

A photograph of two men sitting on bleachers, engaged in conversation. The man on the left is wearing a blue sleeveless shirt and grey shorts, and is laughing with his hand to his mouth. The man on the right is wearing a red zip-up jacket and black shorts, and is smiling. The background is a blue wall with a geometric pattern of triangles and lines.

Building a Mentoring Movement in Canada

Progress Report /// March 2021

In October 2020, the Canadian Mentoring Partnership became MENTOR Canada and entered in a new phase of its relationship with **MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (USA)**. For over 30 years, MENTOR (USA) has modeled collective impact and grown the global youth mentoring movement through tools, training, resources, and advocacy, generously sharing their experience and wisdom across borders. Our alliance with MENTOR (USA) will allow us to further our impact through shared messaging and tools that will help expand and enhance new mentoring relationships across North America. This international alliance gives us the opportunity to look for efficiencies and improved solutions and platforms that the mentoring fields in both our countries can benefit from.

In partnership with MENTOR (USA), we have also had the opportunity to engage in an international collaboration of mentoring champions exploring how to ensure that mentoring is built into COVID-19 recovery on the global stage. **The Global Mentoring Collaborative** includes organizations and initiatives spearheading the mentoring movement in the USA, Canada, UK, India, Europe, Singapore, and South Africa. Together, we are coordinating a media campaign, including a letter, a video, a central website, and social media with #keepmentoring to promote support of mentoring across the globe. We also hosted an international Power of Mentoring virtual event on September 24th: Learning with Leaders: A Global Power of Mentoring Event.

Additionally, MENTOR Canada continued to actively engage organizations from across Canada to work with us and enhance the mentoring movement. Working together with our founding partners: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC), the Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP), and the Ontario Mentoring Coalition (OMC), we are building sector capacity to empower every young person to fulfil their potential.

As a backbone initiative, MENTOR Canada plays a coordinating role in linking researchers, service providers, service recipients, funders, and volunteers to achieve real collective impact.

MENTOR Canada's work focuses on four key areas: research, technology, partnership networks, awareness building and outreach. This work supports the development of:

- Evidence-Based, practitioner-approved guidelines for building and sustaining quality youth mentoring programs;
- Tools and resources for mentoring practitioners that provide just-in-time learning and ongoing professional development; and
- Strategies to address gaps in mentoring services and opportunities, giving more youth access to a mentor.

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What we have accomplished since June 2020

Research

State of Mentoring Research Initiative

With the support of the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), MENTOR Canada concluded the State of Mentoring Research Initiative in December 2020. The initiative had three research streams:

1. Mapping the Gap explored young people's access mentors when they were aged 6-18, and whether such relationships influenced different parts of their lives. The goal of the National Youth Mentoring Survey was to understand whether youth mentoring needs are being met. In total, 3,779 young adults in Canada participated in the study, either through the online survey or one-on-one interviews.

56% of survey respondents had at least one mentor at some point during their childhood or adolescence. More than half of the respondents reported that they could recall at least one time when they wished they had a mentor but did not have access to one. Our analysis also found statistical association between having had access to a mentor during childhood and a number of positive outcomes as young adults, including:

- A higher likelihood of reporting good mental health and a stronger sense of belonging compared to non-mentored youth;
- A higher likelihood of being employed or studying than non-mentored youth;
- A higher likelihood of having completed high school and pursued further education after high school compared to non-mentored youth.

2. Capturing the Landscape explored the prevalence, practices, and scope of mentoring programs in Canada. 150 organizations across Canada participated in the Canadian Survey of Youth Development and Mentoring Organizations. The results showed that mentor recruitment and program growth and scaling are among the top challenges for programs across the country. Furthermore, over half of the 150 organizations who participated in the survey reported that they had children or youth on a waitlist to receive mentoring. The findings will help MENTOR Canada define its priorities for the coming years.

