



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

Guidelines for Building a Mentoring System for Coaches or Officials

Most successful mentoring programs have evolved through experience. Initially, many have little structure and even less documentation and reporting. Some, however, grow to become a national program, co-ordinated by a central contact person, with training programs and learning materials for mentors and the coaches/officials they mentor.

Mentoring programs can range from very informal to very formal, depending on the needs of your sport and the resources that you have at your disposal. If you choose to link coach/official assessment for qualifications to your mentoring program then you will find that your mentoring program tends to become more structured and formal. This will help to ensure that mentors provide quality mentoring that leads to fair, valid and reliable assessment

This document has been designed to help you to build your own mentoring program. It will take you through a series of questions to help you to design a program that is unique to your needs. It doesn't matter whether you are building a program for your local club, or for a national sporting organisation. The questions are designed to suit all levels of sport and will help you to identify the purpose and structure of your own mentoring program.

The more thought that you put into the design of your mentoring program, the more likely it is to be a success. When answering the questions, try to be as detailed and realistic as you can. Overestimating the resources you have available for your mentoring program will only lead to disaster once you try to implement it. Don't forget to consult with other key people in your organisation as you design your program. They will be able to offer a critical opinion and may think of factors that you did not consider. You may want to come back and re-consider your responses to some of the questions once you have gathered more information, or discussed some options with others.

1. Why are you considering introducing a mentoring program?

Mentoring programs may be developed for a wide range of reasons. They include:

- *To gain a qualification*
- *To assess candidates or monitor the quality of training (in these case studies the mentors work closely with coaches in a practical setting and therefore their knowledge of the coaches performance can form a part of the assessment process)*
- *Professional development (eg to expose developing coaches/officials to international competition in a 'safe' way, to expose developing coaches to working with sports scientists etc.)*
- *Structured/supervised practical experience*

2. Who will you target as mentors? Who will you target to be mentored??

Mentors could be assigned or self selected by the coach/official being mentored.

3. What financial and human resources do you have available for your mentoring program? And, what current systems/structures do you have in place that you could build upon?

This will determine elements such as whether you can pay mentors, have a national and/or local coordinator(s) of the program or whether these roles will have to be fulfilled voluntarily.

4. What roles will you expect your mentors to play?

Will you expect mentors to also formally assess the people they are mentoring? How much time will mentors need to devote to the program?

5. What skills/knowledge will mentors need to be effective?

Identifying the skills and knowledge required by mentors will help determine who is best suited to act as a mentor in your program, and what training they may require. Some of the skills and knowledge you might want include:

- Coaching/officiating – general
- Coaching/officiating – sports specific
- Communication skills, including the ability to provide effective feedback
- Knowledge of your sport's accreditation system and the competencies required for accreditation
- Experience and contacts within the sport's system
- General assessing skills
- An interest in developing other coaches and officials

6. How will mentor training occur?

There are a variety of ways that you can provide training for mentors, ranging from sending them a letter outlining their role in the mentoring program to conducting comprehensive workshops and providing certification for mentors. The following table outlines the pros and cons of conducting mentor training workshops.

Pros and cons of formally training mentors:

Pros	Cons
<i>Provides comprehensive training to prepare mentors for the challenges they will face.</i>	<i>Can be costly to run courses.</i>
<i>Improves the quality of mentoring provided to coaches/officials and helps to standardise the mentoring process.</i>	<i>Can be difficult to find a time and place to conduct the workshop that suits all potential attendees.</i>
<i>Allows mentors to interact with and hence learn from other mentors.</i>	<i>Can be difficult to motivate potential mentors to attend another training workshop.</i>

7. Will mentors be assessed and certified as mentors?

Pros and cons of assessing and accrediting mentors

Pros	Cons
<i>Ensures that your mentors actually have the skills required to do their job well.</i>	<i>Costs may be prohibitive.</i>
<i>Improves the quality control of your mentoring (and whole training) system.</i>	<i>Mentors may be reluctant to go through another assessment process.</i>
<i>Provides a transferable qualification for your mentors (if they undertake a generic course and assessment)</i>	<i>May require you to keep an additional database of qualified mentors. (But this could be linked to your coach/official or assessor databases).</i>

8. How will you provide support, recognise and rewards mentors?

The mentors within your mentoring program are likely to contribute significant amounts of time and expertise to help develop other coaches/officials. You need to consider how you will recognise and/or reward their efforts. This may be achieved at an organisational level (eg free attendance at a training course, acknowledgement in a national/state magazine, or allocation of updating points) or at an individual level (a letter of thanks from the coach/official being mentored or 'shouting' their mentor a beer or coffee to say thanks). What are some ways that your mentoring program could acknowledge the efforts of the mentors?

9. What resources need to be developed to support your mentoring system?

Some sports have developed resources to support their mentoring system, such as:

- *Promotional material*
- *Mentor training course/manual*
- *Policy procedures for mentoring system*
- *Feedback and/or assessment sheets for mentors*
- *Workbooks to guide mentoring*
- *Letter to mentor outlining program and their role in it.*
- *Assessment tools to aid the assessment of mentors*

10. How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your mentoring program?

Some indicators for evaluation

The following criteria might be useful measures for you to monitor the effectiveness of your mentoring program.

- *Recruitment/interest – number of participants, number of mentoring relationships established*
- *Turnover/retention rate – number of participants completing their mentoring relationship, number of drop outs*
- *Value of training provided*
- *Goal achievement – whether the program and individual goals are met*
- *Feedback from participants*
- *Comments on unexpected outcomes of involvement in the program*
- *Feedback on individual contributions and the effectiveness of mentors*
- *Monitoring the ongoing progress of coaches/officials who have been mentored*
- *Participant satisfaction with the program and their mentor*

You will need to consider how best to gather this information. You may need to use a combination of fact finding including statistics, questionnaires and evaluation forms.

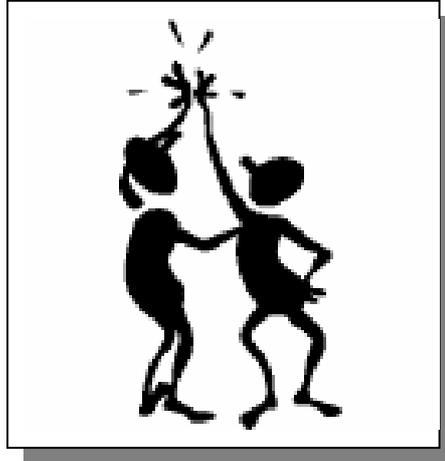
11. Putting it all together – how will you structure your mentoring program?

Some possible structures include:

- *Small handful of national mentors who are trained to mentor and possibly assess. Mentors may be from inside and/or outside the sport.*
- *Mentors are assigned locally during the coaches'/officials' training. They may be from inside and/or outside the sport.*
- *Any coach/official with a higher level of accreditation can mentor. Mentors may also be required to undergo some mentor training.*
- *Coaches/officials choose their own mentor from inside or outside the sport*

Some issues to consider here include:

- *where will the program be implemented?*
- *who will be involved?*
- *who will coordinate the program?*
- *what in broad terms are the roles of the various players (eg program coordinator, state personnel, mentors, coaches and officials)?*
- *when will each element of the program take place?*
- *how are the mentor and the coach/official expected to interact?*
- *what paperwork will need to be completed and how will this flow between people involved in the program?*



Congratulations!

You have now designed a mentoring program that is appropriate to the needs of your sport.

Good luck with its implementation.....