



ONE GOOD RELATIONSHIP CAN TRANSFORM A LIFE

*The Design and
Implementation of the
Mentoring 2 Work Project*

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

June, 2022

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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.

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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.

Centre for Social Impact

The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) is a national research and education centre dedicated to catalysing social change for a better world. CSI is built on the foundation of four of Australia's leading universities: UNSW Sydney, The University of Western Australia, Swinburne University of Technology and Flinders University. Our **research** develops and brings together knowledge to understand current social challenges and opportunities; our postgraduate and undergraduate **education** develops social impact leaders; and we aim to **catalyse change** by drawing on these foundations and translating knowledge, creating leaders, developing usable resources, and reaching across traditional divides to facilitate collaborations.

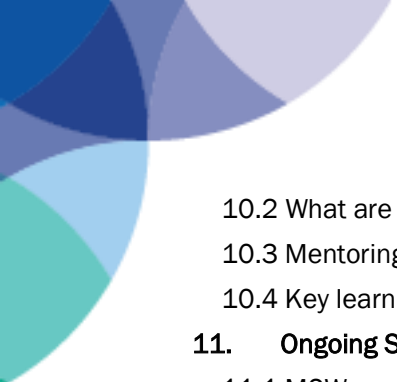


Disclaimer

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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“One good relationship can transform a life. It can become the means by which a young person connects with others ... with their future prospects and potential.” (Rhodes, 2002)



1. INTRODUCTION

Mentoring programs have gained popularity in recent years, especially in relation to work with young people, since they are seen to meet a human need for the giving and receiving of intergenerational support. Mentoring programs vary greatly in scope, aim and duration. There is a growing support for programs that help vulnerable young people explore career options, become career-ready and find employment.

The Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) program was designed to assist unemployed young people find work through mentoring support. Delivered under the Australian Government Department of Social Services Try, Test and Learn Grant, it provided one-on-one mentoring support to unemployed young adults with a focus on career-exploration, job-readiness and looking for, and finding, a job.

This report is not a 'how to' guide on how to run mentoring programs; there is a wealth of resources available that outline effective mentoring practice. Instead, this document closely outlines the M2W program, and draws on implementation evaluation learnings to describe how it was planned, structured and most effectively delivered.

The report is divided into two main parts. The first part discusses employment mentoring and presents the M2W program model. This is followed by a discussion on Program Design, Program Operation and Program Evaluation. The focus then turns to Implementation, covering the various elements of program delivery, including: Program Marketing and Participant Recruitment; Participant Screening; the Matching Process; Participant Training; Mentoring Activities; Ongoing support from Program Staff; Program Closure.

This report outlines how best-practice principles were applied in the design and implementation of the M2W program, and discusses some key learnings that emerged from delivering the program.



2. EMPLOYMENT MENTORING

Mentoring refers to the support offered within a caring, non-professional relationship. The relationship is typically between a younger and older person, where the mentor offers support, assistance, and guidance to the mentee in response to their needs, for example, it could be help with life skills, or career development¹. Mentoring relationships can occur naturally², or formally through institutional matching processes³. Mentoring relationships can be either instrumental or developmental, where instrumental mentoring focusses on achieving specific goals or cementing skills, while developmental mentoring focusses on establishing a mentor-mentee relationship that is close and secure, through which goals or problems can be addressed⁴.

Mentoring offers participants various types of benefits:

- Mentors may act as positive role models, exemplify ideal behaviours and skills for mentees to learn through observation⁵;
- *Mentoring can widen the occupational network of mentees with limited ties to the workforce, increasing their social capital and helping them to secure employment, thereby reducing their risk of long term unemployment⁶;*
- *Mentoring can provide mentees with a positive and safe environment for them to practice life skills, career skills, and social skills thereby promoting resilience and wellbeing⁷.*

Although these benefits typically apply to mentees, benefit flows two ways. Mentors, for example, may experience satisfaction, increased skills and widened social networks⁸.

Employment mentoring involves offering insights into employment processes, developing job-specific skills, networking with industry professionals, and developing ways to address personal and social issues.

¹ Karcher et al., 2005; McDonald & Lambert, 2014; Rhodes, 2005

² Zimmerman et al., 2005

³ Stewart & Openshaw, 2014


⁴ Karcher et al., 2006; Lyons et al., 2019

⁵ Rodríguez-Planas, 2014

⁶ Hällsten et al., 2017; Srivastava, 2015

⁷ Rodríguez-Planas, 2014

⁸ Chun et al., 2012



The transition from studying to working can be a period of significant instability for young people. A lack of understanding about employment options, age-related employment discrimination, or an unstable job market can all result in young people being excluded from the workforce and experiencing unemployment⁹.

Employment mentoring refers to a specific mentoring relationship whereby a person with work and/or industry experience mentors a younger person to assist with gaining employment or furthering their career¹⁰. Career mentoring is associated with significant long-term benefits to mentees, including associations with job satisfaction, career advancement, and increased compensation¹¹.

Mentors can provide both instrumental and emotional support, and can guide a young person through the job-seeking process, while also helping them to develop crucial employment skills¹². Additionally, through mentoring young people may widen their social and occupational contact networks increasing their chances of gaining and maintaining employment¹³.

2.1 Introduction to Mentoring 2 Work

The Mentoring 2 Work (M2W) WA Program was an initiative set up to assist young people experiencing unemployment find work through mentoring support. This initiative paired unemployed young adults (aged between 18 and 25) at risk of long-term unemployment with volunteer mentors, who supported them through the processes of identifying a career, searching for work, and preparing for employment.

The program was funded through the Australian Department of Social Services' (DSS) Try, Test and Learn Fund which was set up to explore ways to support people '*at risk of long-term welfare dependence through small-scale trials aimed at improving workforce participation*'. To be eligible to participate in the M2W program, the person had to satisfy the following criteria: be living in metropolitan Perth, Western Australia; be aged between 18 and 25; have received a welfare payment in the last 6 months; and be at risk of long-term unemployment.

2.2 Mentoring 2 Work Program Background

Phase 1 of the program ran from June 2018 and was expected to be completed by June 2020. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, however, had significant impacts on the employment market and the opportunities available to young unemployed people. In recognition of the increased vulnerability of young people to unemployment because of the pandemic, the DSS granted the program an extension. Phase 2 of the program was delivered between October 2020 and March 2021. Although the core aims of the program remained the same, the program was modified in Phase 2 to address the changing social and employment conditions. This enabled a different approach to be trialled.

Phase 1 ran over 24 months and had a target of helping 240 young adults. Phase 2 covered an 8 month period and had a target of helping 80 young adults. Although Phase 2 was intended to be a

⁹ Hällsten et al., 2017

¹⁰ Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Clausen, 1991; Hawdon, 1996; Kay & Wallace, 2009

¹¹ Allen et al., 2004

¹² Clausen, 1991; Hawdon, 1996

¹³ McDonald et al., 2007

seamless continuation of the first, there was a three-month gap between the end of Phase 1 and the finalisation of the extension agreement and commencement of Phase 2. This interruption necessitated a process of recruiting new staff and redesigning the program model to address the short program time frame and changed socio-economic environment due to the pandemic. Figure 2.1 illustrates the time frames for the two phases, alongside the evaluation activities.

Significant modifications had to be made to the original approach in order to ensure that the target number of young adults were recruited and mentored in the available time. To address the challenge of recruiting sufficient young adults and mentors, the geographic coverage of the program was expanded. During Phase 1 the M2W program was delivered in specific metropolitan Perth regions: in Year 1 the Central region; in Year 2 the Eastern region; and in Year 3 it was extended to the Northern region. For Phase 2 the program was offered across the entire metropolitan area. This wider, more open geographic scoping had implications for recruitment of mentors and young adults, for the matching process and the face-to-face delivery of mentoring sessions. In addition, different recruitment strategies had to be pursued, which are discussed further in Section 6.

Phase 2 also provided an opportunity to reflect on the evaluation findings of Phase 1 and make changes to improve the program structure, streamline the processes and make it scalable in the long term. This resulted in a number of improvements, such as the enhancement of the Toolkit and the development of the website.

This document presents the key learnings from both phases of the program: Phase 1 (pre-pandemic) and Phase 2 (pandemic response).

