

TRAINING FOR **EFFECTIVE MENTEES**

Supporting Mentorship
Experiences for Coaches



Coaching Association of Canada
Association canadienne des entraîneurs

Training for Effective Mentees: Supporting mentorship experiences for coaches

By Catalina Belalcazar, Andrea Johnson and Bettina Callary

Sport organizations are increasingly turning to mentorship programs as a powerful way for coaches to learn from their own experience by working with a mentor.

To support the development of women in coaching, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) has been leading Women in Coaching programs for over 20 years. During this time, the CAC has used mentorship as a foundation for resources and programs, such as the Enhanced Female Mentorship program and the Black Female Coach Mentorship Program. In 2021 alone, the CAC was able to support the development of over 100 women coaches through mentorship programs.

It's important that mentorship programs are set up strategically to optimize support for learning. Often, mentors are provided training to work with mentees, such as NCCP Mentorship. But each mentee doesn't necessarily receive equal training. This gap was reinforced in a review of the CAC's mentorship programs. The review showed that while the mentors appreciated their training, the mentees appeared unsure of how to make the most of the program. For example, what were the roles and expectations of the mentees?

In this blog, we describe how we took an evidence-based approach to create Training for Effective Mentees, which is available for the sport community. This new, free training is now being used by the CAC for its women in coaching mentorship programs.

The science behind Training for Effective Mentees

Andrea Johnson, CAC's Project Coordinator for Diversity and Inclusion, took on the task of figuring out how to assist women coaches to be more effective as mentees. Andrea called on Bettina Callary and her graduate student, Catalina Belalcazar, from Cape Breton University to apply for a SIRC Match Grant to fund the research project, which was further supported by CAC funding. Together, they came up with a 2 phase study that culminated in the creation of the Training for Effective Mentees resources.

The study's first phase consisted of focus groups with mentees from the 2020 cohorts. Mentees noted that they wanted specific guidance on the expectations for the mentee to build the relationship with their mentor.

“The [introductory] presentation focused on the qualities and the experience [of mentees], but not 100% on how to get the most of the mentee role – I would have appreciated a meeting a month later to check on the progress, it was a lot of information, good information, but a lot.”
– 2020 CAC mentee

Mentees provided recommendations to strengthen the preliminary, informal training at the beginning of the program. Their recommendations included topics to cover, mandatory activities, and more time to connect with other mentees. The mentees also wanted ongoing support and opportunities to connect throughout the program as a cohort.

“Whenever someone says, ‘do this’ [but doesn’t provide the time to do it], it never really gets done.” – 2020 CAC mentee

From this initial research, the team developed a plan for mentee training involving 3 group workshops with a facilitator. The team also created activities for mentees to do on their own, with their mentors, and in workshops. There’s a schedule provided for completing the workshops and activities, and opportunities to reflect with other mentees and their mentor.

The CAC developed 3 resources to support the training plan for mentees: a facilitation guide, presentation deck and a workbook. The resources are based on the Female Coach Mentorship Model and the Mentorship Guides for Advancing Women in Coaching ([Coaching Association of Canada and Canadian Women & Sport, 2017](#)).

In May 2021, a new cohort of mentees in the CAC’s mentorship program were all women coaches. They were the first to pilot the 3 workshops titled Training for Effective Mentees. In this second phase of the study, the research team evaluated how the pilot had unfolded by holding focus groups with mentees, mentors and a facilitator. Mentees described the training as valuable and as having involved resources that were applicable and intuitive to use.

“I enjoyed the [workshop] sessions, getting to know the mentees, and getting to know a little bit about what the mentors do. I really like the workbook; it gives some interesting personal reflection that I otherwise would not do on my own.” – CAC mentee

Overall, they identified that the resources helped them be more effective and empowered mentees to create the mentorship experience they wanted.

“We are getting different experiences, and that was left for us individually to figure out and communicate to our mentor, which I liked, but I also liked the guidelines in the workbook. I never felt like I didn’t know what I was doing. It was clear that my job here is to show up and learn new information to use. I thought it was well defined.” – CAC mentee

Ultimately, for mentees to get the most out of their mentorship experience, it’s important that they receive support through training and resources that build or refine their skills.

How sport organizations can optimize mentee training

The research findings led to 3 key messages for sport organizations to consider when facilitating mentee training within mentorship programs.

- 1) Mentees want to be held accountable for completing the workbook and reading the mentee guide, on their own, with their mentors and during the workshops.
- 2) To foster connections and support between mentee cohorts, mentees want opportunities to connect with each other during and outside of workshops. This can lead to community building, which mentees can continue to enjoy post-training.

- 3) Mentees want a learning environment that promotes a sense of agency and self-direction. By allowing mentees to voice topics of interest and preferences for their learning, they're encouraged to lead their training and find value in the program.

This research indicates that Training for Effective Mentees provided mentees with the knowledge, connections and tools to become an effective mentee in a mentorship program. The training provides the opportunity for mentees to learn more about their role and responsibilities in a mentoring relationship, while building a community with the other mentees and mentors.

While this project focused on mentorship programs for women coaches, delivered by the CAC, measures were taken to create flexible training resources. The Training for Effective Mentees resources are available to support the development of effective mentees in any mentorship program for coaches, regardless of gender, sport or context.

Recommended resource

Download the free [Training for Effective Mentees resources](#).

About the Coaching Association of Canada

The Coaching Association of Canada unites stakeholders and partners in its commitment to raising the skills and stature of coaches, and ultimately expanding their reach and influence. Through its programs, the CAC empowers coaches with knowledge and skills, promotes ethics, fosters positive attitudes, builds competence, and increases the credibility and recognition of coaches. www.coach.ca | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

About the author(s)

Catalina Belalcazar is a Ph.D. student in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa with Bettina Callary and Brad Young as co-supervisors. She graduated in 2021 with an MBA in Community Economic Development through sport coaching from Cape Breton University. She is a scholarship recipient from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Catalina has a sport background in soccer and basketball. She also has experience in a support role for coach development. Research interests include coaching Masters athletes and flourishing community development through sport.

Andrea Johnson is the Project Coordinator, Diversity and Inclusion, at the Coaching Association of Canada. In this role, she manages a variety of mentorship programs, develops resources for coaches and sport administrators, and supports CAC partners in their equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. Andrea began to pursue a career in sport management after completing her graduate degree at the University of Ottawa. She focused her education on studying gender equity issues in sport.

Bettina Callary, Ph.D., is the Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Sport Coaching and Adult Learning and an associate professor in the Department of Experiential Studies in Community and Sport at Cape Breton University. She researches coach education and development strategies, coach developers, and psychosocial understandings of inclusive coaching (for example, coaching Masters Athletes, women coaches, Indigenous coaches). Bettina is the Editor-in-Chief of the International

Sport Coaching Journal. She is also an alpine ski coach, swim coach and coach developer. You can follow her on Twitter @BettinaCallary.