4 in 5 respondents believed that mentoring relationships are important for children and youth

3. Raising the Profile of Mentoring aimed to increase our understanding of adults' opinions about mentoring and its place in Canadian society. The study also explored the interest and capacity of adults to step up and become mentors to children and youth outside of their immediate family with the ultimate goal of identifying strategies to increase the number of mentors in Canada. 3,500 adults in Canada participated in an online survey and 18 individuals with mentoring experience participated in interviews. 8% of survey respondents indicated that they were currently mentoring a young person, 23% indicated that they had mentored a young person in the past although they were not currently a mentor, and 69% indicated that they had never been a mentor. 23% of respondents who were not currently mentoring indicated that they would be likely to be a mentor in the next five years. 4 in 5 respondents believed that mentoring relationships are important for children and youth. 4 in 5 respondents also reported that they thought young people needed more mentoring supports to help maximize their success in adulthood

Canadian Centre for Mentoring Research

The Canadian Centre for Mentoring Research (CCMR) was created in 2020. The CCMR's mission is to advance knowledge about youth mentoring in Canada by generating and supporting rigorous and innovative research. In November 2020, the CCMR team submitted a Partnership Development Grant application to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The CCMR also launched its website. The affiliated researcher section of the site will increase the profile of mentoring research and researchers in Canada and promote connections between researchers.

Technology

Technology is critical to growing the mentoring movement in Canada.

MENTOR Connector

In the fall of 2020, we released the MENTOR Connector: an online database that will help youth and adults interested in mentoring to easily find opportunities that suit them. To date 147 organizations and 162 mentoring programs signed up to be listed in the Connector and 1,647 searches have been completed.

E-mentoring Platform

To support mentoring service providers during the COVID-19 pandemic, MENTOR Canada has developed a beta version of Mentor To Go (M2G), a virtual mentoring platform. The beta version will be released for limited use in February 2021. The platform will be made available to all programs registered in the MENTOR Connector by March 2021.

Partnerships

MENTOR Canada worked with AMP to scale their new mentor online orientation and make it available to mentors and service providers across the country. The online orientation provides essential information about how to build effective and safe mentoring relationships and is relevant to mentors in formal mentoring programs as well as to natural mentors who may not be part of a program but wish to hone their mentoring skills. MENTOR Canada hired a training specialist to develop new tools and resources that can build the capacity of mentors and mentoring professionals. We also hired two part-time staff members to support engagement efforts with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, including Indigenous and Black youth.

Communications

MENTOR Canada developed a social marketing toolkit to support organizations across Canada during mentoring month. The toolkit was downloaded a total of 235 times. Elected officials at all levels of government across Canada recognized and celebrated Mentoring Month, including the Honourable Bardish Chagger Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth.

Our staff members also participated in Mentoring Month events across the globe and raised our initiative's profile, including a roundtable organized by Mentorat Québec and the very first Assises du Mentorat organized by the Mentoring Collective in France.

Power of Mentoring

To help youth ages 18-24 connect with mentors, prospective employers, and the Canadian labour market, MENTOR Canada created the Power of Mentoring Campaign. The campaign consists of a series of virtual networking and skill-building experiences. Hosted in partnership with employee volunteers from the private sector, the events are focused on expanding networks, enhancing employment skills, increasing access to job opportunities. Youth gain an understanding of the practical job skills required to meet labour market demands, develop an awareness of the future of work, and learn how to access opportunities aligned to their academic, career, and life goals.

To date, MENTOR Canada has hosted 17 Power of Mentoring Events and engaged 639 employee volunteers and 655 youth in these events.

Next Steps for MENTOR Canada

Research

Executive summaries and complete reports for the State of Mentoring research initiative studies will be released in the winter of 2021. Comprehensive and accurate information about the State of Mentoring will help MENTOR Canada's efforts to effectively support the mentoring field across the country and develop tools and resources that will benefit all mentoring organizations. Ultimately, this will ensure that we improve children and youth's access to quality mentoring opportunities.

MENTOR Canada will develop a knowledge mobilization plan to share the research findings with the stakeholders of the mentoring sector. MENTOR Canada aims to partner with academics to continue the analysis of the data collected as part of the State of Mentoring and explore questions that remain to be answered.