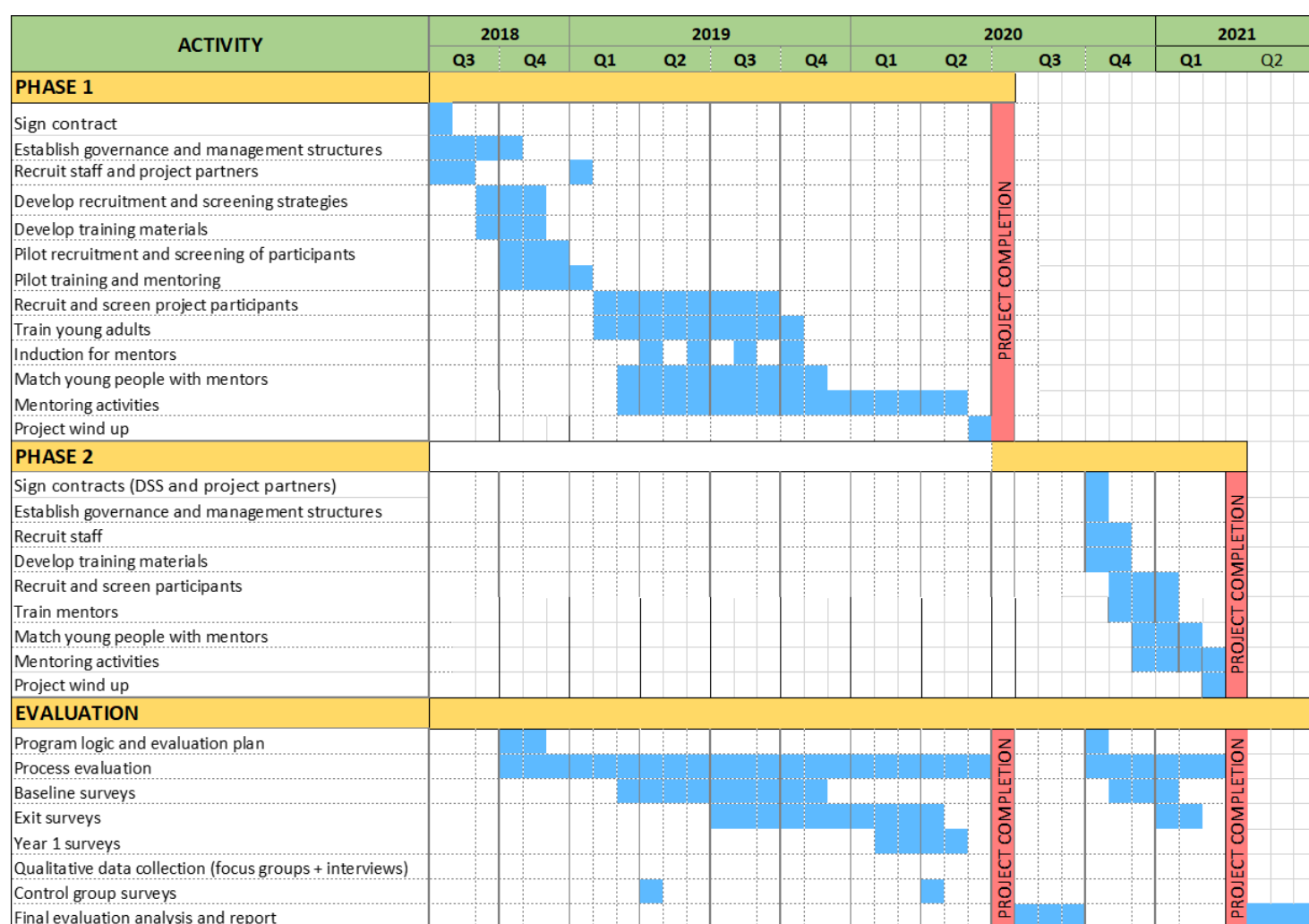


Figure 1: M2W Project Time frames – Phase 1 and 2 and Evaluation Activities

2.3 Understanding the Context: Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment is a result of the interaction between demand-side and supply-side factors:

- demand-side factors, such as the availability¹⁴ and type of jobs¹⁵, the structure of the workforce¹⁶, and attitudes towards younger workers¹⁷;
- supply-side factors, such as the size and level of qualification of the youth labour market¹⁸, along with individual-level factors such as a person's human capital (e.g. level of education, economic resources, and social knowledge)¹⁹ and their contextual factors (e.g. health, mental health, housing)²⁰.

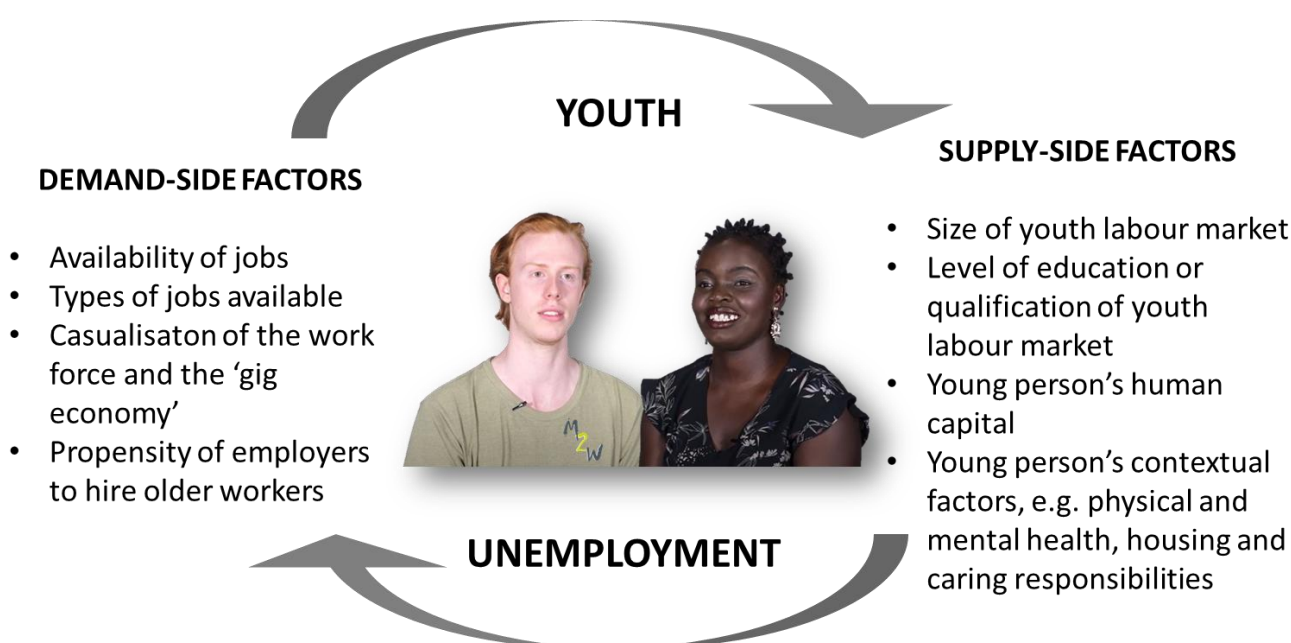


Figure 2: Youth Unemployment Demand Side Factors and Supply Side Factors

The youth unemployment rate in Australia has been double that of the overall Australian population, in spite of increased investment in education and training in the cohort, and unprecedented

¹⁴ Derwin, 2020

¹⁵ Bowman, Borlagdan & Bond, 2015


¹⁶ Yeates, 2019

¹⁷ Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Lathouris, 2020; Sylvester, 2020; Taylor & Walker, 1994; Chiu et al. 2001; Loretto & White, 2006

¹⁸ Bowman, Allan & Levin, 2019

¹⁹ Bottrell & Armstrong, 2007; Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2018

²⁰ Foster & Hagan 2007; Aizer & Currie, 2014; Hedman et al. 2015



prosperity at the national level. It is recognised that effective policy and program responses require alignment of the demand and supply sides of the equation.

Youth unemployment has been strong on State and Commonwealth Government agendas since the 1990s. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought it to the forefront of policy, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison warning young people that the employment market they now face is tougher than that of the 1990s recession²¹. Since 2020, both federal and state governments have invested heavily in training and apprenticeships and construction projects to help stem the flow of young people into unemployment and increase economic productivity²². Even prior to the pandemic, the Australian Government's Priority Investment Approach (2016) identified that young students and parents who are currently unemployed are at significant risk of lifetime welfare dependence, hence the first tranche of the DSS TTL fund was dedicated to initiatives such as M2W that targeted this group.

²¹ McIlroy, 2020

²² Australian Government, 2020; State of Western Australia, 2020



3. PROGRAM DESIGN

Having a clear understanding of what the program is aiming to achieve, and the processes and activities that are needed to achieve the intended impact, are critical for program success. A Theory of Change explains how the mentoring services, and the activities that mentors and mentees engage in, will result in the desired outcomes for participants and for the broader community²³. A Theory of Action articulates the mechanisms through which the activities and processes are delivered to achieve the desired outcomes. A Program Model can further illustrate this by visually organising the inputs, outputs and outcomes that result from implementing the program.

3.1 M2W Theory of Change

The M2W program aims to bring the supply side and demand side together via a mentor who, in addition to identifying and building the young person's strengths and interests, help the young person (with or without the use of their own network) find employment opportunities. Matching a young adult with a mentor provides them with ongoing and sustained personal support as needed, including: encouragement; life skills support; knowledge and career advice; job search and application assistance; connections to employment networks; and support sustaining work. This targeted support enables mentees to: develop their employment vision and aspirations; build skills and confidence; develop proactive job-seeking behaviours; expand their networks; pursue education and training that leads to employment. These attributes make mentees job-ready with skills and motivation. The ultimate goal is for young people to have sustained employment and become independent from welfare support.

There are a number of assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change: that there are suitable jobs available for the mentees; that mentees want to get gainful employment; that employment improves the lives of the mentees; and that mentors will remain committed to participate in the program over time. The theory and assumptions are, in turn, affected by external factors including the labour market (e.g. availability of jobs) and a young person's circumstances (e.g. availability of childcare and stability in the household). This process is illustrated in the Theory of Action in Figure 3.1 below.

