

Refugee Mentorship Toolkit

Creating Structured and Flexible Mentorship Opportunities for Refugee Leaders

Biftu Yousuf, PhD

Index

Introduction	3
Who the Toolkit is for	4
How the Toolkit was Developed	4
How to use the Toolkit	5
Chapter 1 – Refugee Mentorship: Why it Matters	6
1.1 Understanding Mentorship for Refugee Leaders	7
1.2 Guiding Principles: Meaningful Refugee Participation	8
1.3 Our Experience: Fellowship Program for Refugee Leaders	9
1.4 Reflection Tool: Applying “Power With” in Your Context	11
Chapter 2 – Co-Designing Refugee Mentorship	13
2.1 Why Co-Design is Essential	14
2.2 How to Get Started with Co-Design	15
2.3 Program Design Framework	17
2.4 Our Experience: Co-Design in Practice	21
2.5 Reflection Tool: Designing With, Not For	23
Chapter 3 – Implementing Effective Refugee Mentorship	26
3.1 Putting Mentorship Plans into Action	27
3.2 Core Elements of Program Delivery	27
3.3 Program Implementation Framework	29
3.4 Our Experience: Launching a New Mentorship Program	31
3.5 Reflection Tool: Your Mentorship Delivery Check-in	32
Chapter 4 – Sustaining Refugee Mentorship	34
4.1 Creating Conditions for Mentorship Longevity	35
4.2 Practices for Embedding Mentorship	36
4.3 Our Experience: Building a Sustainable Mentorship Model	37
4.4 Reflection Tool: Assessing Sustainability Readiness	38
References	39
Additional Resources	41

Contributors

This toolkit was developed with contributions from • the uOttawa Refugee Hub–Pathways International Fellowship Program for Refugee Leaders Fellows: Yusra Herzi, Valeria Gomez, Omer Malkyar, Shirley Tarazona • the Pathways International team • Mustafa Alio, Managing Director of R-SEAT.

The Fellowship Program was made possible through the generous funding support of the Northpine Foundation and delivered in partnership with the University of Ottawa.

Introduction

KEY TERMS

Mentorship

Fellowship

Refugee Leadership

Cultural humility

Trauma-informed

Resources (staff time, stipends, training)

Meaningful Refugee Participation (MRP)

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs)

REFUGEE LEADERS with lived experience of displacement bring insights, networks, and resilience that can effectively shape the refugee system and other social impact fields globally. Yet, across sectors, leadership opportunities that value both lived and professional expertise as assets remain limited. Mentoring opportunities and professional development for refugees can help elevate their full potential as leaders and decision-makers. This support also empowers the global refugee system to benefit from their skills, perspectives, and expertise. Expanding mentorship opportunities is, therefore, essential to advancing both individual and systemic leadership outcomes.

This Toolkit for Mentoring Refugee Leaders responds to this call. It provides organizations with practical, adaptable guidance on how to design, implement, and sustain structured mentorship initiatives that centre refugees' participation and leadership. Drawing on both lived experience and tested program models, the Toolkit translates lessons from the field into concrete practices that organizations can take to create lasting mentorship ecosystems. Whether used by academic institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs), community-led initiatives, or private sector partners, the Toolkit aims to make mentorship experiences accessible, effective, and transformative.

The Toolkit draws from the uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International Fellowship Program for Refugee Leaders in partnership with Northpine Foundation. This program pairs emerging refugee leaders with mentors, networks, and professional resources to support progress in leadership trajectories and roles. The program reveals that in-depth, tailored mentorship can unlock career and leadership potential when implemented through trust, meaningful participation, and flexibility. It demonstrates that when refugee leaders are valued as equal partners in learning and leadership, mentorship becomes a catalyst for individual growth and broader change.

The lessons from this Fellowship program form the foundation of the frameworks, practices, and tools shared throughout this Toolkit.

Who the Toolkit is for

This resource is designed for organizations that wish to support refugees' professional development and leadership, including:

- ▶ Academic institutions hosting refugee initiatives, research fellowships, or leadership programs.
- ▶ NGOs integrating refugee perspectives into governance and advocacy.
- ▶ CSOs engaging refugees in program design, community leadership, or policy influence.
- ▶ RLOs developing or formalizing mentorship initiatives.
- ▶ Community-led initiatives supporting refugee engagement, leadership, or capacity-building.
- ▶ Private sector partners seeking to support capacity-building, professional development, and leadership pathways for refugees.

This Toolkit is relevant to any organization seeking to create, strengthen, or formalize mentorship opportunities that centre refugee leadership.

How the Toolkit was Developed

The Toolkit is grounded in research, consultation, and lived experience, which combines evidence-based practices with insights from refugees and practitioners.

- ▶ A desk review of international refugee mentorship models and newcomer support resources (e.g., [Jumpstart Refugee Talent](#), [Canadian Council for Refugees](#), [International Organization for Migration](#), [Switchboard](#), [Ingka Group](#)) identified shared principles, gaps, and practices.
- ▶ An in-depth literature review of academic and grey literature on effective mentorship and meaningful refugee participation (e.g., [Milner et al., 2022](#)).
- ▶ Workshops and interviews with refugee fellows, mentors, and sector experts provided real-world learning and concrete examples of what makes mentorship effective in practice.
- ▶ Field experience from the uOttawa Refugee Hub–Pathways International Fellowship informed the Toolkit's practical tools, templates, and checklists, ensuring that guidance reflects tested approaches.

The Toolkit was shaped by these inputs, reflecting evidence and lived expertise. Secondary sources used to inform this Toolkit are in the reference section.

How to use the Toolkit

Each chapter combines concepts, guidance, reflections, and application. Users can read the Toolkit sequentially or directly proceed to the sections most relevant to their context. For example, for a new mentorship initiative, you may consider working through the Toolkit from start to finish, as it is organized to reflect the core components of a program cycle — design, implementation, and sustainability. If you already have an established mentorship program, you may prefer to consult the sections on sustainability and strengthening existing practices.

Each chapter in the Toolkit largely entails these core components:

- ▶ Concept sections, frameworks, and considerations for responsible refugee mentorship.
- ▶ Guidance sections translate concepts into adaptable frameworks for program design and delivery.
- ▶ Case sections illustrate how mentorship works in practice through real examples and lessons learned.
- ▶ Tool sections offer ready-to-use materials that organizations can adapt to their work.

By using and adapting this Toolkit, organizations contribute to a shared goal: providing mentorship opportunities that enable refugees to lead and shape change as equal partners.



CHAPTER 1

Refugee Mentorship: Why it Matters



1.1 Understanding Mentorship for Refugee Leaders

Mentorship for refugee leaders responds to recurring barriers, such as limited professional networks, unfamiliar institutional norms, and unequal access to decision-making spaces ([Tafech, 2025](#)), which shape how refugees navigate leadership pathways. Mentorship offers a structured way to counter these constraints by creating access points that would not otherwise exist, including exposure to professional norms, introductions to sector actors, and guided opportunities to engage in policy or advocacy environments. When intentionally designed, mentorship expands the conditions under which refugees can influence agendas, exercise leadership, and participate as colleagues. In this way, mentorship functions not only as individual support but as an organizational strategy for widening participation in decision-making spaces.

Mentorship for refugee leaders champions a reciprocal relationship of learning and trust that unsettles a top-down transfer of knowledge. Refugee leadership mentorship recognizes lived experience as a complement to professional expertise and positions mentors as partners who contribute access, perspective, and networks. For organizations adopting mentorship for refugee leaders, this means structuring programs as two-way exchanges. One way to achieve a reciprocal model of mentorship is by cultivating and nourishing the conditions for shared learning as a fundamental feature of mentorship. This approach places equal weight on what both parties bring to the relationship and reinforces a practice of mutual accountability.

