Mentoring for MIT Staff

Guidelines for creating a mentoring program for your DLC

Contents

About this Guide 2
Step One: Clarify the Program Purpose 3
Specify objectives for your local program 6
Step Two: Identify the Program Sponsor and the Program Owner **7**
Role and responsibilities of the program sponsor 7
Role of the program owner 8
Step Three: Design the Program **10**
Establish specific program elements and responsibilities 10
Step Four: Create an Implementation Plan **12**
Step Five: Develop Materials **13**
For initial information session 13
For orientation 13
Step Six: Create and Implement a Communication Plan **15**
Recruiting participants 15
Information session 16
Characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of mentors and mentees 17
Step Seven: Match Mentors and Mentees **20**
Matching committee 20
Matching meeting 20
Step Eight: Launch the Program (or Pilot) **21**
Orientation session 21
Step Nine: Monitor and Assess **22**
Addressing program challenges 22
Ongoing learning for mentors and mentees 24

Mid-program assessment 25
Step Ten: Closure, Celebration, and Program Evaluation 26
Celebrate 26
Program evaluation 26
Conclusion.....27

About this Guide

This step-by-step guide is for anyone at MIT with leadership support and the desire to establish a successful staff mentoring initiative in their DLC (Department, Lab, or Center). The steps are supported by a comprehensive assembly of templates, sample documents, and reference sites.

You can use this information on your own or request support from Human Resources. Existing mentoring program owners at the Institute may choose to use these materials to enhance their current programs.

Additional acknowledgements and downloadable resources are available online.

Step One: Clarify the Program Purpose

Establish a program purpose statement

As a first step in designing your mentoring program, determine what you want the program to accomplish and how you will measure success. Your program purpose should align with both your DLC's and MIT's strategic goals.

Sample program purpose statements

- We want to increase the technical knowledge of team members.
- We want to provide professional growth opportunities for our team members.
- We want to increase mentoring partnerships for diverse participants.
- We want to develop the knowledge and skills of less experienced team members to keep pace with the growth and health of our organization.

Example of existing program purpose statements

- MIT Research Administration Circle Mentoring Program Goals:
    - Foster connection and networking within the MIT RA community.
    - Enhance and support research administration as a career at MIT.
    - Serve as a source of support and career guidance

Types of mentoring

As you develop your program's purpose statement, consider the type(s) of mentoring your program will support.

Mentoring approaches have evolved – and continue to evolve. The traditional mode of "I tell you how to do it" has increasingly given way to a more egalitarian practice of asking questions that enable a mentee to derive their own solutions. In this respect, mentoring can be more like coaching.

The venues for mentoring have also changed to keep pace with new work location models. Mentoring can take place virtually via videoconferencing and by phone.

As the types of mentoring have evolved, so have the traditional relationship models. The older, experienced mentor imparting their knowledge to a less experienced protégé or mentee is only one model. Age no longer needs to be a determining factor in whether someone can be a mentor.

Mentoring provides an opportunity to gain unique insights from those whose identity, background, or lived experiences are different from one another.

Some different types of mentoring relationships are described below. How might they fit into your program?

Traditional

The original form of mentoring is the one-on-one model. Typically, a senior employee, usually a leader, is paired with a less-experienced employee to provide career guidance and advice. If a formal program is in place, participants are paired via the program matching process.

Traditional mentoring might be used for:

- **Knowledge retention** — employees nearing retirement may transfer institutional knowledge and experience to a newer employee.
- **Skill sharing** — heightening skills or 'up-skilling' can be provided by mentors who possess the skill, knowledge, and experience to help individuals and the organization get to a desired level, e.g., an IT professional who needs to learn and implement a new technology.
- **Organizational transition** — change is the new constant. New organizational structures, new leaders and managers, responsibility/role shifting, new work models, etc., are all flags of change. A traditional mentoring model can help establish new skills, norms, and community in a relatively short time across an organization.
- **Career development** — a senior leader can provide guidance, advice, and support for career advancement to an employee at a lower job level. The mentor can introduce access to networks and opportunities that could open new doors for a mentee's career advancement.