²³ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2015

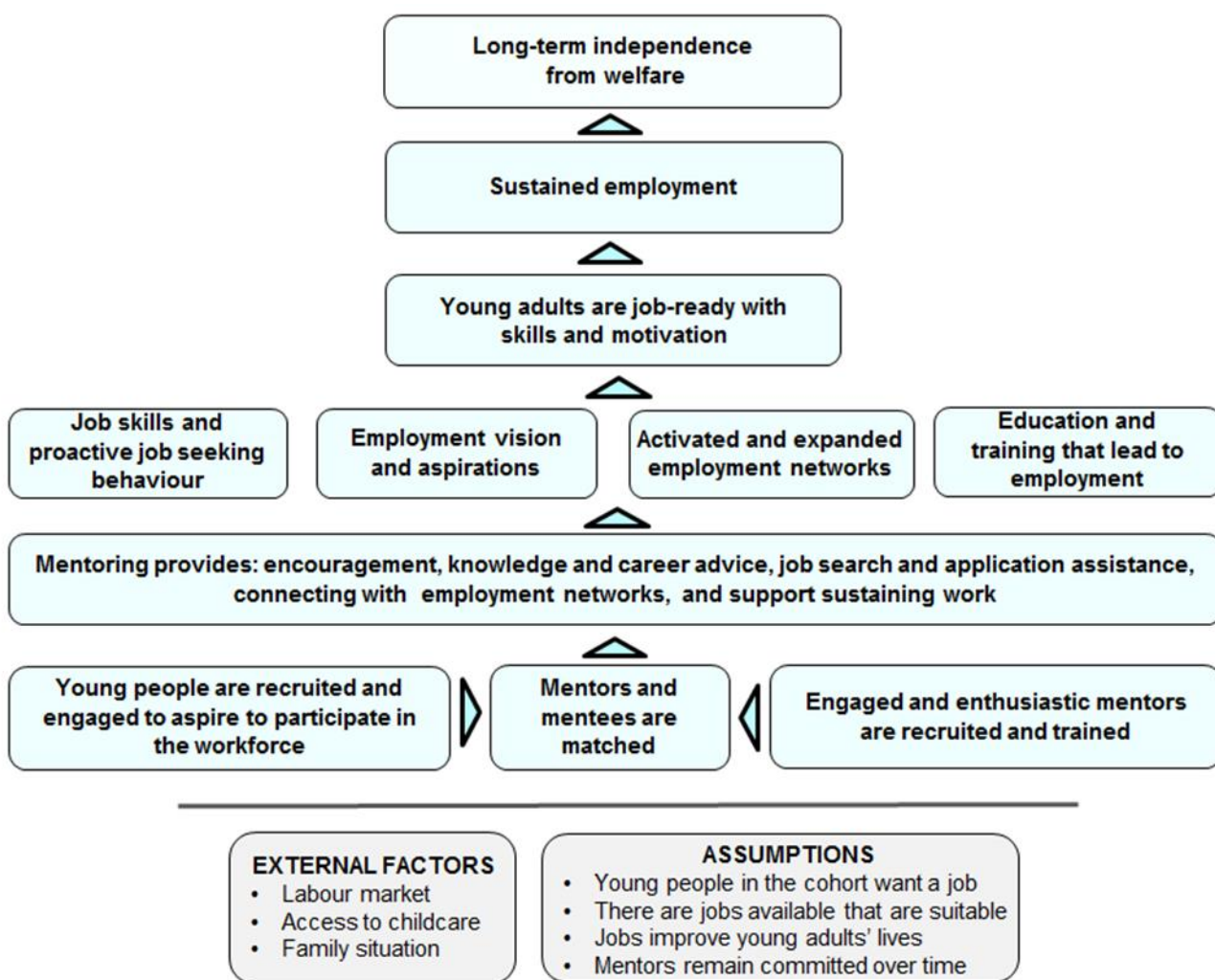


Figure 3: M2W Theory of Action

3.3 Program Model

The M2W program model (Figure 3.2) 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. In brief:

- Eligible young adults were recruited and screened for program participation as mentees by COTA WA;
- Mentors were sourced through a community service organisation (United Way WA) and participated in an induction and training session on the Career Pathway Toolkit (the Toolkit) mentoring resource developed by COTA WA, to prepare them for mentoring;
- Mentors and mentees were matched by program staff;
- Mentees were provided with the Toolkit that guides the mentoring activities;
- Mentoring sessions occurred over a number of weeks with the mentor lending tailored support and assistance pertinent to gaining employment and addressing the young adult's specific needs;

- Mentors were provided with ongoing professional development opportunities;
- Program staff provided coordination, ongoing support, program management and oversight.
- The expected outcomes of the program are that the mentoring activities lead to young adults being job-ready with skills and motivation. Some young adults continue on to education and training that lead to employment. Young adults will have activated and expanded employment networks, find employment and have improved wellbeing. Mentors gain satisfaction and increased skills and confidence because of participating in the program.

3.4 An Evolving Program Model

Phase 2 was designed to respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this phase followed the basic format of Phase 1, a number of changes were made to address the challenges encountered due to the pandemic. The program was adjusted in response to evaluation findings, and with a view to making the program more scalable in the long term. The key changes to the model in Phase 2 are summarised below:

- Recruitment was predominantly through social media platforms with fewer face-to-face recruitment and screening sessions;
- The mentor training program and materials were extensively revised and expanded to prepare mentors to mentor young adults through the program;
- Program staff no longer delivered training of mentees, instead this was provided by mentors during mentoring sessions.
- The mentoring sessions were shortened from a 6-month period in Phase 1 to 6 one and a half hour sessions in Phase 2, due to short time frame.

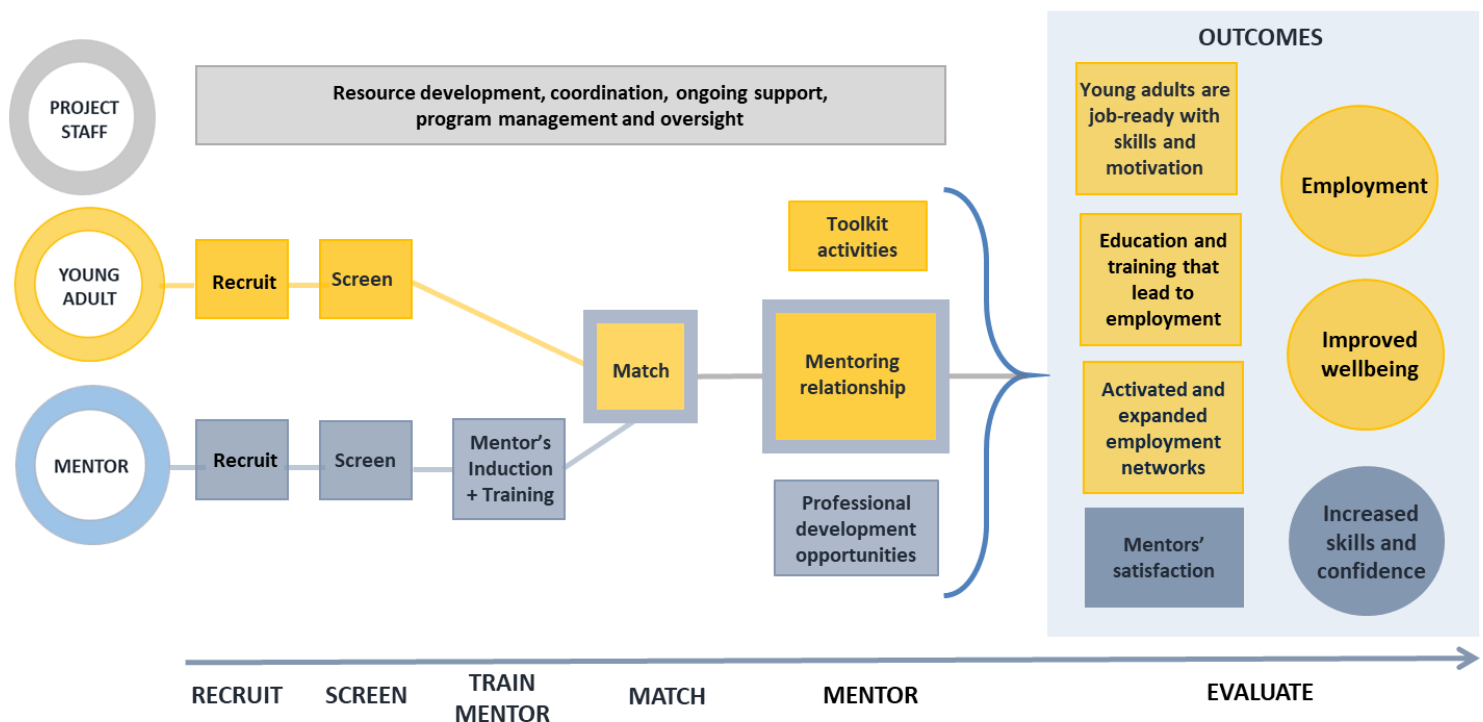


Figure 4: M2W program model

3.5. Definitions, Participation and Engagement Transitions

As the program evolved, it became evident that a number of engagement transitions were possible. Figures 3.3. and 3.4 present the models for capturing participant engagement transitions for Phase 1 and Phase 2.

