

5.1 RECRUITMENT OF MENTORS AND MENTEES

He ika kai ake i raro, he rāpaki ake i raro. As a fish begins to nibble from below, so the ascent of the hill begins from the bottom.

OVERVIEW

Figure 7. Recruitment - key activities



Recruitment is about attracting and engaging mentors, mentees and their parents or caregivers who are going to be a good fit with a programme's core purpose and objectives.

Research on volunteering, particularly volunteering in activities that require a long-term commitment, provides valuable guidance on effective recruitment practices for mentoring programmes (MENTOR, 2015).

When **recruiting potential mentors**, materials that accurately and realistically reflect the commitment, rewards and challenges of mentoring are going to be most effective. Mentors may be more likely to engage if they know they will receive adequate training and support in the role. Understanding a person's motivation to volunteer may also help determine their suitability to be a mentor (MENTOR, 2015).

It is equally important that prospective **mentees and their parents/caregivers** are well-informed about mentoring and the specific programme requirements. If the experience is not what the mentees or the parents expect, the relationship may end prematurely (Spencer, 2007; refer to Section 5.6). Hence recruitment materials should accurately reflect the benefits, practices, support and challenges of being mentored.

A programme's credibility and reputation within the community will have an influence when trying to attract and engage volunteers to be mentors. Programmes need to first establish then build upon their positive reputation and image to promote mentoring as a rewarding and worthwhile activity.

5.1.1 Mentor recruitment plan

Clear **eligibility criteria** and a list of **desirable characteristics** for becoming a mentor in the programme will help target those with the skills and motivations that best match programme goals (refer Section 3).

Further, a clear **mentor role description** will help ensure mentors share the programme's values and are compatible with the programme's culture. It can also prompt unsuitable candidates to self-select out of the recruitment process.

The mentor role description may include:

- an overview of the mentoring programme, its purpose and goals, specific programme requirements, kaupapa (processes), format and content
- desired attributes and qualifications of applicants
- eligibility criteria
- an outline of the safety checking that will be undertaken
- a description of the mentor's role and responsibilities
- the time commitment and duration required

5.1.2 Mentee recruitment plan

As with the mentor recruitment plan, clear **eligibility criteria** and a list of the **characteristics** of the young people the programme is looking to support will help ensure the programme is recruiting mentees whose needs best match the services being offering.

Developing a **mentee role description** may also help a programme formulate a more accurate picture of the young people it is looking to support and therefore where it will source them from.

The mentee role description may include:

- an overview of the mentoring programme, its purpose and goals, specific programme requirements, kaupapa, format and content
- eligibility criteria
- responsibilities
- the time commitment required and duration of the programme

Note: eligibility criteria for acceptance of mentors and mentees into a programme will drive both recruitment and also safety checking and selection practices which are covered in Section 5.2.

5.1.3 Mentee referral process

For mentoring programmes that accept referrals from social services agencies including Child, Youth and Family (CYF) and Police Youth Aid, it will be important to have a formal referral procedure in place, so all stakeholders are aware of the requirements. Programmes working with schools may also have specific referral processes.

Written intake criteria are important. Consider the language used in the document so that mentoring is portrayed as a positive and active experience for the mentee. For example, it may be preferable to use the word “chosen” rather than “referred” when talking with the young person.

5.1.4 Recruitment materials

When designing recruitment materials, ensure you match recruitment messages to the motivations of potential mentors. People are motivated to volunteer for many reasons including enhancing both career and personal development, learning new skills and altruistic intentions (Clary et al., 1998). Being able to include extra-curricular activities on a CV to demonstrate skills development may also be valuable, as organisations are increasingly looking at skills and relevant experiences outside academic achievements.

Information packs should be tailored to particular groups for mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers. The table below summarises what should be included in each pack.

Table 3. Information Packs

Packs
<p>Information packs All information packs should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief one page overview of the programme, the goals and desired outcomes it is looking to achieve with mentees, specific programme requirements, kaupapa, format and content • Mentor/mentee eligibility criteria • Mentor/mentee role descriptions • Application forms • Consent forms for police vetting and referee checking • A description of the intake process for both mentor and mentees i.e., safety checking/screening and selection, orientation and training, matching and ongoing monitoring and support • Mentoring stories
<p>Mentor information packs In addition, the mentor information pack should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the benefits of being a mentor • Realistic expectations – acknowledging the benefits but also the commitment, boundaries, challenges and limitations of the role • Consent forms to access police vetting and to contact referees
<p>Mentee and parent/caregiver information packs In addition, the mentees and their parents/caregivers information packs might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about what mentoring is and how it can be helpful • Referral forms • Health and medical consent forms

Child protection policies about identifying and responding to child vulnerability and policies on appropriate conduct around children should be provided to all parties during the recruitment process. Incorporating these in the programme’s orientation and training programme will be essential.

It is good practice to be explicit about how information will be obtained and what purposes it will be used for. The fact that all mentors will be checked without exception should be a written policy and included in the recruitment materials. This helps manage the expectations of potential mentors who are uncomfortable with being checked.