Reverse

Reverse mentoring is defined as a younger employee serving as a mentor to a more senior member such as a leader or executive. Reverse mentoring relationships can afford leaders fresh new perspectives. It acknowledges that younger professionals have valuable knowledge, skills, and perspectives — for example, social media and other technologies; and social, racial, and/or cultural nuances and trends. Reverse mentoring can also provide a stronger sense of collaboration — a value embedded in MIT culture.

Co-Mentoring/Symbiotic

In co-mentoring, both parties in the mentoring relationship benefit mutually. Each partner possesses unique knowledge and abilities to share.

Peer

People who are in similar situations come together to learn from each other (Employee Resource Groups are an example). Peer mentoring can take place between two people or in a group setting.

Developmental (Career)

This common type of mentoring relationship typically involves a senior leader and a more junior employee, with the goal of helping the mentee further their career. Developmental mentoring can also apply to an employee's current role.

High potential

Mentoring is a highly valued means for development. A high-potential mentoring program can help your top performers remain motivated and engaged.

New in role

Being new to a role can feel awkward. New-in-role mentoring can assist:

- **New hires** — Coming into a large complex organization such as MIT can be daunting, stressful, and sometimes chaotic, especially during times of institutional transitions, such as new work models during the COVID-19 pandemic. A deliberate mentoring program can ease entry to MIT for employees we seek to attract. Pairing new employees with more experienced colleagues can help new employees ramp up and contribute quickly.
- **New managers** — Partnership with more experienced managers can help new managers locate managerial resources, navigate relationships, and more.
- **Promotion or transfer** — Mentoring can ease the transition of an employee who has recently transferred or been promoted from another role or area.

Circle

In circle mentoring, one or two individual(s) mentor a group of people. This is a good approach to use for new employees. A mentoring circle can provide a forum where new employees have ongoing opportunities to speak with senior members in their area. The mentoring circle leader can facilitate topics that will boost new employees' success and allow them room to discuss other work-related activities. The Office of Academic Research runs a successful circle mentoring program focused on career development.

Informal vs formal

Informal mentoring is a naturally occurring, loosely structured relationship. It is usually initiated by the mentee and mentor rather than formal matching via a program. In this type of mentoring, an employee may approach a potential mentor to ask for advice and the relationship evolves from there. Informal mentoring can also emerge from a direct request by an individual to a colleague to become their mentor.

Formal mentoring (the focus of this guide) is an employee development strategy used by organizations to develop mentoring partnerships. A formal program provides the structure and resources to implement it.

Group

A mentor is assigned to a group of mentees who meet regularly. Circle mentoring is a form of group mentoring.

Virtual

Virtual mentoring (by phone, video, and/or other media) is a method rather than a type of mentoring. Our current work climate demands flexibility and creativity in how we work. Virtual mentoring may be incorporated into any of the types of mentoring above.

Specify objectives for your local program

Now, take your program's purpose a step further by specifying measurable objectives that are important to your DLC. The objectives you choose will serve as a basis for assessing the success of your program in Step 10.

Some possible objectives might include:

- Increasing retention in your DLC;
- Receiving positive feedback from new employees on their onboarding experience;
- Providing visible career opportunities;
- Demonstrating values-based leadership for new managers;
- Increasing the number of participants in mentoring partnerships;
- Increasing the rate of promotions for participants; and/or
- Establishing other measures for outcomes and program impact.

Step Two: Identify the Program Sponsor and the Program Owner

The sponsor and the owner should be separate roles. For a sponsor, look for the highest-level leader who has the means to provide the necessary resources, capabilities, and communication for a successful program. The program owner will use those resources to directly manage the program.

Other considerations:

- Budget — for guest speakers, graduation, etc.
- Time — a successful mentoring program requires dedicated time and effort
- Space — for any in-person gatherings such as orientation and graduation

Role and responsibilities of the program sponsor

The program sponsor should be the highest-level senior leader who has the influence, authority, and the means to provide support to the program owner and the program. This role has the ultimate responsibility for the success of a DLC mentoring initiative.

The sponsor should provide the first statement of the program purpose, i.e., why mentoring is important to the DLC and what the program will accomplish for the DLC and MIT.

