

How to Implement a Mentoring Program

Mentoring is a powerful tool for promoting diversity and inclusion (D&I) in the workplace. It provides a structured platform for employees from underrepresented groups to find support, guidance, and opportunities for growth.

This comprehensive guide is designed to help organisations implement mentoring programs that focus on D&I. Whether you're considering formal or informal mentoring, this guide will provide you with a step-by-step approach and practical tips to create an inclusive mentoring environment in the resources sector.

1. Define your mentorship program's goals

Begin by clearly defining what you want to achieve with your mentorship program. Align these goals with your organisation's overall employee advancement and D&I strategies.

Tip: The main goals of your company's mentoring program could include increasing the participation of underrepresented groups, fostering their career growth and development, and creating a more inclusive industry culture.

2. Choose the type of mentoring program

Depending on your goals and available resources, select the type of mentoring program that best suits your company's needs. Options include:

- **Traditional mentorship:** A structured and relationship-based approach where experienced mentors guide and support mentees in their professional and personal development.
- **Reverse mentorship:** Flips traditional mentorship dynamics by having younger or less experienced employees mentor people who are more senior or experienced, encouraging cross-generational collaboration.
- **Group mentorship:** A collaborative approach where a mentor collectively guides and supports a group of mentees, encouraging peer-to-peer learning and diverse insights.

- **Peer mentoring:** A less formal mentoring approach where peers share experiences, skills, and knowledge in an informal setting, promoting connections and community.
- **Buddy system:** Provides a supportive and informal approach, pairing a more experienced employee (buddy) with a new or less experienced employee, offering guidance and support.
- **Micro-mentoring:** Short mentoring stints, often focused on specific topics or skills, allowing mentees to connect with different mentors for targeted guidance.

Tip: Given the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups in the resources sector, try implementing a combination of traditional mentorship, reverse mentorship, and peer mentoring programs to bridge gaps in knowledge and experience.

3. Select mentors and mentees

Work out what makes an effective mentor and mentee for your program. Consider factors such as:

- Expertise
- Willingness to participate
- Alignment with program goals

Tip: Ideal mentors could be experienced professionals in the resources sector who are committed to D&I. Mentees may include women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disabilities, or people from other underrepresented backgrounds.

Then, give employees the opportunity to volunteer as mentors or mentees. Use surveys or other communication methods to gather interest and preferences.

Tip: Encourage participation from employees who understand the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups.

4. Create a program structure and guidelines

Clearly outline the purpose of your mentorship program. Specify what mentors and mentees can expect to gain from their participation.

Tip: Clearly explain that the mentoring program aims to support underrepresented groups in the resources sector by providing guidance, sharing industry insights, and promoting diversity.

Decide on the frequency of mentoring sessions, communication methods (e.g., in-person or online), and feedback collection processes.

Tip: Mentoring relationships should involve regular meetings, knowledge sharing on industry-specific skills, and addressing challenges related to D&I.

Allow participants some flexibility in structuring their mentorship journey.

Tip: While sticking to program goals, tailor mentorship plans to address the specific needs and aspirations of underrepresented groups within the resources sector.

5. Evaluate and improve the program

Continuously collect feedback from program participants through surveys, interviews, or regular check-ins.

Tip: This could be done quarterly, bi-annually, or annually.

Use the feedback to assess the program's effectiveness in achieving its goals.

Tip: Analyse the feedback to see whether the program is contributing to increased representation, career advancement, and a more inclusive resources sector.

Make necessary adjustments to improve the program based on the feedback and insights gathered.

Tip: This could include providing more resources or expanding mentorship opportunities for specific underrepresented groups in the resources sector.

6. Promote and maintain the mentoring environment

Regularly communicate about the program through newsletters, internal channels, and posters. Encourage leadership participation in the mentorship program to set a positive example.

Tip: The involvement of leaders as mentors shows their commitment to D&I. This could be presented through a leadership statement or reconciliation action plan (RAP).

Ensure that mentors and mentees are well-matched based on their capabilities, ambitions, and goals.

Tip: Implement a mentor-mentee matching process that considers the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups and ensures mentors can offer relevant guidance.

Provide resources and support for participants and clearly show how they can reach out for help.

Tip: Offer industry-specific resources, such as training modules on D&I in the resources sector, to equip mentors with the tools they need to address relevant challenges.