MENTORSHIP FOR SUCCESS
RESEARCH STUDY

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Taneja Consulting Inc. acknowledges and appreciates the contributions made to this work by the M4S Partners Table. Your guidance and support have been invaluable to our processes and the work's outcomes.

Honouring Indigenous Peoples of Canada

Our attempts to discuss issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion include our dedication to the sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island. The struggle of Indigenous people is unique and distinct from the issues of diversity as discussed in this document. These struggles are centuries old and include the reclaiming of Indigenous lands, the respect of treaties, and redress for the generations of Indigenous peoples who have been harmed by inequity in Canada. All non-Indigenous peoples are in fact newcomers to the land we are on and what we refer to as Canada.

We acknowledge that the Greater Toronto Area is rich in the history and modern traditions of Indigenous people and the Métis. From the Anishinabe to the Attawandaron, the Haudenosaunee, and the Métis—these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in Indigenous history. These lands extend from the Niagara peninsula across Hamilton, Halton and Toronto to the Rouge River Valley. We have the responsibility to honour and respect the four directions, land, waters, plants, animals, ancestors that walked before us, and all the wonderful elements of creation that exist.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation for sharing their traditional territory with us. We also recognize the enduring presence of Indigenous people on this land.

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"The systemic barriers that exist for racialized entrepreneurs are out there. There are huge barriers for multi-barriered people. There are cultural barriers, language barriers, access to capital barriers. We provide supports to individuals that don't have a leg up."

- Service Provider

BACKGROUND

With Ontario being one of the best provinces to start a business due to its large and diverse population, entrepreneurship in Toronto has grown significantly. With over 1 million small to mid-size businesses in Canada[1], entrepreneurship is a leading driver of our national economy. Entrepreneurship is pursued by many different Canadians such as women, young Canadians, racialized people, low income individuals, and newcomers. For all these populations, there are systemic, widespread barriers that prevent them from growing their businesses. The depth of barriers varies but include limited access to financing, business skills, life complexities, and the lack of networks and relationships that can support decision-making.

Unfortunately, businesses fail. Canadian data indicates that 21.5% of businesses close within the first year with 50% surviving for five years and only a third attaining ten years of business[2]. Mentorship programs help entrepreneurs survive and thrive. Through the network of mentorship programs available across Ontario, mentoring helps entrepreneurs set their expectations, build their knowledge, networks, and confidence, and are a sounding board for ideas and strategies.

This study focuses on marginalized entrepreneurs. The definition of 'marginalized' has evolved throughout the timeframe of the study. Initially, the definition included newcomers and low-income entrepreneurs, but over the course of the research expanded to include entrepreneurs who are women, who have mental health challenges, or are racialized. Furthermore, throughout the study, our awareness and understanding of entrepreneurs who have intersectionalities has developed - entrepreneurs are not defined solely by one diversity but, rather, can be newcomer women, housing-insecure entrepreneurs with mental health challenges, Black low-income entrepreneurs, etc. With this updated definition, the emphasis of the study has been to review mentorship models that can be offered to marginalized entrepreneurs to improve start-up and survival rates.

The research study was hosted by ACCES Employment and guided by a collective of seven entrepreneurship-project partners, together forming a Mentorship for Success (M4S) Partners Table. Partners offer different types of mentorship programs to different marginalized entrepreneurs (Please refer to Appendix A for the list of entrepreneurship-project Partners Table).

[1]https://www.bdc.ca/en/documents/analysis_research/bdc-etude-sbw-nation-entrepreneurs.pdf?utm_campaign=Changing-faces-Study-2019--EN
[2]https://madeinca.ca/small-business-statistics-canada/#:~:text=Data%20on%20new%20small%20businesses,celebrate%20ten%20years%20in%20business.

"Mentorship is a deep touch program—it requires funding to evolve and sustain. It is not a workshop. You need staff to stay on top of supporting and growing the program."

- Service Provider

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The research began with an extensive literature review examining different facets of mentorship, marginalized entrepreneurs, success factors for mentorship programs, and promising practices for organizations offering mentorship.

1. **Literature Review: Guiding Research Questions**
   Considering the topics of entrepreneurship, mentorship, mentorship models, mentorship programs, marginalized entrepreneurs, and mentorship for marginalized entrepreneurs are broad and complex, the M4S Partners identified priorities for the literature review as follows:

A. **What is mentorship?**
   - Defining mentorship and detailing how it is different from coaching
   - Examining the current landscape of mentoring in entrepreneurship by reviewing characteristics of mentoring programs (also identifying if there is a 'typical' program)
   - The types of mentorship models that exist in the literature (within and beyond the entrepreneurship sector)

B. **What are the impacts of mentorship on marginalized populations?**
   - Identifying what works and doesn't work with marginalized populations while incorporating an examination of intersectionalities such as women, newcomers, Black entrepreneurs, and youth
   - Examining barriers to mentorship for marginalized populations while incorporating the needs of diverse entrepreneurs

C. **What are the promising practices in mentorship?**
   - Examining promising practices that should be embedded in any mentoring program for marginalized populations
   - Considering different approaches used for early-stage entrepreneurs versus later-stage entrepreneurs; as well, reviewing components of program fidelity and which factors need to be part of any mentorship opportunities.
   - Reviewing whether there is a right time to provide mentorship and who is best suited to be an effective mentor

D. What are the expectations and impacts of mentorship?
- Reviewing how others are quantifying mentorship outcomes
- Identifying what effects mentors typically have on the business
- Examining if, at any point, mentorship is not useful
- Expanding on how mentorship is understood and the social fabric of entrepreneurship through a cultural lens
- Examining what mentees want out of a mentoring program and what mentors are looking for

E. What are the organizational needs for providing a mentorship program?
- Examining the additional resources organizations need to provide a mentorship program
- Reviewing the biggest challenges and gaps for organizations in providing and sustaining a mentorship program
- Reviewing the capacities organizations need to build if mentors are volunteers

2. Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

This research used a mixed methodologies approach to gain information and insight from a variety of different stakeholders across the entrepreneurship sector. Methodologies included focus groups and key informant interviews. Stakeholders included the following:
- Mentees (please refer to Appendix B for focus groups questions)
- Mentors (please refer to Appendix C for focus groups and key information interviews questions)
- Mentorship Program Facilitators (please refer to Appendix D for focus group questions)
- Service Providers (please refer to Appendix E for key informant interviews questions and the list of service providers that participated)

"The best mentors are those that have started a business."

