

involve

Guide for Mentors

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Welcome to the INvolve Mentoring Program

Thank you for taking part in the INvolve Mentoring program as a Mentor.

This handbook is an introduction to the program and a guide on what to expect from the program as a Mentor. It also has guidance on how best to structure the relationship with your Mentee and what you should do if any issues arise in the relationship.

Our Mentoring program is quite unique so even if you have been involved in Mentoring relationships before we encourage you to read the opening section of this guide before embarking on your first session with your Mentee.

About the INvolve Mentoring Program

INvolve's unique cross industry Mentoring Program brings together emerging diverse talent and senior business leaders from our global network in mentoring partnerships.

These 12 month partnerships aid the career development of diverse talent and provide a valuable source of outside support to help individuals achieve personal goals or address specific business challenges.

By connecting diverse talent and advocates from across different companies and sectors, the program can also give both Mentees and Mentors a fresh outlook, understanding and approach to bring into their everyday work.

These are the things that make the program different;

- Supporting diverse talent; all Mentees are LGBT+, a women, or ethnic minority / POC.
- Intersectional; although Mentees can preference someone of a shared background, our program actively encourages diverse partnerships to invite fresh perspectives and new understanding.
- Cross-company; we match Mentees to Mentors from different companies and often from different industries.
- Global; we often make matches across borders providing Mentees and Mentors with a global perspective on business, career development and work cultures.
- Digital; even before remote working was the norm, most of our relationships were conducted virtually rather than in-person.

Due to these qualities, when you first meet your Mentee you may wonder why you were matched together; different industries, different countries, different characteristics . . .

However all matches are made based on the profile provided and as your conversations develop we hope it becomes clear why the match was made and the great learning experience which is available for the Mentee, as well as you as a Mentor.

What is Mentorloop?

You will see Mentorloop referenced throughout this guide. Mentorloop is the online Mentoring platform that we use to support the program. Your first experience of Mentorloop would have been completing the Mentor profile at the start of the program, but the platform has tools and resources which can support the relationship through the whole 12 months.

When you are matched with a Mentee you will be connected in a 'Loop' with them on Mentorloop allowing you to chat, connect and share information.

As a Mentor it may be tempting to bring the relationship onto email outside of Mentorloop, but please be aware that Mentorloop is there primarily to support the Mentee on their journey and by not using the platform you are moving them away from the support, feedback tools, and resources that Mentorloop can provide them for getting the most from their relationship.

We therefore encourage Mentors to lead by example and use the tools on Mentorloop to structure and conduct their mentoring relationship.

Who are the Mentees on the program?

Mentees have been put forward by their organisations as individuals suitable for the program and have committed to starting a productive mentoring relationship. They may come from a wide range of different industries and job areas.

They are diverse professionals (LGBT+, ethnic minority / POC, and/or woman) seeking someone to guide, focus and support them with their career, specific business challenges and professional development.

All Mentees should have a minimum of 4 years of professional experience and be somewhere between entry-level and mid-manager level. When Mentees complete their profiles we ask them to specify their seniority level and years of professional experience to ensure there is an appropriate gap in experience level between themselves and their Mentor.

How are matches made?

We use a range of different criteria to help make strong matches between Mentees and Mentors – this includes location, seniority level, and requests for Mentors with specific diversity characteristics.

However, we focus matches as much as possible on the level of support required and the key areas of support that the Mentee is looking for assistance with. This is profiled against the information you provided in your own Mentor profile on Mentorloop.

Unless a Mentee has made a specific request within their profile, our matching process is deliberately blind to industry, job role, background, age and identity. This means that your Mentee may be very different from yourself and we encourage Mentors to resist any initial biases they may feel about the 'suitability' of the match until they have gotten to know their Mentee and explored together what both parties are looking to achieve from the relationship.

It is worth noting that when matching seniority level is one of the hardest things for us to assess based on matching profiles. Even though we ask for job-level, job title and years of experience, these are all expressed differently across organisations and countries. In matching partnerships we always try to have a clear gap in role seniority between our Mentor and the Mentee they are supporting. However our program is full of both Mentors and Mentees at all different levels within business and sometimes Mentors and Mentees are matched who are closer in seniority than they may expect.

If this happens then it can still be worth having an initial meeting with your match because the closeness in career level may not be an impediment to the exchange of learning and support which could take place within a more peer-to-peer based relationship. However should this not work for either party then please contact us so we can take further information for a suitable rematch to be made.