The role of the sponsor also includes:

- Selecting a program owner with input from peers and stakeholders;
- Providing support and resources for the program owner;
- Freeing up time for the program owner to commit to the mentoring initiative;
- Obtaining and maintaining the support of the organization’s stakeholders;
- Communicating the purpose, benefits, and accessibility of the program to members of the DLC and stakeholders; and
- Removing barriers to implementation.

Ideal qualities of a sponsor:

- Supports mentoring as an aspect of their staff engagement and retention strategy;
- Allocates resources to support local owner and a successful program;
- Demonstrates influence by approving time for mentors/mentees to fully participate;

- Values and models self-reflection and continuous learning;
- Has cultural competence within the context of MIT; and
- Strongly supports and has a practical understanding of inclusive and equitable practices.

Role of the program owner

The program owner is responsible for developing, implementing, and assessing their area's program. A dedicated program owner is critical for a successful program. Do not underestimate the time and effort required to start and maintain a successful program.

Specifically, the role of the program owner entails:

- Carrying through with the steps in this guide.
- Ensuring the purpose and objectives of the program are clear and agreed upon by all stakeholders.
- Taking direct responsibility for most program activities. Depending on your DLC and how you design your program, you might have specific organizational structure, decision-making, and buy-in needs unique to your area.
- Identifying the critical activities necessary for program development and implementation as outlined in this guide.
- Creating a realistic development and implementation plan.
- Identifying and acquiring the necessary resources with the aid of your sponsor and other stakeholders.
- Gaining endorsement up-front on your plan.
- Recruiting participants in collaboration with others.
- Educating and training participants.
- Developing program materials.
- Facilitating a process for matching mentees with mentors.
- Addressing any programmatic or relationship issues with tact, such as mismatched pairs.
- Assessing the program.

Who should serve as a program owner?

Ideally the program owner should be someone who possesses

- Knowledge of MIT's mission, vision, and goals.

- Knowledge of how their DLC is structured.
- Excellent time management, organizational, and project management skills.
- The ability to influence and navigate MIT.
- The ability to be a neutral facilitator while ensuring equity and inclusion.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- Time to commit to the program.
- Solid working relationships and the ability to forge new ones for the program.

Step Three: Design the Program

This guide includes essential practices for successful programs, but there are no cookie-cutter plans that will work for every DLC. As you tailor your program to your area's needs, keep the following in mind:

- Your program objectives.
- The type of mentoring relationship(s) are you incorporating.
- Consistency with your local culture.
- Parameters, such as budget, time, and workspace locations.
- Focus on simplicity and organization.
- Don't skip steps—but it is okay to merge steps as appropriate.
- Understand and appreciate that mentoring is a powerful means of culture development.
- Remember: you do not need to create materials from scratch. Customizable examples and templates are available for download on the HR website.

Establish specific program elements and responsibilities

A structured program will maximize your ability to provide successful and impactful mentoring experiences in your area. Structure in this context refers to policies, guidelines, procedures, and responsibilities for administering the program.

Determine the balance of structure and informality that is right for your DLC. Revisiting the purpose and goals of your program can help you with this.

Successful programs generally consider or include the following elements:

- Specified duration of mentoring relationships (for example, six months).
- Which activities will participants be required to attend, and which will be optional? For example, orientation and a mid-program review should not be optional. An open house, learning events, and graduation could be invitational.
- An application and review process to gather potential mentors and mentees.
- An organized process for matching mentors and mentees.
- Guidelines for good mentoring practices.
- Processes for managing a mentee/mentor mismatch.
- Closure of the formal mentoring relationships and/or voluntary continuation.

- Clear guidelines on participant time investment. For example, a six-month program might be comprised of the following:
    - Orientation workshop (2 hours)
    - Direct mentoring meetings scheduled by mentor and mentee (one to two hours a month, minimum)
    - At least one additional workshop midway (1 to 1.5 hours)
    - Debrief meeting with all participants at end of six months (1 hour)
- Target number of partnerships. Consider starting with a pilot of 6-8 partnerships. Depending on the size of your DLC, after the pilot and revisions from lessons learned, a scale-up guideline for the program might be 13-15 partnerships.

