



National Youth Mentoring Benchmarks 2007

Fostering the growth and development of high quality youth mentoring



YOUTH MENTORING NETWORK

**The National Youth Mentoring
Benchmarks are supported by the
partners of the National Youth
Mentoring Partnership.**



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**Supported by the Australian Government
Department of Families, Community
Services and Indigenous Affairs**

Overview Statement

Mentoring is many things but at its heart lies an affirmation of human relationships and the capacity to enable those involved (the young people and their mentors) to learn and to grow. At the same time mentoring is no soft option.

Quality mentoring programs require hard work and tough decisions. They require firm undertakings from all involved. They operate with purpose and deliver real outcomes from raising self-esteem, healthier behaviours, and improved school attendance through to better informed career choices and a more secure place in education or the workforce.

Like any relationship, the development of a mentoring relationship takes time and commitment. The strong, personal relationships that are of most value should not be left to chance. It is essential that structured mentoring programs are developed and implemented using consistent standards.

The first set of Australian Benchmarks for Effective and Responsible Mentoring Programs were developed in June 2000 when mentoring was a reasonably new strategy in Australia. This new set of benchmarks is based on the earlier benchmarks but takes account of experience and research in Australia over the last seven years. They have been collaboratively refined and elaborated by a representative group of Australian practitioners and researchers.

These benchmarks are a set of minimum standards that all mentoring programs are encouraged to follow. The Youth Mentoring Network, through the sharing of resources, professional development and collegial networking, encourages all mentoring programs to achieve these standards.

The benchmarks will continue to evolve with our collective knowledge and experience. They are offered by the Youth Mentoring Network as a further contribution to the development of a collaborative youth mentoring community in Australia.



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Planning is an essential part of the development and implementation of a quality mentoring program.

How to use the benchmarks

A. Pre-program planning

Planning is an essential part of the development and implementation of a quality mentoring program. Pre-program planning ensures that all aspects of a mentoring program are carefully considered and put in place before the program begins.

The following guide provides a step-by-step process for planning a quality mentoring program. By following this guide programs will have a solid foundation for achieving benchmarks status. The complete process may take from 3 to 12 months.

B. Benchmarks

Each benchmark is an essential feature of a quality mentoring program, and together they provide a model of quality practice. Comparing an existing or new mentoring program against these benchmarks will assist in the further improvement of the program.

The benchmarks cover:

1. Program design and planning
2. Program evaluation
3. Organisational governance and management
4. Program operations



Outline the type of mentoring that the program will offer

Pre-program planning

1. Needs analysis and research

- a. In consultation with the community demonstrate a need for the proposed program.
- b. Based on the results of the needs analysis, research successful models of mentoring that best respond to the target population.

2. Design the parameters of the program

- a. Define the youth population that the program will serve.
- b. Identify the types of individuals who will be recruited as mentors (e.g. senior citizens, corporate employees and university students).
- c. Outline the type of mentoring that the program will offer (e.g. one-to-one, group, peer or e-mentoring).
- d. Outline the structure of the mentoring program (e.g. as a stand-alone program or as part of an existing organisation).
- e. Develop initial and ongoing training requirements for mentors including orientation, roles and responsibilities etc.
- f. Decide what preparation will be provided for mentees, parents/guardians and other community stakeholders such as schools, businesses etc.
- g. Define the nature and focus of the mentoring program (e.g. career involvement, school to work transition, academic support and socialisation).
- h. Outline the basis for matching mentors and mentees (e.g. gender, interests, personalities or careers).
- i. Determine what the program will accomplish and what outcomes will result for the participants, including mentors, mentees and sponsoring organisations.
- j. Determine when the mentoring will take place.
- k. Outline how often mentors and mentees will meet and how long the mentoring matches should continue.
- l. Decide where mentoring matches primarily will meet – workplace, school, cultural and religious organisation, juvenile justice facility, community setting, youth program or virtual community.
- m. Decide how to engage and promote the program to stakeholders.
- n. Develop monitoring and support structures to ensure that the program has regular contact with both mentees and mentors regarding the effectiveness of their relationship (e.g. regular mentor debriefing sessions).