The following agreed upon definitions were determined by the Evaluation and Project Team and became the basis on which reporting was conducted for evaluation purposes.

- **Recruited** = participant completes an application form
- **Never engaged** = participant does not engage beyond the initial application form
- **Enrolled** = participant meets with COTAWA 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)

3.6 Key Learnings

The compressed time frame was a significant challenge to the way the program was delivered. Ramping up the program in October, after a few months of inactivity, was challenging. Significant changes needed to be made around marketing and recruitment of participants. The holiday period around Christmas and New Year further delayed the implementation of the program, which got under way meaningfully at the end of January. This left a very compressed time frame for matching and mentoring activities and resulted in mentoring relationships continuing beyond the life time of the program. This had implications for the evaluation which could not capture end of program outcomes for this phase. Having sufficient time to properly deliver all the elements of the program, therefore, is key.

PHASE 1 MODEL FOR CAPTURING PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT TRANSITIONS

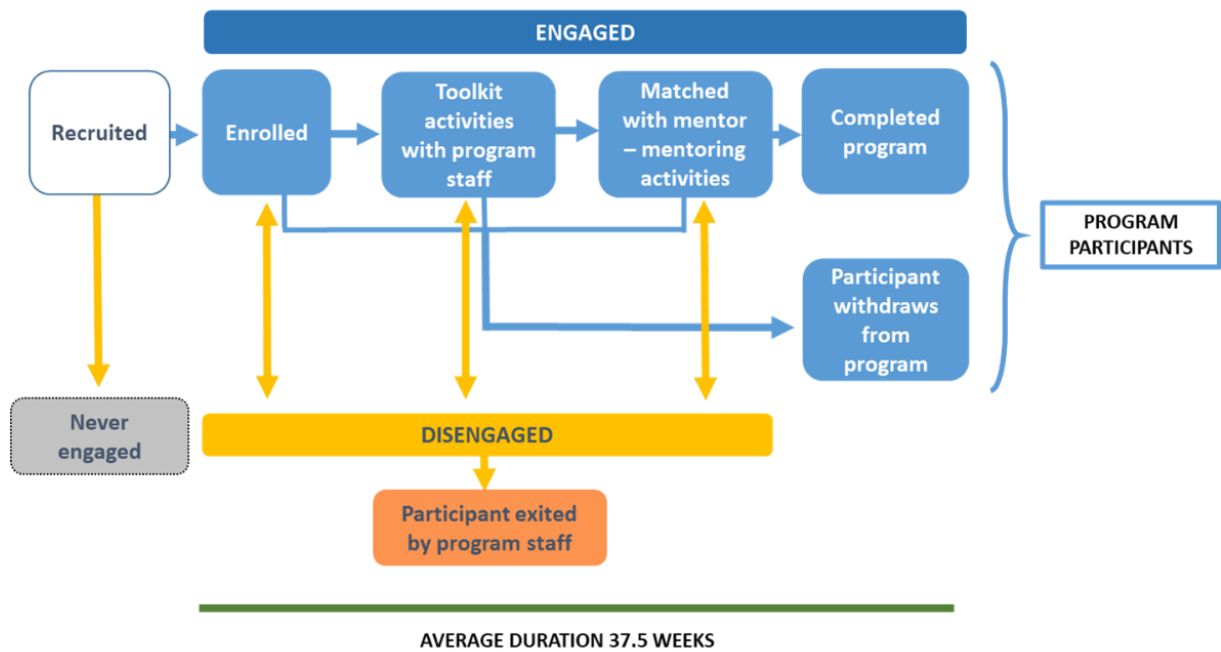


Figure 5: Phase 1 M2W program model for capturing participant engagement transitions

PHASE 2 MODEL FOR CAPTURING PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT TRANSITIONS

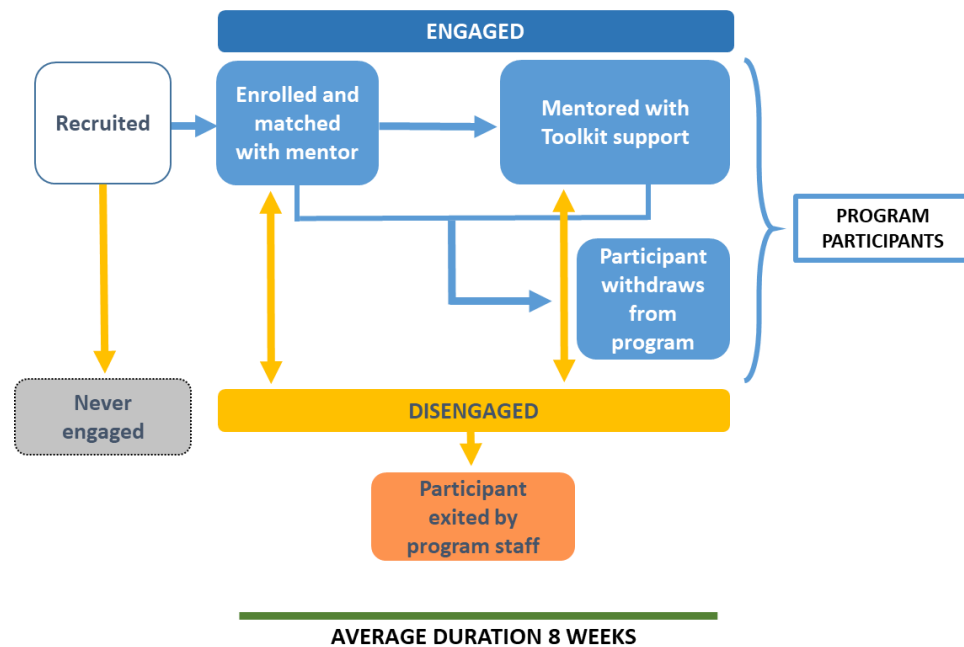


Figure 6: Phase 2 M2W program model for capturing participant engagement transitions

4. PROGRAM OPERATION

There are a number of elements that are known to increase the effectiveness of mentoring programs²⁴. Having sound management and governance structures ensures that the program runs efficiently and effectively. Best practice principles recommend having a Steering Committee, or a formal Board of Directors, to approve program plans, provide inputs and feedback on program decisions, and offer general oversight and leadership. Data and information management protocols are important to be established early in the program design. Additionally, establishing monitoring and reporting systems are essential to track program activities and ensure efficient reporting back to Steering Committee members and funders.

4.1 Program Planning and Design

The proposal of the M2W was prepared by CSI UWA and COTA WA. In line with best practice principles, the program model was co-designed with representatives from community service organisations, employment agencies, peak bodies for business and childcare, as well as potential mentors, employers and unemployed young people. 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 (the young adults the program would serve, the number of mentors required, the duration of program, frequency of meetings, etc.). A detailed program budget was developed that broke down program costs along a timeframe. The proposal was accepted by DSS and the M2W pilot was funded.

4.2 Management and Governance

In line with best practice principles, a number of management and governance structures were established. A governance structure was set up to ensure the legal, ethical and financial accountability of the program, with COTA WA as the backbone organisation. Sub-contracts between COTA WA and major partners were established and staff were hired to implement the program model.

A Steering Committee was established to provide guidance on program design and operation. It consisted of representatives from various service and employment organisations and government agencies. Terms of reference for the Steering Committee were established and meetings were held quarterly to hear how the program was progressing, approve contract payments and offer advice as needed. This Steering Committee structure continued into Phase 2 of the program. Additional members were invited to reflect the changing needs of the program. In Phase 2 Steering Committee members were instrumental in sharing their networks and assisting with the development of revised recruitment strategy.

4.3 Monitoring and Reporting

At the start of the program a communication and branding strategy was set up which included the development of the website, logo and program branding. Policies and procedures were established

²⁴ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2015

for program operations and organisational governance and management: M2W Policy and Procedure Handbook.

An information management system was established that aligned with COTA WA'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). A reporting structure was set up through Activity Work Plans (AWP) that outlined how the strategic plan (aims, objectives and KPIs) would be delivered to the DSS. In addition, data recording systems were set to track data for the program evaluation. For example, spreadsheets were created to capture engagement data for regular updates to the evaluation team. For effective reporting, careful definitions of 'participation' were worked through, and ways of reporting this also needed to be considered. For example, what does 'engaged in the program' or 'withdrawal from the program' mean? When are these points demarcated and how is this data captured consistently?

4.4 Key Learnings

The process of setting up a program of this scale required time to hire suitable staff, enlist Steering Committee members and negotiate contracts with the major partners. There was much preparatory work that also needed to be done before the mentoring recruitment and training could commence. The first few months of the program's life were spent developing and refining the evaluation plan, the marketing and communications plan, the policy and procedural manuals, as well as the training materials. From contract signing these processes took approximately 6 months. It is therefore important to have a realistic understanding of the time needed to set up a program of this scale and complexity.