Step Four: Create an Implementation Plan

As the program owner, having a detailed and thoughtful plan will help you set up a successful program that can serve as a prototype for future program replication. It can also serve as sign-off document with your sponsor and other key stakeholders.

Start by reviewing the key activities necessary for program development and implementation. Decide which tools and resources you will use as-is and which you will tailor to your needs. Set realistic milestones and dates.

At a minimum your plan should include the following:

- Timelines — start and end dates, kickoff schedule, matching, orientation and training, other educational events for participants, celebration date, and venues
- Communication strategy and plan
- Role clarification — sponsor, program owner, optional support from HR, matching committee, et al.
- Required resources — budget, time, space

Step Five: Develop Materials

Based on your Implementation Plan from Step Four, determine what materials will be needed. The downloadable templates we've provided may be customized for your use.

For initial information session

Consider having an information session or open house to invite prospective participants to learn about the program, garner enthusiasm, and generate an applicant-interest list. Materials to have on hand may include the following:

- Two types of applications — one for mentees and one for mentors. (We've provided examples.)
- Mentoring agreement (includes confidentiality). The mentoring program must be a safe environment for mentees and mentors to freely share information with one another.
- List of ideal mentor characteristics.
- Mentor and mentee roles and responsibilities.

The applications

During your participant recruitment process, the prospective mentees and mentors will provide information, typically via an application. You will use this information to facilitate matching mentees and mentors in order to facilitate a positive, impactful learning experience. The information gathered for each mentee could include:

- Areas of strength as a professional;
- Areas of need for professional growth;
- Preferences, if any, for the kind of person they prefer to have as a mentor;
- Location (if relevant);
- For new-in-role situations, the new assignment for which they are being prepared; and
- Other information that might help make a match with an appropriate mentor.

For orientation

Mentor packets should contain:

- Timeline with key dates and milestones

- Mentor benefits
- Mentor role and responsibilities
- Ideas to assist mentees
- Effective questioning tips
- How to be a good listener
- How to give and receive feedback
- Mentoring program and confidentiality agreement

Mentee packets should contain:

- Timeline with key dates and milestones
- Mentee benefits
- Mentee responsibilities
- How to give and receive feedback
- Mentoring program and confidentiality agreement
- Mentee action plan

Step Six: Create and Implement a Communication Plan

Your communication plan should answer these questions for potential participants:

What is the program about?

Why are we providing a mentoring program? Why is it important?

Who can participate?

When are the important dates?

Where can I get more information?

How do I apply?

Does your DLC already have communication channels in place, such as a website, email distribution list, or regular staff meetings? If so, leverage these for your plan. Your sponsor is also a key resource for supporting your communications. Keep equity and inclusion in mind and realize that multiple communication channels may be needed to reach all prospective participants. Be mindful of employees who work remotely and be sure to include them as well.

Determine which stakeholders and others in your organization should be apprised of your program progress. Include them in your communication strategy.

In addition to answering the questions above, your communication plan should be able to accomplish the following:

- Promote your program;
- Attract mentors and mentees;
- Generate positive responses and feedback;
- Ensure the managers of participants are in the loop and supportive; and
- Assess and report on the progress of the program to stakeholders.

Recruiting participants

Finding participants will require time and effort. An information session is one way to elicit interest.

Information session

An information session or open house is a terrific way to introduce the program to your area and garner support and interest. It's also an opportunity for you and your program sponsor to gain visibility and demonstrate your accessibility. Provide your attendees with information packets that outline the purpose, benefits, and procedures of your program.

Consider holding your information session or open house *at least* once a year to continue to attract mentors and mentees as the program continues. You want to be able to recruit enough mentors to meet the needs of your mentees.

Objectives of the information session:

- Define the expectations for mentors so they can make an informed choice about applying.
- Describe the processes for applying, criteria for selection, matching, and managing mismatches.
- Review the program elements, such as time commitment, selection, orientation, learning events, and assessment.
- Share the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees.
- Communicate the program timeline.
- Provide contact information for follow up and additional questions.

Individual recruitment

A direct approach to recruiting desirable mentors can also prove effective. Note that just because someone *wants* to be a mentor does not mean they will be a good mentor.