3. Plan how to evaluate the program

- a. Determine measurable outcomes.
- b. Decide on the evaluation design.
- c. Determine what data will be collected, how it will be collected and the sources of data.
- d. Determine what additional resources will be required to support the evaluation (e.g. consultant fees, community consultation).
- e. Determine the effectiveness of the program processes.
- f. Ensure the findings are distributed appropriately.
- g. Decide how the findings will be reported.
- h. Plan how to implement recommendations and findings from the evaluation.

4. Plan how the program will be managed

- a. Decide what management infrastructure will underpin the program (e.g. management committee, advisory group).
- b. Develop policies and procedures for the management structure.
- c. Develop a recruitment strategy, job description, selection criteria and remuneration package for a coordinator.
- d. Develop ongoing staff training and professional development for the management structure.
- e. Develop policies and procedures that will guide the program.
- f. Develop a financial plan:
 - develop a program budget
 - determine the amount of funding needed to start and sustain the program
 - identify and secure a diversified funding stream needed to start and sustain the program
 - determine the amount of time each funding source can be expected to provide resources
 - establish internal controls and auditing requirements
 - establish a system for managing program finances.
- g. Establish governance procedures.

5. Implement the program:

- a. Recruit a program coordinator.
- b. Develop an implementation action plan for the program including:
 - recruitment of mentors, mentees and other volunteers
 - screen potential mentors and mentees
 - orient and train mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers
 - match mentors and mentees
 - bring mentors and mentees together for mentoring sessions that fall within program parameters
 - provide ongoing support, supervision and monitoring of mentoring relationships
 - recognise the contribution of all program participants
 - help mentors and mentees reach closure.

Benchmarks

1. Program design and planning

Good planning leads to informed decision making. Taking adequate time to consult, design and plan is essential for an effective and achievable program. To maximise the likelihood of success a time frame between 3 and 12 months is common for the planning phase.

Key elements of design and planning:

- a. Clear program parameters (e.g. target groups, program structure, stakeholders).
- b. Consultation with relevant stakeholders.
- c. Program management guidelines that include governance structures, policies and procedures and financial commitment.
- d. Recruitment of a skilled paid coordinator.
- e. Detailed action plan for program implementation which includes recruitment, selection and screening, training and development, matching, monitoring and support and closure.
- f. A systematic plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the program and ongoing refinement.

2. Program evaluation

Evaluation allows judgement of whether the program is meeting its stated objectives and provides opportunities for program improvement. An evaluation process must be designed before the program commences and should be reviewed and assessed as the program develops.

Key elements of program evaluation:

- a. A commitment to ongoing evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the program.
- b. A dedicated budget for evaluation (e.g. for consultant or tools).
- c. An evaluation team that has accountability and transparency, representative of all relevant stakeholders, to oversee the evaluation process.
- d. Clearly defined outcomes which reflect the mission & objectives of the program.
- e. A clear plan to assess program outcomes.
- f. A clear plan to assess program processes (e.g. policy, training, selection, support).
- g. Evaluation tools (e.g. surveys, focus groups, program documents) that collect both qualitative and quantitative data.
- h. A clear system to collate, analyse and interpret data.
- i. Findings that are reported to all relevant stakeholders.
- j. A plan to incorporate the evaluation findings.

3. Organisational governance and management

A well managed mentoring program requires a management infrastructure underpinned by well developed and targeted organisational policies and practices.

Key elements of organisational governance and management:

- a. Clear mission and vision statements.
- b. A clear statement of purpose for effective mentoring incorporating values and principles underpinning the program.
- c. A strategic alignment with the organisation's mission and vision.



A time frame between 3 and 12 months is common for the planning phase.

- d. Policies and procedures which address:
 - legal responsibilities
 - insurance (including volunteer insurance)
 - privacy and confidentiality
 - O.H.S (including harassment)
 - risk management and duty of care
 - child safety policy and practice standards
 - values and ethics
 - grievance
 - operational management
 - rights and responsibilities
 - employment and industrial issues.
- e. A suitable governance structure (e.g. board of directors, management committee or steering committee) that is responsible for the accountability of the program.
- f. An advisory group that has a focus on implementing and reviewing ongoing development of the mentoring program.
- g. A comprehensive information management system inline with the organisation's policies that includes:
 - financial records
 - personnel records
 - program activity
 - evaluation data.

