

Fostering the Future of the Union

A guide to establishing a
mentoring program in your
local union

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For more information and resources, please contact:
Unifor Education Department
education@unifor.org

Sections of this guide have been adapted from, *The Next Generation: A Handbook for Mentoring Future Union Leaders*, by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2012; the *Manual for UNI Mentoring Program* by UNI Global Union; and *Mentoring-in-a box: Technical Women at Work* by National Centre for Women & Information Technology.

Why Do We Need a Mentoring Program?

Committing to supporting an ongoing process of renewal is vital for building a strong, vibrant, and dynamic union. The Statement of Principles found in Unifor's Constitution recognizes that in order to build the union, we must commit to supporting an ongoing process of renewal. Several locals also reinforced this commitment during the Local Union Task Force meetings. In fact, the Task Force put forward the recommendation to establish a formalized mentoring program.



To review the full list of recommendations from the Local Union Task Force please visit unifor.org/lutf.

Nurturing and encouraging the next generation of activists, and staying open to new ideas and ways of doing things are essential to this process of renewal. This sentiment was echoed across the country during the Local Union Task Force meetings. There is a well-recognized need for more effective ways of connecting Unifor members, across generations to enhance sharing of knowledge, skills, insight, and experience from one generation of activists to the next emerged as a prominent theme. This is what the Unifor Mentoring Program offers.

What does the program offer?

A mentoring program can assist the mentee by enhancing their knowledge of the union and its history, increasing commitment to the union, assisting personal growth, and supporting them in avoiding political pitfalls. On the other hand, mentors gain a sense of personal satisfaction from empowering future leaders, reflecting on their personal obstacles and successes, and giving back to their union. Unions also benefit from the transfer of knowledge and history from one generation to the next. The program's feedback mechanism can also help identify barriers for members of equity seeking groups, and can support our broader equity agenda detailed in the Equity Audit report.

Where does the local fit in?

Local unions are central to the process of renewal and have an important role to play in building the next generation of Unifor activists and leaders. Not all Unifor local unions look alike. Single unit local unions can be small or large, and amalgamated locals can vary in size and geography. One thing is clear; there will always be a need to mentor new activists and leadership in every single local union.



Informal mentoring

Mentoring happens informally across the union every single day, and people often begin a mentoring relationship with little or no assistance from their organization. Many do not even think of it as mentoring; they simply consider it part of their job.

While informal mentoring can be helpful, it also tends to reinforce existing political dynamics in a local union, limiting fair and equal access across the membership. Mentors more commonly reach out to others of the same gender and/or racial/ethnic background. Most importantly, these informal approaches often reinforce gender and race dynamics in our union. Relying on informal mentoring often leaves women and workers of colour without access. For a mentoring program to be effective, inclusive and accessible to all, it must be formalized.

Formal mentoring

Formal mentoring takes place when the union takes an active role in setting up the mentoring relationship and provides ongoing support as needed. The very existence of a formal program makes mentorship available to all union members who seek it, and assists in enhancing diversity within the union leadership.

Formal mentoring puts in place a process for how the mentor and mentee are matched, it outlines how long the relationship will last and how often mentor and mentee will meet; and equips participants with standardized tools to measure their success and address challenges.

Steps to a formal mentoring program



1. Select a program coordinator to publicize the program, co-ordinate matching and communicate goals to participants.



2. Recruit participants by discussing the mentoring program at all union meetings where any new members are present. Consider displaying a mentorship poster with contact information for the coordinator.



3. Identify the needs of the mentee through a written survey or interview.





4. Identify potential mentors and create a mentor database.

Administrators of the program should seek recommendations from leadership for mentors, including retired members. A written survey from potential mentors may be useful.



5. Match mentors with mentees. Account for the needs of the mentee and their comfort level through an equity lens.



6. Provide an opportunity for an introduction between the mentee and the mentor. This is an opportunity for both to identify needs and goals, discuss strategies, and develop a working plan for frequency of meetings. A formal mentoring worksheet can be completed. The mentoring agreement should include a formal end date; a one-year period is common.

As a mentor, you should:	As a mentee, you should:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Share your own history and experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Share your own history and experiences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Engage in problem-solving and self-reflection to enhance mentee's learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Remain open to the process of mentorship
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Keep the mentorship focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reflect on the work and outcomes to enhance your learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Encourage mentees to move beyond their comfort zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Articulate the challenges you want to address
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Be open to your own learning and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Be open to your own learning and development



The mentoring program coordinator should:

- ☐ Solicit feedback from participants at various stages of the mentoring program
- ☐ Make adjustments to the program as needed
- ☐ Combine mentoring with broader leadership development and training
- ☐ Use the mentoring program to help identify barriers for equity seeking groups and consider ways to address these
- ☐ Evaluate the effectiveness of the mentorship arrangement overall, and on a case by case basis

Take the first step

The Unifor Education Department is here to help get you started! Creating a new program can be a challenge but the union has a ton of resources available at your fingertips to assist. These include template style documents to help you recruit members wishing to participate in your Local's mentoring program, a planning worksheet to help mentors and mentees get off to a good start, a meeting template to help keep the mentorship focused and on track, and a feedback form to evaluate the mentorship and help identify next steps for the mentee.

There are copies of the templates at the back of this guide and also available online at unifor.org/mentorship

The Education Department has also created a poster and a PowerPoint presentation with speaking notes to help promote your local's mentorship program.

If you have a question or need additional resources, all you need to do is ask.

Contact the Education Department and let us know what you are looking for; email education@unifor.org, or reach out to the National Servicing Representative assigned to your local.





