



Pauktuutit Inuit Women in Business Network

Mentorship Model

One of the key needs identified by Inuit women who are starting or growing a business has been support provided by a mentor. Pauktuutit's 2011 needs assessment research of Inuit women in business found that Inuit businesswomen are more successful when they have a contact who is in business. Mentorship, within the business context, generally refers to a relationship whereby one person passes on their knowledge, experience and advice to another person, supporting their personal growth and that of their business. While details and specifics vary widely between individual mentors and mentees and various mentoring programs and services, in general, the mentoring process occurs in a more supportive, less structured and more social context than formal learning environments. The attraction for many Inuit is that there tends to be a stronger personal connection between mentors and mentees, which resembles in many ways more traditional methods of learning practiced by Inuit.

Pauktuutit has conducted research on mentoring programs in an effort to develop a model Inuit-specific mentorship program. This research entailed a scan of operating successful mentorship programs, in order to compare program components and determine best practices and lessons learned. Particular attention was focused on programs that work specifically with Aboriginal women or women who face a number of specific challenges in relation to engaging in the process of growing new businesses. This research helped to identify a number of specific programs that warranted further investigation. From these programs, five were selected for further examination and in-depth interviews were conducted with key personnel. While direct evaluation data was not provided by the interviewed programs, evaluation outcomes in the form of lessons learned and best practices were openly shared.

The research process has focused upon gaining a deeper understanding of how these programs work, what best practices could be identified and how these lessons may influence the development of a mentorship model specifically designed for Inuit women.

The following summary provides an overview of the key findings:

Program Structure

- Facilitated contact between mentor and mentee may last up to a year, although generally it lasts for a shorter period. After the initial period of engagement, mentors/mentees may



be free to pursue the relationship beyond the formal arrangement. Mentorship programs typically last between 6 months-a year.

- Total contact time averages around 30 hours of direct mentoring.
- While face-to-face is the preferred method of mentoring, technology can be used to increase the ease and availability of contact. Email, LinkedIn and Skype are often used to facilitate the process. One program (CESO) begins with a site visit to a northern/remote community to facilitate an initial face-to-face meeting albeit with a caveat that funding has to be found to finance this activity.
- Gender does not seem to be an issue and it is largely up to the mentor/mentee to determine which person they would like to work with. Gender is principally taken into account in cases where the mentee has experienced abuse.

Staff Support

- The level of staff support varies, but often includes providing some of the up-front support, including recruitment and selection of mentors/mentees, introductions and coordination of workshops/orientation sessions to inform both groups about the expectations and roles.
- Monitoring of the relationship on a monthly basis. This can include addressing any concerns raised by either party and conducting the overall evaluation of the process.
- May offer a final wrap-up assessment of the project and help connect mentees with additional resources to provide further support.
- Development of support resources – handbook for mentees/mentors, updated information on support resources available, notices of upcoming events of interest, contacts, etc.

Mentor Selection

- Priority given to interested parties who have business experience, preferably with operating their own business and perhaps recently retired.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, outgoing with an easygoing personality and an ability to be flexible and adaptable.
- Recruitment through: business events, word-of-mouth, volunteer websites, local free publications, free local radio announcements, speak in local schools and posters around town.



- Formal application forms – provide basic information, including business experience, special areas of interest, special skills, preferred personality type of mentee, etc.
- Personal and professional reference required.
- Criminal record check.
- Face-to-face interview by staff to ask about career, hobbies, boundaries and previous experience.

Mentees

- Must be interested in starting a new business or just getting started (within two years) of establishing a business.
- Formal application forms – include questions about their business idea/existing business, biggest challenges, background in school and business, reasons why they would like a mentor, expectations and sources of support (family, spouse, etc.).
- Face-to-face interview by staff to assess attitude, personality type, strengths and weaknesses in terms of being able to run a business to establish a profile to match to a mentor.

