

# Blue Mentorship and Leadership Pathways

## Toolkit #3: Effective Mentoring



With thanks to our supporters:



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## Introduction

This toolkit is intended for participants in “The Blue Mentorship and Leadership Pathways” project under Canada’s Ocean Supercluster’s Ocean Leaders Impact Program (OLIP) which aims to build a more robust and innovative marine sector. The program’s objectives are to develop a strong peer network of ocean founders and leaders in Canada.

This toolkit is meant as a guide to equip mentors and facilitate conversations. The worksheets and templates can be edited and adjusted as needed. While this toolkit is meant for mentors, it will be shared with all program participants.

This toolkit is divided into three sections:

- **Begin:** how to set up the relationship and outlines roles and responsibilities
- **Facilitate:** how to create safe spaces and provide valuable advice
- **End:** Navigating the Transition: how to end the relationship and guidelines for your final conversation

The last section is a series of worksheets and prompt questions that you can use as needed in your conversations. Edit and revise them as needed.

Lastly, thank you to our mentors and mentees for being part of this program and for your commitment to growing the Blue Economy in Canada and beyond.

## Part 1: Begin

**Mentoring** is typically a mutually beneficial, professional relationship that enhances careers and contributes to the personal and professional development of emerging leaders.

Mentoring programs provide an opportunity for individuals with useful experience, knowledge, and skills to share insight, guidance, and knowledge with others, to help coach and nurture them toward their goals and develop their abilities.

What makes a good mentor?<sup>1</sup>:

- Showing interest
- Availability and flexibility
- Experience in the ocean economy
- A desire to help

## Benefits for the Blue Economy Sector

Led by ECO Canada, this program has wide-ranging benefits to the Blue Economy sector. Its objectives are to:

- Improve the leadership and specific skills in Ocean Founders.
- Diversify the network between professionals in the Ocean Sector.
- Improve the ability to recruit and ladder new talent entering the field while focusing on DEI considerations.
- Support and promote the growth and development of the Blue Economy sector while diversifying the workforce involved.

As much as possible, the program will be recruiting participants from historically marginalized groups. The program will:

- Be accessible and inclusive program for women, visible minority groups, and Indigenous peoples interested in working in this sector.
- Ensure a diverse group of Expert Mentors is recruited.
- Leverage ECO Canada's marine-focused BEAHR training course, to help more Indigenous people enter the field.

## Mentor's Role and Time Commitment

As part of this program, we are asking that you check in with your mentee once a week for the program duration. Having said that, the check-in can look different depending on schedules and needs. Checking in may be an hour-long virtual or in-person meeting or it could be a 15-minute call. If possible, we suggest that you schedule these meetings in advance to avoid scheduling conflicts.

Over the course of the program, your role is to:

- **Encourage and support** - A mentor's primary role is to support and encourage the mentee to manage their own learning by sharing insights and experience so that the mentee can maximize their potential, develop skills, improve performance, and become their best self.

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<sup>1</sup> Abbajay, M. (2019, Jan 20). "Mentoring Matters: Three Essential Elements of Success". *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryabbajay/2019/01/20/mentoring-matters-three-essential-element-of-success/?sh=4497426545a9>

- **Guide** - The mentor's job is to guide the mentee to determine their right course of action, be a positive influence and help facilitate problems.
- **Share** – You have deep insights, experiences, and feedback to share. Don't teach or preach. Serve as a role model, sounding board, trusted advisor, and confidant. Great mentors inspire their mentees by setting an example and potentially motivating them toward a future that is beyond their original dreams. Mentoring is just about having conversations with people and sharing knowledge, experiences, and stories. These powerful conversations will help mentors reflect on their own skills and careers, and help mentors further develop mentoring, leadership, and communication skills.
- **Maintain confidentiality** – Mentors and mentees should hold anything that is said in confidence.

