MENTORING UNEMPLOYED YOUNG ADULTS TO DREAM BIGGER AND BREAK DOWN THE STEPS TO REACH THEIR GOALS

Process Evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

Prepared by the Centre for Social Impact The University of Western Australia

June, 2022

Dr. Mariana Atkins, Lisette Kaleveld, Zoe Callis,









Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, CSI UWA acknowledges that their operations are situated on Noongar land, and that the Noongar people remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their land, and continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Acknowledgements

This project was supported by the Try, Test and Learn Fund: An initiative of the Australian Government Department of Social Services. This report was commissioned by Council on the Ageing Western Australia (COTA WA) and was prepared by the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia (CSI UWA), based on the evaluation findings of the Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) program, a social intervention designed to assist unemployed young people find work through mentoring support. The M2W program team and the CSI evaluation team would like to thank the young adult M2W participants, the young adult control group participants and the mentors for their generous engagement in the numerous evaluation activities across the lifetime of the program. Their feedback and insights form the basis of the key learnings presented in this report.

Authors:

REPORT AUTHORS		
Dr. Mariana Atkins	Senior Research Fellow	mariana.atkins@uwa.edu.au
Lisette Kaleveld	Research Officer	lisette.kaleveld@uwa.edu.au
Zoe Callis	Research Officer	zoe.callis@uwa.edu.au

Address for Correspondence

Dr. Mariana Atkins
Centre for Social Impact the University of Western Australia
Business School
The University of Western Australia
35 Stirling Hwy, Crawey, WA, 6009 Australia
mariana.atkins@uwa.edu.au

Suggested Citation

Atkins, M.T., Kaleveld, L. & Callis, Z. (2022) 'Mentoring unemployed young adults to dream bigger and break down the steps to reach their goals' Process evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project. Centre for Social Impact, University of Western Australia. DOI: 10.25916/n4pq-2041

Council on the Ageing, Western Australia

COTA WA is West Australia's peak not-for-profit seniors' organisation. It is an inclusive organisation that promotes the interest of all older Australians and promotes intergenerational contact and support. COTA WA was the backbone organisation for the M2W program, which paired young adults with older mentors.

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knowledge, creating leaders, developing usable resources, and reaching across traditional divides to facilitate collaborations.

Disclaimer

The opinions in this report reflect the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Centre for Social Impact or COTA WA.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

The Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) WA Project is a Commonwealth funded pilot project under the Department of Social Services (DSS) Try, Test and Learn Fund (TTL). This fund supports new or innovative approaches to assist people at risk of long-term welfare dependence through small-scale trials aimed at improving workforce participation or capacity to work.

The M2W initiative paired unemployed young adults (aged 18 to 25) at risk of long-term unemployment with a volunteer mentor, who supported them through the processes of identifying a career, searching for work, and preparing for employment. To be eligible to participate, the young person needed to be:

- aged between 18 and 25
- have received a welfare payment in the last 6 months, and
- not have a significant connection to the workforce.

The aim was to recruit 240 participants to be segmented into two cohorts: the general group cohort and a smaller cohort (no more than 30% of participants) of those with high support needs (complex needs) as identified by the program staff.

Council on the Ageing WA (COTA WA) was the backbone organisation for the program, responsible for managing the overall program and contracting community service organisations to help with the operation of the program. The University of Western Australia, through the Centre for Social Impact (CSI UWA), was contracted by COTA WA to evaluate the program and assess its success in achieving the specified outcomes as well as the appropriateness of the program for broader rollout.

The program commenced in June 2018 and ran over 24 months, delivered in a number of stages. Stage 1 was the pilot phase of the program, established in July 2018. Stage 2 commenced in December 2018 and Stage 3 began in April 2019. The program officially ended in June 2020. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 had a significant impact on the program. It affected not only the way in which the program was delivered, but also the employment market and the opportunities available to young unemployed people. At the time of writing this report the full impact of the pandemic on youth unemployment broadly, and on the participants of this program more specifically, is yet to be determined. But it is expected that the impacts will be severe and long-lasting.

1.2 Program Model

The program model outlines the main activities in the program which lead to the desired outcomes of young adults being in employment or study and having improved wellbeing. Figure 1.1 presents an idealised version of the program design.

Eligible young adults were referred through employment service providers, with COTA WA actively screening and recruiting the young adults for participation in the program. A Learning and Support Career Pathways Toolkit, developed by COTA WA, formed the foundation for the training and preparation for mentoring of the young adults. Mentors were sourced through a community service organisation (United Way) and participated in an orientation and induction session organised by COTA WA to educate and prepare the mentors to best guide and support the young adults. Young adults and mentors were matched by M2W project officers. Mentoring sessions occurred weekly for

six months with the mentor lending tailored support and assistance pertinent to gaining employment and addressing the young adult's specific needs. The program employed a partnership model to support the strengths of each participant and overcome the barriers and challenges in attaining and maintaining employment. Central to this was the development of a network of support for the young adults in order for them to achieve employment or study by helping them to activate and expand their social networks and become job-ready with skills and motivation. The mentoring relationship was supported throughout by the project staff who played a key role in providing ongoing support and opportunities for professional development. Figure 1: M2W Program Model

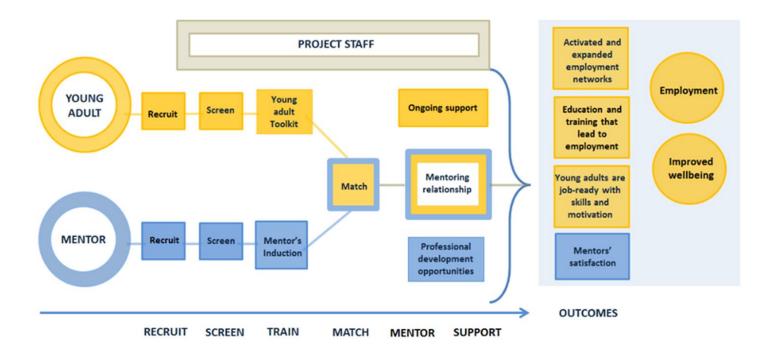


Figure 1.1: M2W Program Model

1.3 Theory of Action

Matching a young adult with a mentor provided them with ongoing and sustained personal support so that they could build skills and confidence, expand networks which potentially link into employment, be guided and encouraged to participate in regular job search activities and achieve employment or study opportunities that could be maintained. The ultimate goal was for young people to have sustained independence from welfare support. This process is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

There are a number of external factors and assumptions underpinning the theory of change. External factors include: a belief that the labour market is open to employing the young adult participants in the program; and family and childcare support is available, if needed, to enable program participation. Additionally, there are a number of assumptions that have been made in the program design, such as: young adults in the cohort want employment; there are suitable and available jobs for the participants to access; employment improves the lives of the participants; and mentors will remain committed to participate in the program over time.

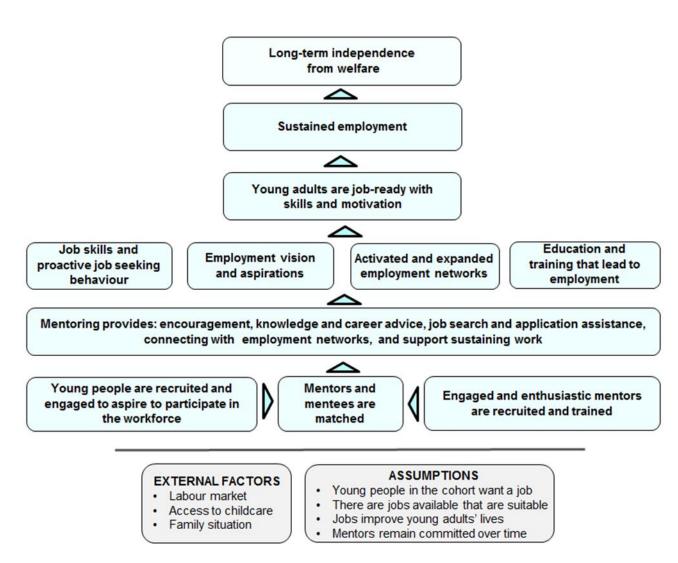


Figure 1.2: Theory of Action

1.4 Evaluation Design

The aim of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the mentoring program for young adults. Figure 1.3 illustrates the conceptual evaluation design. A quasi-experimental design was utilised to measure changing outcomes in both a participant group and a control group. The evaluation has measured success rates and outcomes of participants compared to the control group in order to determine the contribution the program has made to the desired outcomes. Two types of evaluations were conducted: a Process Evaluation and an Outcomes Evaluation. This document reports on the findings of the Process Evaluation.

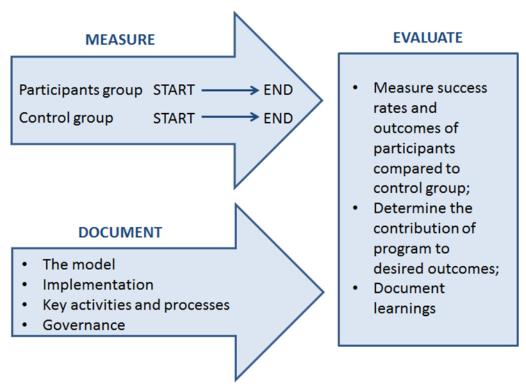


Figure 1.3: Conceptual Evaluation Design

1.5 Process Evaluation

The process evaluation monitored and documented the program implementation in order to understand what was effective in the implementation across different sites (in relation to the processes), and to assist in understanding the relationship between specific program elements and program outcomes.

1.6 Key Process Evaluation Questions

- What are the causal assumptions behind the M2W program? What is the evidence and/or theoretical basis for the intervention making a difference to the cohort group?
- Are program activities implemented as intended? Were there any differences across sites and if so what and why?
- What program components were implemented most successfully? Why/why not?
- To what extent did mentors and young people meet as required and according to expectations? If not, why not?
- How did external factors influence program delivery?:
- 10 Process Evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Ethics Approval

Ethics approval for the evaluation was granted by the University of Western Australia (grant number RA/4/20/4922). The following ethical matters were taken into consideration:

- Full disclosure all participants were fully informed of the purpose of the evaluation, how the information they provided was going to be used and their rights regarding the information they provided. This information was contained in the Information Sheets;
- The voluntary nature of the evaluation, without fear of consequences, was outlined in the Information Sheets;
- Potential risks of participating, and the option to withdraw at any time, were stated in the Information Sheets;
- Confidentiality of the data was assured and the data was depersonalised and securely stored at CSI UWA;
- Informed consent was sought from all participants via the Consent Forms which were signed and kept by CSI UWA;
- Young adults were reimbursed with a \$40 gift card for their time and any out-of-pocket expenses accrued through participation in evaluation activities (surveys, focus groups and interviews);
- Cultural and social sensitivity the evaluation team were briefed on any cultural, gender or considerations social which may have had bearing on the evaluations.

2.2 Data Sources

As outlined in the Mentoring 2 Work Evaluation Plan, the program employed a number of different evaluation activities and data collection methods. The data sources used to inform this Evaluation Report are outlined in Table 2.1. Appendix 3 presents the program evaluation schedules for the young adult participants and the mentors.

	DATA SOURCE	DETAILS
PRIMARY SOURCES		
	Stakeholder interviews	Throughout the program
	(COTAWA program staff and	
	United Way WA staff)	
	Young adult focus groups	3 time points
	Young adult telephone interviews	At the close of the program
	Quantitative surveys	3 time points
	Mentor telephone interviews	2 time points
	Mentor focus groups	At the close of the program
	Quantitative surveys	2 time points
SECONDARY SOURCES		
	Document review	Program records
		Evaluation Team and Project Team meeting minutes
		Steering Committee minutes
		Learning Pathways Toolkit
		Mentor training materials
	Administrative data	Activity spreadsheet
		Activity Work Plans
	Literature review	Academic journals, grey literature
		(government documents and websites)

Table 2.1: Data sources

2.3 Qualitative Data Collection

Interviews were conducted throughout the program with a range of stakeholders:

- Program staff and the stakeholder group (United Way WA and steering committee members)
 were interviewed at two important time points: for the Stage 1 Review (March 2019) and for
 the Stage 2 and 3 Review (March 2020) to determine how the program was tracking in order
 to capture the program evolution.
- Mentors were interviewed via telephone for the Stage 1 Review and for the Stage 2 and 3
 Review. The semi-structured interviews (lasting approximately one hour) allowed the Evaluators
 to explore in greater depth themes that were addressed in the surveys in order to arrive at a
 richer understanding of the nature of the mentoring relationship.
- Young adults were interviewed as part of the Stage 2 and 3 Review. Originally focus groups had been scheduled but due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic these were cancelled and instead the young adults were contacted via telephone for one-on-one semi-structured interviews which lasted approximately one hour. This enabled a rich exploration of a number of

themes relating to the process and value of the program. All young adults who took part in an interview received a \$40 gift card.

Focus groups were conducted with the young adult participants and with the mentors:

- Two rounds of focus groups were held with young adults: 1 at the end of Stage 1 (March 2019), and 3 at the end of Stage 2 (August 2019). These focus groups were held in the State Library and lasted approximately 2 hours in length. The focus groups which were scheduled to take place at the end of Stage 3 (March 2020) were cancelled due to the pandemic, and telephone interviews were held instead with the young adults. All young adults who took part in the focus groups received a \$40 gift card and refreshments.
- Two focus groups were held with mentors at the end of Stage 3 (March 2020). These focus groups were held at the UWA Club and lasted approximately 2 hours. The discussion focused on the nature of the mentoring relationship from the mentors' perspective and uncovered the successes and challenges of the program.

2.4 Quantitative Data Collection

A number of surveys were conducted at various time points in the program. Surveys were developed and distributed on the UWA Qualtrics platform and were analysed using SPSS data software.

- Young adult participants were invited to participate in three surveys: a baseline survey (at the start of the program), an exit survey (upon completion of mentoring or when exiting the program) that captured immediate outcomes of the program, and a post program survey (12 months from recruitment) capturing post program employment experiences and changes in wellbeing. All young adults who completed the survey received a \$40 gift card per survey.
- Young adults who were part of the control group were invited to participate in two surveys that provided data for comparison of outcomes with the young adult program participants: a T1 baseline survey and a T2 post program survey. All young adults who completed the survey received a \$40 gift card per survey.
- Mentors were invited to participate in two surveys: a baseline survey (at the start of the program) that captured their skills, values and expectations of the program, and an exit survey (upon completion of the mentoring relationship or when the young adult exited the program) that captured their perceptions of the program and provided feedback on program design and implementation.

2.5 Determining Complex Needs

The Mentoring 2 Work Program guidelines describe the target cohort to be young adults who are vulnerable to long term unemployment. Within this framework there was recognition that participants would arrive at the program will varying needs and vulnerabilities. As the program evolved it was decided that approximately 30% of young adults recruited would have complex needs. This was in order to ensure the program achieved a balance between responding appropriately to the high needs that this cohort naturally brought to the program and maximising the success of the greatest number of young people with the available resources. This required a consistent and agreed upon definition of complex needs and ongoing monitoring and reporting of the estimated percentage of participants with complex needs.

A Complex Needs Assessment Tool was developed by CSI UWA to be used for two purposes:

- 1. to enable the M2W project officers to assess any complex needs that the young adult may have that act as barriers to them gaining and maintaining employment;
- 2. to determine the appropriate course of action that is needed, such as referral to appropriate external support;

This exercise was completed by the M2W team without direct input from the young adult. Project officers waited for after they had spent enough time with a young adult to feel confident enough to gauge any complex needs they may have. The tool was updated on an ongoing basis as more information came to light. In this way, it was a living document that helped to track vulnerability and needs of the participant. See Appendix 2 for a detailed discussion on the complex needs assessment tool.

2.6 Definitions, Participation and Engagement Transitions

The following definitions were determined by the Evaluation and Project Team:

- **Recruited** = participant completes an application form
- Never engaged = participant does not engage beyond the initial application form
- Enrolled = participant meets with COTAW to complete initial paperwork and baseline survey
- **Exited before intervention** = initially engaged but not responding to contact for up to two months. Participant exited from the program by program staff
- Toolkit = participant completes toolkit activities
- Mentored= Participant undergoes mentoring activities
- **Completed program** = participant completes toolkit and mentoring activities for a period of 6 months
- Withdrew early= participant chooses to no longer participate in the program before the matching stage
- **Withdrew** = participant chooses to withdraw from the program at any stage after being matched with a mentor
- Program Participant = includes participants who completed the program, and those who participated in the interventions (toolkit or toolkit and mentoring)

In order to determine who should be considered a participant for evaluation purposes, the Evaluation Team developed a model for defining program and evaluation participation (see Figure 2.1).

