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Inuit Women in Business Network  
Inoenaen Aknan Manikhakheogutikaktun

# Welcome to Mentorship: A Model for Inuit Women



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**PAUKTUUTIT**  
INUIT WOMEN OF CANADA











The results for each of the mentorship model pilots included feedback on the mentorship program handbook adapted for each region/community, the mentor and mentee application forms for online use, the promotions developed for social media and print advertising and the agenda and introductory presentation for each of the orientation workshops. Following each workshop, a mentorship matching list was created to include each mentee and mentor, their goals for participating in the program and the justification for their matching by Pauktuutit.

A key element of the workshops was an evaluation process that recorded input from the participants to assess the degree to which the project was meeting its objectives but also to provide input to any changes needed to the model.





programs that may not specifically be business oriented, but may lend support to the mentorship program nonetheless.

- Pauktuutit has a wide range of resources available online that have been specifically developed for Inuit women interested in business. In particular, the Inuit Women in Business Network (IWBN) has a website (<http://pauktuutit.ca/iwbn/>) hosted by Pauktuutit that has resources available including fact sheets on financial literacy, a workshop designed for Inuit women interested in starting a new business, case studies of businesses operated by Inuit women, a list of financial terms in plain language, etc.
- In addition, Pauktuutit has a list of resources available from other sources that may prove of interest to Inuit women interested in business.
- Support from Pauktuutit staff
  - Pauktuutit staff support the mentorship program in a number of ways. At first staff will help identify interested parties and hold an informal session to introduce everyone and explain the process, benefits and roles and responsibilities involved in participating in the mentorship program. Staff also maintain working relationships with regional and local partners to support and optimize local delivery in addition to providing assistance in identifying potential mentors and mentees.
  - The resources provided by Pauktuutit include the mentorship handbook that is provided to the participants. As well, staff are on hand to help get the first meeting going and work through the process of completing agreement forms, development agendas, etc. Staff also monitor the group to help identify and address any challenges that may be found and to act as information resources as needed. As well staff keep track of the progress being made and challenges encountered and use this information to revise the model and make it more effective over time.
- Gender issues
  - Initially Pauktuutit wanted to establish women-to-women mentorship relationships however the number of potential Inuit businesswomen who might be interested in becoming mentors was not enough to meet the demand. Through discussions and feedback from the pilot sessions, mentees said they were comfortable with having non-Inuit mentors from either gender. Research showed that steps would need to be taken to address issues related to differences in the gender of mentors and mentees. Making sure mentees were comfortable working with male mentors was a key part of the matching process.
  - With the shift to the group mentoring model, this issue was less important as a number of women were involved and most of the communication would be done remotely. As well, no male mentors participated in the program.
- Providing mentees in remote communities with mentors
  - The goal of the project was to provide Inuit women with mentors in their communities. The face-to-face contact was thought to be an important factor in building trust and developing





## THE Group Mentorship Model

The first version of the model looked at bringing together Inuit women mentors and mentees in the same community to meet for a total of 30 hours over a period of six months. It was thought that much of the contact between these mentors and mentees would be face-to-face with more distant communication being done by emails, texts, telephone calls, and online chatting (i.e. Skype) depending on what people felt comfortable with.

It was felt that recruiting mentors would likely be the biggest challenge for the model. Considering the small number of businesses operating in Inuit Nunangat, the number of qualified and interested mentors from the region would likely not be enough to meet the expected need. Finding possible mentors from southern Canada was thought to be a possibility to increase the number of eligible mentors.

Pauktuutit staff worked to help support and facilitate the development of strong mentor-mentee relationships. Responsibilities and tasks involved in achieving this goal included:

- Identify possible mentors and mentees
- Support the development of mentorship agreements between parties that included identifying expectations, roles and responsibilities
- Monitor and provide support to the parties
- Develop an evaluation processes to help improve the model going forward
- Work with regional and local partners to deliver the mentorship model pilots across Inuit Nunangat
- Update model based on feedback and the results of the evaluation
- Develop new information resources
- Support ongoing knowledge sharing
- Overall ongoing project coordination, administration and reporting.

During the course of the pilot workshop process, it became clear that some changes in the model were necessary to further adjust aspects of the model. In particular, the idea of having one-to-one mentee/mentorship relationships was considered to be less useful than having a group mentorship model. Participants in the workshops felt that having a larger group to work with would have a number of advantages including:

- There could be a higher number of mentees being supported by a limited number of mentors
- Some women would not feel confident in a one-on-one mentorship relationship
- Each participant would have some time to describe how they were doing in their business efforts and what challenges they were encountering. The group, along with mentors, would have the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge.
- The success of the group would not be as dependent on a single person dropping out or being unable to participant regularly.
- Group mentorship offered a stronger basis for networking and developing relationships across the regions.
- Allowed for flexibility of everyone's schedules
- Provided a pool of knowledge and took the responsibility off of a single person to be the "knower".
- Allowed every member to learn and to teach something different.







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## GETTING STARTED

### **Set a Regular Schedule**

Setting a regular time, date and duration for a meeting will be more effective than trying to establish one on a more flexible basis particularly for group mentorship meetings. All members of the group should have input as to what schedule they prefer. The method of meeting should also be determined either by platforms such as Skype or Facetime or email, phone, etc.

