Module Five: Building a Mentorship Program

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Sub-group on Mentorship

Acknowledgements

Workshop II: Building a Mentorship Program

The Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (the Coalition) is a national and global resource for building capacity in global health research. This module engages readers in a discussion of how to create a culture of mentorship. Research interest groups, non-governmental organizations wishing to enhance their practice in research, or university departments may benefit from working through the content and activities presented here. The first four modules of this series inform the questions and content discussed in this fifth module.

Key Messages

1.   Mentoring programs are one resource for creating a culture of mentorship in a variety of settings.

2.   Different approaches to mentorship can be incorporated into mentoring programs.

3.   Mentoring programs must consider how they will create a context supportive of mentorship; how mentors and mentees will be selected, supported, and trained; and how the program will be evaluated.

4.   Mentoring networks can be an effective resource in the context of global health research.

Learning Objectives

Individuals or groups working through this module will be able to:

1. Discuss what the benefits of creating a culture of mentorship are for both their own setting and for the broader context of building capacity in global health research.

2. Explore principles of establishing a mentorship program at a local level (e.g. department level).

3. Discuss ways in which different approaches to mentorship can be incorporated into a mentoring program.

4. Create contextually appropriate and feasible action plans for taking steps towards creating a culture of mentorship.

Mentorship Programs

As organizations, groups or academic departments invest in building a culture of mentorship as a resource for strengthening capacity in global health research, they need to give careful consideration to why they want to, who will be involved, and how they will achieve their goal. Creating a culture of mentorship means that multiple dimensions and approaches to mentoring are engaged. In other words, an environment supportive of mentorship:

- Articulates goals and objectives specific to mentoring

- Builds formal mentoring opportunities

- Supports informal mentoring opportunities

- Considers the benefits of alternative approaches to mentoring

- Creates dialogue about mentorship

- Supports reflective evaluation of mentoring programs and relationships

As a starting point, groups wishing to build a culture of mentorship can work through the activities proposed in each of these mentoring modules. Because informal, indirect, collegial and some alternative approaches to mentoring are all organic in their initiation, the next step for many groups might be the establishment of a mentoring program.

Mentoring: Managing or Empowering Learning?

Mentoring relationships bring people together with different backgrounds, positions, experiences, and positions of influence. In some ways, power differentials are inherent to mentoring relationships because it most often occurs between a more experienced, 'higher-ranking' mentor with a less-experienced mentee. Informal mentoring in particular has been criticized for facilitating the upward movement and career advancement of a select few while excluding individuals from a marginalized or non-majority race, class, gender or sexual orientation (1-4). Many formal mentoring programs attempt to address this exclusion by intentionally matching potential mentees with mentors.

Mentoring programs can either serve to challenge or reinforce unequal or inequitable power relationships. Although formal mentoring programs can help groups or organizations avoid entrenched marginalization, they carry several challenges in power differentials, relationship dynamics and potential for success. Formalized mentoring programs can encourage the "unquestioning replication of organizational values and hegemonic culture by a new generation" (p. 163) (4). Challenges may also arise when mentors or, more commonly, mentees experience competing power differentials from within the mentoring relationship and from the organization or group. Power can serve to suppress internal organizational issues or the debate of sensitive topics, preventing or delaying their discussion

and restricting the ability of individuals in positions of less influence to challenge the status quo (5).

Finding balance between and within power differentials in mentoring is not a simple accomplishment. In global health research, innate power differentials exist between high-income countries and LMICs—not only because of the difference in resource accessibility, but because of a historical and political context of colonization, post-colonization and (some would argue) neo-colonialism. To ensure power differentials are addressed and equitable mentoring opportunities are available, there are a number of questions that those groups wishing to build a culture of mentorship can consider (4):

- Whose interests are being served by the mentoring program?

- How are potential mentors identified? How are potential mentees identified?

- Who might be marginalized by the mentoring program? Are there groups or interests that are contextually relevant, but not represented by the mentors or mentees in the program?

- What strategies are being used to ensure the program is accessible and non-exclusionary?

- Does the mentoring program strive to manage or empower both mentor and mentee in their mutual learning?

- Can the mentoring program challenge unequal power relationships or institutional structures? Are they ways in which the program is serving to reinforce unequal power relationships or institutional structures?

- How can participants in the mentoring relationship contribute to and re-create organizational cultures in ways that contribute to continuous, collaborative learning?

- What resources or structures are in place to address issues of power that may arise from mentoring relationships in the organization?

Exercise 1: Consider the questions below.

As a group of stakeholders in your organization or institution, carefully consider each question below. Using a white board or newsprint, create a map of why-who-how, using the questions to guide your discussion. The map can be used to create a mission statement and proposal or policy document to be presented to the appropriate administration for approval.