As the program evolved, it became evident that a number of engagement transitions were possible. In order to determine a shared understanding of how the program was developing, a model for capturing participant engagement transitions was developed by the Evaluation Team (see Figure 2.2).

These agreed upon definitions and transitions became the basis on which reporting was conducted for evaluation purposes and forms the basis for the participant numbers in this document.

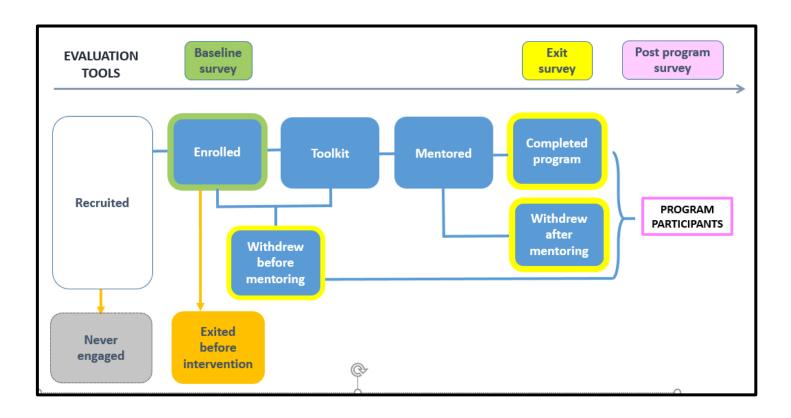


Figure 2.1: Model for defining program and evaluation participation

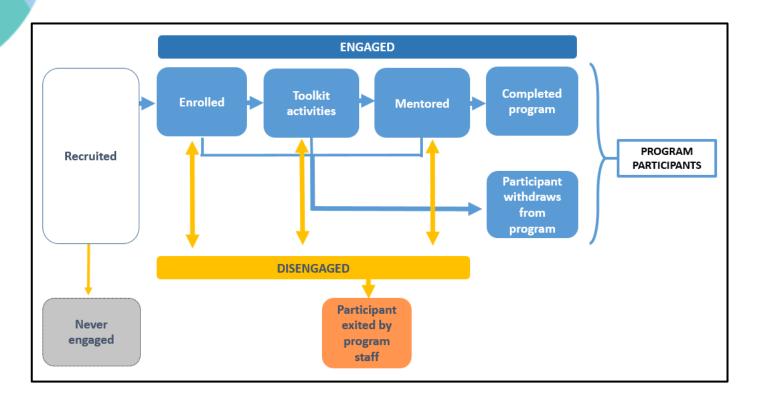


Figure 2.2: Model for capturing participant engagement transitions

3. PROGRAM OPERATION

3.1 Proposal

In September 2017, CSI UWA was enlisted by the Department of Social Services to develop a proposal for a youth unemployment mentoring program as part of the Try, Test and Learn Fund. Over the four weeks of September, CSI UWA brought together representatives from a wide range of stakeholders to co-develop a comprehensive project proposal. Co-development workshops included attendees from community service organisations, employment agencies, peak bodies for business and childcare, as well as potential mentors, employers and unemployed young people (1). The proposal articulated the vision, mission and values of the program and set out clear aims, objectives and measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Additionally, the program criteria were clearly identified (young adults the program will serve, number of mentors required, duration of program, frequency of meetings, etc.). A program budget was outlined that broke down program costs along a timeframe (2).

3.2 Planning and Design

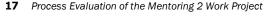
The project set-up phase lasted from March to July 2018, which involved the signing of the contract between the Department of Social Services and COTA WA in March 2018, negotiating the terms and signing of the Activity Work Plan (AWP), finalising Commonwealth contractual obligations, and determining the operation structure of the program. These activities were deemed to be quite onerous: 'For NGOs, dealing with the Commonwealth it is overwhelming... their processes and requirements had impacts'3. The program design phase lasted from April to July 2018 and covered program refinement and operational service planning. This work was ongoing as the program evolved.

During this period, changes to participant recruitment emerged. In the original program proposal, it was envisioned that Centrelink data would be used to secure participant referrals and allow for a randomised control group for the M2W evaluation. However, due to legislative barriers, this was not possible and, as a consequence, a number of changes had to be made with alternative methods of engaging young adults sought. These changes increased the project staff's workload.

After exploring a number of possible approaches it was decided that young adult participants would be sourced from employment services and community service organisations through a staged recruitment strategy: Stages 1, 2 and 3. The revision of the recruitment strategy lead to delays and, following talks with the Department of Social Services, the target number of young adult participants were revised from 360 to 240. The project completion date was also extended by 4 months to the 30 June 2020. This likely impacted the staged implementation: Stage 1 started in August instead of July; the start date for Stage 2 moved from September to November 2018, and Stage 3 moved from January to late April/May 2019.

Recruitment strategy changes also meant that it was expected that there would be more young adults with complex needs recruited. The original proposal was based on approximately 20% of young adults having complex needs. Following discussions with community service partners and

³ Interview 26.02.2019



¹ Internal documents from 29.08.2017

² Program proposal

employment service organisations it was estimated that approximately 40 – 50% of young adult participants may fall into this category⁴. As the program progressed the aim was to have no more than 30% of young adults with complex needs. This presented a challenge to the program team, since there was an unexpected requirement for more intensive service support for young adults and additionally a need for mentors with skillsets to match. A shared definition of complex needs was identified early on as critical for both the program evaluation and for the work of the project officers⁵.

During this phase the evaluation team developed a Complex Needs Assessment Tool which was ready for operation in Stage 2. The Complex Needs Assessment Tool categorised the needs of the young adults into six categories: nil, low, low to medium, medium, medium to high, and high. Of the 121 young adults that were assessed with the tool, only 26.4% were classified as having no complex needs (nil category), 6.6% had low complex needs, 35.5% were classified as low to medium, 3.3% medium, 2.5% medium to high, and 25.6% had high complex needs. This distribution shows that the majority of program participants had some factors that included in the list of possible 'needs' with a quarter exhibiting high complex needs.

In Stage 1 almost all young adults satisfying the eligibility criteria were accepted into the program. One was unable to participate due to health issues⁶. A request was made by COTA WA to DSS seeking greater flexibility in the criteria for recruiting young adults. The eligibility criteria were revised for all TTL Tranche 1 funded projects in August 2018 to accept young adults from ages 16 to 25 and those who had had intermittent periods of work, for example in the gig economy⁷. Mentoring 2 Work decided not to recruit young adults under 18 years because of the vulnerability factors involved with mixing a younger group of young adults with older young adults.

3.3 Management and Governance

In line with best practice principles, a number of management and governance structures were established during Stage 1. A governance structure was set up to ensure the legal, ethical and financial accountability of the program, with COTAWA as the backbone organisation. Sub-contracts between the lead agency and major partners were established. Contracts were signed and commenced on the following dates:

- CSI UWA September 2018
- UWWA December 2018

A reporting structure was set up through Activity Work Plans (AWP) that outlined how the strategic plan (aims, objectives and KPIs) would be delivered. An information management system was established that aligned with COTAWA's privacy and confidentiality policies. Separate data management systems were set up for financial records, staff records, and uploading of data onto the DSS data exchange system (DEX).

The communication and branding strategy was set up during July and August 2018. This included the development of the website, logo and program branding. Policies and procedures were established for program operations and organisational governance and management: Draft M2W Policy and Procedure Handbook.

The following staff worked on the program:

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⁴ Minutes 22.06. 2018 Steering Committee meeting

⁵ Steering Committee minutes: June-December 2018

⁶ Steering Committee meeting minutes 16.11.2018

⁷ Interview Ward 26.02.2019

- Jennette Ward (Program Manager)
- Liz Lennon (Project Officer)
- Ruston Seth (Principal Project Officer)
- Nathan Rose (Project Officer)
- Nick Probert (Senior Project officer
- Sara Kerr (Project Officer)
- Susannah Lingford (Project Officer)
- Paul Abbott (Senior Project Officer)
- Kairi Watty
- Sheree Fitzpatrick

All staff were engaged in a broad range of activities. There were changes to the staff as the program evolved. Susannah Lingford's duties evolved during this time to a project administration, data management and reporting role as the volume of data requirements increased. Christine Allen joined as CEO of COTAWA in 2019 and oversaw the direction of the program.

A Steering Committee was established on 30 June 2018 to provide guidance on program design and operation. It was made up of representatives from the following organisations:

- Council on the Ageing (COTAWA)
- Centre for Social Impact University of Western Australia (CSI UWA)
- United Way WA (UWWA)
- University of Melbourne TTL national evaluators
- Department of Social Services (DSS) -as observers

A terms of reference for the Steering Committee was established in July 2018. This committee met 4 times during Stage 1.

3.4 Evaluation

The evaluation of the M2W program took place at both a local (this evaluation) and national level (led by the University of Melbourne). During Stage 1, CSI UWA worked closely with the Try, Test and Learn National Evaluation Team to ensure that the evaluation of the local program was in line with the national evaluation⁸. The intention of the local evaluation is to provide a fine-grain monitoring of the program to ensure that the innovations of the approach are captured. This has meant that the local evaluation process has had to be flexible, adopting a 'just in time' approach as the program evolved. Procedures for collecting, storing and analysing program evaluation data were established by COTAWA and CSI UWA and were refined as the program progressed. COTAWA has been involved in this process from the start and additionally periodically provide the DSS National Evaluation Team with progress reports.

During Stage 1, the two evaluations were at different stages, making it necessary for CSI UWA to progress the evaluation process and seek ethics approval from UWA Human Ethics (granted November 2018). Drawing upon the national evaluation Program Logic model, the CSI team devised

⁸ June 2018 Steering Committee Minutes

¹⁹ Process Evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

and presented the M2W Program Logic and Evaluation Plan, which was presented at the beginning of Stage 2 on 20 December 2018.

The change of recruitment strategy for the young adults (meaning there would no longer be access to Centrelink data that would enable a randomised control group) meant that a different control group strategy had to be developed.

The foundational documents and program architecture demonstrate that the program partners had the infrastructure and organisational capacity to plan and operate the program effectively. These processes fall under mentoring best practice benchmarks⁹.

⁹ (Australian Youth Mentoring Network)

4. RECRUITMENT, SCREENING AND SIGN-UP

Attracting and recruiting suitable mentors is one of the most critical components of a successful mentoring program¹⁰. Clearly defined program goals and eligibility criteria can be helpful for achieving this¹¹. Likewise, screening is essential to assess the suitability of the potential mentor in relation to the mentoring relationship, the safety of the young person and the reputation of the program as a whole¹². The screening process should cover important elements of the mentoring relationship, especially around frequency of meetings and duration of commitment¹³. Having a clear understanding of the goals of the program, time commitment and expectations of the program are crucial. As well as mentor selection and screening, it is important to spend time in briefing referral agencies on mentee selection in order to recruit mentees with motivation and a desire to participate in the project¹⁴.

4.1 Young Adults Recruitment Strategy

Stage 1: For Stage 1, the recruitment approach employed a 'push and pull communication strategy' ¹⁵ with partner service providers and other stakeholders. Victoria Park was selected as the trial site and a number of approaches were used to recruit participants, primarily through community organisations. However, this did not generate sufficient numbers and the trial site was expanded to Morley. Initially it was also hoped that local MPs could help to recruit young adults, but this did not materialise. However, local MPs have assisted the M2W Program connect with local community organisations and resources¹⁶.

The Program Manager reported that at this stage there was a 'lightbulb moment'¹⁷: a realisation that recruitment needed to come from employment services. This led to a refocus of the program and to a change in the project team which went from being comprised primarily of youth and social workers to being made up of employment service officers with knowledge and experience of youth unemployment and the employment services industry. This has been identified as fundamental to the success of the program¹⁸. In Stage 2, with 94 new recruits from Employment Services, there is evidence that this strategy has been effective.

Initially this recruitment approach proved to be a slow process since relationships with key service providers had to be established and repeated visits and information sessions were needed to recruit

¹⁰ (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011)

¹¹ (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2009)

^{12 (}Miller, 2008)

^{13 (}Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; J.E. Rhodes, Reddy, & Grossman, 2005)

^{14 (}Miller, 2008)

¹⁵ Push communication – one-way engagement: organisations may broadcast information to all stakeholders or particular stakeholder groups using particular channels e.g. email, letter, webcast, podcast, videos, leaflets. Pull communication – one-way engagement: information is made available, and stakeholders choose whether to engage with it e.g. web pages. (Draft AWP 28.05.2019)

¹⁶ Email communication 15.03.2019

¹⁷ Interview 26.02.2019

¹⁸ Interview 26.02.2019

young adult participants. The process was expedited when the employment consultants enabled the program to be included in the young adults' job plans. Once the young adults completed the application form, they were contacted by the project staff via telephone within 48 hours to set up the induction meeting. This first one-on-one meeting outlined the program and presented the consent forms and enabled the staff to gauge the interest and suitability of the participant for the program¹⁹.

Stages 2 and 3: all Jobactive providers operating across the Perth North Metro region were contacted by the M2W team at both regional and site level. This approach was taken to gain support for the M2W program from the site managers and consultants so that they would give their consent to refer young adults into the program. Additionally, in order for a young adult to be referred to the program, the Jobactive consultant was required to use a generic activity code recognisable to Centrelink and update the young adult's job search plan to acknowledge their voluntary participation in M2W. Participants were sourced from Jobactive centres in Mirrabooka, Morley, Osborne Park, Midland and Joondalup.

Initially the M2W team were faced with some resistance from all Jobactive providers. The team attributed this to the constraints that many providers work under, with high caseloads, tight time frames and constantly changing work priorities. Furthermore, it was recognised that Jobactive providers are often approached by many organisations offering educational services, personal support and goods that are relevant to jobseekers. Once M2W was able to gain their trust and convey the uniqueness of the person-centred model of M2W and the simplicity of referring young adults, the support to promote the program increased. Following this, Jobactive providers were happy to promote the program through flyers and pamphlets and verbally to groups of eligible jobseekers.

M2W project officers were given permission to present the program to a group of potential participants at Jobactive offices. The recruitment sessions lasted approximately 15 minutes. The aim of these sessions was to present the key components of the program in a straightforward way, highlighting the voluntary and person-centred approach. Expressions of interest were registered during these sessions with the understanding that the project officer would contact them within the next few days to invite them to a one-on-one meeting where the program, and its suitability for the jobseeker, would be discussed further. After these discussions the young adult would either fill in an application and join the program or would be thanked for their time and not participate. As part of this recruitment process, Jobactive providers were regularly updated of the jobseeker's engagement with the program.

Despite the project staff highlighting the voluntary nature of the program, as the program progressed it became apparent that some young adults had joined the program even though they did not want to participate. Upon enquiry by M2W staff it was found that this was due to a number of reasons²⁰:

- 1) they did not have a good relationship with their Jobactive provider and therefore they did not understand what had been presented to them; or
- 2) they had not understood the voluntary nature of the program; or
- 3) their Jobactive consultant had told them that the M2W program was compulsory despite being told otherwise by the M2W officers. As the program progressed, and the Jobactive providers became more familiar with the program, it was noted that fewer young adults were joining the program unwillingly.

The M2W team observed a number of key differences between the Stage 2 and Stage 3 locations, which affected the initial interest and engagement of the young adults with the program. Participants from Stage 2 locations tended to be of lower socio-economic status than those from the Stage 3 locations. It was felt that although the Stage 3 participants were still receiving Centrelink welfare benefits, they had more financial support from their family and hence they were less engaged both in the program and in looking for employment in comparison to the Stage 2 recruits. These impressions



¹⁹ Project meeting 4.12.2018

²⁰ Interview with Senior Project Officer

were confirmed by Jobactive providers who also faced similar problems engaging with this cohort of jobseekers²¹.

Because of this, recruitment of Stage 3 young adults took longer than expected and consequently the decision was made to return to the Stage 2 locations in order to ensure sufficient program participants. An additional source of participants came from Employability Skills Training (EST) providers who provide employability training to young adults in the Jobactive system. This proved to be a good alternate source of young adults to join the program.

4.2 Young Adult - Survey Results

Figure 4.1 displays the sources of referral to the M2W program. The percentages do not add up to 100% as young adults may have heard about the program from multiple sources. The young adults learned about the M2W program primarily through Jobactive, through referrals (65.5%) and/or being booked into an information session (31.0%). Some (10.7%) were referred to the program by a friend and a few (3.6%) learned about the program in a training session.