Develop criteria to determine who should be in the mentor pool. Criteria to consider are:

- Career levels, i.e., the mentors' career level must be at least level _____
- Years in the organization, certification levels, responsibilities, or job titles are likely to contain inherent criteria which you can use to simplify the mentor selection process, depending on which type of mentoring relationship your program is supporting. Note that requiring a certain number of years might exclude enthusiastic but less-experienced people, such as graduates of MIT management and leadership programs.
- Other criteria can be added to your list from the Ideal Mentor Characteristics below

Once you have established your criteria for selecting mentors, you will need to source viable candidates for your program. Here are a few options:

- **Recommendations (for mentors)** — these are recommendations made based on a judgment that the candidate has desired characteristics as defined by the mentoring program: “We are looking for potential mentors who have the following abilities and characteristics ….”
- **Alumni from MIT programs (for mentors) —** facilitators, peers, and alumni from MIT leadership/management development programs such as L2L and Essentials for Managing.
- **Self-nomination (for mentors and mentees)** — this is likely to be the most productive way to identify volunteers. Self-nomination could come from an information session or from other marketing vehicles such as an emails, posters, or team meetings.
- **Mentee recommendation (for mentors)** — is there someone specific that a mentee identifies as a preferred mentor?
- **Recommendations (for mentees)** — mentees might be identified by their direct managers for reasons including developing high-potential employees, providing visibility for women and other minorities within the Institute, onboarding new employees, and accelerating newly promoted employees.

Characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of effective mentors and mentees

Establish the criteria that are important to you in selecting appropriate mentors. *Remember that “mentor” and “mentee” are roles in a learning partnership and not positions or levels in a hierarchy.*

Ideal mentor characteristics

- Respected as an experienced, successful member of the organization.
- Supports both MIT’s and the local area’s mission, vision, and goals.
- Demonstrates emotional intelligence.
- Facilitates learning through listening and guiding.
- Values and demonstrates trust, respect, diversity, and inclusion.
- Would regard an invitation to be a mentor as an honor or privilege.
- Not omniscient – a learner, too.

- Committed to being accessible and engaged for the length of the program.
- Asks questions and listens well.
- Supportive and able to offer encouragement.
- Willing to share lessons learned from their experiences.
- Open to feedback from mentees and the program owner.

Role and responsibilities of the mentor

- Share skills, knowledge, and experiences that are relevant to the mentee's learning objectives and needs.
- Share understanding and insights about organizational structure, values, norms, and relationships.
- Demonstrate openness to working with mentees who are different than you.
- Be willing to engage and reflect on your own cultural background, identity, and assumptions as they relate to the mentee and mentee/mentor relationship.
- Encourage open discussion about matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Develop a schedule with mentee to meet on a regular frequency.
- Be engaged without distractions during mentee meetings.
- Promptly reschedule canceled meetings. Do not put the onus on your mentee if you cancel.
- Provide candid, constructive feedback.
- Provide recommendations for career growth and development.
- Provide guidance as the mentee creates their goals or action plan.
- Direct the mentee toward available resources as appropriate, e.g., skills training, education, reading, websites, people.
- Be a sounding board and encourage action toward change.
- Ask questions to help the mentee develop critical problem-solving skills.
- Encourage openness to discoveries to realize a higher level of performance and potential.
- Provide access and exposure by introducing mentee to others in the MIT community who can help them meet their goals.
- Show respect and responsiveness by timely replies and willingness to work with your mentee, even if outside of scheduled meetings.
- Maintain confidentiality. Mentoring relationships are built on trust, and your mentee needs to feel comfortable that what they are saying will remain between the two of you.

Ideal mentee characteristics

- Willing participant (the mentoring program is not an intervention for remediating performance).
- Employee in good standing who is likely to stay at MIT.
- Willingness to commit to their growth and program requirements.