Establishing the Mentor/Mentee Relationship

- Mandatory workshops for both mentors and mentees (separately) to establish expectations, provide guidelines and structure to the relationship, communication strategies, outline problems that may be anticipated and how to deal with them (establishing and maintaining boundaries) and to clarify roles, including that of staff.
- Staff review applications and interview notes for mentors/mentees and draw up a short list of potential mentors for the mentees to review. In some programs, the mentee is responsible for the final selection of the mentor. In most programs, the staff have the final say in the match.
- Pair matched based on the specific area of work mentee is looking for advice in and mentor's specific area of expertise.
- Conduct introductory meeting with the selected mentor and the mentee – informal, preferably with direct involvement and participation of staff person. This could be done within a larger social meeting of mentors and mentees.
- Staff establish relationships between the mentor and mentee; mentees are then responsible for initial contact with their mentor by telephone or email.



- Mentee responsible for setting up initial meeting with mentor and carrying on relationship.

Evaluation

- All programs had evaluation processes.
- All had evaluation processes at the end of the program involving an online questionnaire.

Best Practices

- Have group meetings of mentees. This allows for some peer mentorship and for questions and concerns to be raised in a safe environment.
- Mentees welcome print handouts as a record of their learning throughout the mentorship relationship.
- Mentees can write a short bio (three paragraphs) to be sent to the mentor when the match is made. Some programs have found this exercise aids mentees in examining their strengths and weaknesses and prepares the mentor for the introductory meeting.
- Some mentorship programs have found that women enjoy listening to others' stories. They encourage mentors to share their stories (not just their professional advice) with their mentees, to build the relationship and provide inspiration.

Inuit-Specific Mentoring Model

The summary above provides some broad considerations for the development of a mentoring program designed to meet the specific needs of Inuit women. Special considerations will have to be made to tailor the model to meet the unique circumstances and challenges facing Inuit women as they start and grow new businesses in Canada's Arctic. In addition, Pauktuutit has been active in the area of developing an Inuit Women in Business Network (IWBN), providing informal mentorship and guidance in Iqaluit, NU. The IWBN has an important role to play in the development and implementation of a formal mentorship model.



Program Structure

Based on the information gained from the research conducted for this project, there are some clear indications regarding the optimum structure of the model. These include:

- The model will be based on approximately 30 hours of mentorship time per participant distributed over a maximum of six months. This will provide sufficient time for the mentor and mentee to establish a good working relationship and to achieve progress in the mentee's business development plans. For the mentee interested in getting started in business, six months would be sufficient time to do some preliminary research, develop a business plan, access funding and other forms of support and potentially start the business. For those mentees in the early stages of business, six months of mentoring would provide key support during what many consider to be the most challenging and stressful time for business start-ups.
- For mentors/mentees from Iqaluit, it is anticipated that most of the interactions will be based on face-to-face contact, supplemented by the use of emails, texts and telephone calls, depending on mentor/mentee preference.
- While it is anticipated that most of the mentors will be based in Iqaluit, there may be a need to supplement the stock of available mentors with additional people from outside Iqaluit and, possibly, outside Nunavut. To this end, additional funding may be required to help offset the travel costs of an initial visit to Iqaluit by the mentor, to provide critical face-to-face contact during the first phase of the mentoring process and solidify the relationship. To this end, subsequent interactions would be based on face-to-face contact where possible, relying principally on the use of emails, texts, telephone calls, or online chatting (Skype).
- While it is anticipated that gender will not be an issue, steps must be taken to ensure that mentees feel comfortable working with male mentors prior to any matching between mentors and mentees of different genders.

Staff Support

It is proposed that Pauktuutit assume the role of facilitator and monitoring agency for the mentoring program.

- The level of staff time dedicated for support to the program will vary over time. Initially staff will develop a number of resources for the program including:
 - Terms of Reference/Guidelines for the mentorship program.