Recruitment materials should also acknowledge **conflicts of interest**. For example: candidates should not be screened by someone with whom they have a close personal relationship; screening staff should never screen a person they would feel uncomfortable about rejecting because of a personal or perceived connection³.

Any conflicts of interest that do arise should be documented.

5.1.5 Recruitment methods

Evidence suggests that word of mouth approaches are the most effective way of recruiting potential mentors (MENTOR, 2015) Three strategies that may help a programme increase its pool of mentors are:

- Encourage current mentors to be ambassadors and to make approaches on behalf of the programme.
- Consider training and encouraging young people to identify and recruit appropriate mentors for themselves from their wider community when appropriate - referred to as Youth Initiated Mentoring (Pryce, Kelly & Guidone, 2014).
- Consider multiple methods of recruitment as research suggests prospective mentors need to receive a number of contacts/connections before making the commitment (MENTOR, 2015).

Other methods that are commonly adopted to recruit mentors include: social media; information sessions with community groups; creating a tradition within an organisation e.g., with a university that fosters a culture of volunteering.

Resources may need to be tailored to attract different groups of volunteers. For example, university students and retirees will need to be approached using different methods and language. Similarly, programmes may need to produce materials in different languages if English is not the first language in the prospective mentees’ home. **One size marketing does not fit all!**

It is also a good idea to recruit more mentors than needed, to allow for some dropping out during the selection and safety screening process.

For recruiting mentees, programmes will need to consider how to engage young people if they do not handle formal referrals from social services agencies or schools. The following table provides some ideas for engaging prospective mentees.

³ Safer Recruitment, Safer Children includes extensive discussion of the attitudes and behaviours that organisations should be looking for when appointing suitable persons to work with children.

How do I 'sell' the idea of mentoring to prospective mentees?

- Messages might include: "it's a great opportunity to spend some time with someone with different experiences" or "it's a fantastic chance to discover and extend your interests".
- Mentees can include their Certificate of Participation in their resume, illustrating their commitment.
- Engage a previous mentee to speak to a group of interested young people about their positive mentoring experiences. Also consider having a mentor speak as well.
- Prepare a presentation of photos of fun, interactive activities that have been undertaken by matches in your programme.
- Encourage schools to acknowledge the programme as a way of developing leadership potential in the participants.
- Highlight the positives of the programme from the perspective of young people, such as access to group activities, trying new things, spending time outside the classroom (for school-based programmes), learning new skills.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Using local talent as mentors, it works - Pacific youth mentoring programme, Wellington

A highly-successful sportsperson herself, Serena Curtis-Lemuelu says UP² - Unearthing Pasifika Potential Mentoring Programme (funded by the Ministry of Education) has been successful because they have engaged mentors for the students who have standing and achievement in their local community in the areas of sport, professions, academic, church and/or community leaders, who are able to relate, motivate and support the mentees at their weekly mentoring sessions.

Serena also highlighted, that the key to mentoring success is when everyone who has an impact on the student (family, school and community) are actively working together and involved in the mentoring experience, by not only encouraging and supporting the young person to achieve their goals, but also being open to learning more about the young person's environment so they can understand the real challenges that the young person is facing (e.g., parents learning about NCEA).

Checklist 3. Recruitment of mentors and mentees

Recruitment is about attracting and engaging mentors, mentees and their parents/caregivers who are going to be a good fit with your programme's aims and expected outcomes	Check
Mentor recruitment plan	
Confirm the number of mentors to recruit and decide on a timeline for recruitment – e.g., will you recruit once annually or on an ongoing basis?	
Define eligibility criteria for mentors, keeping in mind the needs of the young people to be involved in the programme. List the characteristics you are looking for - skills, attributes, motivations, and backgrounds that best match the goals of your programme.	
Create a mentor role description that defines the qualifications, skills and attributes mentors will need to create successful relationships.	
Identify recruitment methods you will use to attract and source suitable mentors. Use known networks and encourage word-of-mouth promotion, e.g. current mentors, staff, board members and volunteering associations. Identify and approach organisations and businesses that can connect your programme to potential mentors.	
Design and create recruitment materials to attract and engage suitable mentors.	
Create an information pack to give to prospective mentors.	
Ensure all mentor enquiries are followed up in a timely fashion.	
Document the intake process so the mentor knows what to expect.	
Mentee recruitment plan	
Confirm the number of mentees your programme aims to support annually (or other timeframe depending on your programme model).	
Describe the characteristics and eligibility criteria for the young person your programme is aiming to support.	
Create a mentee role description to include in the mentee and parent/caregiver information pack.	
Confirm the referral process and establish a list the organisations/agencies that may refer young people to your programme. Decide if your organisation will accept self-referrals or parent/caregiver referrals.	
Create an information pack for prospective mentees and their parents/caregivers.	
Document the intake process so the mentees and their families know what to expect.	