## Dos and Don'ts

### Do

- Make sure you have the time for mentoring. If possible, schedule the meetings well in advance so you are less likely to have scheduling conflicts.
- Take the time to understand your mentee's goals. Be open-minded. Think of yourself as a "learning facilitator" rather than someone with all the answers. Provide introductions to people and resources based on your mentee's interests and needs.
- Share your experiences and lessons learned. Remind your mentee that your experiences and approaches may be different and are examples for consideration.
- Take the time to reflect on the relationship. Ask your mentee, what is going well, and what else do they need? Course correct and adjust as required.
- Understand that this is a time-limited program.

### Don'ts

- Assume that the mentee will follow your path. Your mentee will be on their unique path.
- Monopolize the conversations. Ideally, you are listening as much as you are talking – if not more!

## Mentee's Role

Over the course of the program, mentees should:

- **Identify your why** – Articulate your specific goals and adjust them as needed.
- **Set the agenda for the meetings** – A prepared task list or set of intentions to achieve with your mentor will help you stay on task and optimize the time you have together in an efficient way. Ask questions – your mentor is there to share their experience and insight.
- **Listen and learn** – After you ask a question, listen actively and don't be afraid to ask follow-up questions to clarify and understand how you can apply the insights to your actions.

- **Show gratitude** – Offer genuine thanks for your mentor’s time, insights, knowledge and lessons you learn. If your mentor is doing an exceptional job, do not hesitate to let them know, and show your gratitude.
- **Share knowledge and information with your mentor** – remember mentoring is reciprocal. You will learn from your mentor, but you can also provide insights to your mentor.
- **Maintain confidentiality** – Mentors and mentees must hold anything that is said in confidence.

## Part 2: Establishing the Relationship

### Keys to a Successful Mentorship Relationship

You've signed up for this program because you have something to share and a desire to help others. What are some keys to a successful mentoring relationship?

- **Mutual trust and respect** – Mutual respect forms the foundation of a successful mentoring relationship. Learning is greatly enhanced when each person feels a sense of personal and professional respect for one another. Trust is built through honesty and integrity.
- **Two-Way relationship** – Mentoring is a two-way mutually beneficial learning situation where the mentor provides advice, and shares knowledge and experiences while also benefitting from the relationship by developing leadership and communication skills, as well as gaining new perspectives and insights from the mentee. Both mentor and mentee must be prepared to have an open dialogue and to be willing to share knowledge and experience as well as learn from each other.
- **Confidentiality** – Mentoring should be a safe environment for reflection and the exchange of knowledge and experience. Mentors and mentees are expected to hold what is said in confidence.
- **Empathy** – Empathy is the ability to understand and respond to the unique experience of another person. Taking the time to listen and understand, will help develop a deeper sense of trust between the mentor and mentee.

### Creating Safe Spaces

Both mentor and mentee have the responsibility to be honest, be themselves, and keep discussions confidential. There must be trust between each person and if one person discusses what was said in meetings, then this will be broken and most likely end the relationship.

Establishing dates and a set time is also a very good first step to building this effective relationship. It will hold each person accountable and become a constant thing in each person's calendar.

It is important to make sure that both the mentor and mentee feel comfortable and safe. How can you lead conversations respectfully? It is good to start small to build the relationship and to ensure that everyone is comfortable with the conversation. For that, one can start by sharing stories of past experiences which can include examples of dealing with difficult situations, mistakes, learning moments, or tough choices. Remember that your experiences and challenges may be very different from others.

When getting to know someone, you may want to ask permission before commenting. It will help ensure that your comments are non-threatening and received thoughtfully. Before speaking out, say:

- May I ask you something?

- May I tell you something?
- May I give you some coaching?
- May I push back a bit on what you are saying?

## Facilitating Conversations

Conversations can be liberating and exposing at the same time (for both mentor and mentee). It is okay to start with small talk. Share your own stories and events – dealing with difficult situations, mistakes, learning moments or tough choices. Be mindful that your experience is unique – challenges and opportunities can be personal.

If there is space in the conversations, ask questions like:

- What would you like to learn?
- What are you struggling with?

Remember that there are no right answers. Instead, you can model your approach to problem-solving. For example:

- “When I had a situation like that, I did this....”
- “I haven’t always productively approached these challenges. If I had to do this again, I would....”

In your conversations, prioritize respect and attentiveness. Make sure you are present and ready to listen.