- Agreement for Mentors and Mentees – stipulating expectations, roles and responsibilities.
- Developing criteria for mentor/mentee selection.
- Application forms for mentors/mentees
- Workshop for selected mentors/mentees – Introduction to mentoring, roles and responsibilities, expectations, how it works and what happens if things aren't going well.
- Evaluation model and process.
- Working with partner agencies (IWBN) to make them aware of the program and what they can do to support the program.
- Ongoing staff support for the program would include:
 - Undertaking of recruitment and selection of mentors/mentees.
 - Facilitating introductions.
 - Coordination of workshops/orientation sessions to inform both groups about the expectations and roles.
 - Regular monitoring of the mentoring relationships. This can include addressing any concerns raised by either party or the overall evaluation of the process.
 - Facilitating knowledge transfer: making contacts for mentors/mentees, handbook for mentees/mentors, updated information on support resources available, notices of upcoming events of interest, etc.
 - Provide final assessment of the project and help connect mentees with additional resources to provide further support once the original agreement is completed. Mentors and mentees would be free to continue their relationship after the conclusion of the original agreement.

Mentor Selection

- Mentors would be primarily selected from the existing pool of experienced and successful Inuit businesswomen in Iqaluit. Pauktuutit has established a list of these women and most have expressed an interest in participating in the program.
- In addition, other mentors will be recruited from the general business community in Iqaluit and may include non-Inuit and male mentors. This list will be compiled only in the event that the pool of Inuit women mentors is not sufficiently deep to meet the long-term needs of the program.
- Priority preferences will be given to those mentors who have experience running a business and are perhaps retired or working part-time.



- Mentors would be selected for having strong interpersonal and communication skills, outgoing with an easygoing personality and the ability to be flexible and adaptable. Selection will also consider particular business skills or experience that mentees are looking for.
- Potential mentors would also be identified through references from IWBN partners and other agencies,¹ Pauktuutit Board members, business events, word-of-mouth, volunteer websites, local free publications, local radio announcements, Nunavut Arctic College and posters around town.
- Formal application forms would be developed to collect basic information, including business experience, special areas of interest, special skills and preferred personality type of mentee.
- Personal and professional references would be required.
- Criminal record checks would be mandatory.
- Face-to-face interviews would be conducted by staff for each potential mentor to ask about career, hobbies, boundaries and previous experience.

Mentees

- The selection and screening of mentees will be critical for the success of the program.
- Mentees must have a real and proven interest in operating a business or in starting their own business. In addition, they must clearly understand the expectations, roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and mentee. “Proven interest” can include having an established formal or informal business, having attended workshops on business, approached partner agencies about business plans or other forms of business assistance, had previous experience with business, or possibly had a business in the past that failed. The intent is to attract women who are in business or have given serious thought to starting a business: women who have really thought about what is involved and what they would like to do and are able to make a serious commitment to taking the next step, be it a business plan or seeking support for an existing business.
- Mentees will be recommended by IWBN partners and other agencies (see above).
- Pauktuutit has a list of IWBN members, as well as participants from past Inuit Women in Business workshops, who may be interested in being mentees.
- Recommendations may also come from other Pauktuutit contacts, including Board members and past Presidents.

¹ Kakivak Association, Baffin Business Development Centre, Baffin Regional Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development and Transportation, City of Iqaluit etc.



- Mentees will also be recruited through local radio announcements, posters, community Facebook groups, etc.
- Formal application forms will be required, including questions about their business idea/existing business, biggest challenges, background in school and business, reasons why they would like a mentor, expectations and sources of support (family, spouse, etc.).
- Criminal checks will be required.
- Interview by staff after completion of the application form to assess attitude, personality type and strengths and weaknesses in terms of being able to run a business and establish a profile to best match with a mentor.