As circumstances changed and risks were encountered —most notably around young adult and mentor recruitment — practices had to be adapted. Leadership had to adapt the program accordingly and this led to program refocus and a change in the program staff. For example, when there was a new focus on recruitment through Jobactive providers, new staff had to be recruited with different skills and networks. An ability to be responsive to changing needs is therefore critical to ensuring program viability and success.

5. PROGRAM EVALUATION

CSI UWA was contracted by COTA WA to evaluate the program in terms of its success in achieving the specified outcomes as well as its appropriateness for broader rollout. The overall aim of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of M2W at achieving outcomes for young adults. Two types of evaluations were conducted: a Process and an Outcomes Evaluation.

The Process Evaluation²⁵ sought to identify the key factors in M2W's implementation that resulted in effective running of the program and positive outcomes for its participants. The Outcomes Evaluation²⁶ utilised a quasi-experimental design to measure changing outcomes in both a participant group and a control group in order to determine the differential impact of the M2W program relative to standard support offered through employment services, on the outcomes targeted by the program. In addition to these reports, a Mentor and Mentee Feedback Report²⁷ presents the experiences of the mentors and mentees who participated in the post-COVID-19 program extension.

5.1 Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was sought through the University of Western Australia. The following ethical matters were taken into consideration:

- **Informed participation and consent:** The *National Statement for Ethical Conduct in Human Research* states that participant consent must be informed and voluntary. All M2W evaluation participants were provided with Participant Information Sheets outlining the purpose of the evaluation, how the information they provided was going to be used, and the risks and their rights regarding their participation and data. After reading the Participant Information Sheet and having any questions addressed, all participants signed a Participant Consent Form;
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** Participants were assured that no individual would be identified in the reporting of results and that data would be securely stored at CSI UWA;
- **Participant reimbursement:** 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 social considerations which may have had bearing on the evaluations.

²⁵ Atkins, Kaleveld & Callis, 2020

²⁶ Callis, Seivwright, Atkins & Kaleveld, 2020

²⁷ Callis, Seivwright, Atkins & Kaleveld, 2021

5.2 Data Sources

The evaluation employed a number of different evaluation activities and data collection methods as outlined in the Evaluation Plan prepared at the start of the program. The data sources used to inform the evaluation are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 7: Data sources

DATA SOURCE	DETAILS
PRIMARY SOURCES	<p>Stakeholder interviews: program staff Throughout the program</p> <p>YOUNG ADULTS Quantitative surveys - participants 3 time points (baseline, program exit (~6 months), 12 months) Quantitative surveys - control group 2 time points (baseline and 12 months) Program participants focus groups At the end of mentoring Program participants interviews At the end of mentoring</p> <p>MENTORS Quantitative surveys 2 time points (baseline and end of mentoring(~6 months)) Mentor focus groups At the end of mentoring Mentor interviews At the end of mentoring</p>
SECONDARY SOURCES	<p>Document review Program records Evaluation Team and Program Team meeting minutes Steering Committee minutes Learning Pathways Toolkit Mentor training materials</p> <p>Administrative data Activity spreadsheet Activity Work Plans</p> <p>Literature review Academic journals, grey literature (government documents and websites)</p>

Evaluation methods for the young adult participants included surveys (baseline, end of mentoring and 6 months after completion), focus groups (at end of mentoring) and one-on-one interviews (at end of mentoring). Control group participants completed surveys (baseline and 12 months). Mentors received surveys (baseline and end of mentoring) and were invited to participate in focus groups (at the end of mentoring) or were interviewed on the telephone (at end of mentoring). Key program stakeholders were interviewed throughout the duration of the program to track program delivery and process development. Secondary data sources were also tracked and monitored for the evaluation, such as program records, meeting notes and program resources.

5.3 Assessing Mentee's Complex Needs

M2W 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 with varying needs and vulnerabilities. During Phase 1 there was a target that approximately 30% of young adults recruited would have complex needs. This was set 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 (see Appendix) was developed by CSI UWA to be used for two purposes:

1. to enable the M2W program staff 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 officers during Phase 1 and the mentors in Phase 2, without direct input from the young adult. It was designed to be updated as more information came to light. In this way, it was a living document that helped to track vulnerability and needs of the participant, as the relationship between the young adult and the program staff/mentor developed. It was useful in helping to determine when referrals should be made.

5.4 Key Learnings

The mixed-methods evaluation design ensured that both qualitative and quantitative evidence was captured across the lifetime of the program. The iterative nature of the program evaluation ensured that ongoing evaluation findings were communicated to program staff in order to modify the program as necessary. Evaluators supported the program staff with peer-reviewed evidence and advice as the program evolved.

Reimbursing young adult program participants and control group participants for taking part in evaluation activities ensured engagement and quality data. Keeping participants informed and engaged in evaluation activities enabled the evaluators to capture longitudinal data as the program progressed.

6. PROGRAM MARKETING AND PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Attracting and recruiting suitable participants is one of the most critical components of successful mentoring programs²⁸. Realistic and clearly defined program goals and eligibility criteria can be helpful for achieving this²⁹. Recruitment materials and engagement strategies need to be designed to attract both appropriate mentors, whose skills and motivations best match the goals and structure of the program, and suitable mentees, whose needs can be addressed by the program and who have a desire to engage³⁰. Recruitment can take place via informal networks, digital platforms, as well as through formal referral channels. Often a number of recruitment strategies need to be trialled in order to reach the target audience. Adaptable and flexible marketing strategies can help to deliver timely and cost-effective recruitment of participants.

6.1 Mentor Recruitment

A not-for-profit organisation specialising in mentoring programs (UWWA) was subcontracted to recruit mentors for the program. They tapped into their organisation's corporate networks and expanded the recruitment into the broader community.

In Phase 2, mentor recruitment continued through the UWWA channels. Mentors who had participated in Phase 1 were invited to continue in the program and receive a new mentee. In parallel, COTA WA implemented a 'top-down' recruitment strategy. This involved consulting with people in a number of relevant organisations, such as: local government; not-for-profit community organisations, such as YMCA and Multicultural Services Centres; and several employment service (Jobactive) providers. The aim of this strategy was to explain the nature of the program and enlist support in recruiting mentors and eligible young adult participants. Hard copy and electronic flyers were distributed in these sites.

Alongside this, a 'bottom-up' recruitment strategy was also pursued. An advertising agency was hired to help refine the strategy which involved advertising directly for mentors via radio and social media (Facebook and Instagram). The radio script and social media advertising focused on the valuable advice mentors can provide jobseekers to help kick-start their career. This recruitment approach was very successful.

6.2 Mentee Recruitment

As with the mentor recruitment, different recruitment strategies were employed across the duration of the program. During Phase 1 program inception, a 'top-down' recruitment approach was used. This involved consulting with people in a number of relevant sectors, such as local government, community organisations and employment service providers, in order to raise awareness of the program and enlist support in recruiting eligible young adult participants.

As the program evolved, it seemed that the most effective and workable mentee recruitment strategy was through using employment service agencies (Jobactive providers) as the main source of

²⁸ DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011

²⁹ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2009

³⁰ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2015

participants. All Jobactive providers operating at both regional and site level (within the target area of the program) were contacted. COTA WA staff spoke with site managers and consultants to explain the program, gain their support and ideally give their consent to refer young adults into the program from Jobactive.

Initially this recruitment approach was slow since relationships with key agencies and personnel had to be established requiring multiple visits and information sessions. However, once the M2W staff gained the agencies' trust and conveyed the intent of the M2W program and the simplicity of referring young adults, the effectiveness of this strategy accelerated.

The enlisted Jobactive providers then promoted the M2W program through flyers, as well as verbally to groups of eligible jobseekers. The process was expedited further when the employment consultants were able to include the M2W program in the young adults' job plans as an 'approved activity'.

Within the Jobactive agencies the following recruitment approach was followed: M2W program officers held recruitment sessions lasting approximately 15 minutes for potential participants. The sessions presented the key components of the program and highlighted the voluntary nature of participation and the person-centred approach of the program. Expressions of interest were registered during these sessions with the understanding that the program staff would contact the interested young adult within the next few days to invite them to a follow-up meeting. 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.

When the program was granted the extension to deliver Phase 2 of the M2W program to respond to the challenges brought about by COVID-19, a similar recruitment strategy was initially followed: program staff visited Jobactive agencies to reinstate the recruitment process. However, there were a number of reasons why this strategy was less effective³¹:

7. changes to regulations regarding in-person meetings at Jobactive centres meant that young adults were not visiting Jobactive centres and hence could not attend recruitment sessions. This led to many young adults disengaging from the Jobactive services;
8. changes to JobSeeker Payments³², which meant that unemployed young adults had more financial resources at their disposal and less pressing need to seek employment. This made it harder to recruit young adults to participate in the program;
9. changes to mutual obligation arrangements in order to be eligible for Centrelink payments: the obligation to apply for 20 jobs per month was reduced to 4 per month as a result of the pandemic. This made it harder to engage young adults; and
10. social distancing measures effected due to the pandemic restricted program staff from having face-to-face meetings with young adults. It was therefore necessary to target Jobactive consultants and ask them to identify directly potential program participants.