### **Set length of meetings**

The meetings shouldn't be any longer than they need to be. All group members should have input in determining how long each meeting should be. Setting fixed dates, times and duration is a very good trait for operating businesses so it is a good chance for everyone to practice their time management skills.

### **Plan sessions in advance**

Group meetings will be most useful if people prepare for them and bring their questions, concerns and information for discussion. All members are busy so people don't want to waste time. Some people find it useful to keep track of ideas and questions they have during the periods between the meetings. Others like to prepare closer to the meeting. Either way, respect people's time and come prepared.

### **Set goals, manage expectations and build trust**

Most people don't have a lot of experience with mentorship programs. To support the process it is important that everyone has a clear understanding of the goals of the group and individuals and the expectations of everyone. A clear and open discussion at the first meeting is a good way for people to identify these issues and start to build trust. Good communication is the foundation of a successful mentorship program. The following questions should be discussed:

- What are members' short-term and long-term business goals?
- Where are members now and where would they like to be in six months?
- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- What do people expect to gain from their participation in the group?

### **Appreciation**

Remember people are participating in the group because they want to help other people and benefit from their experience and knowledge. A sincere expression of gratitude is often the only thing people need to hear to make them feel their efforts are welcomed.







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## TRACKING THE GROUP

It is recommended that the group keep track of the meetings including the time and date of each meeting, the location, who participated and a list of what was discussed during each meeting.

### Goal Setting

The model emphasizes the importance of setting SMART goals that are realistic and measurable. Developing good goals will help ensure participants move steadily forward to achieving their ambitions and help other members meet theirs. SMART goals are Specific,

*Measurable, Accountable, Realistic and Timetabled.*

**Specific:** (simple, sensible, significant) – Goals need to be clear and specific to enable people to focus their efforts and be motivated. Blurry undefined goals hinder people's enthusiasm and can lead to early frustration.

Questions to ask include: What do I want to accomplish? Why is this goal important? Who is involved? Where is it located? Which resources or limits are involved?

**Measurable:** Goals need to be measurable to enable people to determine if they are making any progress towards achieving them. Seeing progress made helps keep people motivated and focused. It also helps people realize when progress is not being made so they can identify problems and figure out solutions in a timely manner.

Questions to ask include: How long should it take to accomplish a particular goal? What steps do I need to undertake to achieve a goal? What does it look like when the goal is accomplished?

**Achievable:** Goals need to be achievable. They can be long term or short term, but unless goals can be achieved, people will get frustrated and have their confidence damaged. Goals should encourage people to reach and be challenged so they grow and expand their experiences and knowledge. A series of achieved goals can be a tremendous confidence-builder and make success more likely.

Questions to ask: How can this goal be accomplished? What are the most important goals to accomplish? Do I have what I need to achieve these goals? If I don't have what I need, who do I go about getting it?

**Relevant:** Goals must be part of an overall plan for success. Goals that are not focused on working towards a relevant end will drain energy, result in frustration and not move a person closer to achieving their ambitions.

Questions to ask: Does this goal seem worthwhile? Does it take me in the same direction as other goals and my ultimate dream? Is this the right time? Does the goal match my needs? Am I the right person to reach this goal? Is it achievable in my community?

**Timely:** Goals must be measured and must have a date for achievement. A goal without an end date can limit enthusiasm, be vulnerable to procrastination, make an effective action plan more difficult to develop, and make it more challenging to measure progress.

This SMART goal criteria helps to prevent everyday tasks from taking priority over longer-term goals.





## HIGHLIGHTING THE POTENTIAL OF A NORTH-SOUTH MENTORSHIP MODEL

During the workshops it became clear that most women interested in mentorship were more comfortable working in a group mentorship model as discussed above. However, there was interest in helping provide support to a smaller group of women who already had some experience in operating a business. These participants were interested in having a mentor who could help them learn more advanced business skills. Although there were very few mentors available in the North with this level of knowledge and interest, developing a model that looked to build on North-South relationships was explored. This North-South model had many advantages including:

- Access to a larger pool of mentors
- Strong need for more mentors with advanced business and financial skills they can transfer onto Inuit mentees
- Distance not an issue as many communication options are now available
- It would be helpful to try and get the mentor and mentee together for at least a face-to-face meeting initially to help establish a bond and trust
- The stronger connections with southern businesses would better support women interested in building businesses in the south.

## EVALUATION

Through the three-year mentorship project, an evaluation team has been watching the process followed in addition to the degree to which the project is achieving its goals. It is anticipated that the final evaluation report will be completed shortly after the end of the third year of activity in the spring of 2018.

The evaluation process in the first year was based upon a review of the project's documentation (e.g., Advisory Committee meeting minutes and draft Needs Assessment Report); interviews with project staff and a short consultation with the contractor that undertook the needs assessment report.

The focus of the project in the first year was on development and implementation. The major activities of the year included:

- Establishing the Project Advisory Committee
- Quarterly meetings with the Project Advisory Committee
- Writing a needs assessment report supported by interviews and consultations
- Building a project website
- Model development

The first year was successful in generating a high level of interest among Inuit women interested in mentorship and the creation of a number of important partnerships with key stakeholder agencies across Inuit Nunangat. The development of the model itself was well underway by year end.

Some of the challenges encountered included the fact only one pilot workshop could be conducted in each region, difficulties in reaching some partnership agencies at times, and trying to define a mentorship model for a population without a lot of experience in formal mentorship programs.