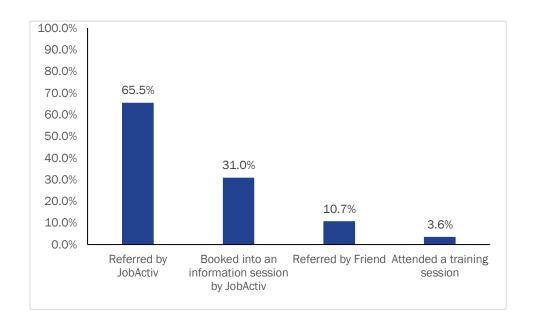


Figure 4.1: Young adult exit survey responses to 'How did you hear about the program?'

Most (69.4%) of the young adults attended a M2W recruitment presentation at an employment service. Acknowledging that only the opinions of young adults that actually participated in the M2W program have been captured here, 70.6% of those that attended the recruitment presentation said that they were "extremely" (25.0%) or "quite a bit" (45.6%) motivated to join the program after hearing the presentation.

To capture other reasons for joining the program, the young adults were asked to rate the extent to which the statements in Figure 4.2 described their motivations to participate in the M2W program. Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale; Not at all = 1, A little bit = 2, Moderately = 3,

²¹ Project meeting

Quite a bit = 4, Extremely = 5. The highest rated motivations to participate were "to find work I love" (mean rating: 4.06) and "to gain confidence" (mean rating: 4.02), followed by "to get a job so I can have more money" and "to try something new" (both 3.91). Seeking help and support was also a motivator, with "to have a mentor help me" and "to help me address problems in my life" with mean ratings of 3.88 and 3.76, respectively. Finally, "to meet new people in the same situation as me" (mean rating 3.05) was the reason which provided the lowest participatory motivation. Figure 4.2 displays the response patterns of these statements.

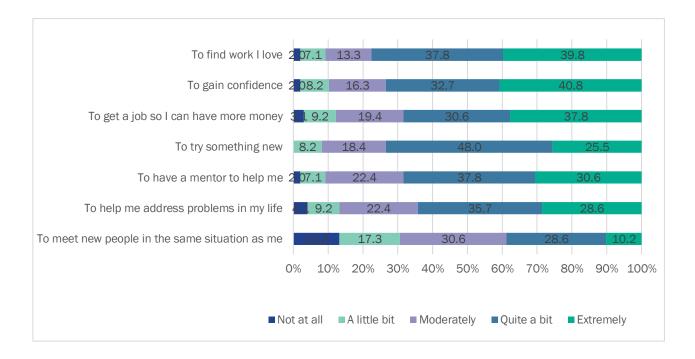


Figure 4.2: Young adults' motivations to participate in the M2W program

4.3 Young Adult - Focus Group Feedback

As a whole the participants felt that the recruitment process was well done. One participant explained that they received a message from their employment provider informing them that they had to attend a compulsory recruitment meeting the next day. Although the young adult thought that the recruitment drive through the employment provider was a good idea, they expressed that more notice needed to be given. When asked about the compulsory nature of the meeting the participants agreed that had it not been compulsory they most probably would not have attended. In general, they thought that the recruitment presentation was good and engaged them to participate. One participant thought that they would not be accepted because they were too young and had no prior work experience, but it turned out their assumptions were not correct.

4.4 Mentors

The mentors for Stage 1 were selected from the project team's professional networks "in order to obtain honest feedback and adjust the program accordingly"²². Most of the mentors were therefore professionally or personally known and recommended and hence for Stage 1 this recruitment strategy worked smoothly.

It was recognised, however, that this approach would not be sustainable going forward and therefore the ongoing recruitment and screening of mentors was sub-contracted to UWWA who developed the selection criteria and recruitment strategy with some support from COTA WA. The external recruitment strategy was developed to tap into corporate networks and the broader community. In line with best practice principles, UWWA established several screening processes before accepting mentors into the program. This process, though developed in Stage 1, was principally used to screen Stage 2 and 3 mentors.

Once an expression of interest to become a M2W mentor was received, an Information Pack was sent within 48 hours containing:

- Thank you letter;
- M2W Volunteer Mentor Program Outline
- Volunteer Mentor Core Competencies
- M2W Volunteer Mentor Enrolment Form
- M2W Position Description

Upon receipt of the enrolment form the screening process commenced. This involved an interview, checking of references and police checks. Applicants who matched the selection criteria were invited for an interview that covered set questions addressing the selection criteria. Next, a selection panel reviewed the applications and made a final decision on whether the candidate was to be referred to COTAWA for inclusion into the mentoring pool. This process took from 4 to 8 weeks and in the meantime there was attrition of potential mentors.

4.5 Mentors - Survey Results

All mentors that completed the exit survey were satisfied with the mentor recruitment process through United Way (68.6% extremely satisfied, 29.4% satisfied, and 2.0% slightly satisfied). They noted that the recruitment was "well organised", "efficient", "well explained", "thorough, supportive, clear", and "easy to follow". Overall, the feedback was positive, though some mentors mentioned that "the selection process took a long time" and some were "quite surprised by the amount of detail requested in the form and the follow up interview". About a third (37.3%) of the mentors said they waited less than a month between submitting their expression of interest and attending the orientation session, whereas 47.1% waited one to two months and 15.7% waited over two months.

²² Steering Committee minutes 27.07.2018

4.6 Mentors - Interview and Focus Group Feedback

Some of the mentors were recruited through industry contacts and were personally known by program staff. Others saw the program advertised via LinkedIn and applied directly. Mentors stated that this process was efficient and helpful. Mentors mentioned that it is important for potential mentors to understand the commitment that they are making since circumstances can change. For example, one mentor joined when they were retired but then went back into the workforce with implications regarding time availability. This highlights the importance of a thorough screening process and clarity around expectations. As the program was winding down towards the end of Stage 3, there were a few mentors who were recruited but were not able to be matched. Although they were informed at the beginning that not all mentors were likely to be matched with a mentee, they voiced their disappointment in not being able to participate to the project staff.

The M2W recruitment, screening and sign-up processes are in line with mentoring best practice benchmarks²³. The young adult and mentor feedback confirmed that the program's recruitment processes were effective.

²³ (Australian Youth Mentoring Network)

5. TRAINING AND PREPARATION

Mentor and mentee training are a critical component of successful mentoring programs²⁴. The literature highlights that investing time and care in training and engaging mentors and mentees has significant positive impacts on program effectiveness²⁵. Training programs should cover, among other things, the goals of the program, roles and responsibilities, expectations and boundaries of the relationship²⁶. Successful programs also include training in practical considerations, such as communication skills, conflict management, and confidentiality matters²⁷.

Research shows that mentoring programs that offer opportunities for ongoing training throughout the mentoring relationship have larger positive effects on the mentees than those that did not²⁸. For many mentors the best training they received was the mentoring experience itself and the opportunity to reflect with other mentors about the mentoring experience²⁹. Mentee training is no less important and should cover many of the topics addressed with the mentors. Of note is the need to ensure mentees are aware of their rights as well as matters around confidentiality, and where they can go for support if there is an issue³⁰.

5.1 M2W Young Adult Training Procedure

During Stage 1 the Learning and Support Career Pathways Toolkit was developed by COTA WA staff and was trialled and refined in consultation with a small group of young adult Stage 1 participants. They provided feedback at all stages of the design process³¹. The toolkit was primarily based around information from the Foundation for Young Australians New Work Order series of papers³² outlining 7 job clusters relevant for young people entering the workforce³³. In a recent conference on the future of youth employment³⁴ this source was identified as being especially pertinent to youth employment, validating the M2W approach. As seen in Figure 5.1 the M2W program employed a co-design process in creating the career map plans between the young adults, the project staff and the mentors. This youth-centred approach is in line with best practice principles from the mentoring literature³⁵.

²⁴ (Miller, 2008) (Kupersmidt & Rhodes 2013)

²⁵ (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002)

²⁶ (DuBois et al., 2002; M. Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005)

²⁷ (Miller, 2008)

²⁸ (DuBois et al., 2002)

²⁹ (Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Atherton, & Pepper, 2000)

^{30 (}Australian Youth Mentoring Network)

³¹ M2W Learning and Support Career Pathways Toolkit - September 2018

³² www.fya.org.au

³³ Other research conducted has been validated by Anglicare in the Oxford Foyer Project.

^{34 6}th Future of Youth Employment Forum: 20-22 February 2019, Perth, WA

^{35 (}Miller, 2008)

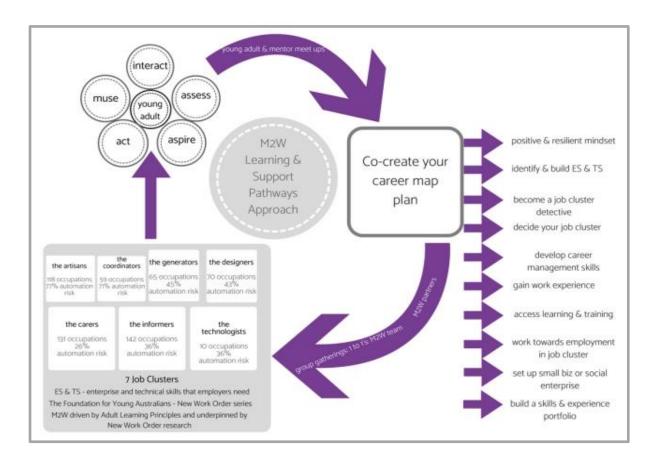


Figure 5.1: M2W Learning and Support Career Pathways Approach36

The toolkit contains 8 activities for the young adult to work through with the project officer, ideally one a week, before they are matched with their mentor. These cover topics areas such as, 'What's Important to you?'; 'Your Strengths', and 'Being a Career Detective'. The final activity in the toolkit is devising a Career Map Plan, which is then presented to the mentor, or at times the mentor joins the project staff and young adult for this session. The idea is that this Career Map Plan forms the basis of the mentoring relationship. An activity of note is the 'Who's your cheer squad?' designed to identify what supports and networks the young adult has and reflect on how they can be enhanced and expanded. This activity was identified as being especially helpful by the young adults (see below).

It was highlighted that working through the toolkit helps the project officers and young adults establish a relationship and rapport which is critical for not only understanding their personal circumstances but also for identifying the mentoring assistance they require. The toolkit was designed to be flexible in its delivery depending upon the personal circumstances of the participants and this ranged from 4 to 8 weeks.

For the above reasons, and to ensure the young adult demonstrated enough commitment and engagement, completing the toolkit was the number one requisite for a young adult being matched with a mentor.

³⁶ M2W Learning and Support Career Pathways Toolkit – September 2018

5.2 Young Adult - Survey Results

Most (88.8%) of the young adults that completed the exit survey had completed at least one of the activities in the toolkit, if not all eight toolkit activities (64.3%). Those that had, at the very least, started the toolkit, were asked to rate the extent they felt they had a greater clarity and understanding of a set of statements designed to reflect the outcomes of the toolkit activities. Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale; Not at all = 1, A little bit = 2, Moderately = 3, Quite a bit = 4, Extremely = 5. Unsurprisingly, as it aligns with activity 1 (What's important to you?), the most highly rated statement was "what you care about and what your interests are in your life" (mean rating: 3.99), followed closely by "what's required to get into your career of choice" (mean rating: 3.91). Next was "your strengths and skills" (mean rating: 3.86) and "how to set career goals" and "the work environments that suit you best" (both 3.84). Finally, the least rated statements were "who is in your cheer squad" (mean rating: 3.77) and "the careers that suit you best" (mean rating: 3.69). The pattern of responses are presented in Figure 5.2.

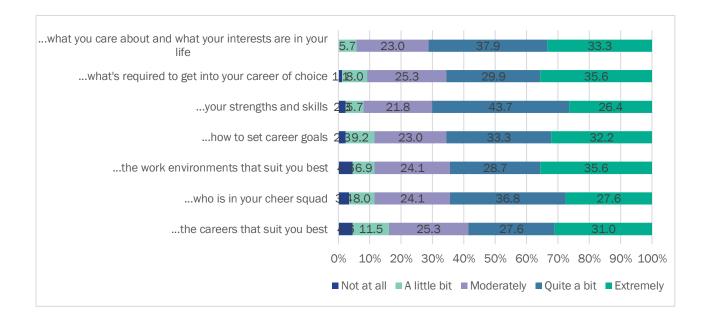


Figure 0.1: The extent to which the toolkit activities increased clarity and understanding of...

Note: n=87, excludes the 11 respondents that left the program before starting the toolkit.

The young adults were also asked how they found the pace of the toolkit activities. Three quarters (75.9%) felt the toolkit was delivered at the correct pace, whereas others felt it was a little bit rushed (12.6%) or too rushed (1.1%). The remaining 10.3% found the toolkit a little bit slow (8.0%) or too slow (2.3%).

5.3 Young Adult Focus Group Feedback

The participants generally had a positive experience of the toolkit activities. They valued the opportunity to connect with the M2W staff: "Talking to [the Project Officer] was the most valuable thing as I already had a pretty solid path set", and to explore what their interests and strengths were: "Acknowledging my strengths was personally rewarding and a moment of growth for me." Many participants acknowledged that the material covered in the activities was useful for different reasons. such as identifying the areas that the mentor could help them with.

In terms of the delivery of the toolkit they valued being able to complete the toolkit at their own pace; it took young adults between 8 to 10 weeks to complete, depending upon their circumstances. They all reported that the once a week contact with the project staff to complete the toolkit worked well. One participant mentioned that the toolkit activity was stressful since they had to be punctual and consistent, something that they found very challenging. All the young adults valued the contact with the project staff since it enabled them to open up and develop a relationship with them. The one-onone contact was seen as effective since they all expressed concern about speaking freely about personal matters in a group setting.

Different elements of the toolkit were seen as challenging by the various participants. Some participants who had a clear idea of what career they wanted to follow felt that the toolkit focussed too much attention on identifying careers. They wished that they could have skipped certain activities. They wanted to "hurry through the toolkit and see how the mentoring worked". They mentioned that they wished that they had been matched with a mentor earlier and stated that the last few activities in the toolkit could have been done with the mentor to avoid having to repeat the material with them. In these last activities there was considerable "pulling out bits of work from previous sections and rewriting these into a plan", something that they did not seem to enjoy. Others valued the extended period of exploration with the project officer: "Finding out what my interests really are, it helped having someone else there."

When asked about specific activities that they found valuable the cheer squad activity was highlighted. The term 'cheer squad' was seen as helpful once they understood what it meant. One participant stated that they realised that this is an area that they have to develop since most of their friends are all in the same position: "They don't do nothing, they don't go to school; they stay at home and play games." The activity enabled the participant to see the value of having a cheer squad and the importance of cultivating it:

"It's about finding time to speak to people and finding people who have the time to talk to you." Participants consistently spoke about the value of this activity, as illustrated by one young adult: "I think most people don't consider who is there to back them up and support them and thinking about it deeply was really reassuring."

5.4 M2W Mentors' Training Procedure

Stage 1: the mentor induction process followed a more ad hoc approach as the resources were being developed. An induction session was held one Saturday morning devised by one of the project officers. Mentors were given an overview of the Mentoring 2 Work program and then worked in small groups on a variety of topics, such as:

- Mentor roles and responsibilities;
- Building relationships:
- Identifying, communicating and managing challenges.

Activities were supplemented with a mentor training workbook. At the time, the ideal format of the induction sessions was seen as having 10 to 15 mentors in one session lasting 4 to 6 hours. The timing of the sessions was critical since most of the mentors were in employment and many had



commitments at weekends³⁷. It was reported by a project officer that some mentors did not see the need for having an induction since they wanted to "just get on and do the mentoring"³⁸. Ongoing training was not formally established in Stage 1. One-on-one training sessions were set up to address specific needs. A number of networking events were held, such as a Christmas get-together at PICA. Additionally, several mentors and young adults were invited to the Volunteer Garden Party on the 5th December.

Stage 2 and 3: As the number of mentors recruited by United Way WA grew, the M2W team liaised with an external facilitator to design and facilitate an induction training program for all mentors to attend once they had met all recruitment requirements. This induction training was delivered as a workshop with groups of mentors and the M2W team in attendance. The content was a combination of context on M2W's delivery, its funding background and its overall purpose as well as theoretical components on effective mentoring, issues and barriers facing young adults, and suggestions on how to support them appropriately.