What happens if you aren't matched?

On each cohort there is, unfortunately, always a few individuals that we cannot match to a suitable partner. This is simply because there wasn't a Mentee available in the pool who was a strong match to your profile – and we would rather not make a match, than an inappropriate match. Please do not take it personally – we really do want you to be part of the program.

If you haven't been matched in this cohort, then we will automatically offer to make you a 'priority' match in the next cohort when hundreds of new Mentees will be joining the program. If you are a 'priority' match then you will be amongst the first to be matched against the whole pool of Mentees – increasing the chances of making a strong match for you.

Your commitment as a Mentor

By taking part in the INvolve Mentoring program you have committed to supporting a Mentee for a 12 month partnership. This is an important responsibility as many of the Mentees within the program are at a critical point in their careers, and also often in their lives. A bad experience working with a senior leader within business can have a real impact on a more junior individuals' confidence and personal development.

We therefore want all Mentor's to recognise this responsibility and meet the expectations of the program which include;

- To dedicate sufficient time to the relationship. Within your profile we asked how much time you would be able to devote to supporting a Mentee and we ask that you keep to this commitment.
- To tell us if your circumstances change. If something happens which means you can no longer dedicate sufficient time to this program then contact us so we can ensure we close the relationship and find a new match for your Mentee.
- To give the relationship a fair opportunity. Not to jump to conclusions as to whether the relationship is going to work without first listening and engaging with your Mentees on their goals.
- To keep the relationship professional. Our Mentors are the senior individuals in the relationship and are responsible for ensuring appropriate boundaries on the relationship are maintained at all times.
- To signpost where additional help is needed. We do not expect Mentors to have all the answers. If you are not comfortable in your experience and knowledge around a specific topic then please focus on signposting other sources of assistance.
- To let us know if there is a problem. We can only offer assistance when we know there is a problem and you can contact us easily on mentoring@involvepeople.org or via chat on Mentorloop.

Structuring your Mentoring relationship

Mentoring relationships may evolve over time, but as a Mentor it is important and helpful to set out a clear structure to follow. This will provide your Mentee with some expectations and also the confidence to fully embrace the relationship as a professional development opportunity. When relationships drift apart or don't fulfil their potential it is usually because they don't have a structure to follow.

Our suggested structure for Mentoring relationships follows 5 stages, or milestones. These milestones are also available to tick off in Mentorloop as your relationship develops – with support resources available for each stage.

5 Mentoring Milestones
Getting Started
Matching / Connecting
First Meeting
Growing
Levelling Up

Milestone 1 : Getting Started

The best place to start is by attending the INvolve Mentoring Induction webinar – this will introduce the Mentoring program and provide tips on how to start and develop your relationship. If you can't make the live webinar then there will always be a recording available to watch.

If you are reasonably new to Mentoring then getting to know Mentorloop – the online platform supporting this program – is a must. The platform will provide a structure to your relationship and has several support resources available for each stage of your relationship. It also has a chat function allowing you to contact the INvolve team.

An overview to Mentorloop is included in the induction webinar but you can also access the [Mentorloop guide](#).

Prior to getting started with the relationship, it is also good to spend some time considering what makes a great Mentor. What support or help were you provided earlier in your own career which really made the difference to you? Consult these [tips on the key qualities of a great Mentor](#) and consider how you can manifest these in the way you plan to offer support.

Milestone 2 : Connecting

Once your partnership is announced you will be able to connect with your Mentee through Mentorloop. Remember that the INvolve Mentoring program is not like other Mentoring schemes so your match might be not what you expected and have a very different background to yourself when it comes to career, industry, location and personal characteristics.

You will be able to view their profile within Mentorloop which should start to reveal why you were matched and what they are looking for from the relationship. However there is no better way to get to know each other than reaching out in the chat function to say hi!

We all groan when anyone suggests ice-breakers but they are a really effective way to get a conversation started and ease the tensions of a new relationship so why not try one of these [25 question suggestions](#) to get going before arranging your first virtual meeting.

Another good place to start is to ask your Mentee to create the agenda for this first meeting so you can really get a sense of where they would like to focus.

Be aware sometimes notifications and emails can get blocked or go into Spam folders.

If you connect with your Mentee and do not get a response within 10 days then please let us know. We have alternative contacts for all those on the program and can also reach out to the Mentoring program contact at their organisation.

Milestone 3 : First Meeting

Getting a first meeting in the diary is a great idea as it will build on the momentum of first connecting and ensure the relationship gets off to a strong start.