1. What are the goals of the mentoring program?

2. What functions will the mentor have (in comparison to teachers, advisors or counselors)?

3. Who should be mentors?

4. How will mentors be prepared?

5. Who should be the mentees?

6. How will the mentees be prepared?

7. How will matching of mentors and mentees occur?

8. How will the institution/group recognize and value mentoring?

9. How will the mentoring program be evaluated?

10. How will individual mentoring relationships be evaluated?

Template-Proposing a Mentoring Program

Name of Organization

Type of Mentorship Program Proposed (identify target groups)

Mission or Vision Statement

Goals an Objectives of Mentoring Program	
Goal 1	Objectives
Goal 2	Objectives
Goal 3	Objectives

Mentorship for What? How will your group work for each of:	
Mentorship for Research Capacity	Strategy
Mentorship for Leadership Development	Strategy
Mentorship for Sustainable Capacity	Strategy

Action Plans for Prioritized Strategies from Above	
Prioritized Strategy 1	Actions
Prioritized Strategy 2	Actions
Prioritized Strategy 3	Actions

Resources and Supports Needed

Challenges and Barriers Identified

Elements of Effective Mentoring Programs

There is no one set of rules for effective mentoring programs. Mentorship programs need to fit with the needs and context of the organization or group. There are, however, a number of elements that are common among mentoring programs with demonstrated sustainability and success.

Table 1: Elements of Effective Mentoring Programs (7)

Element	Strategies
Create a Supportive Culture, Context and Structure	• *Second-generation mentoring* engages past mentees in the mentorship of new mentees, contributing to sustainability and fostering continuous learning. • *Time for mentoring* is a critical structural support for both mentors and mentees. Mentoring relationships with more frequent interactions lead to greater capacity building. This implies a need for some form of institutional or organizational value and recognition of mentoring. • *Confidentiality*, best supported by clearly defined policies, ensures that both mentor and mentee respect and trust the confidentiality of their interactions. Supports for mentors and mentees to seek confidential counsel external to their mentoring relationship are also important.
Select, Train and Support Mentors and Mentees	• *Establishing criteria* for selecting mentors can contribute to ensuring they possess the attitudes, communication skills, interpersonal skills and professional competence and experience needed to become good mentors (See Module 1 for a list). • *Matching* mentors and mentees in respectful ways, allowing for informal mentoring to be nourished while supporting formal mentoring contributes to ensuring mentorship is mutually beneficial. • *Recognition* for mentoring is an explicit acknowledgement of the organization or institution's value of mentoring. • *Mentoring training and support* provides the foundational knowledge and skills mentors need to provide the best mentorship they can. Training may include such topics as: facilitating reflective practice, establishing collaborative relationships, developing observational skills, understanding professional and academic needs of mentees, and/or understanding and evaluating mentoring relationships.
Evaluation	• *Reflecting on or measuring* outcomes, successes and ongoing challenges maintains flexibility and responsiveness in mentoring programs.

Exercise 2: Creating a supportive culture, context and structure

Creating a supportive culture, context and structure requires group reflection and action on a number of issues that were discussed in the first three modules of this series. Consider the following questions, discussing them as a group and drawing from the group's work in previous workshops and the content of the first three modules. For each question, add to your mentoring program proposal by identifying available and needed resources, writing a strategy and developing an action plan with tasks for each question. When appropriate, assign tasks in an equitable manner.

1. Are there any existing policies that support or direct mentoring programs in your organization? If so, do they promote the mission, goals and objectives of your mentoring program? How could they be adapted to promote the mission, goals and objectives of your mentoring program? Are formal policies needed?

2. What partners should be involved in building the mentoring program? Is there a role for incorporating external mentors or mentees? Consider this question using the Newman's model for catalytic capacity building (Module Three).

3. Who will participate in mentoring? How will mentors and mentees be identified?

4. Will the mentoring promoted by the program be formal, informal or some combination of both? How can opportunities for informal mentoring be facilitated and encouraged?

5. Will alternative approaches to mentoring be incorporated? If so, in what ways? How will these alternative approaches help to achieve the mission, goals and objectives of the mentoring program? What resources are needed to incorporate these approaches to mentoring?

6. Will guidelines be established for directing mentoring interactions (e.g. format for recording the frequency of interactions, setting goals within mentoring relationships, reflective evaluation of mentoring relationships)?

7. What are the roles and responsibilities of mentors? Of mentees?

8. How will confidentiality be maintained? Is some kind of formal agreement necessary or required by privacy law?

9. What supports will be in place for mentors or mentees who wish to seek counsel outside of their mentoring relationship?

10. How will time for mentoring be allocated? What institutional or organizational support is needed to facilitate this?

11. How will mentoring be recognized and valued? Is there an academic reward structure in place that acknowledges mentoring as a significant contribution to continuous learning? Does your institution or organization support awards for excellence in mentorship? If not, how could this be encouraged?

Exercise 3a: Select, train and support mentors and mentees.

