbook there is a worksheet that covers these topics: Confidentiality, How do you view your role?, logistics, How and when to check in, and goals of the relationship. You want to fill this out before your first meeting, but know that you will make modifications based on what the other person or people bring to the table.

I want to highlight a few things. 1) Under how do you view your role, you'll see some terms that might not be familiar to you. Relational vs. traditional has to do with how much give and take you want. As a mentee, do you want to do some teaching of skills or knowledge? As a mentor, do you expect to ask for feedback? Under this is power dynamics and mutuality. Which are related and defined in the handbook. How you view your role can be influenced by a lot of things - culture, current level of trust, tenure at the company. Be honest about your expectations here. It can lead to some confusion and frustration if there is a mismatch in expectations.

The next one is level of sponsorship. Sponsorship is when a mentor goes out of their way to advocate for and help a mentee gain visibility, suggests them for opportunities and makes introductions to people in your network (can be relevant for peers and groups too). This may come later in the relationship after more trust is built, but be honest up front about what you need and expect (mentee), and what you are willing to do (mentor).

Breakout Groups

Meet other mentors and mentees

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Breakout Topics

Name, Department, Position, Tenure

How did you get connected with mentoring?

What expectations/goals do you have that are important to you to cover with your partner(s)?



[Back to Agenda Page](#)

We've covered a lot of ground, and we still have some important topics to cover, so we are going to divide into groups to switch things up, and have some time to process what we've covered so far. You can see some prompts on the right. We'll send these to your groups in chat use what is helpful to you. We will bring you back in about 10 minutes. If you are watching a recording, take some time to either process with whoever you are watching with, or jot some thoughts in a notebook. Everyone should also feel free to get up and stretch!

Key Dates

Mark your calendars!

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

[Welcome back to the main room. Before we jump into key dates, did anyone have some discussion, learnings, or questions they would like to share from their group?]

Calendar and Key Dates

January	February	March	April
20 Navigating Rough Patches (optional training)		15 Live Mentoring Orientation	7 Mentoring Community Gathering
May	June	July	August
20 Creating Synergy and Mutuality (optional training)		20 Breaking Down Barriers in the Workplace (optional training)	
September	October	November	December
	15 Live Mentoring Orientation	7 Mentoring Community Gathering	

Newsletters and blog posts released quarterly. Join our Teams Channel to stay connected!

Here you can see some key dates for the year.

[explain where we are in the year]

In general you can see that we offer this orientation live twice a year, so if you have friends who are interested, feel free to share this timing with them. We also periodically offer optional trainings that promote best practices in your relationship. It's a great opportunity to gather with other mentors and mentees. The trainings will also be made available on our resource page after. Groups or pairs could watch the recordings together too.

We also have two mentoring community gatherings a year. These are networking opportunities and a time to celebrate all the ways we are supporting each other!

Finally, you'll receive newsletters and blog notifications quarterly, and you can join our teams community to connect with each other.

Contact Us

Who to contact for support

Your HR Partner: Don't know who that is? Use email below

Point Person for Your Group: Don't know who that is? Use email below
mentoring@company.com

Reach out on Mentoring Teams Channel

Fill out request for support on Mentoring Resources Page

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Again, we are here to support! Choose the way that works best for you and we will do our best to help you find what you need.

Anti-Bias Training

By our DEI consulting partners

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Next I'll hand it over to our DEI consultant partners to conduct anti-bias training. They'll help us inspect how power dynamics and biases can play out especially in mentoring relationships, and highlight some opportunities mentors and mentees can take to challenge or navigate harmful biases on the personal and company level. Sometimes mentoring has either intentionally or inadvertently been used by companies to teach conformity or perpetuate harmful practices or company culture. This training is meant give you some awareness and tools to prevent that, but of course it takes ongoing learning and effort. Let me introduce [presenter names].

Resource Links

[Mentoring Handbook](#)

[Calendar of Events](#)

[Teams Channel](#)

[Blog](#)

[Mentoring Resources Page - additional books/materials, request for help survey, and more!](#)

[Training Courses/Videos](#)

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Thank you to [consultant names]!

Don't forget that you'll receive this slide deck as part of your welcome packet and this slide is a great place to return to for resources.

If you are watching this as a recording, be sure to reply to the email we sent you with a link to this video to let us know you've completed the training and are ready to receive your welcome packet.

Thank you!

And welcome to the mentoring community...

[Back to Agenda Page](#)

Thank you and welcome to the mentoring community! We are excited to have you.

References

- Deptula, B. J., & Williams, E. A. (2017). An Intersubjective Perspective on the Role of Communal Sharing in Synergistic Co-mentoring: Implications for Human Resource Development. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 28(3), 369–400.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21287>
- Ghosh, R., Hutchins, H. M., Rose, K. J., & Manongsong, A. M. (2020). Exploring the lived experiences of mutuality in diverse formal faculty mentoring partnerships through the lens of mentoring schemas. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 31(3), 319–340.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21386>
- Gibson, S. (2006). Mentoring of Women Faculty: The Role of Organizational Politics and Culture. *Innovative Higher Education*, 31(1), 63–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-006-9007-7>
- Goerisch, D., Basiliere, J., Rosener, A., McKee, K., Hunt, J., & Parker, T. M. (2019). Mentoring with: reimagining mentoring across the university. *GENDER PLACE AND CULTURE*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2019.1668752>
- Groves T. (2021). Establishing mentoring programs for the advancement of women in the workplace. *New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, 33(3), 66–69. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.20342>
- Leck, J. D., & Elliott, C. (2016). Shattering Glass: e-Mentoring and the Advancement of Diversity. *International Journal of Organizational Diversity*, 16(4), 1–15.
- Liu, Y., Abi Aad, A., Maalouf, J., & Abou Hamdan, O. (2021). Self- vs. other-focused mentoring motives in informal mentoring: conceptualizing the impact of motives on mentoring

- behaviours and beneficial mentoring outcomes. *Human Resource Development International*, 24(3), 279–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2020.1789401>
- Mcglowan-Fellows, B., & Thomas, C. S. (2004). Changing Roles: Corporate Mentoring of Black Women: A Review with Implications for Practitioners of Mental Health. *International Journal of Mental Health*, 33(4), 3–18.
- Ragins, B. R., Ehrhardt, K., Lyness, K. S., Murphy, D. D., & Capman, J. F. (2017). Anchoring Relationships at Work: High-Quality Mentors and Other Supportive Work Relationships as Buffers to Ambient Racial Discrimination. *Personnel Psychology*, 70(1), 211–256. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12144>
- Round, S. (2021). Can reciprocal mentoring as a progressive tool contribute to creating shared understanding of women’s career equality challenges? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching & Mentoring*, 15, 260–269. <https://doi.org/10.24384/a7fa-5w16>
- Turner-Moffatt, C. (2019). THE POWER OF MENTORSHIP: Strengthening Women in Leadership Roles. *Professional Safety*, 64(8), 17–19.