Effective mentorship aligns with the ethos of Meaningful Refugee Participation (MRP) ([Declaration Working Group, 2025](#)), emphasizing that participation is intentional, substantive, and transformative. Because MRP centres lived experience as a source of authority, mentorship designed in this way supports refugees in shaping priorities, identifying objectives, and guiding how mentorship operates in practice. When grounded in MRP, mentorship becomes more than individual capacity building; it strengthens an organization's capacity to contribute to lasting systems change. In a global context marked by shifting displacement patterns and emerging forms of refugee participation, mentorship is one of the most practical tools organizations can use to shape what comes next.



1.2 Guiding Principles: Meaningful Refugee Participation

Five principles are distilled from global practices that uphold MRP and demonstrate how they can be embedded in mentorship practice. For organizations seeking to embed MRP in their own mentorship models, these principles provide a roadmap that connects values to practical action. Each principle below includes brief examples and an implementation tip to support translation into practice.

Meaningful refugee participation is not only about recognizing lived experience; it is also about recognizing expertise. Refugees should be engaged in ways that reflect their professional backgrounds, subject-matter knowledge, and practical experience, not only as general representatives of displacement. As with any expert role, meaningful participation also carries a responsibility to offer insights grounded in knowledge and experience, to continue building expertise, and to remain attentive to affected communities so that contributions remain relevant, credible, and effective.

1. Right to Participate

Refugees have the right to participate in all decisions affecting them.

- Tailored development plans are co-created with mentors based on the mentee's goals.
- Refugees design and lead their own advocacy projects.
- Refugees hold seats on advisory boards that directly shape institutional work.

TIP



Co-establish mentorship goals, activities, and decision-making from the outset.

2. Good Faith and Non-Discrimination

Participation must be implemented earnestly and equitably.

- Mentorship recruitment, selection, and matching are transparent.
- Refugees are recognized and invited to present as experts at global forums.
- Refugees' contributions are valued as lived experience and professional insight.

TIP



Embed equitable participation at every stage of mentorship, from mentor selection to mentorship session design.

3. Access to Information

Access to timely, clear, and relevant information is essential.

- Access to relevant and high-quality training.
- Refugees have direct engagement with policymakers.
- Refugees contribute to and help disseminate actionable knowledge.

TIP



Broker access to knowledge, platforms, and professional networks that expand leadership opportunities.

4. Support and Resources

Participation must be resourced to be tangible and impactful.

- a. Stipends and professional development funds are provided.
- b. Tailored mentorship, international travel support, and access to professional platforms.
- c. Investment reflects a core belief: refugees deserve not just seats, but the tools and resources to lead from them.

TIP



Allocate material resources, logistical, and relational resources to make refugee participation feasible.

5. Accountability and Feedback

Participation must come with a right to remedy.

- a. Structured reflection points, regular mentor check-ins, and open channels for input and honest conversations.
- b. Refugees shape future iterations of the program through continuous feedback.
- c. Program evolves with, and because of, its participants.

TIP



Create structured feedback loops to ensure lived experiences directly inform program design and adaptation.

These principles set the foundation for mentorship that is participatory, ethical, and aligned with system-level change. The next section illustrates how these principles have taken shape in practice, drawing on lessons from the uOttawa Refugee Hub – Pathways International Fellowship program to demonstrate what MRP-aligned mentorship looks like when implemented.

1.3 Our Experience: Fellowship Program for Refugee Leaders

The reflection, written by two inaugural Refugee Fellows, demonstrates how the five MRP principles can take shape in real-world programming. Drawn from their experience at the uOttawa Refugee Hub–Pathways International Fellowship for Refugee Leaders, it illustrates how mentorship can operationalize “power with” approaches and meaningfully shift how programs are experienced.

In this toolkit, “power with, not for” refers to an approach grounded in shared decision-making, mutual respect, and co-leadership, where refugee participants are engaged as partners in shaping mentorship rather than as passive recipients of support.



Power With, Not For A Fellowship That Practices What Participation Preaches

When we first joined the uOttawa–Pathways International Fellowship, we weren't entirely sure what to expect. We've both seen "participation" dressed up for press releases, polished, performative, and quietly empty. But this was different. From the very beginning, we weren't asked to consult. We were asked to lead.

And not the kind of leadership where you're handed responsibility without support, what we call symbolic leadership. No, here, we were trusted with something much deeper: real leadership with mentorship. And that changed everything.

Each of us had the space to shape a project that was not just meaningful to us, but grounded in the systems we've spent years navigating and pushing against. One of us focused on creating legal hiring pathways for refugee professionals. The other built out advocacy tools to support refugee work rights in urban areas. We weren't led by someone else's vision. We were asked, what do you want to change? And then: how can we help you do it?

That kind of question is rare. Especially for forcibly displaced people, trust is not something we often feel from institutions. But during this Fellowship, we felt it, and we returned it. We didn't just work with our mentors. We were welcomed into a team that saw us fully. We shared stories, swapped ideas, and built connections, and in that process, we rediscovered what it means to belong in a space that sees your potential and your history.

We often say that knowledge and tools alone aren't enough. Without patience, without consistent support, without people willing to stand beside us when the spotlight fades, there's no real change. This Fellowship understood that. **It didn't rush us toward outputs. It gave us the resources, funding, training, mentorship, and space to grow at our own pace, and the understanding that transformation takes time.**

Each of us received a stipend and professional development funding. That financial support gave us breathing room. But more importantly, it sent a message: our labor matters. Our insight matters. And our leadership is worth investing in, not just during the Fellowship, but beyond it. Through this program, we met directly with Canadian policymakers at IRCC, attended the York University Climate Migration Futures course, and deepened our thinking on how climate, labor, and legal systems intersect.

Looking back, one of the most powerful parts of this experience was not just what we learned, but how we were treated. We were never asked to shrink ourselves to fit an agenda. We were invited to expand. We weren't told what to do. We were asked what was missing, and then supported to build it ourselves.

This Fellowship didn't hand us a seat at the table. It asked us to help design the table. And that's what meaningful refugee participation should look like, not power for, but power with.

Now, as we prepare to present our projects, continue our work, and mentor others who will follow, we carry this experience with us. We know now that being resourced and trusted isn't a gift, it's a right. And when institutions get it right, the ripple effect is real.





As the words of these inaugural Fellows' show, this Fellowship program demonstrated MRP principles not through policy statements, but through action. This reflection also underscores that effective mentorship for refugee leaders depends on shared power, sustained support, and organizational commitment to participation.

Key Takeaways for Early-Stage Planning

- ▶ Mutual trust and co-leadership enable genuine participation.
- ▶ Resourcing mentees through stipends and training ensures equity.
- ▶ Mentorship timelines should allow for growth, not just outputs.
- ▶ Programs thrive when feedback and adaptation are continuous.

1.4 Reflection Tool: Applying “Power With” in Your Context

Mentorship that is grounded in MRP begins with reflection. Use the prompts below (Step 1) to explore how your organization currently supports, or could begin supporting, mentorship opportunities for refugee leaders. Then, you can complete the checklist (Step 2) to assess how your approach or plans align with the principles of “power with, and not for” as foundational to MRP. This tool can be used whether your organization already runs mentorship programming or is considering how to introduce it.

Step 1: Reflect

- ▶ How is mentorship currently practiced in your organization?
- ▶ Are refugee participants engaged in roles that reflect both lived experience and relevant professional or practical expertise?
- ▶ Who sets the mentorship goals: the mentor, the mentee, or both jointly through shared decision-making?
- ▶ What would “power with, not for” look like in your organizational context?
- ▶ What resources, timing, funding, or training would make participation equitable?
- ▶ What systems will you use (or strengthen) for ongoing feedback and co-learning?
- ▶ What changes, small or structural, would move your approach or plan closer to the MRP principles described above?