If your Mentee is in a different timezone then it is important to establish an overlap time which works for you both. Remember that your Mentee is getting the benefit of your time, so if flexibility is needed then it should really come from your Mentee.

Your first meeting will most likely be virtual and conducted through Zoom, Teams, or another video conference platform. You can connect your Zoom account with Mentorloop if you wish to connect directly through Mentorloop – but can also arrange via email once you have exchange business contact details. Remember not to ask your Mentee for any personal contact details.

The vast majority of relationships are remote – however if you do both live in the same area and wish to meet in person then ensure you choose a suitable professional meeting location just like any other business meeting.

We have a check list of things to consider ahead of your first meeting – [available here](#).

There are also some key tasks to do within the first meeting which will set the relationship up for success;

Setting Goals

We encourage Mentees to set up goals in Mentorloop ahead of the first meeting, but even if they haven't then this is a great thing to discuss in the first meeting.

By understanding what your Mentee wants to achieve as personal goals, you will be able to consider how you are best placed to support – whether that be with advice, experience, challenges or resources. It is also helpful to encourage your Mentee to break down wider goals into smaller achievable parts to achieve a pathway through to success.

Remember that the role of a good Mentor is not to tell your Mentee what to do, but to facilitate their progress by giving them things to consider or by providing an alternative viewpoint from their fixed position.

It is also important to be honest. If there are certain areas where you don't think you will be helpful then tell them, or divert them to alternative sources of knowledge.

A Mentoring Agreement

Creating a Mentoring Agreement is highly recommend for both parties to get the most from the relationship. This is a 12 month program so the time for learning is limited and by ensuring the commitment is there, you will be ensuring the best outcomes for the relationship. We all have a habit of prioritising short term pressure over our own long term growth, and signing the agreement will draw your Mentee's attention to the importance of prioritising their own career development.

It is also good for you to understand your responsibility as a Mentor to carry out your commitment and not to leave your Mentee continually chasing you for assistance.

You and your Mentee can discuss what you would like to include in a Mentoring Agreement within the first meeting. Alternatively you can use our [Meeting Agreement Template](#) and complete it in the first meeting.

Milestone 4 : Growing

After your first meeting and sharing of commitments and goals, the relationship should develop its own pace and structure. However it is still important to nurture the relationship and challenge your Mentee to extend their learning and understanding.

Here are some key tips on how to main energy and momentum;

- Create good meeting habits; stick to your times and ensure that your Mentee sends you a summary of the actions they are going to take before they see you again. Make reporting on these the start of your next meeting.
- Keep track of progress to goals; keep returning to the original goals set in the first meeting. If they are no longer relevant then adjust them. If they are reached – then stretch them further.
- Share resources; you don't need to have a meeting to keep in touch. If you see an interesting article, relevant resource, or source of inspiration then share it with your Mentee there and then.
- Connect them with others; many Mentees take part in the program because they want to build their network. You can facilitate this by introducing and connecting them with people who align to their goals.
- Provide feedback; let your Mentee know how you think their journey is going and where you think they would be able to get more value from the relationship. Also ask for feedback so you can also learn and adjust your approach.

Want more ideas on how to keep growing – read the [10 Key Qualities and Habits of a Highly Effective Mentor](#).

Milestone 5 : Levelling Up

Your first priority is to support the development of your Mentee, but once a good structure has been established it is worth considering what you may also be able to learn and gain from this relationship.

Our program specialises in matching individuals from different companies, different industries, different locations, or different minority groups and this provides you with just as much opportunity to learn as your Mentee.

Reverse-mentoring is the process whereby the more senior member of the relationship makes a conscious effort to listen and learn from the junior member. Your previous

experiences are likely to have been very different from your Mentee so there is an opportunity to walk in someone else's shoes and, as a result, improve your knowledge and understanding.

Here are some tips to getting the most out of reverse mentoring;

- Don't assume your way is the best way; you are likely using your experience to guide your Mentee – but don't automatically assume that their natural approach to problem solving is inferior to yours. See if there is anything you can learn from the way your Mentee faces their challenges.
- Ask questions; your Mentee will probably have lots of questions for you – but you should also ask lots of them. This will not only help you provide better Mentorship through understanding, but will also increase your appreciation of their lived experiences.
- Ask for recommendations; we can all get caught in our own bubble so ask your Mentee what they are reading, watching or listening to. They may well lead you to brand new sources of inspiration.
- Invite feedback; as a people manager it can be difficult to get honest feedback from your team members. Within the openness and honesty of a mentoring relationship, you may get some feedback you have never heard before.
- Focus on areas where you want to develop; maybe it is technology, or work/life balance, or people management, or communication skills – your areas of weakness maybe areas of strength for your Mentee so ask them for support and ideas.