- Mentee

LITERATURE REVIEW

INSIGHTS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT MENTOR

Is trauma-informed

Wants to build a trusting relationship

Provides a sounding board and gives feedback

Holds the mentee accountable for taking action

Below is a summary of the key areas emerging from the literature review. For the full literature review, underline please access it here.

WHAT IS MENTORSHIP?

The classic concept of mentoring (i.e., unidirectional from mentor to mentee) is shifting towards a concept of mentorship that encourages refocusing on the specific roles that mentors and mentees both play in their mentoring. This shift begins to focus on "assets" that reflect skills and abilities that mentees must develop, with mentors using a variety of strategies to cultivate success[3].

To recognize a mentoring relationship as distinct from other types of support, these components must be present: there must be a reciprocal relationship with development benefits for the mentee, especially career-related benefits, as well as regular and substantial interaction with a long-term perspective.[4]

There are 4 stages of a mentorship relationship and application to entrepreneurial mentorship[5]

In formal mentoring programs, a third party manages the matching process. Good matching programs are dependent on demographic variables as well as common professional interests[6]. A formal mentoring program would require both parties to discover the relationship and assess the suitability of the mentor–mentee match.

1. **Initiation**
   When mentors and mentees form expectations and get to know one another.

2. **Cultivation**
   When the relationship matures, and mentors typically provide the greatest degree of psychosocial and career support.

3. **Separation**
   When mentees seek autonomy and more independence from mentors.

4. **Redefinition**
   When mentors and mentees transition into a different form of relationship characterized by more peer-like interactions or terminate the relationship.

[3] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK552775/
[4] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0266242619901058
[5] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK552775/
[6] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244015569666

TYPES OF MENTORSHIP

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring can be used in the workplace. For example, being formally connected to another staff member with whom you can share your challenges, successes, and questions without fear of judgment or repercussions. This person can relate to your experiences, offer guidance, and share ideas and strategies and this learning goes both ways.[7]

Reverse Mentoring

In traditional mentoring, new or junior employees learn from their seniors. However, as more members of Generation Z have entered the workforce and technology advances, reverse mentoring, in which junior employees share new concepts, trends, and technological skills with their seniors, has gradually gained momentum in multinational companies.[8]

Traditional One-to-one

In traditional mentoring, there is a one-to-one personal relationship between an entrepreneur and a seasoned business owner. At a minimum, the mentor and mentee should meet regularly at least four hours per month for at least a year.[9]

Group Mentoring

The mentor assumes the role of leader and makes a commitment to meet regularly with the group over a long period of time. Most interaction is guided by the session's structure, which includes time for personal sharing.[10]

Speed Mentoring®

Speed mentoring is a type of networking event where participants meet for short, focused sessions to discuss specific topics. It is similar to the concept of speed dating, a matchmaking process that involves single individuals meeting potential partners in a short period of time. Speed mentoring sessions are typically shorter than traditional mentoring meetings, and the focus is on exchanging information and ideas rather than building long-term relationships. Speed mentoring events are typically organized around a specific theme or topic, and the mentees have an opportunity to rotate between mentors to learn different perspectives. Each mentee has 15 to 20 minutes with an "expert" on a topic chosen by the participant.[11,12]

[7]https://ecepeermentoring.trubox.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/700/2021/08/Mentorship-as-a-Strategy-to-Address-Recruitment-Doan-Gray-2021-2.pdf
[8]https://ascelibrary.org/doi/full/10.1061/%28ASCE%29LM.1943-5630.0000227
[9]https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Full_Toolkit.pdf
[10]https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Full_Toolkit.pdf
[11]https://www.glueup.com/blog/speed-mentoring#:~:text=Speed%20mentoring%20is%20a%20type,a%20short%20period%20of%20time
[12]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317334712_Applying_a_Social_Justice_Lens_to_Youth_Mentoring_A_Review_of_the_Literature_and_Recommendations_for_Practice

INSIGHTS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT MENTOR

Builds confidence and motivation

Helps to clarify the vision and pitch

Is critically aware of their influence

Provides guidance

WHAT CONSTITUTES SUCCESS IN A MENTORING PROGRAM?

Few studies have investigated the role of class, race, ethnicity, or gender differences in mentoring, and the limited research that has been conducted has focused simply on whether matching based on any of these demographic characteristics impacts the relationship and has focused on youth populations.[12] Demographically matched mentors may offer shared life experiences that could counter the effects of discrimination and demonstrate possibilities for a mentee identity that are less commonly depicted in their everyday lives or the media.

A study from 2010[13] found that Black male youth felt that sharing their mentors' racial background allowed for greater mutual identification over shared experiences (e.g., experiences with discrimination) and interests. They also noted that they felt more confident in the advice given by mentors who shared similar personal experiences as opposed to advice given by others who could only give advice based on theoretical knowledge. Similarly, adolescent girls may especially benefit from women-identifying mentors who work in traditionally male-dominated fields.