## First Meeting

Once you have been matched with your mentee, reach out and introduce yourself. If you have a resume or bio, please share it and/or connect via LinkedIn.

Set up the time for your first meeting and review the [draft accountability agreement](#).

Some conversations starters might include:

- What experiences are you most proud of? Least proud of? Why?
- What actions have you taken to develop as a leader? What are some leadership gaps you would like to close?
- What keeps you up at night?
- What are your goals for your business? Which goals are achievable and which ones are you struggling with?
- Describe some of the lessons you have learned from success and failure.

In preparing for your first meeting, you may also want to consider your answers to the above questions and be prepared to share these with your mentee.

## Tips for Success

- Focus each discussion on a compelling question, new experience, article, etc.
- Share resumes or LinkedIn profiles.
- Solicit feedback on how the relationship is going.





- Maintain confidentiality.
- Honour your commitments (e.g., meetings, follow up etc.).
- Enjoy the experience!

## Part 3: Navigating the End

Once the program has come to an end, have a candid conversation about what you would both like to do next. You may choose to continue less formally, or you may decide to end the relationship. No matter what, be honest about your capacity and availability.

In the final session, celebrate what has been accomplished. Revisit the mentee's goals and discuss how they have changed or evolved and what might be their future goals.

In the last session:

- Clarify your relationship moving forward.
- Acknowledge your mentee's growth.
- Celebrate any challenges that they overcame.
- Set some future goals.

## Draft Worksheets

Please note that these worksheets can be used as templates and/or conversation starters. Please edit and revise them as needed.

### Mentor/Mentee Accountability Agreement

Mentor Name:

Mentee Name:

We agree to meet \_\_\_\_\_ [number of times] per month for the next \_\_\_\_\_ [number] of months. We will usually meet \_\_\_\_\_ [specific time e.g. Thursday afternoons at 3 pm] other than the weeks \_\_\_\_\_ [any exceptions or scheduling changes]. We will both agree to honour these times as much as possible and avoid last-minute changes to the best of our abilities.

After discussion, we have agreed that we will meet \_\_\_\_\_ [virtually, by phone etc.]

About midway through the project, we will check in and ensure that the above agreement is working for both of us and adjust if needed.

## Breaking the Ice – First Meeting Talking Points

### **1. Tell me about your career path. Why have you chosen to do what you do? How did you get here?**

This question is meant to help your mentee clarify and articulate their sense of purpose: what drives them to do the work that they do as well as articulate their background and experience.

### **2. Where do you want to go from here? What's next for you?**

This question is intended to get the mentee to articulate their goals.

### **3. What are you currently doing well that's helping you get there?**

This question aims to help the mentee identify his or her strengths.

### **4. What are you not doing well that's preventing you from getting there?**

This question aims to help the mentee identify his or her challenges and potential roadblocks, both internal and external.

### **5. What specific assistance or resources can I help you to obtain?**

This question ensures that the mentor's skills, expertise, and resources best align with the needs of the mentee.

Adapted from *Micromentor.org* <https://www.micromentor.org/blog/en/questions-maximize-first-mentoring-conversation/>

## Mentee Goal Worksheet

Share this worksheet with your mentee as a discussion for the first or second meeting. It may take a couple of meetings to solidify the goals.

### Mentoring Goals

Consider what you want to achieve over the course of the program.

#### **Goal 1:**

Benefits of this goal for my organization, and for me:

Challenges in achieving this goal (time, resources etc.):

#### **Goal 2:**

Benefits of this goal for my organization, and for me:

Challenges in achieving this goal (time, resources etc.):

#### **Goal 3:**

Benefits of this goal for my organization, and for me:

Challenges in achieving this goal (time, resources etc.):

## Tracking the Conversations – Mentee Worksheet

Share this worksheet with your mentee so they can clarify the topics/themes they would like to focus on throughout the program.

### Conversation 1

Discussion Topic/Questions – List 2-3 questions you are thinking about.

Key Takeaways: After the meeting, jot down some ideas in response to your questions.

### Conversation 2

Discussion Topic/Questions – List 2-3 questions you are thinking about.