Many of these reasons were related to the changed conditions brought about by the impacts of COVID-19. As a response to these challenges, a 'bottom-up' recruitment approach was adopted via radio and social media, in line with the one developed to recruit mentors. Radio advertisements were aired in a popular radio station with the target cohort. The radio script and social media advertising

³¹ This information was derived through consultation with employment service providers and program staff.

³² Between March and September, the Coronavirus Supplement increased JobSeeker payments by \$550 a fortnight. The supplement was subsequently reduced to \$250

focused on the valuable advice jobseekers can gain from experienced mentors and how they can fast-track job placements.

6.3 Key Learnings

A 'top-down' strategy can be helpful when there is time and resources to develop relationships across a number of organisations and across different operational levels within organisations in order to recruit suitable participants. This strategy was successful under 'normal' economic and social conditions. The pandemic resulted in changes to the recruitment process and highlighted the importance of having flexible recruitment strategies. Indeed, the pandemic offered the opportunity to explore new avenues of recruitment.

'Bottom-up' strategies, through online advertising in social media and via radio, were effective in reaching a wide audience. Although these strategies generated a lot of interest, they required careful screening of potential mentors and mentees as the referral checks provided by the 'top-down' strategy were not in place. Additionally, this recruitment drive could not be targeted to specific geographic areas and hence it captured potential mentors from across the metropolitan area, posing challenges when matching mentors with mentees.

It is important to give enough time for the marketing and recruitment strategy to take effect. Often people need to see an advertisement for an organisation or program a number of times before they decide to respond³³. This is especially the case when a new program is being established and there is limited knowledge within the broader community of what the program is intending to achieve and whom they are targeting.

It is also important to be prepared for the influx of interest when online strategies are implemented. This has implications for staff vetting and signing up prospective participants. Ensuring a balance between mentor and mentee recruitment is vital in order to avoid participants waiting long periods of time to be matched and commence mentoring. This is difficult to do, however having clear lines of communication between all parties working on both the mentor and mentee recruitment, and regular monitoring, assists to ensure a smooth recruitment process.

³³ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2015

7. PARTICIPANT SCREENING

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 whole³⁴. It is also important to screen prospective mentees about whether they have the desire, commitment and time to be mentored effectively³⁵. The screening process should cover important elements of the mentoring relationship, especially around frequency of meetings and duration of commitment³⁶. Having a clear understanding of the goals of the program, time commitment and expectations of the program is 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 project³⁷.

7.1 Mentor Screening

UWWA, who were responsible for recruiting, screening and signing up the mentors, established several screening processes before accepting mentors into the program. 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 COTA WA for inclusion into the mentoring pool. In Phase 1 this process took between 4 to 8 weeks to complete. Due to time constraints in Phase 2, this process was accelerated in order to have mentors ready for induction and training as soon as possible.

7.2 Mentee Screening

In Phase 1 young adults were recruited in person and once they completed the application form, within 48 hours they were contacted by the program staff via telephone to set up an induction meeting. In this face-to-face induction meeting the program structure was outlined and forms were signed (such as the consent forms). This meeting enabled P to gauge the level of interest and

³⁴ Miller, 2008

³⁵ MENTOR, 2015

³⁶ Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, Reddy, & Grossman, 2005

³⁷ Miller, 2008

suitability of the participant for the program. Young people who expressed an interest in the program, and who met the selection criteria, were then enrolled into the program.

Under Phase 2, which relied on online recruitment via radio promotion and social media advertising, screening was important to ensure that people expressing interest in the program satisfied the selection criteria. Face-to-face meetings were arranged between program staff and the prospective mentees. Because of time and resource constraints, however, this changed to telephone interviews. An interview template was developed and young adults were interviewed to gauge level of interest and suitability to the program. This conversation helped determine the type of mentor they were looking for and helped collect information which was used in the matching process.

7.3 Enrolment

As part of the enrolment process, M2W program staff went through the following documents with each participant individually:

- Information Sheet – outlining program description, requirements for participation and participants' rights;
- Code of Conduct Policy – explaining the expectation that both mentors and mentees conduct themselves in a professional and appropriate manner;
- COVID-19 Policy – laying out the Commonwealth and State Government's directives on COVID-19-safe practice, and recommending how and where mentoring meetings should occur;
- Terms of Agreement (Mentor and Young Adult) – outlining the terms of participation in the program. This document was signed by the participants and a witness;

M2W Media Consent Form – seeking permission from the participants to use photographs, audio or film in which they may appear

7.4 Key Learnings

Having a clear selection process is essential to determine the suitability of potential participants. A written screening plan that includes all policies and procedures is valuable in ensuring a smooth process. Having a clear and thorough enrolment process likewise ensured that suitable participants were recruited. As the M2W program evolved different screening strategies were followed to respond to the changing circumstances. The best outcomes were achieved when potential participants were screened face-to-face since this enabled program staff to quickly gauge level of interest and suitability of the program. Communicating program development to the organisation responsible for recruiting mentors was to ensure that the right mentors were being recruited. Sound communication between all parties in the recruiting process was essential.

Time was a critical factor in the screening process. The mentor selection process can be long, as the various references and clearances are checked, and this has to be factored into the young adult recruitment process in order to ensure that there are sufficient available mentors to be matched.

The young adult screening process had to be modified to accommodate the changing socio-economic environment. Program staff had to develop new processes to determine the suitability of the young adults to the program and to capture the mentoring support required. Having a flexible and responsive approach was essential to recruit and enrol suitable participants in the short time frame of Phase 2.

8. THE MATCHING PROCESS

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 as a consideration in the matching process³⁸. The mentor's ability to identify and solve relationship barriers, has been identified as being a strong indicator of relationship success³⁹. Good matches occur when there is a basic compatibility between the youth and mentor in their personalities, interests, and expectations or goals for the relationship⁴⁰.

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 made⁴¹. 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 programs⁴².

8.1 An Evolving Matching Process

Phase 1 of the M2W program trialled a number of matching approaches. The initial matching strategy involved a social event with the aim of enabling young adults and potential mentors to meet. This event enabled the program staff to observe the interaction between the mentors and young adults and helped in the subsequent matching process. Although there is some evidence that allowing mentees to choose their mentor can have positive results⁴³, this approach was discontinued for logistical reasons since it proved difficult to satisfy all the requested matches.

As the program evolved a simpler, more organic matching model evolved. In Phase 1 program staff worked directly with mentees for a period of time before the matching process. This enabled program staff to get to know the young person and determine the type of mentor they needed. They were then able to select the most suitable mentor from the pool of available mentors. Several qualities and attributes were considered when making a potential match. These were:

- 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 identified, the program staff would contact the young adult to provide a general overview of the potential mentor. If the young adult was happy with the match then the program staff would liaise with the selected mentor to brief them on the young adult and share any

³⁸ Spencer, 2007

³⁹ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2009

⁴⁰ Rhodes & DuBois, 2006

⁴¹ Miller, 2008

⁴² Herrera et al., 2000

⁴³ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2015

information deemed to be relevant, such as any mental health issues or complex needs. Mentors were likewise given the option to accept or decline the match. 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.

During Phase 2 this process had to be modified, since program staff were no longer training the young adults prior to the matching process. The matching process was based on the information provided in a mentor preference survey, which outlined the key attributes they were looking for in a mentor, alongside meeting notes. Program staff then matched them with as close a fit as possible from the pool of available mentors.

During the first meeting between the young adult and their mentor they were asked to complete and sign the M2W Commitment Form: Agreement between Young Adult and Mentor. This form outlined the program structure and the expected time commitment of participation. Signing of the form demonstrated a formal agreement to adhere to the expectations of participation in the program.

8.2 Key Learnings

Matching of mentors and mentees is one of the most important components of a mentoring program and is as much an art as a science. It is important to get to know both parties separately (through training sessions and face-to-face meetings, for example) in order to make informed decisions around potential matches. In many cases, having a mentor who is caring and interested in helping the young person is more important than them having experience in a specific field. However, much depends upon the mentoring needs of the young person, whether they are looking for support around developing life skills and gaining clarity around future employment directions, or whether they are wanting targeted advice on specific jobs and assistance on applying for these.

Although some pairings can appear a good match on paper, they may be incompatible in reality. This may not be a reflection on either party, instead it could be that the personalities are incompatible. Mentor-mentee pairings need to be monitored closely, especially in the early phases, to ensure that the relationship is developing positively. Where this is not the case, then program staff must be ready to intervene and rematch if necessary, in order to avoid negative or harmful outcomes. Having clear channels of communication between the program staff, the mentors and mentees to discuss this is critical. Program staff need to be able to respond quickly to requests for rematching.

Ageism was a factor in some pairings. Some young adults perceived retired mentors as not being as suitable as mentors who were still engaged in the labour force. In some cases young adults disengaged from the program or requested a rematch. In these cases careful management of the situation was needed to help young adults see beyond chronological age to the merit of having an older person supporting them.

9. PARTICIPANT TRAINING

Training of mentors and mentees is a critical component of successful mentoring programs^{44 45}. Training programs should cover, among other things, the goals of the program, roles and responsibilities, expectations and boundaries of the relationship⁴⁶. Successful programs also include training in practical considerations, such as communication skills, conflict management, and confidentiality matters⁴⁷.