While matching mentors and mentees based on demographic or identity-based similarities may be an important factor, it surely is not the only determinant of successful mentoring relationships. There is also a risk of mentors over-identifying with a mentee from a similar background, and the need to protect themselves against re-traumatization.

Various populations face unique barriers to mentorship and entrepreneurship—and these barriers need to be examined with an intersectional lens. A cross-cultural study of 86 course descriptions on entrepreneurship from 81 universities in 21 North American and Western European countries, found gendered language. This included a 1 to 9 ratio of feminine to masculine phrases in course descriptions, reinforcing masculine conceptualizations of entrepreneurship.[14]

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[12]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317334712_Applying_a_Social_Justice_Lens_to_Youth_Mentoring_A_Review_of_the_Literature_and_Recommendations_for_Practice

[13]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/40024587_Brother_from_another_mother_Mentoring_for_African-Caribbean_adolescent_boys

[14]https://pure.au.dk/ws/files/168232530/Warhuus_2018_This_class_is_not_for_you.pdf

Evidence suggests that women are under-represented as participants in, and staff of, many entrepreneurship and small business support programs and advisory services. The many barriers confronting Indigenous women entrepreneurs are also obstacles for women entrepreneurs in general. However, intersectionality and important distinctions between the two groups must be understood to develop and implement meaningful policies that will build a more equitable and inclusive ecosystem.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN AND INDIGENOUS WOMEN INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING[15]

- Finances to start a business
- Stereotypes and biases connected to entrepreneurship
- Lack of training, education, and mentorship opportunities
- Inadequate access to connectivity and technology
- Challenges balancing family and community roles
- Lack of confidence

Newcomers also face a variety of barriers to entrepreneurship and mentorship. Through mentoring, newcomers are trained to acquire the technical, social, and organizational information they need[16]. Societal factors are a significant challenge for onboarding newcomers. Barriers include a lack of background knowledge about procedures and conventions, cultural differences and communication issues, and a fear of judgement[17].

[15]https://telfer.uottawa.ca/en/
[16]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324484574_Newcomers'_Barriers_Is_That_All_An_Analysis_of_Mentors'_and_Newcomers'_Barriers_in_OSS_Projects
[17]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324484574_Newcomers'_Barriers_Is_That_All_An_Analysis_of_Mentors'_and_Newcomers'_Barriers_in_OSS_Projects

INSIGHTS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT MENTOR

Great listener; hears mentee's concerns and where they want to grow – understands where the mentee is at and what type of supports they need

The mentor can talk about your business idea and own it

Is very hands-on and shows you the ropes - they don't just tell you the activity is important

Asks a lot of questions and is imaginative

PROMISING PRACTICES IN MENTORSHIP

There are several shared principles that create the conditions for effective and successful mentorship programs.[18]

- A clear program management structure
- An effective mentoring program manager at the helm
- A well-designed mentor-mentee matching process
- Initial training and preparation to engage in mentoring, for both mentors and mentees
- Proactive, ongoing support for mentees, mentors, and program managers
- Regular reviews to continually evolve the program
- Shared opportunities and ideas to allow programs to flourish
- There is also evidence of mentors developing and benefiting through the experience, confirmed by their ongoing engagement with volunteer mentoring activities, networks, and business activities.

- Creating a small ambassador group to try out new ideas with and garner feedback[19]
- Spotlighting mentoring pairs regularly. Not only does this recognize the great success of your mentees and boost visibility, but it also gets the word out that the program exists
- Incentivize participation by paying your mentor or your mentee for their time. If that isn't possible, a gift card so that mentorship sessions can happen over a paid lunch is the next best thing
- Mentees also felt that personality plays a part—attitude and personality are important. A mentor might have all the technical skills, "but if you don't get on it's not going to work"[20]

[18]https://www.youthbusiness.org/resource/the-impact-of-mentoring-on-young-entrepreneurs
[19]https://hrdqstore.com/blogs/hrdq-blog/how-to-structure-a-mentorship-program
[20]https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf

Intercultural mentoring and other educational approaches for immigrant populations are increasingly of vital importance. The unrealized potential of immigrant entrepreneurship is considerable. For newcomer immigrants, networks and relationships are necessary for accessing knowledge that exists outside of formal institutional learning. Best practices[21] include the following:

- Mentors recognized the importance and significance of culture and possess an understanding that knowing about their mentees' culture and/or worldviews are important.

- Mentor participants reported that they "get" how difficult it is for mentees to adjust in a general sense but were, to various degrees, unaware of how much their own culture (i.e., Canadian culture) affected the relationship.

- In addition to building trust and relationality, mentors suggested it would be useful to have access to scripts or examples of guidelines for structuring a frank discussion about the limits and boundaries of the mentoring relationship.

- Mentors should be counseled that networking is a learned skill and the nuances of networking vary greatly from country to country, place to place, and of course, person to person. To take advantage of the mentor's network and other introductions facilitated by the program, mentees must be able to not only make a good first impression, but also to parlay introductions into meaningful connections.

- Intercultural mentoring dyads need to spend time acknowledging not just the blessings of cultural diversity, but also the accompanying challenges. This may be achieved by discussing how mentees may be perceived and the biases and prejudices they may encounter.

[21]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317369812_Inter-cultural_mentoring_for_newcomer_immigrants_Mentor_perspectives_and_better_practices

"Often self-esteem is low or drive is low so the mentor is pulling them. The mentee needs to want to be coached and pushed."