Local Union Mentoring Program Application

Member Information

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Unifor local union unit number:

Workplace (if necessary):

Demographics Information

Unifor is committed to equity and diversity. As part of our commitment to foster equity and inclusion and to ensure that the union better reflects the diversity of our membership at all levels within the union, we are tracking participation in mentorship programs from coast to coast to coast. Please note that any information collected with respect to equity will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Please indicate if you identify as belonging to any of the following categories (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal or Indigenous | <input type="checkbox"/> Woman |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, non-binary | <input type="checkbox"/> Worker of colour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worker with a physical, mental health and/or cognitive disAbility | |

Age:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 18-30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 | |

Do you have a mentor gender preference?

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No | If yes, please indicate your preference:
_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | |

Describe the union activities that you have been involved in

(This includes elected positions, standing committees, union education courses that you have taken, rallies you have attended, community solidarity building activities, etc.)

**What hopes do you have from the mentoring program?
What are your goals and objectives?**

Have you already been working toward the goals stated above? If so, how?

What are your top three strengths as a Unifor member that you believe can be further developed through mentoring?

What are your short and long-term activist/leadership goals?

What specific knowledge and/or skills do you hope to learn from a mentor?

How will your participation in a mentoring program benefit the members of your local? (Consider ways in which you can share what you have learned with members)

Additional comments:



Worksheet for Planning the Mentoring Relationship

Date:	
Mentor:	Mentee:

When entering into a mentoring partnership both parties agree to a shared commitment and effort. This worksheet can be completed together at your first meeting and it helps to document decisions you jointly make about the work ahead. It is an important tool to keep you both on track throughout the mentorship period.

Refer to this sheet at each meeting to be reminded of agreements you made at this first meeting, use it as the basis for decision-making and as needed adjust your plan as you proceed.

1. Clarify roles

The role of a mentor is to share expertise, advise, advocate, coach, and support. The role of the mentee is to seek advice, stay open to learning and take steps toward growth.

Write comments or clarifications you wish to make about your role.

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2. Establish purpose

Mentoring for its own sake is not the purpose of this program. This program seeks to empower the next generation of union activists and contribute to renewal.

Record your specific purposes for entering this mentoring partnership (for example, to learn from one another about a particular topic or to develop new defined skills, such as running meetings or negotiating contracts).

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3. Document initial goals

What do you wish to accomplish by working together in the mentoring relationship?

Discuss and record your short-term and long-term work goals. You will likely continue refining these goals and setting new ones as you meet in the weeks ahead.

4. Establish mentoring timeframe

How long should your mentoring relationship last? Having a clear endpoint can make you more productive in your time together and help you stick to a schedule. Consider a target date of six to twelve months ahead. Plan a mid-point meeting to reflect on progress halfway to your goal.

Describe your timeframe here. Set your mid-point check-in date.

5. Plan your work together

Record when, where, and how frequently you will meet. Agree to maintain momentum by keeping to your meeting schedule, but discuss what you will do if one of you needs to postpone a meeting.

Discuss and record your regular meeting plan as well as your contingency plan.

6. Plan your work together

Mentoring works best when the participants can interact as needed, but it is important to set some ground rules. Are unscheduled drop-in meetings acceptable? What kind of response time can each of you expect when the other leaves a message by phone or e-mail?

Briefly note your preferences and expectations.

7. Discuss how to give and receive constructive feedback

In a healthy mentoring partnership, both parties are able to give and take constructive feedback. A mentor may give critical input to help a mentee learn a new skill, improve methods, or build awareness. In turn, a mentee may offer a recommendation or ask for a different kind of, or more support from the mentor.

Discuss and record how you prefer to give and receive critical feedback. How will you ensure the feedback and partnership remains respectful and productive for both of you?

8. Determine your next meeting date and time



Local Union Mentoring Meeting Template

This meeting plan will help you structure your meetings, document activity between meetings, guide discussion about progress toward meeting specific tasks and broader goals, and establish a work plan for moving forward. Complete this meeting template jointly at each meeting.

Date:	
Mentor:	Mentee:

1. Agenda

Note topics you want to discuss, list items identified for future discussion from your last meeting plan and any new items for discussion.

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2. Work update

Review the meeting plan agreed to in your last meeting and list progress toward completing tasks. Identify tasks that were completed and those that might have presented a challenge. Discuss and note recommendations for completing unfinished tasks.

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3. Upcoming work

Describe upcoming tasks – those identified as incomplete above and any new tasks. List any supports or resources necessary to achieve these tasks. Identify ways to obtain required resources and, if applicable, who will provide the supports needed to complete tasks.

4. Goals progress

Use this table to track your progress toward meeting work goals determined in previous meetings.

Goals	Actions (What will you do, who will help, and resources required)	Status: Not Started (NS), Ongoing (O), or Completed (C)

5. Items for next meeting

List discussion points and action items you want to discuss at the next meeting.

Next meeting date:



Local Mentoring Program Feedback Form

This evaluation form should be completed during your final formal meeting together. This form provides you with an opportunity to discuss what worked well and what you would change in the future. This is also an opportunity to discuss the next steps in the mentee's movement toward realizing the longer-term goals that were established at the outset of the mentorship.

This form should be completed jointly and submitted to your Local Mentoring Program Coordinator.

Date:	
Mentor:	Mentee:

Assess the mentoring relationship and progress toward goals established

1. What worked well during the mentoring relationship?

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2. What did I learn/gain?

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3. What did not work as well?

Feedback for my mentor:

4. I felt you were most effective when...

5. I feel you could be even more effective if...

Feedback for my mentee:

6. Here is what I saw in terms of your growth and movement toward your goals...

7. Here are my hopes/wishes for you as you go forward ...

Mentor Signature: _____

Mentee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please submit this completed and signed form to your Local Mentoring Program Coordinator



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