There were six orientation sessions in total. Over time, it became apparent to the M2W team that the most pertinent and conversation-provoking content during these workshops related to the intricacies of the program itself. While the team were always present at the early induction workshops to address queries, it was felt that having an external stakeholder deliver this induction was not the best option moving forward. This prompted the M2W team to devise its own induction training program in order to deliver it themselves for the remainder of the mentor recruitment phase. There were four orientation sessions delivered by the M2W team. Mentors that could not attend an orientation session had a one-on-one session with Paul Abbott. Other mentor professional development opportunities are discussed in Section 8.

5.5 Mentors - Survey Results

Over half (52.9%) of the mentors that completed the exit survey attended an orientation session designed and led by the external facilitator, a third (33.3%) attended a M2W-led orientation, and 13.7% had a one-on-one orientation session with Paul Abbott. Mentors were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the orientation session they attended on a six-point Likert scale (extremely dissatisfied = 1, extremely satisfied = 6). Almost all (98.0%) mentors were satisfied with the orientation session to some extent (mean rating = 5.39), with 47.1% feeling extremely satisfied, 49.0% satisfied, 2.0% slightly satisfied, and 2.0% dissatisfied. Mentors found the orientation sessions were "well run, efficient", "clear, interesting and useful" and a "lovely friendly welcome to the program.", which provided a "good overview of the program and requirements of mentors." and "gave a good basis of the typical situations and scenarios." However, some mentors found the orientation "failed to provide mentors with the core skills required for today's job market." and "it was too long. Also, "I think we all could have been given a handout with the most important information."

Mentors were also asked to reflect on the content of the orientation by rating their level of agreement with the statements in Figure 5.3 on a six-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 6). On average, all statements had a mean rating between 5 and 6, which corresponds to agree and strongly agree. The most agreed with statement was about the clarity of the purpose of the M2W program (mean rating = 5.55), followed closely by understanding the format of the M2W program (mean rating = 5.39). Although still mostly agreed with, a few (4.0%) disagreed with the statements that pertained to feeling more equipped to mentor and support a young adult in their career path (mean ratings 5.29 and 5.10, respectively). Mentors mentioned the orientation provided them with "general awareness of what [they were] getting into", "gave [them] insights as to the do's and don'ts when mentoring a young adult", "helped to set realistic expectations.", and increased "understanding the role of the mentor." Importantly, it allowed them to shift "...my focus from just being about

³⁷ Project meeting notes 28.11.2018

³⁸ Project meeting notes 4.12.2018

³¹ Process Evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

pushing my mentee into a job to providing support, guidance and confidence". They appreciated the explanation "...of the background work that has been completed before you get your mentee."

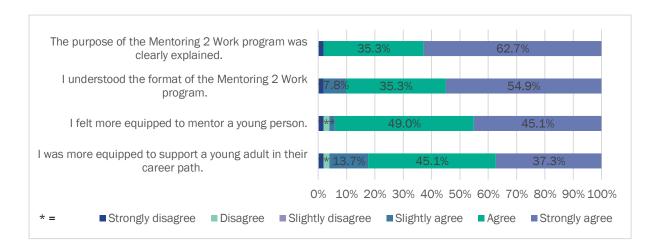


Figure 0.2 Mentor agreement with statements about the orientation

Many mentors felt there was "no improvement required", "it was fine" and thought "the orientation is good as it was" and did "not have any suggestions". However, some suggestions for improvement included information documents, roleplaying, hearing from mentors and mentees who had been through the program, and information about how to deal with complex needs. Suggestions for documents included "pre-read online packs" or "some notes to take away on key points", "further reading or advice on various ways to support the mentee - websites, books, subscriptions etc" and "example[s] of the worksheets" or "a sample pack of the mentees' activities". Others wanted a practical element to the orientation with "roleplay", "some practical exercises around coaching and mentoring skills" and "more examples of what people have done week to week to address different situations."

Additionally, mentors mentioned that they would have liked to hear "a personal story of how a mentor has helped a young adult would be impactful.", or even "a short presentation from a mentor who has previously mentored someone to work - the ups and downs and handy tips." Some desired "hearing from mentors who had been there and done it" or "more meetings with previous mentors". Some felt there could have been more preparation for dealing with young adults with complex needs: "how to deal with difficult mentees." "Perhaps some more examples or insights into some of the complex needs the young adults might have, so we could be better equipped / more prepared for them when discovering these needs." Further suggestions for guidance included "details of the lack of life skills that I will encounter - how far was I supposed to deal / coach/ train in that area?" and "sharing examples of challenges with other mentees and how to overcome it."

5.6 Mentors - Interview and Focus Group Feedback

The mentors stated that they found the induction process useful which covered important material: the risk matrix was mentioned as a helpful tool. All mentors identified mentor training as a key area to focus on going forward. The induction was seen as a good starting point, but continuous training opportunities were needed. One mentor stated. "I don't know what I don't know". When asked to give feedback on the toolkit they felt it was a thorough and helpful instrument for the young adults. It was mentioned that the toolkit assumes that the young adults and mentors come to the relationship like a blank canvas. In reality mentors and young adults can have a clear sense of the process and direction they want to take. However, it was acknowledged that the toolkit is adaptable for different needs and "it is possible to turbo charge your way through it yet still stay true to the format".

The mentoring relationship can be complicated when mentees have complex needs, and it was recognised that unskilled mentors can put vulnerable young adults at risk. Ongoing mentor training is needed in order to avoid vulnerable people being matched up with people who do not have the necessary skills. Mentors need to be trained on how to assess their mentees and refer them to appropriate help where necessary. They realised that it is easy to underestimate the skills required, especially during the initiation and exiting of the mentoring relationship.

The advent of the 'Me Too' movement was seen as adding a new dimension of risk to the mentoring relationship. COTA WA acknowledged that it might be reasonable for some male mentors to chose not to mentor women as part of their personal risk management strategy. It was stated that guidance is needed on how to navigate potential risks both for the mentors and for the young adults. At times, because navigating these issues may be quite nuanced, it might be more helpful to receive support via peer-to-peer informal avenues rather than formal training from project staff. Some of the areas identified as important for mentor training were: protective interrupting, confidentiality issues and setting boundaries. It was stated that having training sessions during times that can accommodate working people with plenty of notice would ensure greater participation. Additionally, it was mentioned that, although the staff were highly skilled, they were not educators and hence going forward training sessions should be led by professionals.

The mentors suggested that there was a need to build a sense of community between the mentors in order to share ideas and solutions to challenges they might face which cannot be addressed by project officers alone. It was stated that training mentors gives them increased confidence and helps them to stay passionate and committed. It was mentioned that young adults could also benefit from having opportunities to get together and share experiences - either in an informal setting or as part of a workshop.

The training and preparation component of the M2W program evolved as the program progressed, following an iterative process. This component was central to the program and reflected the mentoring best practice principles³⁹. As illustrated in the young adults' feedback, this was highly valued.

^{39 (}Australian Youth Mentoring Network)

6. MATCHING

The effective matching of a mentee with a mentor is an essential element in creating lasting, successful relationships. Much depends upon the individual needs of the mentee and the skills available in the pool of mentors. Mentor's interpersonal skills are of critical importance in the matching process⁴⁰. The mentor's ability to identify and solve relationship barriers, has been identified as being a strong indicator of relationship success⁴¹. Good matches occur when there is a basic compatibility between the youth and mentor in their personalities, interests, and expectations or goals for the relationship⁴².

The best practice principle is that mentors and mentees should have a say over their match and the matching process should involve opportunities to meet before a final match is made⁴³. However, a matching process that allows mentors and mentees to express preferences against a range of criteria - such as age, gender and ethnicity - leads to longer waiting periods prior to matching and is the least critical element of best practice in mentoring programs⁴⁴.

6.1 M2W Matching Procedure

Stage 1: The initial matching strategy in Stage 1 involved a social event with the aim of enabling young adults and potential mentors to meet. Attendance was low, however. During the event an overview of the program was given and according to the feedback received from the attendees, this update was appreciated. This event enabled the project officers to observe the interaction between the mentors and young adults and helped in the subsequent matching process.

After the event a list of anonymous profiles with a short description of hobbies and interests was then sent to all participants who were asked to rank their preferences (from 1-4). Mentors were also invited to list preferences for young adults they felt comfortable working with. It was noted that 3-4 mentors were very popular with the young adults. One staff member observed that some young adults showed preference for mentors in professions with perceived 'soft skills' such as empathy and listening (such as psychology) to mentors in the profession of their choice. This may indicate that the ability to provide general support may be as important as the ability to provide industry specific knowledge.

As the project team got to know the young adults better, they were able to match mentor preferences and personalities with the young adults. Thus, the match was informed by the preferences of the young adult, the preferences of the mentor, as well as any ideas the project staff had about suitable personality matches. Once the match was finalised the mentors were emailed the name of the young adult they had been paired with and were invited to attend the next Learning and Support session to meet their mentee and have the official handover.

Stages 2 and 3: As the number of young adults and mentors participating in the program increased, a simpler, more organic matching model evolved. As a young adult reached the point of needing to be matched with a mentor, the M2W project officers would meet to select a suitable mentor from the pool of mentors they had met in the mentor induction sessions. Several qualities and attributes were considered when making a potential match. These were:

^{40 (}Spencer, 2007)

^{41 (}MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2009)

^{42 (}J. E. Rhodes & DuBois, 2006)

^{43 (}Miller, 2008)

^{44 (}Herrera et al., 2000)

³⁴ Process Evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

- Similarities in background (cultural, educational, vocational)
- Personality compatibility
- Location of both mentor and mentee
- Career (whether there was any alignment between the kind of work/career a young adult wanted to pursue and that of the mentor)

When a potential match was made, the project officer would contact the young adult to provide a general overview of the potential mentor to see if they were of interest to them. If so, the project officer would then liaise with the potential mentor to brief them on young adult and share any information deemed relevant to be relevant, such as mental health issues.

This matching method proved to be successful because it enabled both parties to make an informed choice on entering the mentoring relationship. It also did not raise hopes unduly had the match not been made. Giving general information about the mentor and the young adult to each other also allowed them to properly introduce themselves upon meeting. This was particularly important for the young adult to develop their interpersonal and networking skills.

6.2 Young Adult - Survey Results

Just over half (58.2%) of the young adults who completed the exit survey progressed to the mentor matching stage. Two (2.1%) of the participants had very poor matching experiences and had to be rematched, as their mentors left the program. One of the young adults stated⁴⁵: "after the handover there was silence. He abandoned me and wasn't meeting the commitments he had signed." The participant was very aggrieved and after a month without contact from the mentor they contacted project staff and were rematched with a more committed and suitable mentor. When asked why they had not simply quit the program they stated that they saw the value of the program and knew that it had a lot to offer with the right sort of mentor. The other young adult with matching problems was likewise ignored by the mentor for several weeks despite their attempts to get in touch. However, they continued to persevere and eventually reconnected with the mentor.

Those matched with mentors were asked whether they had a say in the matching process, and 54.4% reported that they had. They gave preferences for mentor characteristics such as gender, industry of work, and interests. Some of the mentees mentioned that "if [they were] uncomfortable with the match, [they] would be able to meet a different mentor".

The mentees were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction of the match of their (most recent) mentor. Overall, the majority (96.5%) of the young adults were satisfied with the match: 66.7% said they were extremely satisfied, 22.8% were satisfied, and 7.0% were slightly satisfied. The remainder were slightly dissatisfied (1.8%) and dissatisfied (1.8%). The young adults' overall satisfaction with their mentor was overwhelmingly positive (98.2%), slightly more so than their satisfaction with the match. Again, 66.7% were extremely satisfied with their mentor, and 28.1% were satisfied, 3.5% were slightly satisfied, and only 1.8% were dissatisfied.

We were also interested in the mentor traits that were considered important to the young adults. having now had some mentoring (see Figure 6.1). Using a 6-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, slightly disagree = 3, slightly agree = 4, agree = 5, strongly agree = 6), the young adults were asked to rate the extent which they agreed or disagreed with a set of statements that completed the sentence "it is important that a mentor...". The most highly rated mentor trait was "...is an active listener" (mean rating: 5.25) with 96.5% slightly agreeing (14.0%), agreeing (35.1%) or strongly agreeing (47.4%).

Meeting location and availability were next most important factors, as "...can meet at a location that is easy for you to get to" had a mean rating of 5.02, and "...is available to meet frequently" had a

⁴⁵ Focus group 6 December 2018

mean rating of 4.88. The career and interests of the mentor were also important to the young adults, as "...has a profession or work experience in an area that interests you", "...is successful", and "...has similar personal interests and hobbies to you" had mean ratings of 4.81, 4.51, and 4.28 respectively.

Traits that were not considered to be important were "...has a similar ethnic background to you" and "...has the same gender as you", which had mean ratings of 2.75 and 2.74, respectively, which corresponds with a rating somewhere between disagree and slightly disagree.

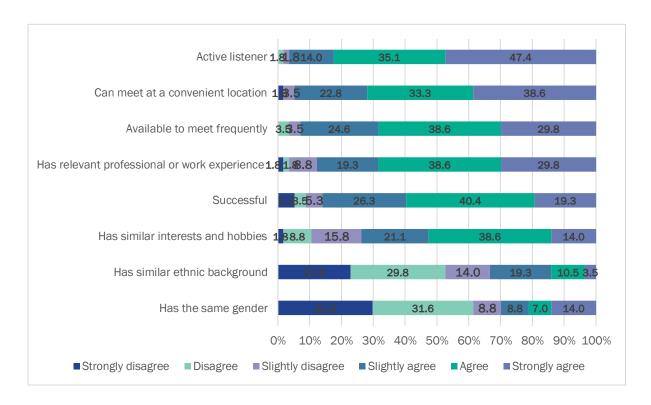


Figure 6.1: Important mentor qualities

Overall, the feedback from the young adults about their mentors was very positive (see Figure 6.2). Using the same agreement 6-point Likert scale outlined above, the young adults were asked to rate their level of agreement with four statements about the mentoring ability of their mentors. The most highly rated statement was "my mentor had sufficient skills to mentor me" with a mean rating of 5.54. The young adults found their mentors to be knowledgeable as "my mentor had sufficient professional knowledge to help me with my career plan" was the second highest rated statement (mean rating of 5.42). This was followed closely by the statements relating to the mentors' advice; "my mentor provided me with valuable life advice" and "my mentor provided me with valuable career advice", both of which had a mean rating of 5.39.

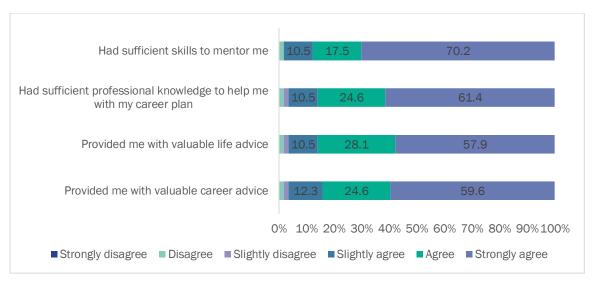


Figure 6.2: Young adults' ratings of mentor skills and advice

6.3 Young Adult - Focus Group Feedback

The participants had mixed feedback on the social gathering around mentor matching which had been trialled in Stage 1. They explained that although it was an opportunity to meet potential mentors, they did not exchange details or necessarily remember names, and it was hard to identify them when it came time to choose possible mentors. Two young adults enjoyed the event but stated that they were expected to host part of the event themselves (sign photo consent forms etc.), and they did not enjoy this. They would have preferred to "just be guests, to sit down and chill and speak to people". One young adult did not like the social since there were too many people and no alcohol.

As part of the selection process they were asked to select and rank three preferred mentors. however, they mentioned that they could not identify the mentors they had met at the social from the ones on the list since there were no photos. They stated that knowing the mentors' personality strengths would have been useful in the selection process. They were provided the mentor's interests, gender, ethnicity and place of work and one young adult stated that, "knowing what their strengths are and how they could help me would have been helpful rather than just their interests. At the end of the day, interests don't really reflect what you need to do". The participants stated that they should have been asked at some point in the matching process the kind of mentoring that they thought they needed and given guidance in selecting mentors with those attributes. Another participant stated that they thought it was valuable to have information on interests since the mentoring experience should be more than just about getting work advice: "It's important to share interests. The matching criteria should not just be about the jobs."

Young adults were notified of whom their mentor would be via email and this was well received, as was the handover meeting. Handover meetings were initially held in an interview room at COTAWA offices; however, this was perceived as being very formal and made some of the young adults feel like they were being interviewed. Handover meetings of Stages 2 and 3 were held in various locations, such as cafes. Participants reported that it was good to have the mentor, mentee and project staff in the handover meeting, and useful to go through the toolkit material and discuss the mentoring expectations and commitments together. Some of the young adults said that for the first meeting after the handover they met at the mentor's workplace and then went to a café and that most of the subsequent meetings were held in coffee shops.