Mentoring programs that offer opportunities for ongoing training throughout the mentoring relationship have larger positive effects on the mentees than those that did not⁴⁸. For many mentors the best training they receive is the mentoring experience itself and the opportunity to reflect with other mentors about the mentoring experience⁴⁹. Mentee training is no less important and should cover many of the topics addressed with the mentors⁵⁰. 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 issue⁵¹.



⁴⁴ Miller, 2008; Kupersmidt & Rhodes 2013

⁴⁵ DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002

⁴⁶ DuBois et al., 2002; Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005

⁴⁷ Miller, 2008

⁴⁸ DuBois et al., 2002

⁴⁹ Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Atherton, & Pepper, 2000

⁵⁰ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2015

⁵¹ Australian Youth Mentoring Network

9.1 An Evolving Training Approach

A key element of the M2W program was the training component which evolved across the lifespan of the program. In Phase 1 the program staff worked directly with the young adults (post recruitment and before being matched with a mentor) to prepare them to be mentored. A specialised resource, the Career Pathways Toolkit, was developed to guide the training of young adults by program staff which ranged from 4 to 8 weeks, depending on circumstances. Program staff and young adults used this resource to clarify interests, strengths, possible career options and co-designed a career map. These activities were intended to prepare the young adult for targeted mentoring around the career map with their mentor once they were matched. Mentors, on the other hand, had a short induction and training process, with the understanding that most of the support would be given as the mentoring relationship evolved. In this phase the Toolkit was not shared with mentors.

The evaluation of Phase 1 revealed that whilst this preparatory training was helpful for the program staff to get to know the young adults and identify suitable mentors, it was resource-intensive and did not give mentors the opportunity to work through the guided training directly. Some mentors stated that they would have preferred a more structured framework to guide the mentoring sessions and that the Toolkit would have provided that.

In Phase 2 this approach was reversed in order to address the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to test a model requiring fewer resources. In this phase, program staff did not work directly with young adults; instead, they trained the mentors to work through the Toolkit activities with the young adults as part of the mentoring sessions.

The Toolkit was used by mentors and young adults together and offered a scaffold to guide the mentoring sessions and the support provided – especially in the initial phases where they were getting to know one another. This approach was designed to be less resource-intensive for the program since all young adult training was now carried out by the mentors. It was also more empowering for the mentor since it enabled them to tailor the training and support thereby have ownership of the process. Additionally, due to the time constraints of this phase, it enabled the mentoring activities to commence sooner.

The Toolkit was expanded and refined for two target audiences: a Mentors' Toolkit and Workbook providing skills and practical tips on mentoring; and a Young Adults' Toolkit providing tools and resources to explore life goals and career options.

9.2 Mentors' Induction and Training

The Toolkit and the accompanying Workbook were central to the Mentors' Induction and Training Session. Training was delivered in one 3-hour session. Alongside providing key information on the program (expectations, code of conduct, reporting requirements and information on the evaluation), the Toolkit resource provided practical mentoring skills development around topics such as:

- Establishing and building the mentoring relationship
- Active listening and communication styles
- Challenges, conflicts, judgements and problem solving

Practical examples were offered, as well as advice on planning and delivering mentor support through established career coaching frameworks and methodologies, such as: empathy mapping for

engaging with young adults through the SAY THINK FEEL DO model⁵²; tracking progress through the GROW/REGROW model⁵³; and goal planning using SMART goals⁵⁴.

An important element of a mentoring program is understanding what type of support should be offered, and where the boundaries should be set. As part of the training, it was reinforced that mentors are not counsellors, parents, providers, teachers or all-knowing advisors. Instead, a mentor can:

- be a guide, a wise advisor, a partner on the journey, and a trusted friend;
- serve as a mirror for the young adults – helping them see both who they are and who they can become;
- help the young adult feel comfortable in their own skin;
- expose them to new opportunities and ways of thinking;
- establish a strong connection with their mentee and thus be a catalyst for positive change and growth.

9.3 Using the Toolkit – Young Adults

For young adults the Toolkit was designed to be used with their mentors working selectively rather than progressively through all activities, since mentees were at different stages of career readiness. It was designed to encourage high level engagement in career decision-making with the view that this leads to higher levels of long-term enjoyment and success in career decisions. As well as helping young adults meet their (often urgent) short-term goal of getting a job (income), the Toolkit also aimed to explore medium- and long-term career and life planning goals. It was intended to ‘plant a seed of possibility’ and help young people arrive at their ABCD job:



⁵² Gray, 2010

⁵³ Originally developed in the 1980s by business coaches Graham Alexander, Alan Fine and John Whitmore

⁵⁴ Doran, 1981

The Toolkit was divided into three sections:

- Section One – Engagement: Think and Feel
- Section Two – Performance: Say and Do
- Section Three – Next Steps, Resources and Important Information

9.4 Key Learnings

Different approaches to mentor and young adult training were trialled in the program. The training of young adults by program staff (as seen in Phase 1) gave staff insights that helped them identify the mentoring assistance they required to better match young adults with potential mentors. Having the opportunity to get to know the young adults and mentors before matching them was very valuable and resulted in many successful matches and mentoring relationships. This approach was time- and resource-intensive, however. Additionally, some mentors commented that they would have liked to have done the training with the young adults themselves, rather than the program staff doing it. In this phase, the program staff focused on training the young adults rather than the mentors. Although mentors commented that the young adults had a good understanding of the program when they commenced mentoring, many mentors felt ill-equipped to mentor and felt they had to learn by doing, since mentor training and development took place throughout the program..

The training approach followed in Phase 2 was well received by the mentors who felt prepared to start the mentoring. Mentors commented that the Toolkit helped to scaffold the mentoring sessions and provided material to draw on. The training also gave mentors greater confidence to mentor. This approach relied on the mentors to engage the young adults from the start, with program staff providing some support. Some of the matches were less successful, since program staff had less knowledge of the individuals. In cases where the matching was unsuccessful, it was harder to reengage the young adult to be matched with a new mentor.

10. MENTORING ACTIVITIES

Mentoring activities can be categorised into ‘developmental’ and ‘instrumental activities’⁵⁵. *Developmental mentoring* influences young adult’s social and emotional development through the creation of supportive relationships⁵⁶. These mentoring activities focus on joint interests and social situations that 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 becoming⁵⁷. These activities 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 focus⁵⁸. Mentors can help mentees accomplish tasks or goals by providing advice, guidance, explanations or suggestions. These activities facilitate the improvements in skills in order to 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.

Length of mentoring intervention and having reliable and regular contact is associated with positive mentoring outcomes⁵⁹. The reliable involvement of a caring mentor in a young person’s life may increase feelings of security and attachment in interpersonal relationships⁶⁰. 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 contact⁶¹. Conversely, there is evidence that mentoring relationships can do harm when they go wrong in cases of: lack of compatibility in personality or interests; insufficient mentor skills or abilities; irregular or infrequent contact; absence of a close emotional bond; or insensitive mentor behaviour⁶².

10.1 Mentoring Frequency and Venue

In Phase 1 mentors and mentees met face-to-face once a week for a period of 6 months. In some cases, the relationship ended prior to this time, if mentees got a job placement, started study, felt that they had gained sufficient from the relationship or exited for other reasons. In Phase 2, some of the mentoring sessions took place face-to-face, but during mandated periods of separation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, mentoring sessions occurred via telephone or online via Zoom. There was some evidence that mentees and mentors preferred in-person meetings over virtual ones.

10.2 What are the Mentoring Activities?

No two mentoring relationships are alike because each participant brings with them specific needs, skills, personalities and expectations. Additionally, not every mentoring session covers the same

⁵⁵ Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006

⁵⁶ Rhodes, 2005

⁵⁷ Markus & Nurius, 1986

⁵⁸ DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005

⁵⁹ DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005

⁶⁰ Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005

⁶¹ Rhodes & DuBois, 2006

⁶² DuBois et al., 2011

material, since much depends upon the mentee's needs at a given point in time. The M2W program focused on employment, hence most of the mentoring activities could be classed as instrumental activities, focusing on employability skills. Nevertheless, there was also a focus on developmental activities, such as life skills.

Mentoring meeting notes reveal a broad range of support offered by the mentors. These were analysed and revealed a number of activities which can be classified into 6 broad themes, as seen in Table 10.1 which outlines the main mentoring topics discussed, and support given, during the mentoring sessions.

Table 8: Mentoring activities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resume & Cover letters ○ Interview skills ○ Personal Branding ○ Job Search ○ Job Canvassing ○ Career Map Plan / Prospects ○ Work Experience • Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Short / Long Courses ○ Study Decisions ○ Traineeships ○ Apprenticeships • Networking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introductions to mentor's colleagues / contacts ○ Growing own networks ○ Social Media ○ M2W Social Functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Time Management ○ Reliability / Punctuality ○ Respect ○ Communication ○ Confidence ○ Commitment / Focus ○ Personal Grooming ○ Leadership • Goals and Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Goals ○ Outcomes ○ Ambitions • Personal Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Housing ○ Family ○ Financial ○ Driving / Transport ○ Physical / Mental Health ○ Lack of Education ○ Technology
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10.3 Mentoring and Relational Support

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.

