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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.



clear communications. However it was found that in many communities there would not be a large number of mentors available to meet the need. It was also found that Inuit are increasingly comfortable using social media and email/text/teleconferences to communicate both socially and professionally and therefore regular face-to-face contact was deemed less important as initially thought.

- Biggest challenge
 - Perhaps the biggest challenge the project faced was trying to find enough mentors to fill the demand. Through recommendations made by the advisory committee and regional/local partners, potential mentees were easier to find than mentors. This is mainly because of the relatively very small number of Inuit business women in Inuit Nunangat. Inuit women face a wide range of barriers when starting a business and even in the south, the number of small businesses that fail within the first two years is very high. Considering the challenges businesses must face in the North including the very high costs of goods, transportation costs, shortage of affordable and adequate space for business, shortage of financial expertise, high costs of operating costs, shortage of skilled labour – the list is very long. In short, Pauktuutit was impressed with the number of Inuit businesswomen who did come forward offering to mentor. To help address the issue of few mentors, the group mentorship model was developed which allowed for a fewer number of mentors to support a larger and more geographically diverse group of mentees.



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.



The Welcome to Mentorship for Inuit Women model forms the basis of a handbook for participants in the program, including both mentors and mentees, and has been developed to consider the unique situations in each Inuit region. The handbook introduces the project and its purpose, explains the idea of mentoring for business people, reviews the expectations of participation in the program and explains the steps to developing a successful mentorship relationship. The handbook also includes skill-building worksheets that the participants complete during the orientation session to the program, including exploring personal strengths and challenges, goal setting, tracking mentorship sessions and a Mentorship Agreement Form.

The model also describes the process for setting up the mentorship program in a community, including promotion/advertising, application forms and methodology for matching mentors and mentees. For inspiration, business tips from experienced Inuit businesswomen and a profile of a successful and relatable Inuk businesswoman were added to the handbook to provide role models and actual examples of how Inuit women started and developed their businesses.

The model is flexible enough to support business women at every stage of the business cycle. Mentorship allows established business people to pass on the benefits of their experience, insights, and wisdom to those seeking support as they begin their businesses. New business people also gain from the networking and development of a long-term supportive network of people with similar interests and backgrounds.

Group mentorship involves a number of mentors and mentees joining a mentorship group to support and encourage each other while sharing information, ideas and contacts. All people in the group participate in discussions, sharing information and ideas, and supporting other participants. Pauktuutit's model focuses upon Inuit women but also includes mentors from non-Inuit backgrounds.

A key element of the group mentorship model is self-assessment in relation to business skills and the identification of how skills can be improved to help businesses get started and grow. Relying on others for support and guidance is an important part of the group mentorship model.

The model provides a number of guidelines that establish key elements including:

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

The frequency of meetings is up to the participants to determine although they are encouraged to meet at least once a month for between 1-3 hours. Contact can include in-person for those in the same community or email, telephone calls, Skype or Facetime for those in different communities.

- What happens if the mentorship group isn't working?

The mentorship relationship is a very personal one and not all arrangements will be a good fit of personalities, needs and priorities. If people decide they would like to try another group, Pauktuutit staff help explore options including joining another group.

- What support is available from Pauktuutit staff?

Pauktuutit staff provides ongoing monitoring and support for the mentorship groups. This includes gathering feedback and advice on how Pauktuutit can keep improving the program and supporting businesswomen. Participants can also contact Pauktuutit anytime with questions, concerns or feedback about the program or



building a business. Pauktuutit has developed many specialized resources to help Inuit women build their businesses and have considerable expertise in available community and regional business support programs.

BASIC MENTORING PRINCIPLES

Mentorship is a two-way relationship that requires effort and respect from both the mentee and mentor. Mentorship succeeds when parties have a clear understanding of their expectations and obligations. Every group will include individuals with a wide range of experience, perspectives and knowledge. Sharing these effectively is the essence of successful mentoring. Successful traits for mentorship relationships include the following.

For Experienced Businesswomen:

- Be supportive and encouraging
- Offer wisdom, knowledge, experience, constructive criticism, networking opportunities and resources
- Be a positive role model
- Act as a sounding board for fellow participants to bounce ideas off of
- Provide helpful feedback
- Acknowledge the accomplishments of others

For New Businesswomen:

- Be clear on what you want to gain from the mentoring experience
- Identify your strengths and weaknesses
- Communicate regularly
- Be open-minded and willing to try new things
- Be responsive to suggestions and constructive criticism

BENEFITS OF MENTORSHIP

There are clear benefits to be gained by both parties from a good mentorship relationship including:

- Creating opportunities to give back to the community
- Strengthening communication and relationship skills
- Encouraging people to stay current with emerging business concepts
- Providing an opportunity to expand professional networks
- Allowing for growth in perspectives, insights and knowledge
- Providing the opportunity for support, encouragement, wisdom, practical help and advice
- Allowing participants to build self-confidence
- Helping with short-term and long-term business planning and direction
- Offering the opportunity to enhance specific skills
- Providing general constructive criticism and guidance



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.



SETTING AN AGENDA

The agenda lays out the activities and timelines for a specific meeting. Having an agenda not only lets people know the order topics will be discussed, but also gives them an idea of how long each item will take. This provides participants with an idea of how long they have to ask questions, give updates, etc. A suggested agenda follows.

Welcome and Review (10 minutes)

The leading group member introduces the meeting and welcomes everyone. A review of the previous meeting is done along with a short discussion about any follow-up questions that were asked or additions that were made to the previous meeting's conversation.

Icebreaker exercise (20 minutes)

These help relax everyone and helps build trust. They should be fun but also tie to team building, decision-making, etc. Some examples are provided in the handbook.

Describing businesses (10 minutes each person)

Group members take turns sharing their business successes and challenges with the group. After each person speaks, the group is given five minutes to respond and provide feedback to the person directly. Some basic questions to start the discussion are:

- Full name
- Name of business and what it does
- Something positive that has happened since the last meeting (business related or personal)
- A challenge encountered since the last meeting (business related or personal)

After five minutes of group discussion, the group moves onto the next person. This continues until every person has spoken and received feedback.

Discussion (20-30 minutes)

After the individual discussions, there is a broader open group discussion. The topics covered can be flexible and focus on what the members want to discuss. Some suggestions are:

- Updates on a business support program
- Upcoming meetings that may be of interest
- Discussion on an issue of interest – tax preparation, software for business accounting and bookkeeping, business licensing, etc.
- Sharing stories about business experiences, role models, case studies, etc.
- Suggestions for future discussion by the group



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.



ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Organization	Name	Location
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