6.4 Mentors - Survey Results

Just under a fifth (19.6%) of the mentors said they were matched within 1-2 weeks after their orientation session, 33.3% waited 3-4 weeks, 19.6% waited 5-6 weeks, and 27.5% waited more than six weeks. Mentors were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the match with their mentee (or most recent mentee for those who were matched more than once), on a six-point Likert scale (extremely dissatisfied = 1, extremely satisfied = 6). Almost all (98.0%) of mentors were satisfied to some extent with the match, with 41.2% extremely satisfied, 52.9% satisfied, 3.9% slightly satisfied, and 2.0% slightly dissatisfied (mean rating = 5.33, which corresponds to a rating between satisfied and extremely satisfied). Just under a quarter (23.5%) of the mentors reported that they had had some say in the matching process, with many of them specifying that this was "more of "do you want to proceed?"" and being provided with "a synopsis of the mentee and asked if I would like to be introduced." Others mentioned they "...asked for a female" or were "...asked if [they] had a preference for gender".

The mentors' responses regarding the handover were overwhelmingly positive. Mentors were asked to rate their level of agreement (six-point Likert scale, strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 6) with the statements in figure 6.3 which completed the sentence "The mentor handover process...". The statements in the figure are ordered from highest mean agreement score (5.63) to lowest mean agreement score (5.57), however they were all agreed with to relatively the same extent.

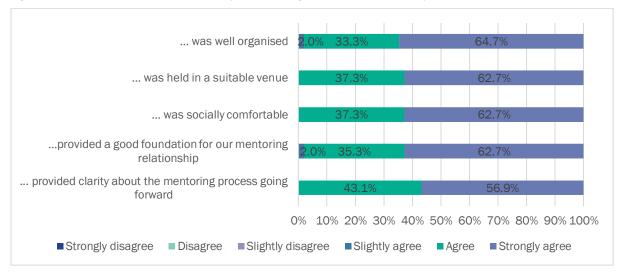


Figure 0.1 Mentor agreement with statements that complete the sentence "The Mentoring 2 Work handover process was...

There were few suggestions made by the mentors to improve the handover process, such as "would be a good to do this in a collaborative environment / workshop. It helps bring out the personalities and will ensure a common base of knowledge and might help break some of the initial nerves if facilitated well." and "perhaps in the handover they could demonstrate what a usual mentoring session would look like. A list of questions depending on the week of the program, not the same questions for every week." Others would have liked to have been provided with more resources: "Some suggestions for activities would be great. It was hard to know if I was on the right path or doing what was expected of me in the program. So feedback for that would be good too." "We needed more resources on how to mentor as some of us may not have mentored previously. There is so much information on the internet and other formats but it should come from someone involved with coordinating the program, i.e. links, useful sites, tips, etc. We could have contributed our own resources we found useful to assist others." One mentor suggested the program "implement a digital solution for record keeping and notifications/calendaring.". But overall the comments were positive and mentors found the handover to be "positive, comfortable and timely", "very good" and "smooth".

The majority (64.7%) of the mentors felt their mentee was prepared by the program staff to a great extent to be mentored, with 33.3% to some extent and 2.0% a little. While most noted that the

"preliminary work formed a good foundation by the time [they were] matched with [them]", a few mentioned that some mentees had a "lack of life skills and personal development - without ongoing treatment for slight mental illness - wasn't a conduit for a ready for "job" candidate", and "I don't think he truly understood the opportunity or valued the relationship/time provided - often late or no show, did not really progress his actions each week and was not proactive in the relationship or what he wanted." Other concerns included that "the mentee hasn't been taken everything on board.[sic]". "...needed to be a little more pro-active for themselves.", and it "took a lot to make progress, and he didn't seem to understand the purpose of the program with regards to his role."

The mentors were also asked to reflect on their mentoring sessions and rate their level of agreement on the six-point Likert scale with the statements about their mentee in Figure 6.4. By far the most agreed with statement was "My mentee was respectful" (mean rating: 5.69). Mentors agreed their mentees had a positive mentoring experience in the program and that they were receptive to their advice (mean rating 5.12 and 5.08, respectively), followed closely by being enthusiastic about being mentored (mean rating 4.98). Most (92.2%) agreed to some extent that their mentee appeared to be improving as the mentoring progressed (mean rating: 4.88). The mentors felt their mentees stayed focused during the sessions and acted upon the advice they were given (both had a mean rating of 4.61, which corresponds to between "slightly agree" and "agree"). On average, the mentors slightly agreed that their mentees met the goals set each session and increased their job seeking behaviour (mean ratings of 4.16 and 4.14, respectively). The distribution of responses can be seen in Figure 6.4.

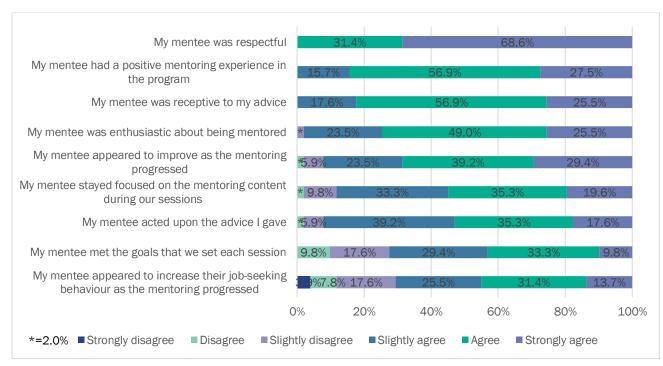


Figure 0.2 Mentor agreement with statements about their mentee

6.5 Mentors – Interview and Focus Group Feedback⁴⁶

Matching was understood by the mentors as a two-way process with both parties having a say on the selection. Nevertheless, they mentioned that the criteria used in the matching process was not very clear. For some the type of industry may be the best criteria, for others its other personal qualities and attributes, and other mentors thought it might be useful to understand what kind of mentoring a mentor could offer most effectively (e.g., practical job skills or emotional support and encouragement) depending upon the needs of the individual young adults. It was suggested that the matching process needed to be clarified.

It was recognised that it is very important to take into consideration the complex needs of the young adults when matching them with mentors in order to minimise risks. Although mentoring best practice principles state that mentees should have an active role in selecting their mentor, after trialling this approach in Stage 1 it was put aside for a more project officer-directed approach in later stages. During the toolkit phase project officers were able to get to know the young adults well. They kept the young adults' needs in mind as they conducted the mentor induction sessions with a view to pairing the mentees and mentors. This approach was considered effective and resulted in successful mentoring relationships.

⁴⁶ Information collected form 3 telephone interviews – March 2019

7. MENTORING ACTIVITIES

Mentoring activities can be categorised into 'developmental' and 'instrumental activities' ⁴⁷. *Developmental mentoring* reflects the assumption that mentoring influences young adult's social and emotional development through the creation of supportive relationships ⁴⁸. These mentoring activities can entail conversations about joint interests and social situations. They help young people develop their identity or "possible selves" and explore what they would like to become, what they might become, and what they fear becoming ⁴⁹. The aim of these activities is to increase the young adult's self-esteem and connectedness to ultimately achieve instrumental outcomes (e.g. gain employment).

Instrumental mentoring has the learning of skills, or the achievement of specific goals, as the primary focus⁵⁰. In these mentoring activities mentors help mentees accomplish tasks or goals of the mentees' choosing by providing advice, guidance, explanations or suggestions. The aim of these activities is to facilitate improvements in skills in order to ultimately have increased self-esteem and social connectedness (improved wellbeing). Developmental and instrumental activities are not mutually exclusive and both can form part of a mentoring program to achieve a program's goals, in this case to become job-ready and enter the labour force or education leading to employment.

How often mentors and mentees spend time together has been highlighted as critical in influencing the effectiveness of mentoring relationships. Reliable and regular contact has been associated with positive mentoring outcomes⁵¹. One reason for this is that the reliable involvement of a caring mentor in a young person's life may increase feelings of security and attachment in interpersonal relationships⁵². The amount of time needed for effective mentoring to occur depends on factors such as the characteristics and needs of the youth, the mentor's skills and background, and the frequency of contact⁵³. Studies show that benefits of mentoring appear to increase with time and the greatest benefits were seen in relationships that lasted one year or longer⁵⁴.

7.1 M2W Mentoring Activity Procedure

From discussions with young adults and mentors it was evident that no two mentoring relationships were the same. A typical mentoring session would involve the young adult and mentor spending a few minutes catching up with each other and speaking generally about how they were. In some cases they would then go through the previous month's 'To Do' list and check progress. They would then work on a specific activity, such as searching online for potential jobs. The topics discussed and activities completed would be recorded in a template (either by the mentee or mentor) and these would then be sent off to the project officer.

An important component of the M2W program is that records were kept on the mentoring activities through meeting notes. This enabled the project officers to monitor how the mentoring relationships were progressing and to identify if there were any problems with the match. This process was developed as the program evolved. There are no records of mentoring activities in the spreadsheets

⁴⁷ (M. J. Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006)

^{48 (}J. E. Rhodes, 2005)

^{49 (}Markus & Nurius, 1986)

^{50 (}DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005)

^{51 (}DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005)

^{52 (}J. Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005)

^{53 (}J. E. Rhodes & DuBois, 2006)

^{54 (}Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; J. Rhodes et al., 2005)

⁴¹ Process Evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

for Stage 1. Project officers reported that they touched base with the mentors but this process became more formalised and rigorously documented as the program progressed into Stage 2 and beyond. Mentors, however, were asked to take notes during the sessions and send these through to the project officers at the end of the sessions. Appendix 4 shows the Meeting Note template.

Mentors' meeting notes were received via email in various formats: (i.e. scanned or photographed handwritten notes or typed notes within the body of email or in MSWord Doc). The meeting notes were then filed under the relevant young adult's folder and entered into their individual spreadsheet. This information was copied into the Data Exchange (DEX) program reporting system of the Department of Social Services (DSS).

The project officer would examine the notes and any issues revealed in the meeting notes, or raised by the mentor, were handled swiftly by calling the mentor or the young adult, if applicable. Swift responses helped to address the problems and determine workable solutions, where required.

7.2 Mentoring Activities

It became clear that during the one-on-one mentor meetings the topics covered were dependent on the young adult's needs at the time. The meeting notes were analysed according to support offered by the mentors and coded into 6 broad themes. These were further broken down into specific subheadings.

Table 7.1 outlines the main mentoring topics discussed, and support given, during the mentoring sessions.

Table 7.2: Mentoring activities

Employability

- Resume & Cover letters
- Interview skills
- Personal Branding
- Job Search
- Job Canvassing
- Career Map Plan / Prospects
- Work Experience

Study

- Short / Long Courses
- Study Decisions
- Traineeships
- o Apprenticeships

Networking

- Introductions to mentor's colleagues / contacts
- Growing own networks
- Social Media
- M2W Social Functions

Life Skills

- Time Management
- Reliability / Punctuality
- Respect
- Communication
- Confidence
- Commitment / Focus
- o Personal Grooming
- Leadership

Goals and Outcomes

- Goals
- Outcomes
- Ambitions

Personal Barriers

- Housing
- Family
- o Financial
- Driving / Transport
- Physical / Mental Health
- Lack of Education
- Technology

7.3 Mentoring and Relational Support

Feedback from mentor surveys and Project Officer interviews described how the mentoring support often involved support that was delivered in relationship with young adults. By this, it was meant that the relationship was the vehicle in which needs were understood, advice, or motivation to act was delivered and accountability built.

While Figure 7.1 indicates that most mentoring sessions did keep a focus on employability and the dimensions of this, Figure 7.2 describes the richness of the sessions in terms of the focus, and the agility of the mentoring relationship for addressing various barriers to employment, and meeting multi-dimensional needs. It also highlights the highly individualised focus that mentoring can bring to the support.



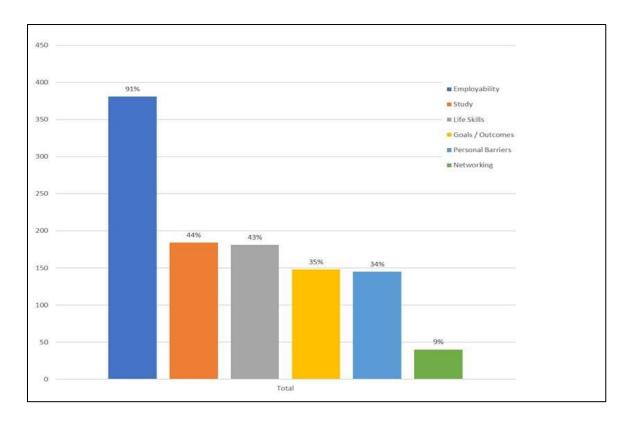


Figure 7.3: Topics covered in mentoring sessions

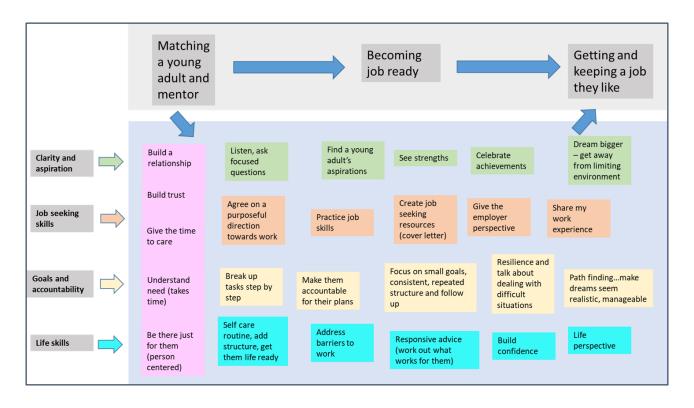


Figure 7.2: Relational support offered by mentors

7.3 Mentoring - Frequency of Meetings and Venues

Mostly the young adults and mentors met in a mutually convenient café or public place for approximately one hour. Over half (57.9%) of the young adults met with their mentor once a week during the program, 12.3% met once a fortnight, 5.2% met once a month, and 19.3% started with weekly meetings and then met every other week as the program progressed. As the COVID-19 pandemic increased restrictions on social gatherings, some (3.5%) of the young adults reported that had stopped meeting face-to-face, and instead had telephone mentoring sessions every few weeks.

The young adults were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the frequency of their meetings on 6-point Likert scale (extremely dissatisfied = 1, dissatisfied = 2, slightly dissatisfied = 3, slightly satisfied = 4, satisfied = 5, extremely satisfied = 6). All of the young adults that completed the exit survey reported that they were satisfied with the frequency of the face-to-face meetings. Over half (57.9%) of the young adults were extremely satisfied with the meeting frequency, about a third (31.6%) were satisfied, and 10.5% were slightly satisfied. The young adults were also asked if they would have preferred to meet more or less than they did. Not one young adult said that they would have preferred to meet less frequently, and most (89.5%) were happy with how frequently they met, with only 10.5% reporting that they would have liked to meet more. This was mainly due to the young adult having conflicting work or study commitments, or not being able to meet at a time that was suitable for both the young adult and the mentor.

Over three-quarters (78.9%) of the young adults usually met their mentor at a café, 8.8% met at a library, 5.3% met at a shopping centre, 5.3% met at the mentor's workplace, and 1.8% met at a park. Most (82.5%) of the young adults determined the location of the mentor sessions together, 14.0% said the location was determined by their mentor, and 3.5% said they determined the location.

7.4 Mentoring – Mode of Interaction

Almost all (98.2%) young adults reported that they had some form of contact with their mentors. As can be seen in Figure 7.3, text messages were by far the most common mode of communication between meetings, with 89.5% of young adults reporting that they had communicated via text message. Email was much less popular, with just over half (52.6%) of the young adults reporting that there had been an email exchange with their mentor between mentoring sessions. Similarly, just under half (45.6%) had had phone calls with their mentor. Interestingly, skype was presented as a response option in the survey, but not one young adult reported that they had communicated with their mentor over skype between meetings.

