

Executive Summary

The YWCA Metro Vancouver has successfully operated mentorship programs for over two decades. The recommendations shared in the Mentorship Best Practices Toolkit are based on experiences and knowledge gained from operating the YWCA Metro Vancouver NextStep Mentorship Program. The toolkit has been written to assist service providers in the development, management and evaluation of effective mentoring programs.

Mentorship Toolkit

The Mentorship Best Practices Toolkit is intended for agencies, organizations and program staff who are planning to develop a new mentorship program or reviewing an existing mentorship program.

The toolkit is written in general terms to be relevant to a variety of organizations and scenarios. While developing the toolkit's content, we relied on our experience developing, managing and evaluating a multi-modal mentorship program within the context of an employment-based mentorship program.

In the toolkit, we cover every aspect of creating, sustaining and enhancing mentoring relationships and programs. Toolkit chapters include guidelines for:

- Program planning and management
- Recruitment
- Screening
- Training
- Monitoring and supporting
- Recognition and retention
- Closure
- Program evaluation

The Need for the NextStep Mentorship Program

The YWCA conducted research that identified a gap in employment services to support individuals with diplomas and degrees struggling to participate in the labour market. Even during favourable labour market conditions, these individuals are only able to find temporary and low-skill jobs, and often transition back and forth from unemployment to employment.



The YWCA NextStep Mentorship Program was funded by the British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction. NextStep was developed and implemented by the YWCA for three years between 2014 and 2017. The YWCA commissioned the BC Centre for Employment Excellence to conduct the evaluation.

Research Design

Eligible individuals were randomly assigned to one of two groups:

1. **Intervention Group:** Half of the eligible individuals were assigned to the intervention group. Individuals in this group were eligible for one-to-one mentorship, group and peer mentorship. In other words, individuals in the intervention group received both mentorship components in the NextStep program.
2. **Comparison Group:** The other half of the eligible individuals were assigned to the comparison group and received only one component—group and peer mentorship. This group did not receive one-to-one mentorship.

Outcomes

The evaluation reports from the NextStep Mentorship Program reveal that the majority of participants were satisfied with the program's content and the outcomes

they experienced from being in the program. Most participants in the intervention group appreciated the opportunity to focus more strategically on their careers and gain insight from knowledgeable and experienced mentors.

NextStep helped mentees gain:

- Perspectives on the type of career, work and job they were looking for
- Direction and clarity on how to conduct an effective job search
- Job search skills such as interviewing, presentation and self-marketing skills
- Resume preparation skills to get interviews, and interview skills to impress employers
- Networking skills such as confidence, information interviewing and meeting more industry contacts
- Knowledge of local job opportunities, industry research skills and follow-up techniques
- Knowledge of and access to professional associations
- Improved self-efficacy that resulted in more participants using social networks to get job leads
- Industry knowledge, encouragement and emotional support from successful mentoring relationships
- More full-time employment

NextStep mentees were disengaged from the labour market for an extended period of time¹. After completing the program:

- 87% of NextStep mentees are working full-time, part-time or self-employed, compared to 40% at baseline.
- 60% of NextStep mentees are working full-time, compared to 5% at baseline.
- There was no significant difference in full-time employment between mentees that worked one-on-one with a mentor and those that did not.

¹ To be eligible for NextStep, participants were required to be unemployed (or working less than 20 hours per week) at the time of program intake. Additionally, they had to have been conducting an active job search without success for a minimum of 12 months at the time of program intake.



By participating in NextStep, mentees gained better job search skills, increased confidence, expanded professional networks and improved networking skills.

Researcher Recommendations

- A mentoring program is not an employment program. To be effective, mentoring programs should be used in conjunction with other employment programs and services.
- If there is enough demand from mentees or the target population, a sector-based approach may be effective (e.g., finance, IT).
- Create opportunities to ensure the networks established can continue after the completion of the program.
- Use social media (e.g., LinkedIn or Facebook) to support a “community of practice”.
- Smaller communities/organizations may find it harder to identify suitable mentors. They may need to leverage other programs or rely on other methods, such as Skype or telephone, for mentees and mentors to connect.
- Job search intensity or the extent to which individuals engage in job search activities tend to decrease over time and may need a “booster” to maintain the momentum.
- Consider adding a mental health component to the program to support mentees.