



Career Development

Settling in a new country can require people to look at their careers in new ways. Mentoring provides an opportunity to learn about how one's occupation is practised here, to adjust career goals or set new ones if necessary, and make future plans.

Mentees will have already received some general job search training and support prior to participating in the mentoring program. They should already have an idea of which career direction they would like to pursue; however, during the course of the mentoring relationship, mentees may need assistance with

- setting career goals commensurate with their skills and experience.
- developing a strategy to achieve career goals.
- gaining relevant professional skills and knowledge.

4.1 Setting career goals

It can be difficult to set specific career goals if a person does not have a complete understanding of the profession as it is practised here and has not had the opportunity to speak with people who work in the field.

A mentor's critical assessment of the mentee's career goals may lead to the identification of barriers, professional development needs and/or alternative career choices which may be as or more attractive. Take time to conduct a "reality check" of the mentee's short-term and long-term career goals. What are the assumptions and rationale behind them? Do the mentee's "assets" match the career choice? Like all job seekers, newcomers sometimes underestimate, or inflate, their potential. Mentors may agree that the mentee is absolutely on the right track, or may suggest alternative career paths for the mentee to consider that will help them to meet their goals. Work together to assess career goals and aspirations of the mentee, and the best way to work towards achieving them.

Setting career goals may include

1. changing or confirming the kinds of positions which the mentee would like to target in his or her job search.
2. identifying professional development needs and lining up options.
3. identifying and considering alternatives to the mentee's first career choice if necessary.
4. developing a short-term strategy for securing employment and aligning it with a long term strategy for achieving career goals.
5. developing strategies for transfer to a new industry, sector or occupation if necessary.

Together you can

- explore transferable skills and alternative career options (if relevant).
- highlight career options which the mentee may not have considered.
- shed light on the pros and cons of different career options.
- discuss possible rewards and challenges of the chosen career direction.
- work on an action plan.
- consult Networking and Researching your field for additional suggestions.



4.1.1 Tips

For mentees

- Take charge of managing your own career. No-one will do it for you.
- If you would like to revisit your career goals, share why.
- Be adventurous. There may be career options in Canada which were not available in your country.
- Be inquisitive. Even if you are confident about your career goals, discuss the rationale of your choice with your mentor. She or he may have new insights for you.
- Remember the difference between “information” and “advice.” Be prepared to make your own decisions.
- Be prepared to do more research about your field and to revise your resume to suit your new direction. Speak to your coach about career counselling options available to you.

For mentors

- Ask for permission to provide suggestions and constructive feedback.
- Ask probing questions that will help the mentee explore more about why he or she may want to refine their career goals and what the benefits may be.
- Remember that the mentee will make his or her decisions. These may differ from the path you may have suggested.
- Differentiate between short- and long-term goals.
- Provide honest, specific feedback.
- Refer the mentee to speak to colleagues who are in the same role that the mentee is interested in pursuing.
- Consult your HR department for internal resources, or for current advice on career planning and development.
- Remind your mentee that they may be a few steps away from achieving their career goals. Assist the mentee with developing an action plan to reach their goals.
- Address expectations. It is easy for anyone to get discouraged if they expect immediate results within a short time frame.

4.2 Strategy for next steps

Some mentees will make a smooth transition into their field of choice, some will take a longer route and others will embark on a new direction. The mentoring relationship can provide insight, strategies and support for what follows.

Together you can

- differentiate between short and long-term career goals.
- identify steps that can be taken to reach these goals and assign milestones; for example, volunteer work, certification, courses.
- strategize how to overcome challenges and barriers.
- plan the transition period between careers; for example, working at one job while taking courses to prepare for another.
- discuss each of your own career paths to-date. Were they linear? If not, how did you make the transition from one to another?

Strategy for next steps / Tips (continued)

- refer back to sections of the online Handbook such as Researching your field. Come up with decision-making criteria. For example, what tradeoffs between earnings and career potential can the mentee accept? Or how would one know if a job is a good Career move or career-killer?
- analyze jobs opportunities to identify their future potential and not only the immediate benefits.

4.3 Professional development

The ability to learn is an essential component of building and maintaining a career. The mentee may already know a lot about training and professional development in their field. The most effective discussions within the mentoring relationship will likely focus on what professional development means for the mentee. Based on the career goals established, identify gaps in knowledge and discuss professional development opportunities that the mentee can pursue such as certifications, courses and appropriate skills development to help them reach their career goals.

The amount of time you spend on this topic will vary depending on whether or not the mentee has decided to change or develop his or her career goals. A change in direction may require learning about training and professional development opportunities in the new field.

Together you can

- discuss the importance of professional development in your field and for the mentee personally.
- talk about what employers value.
- explore options for specific professional development areas relevant to the mentee's goals.
- create an action plan.

4.3.1 Tips

For mentees

- Take advantage of the mentoring relationship to ask questions about training and professional development options.
- Be open to taking courses, workshops or seminars. They are also a great way to meet people and network with them for possible career opportunities. Make an honest assessment of how professional development fits into your personal life and budget. Share this information with your mentor.

For mentors

- Relate professional development to career advancement.
- Bring information on publications and websites related to professional development opportunities in your field that are offered outside the workplace, or within. Explore whether the mentee might be able to participate in any professional development activities in your workplace.
- Provide honest feedback and direction if necessary on the mentee's chosen training or professional development options.
- If the mentee requires additional support, discuss referring him or her back to the coach.
- Consult your HR department on what they look for in a candidate in terms of professional development.
- Update yourself and keep current on professional development opportunities in your sector so you can direct your mentee appropriately.