- Mentor

The relationship between the client, the organization, and the mentor involves three key phases: start-up, midpoint and the endpoint, sometimes referred to as the 'letting go' phase. The client and mentor usually meet for 2–5 years, with 3 years being average. However, the challenges faced by entrepreneurs can be very different at the midpoint or endpoint compared to the start-up, and that may change the approach.[22]

Start Up[23]

Research seems to indicate that mentorship is easiest at the beginning of starting a business. At the start of their relationship mentors identified the need to be supportive, tenacious, and to enable the entrepreneur to keep their vision in sight. As is common with all three stages, the mentor's role is to help the client to reflect on what is happening. Within the reflective process there may be a disguised 'call for help' brought on by the reality of running a business and the mentor can help by monitoring anxiety and be there to support the mentee. Supporting mentees to set goals and track against them is one of a mentor's most important roles.

Midpoint[24]

At the midpoint, mentors need to keep the client motivated and encourage them to persist. This may mean sitting around the table doing the financial forecasting and checking where the mentee has come from, where they are now, and where they are going. This is also likely to be the 'growth phase' and the client may need to understand how and where to attract further funding.

During this stage, mentors may speak to their mentee one day and get the sense that something is wrong. Mentors are not expected to be therapists or counsellors.

[22]https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf
[23]https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf
[24]https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf

A mentee may experience challenges that a mentor is not qualified to handle. What is important is that mentors are equipped with tools and strategies to effectively navigate difficult conversations with the mentee. A mentor can be an important influence to help mentees prioritize self-care and mindfulness.[25] The midpoint is usually when support changes from being theoretical to more hands-on. Mentors will be looking at the client's ability to maintain momentum and energy especially as the 9-18 month period can be a most challenging time for start-up businesses.

Endpoint[26]

At the endpoint, mentors need to be objective and encourage lift off. This is where the mentor may want to help the mentee think big, as they did at the very beginning. Once the ties are severed it may be that mentoring gets changed for a 'normal' business relationship where the role becomes more about advice and a discussion about ideas.

[25] https://www.risehelps.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Rise-MentoringToolkit-Mentors-1.pdf
[26] https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf

"The word 'mentor' is challenging—people think they need to be sage, and old. Someone needs to be 1-2 years ahead in my business journey. It is most important to meet them [mentees] where they are."

- Mentee

WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS AND IMPACTS OF MENTORSHIP?

A study was done with over 1,000 participants across 42 countries which surveyed the same individuals twice, 18 months apart. By surveying the same participants 18 months later, the team was able to assess how the mentoring model and mentor-mentee relationships had evolved and improved over time. The study found the following results.[27]

In Phase 1, at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, 60% of mentees reported that their businesses were growing because of the accelerator role that mentoring played. In Phase 2 this increased to 74%

57% of mentees during Phase 2, 18 months later, said their business improvements would not have happened at the same speed or scale or at all, without their mentoring relationship

Successful mentoring requires the following key features[28]:

· Screening of prospective mentors
· Matching of mentors on relevant criteria
· Pre-match and ongoing training, and frequency of contact
· In addition to the 'softer skills' such as listening, the mentor needs 'harder skills' such as analytical adeptness to review business plans and stay objective

· The mentor also needs to be a 'blank slate', to be a good listener and to know how to do needs analysis
· Furthermore, the mentor needs to be focused and organized and ensure the mentee does likewise. Ideally, the mentor needs to have connections in an area which is industry-specific to the client's business and help by making introductions to potential customers

By contrast, mentoring is in danger of being unsuccessful when any of the following conditions apply[29]:

· Social distance and mismatch between the values of mentor and mentee
· Inexpert or untrained mentors
· Mismatch between the aims of the mentoring scheme and the needs of the person being mentored.

[27]https://www.youthbusiness.org/resource/the-impact-of-mentoring-on-young-entrepreneurs
[28]https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf
[29]https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf

In discussions between mentor and mentee, two main methods are used: 'pulling' and 'pushing.' Pulling calls on the ability to offer a sanctuary; to offer a safe place where the mentee feels able to share their agenda, interests, and goals and to offer support by listening, asking the right questions, and drawing out the mentee's own answers to problems. Pushing, on the other hand, calls on the ability to offer stimulation; to offer creative ideas, challenges, knowledge, success stories, models and tools, leading-edge thinking, and wisdom.[30]

A mentor tracking system allows mentors and mentees to keep track of their progress over time, evaluate successes and failures, set goals and milestones, create accountability measures, measure impact on both parties involved in the relationship, improve communication between them, and ultimately build better relationships. Below are a few key metrics to consider:[31]

A. Registration process

This includes mentees goals, demographics, skills, and experience. By tracking the registration process you can measure:

- The number of mentors and mentees involved
- Mentor capacity (how many mentees all the mentors said they could take on). This helps to ensure the program is sustainable
- Profile breakdowns

B. Pairing reports

This generates reports on mentor-mentee pairs. This will allow you to see:

- Active, pending, and past pairings. From here, you can see how long matches have been active – which is a great indicator of mentor longevity.

- The most common matching reasons. Knowing the reasons why people have been paired can be helpful for future recruitment
- Percent of participants paired
- Total matches made over time
- Number of introductory mentoring sessions completed
- Mentor-mentee pairing satisfaction

C. Session monitoring

- Sessions completed. Find out how often pairs actually meet and, therefore, how much value they are getting from the program
- Participant feedback
- Total hours spent mentoring
- Top participants by mentoring hours. When you know who's spending the most time in mentorship, you can analyze their approach and pass on the knowledge to others

[30]https://researchportal.coachingfederation.org/Document/Pdf/1992.pdf
[31]https://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/mentor-tracking-system#:~:text=A%20mentor%20tracking%20system%20allows,them%20%E2%80%93%20and%20ultimately%20build%20better

D. Skill and goal attainment

- A breakdown of the goals and skills that mentors and mentees indicated they wanted to develop or help develop during registration
- Insight into how mentees self-assessed their skill and goal competencies at the beginning of their pairing. At the end of the pairing, they can re-assess their skills and goals, and see how far they've come
- How many sessions were dedicated to each goal or skill topic based on feedback from mentors and mentees

EMERGING RESEARCH THEMES

"Vibe makes a huge difference—that is why choice is so important."