Step 2: Assess

Use this quick checklist to identify where your organization already applies MRP principles, or where new practices, investments, or pilots could help you get started.

Refugee mentorship in our organization is clearly defined, with a shared understanding of its purpose and approach.

Mentorship goals are (or will be) co-defined by mentors and mentees, rather than established unilaterally.

Our mentorship approach emphasizes “power with, not for”; mentors and mentees learn and lead together.

Adequate resources (time, funding, and training) are available, or could be allocated, to make participation equitable for mentees.

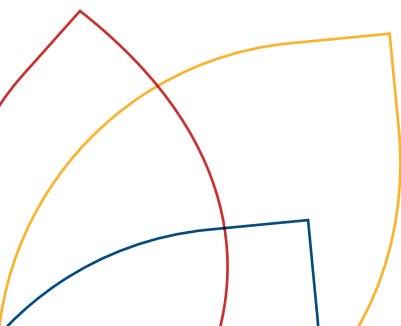
Systems are (or will be) in place for ongoing feedback, reflection, and co-learning.

We identified specific changes, small or structural, that could make our mentorship model more equitable and participatory.

After completing both exercises

Review your reflections and checklist responses together. Identify two or three concrete actions your organization can take to strengthen, or begin developing, mentorship practices that embody “power with.”

This reflection tool closes Chapter 1 and prepares organizations for Chapter 2, where co-design essentials are introduced to guide the development of refugee mentorship programs.



CHAPTER 2

Co-Designing Refugee Mentorship



2.1 Why Co-Design is Essential

Co-design is an effective approach for creating refugee mentorship programs. It begins with consultations with key stakeholders, including refugee leaders themselves, refugee-led organizations, refugee communities, and other actors with relevant expertise. These formative consultations ensure that mentorship opportunities are grounded in a shared understanding of what is needed and meaningful. Co-design means that the mentorship opportunity will also draw out what your organization may specifically be best placed to offer; there is not a one-size-fits-all mentorship program for either refugee leaders or organizations. Where initial consultations help organizations identify key opportunities, co-design builds on this foundation and positions lived experience as essential to shaping program structures and delivery.

For program designers, this means that lived experience partnership is anchored from conception to execution. Co-design requires organizations to move from gathering input to sharing decision-making authority, within clearly defined program parameters. One way to achieve this beyond the early consultation stage is to have stakeholders co-define program focus areas that align with the organization's mandate, while participants themselves can co-set mentorship goals and success indicators in their individualized development plans. Designing mentorship programs in this way reframes refugees not only as participants in the process, but as partners shaping the very systems that will mentor them. When done well, co-design becomes both a method and an outcome, producing mentorship models that are trusted, relevant, and grounded in meaningful priorities.

Effective co-design is guided by concepts that clarify how relationships are built, how decisions are made, and how responsibility is shared throughout program development. These concepts draw from established mentorship programs, global participatory frameworks, and field experiences.



2.2 How to Get Started with Co-Design

Co-designing mentorship programs with refugees requires a shared value system anchored in partnership, participation, and dignity. For organizations seeking to use a co-design framework for their mentorship model, these five concepts provide a roadmap that connects shared values to practical action. Each concept below includes examples of what co-design looks like in practice, followed by tips that organizations can adapt, regardless of size or context.

1. Reciprocity

A reciprocal mentorship model ensures that learning flows both ways: mentors gain deeper cultural competence, insight into systemic barriers, and strengthened partnerships; mentees gain visibility, professional agency, and access to networks.

- a. Mentees help set mentorship goals and define success indicators.
- b. Mentors and mentees co-create agendas for mentorship sessions.

TIPS



- ▶ Frame mentorship guidance to emphasize mutual learning.
- ▶ Encourage mentors to reflect on how their assumptions shift through the mentorship program.

2. Strength-based Practice

Focusing on existing strengths avoids deficit framing, instead foregrounding skills, such as cross-cultural navigation, adaptability, and lived knowledge.

- a. Program design begins with strength-mapping instead of needs-mapping.
- b. Mentees describe what they want to contribute, not just what they want to gain.

TIPS



- ▶ Review program language to remove deficit framing where avoidable.
- ▶ Build activities around participant strengths.



3. Humility

Cultural humility requires an open, curiosity-driven approach to collaboration that honours refugees as co-experts.

- a. Mentors ask open-ended questions instead of providing predetermined advice.
- b. Mentors are trained in listening to subtext and root issues.

TIPS



- ▶ Recognize that co-design may surface tension, an expected part of power-sharing.
- ▶ Build “pause points” into program cycles to reassess what is working and what may need adjustment.

4. Ethical Participation

Ethical participation requires clarity about roles, expectations, and decision-making authority.

- a. Mentors and mentees jointly set boundaries around communication, confidentiality, and consent.
- b. Mentors and mentees co-develop a shared code of conduct.

TIPS



- ▶ Avoid prompting personal trauma and offer opt-out mechanisms for reflective activities.
- ▶ Clarify what organizational responsibilities include and what mentors cannot take on.

5. Feedback

Structured and continuous feedback loops enable programs to evolve, transforming mentorship from a static model into a living tree of learning.

- a. Regular “review” meetings with mentors, mentees, and staff to share learnings.
- b. Use interviews, surveys, journaling, and discussions to gather evolving insights.

TIPS



- ▶ Seek feedback after key activities and program milestones.
- ▶ Show mentees how their feedback leads to future program changes.

These concepts provide a foundation for co-designing mentorship programs alongside stakeholders and participants. The next section links these values to the practical, step-by-step design stages that organizations can adopt regardless of size or capacity.

2.3 Program Design Framework

Creating a mentorship program that supports refugee leaders requires both structure and flexibility. An effective design provides clear guidance and shared expectations, while leaving room for adaptation as relationships, needs, and contexts evolve. The six stages below provide a framework that any organization, large or small, can use to design mentorship programs. This framework is scalable: small organizations may combine stages, while larger ones may implement each stage in full. Templates aligned with each stage are provided in the Additional Resources section at the end of the toolkit.



If you are a smaller organization with limited capacity, you may choose to combine stages of this framework to better fit your resources. The six stages of this framework can be streamlined by combining related steps. For example, **Stages 1 (Needs Assessment)** and **2 (Program Design)** can be conducted together through a single consultation process that identifies needs while defining program goals and structure. Similarly, **Stages 3 (Recruitment)** and **4 (Selection and Orientation)** can be integrated into one coordinated process that includes outreach, screening, matching, and onboarding. **Stages 5 (Goal Setting)** and **6 (Monitoring and Reflection)** can also be combined by using simple, ongoing check-ins that track progress while gathering feedback. This flexible approach allows organizations to maintain the core principles of the framework while adapting it to available time, staffing, and resources.



Stage 1: Needs Assessment and Stakeholder Mapping

Develop a shared understanding of who the mentorship program serves and why. This stage focuses on mentorship needs and the context in which the program will operate.

- ▶ **Engage refugees early** through participatory discussions or mini-workshops to identify mentorship needs, barriers, and aspirations.
- ▶ **Map existing resources** by assessing internal capacity (e.g., staff time, funding, networks) and external partners, such as RLOs, community groups, and universities.
- ▶ **Identify service shortfalls** to ensure the program complements, rather than duplicates, existing refugee support structures.