Role and responsibilities of mentees

- Have an agenda and goals for mentoring meetings.
- Take charge of own development.
- Initiate frequent contact with mentor.
- Express genuine appreciation for mentor's help and time.
- Practice integrity by following through on commitments.
- Collaborate in setting realistic expectations of self and mentor.
- Explore ways to achieve one's goals.
- Willingness to learn and practice new behaviors.
- Communicate openly with mentor, be willing to share.
- Openly discuss matters related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Be receptive to mentor feedback and recommendations to enhance growth.
- Meet with mentor regularly on the agreed-upon timeframe.
- Remain engaged without distractions.
- Reschedule a canceled meeting promptly.
- Review goals and/or action plan with mentor and modify as appropriate.
- Remain open to meeting new people.
- Take initiative, not being overly dependent on mentor.
- Provide feedback to your mentor on what is working or not working in the partnership.
- Maintain confidentiality. Mentoring relationships are built on trust, and your mentor needs to feel comfortable that what they are saying will remain between the two of you.

Step Seven: Match Mentors and Mentees

Diversity matters when matching mentees with mentors. Creating matches between people whose personality types, work styles, or views are too similar can minimize the learning opportunity. Consider which matches will provide the greatest opportunities for discovery, challenge, and growth for the participants.

This is a good time to revisit the original purpose of your program established in Step One so it can serve as a beacon for meeting the goals of your program and as a guide for the matching exercise.

Matching committee

Select and facilitate a small committee to conduct the mentee-mentor matching. The program sponsor can weigh in on the committee selection by suggesting and inviting members.

Matching meeting

For the matching meeting, establish guidelines and ground rules to heighten awareness and help avoid biases. Diversity during the matching process should be a conscious mindset.

Review your program purpose to determine the intended beneficiaries. Then establish criteria for your mentee-mentor pool, with the following in mind:

- Potential positive impact on the program’s purpose and objectives.
- Degree to which the mentor’s strengths match the mentee’s needs.
- Diverse perspectives, titles, functions, backgrounds, and other dimensions to enrich the experience for both parties.
- Identify members with the knowledge, skills, and experience to serve as mentors.
- Solicit and review applications for completeness. Follow up with applicants for any missing information that might affect their participation.
- Pair mentors with mentees based on compatibility from application forms.

If information on an application is not clear, or questions arise about a mentor or mentee, reach out to applicants as needed to gather additional information.

Once your committee has made all the matches, notify the participants per your communication plan.

Step Eight: Launch the Program (or Pilot)

Now that you have designed and developed a program that fits your area, it's time to launch it. You might want to consider your first session as a pilot. This will allow you an opportunity to track and assess how things go so you can iterate improvements in the next round.

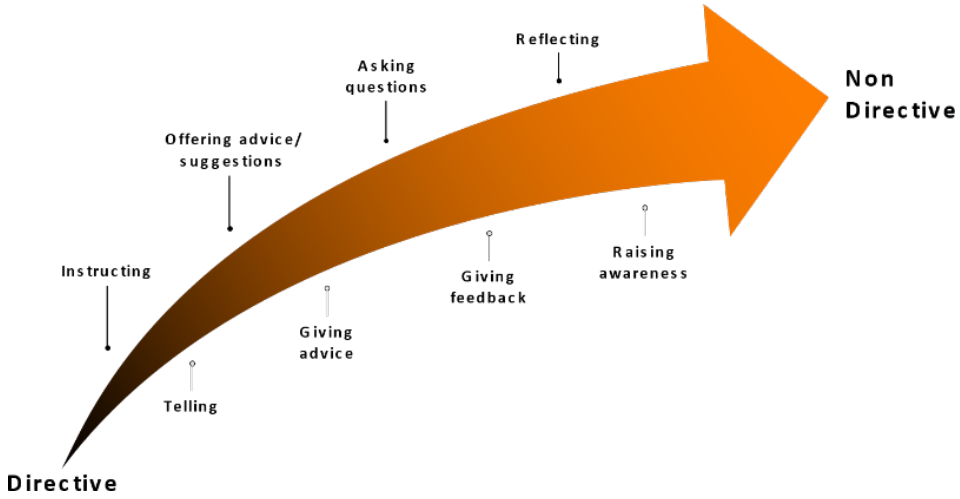
Step Eight will include the following activities:

- Follow through on the program you've developed;
- Follow your communication plan;
- Conduct an orientation meeting; and
- Be prepared to track and assess how things go.