What to do if the relationship is not working?

There are many reasons why a relationship might stutter and although this is more common at the start, it can happen at any point. Here are suggestions of what to do if you feel your relationship with your Mentee is not working.

Please note that if the obstacle is serious (such as inappropriate or challenging behaviour from your Mentee) then we suggest not engaging your Mentee directly but jumping straight to contacting us to address the issue with them, or their employer.

- If your relationship is new, then give it a little more time. Our scheme matches individuals who – on first meeting – might not have shared experiences or points of reference but with a little dedication this can become the strength of the relationship. Many Mentors who have expressed immediate concerns with us on an initial match or meeting have gone on to build valuable relationships so we recommend giving it two meetings before considering closing the relationship.
- If there are specific concerns then try to discuss them with your Mentee. This might overcome the challenges and might also be an important learning experience for them. Some mentees will not have been involved in Mentoring programs before and may have incorrect expectations about a mentoring relationship.
- Contact our team – we can advise and mediate a potential solution. We can also – if necessary – close the relationship professionally on your behalf and assist both parties in finding a new match.

What happens at the end of 12 months?

The INvolve Mentoring program is a 12 month supported program, however you have some choices at the end of the 12 month period.

As you approach the end of the program you will receive a notification through Mentorloop to remind you to set a 12 month meeting with your Mentee.

What to cover in your last meeting.

It's important to think about the end of your mentoring partnership to allow both parties to reflect on the development, highlights and goals achieved in the last 12 months. Whether the mentoring partnership is tailing off or if the thought of the partnership ending has never crossed your mind, it is important to set an end date and final meeting and consider the following:

- Goals – were the goals that were initially set accomplished? If not, why not?
- Growth – consider what you and your match has learned from one another during the partnership.
- Highlights – what in particular was a highlight for yourself and your mentee during your partnership?
- Challenges – what were some of the challenges that you encountered in your partnership and how did you overcome them?
- The future – are there any additional learnings/opportunities that you would like to take advantage of?

The final thing to consider is whether you and your Mentee would like to continue a relationship – and if so deciding on how this will be structured.

What happens next to the relationship?

You and your Mentee might have very fixed ideas about what happens at the end of the 12 month program but here is how Mentoring relationships usually develop.

Option 1 : Continue the structured relationship

Although you will no longer have Mentorloop and the INvolve team for on-going support, by the end of the 12 months you should have established a good structure which you could continue on for another period time. We don't recommend extending a structured relationship without having some clear goals and timeframe to ensure that the relationship remains valuable and focused to both parties. This is something that can be discussed in your last meeting of the INvolve program.

Option 2 : Continue as an unstructured relationship

It may no longer be formal mentoring but that doesn't mean that you can't keep touch with your Mentee and check in with them on a less regular basis. There may be changes in their lives where still having a connection available could be hugely valuable to their progression.

Making sure you are connected on LinkedIn is also a good way to keep in touch.

Option 3 : Close the relationship

There is absolutely no problem with closing the relationship after 12 months as this is always presented as a 1 year program.

Your final meeting is the opportunity to formally close the relationship with your Mentee as you summarise the progress over the last 12 months. If you do not plan to continue on any relationship then this should be made clear to your Mentee during this meeting to avoid misunderstandings and to allow them to look for any alternative support they might need.

Taking on a new or additional Mentee

We are always looking for Mentors who have the skills and understanding to support diverse talent. The more Mentors we have within the program, the greater our opportunity to support Mentees and ensure strong matches.

If you would like to support an additional Mentee or have reached the end of program and wish to be involved again then please just let us know and you will be able to join the new available cohort.

Support and feedback

You will receive check-ins from us through Mentorloop on regular occasions with the opportunity to report back how your relationship is going. We rely on this feedback to ensure that relationships are working out so please engage with these opportunities.

Mentorloop will also send regular tips to strengthen your relationship and has a Resources section within your log-in area which is being constantly updated with insight and inspiration on getting the most out of a Mentoring relationship.

Our team is available to assist with any questions or problems at any time throughout the 12 month program. Just contact us;

mentoring@involvepeople.org or the Chat function in Mentorloop.