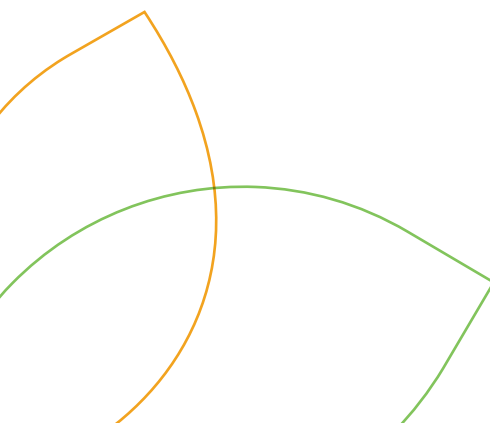
Output: A *Needs and Context Summary* outlining needs, goals, risks, and initial program parameters.

Stage 2: Program Purpose and Design Parameters

Clarify the overall purpose and boundaries of the mentorship program before recruitment begins. This stage ensures that there is a shared understanding of what the program aims to do.

- ▶ **Define how mentorship creates change** by clarifying the steps from activities to outcomes (e.g., policy participation, career advancement, leadership readiness).
- ▶ **Choose the mentorship model**, such as one-to-one, group, or peer mentorship, recognizing that each carries different resource implications and enhances participant experience.
- ▶ **Set duration and intensity**, including mentorship tenure and key touchpoints, such as an onboarding check-in, mid-point review, and close-out reflection.

Output: A *Program Design Brief* describing scope, purpose, structure, timeframe, and requirements.



Stage 3: Recruitment and Screening

Invest time in finding mentors and mentees who align with the shared values and expectations of the program. This stage prioritizes diversity, fairness, and trust-building.

- ▶ **Recruit through trusted networks**, including partnering with RLOs, CSOs, and community groups to reach diverse candidates and reduce barriers to participation.
- ▶ **Use transparent selection criteria** so applicants clearly understand the program's values and expectations.
- ▶ **Apply structured screening** using short, recorded video introductions and guided interviews to understand applicants' goals, availability, and expectations.

Output: *An Application and Recruitment Guide* to capture profiles, strengths, interests, and alignment with program purpose.

Stage 4: Selection and Orientation

Establish intentional mentor-mentee relationships and hold early orientation processes that set the tone for trust, accountability, and co-learning. This stage lays the foundation for an open and collaborative relationship.

- ▶ **Match mentors and mentees**, using an approach that fits organizational capacity and context, whether through internal designation or a matching process based on goals and learning style.
- ▶ **Facilitate first meetings that focus on shared values**, expectations, and ways of working before moving into detailed goal setting or action planning.
- ▶ **Conduct orientation sessions for mentors and mentees** on co-design essentials, including reciprocity, strength-based practice, cultural humility, communication norms, and ethical participation.

Output: *A Mentorship Agreement* outlining mutual expectations, confidentiality, and meeting cadence.



Stage 5: Goal Setting and Development Planning

Support the co-creation of goals that are measurable yet flexible enough to evolve during mentorship. This stage ensures progress is tracked and milestones are celebrated.

- ▶ **Co-create a development plan within the first two meetings**, by identifying two to three goals linked to leadership growth, network expansion, policy engagement, or skills development.
- ▶ **Encourage measurable but adaptive targets**, revisiting goals at the mid-program check-in to reflect new insights, shifting priorities, and emerging opportunities.
- ▶ **Provide reflection templates so mentors and mentees track progress collaboratively**. Use short prompts, monthly check-ins, or shared notes to help mentor and mentee review what is working, what has shifted, and what requires adjustment.

Output: An *Individualized Development Plan Template* to guide goal setting and facilitate structured review at agreed intervals.

Stage 6: Monitoring, Reflection, and Closure

Monitor program activities to support accountability, responsiveness, and continuous improvement. This stage ensures that the mentorship program remains dynamic and informed.

- ▶ **Schedule regular check-ins** with mentees on a monthly or quarterly basis to gather feedback.
- ▶ **Share synthesized feedback** with participants and stakeholders and invite suggestions for redesign, ensuring that adaptations are participatory and visible.
- ▶ **Support closure with continuity** by promoting participants to document lessons learned, reflect on growth, and identify next steps, such as continued collaboration, alumni engagement, or peer mentorship opportunities.

Output: A *Mentorship Reflection Report* capturing insights, recommendations, stakeholder- and participant-informed feedback to shape future program cycles.

These six stages provide structured yet flexible approaches to formalizing mentorship programs, moving intentionally from initial assessment to goal setting and closure.

2.4 Our Experience: Co-Design in Practice

This example illustrates how co-design concepts shaped the development of the uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International Fellowship for Refugee Leaders. This included early consultation, lived experience partnership, and consistent feedback to inform the program's purpose, structure, and delivery blueprint.

Background

Prior to launching the Fellowship program, uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International engaged extensively with refugees, practitioners, and others in the field to identify gaps in professional development and mentorship. These were seen as key barriers preventing refugees from realizing their full potential as leaders. This was true for leadership within the global refugee system itself and in other social impact fields.

In response, uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International partnered with RLOs, NGOs, CSOs, sector experts, and private sector partners to strategize on how to address this gap effectively. The Fellowship Program for Refugee Leaders was borne out of these efforts, as highlighted by key co-design approaches reflected below.

Listening to and responding with refugee leaders

Firstly, it was important to listen to what refugee leaders themselves identified as systemic barriers in their professional trajectories. These early discussions highlighted:

- ▶ Opportunities for refugee leaders to gain formal knowledge, build skills, and access networks.
- ▶ Expanded support to ensure that they are equipped to participate meaningfully and effectively.
- ▶ An urgent need for the field to benefit from their skills, perspectives, and expertise.

uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International thoughtfully absorbed what they heard from those with lived experiences of displacement and implemented a plan to create a program with refugee leaders and not for them.

Engaging RLOs early and continuously

Refugee-led organizations (RLOs) were consulted early to help shape the core purpose and design parameters of the program. These formative discussions clarified:

- ▶ Leadership development opportunities that were meaningful for refugee professionals.
- ▶ Suitable mentorship models and selection methodologies.
- ▶ Contextual considerations, such as accessibility, resourcing, and historical dynamics.

Partnership with RLOs was maintained throughout program rollout. This included having them participate in selection processes, connecting them with Fellows for program reflections, and obtaining feedback on program impact.

RLO contributions ensured the program was anchored in lived experience expertise and attuned to broader contexts.

Making flexibility a core program feature

Flexibility became a central design element, which allowed the program to be responsive and customizable. This was achieved through:

- ▶ Tailored development plans to map and track goals, priorities, focus areas, and professional development interests.
- ▶ Flexibility in meeting cadence and formats to diversify learning opportunities across group touchpoints, cohort collaborations, and one-to-ones.
- ▶ Open communication and regular check-ins that supported pivots and adjustments in real time.

The Fellows' priorities were kept central to the design because of these practices, which meant personalized and effective mentorship experiences.

Cultivating learning, reflection, and connection

Learning, reflection, and connection were embedded in the program through structured and informal spaces. This included:

- ▶ Invitations to participate in broader organizational activities, such as team exchanges on policy and workstream developments.
- ▶ Fellowship showcase with the program Funders to share reflections.
- ▶ Post-program connections to link former and future cohorts for mutual benefit.

Relationships within the organization and with key stakeholders, including staff, funders, and Alumni, were key to ensuring the program remained a living initiative.

This reflection foregrounds how commitments to co-design translate into concrete program development. Organizations can use this example to visualize and adapt a program design framework that fits their context.

Key Takeaways for Program Design

- ▶ Careful engagement with lived experience grounds key contextual insights.
- ▶ Flexible structures enable creativity that complements structured components.
- ▶ Intentional learning spaces encourage active participation and shared ownership.
- ▶ Relationship building cultivates bridges across key stakeholders and continuity.

2.5 Reflection Tool: Designing With, Not For

Use the self-assessment (A) and discussion (B) tools below to explore how your mentorship initiative reflects co-design. This reflection tool can be used during early planning, mid-program reviews, or after each mentorship cycle.