- Mentee

There were several insights, gaps, and needs expressed by research participants. The conversations were themed across all stakeholders and are shared below.

THEME 1: NEEDS OF MENTEES

Overall, mentees expressed the need for more choices in the mentorship program. Here are the areas in which they have expressed wanting more choice:

- Choosing their mentor. Vibe/chemistry is mentioned repeatedly as a success criterion in a mentoring relationship
- The type of mentorship model they seek at various points of their business. Mentees want to access different mentoring models at various milestones in their business. For example, they would like access to one-on-one mentorship to support them flushing out their business' financial plan but then group mentorship to discuss leveraging social media while accessing peer-to-peer mentorship to discuss pricing strategies.
- The duration of the mentoring relationship. Mentees want to decide, with their mentor, the length and frequency of meeting with their mentors.

THEME 2: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM – BUSINESS TRAINING COMPONENT OF PROGRAM

Many participants indicated that any and all training components should have a culturally appropriate and sensitive educational component that is adapted to the marginalized entrepreneur. These adaptations include ensuring the program is accessible, uses language that resonates with the entrepreneur, and has resources that can support marginalized entrepreneurs. Participants indicated that in the educational portion of the program,

a readiness assessment should be shared with entrepreneurs to ensure there is a readiness and openness for mentorship. Once readiness is assessed, mentors and mentees want networking opportunities between mentors and mentees so a level of familiarity and trust can be built before mentees select mentors. Some suggested using the Speed Mentoring® model once readiness has been assessed for mentees to be able to meet and assess fit with mentors.

Participants also spoke about needing accessible software that has a list of mentors, their profiles, mentees with whom they are working, mentee goals, access to resources, and more. A select few organizations consulted are currently using software that profiles mentors for mentees to select their 'top choices' based on the information shared in the summary and the 'vibe' mentees get from the mentor picture and profile.

Participants spoke about needing consistent templates and reference materials around expectations of both mentors and mentees. There is also an understanding that relationships in the ideation phase of a business are typically longer and both mentors and mentees would benefit from a mentorship handbook of sorts. This handbook, as suggested by participants, needs to have worksheets that mentees complete before meeting with their mentors that identify their short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals.

Entrepreneurs described wanting follow-up calls with the mentorship program so they can be supported in ways that their mentor may not be able to provide such as helping them navigate paperwork, referring them to services that are available to them (not just for their business but life challenges as well), and coaching them through important calls and meetings etc. They want the program to provide continuity between the end of the educational component of the program and the beginning of the mentorship process and be available for ongoing supports after the mentorship portion as well.

"Giving mentees knowledge and tools prior to meeting with their mentors gives them a solid base to work from— mentees are often scared, intimidated and not confident if they do not have the knowledge and tools beforehand."

- Mentorship Program

THEME 3: MENTORS

Participants specified they would like to have a diversity of mentors to choose from and mentioned the following diversities they are looking for: age, stage of business, race, knowledge/expertise, gender, and sexual orientations. Additionally, mentees also indicated that they would prefer mentors who have lived experiences with being an entrepreneur and having the ability to understand the different cultural nuances that mentees bring to the relationship. Furthermore, mentees are looking for mentors that are trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion, mental health, are trauma-informed, and come from a place of empathy when supporting entrepreneurs.

Mentors also indicated that understanding cultural nuances or cultural groups can augment a relationship. For example, a mentor expressed "in working with Latin American entrepreneurs, you need to understand the struggle and why Latin Americans moved here to Canada. Family is at the centre and therefore, when supporting entrepreneurs, mentors need to understand that they are part of a community supporting the mentee." Additionally, mentors spoke to the valuable backgrounds of internationally trained Black, Indigenous, and racialized entrepreneurs and indicated that tapping into the mentee's cultural group is valuable and effective in helping the entrepreneur test their product.

THEME 4: GAPS AND NEEDS

Throughout the research, participants spoke about several gaps, needs, and the fragmentation in mentoring programs. They indicated needing a system that could accomplish the following:

- help build relationships between the mentor and mentee
- share resources that could support the relationship
- offer training to both mentors and mentees
- identify efficiencies and synergies that could be developed for mentorship programs, measure effectiveness of programs, and coordinate events
- curate new mentors
- co-develop, host, and maintain a database of mentors

Moreover, many participants spoke about building the entrepreneur's capacity in having productive conversations with their mentors because mentees are often uncertain, intimidated, and not confident in asking for supports.

Participants spoke about the need for a handbook that is completed by the mentee and reviewed by the mentorship program to achieve the following:
· to tease out and clarify mentorship goals
· to give the program context of the mentee's business, their progress, their current challenges, and the mentees' short, intermediate, and long-term goals
· to help guide the program in supporting the mentee with what they can/need to talk to their mentor about. Many indicated that this conversation, prior to a mentorship meeting, limits 'no-shows.'
· help mentees create an agenda for their meetings with their mentor
· assists mentees and the program in determining the stage and progress of their business and what are the most pertinent questions for their mentors

Many participants spoke about the need of a readiness assessment with the mentee to ensure the following:
· the mentee has the workings of a good business plan in place before working with a mentor
· that it is the right time for mentorship (i.e., at times life can be too hectic for a mentorship relationship or, at times, a mentee is not coachable)
· they are encouraged to be transparent in sharing their challenges with their mentor; mentees, at times, withhold information because they do not want to be seen as 'messy' or 'unsuccessful'
· that mentees are ready to speak transparently about their finances; are able to be vulnerable and open to a trusting relationship

THEME 5: GAPS IN MEASUREMENT

Conversations with stakeholders indicated that most mentees have large goals and that there would be benefit in breaking up the goals into smaller increments. With these smaller goals, stakeholders suggested that either the mentor or the mentorship program can track the progress towards those goals. Furthermore, stakeholders wanted an opportunity to track goals through the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data and input their assessments into a platform that can report on the data collected.