Establishing Mentor/Mentee Relationship

- At the beginning of the match-up process, both parties will identify goals and objectives they would like to attain during the mentorship period to be used to evaluate progress.
- Staff will review applications and interview notes for mentors/mentees and draw up a short list of potential mentors for the mentees to review.
- Mandatory workshops for both mentors and mentees (separately) to establish expectations, provide guidelines and structure to the relationship, communication strategies, outline problems that may be anticipated and how to deal with them (establishing and maintaining boundaries) and clarify roles (including that of staff).
- Pair matched based on the specific area of work mentee is looking for advice in and the mentor's specific area of expertise.
- Conduct informal introductory meeting with the selected mentor and the mentee – preferably with direct involvement and participation of staff person. This could be done within a larger social meeting of mentors and mentees.
- Staff will follow-up with both parties to see how the initial contact went and to review any concerns, impressions and next steps.
- Staff will review the initial pair-ups and assess. Make final recommendation as to whether match is a go or not.
- Staff members are responsible for facilitating the establishment of the relationship, through matching the mentor/mentee and providing the introductory meeting.
- Mentees are responsible for setting up the initial post-introduction meeting with their mentor and for carrying on relationship by their preferred method of communication.



Evaluation

- Establish pre- and post-participation interviews/questionnaires for both mentors and mentees.
- Evaluations should not be conducted by staff. These should be done either through online forms or a third-party evaluator to maintain anonymity for the participants.
- The evaluation process should provide feedback on the overall program, as well as on the mentors and areas where they could improve and identify resources that could help mentors increase their mentoring skills.
- The evaluation process will also provide feedback from mentors on their personal learnings and satisfaction with program participation. This will be important for maintaining a strong pool of mentors and encouraging mentors to participate in multiple program cycles.

Potential Challenges

- Finding qualified and available mentors is anticipated to be one of the main challenges facing the project. In the initial stages, there are a number of experienced Inuit women candidates who have already been contacted and who have expressed an interest in participating. To supplement the number of mentors, consideration will be given to extending the criteria for mentors to male and non-Inuit living in Iqaluit. If further depth is required for the mentorship pool, linkages with agencies such as CESO will extend the mentor pool to the national level.
- Mentees can become overwhelmed and demand too much of mentors. Proper orientation and clearly outlining the expectations, roles and responsibilities of each person will reduce the incidence of overwhelmed mentees. As well, the orientation and preparatory workshop that mentors and mentees take will address common issues, such as how to deal with demands being placed on one's time beyond the mentorship agreement.
- Difficulty in finding a good match for mentors and mentees. This will require patience and practice, but the addition of one or two mentors for review by the mentees will greatly increase the likelihood that a good match can be found. Also, staff will be providing support to ensure problems are addressed at the early stages.
- Challenges related to mentors not understanding the unique context and barriers faced by Inuit. This should not be a significant problem in the initial phases, as most mentors will be Inuit women. Subsequent to that, mentors will be selected from Inuit men and non-Inuit men and women with extensive experience in Iqaluit and Nunavut.



Resources Required

To adequately administer and support a formal mentorship program for Inuit women in the North, specific resources would be required.

- Office space and related infrastructure: program administration would require basic technological infrastructure, including computers, telephone system, teleconference capabilities and internet access, as well as work space for program staff. This infrastructure would be essential to support program participants (both mentors and mentees) through regular communication.
- Program staff: two program staff would be necessary to implement the mentorship model. Staff would be required to research and develop all tools and resources for the program, establish the mentorship relationship, facilitate the introductory/orientation session and monitor the relationship throughout the program. As well, staff would be responsible for promoting the program to recruit target mentors and mentees.
- Travel and meeting costs: Travel would be required to ensure at least one face-to-face meeting between program staff, mentors and mentees during each program session. This would include separate orientation sessions to discuss program roles and expectations with mentors/mentees and an introductory session to establish the relationships. Meetings costs would be incurred to provide a comfortable space for these sessions.
- Translation: All tools and resources produced for the mentorship program would be translated into Inuktitut to remove any language barriers to participation for Inuit women.
- Evaluator: an independent evaluator would be contracted to perform a thorough assessment of the mentorship program. Evaluation will be essential to program success given that the Inuit women-specific mentorship model was developed through learning from programs running in a similar, though not identical, context.