A. Self-Assessment Checklist

Question	Yes	Partly	No	Evidence / Next Steps
Refugee experts or leaders were consulted during program design.				
Stakeholders contributed to program construction, such as parameters and focus areas.				
The program's recruitment and matching processes consider access barriers (language, geography, technology).				
Mentorship materials are accessible (plain language, multiple languages, visual formats).				
Mentors receive training in cultural humility, trauma-informed strength-based practice, or ethical participation.				
A written conduct policy outlines boundaries, confidentiality, and reporting mechanisms.				
There are clear systems for addressing misunderstanding, conflict, or harm.				

Question	Yes	Partly	No	Evidence / Next Steps
Mentees are compensated, supported, or recognized in ways that make participation feasible.				
Mentees co-define mentorship goals and success indicators.				
Lessons learned are captured in simple, shareable formats (briefs, visuals, templates).				
The program includes regular points for adjusting goals, pacing, or format based on participant input and feedback.				
We have structured ways for participants to influence program delivery through continuous feedback.				
We document changes made in response to feedback and communicate them back to participants.				
Alumni or mentees contribute to training, onboarding, or peer-support activities when appropriate.				
Partnerships or resourcing strategies are designed to sustain mentorship beyond a single cycle.				

Tip: Treat the checklist as a living tool. Revisit it at key program stages and update the “Next Steps” column to track progress over time.

B. Discussion Reflection Prompts

1. Participation and Power

- ▶ How have refugee experts or leaders shaped program design?
- ▶ Where do mentees influence mentorship direction, and where is influence still limited?
- ▶ What is one area where decision-making could shift from “for” to “with”?

2. Accessibility and Flexibility

- ▶ Who might be excluded by our current structure (language, geography, time zones, technology)?
- ▶ What adaptations, such as hybrid formats, translated materials, or peer-mentor options, could increase participation?

3. Learning and Accountability

- ▶ How do we show participants that their feedback has led to meaningful adjustments?
- ▶ What mechanisms support accountability when commitments or expectations need recalibrating?

4. On Long-Term Sustainability

- ▶ How are alumni or past mentees engaged as contributors, co-mentors, or advisors?
- ▶ What partnerships or resource-sharing arrangements support long-term continuity?

After completing both exercises

Review your self-assessment results and discussion responses together. Identify two or three concrete actions your organization can take to begin designing or strengthening mentorship practices that reflect co-design concepts.

This reflection tool closes Chapter 2 and prepares organizations for Chapter 3, where mentorship programs are operationalized through preparation, supervision, and ongoing relationship management.



CHAPTER 3

Implementing Effective Refugee Mentorship





3.1 Putting Mentorship Plans into Action

Implementing effective mentorship for refugee leaders focuses on the practical actions that bring programs to life. For mentees, reliability is essential to ensure processes are predictable and mitigate uncertainty. For mentors, structured planning helps them offer support that is manageable and consistent. Effective implementation therefore requires clear practices, consistent communication, and accessible processes that support both mentors and mentees. This is the stage where plans transform into relationships that are sustained by steady engagement and defined expectations.

Implementation also requires attention to the conditions that support productive relationships. This includes ensuring that training and orientation are provided before the mentorship begins, that early meetings follow a clear sequence, and that there are straightforward ways to ask questions or seek guidance. Even in low-capacity settings, small but consistent actions, such as confirming appointments, providing short meeting guides, or offering periodic check-ins, help reinforce trust and structure. These routines make the program usable for participants regardless of their prior experience with mentorship.

For program managers, effective delivery involves aligning mentorship practices with the systems established during program design. Organizations new to refugee mentorship, such as the uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International Fellowship Program for refugee leaders, find that a learning-oriented approach foregrounds MRP strengthens delivery. When mentors and mentees are well-prepared, when expectations are co-established, and when activities support two-way learning, implementation becomes a continuation of co-design. This alignment sets the foundation for the implementation elements outlined in the next section.

3.2 Core Elements of Program Delivery

High-quality program delivery requires a set of guidelines that shape mentorship practices in day-to-day implementation. For organizations seeking to deliver meaningful mentorship for refugee leaders, these five guidelines provide a roadmap that connects program commitments to practical action. Each guideline below illustrates what effective delivery looks like in practice, followed by adaptable examples that organizations can modify to suit their contexts.



1. Clarity

Clearly defined expectations and responsibilities support steady participation.

- a. Discuss roles, communication preferences, and boundaries during onboarding.
- b. Review what mentorship can and cannot offer before beginning goal setting.
- c. Confirm next steps at the end of each meeting to maintain shared understanding.



2. Reliability

Regular contact helps mentorship relationships progress steadily over time.

- a. Establish recurring meetings on a confirmed day and time.
- b. Respond to communication promptly to maintain agreed norms.
- c. Use structured program touchpoints, such as early check-ins and mid-term reviews, to reinforce consistency.



3. Responsibility

Shared responsibility helps maintain alignment and monitor progress.

- a. Co-create development goals and review them together as mentorship progresses.
- b. Follow up on agreed actions between meetings and notify each other of changes.
- c. Use shared documents or brief notes to maintain visibility on tasks, commitments, and progress.



4. Boundaries

Clear boundaries maintain the integrity of the mentorship relationship and keep responsibilities manageable.

- a. Discuss the scope and limits of mentorship during onboarding.
- b. Refer questions outside the mentor's role, such as legal or personal matters, to program staff.
- c. Use program procedures to address cultural differences, concerns, misunderstandings, or disagreements.



5. Responsiveness

Mentorship remains effective when delivery adjusts to evolving priorities and circumstances.

- a. Revisit goals during check-ins to reflect new opportunities or shifts in focus areas.
- b. Modify meeting frequency to accommodate changes in availability or workload.
- c. Adapt agendas or formats when mentees identify new interests or propose adjustments.

These guidelines establish the foundation for program delivery. The next section sets out core practices for putting mentorship plans into concrete action.

3.3 Program Implementation Framework

Delivering an effective mentorship program that supports both mentors and mentees requires essential practices. These include preparation, onboarding, relationship management, and goal-focused tools as outlined below. Organizations can adapt these practices to their capacity, creating a delivery approach that is well-organized and grounded in consistent, purposeful engagement.

1. Preparing Mentors and Mentees



Preparation equips mentors and mentees with the information and skills needed to begin the mentoring relationship with confidence. It also establishes a shared understanding of how mentorship will function and the responsibilities tied to each participant.

Mentor preparation can include:

- ▶ Role clarity and boundaries
- ▶ Effective, respectful communication skills
- ▶ Cultural humility and awareness of migration-related contexts
- ▶ Trauma-informed basics (without requesting personal disclosures)
- ▶ Goal-setting support and expectation management
- ▶ Ethical considerations, including confidentiality and appropriate use of networks

Mentee preparation can include:

- ▶ Purpose and limits of mentorship, and how mentorship differs from other forms of support
- ▶ Expectations for meeting frequency, preparation, and participation
- ▶ Clarification of personal goals and priorities
- ▶ Preferred communication methods and availability
- ▶ Encouragement to shape meeting agendas and raise questions

These sessions do not need to be lengthy. Short orientations, delivered online or in person, paired with clear written guidance, are typically sufficient.



2. Onboarding and Early Meetings



A structured onboarding process establishes stability and shared expectations from the start.

Onboarding typically includes:

- ▶ Staff-facilitated introduction to review expectations, confirm logistics, and ensure mutual understanding.
- ▶ First meeting focused on introductions, goal clarification, and agreement on communication norms.
- ▶ Early action items, such as drafting a simple goal plan or identifying next steps.
- ▶ Follow-up check-in within the first two to three weeks to identify questions or emerging challenges.