"The needs of marginalized entrepreneurs are different because there are systems that may not propel them forward."

- Mentor

Stakeholders also want metrics that can assess the following research questions:

- Do mentees have improved efficiencies through the mentoring relationship?
- Assess mentee satisfaction at each milestone of the relationship (has the relationship been useful? What can be improved? Did entrepreneurs launch their business? Would the mentee meet with the mentor again? Did the mentee get the clarity they needed? Are there any other experts entrepreneurs need that can support their business? etc.)
- Is problem solving becoming innate for mentees?
- Has the size of the mentee network changed?
- Have perceptions of mentees changed with regards to small businesses being a viable way to make money?
- Number of interactions during relationship (online course, face to face, number of people that entered and completed the program)
- What is the ideal number of hours needed to support the relationship?
- An ability to add a dollar value to the time of a mentor

THEME 6: GAPS IN FUNDING

Providers spoke about gaps in funding and the primary need in compensating mentors. Apart from recognizing the time and crucial role mentors play in the survival rates of new businesses, funding the mentorship role is seen as taking accountability and using a diversity, equity, and inclusion approach. Some spoke about needing to create safe spaces for entrepreneurs by creating access to more diverse mentors. Furthermore, if mentors are compensated, this would encourage the inclusion of mentors from different backgrounds (be it age, stage of business, race, economic background, etc.)

Providers also spoke about how the eligibility criteria for some funding allocations are challenging and are in need of a budget line that can provide some funds for new entrepreneurs.

"The ideation phase is all vibes but once you get to the operational phase, they [mentees] don't care what they [mentors] look like—it is about resolving the issue."

- Mentorship Program

THEME 7: MENTORSHIP MODELS BY PHASE OF BUSINESS

Ideation/Business Plan Development Phase

It is during this phase that many spoke about the relevance and necessity of chemistry and fit between the mentee and mentor. They spoke about the need for one-on-one mentorship during ideation as mentees need to be walked through each component of their business plan, considering they and their business are at their most vulnerable. During this phase, mentees can benefit from several one-on-one mentorship sessions at their discretion. Alternatively, participants spoke about wanting group mentorship during ideation because a group mentorship environment allows for a lot of learning and knowledge transfer without pressuring the mentee to discuss topics on which they may not have very much insight. The group mentorship model allows for mentees to observe, listen to the conversations and questions of others, and reflect on their learning.

Furthermore, during this initial phase, participants felt that it would be useful to have a strategic session and bring in 3-4 mentors together to discuss and critically reflect about an entrepreneur's business plan.

Growth and Established Phases

This phase was characterized more by practical concerns than by mentor-mentee fit. Participants spoke about the mentorship in this phase needing to be organized in a way that allows for questions to be resolved with mentors. Participants wanted mentors in this phase to know their business and be from the same industry as the entrepreneur. Participants indicated that mentorship could range from getting quick questions answered to participating in more detailed sessions with an expert in specific areas that are challenging.

It is in this phase that participants expressed the need for choice in the type of mentorship they select. For example, peer-to-peer mentorship is seen as keeping mentees motivated, growing the entrepreneurs' network, building skills, and confidence. Whereas, group mentoring is seen as aligning with marginalized entrepreneurs as it gives entrepreneurs a way of helping others and learning from each other as they solve challenges together.

"Peer sessions are key for marginalized groups. Being able to learn from your peers accelerates your personal growth."

- Mentor

"Peer to peer works because you can build a community and people feel less intimidated than traditional mentorship. It is less intimidating as you feel like you are giving advice too. It is more conversational and less one-directional in terms of you just asking questions. When you can contribute, you have more ownership over it."

- Mentee

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

A | Each educational training component should be culturally appropriate and sensitive.

B | The tail end of the educational training component should have a readiness assessment embedded that measures a mentee's readiness for mentorship. Participants indicated a few components to be included in the assessment:

- a discussion around the progress towards a business plan
- if a mentee's life circumstances allow them to be receptive to mentorship
- encouraging mentees to have open and honest relationships with mentors; successful mentoring relationships rely on healthy and transparent relationships
- assesses if the starting point to mentorship should be group or one-on-one mentorship (this will likely be dependent on the stage of business the entrepreneur is in, the personality and comfort of the entrepreneur, and their current goals).

C | Networking opportunities between mentors and mentees should be offered so familiarity and trust can be built before the mentoring relationship begins.

D | Offer a mentorship continuum in which the entrepreneur receives, *during ideation/start-up phase*, one-on-one mentoring (traditional mentoring) or group mentorship (depending on readiness assessment results). For one-on-one mentoring, mentor(s) should be chosen by mentees.

E | Offer a mentorship continuum in which the entrepreneur receives, *during growth and scalability phases*, options to select one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring, and/or peer-to-peer mentoring opportunities. For one-on-one mentoring, mentor(s) should be chosen by mentees.

F | Offer Speed Mentoring® opportunities for mentees so they can select their preferred mentor(s).

G | Develop a system-wide measurement framework that provides consistent data across mentoring programs.

H | Continue building awareness, collaboration, and collective action towards mentorship programs for marginalized entrepreneurs through the M4S Partners Table.

I | Develop a strategy with funders to raise awareness about funding gaps—specifically for the provision of a reasonable stipend to mentors. This approach will diversify the mentor pool and make room for mentors that are racialized, younger entrepreneurs, and ones with other diversities.