Key Takeaways: After the meeting, jot down some ideas in response to your questions.

### Conversation 3

Discussion Topic/Questions – List 2-3 questions you are thinking about.

Key Takeaways: After the meeting, jot down some ideas in response to your questions.

### Conversation 4

Discussion Topic/Questions – List 2-3 questions you are thinking about.

Key Takeaways: After the meeting, jot down some ideas in response to your questions.

Add more if there are more conversations....

### Midway Checkpoint

As candidly as possible, evaluate how well things are going. Sample prompts for the midpoint conversation are below:

- How are we doing?
- Aspects that are working well
- This would work better if....
- What has been most useful to me....
- The quality and frequency of our meeting/communication are....

## Sample Talking Points/Themes Along the Way

### Role Modelling

Role modelling begins with the clarification of personal values and involves building and affirming shared values that all can embrace. It is the power of spending time with someone, of working side-by-side with colleagues, of telling stories that made values come alive, of being highly visible during times of uncertainty, of handling critical incidents with grace and discipline, and of asking questions to get people to focus on values and priorities.

Discussion prompts may include:

- What challenges have you experienced in getting your voice heard in the organization?
- What is something that you would like to accomplish in your career?

### Inspiring a Shared Vision

Leaders enlist others in a common vision. They have the desire to make something better than it is today, change the way things are, and create something that no one else has ever produced.

Discussion prompts may include:

- What do you hope to contribute to the Blue Economy sector?
- What do you hope to be your legacy when you retire?
- How do you solicit others to follow you? How do you show leadership?

### Challenging the Process

Leaders are pioneers - they are willing to step out into the unknown. This is particularly true in the emerging Blue Economy. The work of leaders is to ensure change, and the status quo is unacceptable to them. They search for opportunities to innovate, grow, and improve. Leaders must remain open to receiving ideas from anyone and anywhere. The leader's primary contribution is in recognizing and supporting good ideas and being willing to challenge the system to get new products, processes, services, and systems adopted.

Discussion prompts may include:

- What is your comfort level with taking risks? How do you evaluate risk?
- Reflect on how you conduct yourself. How does your personality impact your ability to see innovative opportunities?

### Enabling Others to Act

At the very heart of cooperation is trust. Leaders help create a trusting climate. They understand that mutual respect is what sustains extraordinary efforts. When leadership is understood as a relationship founded on trust and confidence, people take risks, make changes, and keep programs, organizations, and movements alive. Without trust and confidence, people do not take risks. Without risks, there is no change.

Discussion prompts may include:

- What are your strategies and approaches to creating meaningful relationships in the workplace?
- How do you develop confidence in others?