Early alignment helps prevent misunderstandings and sets the conditions for a productive working relationship.

3. Supporting and Managing the Relationship



Once meetings begin, programs can help sustain momentum through light-touch support that maintains clarity and consistency without creating administrative burdens.

Support may include:

- ▶ Guidance on meeting structure, including sample agendas or planning tools.
- ▶ Monthly check-ins, individual or group, to monitor progress and surface concerns.
- ▶ Clear points of contact for troubleshooting, ethical questions, or boundary issues.
- ▶ Encouragement of two-way learning to reinforce the reciprocal nature of mentorship.

4. Activities and Goal-Focused Tools



Activities help structure the mentorship and support steady progress toward the mentee's goals.

Organizations can offer a flexible menu of options, such as:

- ▶ Professional profile development (bios, resumes, leadership summaries).
- ▶ Career or advocacy pathway mapping.
- ▶ Network exploration, including existing contacts and new opportunities.
- ▶ Communication practice, such as interview preparation or meeting rehearsal.
- ▶ Observation-based opportunities, such as attending events, panels, or meetings together.
- ▶ Skill-building exercises aligned with the mentee's goals.

Tools that support these activities may include meeting guides, short action-planning templates, and checklists for preparing conversations or introductions.

3.4 Our Experience: Launching a New Mentorship Program

This example illustrates how the uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International approached the launch of a brand-new mentorship program for refugee leaders. While the program was co-designed, it was implemented solely and relied on evolving structures. It shows how early planning, documentation, onboarding, and adaptation contributed to the first cycle of program delivery.

Program Context

This example foregrounds how the uOttawa Refugee Hub-Pathways International launched its first Fellowship Program for Refugee Leaders with only one dedicated staff member who also served as the primary mentor, Biftu Yousuf. The 12-month Fellowship requires an average commitment of 20 hours per month and a combined dedicated one-to-one mentorship with structured learning opportunities. Fellows participate in a uOttawa course delivered by Professor Jennifer Bond, CEO of Pathways International, as well as engage in broader stakeholder meetings, including in-person convenings where feasible.

Onboarding Practices

The program manager developed several initial implementation documents, including a milestones tracker, onboarding plan, mentor guidelines, and outreach plan, to guide early delivery. Building on these documents, the program manager created an onboarding kit that included guidance on representation and attribution, knowledge and skill-building resources, and general expectations. The onboarding process also integrated introductions to broader organizational staff, giving Fellows an early understanding of the organization's workstreams and roles.

Communications and Coordination

A robust communications plan was established at the outset. The program manager collected Fellows' bios for internal and external use, which included introductory announcements on social platforms. Fellows were added to the organization's platforms, including program email accounts and Microsoft Teams, to support regular communication and access to resources. A WhatsApp group was created to facilitate quicker coordination around schedules, reminders, and informal questions.

Adapting to Fellows' Requests

As the program progressed, several components were adapted in response to Fellows' requests. Fellows identified technology needs, such as Canva, Zoom Pro, and Adobe licenses, and the organization provided access to these tools to support project work and skill development. The program also offered recurring skill-building opportunities, including sessions on presentation preparation, public speaking, note-taking, synthesizing information, and drafting briefs.

Participation in Broader Organization

Fellows also expressed a desire for more group meetings and Fellows-only sessions. In addition to structured mentorship meetings, Fellows were invited to join staff meetings or participate in policy discussions, creating opportunities to learn about key workstreams and contribute where appropriate. These activities supported learning but also introduced Fellows to the program's operational working environment.

Emerging Outcomes from Implementation

Fellows later described developing a sense of belonging within the organization, noting that integration into communication channels and ongoing interaction with staff contributed to feeling part of the team. For the organization, these practices demonstrated that mentorship was not only about skill-building, but also about creating practical avenues for refugee leaders to participate in professional spaces.

This reflection offers a practical look at how implementation unfolds into practice and points to considerations that organizations can adapt to their own contexts.

Key Takeaways for Program Implementation

- ▶ Clear onboarding materials establish familiarity with organizational structures.
- ▶ Varied communication channels reduce coordination barriers.
- ▶ Responsive adjustments strengthen program relevance.
- ▶ Involving mentees in organizational activities fosters belonging.

3.5 Reflection Tool: Your Mentorship Delivery Check-in

Use this tool to assess how well your program delivers mentorship through preparation, onboarding, communication, and relationship support. The prompts below translate core mentorship practices into organization-level questions that help you identify where your implementation approach is strong and where adjustments may be helpful.

1. Building the Conditions for Trust

How does your program support the early development of trust between mentors and mentees?

Participants receive guidance on introductions and early relationship-building.

Mentors and mentees discuss roles, boundaries, and confidentiality early on.

Mentees have opportunities to share their background in a way that feels safe and voluntary.

One improvement we could make to support early trust-building:

2. Setting Goals and Expectations

Mentors and mentees are supported to establish shared goals and expectations.

Expectations for meetings, communication, and responsibilities are discussed and documented.

There are scheduled points for reviewing and adjusting goals.

One way we could strengthen goal-setting or expectation alignment:

3. Supporting Effective Communication

What practices does your program use to promote clear, respectful communication?

Mentors and mentees receive guidance on active listening and open-ended questions.

Participants have access to tools or prompts for providing constructive feedback.

There is guidance on navigating sensitive or complex conversations.

One area where communication support could be clearer:

4. Encouraging Skill Development and Exposure

How does your program help mentees build skills and gain exposure to relevant networks or opportunities?

Mentors receive guidance on identifying strengths and areas for development.

Mentees are supported to attend events, meetings, or other learning opportunities.

There are structured opportunities for self-reflection or progress review.

One additional way we could support skill-building or exposure:

After completing this exercise

Review your check-in responses and identify two or three concrete adjustments your organization can make to strengthen mentorship delivery.

This reflection tool closes Chapter 3 and prepares organizations for Chapter 4, which examines how mentorship can be embedded in organizational structures and systems, and supported over time through practical steps that strengthen longevity.

CHAPTER 4

Sustaining Refugee Mentorship

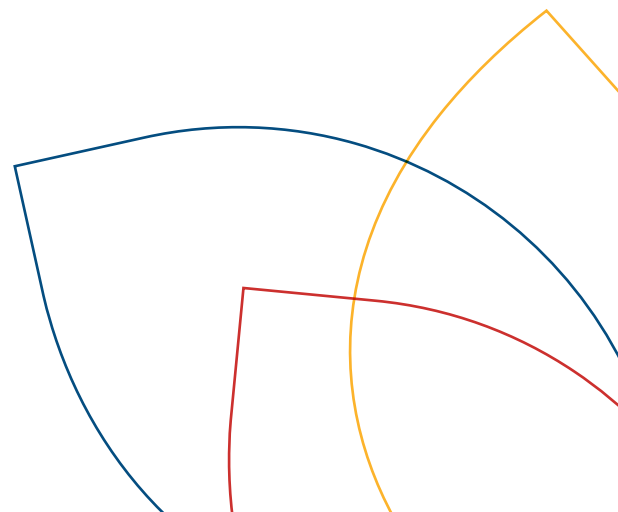


4.1 Creating Conditions for Mentorship Longevity

Mentorship initiatives may begin as pilots or short-term projects, often tied to limited funding or staff capacity. In the absence of structures to anchor the work, mentorship opportunities risk inconsistency or gradual program decline. Sustained mentorship emerges when organizations institutionalize these commitments, rather than treating them as time-bound activities. This can include embedding mentorship within routine planning, budgeting, and staffing practices to ensure that it is supported beyond a single cycle. When mentorship is recognized as an ongoing responsibility rather than an add-on, organizations are better positioned to maintain stable commitment even during periods of change.