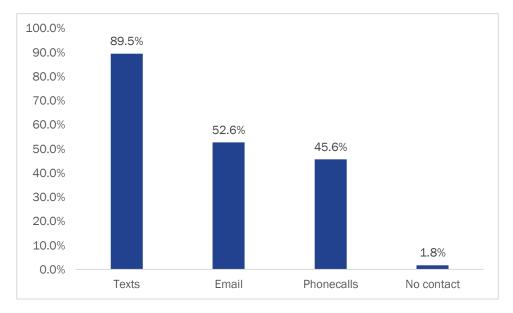


Figure 7.3: Modes of communication between mentors and young adults, between mentoring sessions'

Mentors provided additional support between mentoring meetings (see Figure 7.4). Many of the young adults reported that their mentor provided emotional support between meetings, such as checking in with them, for example to see how they were (82.5%) or sending motivational or encouraging messages (59.6%). Other types of support between meetings were employment focused, where mentors sent resume and cover letter feedback (66.7%); and sent jobs advertisements (36.8%). The survey allowed the young adults to provide other examples of the types of things discussed between meetings, one young adult said they spoke about "...experience and business", another said "clothing", and one young adult said they had a "phone interview role-play".

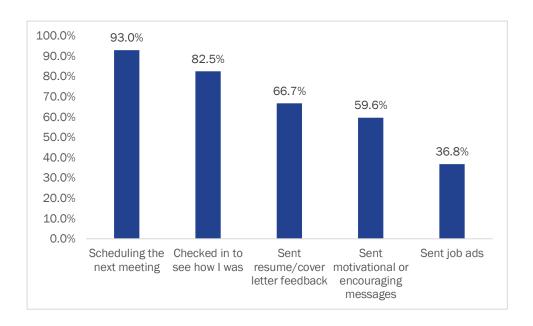


Figure 7.4: Content of communication between mentoring sessions

In some cases, mentors met their mentees and took them shopping for work clothes or provided other face-to-face support.

7.5 Young adult - Perceptions of Value of Mentoring

The following graph describes the positive value that the mentoring relationship had for the majority of young adults. Over 90% of young adults reported that *to a great extent* mentors helped them through treating them with respect as an adult – the significant impact that this seems to have made on the majority of young adults may reflect an unmet need in young adults who are unemployed, and also reflect the power of this in and of itself. Soft skills and supports, seem to be more highly agreed with, although this could be that they were more universally applied, whereas the more specific skills depended on the needs of each individual. Overall, a diversity of supports and impacts were considered of value to young adults.

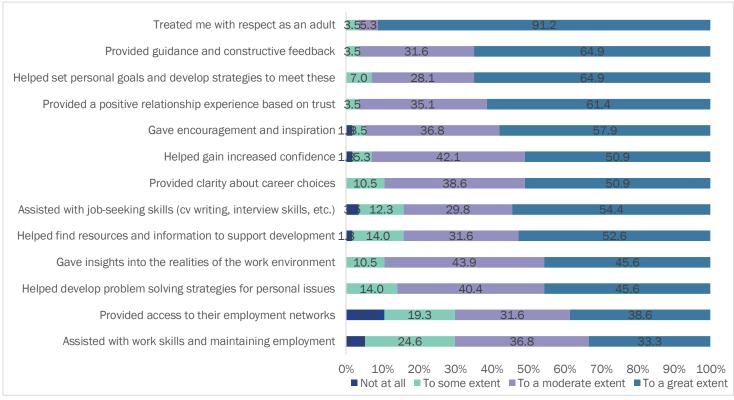


Figure 7.5: Extent to which the young adults felt their mentors helped them

7.6 Young Adult – Focus Group Feedback

The participants stated that mentors were useful in that they "helped to focus on what was needed" in the process of getting a job. To this end, they received help with resume writing and one of the mentors was proactive in getting information regarding licences and TAFE courses. In one case the mentor provided innovative suggestions which were valued by the participant: "My mentor made a brand-new idea and suggested that I should make a resume business card, something that I can give potential employers. A different approach to cold calling and dropping off resumes." One of the participants highlighted the caring nature of the relationship and stated that the mentor called them and checked in on them and asked if they were getting enough sleep. The limitations of the mentors were also raised and the importance of understanding what they can and cannot offer: "Mentors can help up to a certain point – the paperwork side of things – but when it comes to the applying for work and getting a job, he can't help because it is not his line of work."

The participants were asked about who sets the agenda on what will be discussed and when and where the meetings are held. The experiences were varied. One young adult stated that the mentor was in complete charge, setting the agenda and guiding the whole process including time and venue: "He cuts straight to the chase and says, "this is what you need, this is what we'll do". This was appreciated by the participant who was happy for the mentor to take direction. One of the other participants had more control over what would be discussed and when and where the meetings would take place. One young adult (who had previously been matched with a disengaged mentor)

had a new mentor who committed to meeting at a set time and day each week which offered that young adult great relief and security.

The nature of the mentor-mentee relationship was discussed. One of the participants stated that the mentor was empathetic and supportive and that it helped that the mentor had children of a similar age to the mentee "because he is very understanding about the challenges for a person like me to get a job". Mentors were seen by all the participants as being a source of support not just around work issues but in helping to implement strategies that help them to sort out general life problems.

The differences in the young adults' relationships with mentors and program staff were discussed. Some participants felt that there was not much difference in their relationship between the two. They felt supported by the program staff on an ongoing basis: "It's nice to know that the project staff is a phone call away; they haven't pushed you away". One participant (who is more independent) stated that the relationship is closer with the mentor: "Mentors go further: you can contact them at any time. With project staff you can only contact at work hours." On the other hand, one of the participants with more complex needs stated that they had a closer relationship with the program staff. They mentioned several occasions when the program staff went out of their way to enquire about their health or help them to attend events when they were lost.

7.7 Mentors - Survey Results

The mentors were asked to estimate the proportion of time they spent discussing various topics in their mentoring sessions. As can be seen in the Figure 7.6, this varied greatly. By far the most time was spent on providing encouragement, following up on actions, and reviewing plans and goals (mean: 31.4% of the mentoring session, minimum: 10.0%, maximum: 75.0%). The next largest component of mentoring sessions was discussing job searching skills and looking at new opportunities (mean: 18.1% of the mentoring session, minimum: 0%, maximum: 65.0%). Job searching and skills was followed closely by workplace expectations and sustaining employment (mean: 17.4% of the mentoring session, minimum: 0%, maximum: 80.0%), and personal and family issues (mean: 16.8% of the mentoring session, minimum: 0%, maximum: 50.0%). Exploring education options had relatively less of a focus, with an average of 12.6% of the mentoring session spent on it (minimum: 0%, maximum: 40.0%). Most people did not report other discussion, so the mean is very low (3.7%), however it should be noted that the maximum was 45.0%. Other discussion included "general chit chat about topics we have common interests in", "exercise and her dog walks.", "movies", and "coaching around monetising her hobby as a source of income".

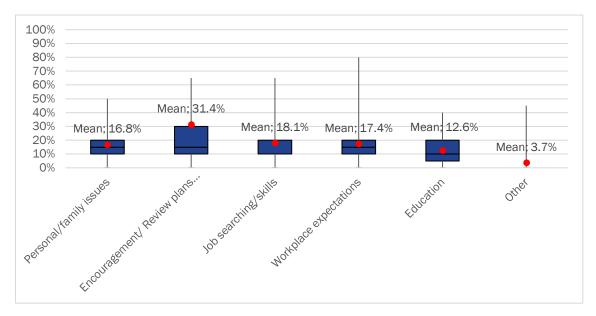


Figure 7.7: Boxplots and mean time spent discussing mentoring topics in a typical session

7.8 Mentors – Interview and Focus Group Feedback⁵⁵

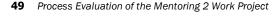
The mentors recognised that mentoring is a complex relationship that cannot be oversimplified and that sometimes "it can be hairy". Mentors stated that the handover process with the project officer was helpful since they were given the case notes and templates to record the mentoring meetings and activities. The mentors did various activities with the young adults during the mentoring sessions, such as practicing interview techniques, interpreting body language, practicing how to do small talk and general advice on social behaviour. However, they stated that in the absence of formal complementary or supplementary activities to guide the mentoring sessions, they drew upon their own experience. However, some mentors stated that they were running out of things to say and activities to do.

Mentors mentioned that sometimes mentors and mentees simply don't 'click' and that young adults can sometimes disengage then reconnect: "you meet bumps along the way – it's part of the process". Clear guidance on dealing with non-engagement of mentees and ensuring that there is progress in the relationship were two areas identified as needing attention.

In some cases, it was felt that the young adults had too many players giving them (perhaps conflicting) career advice and that this could "muddy the waters". In addition to their mentor, young adults received career advice from the project officers as they worked through the toolkit, and they would have received career advice from the employment service consultants as well. It was noted that there might be a conflict between short term goal of getting a job, in some cases any job, and the long term goal of pursuing a job that leads to a career of their choice. In addition, young adults could be exposed to quite different ideas from various sources about what might be realistic for them, and what is appropriately aspirational. Young adults' experiences of being exposed to a variety of opinions and views from various supporters is yet to be understood.

The recording and reporting process were clearly understood and it was mentioned that having both parties agree and sign the record was a helpful strategy to foster ownership of the process. The mentors stated that having a project officer who could walk them through the mentoring process and assist them on an ongoing basis was a big help, as stated by one of the mentors: "The project officer worked closely and gave tailored support as needed." One mentor stated that when problems were

⁵⁵ Information collected form 3 telephone interviews – March 2019



encountered with the mentees, such as non-attendance at appointments, after a call to the project officer the problems were sorted out.

8. ONGOING SUPPORT FROM PROJECT STAFF

There is extensive evidence from best practice guidelines that ongoing program support leads to successful mentoring programs⁵⁶. Program staff can provide help, guidance and moral support by keeping in regular contact and this can ensure that matches last and flourish⁵⁷. Program staff who check in with the mentors and mentees and provide opportunities to participate in structured activities are associated with positive outcomes. These can be both social in nature and more professionally focused providing opportunities for professional development and networking.

Guidelines recommend more intensive contact at the beginning of mentoring relationships, becoming further apart as the relationship between the mentor and mentee becomes established. Establishing an action plan at the outset to guide the content of the meetings and ensuring a written record be kept of the content discussed at each meeting is proposed as good practice to monitor how the relationship is progressing.

8.1 M2W Support Model

A unique component of the M2W program is the ongoing support that the project staff lend to both the young adults and the mentors. This support is varied, depending upon the needs being addressed. Support could be informal, such as telephone conversations or text messages, or formal, such as the regular mentor breakfasts, professional development seminars and workshops, and members' only social media platforms. Relationship building was highlighted as a key role of the project staff who provide a 'safety net if things go wrong' and are 'an anchor to go back to'58. This is especially the case for young adults with complex needs.

In the Stage 1 phase of the program, project officers were learning about the various needs of the participants (both young adults and mentors) and trialling different approaches to support them. As new mentors joined the program during Stage 2 the M2W project team developed a program of support for the mentors. This was seen as being essential for creating an 'ecosystem of support' for the mentors in order to support their professional development and expand their networks within the program. This helped to create a community of mentors that could support each other and share advice across mentoring relationships.

Project staff provided ongoing support in the following ways:

8.2 Face-to-face and Telephone Support

The M2W project officers arranged and facilitated every introductory meeting between the young adults and their mentors. This was done so that both felt comfortable meeting the other for the first time and conversation could be kept in an introductory and relaxed tone. The basis of this meeting was for the M2W team member to complete the final activity of the toolkit – the Career Map Plan for the young adult and mentor to work on together as a way to continue the momentum struck up with the young adult during the toolkit phase. Project officers were also available when needed for face-to-face meetings.

⁵⁶ (DuBois et al., 2002; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; J. Rhodes et al., 2005)

⁵⁷ (Herrera et al., 2000)

⁵⁸ Project meeting notes 4.12.2018

⁵¹ Process Evaluation of the Mentoring 2 Work Project

The M2W project staff kept in regular contact with both mentors and young adults to ensure that the mentoring sessions and relationships were progressing well. When problems arose, the project officers were able to step in quickly to lend support - either via telephone or by attending a mentoring session if necessary.

The mentors were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements in Figure 8.1 about the support they received from the program staff on a six-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 6). It should be noted that all statements were rated very highly with mean agreement ratings (5.78, 5.69, 5.51, and 5.37) that corresponded to between "agree" and "strongly agree". See Figure 8.1 for the distribution of responses, noting that almost all responses indicated the mentors agreed with the statements to some extent.

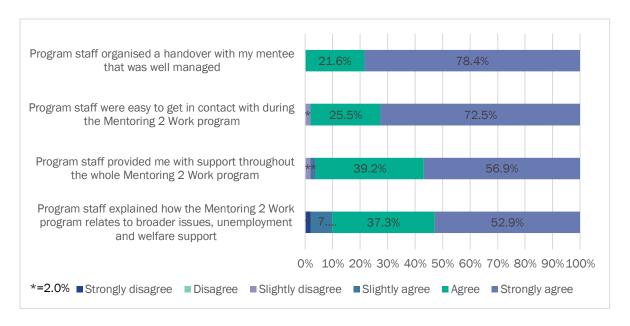


Figure 8.1 Mentor perception of support from program staff

8.3 Mentors' Breakfasts

Regular breakfasts were held for mentors to meet the project and evaluation staff. These complimentary breakfasts were held at various venues (cafes and hotels) close to the Perth CBD to accommodate as many mentors as possible. At these breakfasts mentors were able to network with each other and share experiences and tips around mentoring. Each breakfast event was structured around a key theme relating to the M2W program. These were:

- the evaluation process led by UWA CSI;
- reflections on mentoring by two of the more M2W-experienced mentors who had recently completed mentoring;
- employability and job market positioning in relation to anyone seeking a job; and
- how to handle discussing more personal issues raised by a young adult. Most of these topics were derived from conversations the project officers had had with mentors and were received as suggestions.

These events were seen as a way to thank the mentors for their commitment and dedication and encourage them to recommend the program through their networks in order to recruit more mentors.

Over half (56.9%) of the mentors that completed the survey had attended at least one of the mentor breakfasts. Figure 8.2 presents the proportions of the respondents that attended each breakfast, the venue, and the content of the presentation.

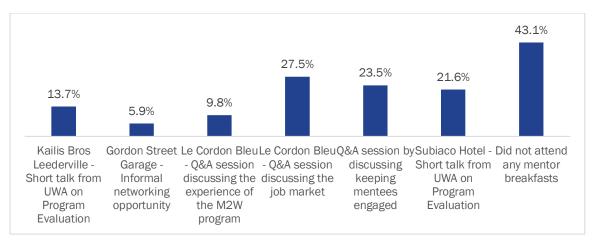


Figure 8.2 Proportion of mentors that reported attending each of the mentor breakfasts in the exit survey

The mentors that reported that they had attended at least one of the breakfasts were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements about the benefits of the breakfasts in Figure 8.3 on a six-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 6). The most agreed with statement was that the breakfasts gave them an opportunity to engage with program staff (mean rating: 5.66). This was followed by the opportunity to share mentoring tips and experiences with other mentors and meet new people (mean ratings 5.45 and 5.38, respectively). On average, the mentors slightly agreed to agreed that the breakfasts improved their mentoring skills and increased their professional networks (mean ratings 4.38 and 4.34, respectively).

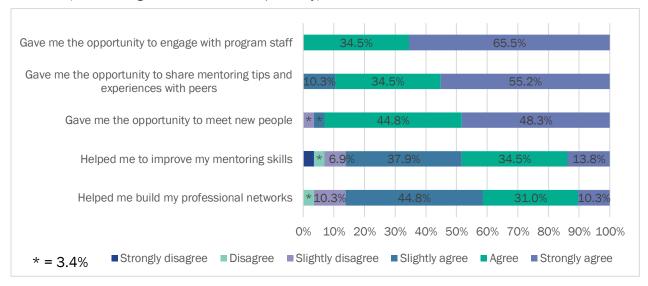


Figure 8.3 Mentor's perceived benefits of the mentor breakfasts

8.4 Professional Development Workshops

Several workshops were held to address specific needs raised by the mentors. One of the mentors who worked in the recruitment business offered a Job Market Positioning workshop. The workshop was designed to be applicable for both mentors and mentees. Of the mentors that completed the exit survey, 31.4% said that they had attended the Job Market Positioning workshop. Those who said they had attended were also asked how helpful they found the workshop for assisting their mentee, and how helpful the workshop was for their own professional development. The workshop was well received, as just over half (56.3%) found the workshop very helpful for assisting their mentee (31.3%

helpful, and 12.5% a little helpful). Half (50.0%) of the mentors also found the workshop to be very helpful for their own professional development (43.8% helpful, and 6.3% a little helpful).

The M2W project staff had also arranged for a couple of 'First Aid for Mental Health' workshops to offer for mentors but with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic these had to be cancelled.