Orientation session

Once you have recruited and matched your mentees and mentors, kick off the program with an orientation session. During the session, your sponsor should deliver a short welcome thanking the participants and reviewing the program's goals and benefits. This is also an opportunity for you to clarify policies and procedures.

You may wish to provide some information that will enhance mentoring relationships. For example, you might discuss the impact of various types of mentoring approaches (see graphic below). Or, you might prefer to use periodic learning sessions later in the program to share this kind of information. Need help deciding which materials to use and when? Human Resources can help.



Source: https://www.pushfar.com/article/mentoring-vs-coaching-the-key-differences-and-benefits/

Step Nine: Monitor and Assess

Once your program is underway, you should remain accessible, committed, and engaged. Your time commitment might be lessened during rollout, though you'll want to keep a pulse on how the relationships are progressing and feed the program with relevant learning opportunities. It is also prudent to monitor and address any unforeseen issues that might arise. Some potential challenges and solutions are outlined below.

Addressing program challenges

Challenge #1: Dealing with a mentee-mentor mismatch

Following the guidelines here will make mismatches less likely, but they can still occur. As mentors and mentees begin working together, it might become apparent that the needs of the mentee do not match the strengths or experience offered by the mentor.

What to do. Be proactive: use matching criteria and a committee to make the best possible matches. Mention during orientation that mismatches can occur. Make sure participants understand that mismatches are not anyone's fault, and that you should be alerted if the mentoring relationship is not working out. Have a check-in about one month into the program with each mentee and mentor with this in mind.

If one member of the pair says the match is not working, explore the reasons. Speak with the mentee and mentor separately. Do not assume it is necessary to make a change until you have talked to both parties. Bear in mind that conflicts are a natural result of matching people with diverse skill sets and experience. This can be a powerful opportunity for growth. If a mentoring pair can work through conflicts by valuing the richness of their views, backgrounds, and experience, they can learn more from each other by exploring outside their comfort zones.

If, however, the pair will not be able to have a productive mentoring partnership after due effort to resolve their conflict, then the partnership should end. Your goal should be to end the match while maintaining the dignity of both participants. Do not place blame. Simply reiterate that "It happens."

Let the mentee know that you will work to find another mentor for them. Let the mentor know it would not be fair to them to keep them matched with a mentee that does not need the specific strengths and experience that the mentor has to offer. Tell them when you find a mentee whose needs match their strengths and experience, either now or in a future session, you will reach out to them. Express your appreciation for their desire to serve as a mentor and the time they've put in.

Challenge #2: A participant can no longer participate because of unforeseen circumstances.

What to do: Seek to understand the circumstances. Find out if there are any additional reasons why the party can no longer participate. If the mentee can no longer participate, ask if they have notified the mentor. If not, they should do so directly. Let the mentor know you appreciate their time and effort and would like to include them in the next session (if appropriate). If it is the mentor who cannot continue, seek to understand the circumstances. Find out if the mentor has communicated this to the mentee. If not, they should do so directly. Follow up with the mentee to let them know you will find another mentor when possible.

Challenge #3: An individual volunteers to be a mentor, but you feel they would not be a good mentor.

What to do: Communicate up front during the selection process that there is no guarantee that everyone will be selected and matched, and reiterate that throughout the process. Be clear and public about the criteria and expectations for mentors. Your matching committee can also be helpful, especially if a member has a personal connection with the individual and can talk to them directly. Put into words with your committee specifically why the volunteer mentor is not suitable.

Challenge #4: A mentor is repeatedly unavailable to meet with a mentee or appears to lack commitment.

What to do: If a mentor is missing meetings and not responding to email, the mentee should first address it with the mentor directly and honestly. Determine if there are any solutions, such as more flexibility from the mentee. If it is a particularly busy time for the mentor, see if the mentor wants to touch base or have meetings by phone or Zoom with their partner until they can resume as agreed.

Explore if there is anything else preventing the mentor from fulfilling their agreement. Address anything you find out with a solution-seeking mindset. If the mentor simply cannot continue in the role, they should communicate this to their mentee. Let the mentee know that you will do your best to find them a suitable alternate mentor. Remember that individuals who have agreed to be mentors already have a strong commitment to the process. Generally, most mentors who have made a commitment to the program will follow through.