A long-term approach begins with clarifying where mentorship fits within the organization. For organizations, identifying connections to existing leadership development, equitable participation, or staff learning systems helps embed mentorship into broader organizational practice. Equally important is documenting core procedures to preserve institutional knowledge across program cycles. Written workflows and templates reduce informal dependence on staff memory and support consistent delivery. Clear documentation also enables gradual improvement over time. In this way, mentorship systems become increasingly responsive and easier to maintain.

Sustaining mentorship also requires diversified forms of support. This may include a combination of grant funding, institutional commitments, and key partnerships. Internal “champions,” including refugee alumni, can help carry mentorship forward by advising on program design, co-facilitating sessions, or orienting new participants. Their involvement provides continuity and contributes to stronger institutional ownership. By investing early in structures and systems, organizations create the foundation for mentorship programs that continue to grow, adapt, and support refugee development over time.



4.2 Practices for Embedding Mentorship

These five practices support organizations to sustain refugee mentorship over time. For organizations seeking to adopt sustainable practices, these five practices offer guidance for integrating mentorship into routine operations and creating conditions for programs to remain steady across cycles. Each practice outlines how organizational commitments can translate into durable practice.



1. Locate mentorship within a clear organizational home

Mentorship is more sustainable when it sits within an established team or function. Clear placement helps align mentorship with existing mandates and reduces the risk that responsibilities become fragmented or overlooked.



2. Integrate mentorship into routine planning and decision-making

Embedding mentorship into regular organizational rhythms, such as planning meetings, budgeting processes, and reporting cycles, ensures that it is considered alongside other core activities.



3. Build internal capacity and shared knowledge

Sustained mentorship relies on accessible tools and shared understanding. Documented processes, onboarding materials, and simple guidance documents maintain continuity and support consistent delivery.



4. Clarify responsibilities for mentorship delivery

Sustainability depends on knowing who is accountable for core functions, such as communication, troubleshooting, and participant engagement. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities help ensure continuity during transitions.



5. Recognize and include alumni and partners as ongoing contributors

Involving refugee alumni, mentors, and community partners in defined roles, such as co-facilitation, onboarding support, or advisory input, strengthens continuity. Their engagement broadens ownership and reinforces mentorship as a long-standing organizational practice.

These practices establish the foundation for embedding mentorship within organizational structures and systems. The next section illustrates how these commitments take shape in practice through a concrete example, drawing on lessons learned from the field.

4.3 Our Experience: Building a Sustainable Mentorship Model

This example illustrates how the uOttawa Refugee Hub–Pathways International is beginning to build the foundations for sustaining its Fellowship for Refugee Leaders program beyond an initial pilot cycle. Rather than establishing a full sustainability framework from the outset, the program advanced through incremental steps shaped by monitoring, learning, and ongoing refinement. The example highlights emerging elements, such as funding, partnerships, and alumni leadership structures, that can support organizations as they consider what sustained mentorship might look like in their own contexts.

Sustainability for our mentorship program was developed incrementally. The program did not establish a full framework at the outset; instead, the key elements of sustainability emerged through monitoring, evaluation, and learning processes that were embedded in the program design and implementation. These early steps, which included obtaining regular feedback on experience, measuring impact quarterly, and extensively documenting practices, created conditions that improved the program steadily.

Three factors are particularly important for the program's long-term sustainability.

Securing External Funding

The program received support from a local philanthropic organization, which provided resources that enabled the launch of the first and second cohorts. Having a dedicated funding source reduced uncertainty and allowed the program to invest in core components, such as onboarding, supervision, and Fellows' development. Organizations seeking similar stability may consider local foundations, community trusts, or impact-focused donors that support leadership development and refugee participation.

Building Key Partnerships

In parallel, we established partnerships to create professional development opportunities for Fellows, including scholarships and training. These collaborations expanded access to learning resources and diversified training costs. Similar opportunities exist for organizations to engage settlement agencies, employment programs, or universities to gain access to development pathways, professional networks, and research connections.

Establishing a Refugee Advisory Board

Our organization developed a Refugee Advisory Board (RAB) for a specific workstream and invited past Fellows to serve as members. The RAB is a structured body of refugee and migrant leaders whose purpose is to provide strategic input on program activities and ensure that lived experience informs ongoing development. Organizations that are not equipped to establish a dedicated advisory board can still create opportunities for mentees to participate in existing organizational committees or boards, allowing them to contribute their perspectives and gain leadership experience.

This reflection foregrounds three factors that strengthened the program's resources, delivery, and engagement. They also complemented the early, gradual steps described above, forming the foundation for mentorships' longevity. These provide a starting point for organizations to adopt sustainable practices.

Key Takeaways for Program Sustainability

- ▶ Sustained mentorship depends on systems that support consistency over time.
- ▶ Embedding mentorship within organizational structures strengthens longevity
- ▶ Internal capacity-building and shared tools make sustainability manageable.
- ▶ Early investments in funding, partnerships, and continuity strengthen long-term viability.

4.4 Reflection Tool: Assessing Sustainability Readiness

Use the prompts below to consider what sustainability could look like for your organization and how current practices support (or limit) long-term mentorship delivery.

Reflect

▶ **What does sustainability mean in your organizational context?**

Consider time horizons, capacity, staffing, funding models, and existing commitments.

▶ **What has worked well in your programming so far, and what has been challenging?**

Reflect on processes, decision-making, communication, and documentation across cycles or phases.

▶ **How has your organization preserved institutional knowledge?**

Identify which tools, documents, or informal practices have supported continuity so far.

▶ **Who can you look to within your organization or networks for guidance on sustainability or knowledge preservation?**

Consider staff roles, alumni, partner organizations, and advisory bodies.

After completing this exercise

Review your reflection and identify two or three areas where small adjustments could strengthen sustainability, whether through clearer documentation, improved internal processes, or expanded partnerships. Outline immediate actions your organization can take to affect the next program cycle.

This reflection tool closes Chapter 4 and transitions organizations to references and resources that underpin the toolkit.

References

Canadian Council for Refugees. (2021). Centring newcomer voices – Resource guide. ccrweb.ca/en/centring-newcomer-voices-resource-guide

Conte, C. & Wolffhardt, A. (2021). Effective inclusion of refugees: Participatory approaches for practitioners at the local level. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/data-and-publications/handbooks-and-toolkits/effective-inclusion-refugees-2

Declaration Working Group. (2025). Independent declaration on the right of persons with experience of forced displacement or statelessness to participate in decisions that affect them: Final version with commentary. Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law. www.unsw.edu.au/content/dam/pdfs/law/kaldor/2025-12-Independent-Declaration-With-Commentary.pdf?