8.5 Social Media

Overall, 49.0% of mentors that completed the survey felt that the M2W program widened their professional networks. Mentors noted that they "developed relationships with other mentors" and "connected with the Mentoring 2 Work staff", and the program provided "exposure to industry professionals in the HR sphere". The mentors found it beneficial to meet others in different careers, with many mentioning that they "met new people from many backgrounds" and that this "helped me connect with people outside of my career network. This provided me with diversity and richness of experience." Others felt that they met a few good people though the program with one participant noting they "made a few connections with some really amazing people - definitely quality not quantity" and another stating: "by introducing my mentee to my network it has helped me reconnect in a different and positive way." Some mentioned that they "have connected with some on LinkedIn", "connected with people online and met with some people after" and noted that "every new person widens my network - LinkedIn and you never know when u will run into someone in the future".

One of the mentors suggested that a closed LinkedIn group be set up to facilitate networking and collaboration amongst the mentors. The M2W project staff set this up and invited all mentors to join. Although it did not become widely used as a platform for mentor-to-mentor discussion and networking, it did prove to be a useful avenue for the project staff to communicate and engage with the mentors. Over half (60.8%) of the mentors that completed the survey said that they had joined the LinkedIn group. When asked what they gained from the group, the mentors said, "updates and networking", "some good information and advice", "interesting articles to read", "it was a communication tool about the Project.", and "another form of connection with the team." However, many noted that they did not get much out of it because they "didn't use the group", were "a bit inactive", and "rarely go on LinkedIn". When asked how useful they found the LinkedIn group many said it was "not very useful", either because they "don't use it that often" or because it "didn't feel like many people were active." One mentor noted: "I found reassuring there was one, it provided a platform to connect with other mentors and found like most things you get from it what you contribute." A few did mention that there was potential development for the LinkedIn group and that it "could be much more useful if there was a communication plan around its use." One mentor noted: "Personally, i [I] did not make use of it, but there are lots of opportunities to leverage LinkedIn for showcasing success stories, funneling [funnelling] new expressions of interest for new mentors, raising awareness of potential mentee employment opportunities, networking mentors with employment opportunities."

The M2W program offered ongoing support to both mentors and mentees in line with best practice principles. The level of support was very high and provided mentees with a feeling of security. Likewise, the support given to mentors ensured that they stayed connected. The qualitative feedback received from mentees and mentors stated that the project officers were excellent ambassadors of the program and were a wonderful resource to troubleshoot problems and ensure that relationships stayed on track.

8.6 Young Adult Feedback

The young adults were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements in Figure 8.4 about their interactions with the program staff during the program. The average agreement ratings for all statements were between 5 and 6, corresponding to agree and strongly agree. The most agreed with statement was that the program staff had explained that the program was voluntary (mean: 5.71). followed closely with agreement that the mentor handover was well managed (mean: 5.68). The young adults agreed that the staff were easy to contact during the program (mean: 5.59) and felt the program staff had provided them with support during the program and explained that they had formally completed the program (both mean: 5.47). The least agreed with statement, though still agreed with, related to the explanation of how the program relates to broader society (mean: 5.35).

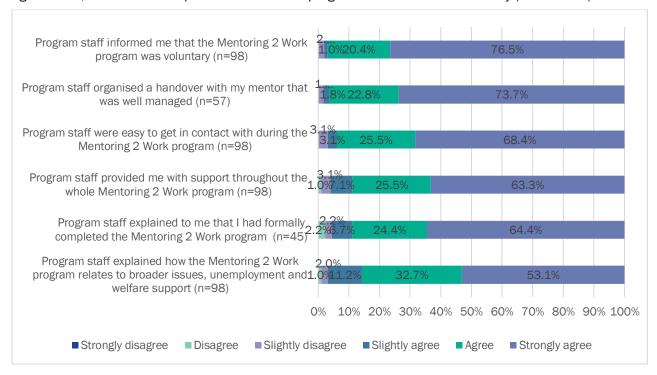


Figure 8.4 Young adults' perception of support from program staff

9. PROGRAM CLOSURE

The mentoring literature highlights that the ending of the mentoring relationship should be carefully managed to support all participants in the mentoring relationship⁵⁹. This should form part of the program's policy and procedure whether the relationship runs the full course, or whether it terminates early⁶⁰. Focussing on good experiences and achievements in the relationships can be cathartic to mentors and mentees. Arranging special activities, such a graduation ceremony, can be an effective way to close the relationship and program.

9.1 M2W Program Closure Procedure

The M2W program closure procedure took place when young adults exited the program upon reaching the 6-month mark of mentoring, or if they requested to exit the program prior to completing 6 months of mentoring due to other circumstances (for example, to commence employment or for personal reasons).

When the program closure process was initiated, the relevant M2W project officer would arrange a teleconference with both mentor and mentee together. The purpose of this was to celebrate the young adult completing their time in the M2W program and acknowledge and reflect on things they have learned, improved in or any other change they may have experienced. The mentor was also invited to give their perspective on the mentoring journey. This also offered the opportunity to thank and acknowledge the important role that the mentor played. The project officer would suggest that the mentee and mentor may like to maintain the contact if this suited both parties. The meeting was concluded with the mentee and mentor being asked to complete the exit survey for the program evaluation. This conversation was recorded by the M2W project officer in note form and reported as the final contact for the mentor and young adult in M2W.

When this process was not able to be carried out, the project officer would have the conversations separately with the mentor and the mentee. If either party was not reachable by telephone then the process would be carried out via email to acknowledge the milestone, convey appreciation for their time and commitment in the program and included the link to the online exit survey for them to complete.

9.2 Young Adult Deedback⁶¹

At the end of the 6 months of mentoring, the young adults were advised by the program staff that they had completed the program, over the phone, by email, or in person (see Figure 9.1 for the breakdown). Almost all (93.3%) of the young adults felt the program staff had fully explained what it meant to complete the program.

^{59 (}Miller, 2008)

^{60 (}MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2009)

⁶¹ Focus group 6 December 2018

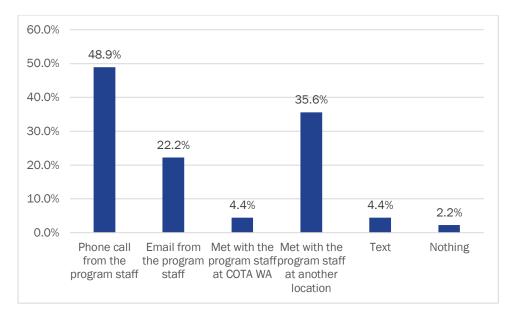


Figure 9.1 Method of communication young adults were advised they had completed the program

In terms of how they felt about the completion process, the young adults were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements presented in Figure 9.2, on a six-point Likert scale (strongly disagree = 1, strongly agree = 6). The young adults agreed to all the statements to a similar extent, corresponding to an "agree" response (5). The most agreed with statement was "I knew when I was going to be formally completing the Mentoring 2 Work program", with a mean rating of 4.93. This was followed by "my mentor discussed program completion with me before our last meeting" and "my mentor prepared me for my working life after the Mentoring 2 Work program" (mean 4.78 and 4.71, respectively).

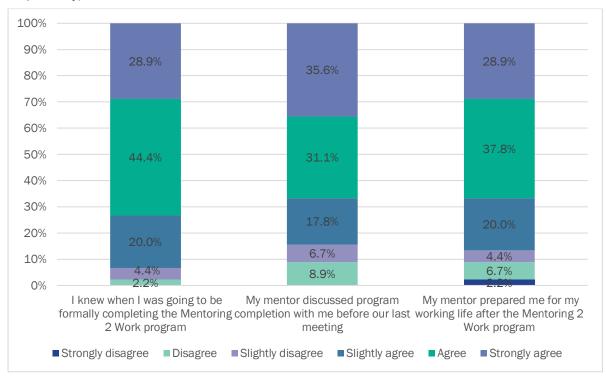


Figure 9.2 Young adults' feelings about the formal program completion

Regarding the program closure the participants had varying responses. One young adult stated that they would continue in the program even after they got a job, since they saw the value of having a mentor who could help them "navigate any issues emerging at work". One participant suggested that "There should be an option to continue contact with the mentor if your relationship is good".

In Stage 1 some young adults were anxious about the closure of their relationship with the mentor since there was a lack of clarity about how this would work and who would be responsible for overseeing the exit. However, as the program evolved, processes were in place to ensure that mentors discussed program closure with the mentees.

9.3 Mentor's Feedback⁶²

The mentors stated that during Stage 1 program closure was not formally addressed within the training. In Stages 2 and 3 the program closure process was more formalised, and mentors explained that they prepared their mentees for the end of the program. This was seen as a delicate area which needed to be handled carefully with a clear strategy and process. Most mentors stated that they were willing to continue meeting their mentee after the program closure if their mentee requested this.

Although the process of mentoring 'closure' took some time to be developed as the program evolved, in Stages 2 and 3 processes were in place which ensured that mentees were prepared for the formal end of the program and several pairings decided that they wanted to continue with the contact. Although in the M2W there was no formal 'graduation' from the program and no certificate awarded, the end of the formal mentoring program was celebrated between the mentees, mentors and the project officers, in line with best practice mentoring principles.

Of the mentors that completed the survey, most (93.3%) of the mentors with mentees that completed the full six months of mentoring felt that the program staff had fully explained what it mean to formally complete the program. They were also asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements in Figure 9.3. Almost all (90%), agreed to some extent that they knew when their mentee would be finishing the program (mean rating 5.10, corresponds to "agree"). Similarly, 83.3% of mentors agreed to some extent that they had discussed program completion with their mentee before their last meeting (mean rating 4.83, corresponds to "agree").

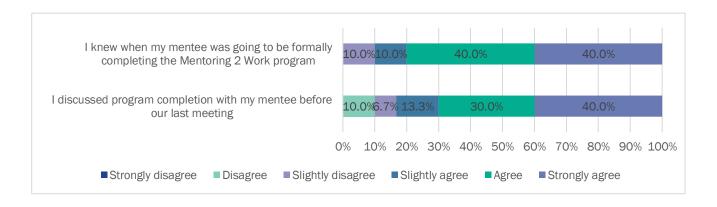


Figure 9.3 Mentor's feelings about the formal program completion

⁶² Information collected form 3 telephone interviews - March 2019

10. CONTROL GROUP

Ideally, evaluations should be conducted through the use of an experimental design with multiple dependent variables⁶³. Despite originally planning to employ an experimental design, this could not be carried out within the M2W program, as outlined in Section 3.2. Instead, a quasi-experimental design was employed. Quasi-experimental designs identify a comparison (control) group that is as similar as possible to the treatment group in terms of baseline (pre-intervention) characteristics. The control group captured what would have been the outcomes if the program had not been implemented (i.e., the counterfactual). Hence, the program can be said to have caused any difference in outcomes between the treatment and comparison groups.

10.1 Control Group Selection

Control group sites were carefully selected to identify areas with similar socio-economic and employment characteristics. Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indexes for Australia (SEIFA) scores were analysed to identify suburbs with similar characteristics to the ones where the M2W project were being conducted. Using the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) the following control sites were selected: Ascot, Canning Vale, Armadale.

10.2 Control Group Procedure

As with recruitment for the treatment group, letters were sent to Jobactive providers operating in the identified areas, asking their assistance in recruiting participants to take part in the program as part of the control group. One company, APM Employment Services, agreed to participate and supported the evaluation team in recruiting the control group across their offices.

The manager of the various APM offices identified suitable recruits from their database according to the age and employment status criteria, which were the same as those for the treatment group. Recruitment flyers were also displayed in their offices. The employment consultants arranged appointments for the jobseekers to meet with the evaluation team to learn about the study after their regular employment services appointments. The evaluation team explained to the jobseekers that although participation in the program was not an option since it was not running in their area, if they chose to participate in the control group study they would be invited to carrying out 2 surveys a year apart, for which they would receive a \$40 Coles gift card for each survey. The voluntary nature of the surveys was stressed. The vast majority of jobseekers took up the offer to participate in the study.

The surveys were administered in the employment service offices directly into Qualtrics on laptops provided by the evaluation team and supplemented by the Jobactive computers where available. Most participants completed the surveys on their own. In some cases, the evaluation team assisted the jobseeker with filling out the surveys. Gift cards were distributed as soon as the surveys were completed.

In total 285 control group baseline surveys were collected between April, May and June 2019. The one year follow up survey was conducted via email. Participants were invited to complete the survey online and upon completion of the survey they clicked on a link to download the \$40 Coles gift card.

^{63 (}O'Brien & Rodopman, 2007)

11. COVID-19 CONSIDERATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on all facets of life, COVID-19 restrictions. including direct business closures, social distancing, and stay-at-home provisions have hit young people particularly hard in Australia⁶⁴. The youth labour market is characterised by higher levels of employment in consumer facing roles—such as in retail, hospitality, events, fitness and entertainment industries—and considerably higher rates of part-time employment and casual work than the general population. During the COVID-19 crisis, these characteristics of the youth labour market have meant that young people are more susceptible to losing their jobs and also having their hours reduced, as businesses lose custom and face an uncertain future.

The Australian Government responded to the projected increases in unemployment with a temporary increase of \$550 per fortnight to the JobSeeker Payment, relaxation of mutual obligation requirements, and the introduction of the JobKeeper Payment scheme. As young people are more likely to be casuals working in insecure employment, many were not eligible for the JobKeeper Payment which enabled employees with longer-term attachments to a specific business maintain a formal connection with their (eligible) employer.

The employment impact of this on the participants is discussed further in the M2W Impact Evaluation.

11.1 Impact of the Pandemic on the Program *Implementation*

The operation of the program was moderately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic since all young adults had completed the toolkit phase and were matched with mentors prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

When the COVID-19 restrictions commenced there were only 20 young adults still working with mentors in the mentoring phase. For these participants there was some disruption to the mentoring process since mentees and mentors were unable to meet face-to-face at public venues due to government sanctioned social distancing regulations. Contact between the two had to switch to phone conversations (verbal and SMS) or email. Project officers reported that this had an impact on the depth of interaction and hence the quality of the mentoring experience. The back and forth of an in-person conversation was replaced, with more 'checking in' type interactions. From the young adult viewpoint, because the Australian Government has increased the amount jobseekers can receive from Centrelink, the incentive to apply for jobs and work decreased. Additionally, there were now fewer entry-level roles in the hospitality and retail sector to apply for - the type of work young adults in M2W had most commonly commenced in before COVID-19.

The M2W program made it a priority to address the issue of social isolation that many people who rely on welfare experience by providing interpersonal interaction opportunities for young adult participants. With the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic, social activities at public venues were no longer possible and regulations hampered face-to face-meetings with mentors. An impact of this is that young adults who were socially isolated prior to joining M2W but responded well to face-tocontact offered by the program, may have reverted back to being socially isolated. Mentors have reported that it has become increasingly difficult to reach the young adult and / or engage them in conversation over the phone. Project officers have also noted the reduction in interactions being recorded and submitted by mentors.

^{64 (}Atkins, Callis, Flatau, & Kaleveld, 2020)

Project officers reported that whilst most young adults still in the M2W program acknowledged the broad impacts of the epidemic, they were less concerned about the impacts on their immediate employment or education situation. Those studying were able to adapt quickly to remote methods of delivery. All young adults commented that although there are fewer or no jobs available for them to apply for, the increase in Centrelink assistance has been a big a help to them.

11. KEY OBSERVATIONS AND **CONSIDERATIONS**

This section discusses some of the main observations and reflections on the program, illustrated with quotes from the program participants, where appropriate. The report concludes with some broad observations on the program.

12.1 Respectful, Person-Centred Approach

One of the program's strengths was its focus on the individual. Project officers treated the participants respectfully and kept to their word. This was noted and appreciated by the participants who commented that this was not always their experience. This personalised approach was especially valued by Aboriginal participants as articulated by one of them:

'It was nice to be a part of a non Indigenous program that was so friendly and people weren't suspicious or untrusting of me. Job active staff can sometimes paint you with the same brush as everyone else because you're Aboriginal and unemployed, regardless of not knowing the whole story. I only dealt with (Project Officer) from Mentoring to Work but he was so nice and spoke so highly of other Aboriginal people that he'd met that he thought were amazing, I don't hear that much from non Indigenous people other than in sports so that was cool. Plus I always walked away from an appointment with him thinking better of myself, I'm sure a lot of other people my age would agree.' (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

12.2 Focus on the Young Adults' Strengths and Goals for their Future

The program helped young adults consider their long-term career goals and aspirations and this helped them to strategically approach looking for employment, as illustrated by one mentor:

"Helping young adults to dream bigger and break down the steps to reach their goals" (M2W mentor focus group feedback)

For many young adults this was a novel way of approaching job seeking.