Challenge #5: Mentee appears to be lacking commitment.

What to do: If a mentor feels that their mentee may be lacking motivation or is not committed to the relationship, the mentor should explore this directly and try to determine the reason. It is possible that the mentee believes that the mentor lacks commitment to the mentee's career. It

might be a mismatch. Also, it sometimes happens that after some exploration with a mentor, a mentee has discovered their career focus is no longer the direction they wish to go. In all respects, open dialogue between mentee and mentor should be encouraged.

Challenge #6: Not enough mentors to match the number of mentees.

What to do: With your sponsor's assistance, work your network to find more mentors. Look both inside and outside your area for recommendations.

Challenge #7: Implicit power differential

Occasionally a younger or less-experienced mentee might feel unsure or uncomfortable about raising questions or concerns. The same might be true when mentoring partners are different in other ways, such as diverse cultures, races, and/or backgrounds.

What to do: Mentors should try to create a safe space to for mentees to raise issues. By being vulnerable themselves, they can help level the field. Mentors might begin early in the relationship to discuss such questions as, "Let's begin by learning what we share in common," or "How are we alike?" They might also pose, "How are we different?" It is okay to acknowledge the differences. The mentor might say something like, "Because of our differences, there might be times when we do not fully relate to each other's perspectives or experiences. How we address this can be a valuable learning experience for us. I will let you know when this is happening, so you can tell me more and you can do the same. How do you feel about this? What other suggestions do you have that might help us bridge our differences?"

Ongoing learning for mentors and mentees

After orientation, you can continue to provide learning and growth opportunities through periodic educational events. Consider timely topics and events to support the ongoing development of mentors and mentees.

Examples include:

- Guest speakers. Invite previous mentors and mentees to talk about how they got the most from the program, external speakers on how to be a stronger mentor, or experts in career development and active listening. Use your imagination or seek ideas from participants.
- Leverage support from MIT Human Resources for ideas, resources, and possible panelists.
- Facilitate interactive workshops or panels on topics that you feel will help mentees and mentors, and meet the program goals.

- Take a tour of MIT.
- Provide relevant articles and other literature.

Your learning events can include mentees and mentors at the same time to build a cohort experience. For content specific to mentors or mentees, conduct separate peer group experiences. Separate meetings provide the opportunity for a facilitated forum where participants can brainstorm topics, mentors can discuss challenges with mentees, and mentees can discuss challenges with mentors.

Mid-program assessment

At the half-way point of your program (at three months for a six-month program), assemble your mentoring partners to discuss how they are progressing. Facilitate breakout groups for them to share what they are learning along the way. This is also an opportunity to seek feedback on the structure of the program thus far and gather suggestions for improvement for the second half.

Step Ten: Closure, Celebration, and Program Evaluation

You might wish to mark the formal closure of each session of your program with a celebratory event. This is a time to assess how well the session met your initial objectives and make changes if necessary.

If there were problems during the session, debrief to see what happened and whether they can be prevented in the future. We've provided guidance on common problems, like mismatches between mentors and mentees, in Step Nine.

Celebrate

A celebratory gathering is a great way to mark the end of a session and to acknowledge official closure to the mentoring relationships. It is also an opportunity to bring visibility to your program for the next round. If the sponsor and others senior leaders are present, it will highlight the importance of mentoring as part of your culture as well as your area's commitment to employee development.

A certificate of participation for mentees and acknowledgement for mentors with a small gift would be appropriate and appreciated.

Program evaluation

At the closure of the first program or pilot, conduct an overall program evaluation. Your well thought-out purpose and objectives will pay off now. Leverage your assessment of your objectives and the feedback you received throughout the session to improve your design, procedures, and infrastructure for the next round.

You might also conduct a follow-up evaluation with mentees about three months after closure to determine the sustained impact of their mentoring. Again, revisit your original objectives that you established in the beginning steps of your program.

Conclusion

Your mentoring program can have a powerful positive impact as a resource to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion, boost morale and retention, develop promising employees, and contribute to the growth mindset at MIT. We hope this guide and the accompanying templates will smooth your path to creating a strong and successful mentoring experience for your MIT DLC.