Essex-Lettieri, D. & Zahreddine, J. (2024). Five organisational pathways for enabling meaningful refugee participation: A step-by-step implementation guide. Cohere. refugepoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Cohere_report_July5.pdf

First Round Review. (2016). How to be a career-changing mentor – 25 tips from the best mentors we know. review.firstround.com/how-to-be-a-career-changing-mentor-25-tips-from-the-best-mentors-we-know/

Gross, C. (2023, June 6). A better approach to mentorship. Harvard Business Review. hbr.org/2023/06/a-better-approach-to-mentorship

Ingka Group. (2025). Unlocking talent: A toolkit for supporting refugee employability. www.ikea.com/ch/de/files/pdf/43/2a/432ae1da/unlocking-talent-a-how-to-guide-for-opening-pathways-to-decent-work-for-refugees_ingka-group-an-ikea-switzerland-2025.pdf

International Organization for Migration. (2021). Guidelines: Piloting mentorship schemes. globalofficebrussels.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd12636/files/documents/2024-08/Guidelines_Piloting%2520Mentorship%2520Schemes%2520%25281%2529.pdf

Jumpstart Refugee Talent. (2025). Welcome talent Canada: Mentorship guidebook. jumpstartrefugee.ca/doowhoah/2025/06/May-2025-WTC-Guidebook.pdf.pdf

Landry, A. & Lewiss, R. E. (2020, August 25). What efficient mentorship looks like. Harvard Business Review. hbr.org/2020/08/what-efficient-mentorship-looks-like

Ma, Y., Mukherjee, S., & Uzzi, B. (2020, July 7). What's the secret ingredient to great mentorship? Kellogg Insight. insight.kellogg.northwestern.edu/article/great-mentorship-research

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. (2011). Mentoring immigrant & refugee youth: A toolkit for program coordinators. youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/mentoring_1197.pdf

Milner, J. (2021, June). The politics and practice of refugee participation in the governance of the global refugee regime. Paper presented at the Canadian Political Science Association Annual Conference. carleton.ca/lern/wp-content/uploads/Milner-CPSA-paper-refugee-participation-May-2021.pdf

Milner, J., Alio, M., & Gardi, R. (2022). Meaningful refugee participation: An emerging norm in the global refugee regime. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 41(4), 565–593. doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdac007

Moran, G. (2018, March 16). The best mentors ask these 8 questions. Fast Company. www.fastcompany.com/40543989/the-best-mentors-ask-these-8-questions

Ramazani, U. (2023). Building meaningful refugee participation into protection policymaking. Migration Policy Institute. www.migrationpolicy.org/research/refugee-participation-policy-making

Switchboard. (2023). Promoting supportive mentoring for refugee youth. www.switchboardta.org/resource/promoting-supportive-mentoring-for-refugee-youth/

Tafech, H. (2025). Refugee leadership: Tools, challenges, and the path forward. Refugees International. www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/refugee-leadership-tools-challenges-and-the-path-forward/

Additional Resources

Template 1: Needs and Context Summary

Purpose

This template documents who the program is for, what mentorship needs exist, and the context in which the program will operate. It supports informed design and alignment with existing services.

How to Use This Template

Complete this template before program design is finalized. It can be informed by workshops, interviews, surveys, or internal reflection. Smaller organizations may complete this collaboratively in a single session.

Needs and Context Summary Template

Program Name: _____

Organization: _____

Date Completed: ____ / ____ / ____
Day Month Year

1. Target Group

Briefly describe who the mentorship program is intended to serve and why.

2. Identified Mentorship Needs

Summarize key mentorship needs, aspirations, or barriers identified through engagement with participants or stakeholders.

3. Operating Context

Describe relevant contextual factors that may shape the program (e.g., institutional setting, community dynamics, policy, or funding constraints).

4. Existing Resources and Partners

List internal capacities and external partners that may support program delivery.

5. Service Gaps and Risks

Identify unmet needs, overlaps with existing services, or risks that may affect implementation.

6. Initial Program Considerations

Note early assumptions regarding scale, duration, delivery format, or feasibility.

Template 2: Program Design Brief

Purpose

This template clarifies the purpose, scope, and structure of the mentorship program before recruitment begins. It establishes shared understanding across stakeholders.

How to Use This Template

Complete this template once needs have been identified and before launching recruitment. It may be shared internally or externally to communicate program intent.

Needs and Context Summary Template

Program Name: _____

Organization: _____

Program Period: _____

1. Program Purpose

State the primary purpose of the mentorship program.

2. Intended Outcomes

Describe the key outcomes the program aims to support for participants.

3. Mentorship Model

Indicate the mentorship format (e.g., one-to-one, group, peer) and the rationale for this choice.

4. Scope and Boundaries

Clarify what the mentorship will focus on and what is outside its scope.

5. Duration and Intensity

Outline program length, expected time commitment, and key touchpoints.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Summarize the roles of mentors, mentees, and program staff.

Template 3: Application and Recruitment Guide

Purpose

This template supports the transparent and consistent collection of information from mentors and mentees. It helps assess alignment with program purpose and expectations.

How to Use This Template

Use this template during recruitment. Questions may be adapted or shortened depending on program scale and capacity.

Mentorship Application Template

Program Name: _____

Applying as: Mentor Mentee

Name: _____

Email: _____

Organization (if applicable): _____

1. Background and Experience

Briefly describe your background, experience, or lived experience relevant to this mentorship.

2. Motivation

Why are you interested in participating in this mentorship program?

3. Strengths and Interests

What strengths, skills, or learning interests would you bring to the mentorship?

4. Availability and Commitment

Preferred meeting frequency: _____

Availability window: _____

5. Expectations

What do you hope to gain from or contribute to this mentorship?

Template 4: Mentorship Agreement

Purpose

This template clarifies expectations, boundaries, and commitments at the start of the mentorship relationship. It supports trust and accountability.

How to Use This Template

Complete this agreement during orientation or the first meeting. It should be revisited if expectations change.

Mentorship Agreement Template

Program Name: _____

Mentor: _____

Mentee: _____

Duration: Start date _____ / _____ / _____ End date _____ / _____ / _____
 Day Month Year Day Month Year

Frequency of Meetings: _____

Preferred Mode: In-person Virtual

1. Purpose

This mentorship supports the mentee's professional growth and leadership development through a relationship based on trust, respect, and reciprocal learning.

2. Shared Commitments

Both mentor and mentee agree to:

- ▶ Maintain confidentiality, professionalism, and mutual respect.
- ▶ Honor agreed meeting schedules and communicate changes promptly.
- ▶ Engage openly in goal-setting, reflection, and feedback.

3. Boundaries and Safeguarding

- ▶ Either party may request to pause or end the mentorship.
 - ▶ Confidentiality will be upheld unless safety concerns require disclosure.
 - ▶ Concerns may be raised to the program coordinator:
-

4. Development Goals (to be co-created)

5. Feedback and Reflection

Feedback will be shared at midpoint and conclusion using the program's reflection process.

Template 5: Individualized Development Plan

Purpose

This template supports the co-creation of goals and provides a shared reference for progress and reflection.

How to Use This Template

Complete within the first two mentorship meetings. Review and update at agreed intervals.

Individualized Development Plan Template

Program Name: _____

Mentor: _____

Mentee: _____

Plan Start Date: ____ / ____ / ____
Day Month Year

1. Development Focus

Briefly describe the main focus areas for this mentorship.

2. Development Goals (2–3)

Goal 1

Description: _____

Indicators of Progress:

Goal 2

Description: _____

Indicators of Progress:

Goal 3 (optional)

Description: _____

Indicators of Progress:

3. Planned Activities and Support

List activities, resources, or support needed to advance these goals.

4. Review and Adjustment

Description: _____

Indicators of Progress:

Template 6: Mentorship Reflection Report

Purpose

This template captures learning, outcomes, and feedback at the conclusion of the mentorship. It supports accountability and program improvement.

How to Use This Template

Complete at program close-out or during an exit conversation. Responses may be synthesized for program learning.

Mentorship Reflection Report Template

Program Name: _____

Mentor: _____

Mentee: _____

Mentorship Period: _____

1. Summary of Mentorship Activities

Brief overview of meetings, focus areas, and engagement.

--

2. Key Learnings and Outcomes

What changes, insights, or progress emerged through the mentorship?

3. What Worked Well

Identify aspects of the mentorship that supported engagement or growth.

4. Challenges or Adjustments

Note challenges encountered or areas for improvement.

5. Next Steps

Describe intended next steps (e.g., continued collaboration, alumni engagement, peer mentorship).

Acknowledgment

This toolkit was developed through the collective efforts, expertise, and lived experiences of many contributors committed to advancing refugee leadership and inclusion.