'The support I received was exceptionally helpful in areas I would normally overlook which in the end made a huge difference.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'It really helped me realise where my priorities should be.' (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

"I had agreed to the program because I thought wow, here is a program that wants to help ME and they did, guiding and coaching goals and dreams into possibilities." (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

12.3 Tailoring Support According to Needs

The format of delivering the toolkit worked well and served different purposes depending upon the individual. Those who are more career-focused and have clarity on desired employment outcomes seemed to want to progress through the toolkit quickly to reach the mentoring with the outside mentor. Those who had less clarity on career goals and who perhaps had more complex needs benefitted from greater focus on the toolkit.

The personalised nature of the mentoring relationship meant that advice was targeted to the individual's needs. Instead of offering generalised advice on job-seeking skills, mentors drew upon their own experiences and focused on the areas that the mentees needed support. This was highlighted as being especially helpful by the many mentees:

'I learnt by taking your time with your cover letters can make a huge difference in being noticed by an employer.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'The networking advice my mentor provided.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'Learning how to break my silence barrier when applying for face to face work.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

12.4 Offering Broad Life Skills Guidance and Support

Most mentors did not simply work on job-seeking skills (such as writing cover letters and preparing for interviews), but offered advice and support to enable the mentees to develop their life skills. This support was varied depending upon the mentees needs:

'The program indirectly teaches self awareness.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'How to manage my money to not have it run out before the week is over and not be able to get to work shifts.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'Time management and preparing myself for work.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback) 'If you ever need help don't be afraid to ask.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'Dress appropriately and good manners in public.' (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

The mentors themselves acknowledged that the life-related advice and assistance they offered was essential for some of the mentees, above the job-seeking advice. For some participants this was the most valuable interaction, as stated by some of the mentors:

"Before becoming job-ready some young adults need to become life-ready" (M2W mentor – focus group feedback)

"Mentee needed a parent" (M2W mentor – focus group feedback)

"Help young adults deal with situations where they feel totally disempowered" (M2W mentor – focus group feedback)

"Goal setting and thinking about the future is a luxury for many people" (M2W mentor – focus group

"Some young adults have a lot of maturing to do" (M2W mentor – focus group feedback)

"They needed life skills since they didn't know how the world worked" (M2W mentor – focus group feedback)

12.5 Helped Identify Complex Needs and Refer to Services

An innovative component of the program was the development of the Complex Needs Assessment Tool. This tool enabled Project Officers to identify young adult participants with a range of complex needs of varying degrees. This helped both the Project Officers identify young adults in need of additional services and support. In a few cases it helped identify young adults who were not suitable for the program. The Tool assisted in the matching process, by identifying specific needs that the mentee had and therefore seeking mentors with specific skills and attributes to address these. The program structure enabled frank conversations to be had between young adults and the Project Officers and this was greatly valued by many of the participants:

"...just once a week having that conversation with (Project Officer) really helped my mental health and helped me realise that I probably needed to speak to a professional to talk some more about my home life and how it was affecting me. Big thanks to (Project Officer), didn't know him long but the impact he had was a very positive one.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'My mentoring to work counsellor was the one that got me to see my psychologist for my anxiety.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

'Help me get into a better head space to be able think clearly.' (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

12.6 Different Support to that Offered by Jobactive Service **Providers**

Many of the young adult participants compared the support they received in the M2W program with that offered by the Jobactive system. They stated that the M2W program offered a more personalised and effective approach to looking for employment, as illustrated in the following quotes:

'The job providers are really nice, but they don't have much time for you. Perhaps they think you don't need help?" (M2W mentee – interview feedback)

"The Job Providers' main focus is to make sure you're applying for jobs. They have not been very helpful for me" (M2W mentee – interview feedback)

"Jobactive give you a list of things to do and you have to do them. You are just a cog in the machine of a big corporation. With them life was being drained" (M2W mentee – interview feedback)

"M2W made me feel like I have a future instead of being numb" (M2W mentee – interview feedback)

"It is in the interest of Jobactive providers to hold onto you for as long as possible since it guarantees money. M2W have a different motivation" (M2W mentee - interview feedback)

"Employment service providers put up a wall between staff and the clients (young adults). I feel like the M2W organisation cares and it's trying to help" (M2W mentee – interview feedback)

The main differences are summarised in the following table:

Table 12.3: Main differences between M2W and Jobactive system

Mentoring 2 Work:

- Driven by their goals
- 2. Aspirational
- 3. Relational support to address multiple employment barriers
- 4. Empowering, free of judgement and agenda, can face the issue with support

Jobactive system:

- Driven by compliance and requirements
- 2. Any job (advertised)
- 3. One-on-one support without time for further focus if needed
- 4. Can be disempowering or alienating processes

12.7 Adaptability and Refocus of Program as Needed

Findings indicate that the ability of leadership to adapt the program as needed was critical to program viability and success. As circumstances changed and risks were encountered - most notably around young adult and mentor recruitment - practices had to be adapted. This resulted in a refocus of the program and a change in the program team. In Stage 1 it was more difficult to recruit young adult participants than mentors (who were readily sourced from the project staff's networks) and therefore more effort went into this. This phase was characterised by the development of training resources and processes for the young adults. Focus on this element meant that less attention was directed to mentor induction and training, components which are identified in the mentoring literature as critical for success⁶⁵. As the program progressed into Stages 2 and 3, and young adult recruitment grew, this required a further refocus of attention and resources to ensure that mentor recruitment and training kept pace with the young adult participants.

12.8 Importance of Relationship Building with Project Staff

Relationship building between all stakeholders and across all program elements was a key component of the M2W program. As the program evolved there was growing understanding that project staff act as internal mentors for the young adults. This was based on the way the program was designed around an extended induction process involving the toolkit. This process assisted the young adults, often for the first time, to explore their strengths and career aspirations. These learning and support activities were the foundation for the later work with the mentors. There is also evidence that this formative stage met a need for young adults and provided a protective base to mitigate any risks (including disappointment) that they may have experienced in their mentoring relationship. Project officers perceived that they played an important role in anchoring the young adults to the program - "they feel safe with us'66 and, as evidenced in the feedback, young adults valued this.

As the program has unfolded the Evaluation Team acknowledges that a complex relationship may emerge between young adults and internal (project officers) and external mentors. In some cases, the relationship with the project officer was valued more than the relationship with the external mentor, especially where the support given is more personal in nature and the young adult is not as confident or clear about their direction. It may be that for participants with complex needs this becomes a highly significant anchoring relationship. For other young adults they are keen to meet their mentor and seem to be more resilient to manage that relationship as well as disappointment and hurdles, without close support of project staff. Findings from Stage 2 and 3 may reveal further insights about what ideal pathways and models serve which young adults, and how the internal as well as external mentoring meets various needs and complement one another.

A value-added outcome of the program has been building the young adults' confidence and establishing trusting relationships between the young adults and the project staff and mentors. The Program Manager stated that the staff have honoured what they said they would deliver to the young adults, and have modelled behaviour, values and attitudes that have put the young adults at the centre of the project and treated them with respect⁶⁷. Although there have been changes to the project team, the values and ideals have been consistent across staff. Again, this is reflected in the feedback from the young adults.

^{65 (}Miller, 2008)

⁶⁶ Project meeting 25.02.2019

⁶⁷ Interview 26.02.2019

12.9 Redefining the Concept of an Ecosystem of Support

In the original proposal it was suggested that young adults needed to have an ecosystem created for them. However, as the program evolved the original idea of creating an ecosystem was reinterpreted because there was a realisation that all young adults bring with them their own ecosystem. The aim was then to enable young adults to harness and grow their ecosystem by learning new skills and being exposed to opportunities to meet new people.

12.10 Overall Impressions of the Program

Overwhelmingly the young adult participants had positive experiences of the program and expressed that participation in the program had helped them, as illustrated in the following quotes:

"[I] feel more supported and prepared" (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

"I'm in a better place" (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

"The program gave me a confidence boost. I now have clear pathway to my goals and clarity of how to get there" (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

"M2W has given me an edge in the job application process" (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

"M2W helped me to get direction and discover what I needed to do to get there" (M2W mentee survey feedback)

"M2W gave me a sense of where I wanted to go instead of drifting along" (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

"It put things in perspective and set out a clear career path [for me]" (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

"M2W helped me to see that I already had the tools to get a job, but I didn't know how to go about applying them" (M2W mentee – survey feedback)

12. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Youth unemployment is a serious social problem. The impact of this can be severe and long-lasting and can have significant effects on young people's health and wellbeing:

"Young people are left behind in schooling and they don't know what they want to do. They feel alone, angry, depressed and anxious. There are mental health issues when you are treated as a second-class citizen and this makes you feel worthless" (M2W mentee - interview feedback)

Without timely and targeted intervention, young adults are at a high risk of missing a strong entry into the labour market and are therefore are at risk of being financially disadvantaged and welfare dependent for their whole lives.

As this Process Evaluation has demonstrated, the M2W Program was designed and implemented following mentoring best practice guidelines in a way that was young adult-centred, flexible and accommodating of this cohort's diverse needs. The program staff not only demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the program's challenges and opportunities, but they also had the necessary interpersonal skills and judgement to implement an effective approach. The program employed a sophisticated and holistic approach to address young adult unemployment through acknowledging the many different personal, social and environmental factors that create barriers to a young adult gaining employment.

Overall participants, both mentors and mentees, expressed that the program had potential to help address the challenges of youth unemployment, as seen in these two concluding quotes, from a mentor's perspective:

"This is a program that has a very high potential of improving our human capital and the quality of our society. I am very interested to see it rolled out nationwide." (M2W mentor - survey feedback): and through the eyes of one of the mentees:

'Throughout my time with other job agencies/workactive providers: I found M2W the most helpful, the most compassionate and 'stick-to-their-work' program. They do exactly as they say they will, and they help the individual to their own desired needs. This program is fantastic for those who need the help! I hope to see this program continue into the future.' (M2W mentee - survey feedback)

APPENDIX 1

Assessment Tool for Identifying Highly Complex Needs for M2W Program

Why do we need to identify who has complex needs?

The Mentoring 2 Work Program, as implemented in metropolitan Perth by COTA WA, requires 240 young adults to be recruited as participants. The program guidelines describe the target cohort to be young adults who are vulnerable to long term unemployment (which includes young parents and former students). Within this framework there is recognition that participants will arrive at the program will varying needs and vulnerabilities and an overall guideline points to a mix where approximately 30% of all program participants will have complex needs.

It is important to ensure the program achieves a balance between responding appropriately to the high needs that this cohort may naturally bring to the program and maximising the success of the greatest number of young people within the available resources. This calls for a need for ongoing monitoring and reporting of the estimated percentage of participants with complex needs. This also calls for a need for a consistent and agreed upon definition that all program stakeholders can work with.

What are the benefits of monitoring complex needs?

The M2W program framework recognises that participants arrive at the program with varying needs - some of which are complex. Higher complex needs have implications for:

- Resourcing (time, management, planning)
- What supports may be required for individuals both within and outside the program to achieve success
- Meeting specified targets set by the program guidelines
- Evaluating outcomes fairly.

A needs assessment process may also be a chance to identify any urgent needs or supports that have not be identified elsewhere and refer to appropriate agencies.

What is the definition of 'complex needs'?

Rather than provide a sentence-based definition where various program stakeholders are required to interpret the meaning, we have provided an assessment tool that describes various factors that may contribute to an individual experiencing 'high' or 'complex' needs around their ability to find employment. The list of factors outlined in the tool are indicative only. In composing this list, we recognise that other factors may come into play and also that vulnerabilities are often compounding and are likely to be intersecting. Although this list of factors may help inform the identification of complex needs, program staff will continue to rely on their own judgement, experience and their understanding of individuals and what they know of their lives to inform this assessment.

Under the proposed assessment matrix, complex needs fall into four domains - health issues, economic barriers, labour market disadvantage and social constraints - and are limited to those factors that are considered to be barriers to finding work or study, and also factors that are able to be addressed.

How will this assessment tool be used?

By Project Officers in consultation with the project staff.

Matrix for assessment of highly complex needs in the context of the Mentoring 2 Work program

Name:		Date	:			
Domain \Assessment	No barriers effecting ability to find work or study ⁱ	Potentially low-level barriers effecting ability to find work or study	Potentially medium level barriers effecting ability to find work or study	Potentially high level barriers effecting ability to find work or study ^w	Don't know / Unsure ^v	Urgent response flagvi
 Health issues Physical health issues Alcohol and other drug problems Disability or impairment Mental health issues Psychological barriers e.g., feelings of worthlessness or lack of self-efficacy 						
Financial stress e.g., poverty affecting living conditions, or not affording the clothes, licenses or resources to gain employment						
Labour market disadvantage - Poor English proficiency - Educational deficit - Lack of training and skills - Lack of recent work experience - Issues with obtaining a driver's license - Being an ex-offender						
Social constraints - Unhealthy relationships (e.g., abusive relationships, domestic and family violence) - Experiencing resettlement - Caring responsibilities excluding childcare - Lack of a supportive social network - Difficulties accessing transport - Lack of access to telecommunications - Problems with housing or living arrangements - Sole parent - Issues with accessing childcare						
		Is this participant experiencing complex needs? Tick if one or more domains have been assessed as 'high level'				

NOTES:

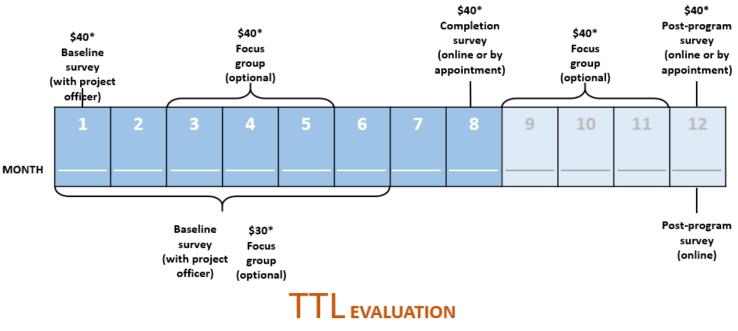
- i) The participant's needs are being met, or are adequately managed and have very little or no impact on their ability to find work or to study;
- ii) The participant may experience some barriers, but it is anticipated that through support they will be mitigated;
- iii) The participant may experience moderate barriers across multiple domains but it is anticipated that through support they will be mitigated;
- iv) The participant may experience several barriers across multiple domains and/or significantly entrenched disadvantage that will require intensive support and planning to overcome in order to find work or study;
- v) At the current time do not have enough information on the participant to adequately make an assessment;
- vi) The participant, or people around them, are assessed to be at risk and require the program staff to arrange supports.

APPENDIX 2



M2W YOUNG ADULTS' PROGRAM EVALUATION SCHEDULE

UWA EVALUATION

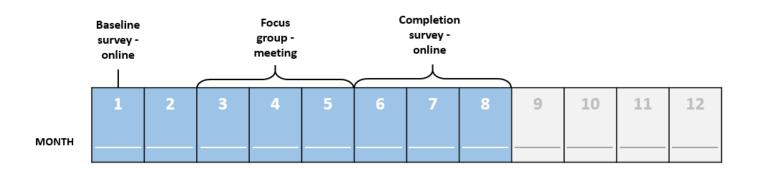


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M2W MENTORS' PROGRAM EVALUATION SCHEDULE



Evaluation conducted by the CSI UWA Evaluation Team:

Professor Paul Flatau - paul.flatau@uwa.edu.au Dr. Mariana Atkins - mariana.atkins@uwa.edu.au Ms. Lisette Kaleveld - lisette.kaleveld@uwa.edu.au Ms. Zoe Callis - zoe.callis@uwa.edu.au

APPPENDIX 3



MEETING NOTES

Mentoring 2 Work - Young Adult & Mentor Sessions Young Adult Name:

Mentor Name: Location: Duration: Discussion: Career Map Plan Review: What was achieved this week?



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Mentoring2Work

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V -							
Anything that didn't go	well?						
Next appointment:							
Actions:					Due date:		
Attendees:	10 1 1 1		r				
Name:	Adult/Mentor:	Organisation – Young Adult/Mentor:			Signature:		
Meeting Checklist:							
Procedure Yes			No	No N/A			
Review actions from previous me	eeting				72		
Review short, mid and long term goals							
Complete discussion notes			\neg				
Complete additional information if applicable							
Confirm next appointment details							
Complete actions list							
Attendees to sign meeting notes							
Take photos of completed activities							
Forward photos to M2W team							



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