An evaluation process must be designed before the program commences.



- h. A strategy to support program sustainability that includes:
 - collaborative alliances/arrangements (e. g. training and sharing of resources)
 - long term and diverse funding and support
 - high public profile members from the local community.
- i. A staff development and support plan.
- j. An established public relations/communications plan that:
 - includes a marketing plan
 - gathers feedback from all stakeholders
 - develops partnerships and collaborations with other organisations
 - recognises mentors, mentees, other program participants, funding bodies and organisations that sponsor mentoring programs
 - includes a promotions and marketing kit (e.g. pamphlets, DVDs, website etc).

4. Program operations

There are six core practice areas for mentoring programs that require defined operating principles:

1. Recruitment
2. Selection and screening
3. Training and development
4. Creating the match
5. Monitoring and supporting the match
6. Closing the match

N.B. These principals apply to all forms of mentoring including e-mentoring.

4.1 Recruitment

A recruitment strategy needs to consider both mentors and mentees.

High quality mentors are a vital element of a successful program. A planned and targeted recruitment strategy is essential for attracting and retaining appropriate mentors who meet the needs of the program.

Mentoring may not be appropriate for all young people. A planned and targeted recruitment strategy is required for selecting mentees in accordance with the program objectives.

Key elements of recruitment of mentors and mentees:

- a. A targeted recruitment strategy that includes:
 - identification of target markets
 - a marketing plan
 - ongoing marketing and public relations in accordance with the identified purposes and participants of the program.
- b. Provision of program information that includes:
 - role expectations
 - time commitment
 - duration of the relationship
 - selection and screening processes
 - training and development requirements
 - matching processes
 - monitoring and support offered by the program
 - closure procedures.

4.2 Selection and screening

To ensure the safety and security of mentors and mentees a responsible mentoring program must have a documented and comprehensive selection and screening process.

Key elements of selection and screening:

- a. A formal application and assessment process.
- b. Face to face interview of mentors.
- c. A minimum of two referee checks.
- d. Adherence to all relevant Federal, State and Territory legislation.
- e. Relevant State and Territory child protection/safety checks for all prospective mentors of young people.
- f. A national criminal history check for prospective mentors.
- g. A willingness of prospective mentors to participate in training and development.

4.3 Training and development

Training and development provides an opportunity for mentors to develop appropriate skills and knowledge to adequately prepare them to commence their role. Opportunities for additional training and development are important to support the ongoing needs of the mentor, the mentee and the relationship.

Key elements of training and development:

- b. An information session for mentors and mentees that includes:
 - an overview of the program
 - clarification of roles and responsibilities
 - description of eligibility, screening process, and suitability requirements
 - clarification of the level of commitment expected (e.g. time, energy, flexibility)
 - confidentiality and liability information
 - do's and don'ts of relationship management
 - boundaries and limitations for the contact between mentors and mentees
 - identification of the benefits and recognition available to mentors from involvement in the program
 - a written summary of program policies, procedures and guidelines.
- c. An effective training program for mentors that includes:
 - skilled and experienced trainers
 - mentor training materials that are adapted to address the issues most relevant to the program, the mentees who participate and the mentors, including:
 - definitions
 - roles, responsibilities and expectations
 - ethics and values
 - cultural and social sensitivity, including acceptance of individual differences
 - youth development and related issues
 - development of the mentoring relationship
 - suggestions for mentoring activities
 - setting of personal boundaries and parameters
 - crisis management and problem solving
 - conflict resolution



Monitoring and supporting the match assists to motivate and guide the relationship.

- communication and interpersonal skills
- explanation of confidentiality, duty of care and legislated child protection responsibilities
- resources and referral points for other support services.
- ongoing skill development as appropriate.

4.4 Creating the match

A well-planned matching process confirms the roles, responsibilities and expectations of both parties and increases the likelihood of a successful relationship.

Key elements of matching:

- a. Well defined criteria for matching, linking program's statement of purpose and eligibility.
- b. Personal profiles of both mentors and mentees to inform the match.
- c. Clearly articulated and defined matching processes.
- d. An understanding and agreement by all stakeholders (mentors, mentees, parents/ caregivers) of the terms and conditions of program participation.