Figure 10.1 indicates the richness of support that the mentoring sessions can provide in terms of the focus and agility to address the various barriers to employment, and meeting multi-dimensional needs. It also highlights the highly individualised focus that mentoring can bring to the support.

10.4 Key Learnings

Young adults commented how the tailored support they received from the mentors and program staff was valuable for clarifying employment goals, building job-seeking skills and applying for work. 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 program offered a more personalised and effective approach to looking for employment. In addition to employment-related support, young adults valued the advice and support they received around life skills. This person-centred support model was central to the program's success.

In response to the pandemic, Phase 2 was delivered, in part, remotely, either via telephone or Zoom. Although some participants stated that they preferred face-to-face contact, this trial demonstrated that mentoring could be carried out in this way. This has implications for the way similar programs can be planned and implemented. With careful planning and support, geographic proximity need not be a requisite for participation as either a mentor or mentee.

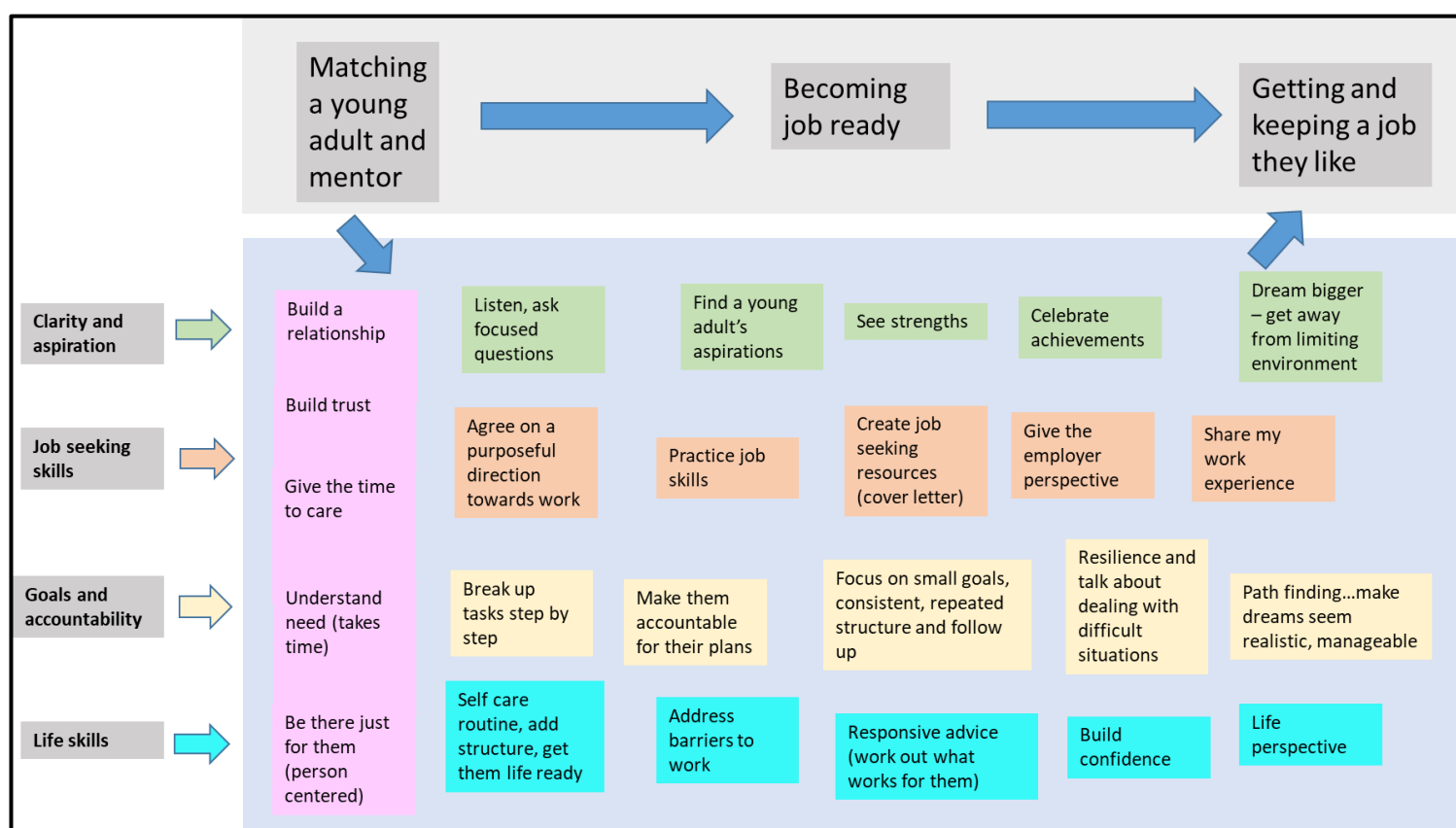


Figure 9: Relational support offered by mentors

11. ONGOING SUPPORT FROM PROGRAM STAFF

Ongoing support of the mentoring relationships is critical for having a successful mentoring program⁶³. Program staff can provide help, guidance and moral support by keeping in regular contact with mentors and mentees and this can ensure that matches last and flourish⁶⁴. 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 or more professionally focused providing opportunities for professional development and networking.

Program staff play a key role in monitoring mentor-mentee relationships. Mentoring relationships can do harm when they go wrong in cases of: lack of compatibility in personality or interests; insufficient mentor skills or abilities; irregular or infrequent contact; absence of a close emotional bond; insensitive mentor behaviour⁶⁵.

Although it is important to properly fund preparatory activities for a mentoring program, resources need to be allocated to ongoing support and training throughout the life course of the program⁶⁶. Guidelines recommend more intensive contact at the beginning of mentoring relationships, becoming less frequent 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 is kept of the content discussed at each meeting is proposed as good practice to monitor how the relationship is progressing.

11.1 M2W Support Model

A unique component of the M2W program was the ongoing support that the program staff gave to both mentees and mentors. This support was varied, depending upon the needs being addressed. During Phase 1 support was informal, such as telephone conversations or text messages, or formal, through regular mentor breakfasts, professional development seminars and workshops, and members'-only social media platforms.

As new mentors joined the program the program staff created 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.

Program staff provided ongoing support in the form of face-to-face and telephone support, mentors' breakfasts and professional development workshops, which are described below:

11.2 Face-to-face and Telephone Support

In Phase 1 M2W program officers arranged and facilitated the introductory meetings between the young adults and their mentors. This was done so that both felt comfortable meeting the other for the

⁶³ DuBois et al., 2002; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2005

⁶⁴ Herrera et al., 2000

⁶⁵ DuBois et al., 2011

⁶⁶ DuBois et al., 2002

first time and conversation could be kept in a relaxed tone. The purpose of this meeting was also to introduce the young adult's Career Map Plan Toolkit activity to continue the momentum struck up with the young adult during the Toolkit phase.

Program officers were available when needed for face-to-face meetings or telephone support. The M2W program 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 program staff were able to step in quickly to lend support, either via telephone or by attending a mentoring session if necessary.

In Phase 2 program staff did not have the same level of personal contact with young adults, but they were available to lend support via telephone sessions as needed.

11.3 Mentors' Breakfasts

In Phase 1 regular breakfasts were held for mentors to meet the program 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 program staff 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. These events did not continue in Phase 2 due to the short timeframes and revised program model.

11.4 Professional Development Workshops

In Phase 1 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.

11.5 LinkedIn Group

In Phase 2 a mentors' M2W LinkedIn group was set up by program staff to offer support to the mentors. Mentors posted questions pertinent to the mentoring sessions and participants and program staff provided solutions.

11.6 Key Learnings

Providing ongoing support to both mentors and mentees was a key component of M2W. In Phase 1 mentors were given a short induction process before they commenced mentoring which was intended to take place over a period of 6 months. In this phase, ongoing support was crucial to provide additional training and guidance in the mentoring process. Networking breakfast events and professional development workshops were able to keep the mentors engaged and connected with each other. These events helped to create a community of mentors who felt valued and supported.

Phase 2 trialled different approaches to supporting the mentoring relationships. In this phase, online support via a LinkedIn group proved to be effective in providing ongoing assistance to mentors.

PROGRAM CLOSURE

Ending the mentoring relationship has to be carefully managed to support all participants⁶⁷. This should form part of the program's policy and procedure whether the relationship runs the full course, or whether it terminates early⁶⁸. 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.

12.1 M2W Program Closure

In Phase 1, the 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 program staff 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 offered the opportunity to thank and acknowledge the important role that the mentor played. The program staff would suggest that the mentee and mentor maintain 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 program staff in note form and reported as the final contact.

When this process could not take place, the program staff would have the conversations separately with the mentor and the mentee. If either party could not be reached 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.

Due to the short time frames, none of the mentees in Phase 2 were able to have a formal program closure. Young adults and mentors were informed that the program had come to an end and that mentoring support from program staff would cease. Participants chose to continue with the mentoring outside of the formal program.

⁶⁷ Miller, 2008

⁶⁸ MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2009

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 at risk of being financially disadvantaged and welfare dependent for their whole lives.

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 trialled different approaches across the two phases to address young adult unemployment through acknowledging the many different personal, social and environmental factors that create barriers to a young adult gaining employment.

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