Selecting, training and supporting mentors and mentees in their mentoring relationships requires group discussion and action on a number of issues that were discussed in the first three modules of this series. In particular, Module Two (Competency in Mentoring) should be carefully considered prior to completing this exercise. Discuss the following questions as a group, drawing from previous workshops and modules. For each question, add to your mentoring program proposal by writing a 'position statement' and identifying available and needed resources, writing a strategy and developing an action plan with tasks for each question. When appropriate, assign tasks in an equitable manner.

Selection Criteria and Matching

1.   What mentor competencies does your group consider essential? Use the Model of Mentor Competence provided in Module 2—Figure 1. Write a statement identifying the specific attributes, skills and competencies you feel are important for mentors to possess. Is there anything that your group feels mentors are required to have (e.g. exclusion/inclusion criteria)? How will competency to mentor be assessed (e.g. peer-supported nominations, application procedure)?

2.   What mentee qualities does your group consider essential? Use Module 2—Table 2 for a summary of desired qualities in a mentee. Write a statement identifying specific qualities your group feels should be present in mentees (these qualities should focus on willingness and capacity to learn and benefit from mentoring). This statement can be used in your program's advertising and recruitment materials.

3.   How will your mentoring program facilitate mentor-mentee matching? This depends on the type and approach to mentoring promoted in your program. What supports (including administrative supports) are necessary to achieve the desired matching process? How can informal mentoring be promoted? Are there ways in which the mentoring program can bring potential mentors and mentees together to provide opportunities for initiating informal mentoring?

Exercise 3b: Select, train and support mentors and mentees.

Selecting, training and supporting mentors and mentees in their mentoring relationships requires group discussion and action on a number of issues that were discussed in the first three modules of this series. In particular, Module Two (Competency in Mentoring) should be carefully considered prior to completing this exercise. Discuss the following questions as a group, drawing from previous workshops and modules. For each question, add to your mentoring program proposal by writing a 'position statement' and identifying available and needed resources, writing a strategy and developing an action plan with tasks for each question. When appropriate, assign tasks in an equitable manner.

Training and Support

1. What are the training needs of your group as they work towards building a mentoring program? What training needs can your group identify for mentors? For mentees?

2. How and when will training be provided?

3. Besides training, what supports do potential mentors (and mentees) in your organization need to facilitate their participation in mentoring? How can these be addressed? What institutional or structural support is needed to make it happen?

4. How will mentoring be recognized and rewarded in your organization? Are there incentives for participating in mentoring? Is the context supportive of mentoring? What do potential mentors feel is an appropriate form of recognition? How can this recognition be facilitated?

5. What supports will be in place for mentors or mentees who encounter dysfunction in a mentoring relationship? How will the potential for dysfunction be minimized? What process for ending dysfunctional mentoring will be in place? How will the program respond?

Building Mentoring Networks

The rapidly changing contexts of globalization, global policy and global health research demands responsive, flexible approaches to capacity building. As technology opens more doors for new ways of communicating and sharing information, possibilities for creative approaches to building capacity become available. Geography and time do not pose the same constraints to global and international collaboration as they did even five years ago (8). Adding to these contextual changes is the increasing mobility and decreasing career linearity of individuals working in research, health policy and community settings (9).

The traditional, dyadic model of mentoring may be effective for some people in some settings. Alternative approaches to mentoring, however, take advantage of advances in technology and respond to the increasing mobility of individuals by offering virtual space for building capacity (8). As individuals tend away from linear careers and towards engagement in multiple cycles of learning and adaptation, opportunities for multiple mentors emerge (9, 10). For global health researchers, networks are becoming increasingly useful and used tools for strengthening their capacity in research, leadership, partnership building, and more. Building mentoring networks is a complementary strategy.

Newman's model for catalytic capacity building (see Module 3) offers a conceptual justification for investing in mentoring networks. In this model, participants in an environment of continuous learning build skills, knowledge and competencies in one setting and then engage in a catalytic process of sharing this capacity with people in their other affiliated organizations or groups (11). Through the use of widely-available internet technology (such as the Coalition's collaborative web space), mentoring networks can facilitate this process of catalytic capacity building, playing a significant role in strengthening global health research around the world.

Exercise 4--: Consider the concept of mentoring networks.

As a group of stakeholders in your organization or institution, carefully consider each question below in the context of the mentoring program you're proposing or are involved in. Using a white board or newsprint, brainstorm around the questions and consider strategies that could facilitate incorporation of mentoring networks into your mentoring program. When appropriate, identify specific actions or tasks and allocate them equitably.

1. Who would you like your mentoring program to benefit? Do you have partners, mentors or mentees in other settings? Do you have some kind of global or international collaboration that would benefit from the capacity building offered by mentoring?

2. In what ways is your mentoring program connected to a mentoring network? Is your program part of a mentoring network? What mentoring networks can you identify that may be complementary to your program?

3. What resources are needed by your group and by individuals in the mentoring program to facilitate participation in a mentoring network?

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