4.5 Monitoring and supporting the match

Monitoring and supporting the match assists to motivate and guide the relationship. It provides opportunities for constructive feedback and assists risk management and quality assurance procedures.

Key elements of monitoring and supporting the match:

- a. Appropriate and safe locations for the mentor and mentee to meet.
- b. A process to review relationship expectations.
- c. Opportunities for regular scheduled feedback, debriefing, troubleshooting and support.
- d. Contact made by the program, at least monthly, to monitor the frequency of meetings.

- e. Contact made by the program, at least quarterly, to review the quality of the relationship.
- f. Training and development which meets the identified needs of the mentors (such as guest speakers, networking and peer support).
- g. Recognition of the mentor's contribution.
- h. Recognition of the mentee's participation and achievements.
- i. Assistance for mentors and mentees who are experiencing difficulties within the relationship.
- j. Written records of all contact between program personnel and mentor/mentee.
- k. A process for managing grievances, recognition, re-matching, interpersonal problem solving and premature termination of the mentoring relationship.
- l. Record/monitor transcripts from e-mentoring sessions.
- m. Appropriate support resources and materials for the professional development of the mentor (e.g. fact sheets).

4.6 Closing the match

To signal an appropriate end to the formal relationship and for safety, legal and professional reasons, all stakeholders must clearly understand when the relationship ends.

Key elements of closing the match:

- a. Recognition of participation (e.g. celebration event, certificates).
- b. A formal closure policy with clear procedures for exiting the program and future contact (e.g. formal letter, exit interviews or debriefing).
- c. Notification to all relevant stakeholders of the closure of the match (e.g. parents/guardians, teachers, principals etc).
- d. An exit process for those who wish to terminate the relationship prematurely.
- e. A transition policy to assist mentees to define the next steps to continue achieving personal goals.

Glossary

Business Mentoring

Business mentoring programs work with companies who want to give something back to the local community in which they are operating. Mentoring often takes place in the work place and includes activities such as tutoring, job shadowing, and career exploration.

Community Based Mentoring

Community based mentoring is usually one-to-one mentoring where the mentor shows the mentee different social experiences often within their local community but also in the broader community. These activities may include, going to the movies, parks, playing sport, career exploration, assisting with their homework and teaching them life skills. Regular, long-term commitment is an essential ingredient of community based mentoring.

Electronic Mentoring (e-Mentoring)

Electronic mentoring uses technology to connect the mentor and the mentee. These programs are usually used in situations where the mentees are in isolated areas or where the volunteers are restricted in the amount of time they can volunteer. The mentors and mentees communicate through messages using a system similar to email. Messages are monitored by the program.

Faith Based

Faith based programs are usually attached to a religious organisation or place of worship. The values of the religion are reflected in the programs mission and purpose. The activities that take place in these programs are those similar to community based programs. While the programs may be affiliated with a religious organisation most will include participants from the whole community and not only from within their congregation.

Mentoring:

For the purpose of the Youth Mentoring Network, mentoring aims to provide a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and character of the mentee (Adapted from Mentor/National Mentoring Partnership and Robyn Hartley's "Young people and mentoring: towards a national strategy" 2004 Report).

School Based Mentoring

Similar to site-based, school based mentoring takes place at the mentees' school either during school hours or immediately after. School based programs often target students at risk of leaving school early or who are socially isolated or failing to achieve their potential. Activities may include tutoring, career exploration, playing games or sports. The primary focus is the development of a long-term supportive relationship.

Site Based Mentoring

Site based mentoring occurs at a specified location such as a juvenile justice centre, a community centre, youth centre or at the agency itself for all of the meetings and activities between the mentor and the mentee. It is unlikely that mentoring sessions will take place in any other location than the specified site. While the mentoring may be in a group setting, the structure and focus of the relationship is one-on-one.

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Photographs courtesy of Big Brothers Big Sisters Melbourne.



Mentoring aims to provide a structured and trusting relationship that brings young people together with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement.

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For further information on

youth mentoring in Australia

visit the Youth Mentoring Network website

www.youthmentoring.org.au



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