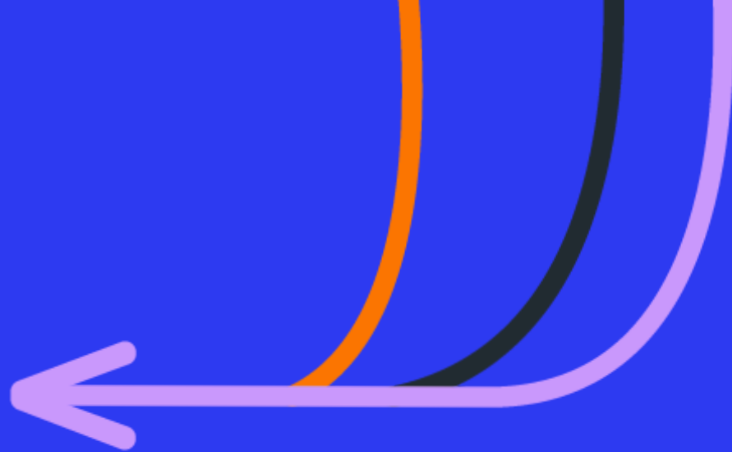


# Workplace mentoring:

## A quick guide for employers



*A guide developed by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) as part of the [Employer Innovation Lab](#), a targeted program to increase workforce participation of young people facing barriers to employment.*

### What is workplace mentoring?

Mentoring is a professional relationship between a more experienced person (the mentor) and a less experience person (the mentee), designed to support the mentee's development and confidence at work.

#### A mentor can provide two types of support:

- Career guidance, helping the mentee grow skills, navigate opportunities, and build networks.
- Personal support, helping the mentee feel more confident, capable and connected at work.

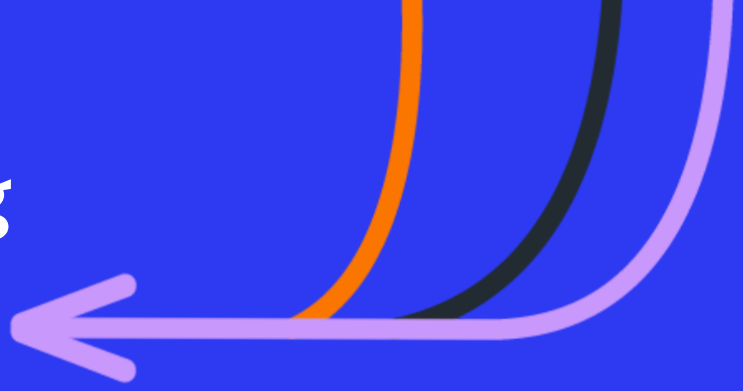
Mentoring can be formal (with training, structure, and regular check-ins) or informal (peer-based or experience-based support). Programs may be one-on-one, or group based.

This isn't a supervisory relationship – the mentor doesn't have authority over the mentee. Instead, their role is to listen, guide and support. Mentors can also open doors by making connections and offering sponsorships.

#### Mentoring vs coaching:

- Coaching is short-term and task-focused, helping someone improve specific skills or performance.
- Mentoring is broader and longer-term, supporting confidence, career growth and connection. They're different but can work well together.

# Why mentoring matters



## What are the benefits?

Workplace mentoring delivers practical outcomes for everyone involved:

- **For the mentee:** faster skill development, greater confidence, better promotion prospects, and stronger job satisfaction.
- **For the mentor:** renewed purpose, enhanced leadership skills, and personal growth.
- **For the organisation:** improved staff retention, increased engagement, and a stronger culture of learning and inclusion.





## What research says

Research strongly supports workplace mentoring as a way to retain and support young employees. Here's what evidence shows:

- A range of models (like group mentoring or e-mentoring) can work, but one-on-one mentoring often has the biggest impact.
- A 'constellation' of mentors (e.g. multiple mentors across areas) can increase support and flexibility for mentees.
- Mentoring is especially helpful for those who may struggle with workplace expectations, literacy / numeracy, or confidence.
- Shared values, interests, and communication styles are more important than matching on demographics like age or background.
- Cultural awareness matters; mentors should understand and respect cross-cultural differences.
- Female mentors can be particularly supportive for mentees in male-dominated industries.
- Mentoring doesn't work when mentors are unavailable, unclear in their guidance, or set unrealistic expectations.



# Tips for setting up a mentoring program

If you're building a mentoring program, start with these five steps.



## Planning & set up

- Do a needs assessment and get buy-in from middle and senior management.
- Check that the program fits your existing HR systems and values.
- Nominate a staff member to coordinate and support the program.



## Training mentors

- Provide simple training session or toolkit to guide mentors.
- Focus on listening, goal setting, feedback, and setting boundaries.
- Make it practical and focused on real workplace challenges.



## Recruiting participants

- Decide who the program is for (e.g. new hires, young staff, return-to-work employees).
- Set clear screening criteria.
- Invite and confirm participants.



## Monitoring & evaluation

- Check-in regularly using surveys or informal chats.
- Track outcomes like satisfaction, retention or performance.
- Create a clear process for resolving issues if mentoring stalls.
- Use feedback to tweak and improve the program over time.

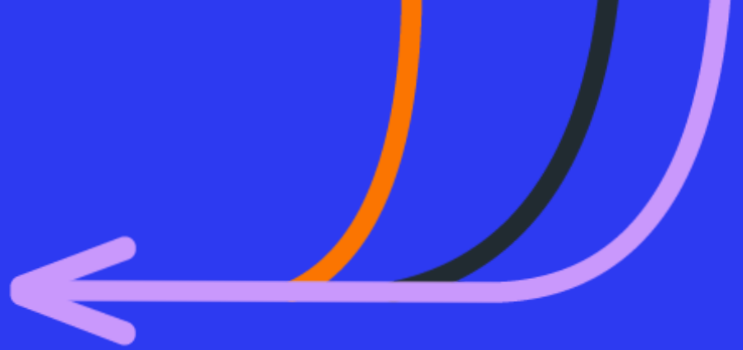


## Matching mentors & mentees

- Match people based on shared goals, communication styles, and preferences.
- Avoid focusing only on age or background, values and fit matter more.
- Record expectations, roles, and communication preferences clearly.



# Further reading



- [How Consep's Young Starters program is building careers.](#)
- [Leading to unlock potential](#) (2022). A user-friendly guide by Employment & Workplace Relations (Australia).
- [Peer mentoring handbook](#). The Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania. A user-friendly guide to set up a mentoring program.

This guide is developed for the SVA Employer Innovation Lab, drawing on high-quality academic and non-academic sources. It is part of a broader suite of support from the SVA [Employer Innovation Lab](#). If you're designing your mentoring program or want tailored advice, reach out to our team [careerladder@socialventures.org.au](mailto:careerladder@socialventures.org.au).