Technology

MENTOR Canada is currently developing an interactive data visualization dashboard which will allow users to easily access and compare the results from the State of Mentoring research initiative.

MENTOR Canada will also add a knowledge to its MENTOR Connector. It will help mentors and mentoring service providers across the country access the resources they need to create and maintain quality mentoring relationships.

Partnerships

MENTOR Canada continues to work with service providers across the country to facilitate the creation of regional networks that will ensure uniform access to support. We will continue to engage with service providers and their regional networks to develop resources and tools responsive to their needs, including the development of just-in-time training, a knowledge hub, and a quality mentoring system.

Communications

MENTOR Canada is launching a large-scale social marketing campaign in February 2021. The campaign will raise awareness of mentoring and encourage 1,000 people in Canada to become mentors and find mentoring opportunities that suit them through our MENTOR Connector.

Strategic Planning

In November 2020, MENTOR Canada initiated a strategic planning process since the pandemic impeded our ability to consult with our stakeholders at the annual mentoring symposium. Over 54 interviews with stakeholders were realized between November 2020 and January 2021. These interviews will guide the creation of an actionable strategic plan that will clearly define:

- MENTOR Canada's shared vision, mission and values;
- The current environment in which it operates, what sets MENTOR Canada apart, and the opportunities and risks it faces;
- The results it will focus on achieving in the short, medium and long term, and the scope of its reach;
- The programs and activities that will lead to those results;
- What kind of organizational entity it should be (e.g., become a charity or not-for-profit, remain a coalition);
- A governance structure that reflects the spirit in which the coalition was formed, supports its strategic direction and enables it to move forward effectively with all of the above.

The strategic planning process will be completed in March 2021.

Financial partners

- **Youth Program Navigators (YPN) pilot program under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS)** a division of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) granted MENTOR Canada \$30,000 in December 2020 to conduct research and experimentation to explore the implementation of a “no wrong door” approach for the youth employment ecosystem. The “no wrong door” approach, also referred to as CORDS (Contextual Opportunities and Resources Distribution System) is the implementation of a “no wrong door” policy for digital touchpoints, weaving together opportunities and resources from different web-based sources for presentation to youth on the websites and web-based systems they use.
- **Strategic Collaborations program under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS)** division of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). A contribution agreement for \$6.3M was signed in June 2019. From June 2019 to March 2022, MENTOR Canada will work to become a national access point for service providers and youth-serving organizations in order to increase opportunities for youth to receive high-quality mentorship across Canada.

- **KIAS Grant** a program of the University of Alberta. MENTOR Canada, AMP, and the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta received funding from the Kule Institute for Advanced Studies to develop the Canadian Centre for Mentoring Research.
- **BMO Financial Group** announced a 5-year funding agreement totaling \$750,000 in June 2018. This funding would enable the development of a Pan-Canadian Mentoring Strategy, through the creation of MENTOR Canada while directly supporting the State of Mentoring research initiative.

More on MENTOR Canada's Founding Partners

- **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC)** is a federation comprised of 102-member agencies servicing more than 1,100 communities across Canada and provide mentoring to more than 41,400 children and youth. The national organization provides services and programs to member agencies to assist them with their work with parents, mentees, and volunteers and ensure superior quality programming in all parts of the country.
- **Alberta Mentoring Partnership (AMP)** is a network of 163 community mentoring agencies, government and youth serving organizations working together to raise the profile of mentoring in Alberta by providing access to mentoring resources and toolkits, training materials, and research. Created in 2002, AMP has seen significant impact across the province in terms of leadership, mentoring promotion and advocacy, research and knowledge sharing.
- **Ontario Mentoring Coalition (OMC)** is a network of 80+ community mentoring agencies and the champion of children and youth mentoring in Ontario with a focus on convening across sectors to increase the engagement of community partners, building knowledge and capability to deliver quality mentoring, building the case for mentoring and raising awareness.

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