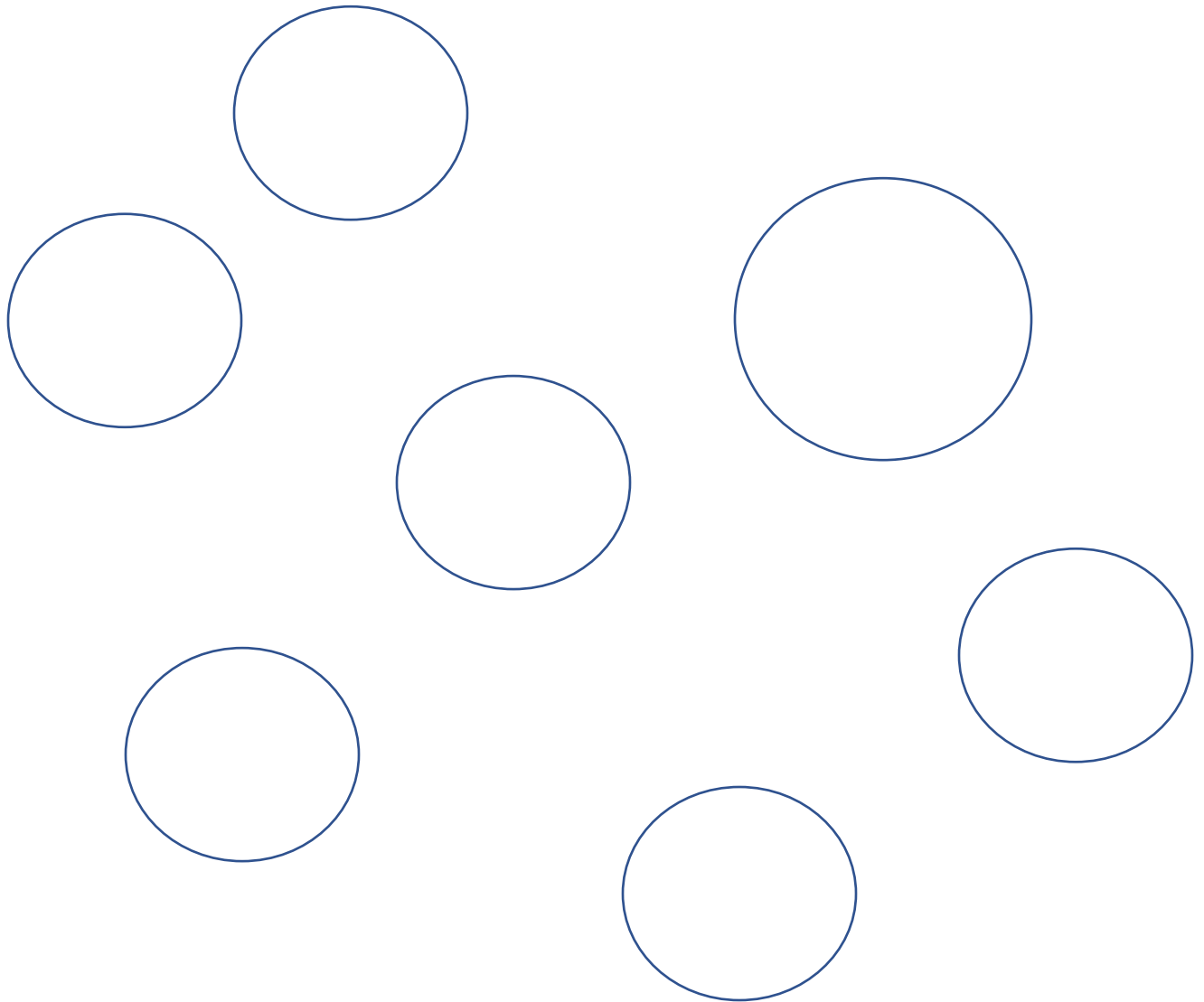


- How do you show appreciation for the efforts and accomplishments of others?
- What do you do to improve the morale in your workplace?

### Career Portfolio Worksheet

As previously noted, the Blue Economy is evolving and changing rapidly. New job opportunities are arising as others become redundant. Thinking about broad, transferable skills can be helpful when individuals do not have deep expertise in this emerging sector.

To articulate your career portfolio, map your roles and draw connections between them. In the circles, add key roles that you previously held. These may include formal roles (by job title) or informal such as “mentor,” “facilitator,” or roles such as parents, students, etc. Add more circles as needed and include roles that you consider to be high growth. Once you have identified these roles, draw lines connecting the roles and name the lines with skills that were transferable across those roles.



## Personal Action Plan – Inclusive Leadership

A commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion is critical to advance the Blue Economy. You may want to refer to [Engaging on Canada's Blue Economy: What We Heard](#) which summarizes critical feedback from diverse voices in the sector. [Achieving Equity in the Blue Economy](#) also offers valuable case studies and best practices.

Reflect on how you can be an inclusive leader. What is within your sphere of influence and control? If you can hire, how can you ensure that your recruitment process includes diverse candidates? If you make decisions around promotions, what are some biases you may need to interrupt?

Add 2-3 inclusive leadership practices you will continue and/or start:

How will you assess your own leadership style? Can you connect with members of your team for feedback? Can you call on your peers? How will you adjust as needed?

## References

Abbajay, M. (2019, Jan 20). "Mentoring Matters: Three Essential Elements of Success". *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryabbajay/2019/01/20/mentoring-matters-three-essential-element-of-success/?sh=4497426545a9>

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