J | Redefine the word 'mentor' as there is a perception that a mentor is of a certain age and stage in their career. Mentees have expressed that a mentor can also include entrepreneurs that are just a few years ahead in their business relative to the mentee.

K | A mentorship system for entrepreneurs needs a structure and capacity that accomplishes the following:

- curates diverse mentors
- identifies the skill sets and expertise of mentors
- identifies which business stages/topics mentors are best suited for
- identifies which communication style mentors prefer
- co-develops, with the M4S Partners Table, a platform that hosts mentor profiles, facilitates matching (as directed by the mentee), hosts all mentee goals, tracks progress on goals, etc.
- informs and trains both mentees and mentors on expectations of the mentorship program
- trains mentors
- develops a platform for mentors to connect and share their experiences, insights, and questions
- prepares and reviews the mentorship handbook with mentees and mentors, which includes worksheets to help mentees detail their long-term, intermediate, and short-term goals
- provides mentors with resources and templates to support the mentoring relationship

- helps mentees create an agenda for their meetings with mentors
- identifies the needs of each mentoring relationship and provides advice, guidance, support, coordination, etc.
- gathers both qualitative and quantitative data to assess the health of the mentoring relationship and the success towards meeting the mentee's goals
- follows up with mentees to see where they are with their issues/challenges
- helps mentees navigate paperwork, provides referrals to wraparound supports, and helps to remove barriers to access (language supports, financial supports, housing, etc.)

MENTOR RECOMMENDATIONS

A | Curate mentors that are diverse in age, stage of business, race, knowledge/expertise, gender, sexual orientations, etc.

B | Mentors should have lived experience with being an entrepreneur

C | Mentors need to understand the diverse cultural nuances that mentees bring and be trained on the following:

- Mentor basics 101
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion (how to support diverse mentees)
- Mental Health
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Connecting with and relating to the needs of marginalized mentees
- Facilitation skills

MENTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

A | Ensure flexibility in the mentoring program so mentees can decide how long the mentoring relationship lasts, which mentorship model is chosen when, which mentor(s) are selected, etc.

B | Allow matching to be directed by the mentee as chemistry is mentioned repeatedly as a success criterion in a mentoring relationship

C | Mentees need exposure to a variety of different mentors as each different mentorship model helps to grow their network and gives them more people to choose from when needing support with business-related questions

D | Provide mentees a network of professionals that is willing to pilot their product and provide critical feedback

E | Offer mentees a strategic session with a group of mentors that will identify and discuss issues and challenges in the mentee's business plan

"Entrepreneurs are not created in a box so, mentorship can't be in a box."

- Service Provider

INSIGHTS ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GREAT MENTOR

Helps their mentee network and shares their network as well

Is consistent and always shows up when needed

Shares different perspectives

Helps resolve issues

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS

This research has given the entrepreneurship sector the opportunity to gain different perspectives and insights. In conversations with stakeholders and through reflections with the M4S Partners Table, here are some immediate next steps for consideration:

1. Prioritizing conversations with the M4S Partners Table that highlight and shape the backbone and governance needs of a collective entrepreneurship system. These conversations can begin with the co-creation of a document that identifies what a robust entrepreneurship system needs to look like, which organization(s) can backbone this system, roles of a backbone organization, and the most prominent gaps in the system etc.

2. Defining mentorship terminology and corresponding metrics. Speaking the same language will help to ensure there is consistency in marketing and awareness of mentorship programs and that the sector can gather systems-level data to show the success and areas of opportunities for mentorship with entrepreneurs.

3. The co-creation of data protocols that can be used by partners in the collective. These protocols will ensure that data that is shared meets the standards and criteria of all organizations involved.

CONCLUSION

Mentorship for entrepreneurs is a critical success factor for the survival and growth of businesses. Mentorship programs require an intentional, consistent, and diverse approach that keeps the needs of mentees at the centre of all efforts. Through conversations with mentees, mentors, providers, and facilitators, it is evident that the sector, alongside funders, need to augment their supports and offerings to ensure they are resonating with the diverse entrepreneurs it wants to cultivate. There is a clear need to continue advocating for funding to support programs that close the gaps that exist for marginalized entrepreneurs by providing supporting networks and growing the skills necessary to effectively handle their business challenges.

There is a sense of fragmentation in the system that can be repaired by more collective planning and funding. There are key aspects to an entrepreneurship mentoring program that need development such as the creation of a readiness assessment, a mentee-centered matching process, an online database profiling mentors, a robust training continuum, and system-wide metric development that assesses impacts. With a deeper understanding of the needs of mentees across the different stages of business, investments need to be equally felt at the beginning of an entrepreneur's journey along with during growth and established phases – mentoring processes need to be developed that recognize the different needs of mentees at each phase of business. Through mentorship at each phase, entrepreneurs continue feeling empowered—this empowerment has a direct relationship to having sustainable, thriving businesses.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: M4S RESEARCH STUDY ENTREPRENEURSHIP PARTNERS

Name of Organization	Type of Entrepreneur Supported
ACCES Employment **ACCES**	Newcomer/marginalized entrepreneurs as well as pre-arrival entrepreneurs
ACCESS Community Capital Fund **ACCF**	Marginalized Entrepreneurs and Women's Business Accelerator, Small Business Accelerator, Small Business Loans
Business in the Streets **BITS**	Underserved and underrepresented Young Entrepreneurs
North York Community House **NYCH**	Newcomers to Toronto
Rise	Empowering Entrepreneurs with mental health and addiction challenges
Scadding Court Community Centre **SCCC**	Supports tailored to specific communities including; low-income self-identifying women, newcomers to Canada, creative entrepreneurs, racialized women, and e-commerce entrepreneurs.
United Way Greater Toronto **UWGT**	Working towards eliminating poverty in the GTA
YSpace (York University)	Entrepreneurship and innovation hub supporting startups and entrepreneurs from a variety of sectors and communities. ELLA focuses on women entrepreneurs and BEA (Black Entrepreneurship Alliance) focuses on Black – led businesses.

APPENDIX B: MENTEE FOCUS GROUPS QUESTIONS

Preamble & Context Setting

The goal of this project is to review mentorship delivery models within the GTA to assess how funding can best be utilized to enable impactful mentorship for marginalized entrepreneurs, ultimately leading to improved start-up and survival rates.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can decide to withdraw your participation at any time. All data collected is kept with an external evaluation consultant, Seema from Taneja Consulting Inc. No raw data is shared but rather, themes and general ideas around gaps, needs, and recommendations will be shared with provider partners and in reports and marketing material developed. Absolutely no identifying information is shared.

Questions for Mentees

A. What has been your experience with the mentorship program you were engaged in?
B. What was your expectation from the mentoring program/ Why did you join the mentoring program? Are you hesitant to ask mentors about specific supports because you are not sure whether that is appropriate?
C. What does success look like for you for an entrepreneurship mentorship program?
D. Does the type of mentorship you need change depending on the phase of your business (start up, established etc.)
E. How does being a newcomer for example impact your needs from a mentoring partnership or activity? Do you want to be mentored by someone who has your lived experience? Is that what is important or is it the sector your mentor is in or the experience / success they have had? If we wanted to adapt this mentorship program to meet you where you are at (the different diversities you may come with), what are some areas we should consider?
F. What supports did you get from the organization that was providing the mentorship program? (Probe: accessibility supports). What supports would you like to have seen from the organization?
G. Are there times when an issue-based mentoring relationship is preferred over a long-term one?

APPENDIX C: MENTORS FOCUS GROUPS AND KEY INFORMATION INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS

Preamble & Context Setting

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Questions for Mentors

Role of Mentors

A. What do you see as your role as a mentor?

B. For this role, was there any training or resources provided to you to support you in your role? (Probe for if they want capacity building supports)

C. What makes you want to be a mentor – why did you decide to be a mentor?

D. What are the most significant skills you want to develop with your mentee? How long is the ideal mentoring program that will allow you the time and space to build mentees' capacity?

E. What are the biggest hurdles you face with the mentoring relationship? Do you feel like mentees know what supports a mentor can provide?

Mentorship Models

F. Which aspects of each model are ideal to have, and which ones are good to have?

G. What do you see as the biggest gaps in mentorship? (Probe: what if mentorship programs were backboned by someone that helps you with resources, sharing opportunities/events, sharing learnings from others etc.)

H. How do you define 'impactful mentorship'?

Mentees

A. Does the type of mentorship a mentee needs change depending on the phase of their business (start up, grow, established etc.)

B. Do the needs of marginalized (i.e., newcomers or low-income) entrepreneurs differ than those of other groups? If so, how?

C. What advice would you give an entrepreneur mentee that is looking for a mentorship program? What are things they should be looking for?

APPENDIX D: MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FACILITATOR FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Preamble & Context Setting

The goal of this project is to review mentorship delivery models within the GTA to assess how funding can best be utilized to enable impactful mentorship for marginalized entrepreneurs, ultimately leading to improved start-up and survival rates.

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Questions for Facilitators

Mentorship Models

A. Which aspects of each model are ideal to have, and which ones are good to have?

B. What do you see as the biggest gaps in mentorship? (Probe: what if mentorship programs were backboned by someone that helps you with resources, sharing opportunities/events, sharing learnings from others etc.)

Mentees

C. Does the type of mentorship a mentee needs change depending on the phase of their business (start up, grow, established etc.)

D. Do the needs of marginalized (i.e., newcomers or low-income) entrepreneurs differ than those of other groups? If so, how?

E. What advice would you give an entrepreneur mentee that is looking for a mentorship program? What are things they should be looking for?

APPENDIX E: SERVICE PROVIDERS KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS QUESTIONS AND M4S RESEARCH STUDY PROVIDERS ENGAGED

Preamble & Context Setting

The goal of this project is to review mentorship delivery models within the GTA to assess how funding can best be utilized to enable impactful mentorship for marginalized entrepreneurs, ultimately leading to improved start-up and survival rates.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can decide to withdraw your participation at any time. All data collected is kept with an external evaluation consultant, Seema from Taneja Consulting Inc. No raw data is shared out but rather, themes and general ideas around gaps, needs, and recommendations will be shared back to provider partners and in reports and marketing material developed. Absolutely no identifying information is shared.

Questions for Providers

A. What does the mentorship program look like in your organization?
B. What feedback do you typically hear from mentees and mentors? Is there a formalized way to follow up and to receive feedback?
C. What do you see as the biggest gaps in mentorship?
D. How do you measure impact?
E. Which aspects of each model are ideal to have, and which ones are good to have?
F. Do the needs of marginalized (i.e., newcomers or low-income) entrepreneurs differ than those of other groups? If so, how?
G. Where do you think the emphasis is in funding for mentorship programs? Do you think there are key pieces of mentorship programs that are being left out of the funding conversations?

Name of Organization Engaged in Research Consultations
ACCES Employment **https://accesemployment.ca/**
ACCESS Community Capital Fund (ACCF) **https://accessccf.com/**
Black Entrepreneurship Alliance (BEA) **https://www.thebea.co/**
Business in the Streets (BITS) **https://businessinthestreets.com/**
Futurpreneur **https://www.futurpreneur.ca/en/about/**
Northstar Startups **https://northstarstartups.com/**
Prince's Trust Canada **https://www.princestrust.ca/**
Rise **https://www.risehelps.ca/**
Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) **https://www.torontomu.ca/**
YSpace (York University) **https://www.yorku.ca/yspace/**