

Guide for Mentees

Introduction

This guide is intended to give you the information you need about working with an ACOSVO Mentor, so you can decide if it is a useful support for you at this time.

We describe mentoring as an opportunity for our members to be supported to learn and develop as leaders, professionally in themselves and to be their best for their organisation. We also intend the mentoring service to offer quality volunteer experiences for experienced leaders who wish to volunteer their time as a mentor. We expect that, once matched, you will both enjoy the opportunity to learn from one another, developing mutual trust and respect, and experience your mentoring relationship as satisfying and purposeful. While every mentoring relationship is different, our experience of offering this service for more than a decade is that each relationship offers both mentor and mentee the chance to develop and learn.

ACOSVO Mentoring Service

ACOSVO offers our members the opportunity to work with a mentor, free of charge, for 6-12 months – and this is made possible through our team of volunteer mentors.

Mentoring is a voluntary 1:1 relationship in which an experienced person (mentor) provides consistent support, impartial guidance, and potentially practical help for someone with less experience (mentee). The mentee benefits from impartial, non-judgemental guidance and support, an opportunity to reflect and consider future action - and in this way the mentee is enabled to gain skills, knowledge, and confidence to perform at their best.

ACOSVO Mentors offer an opportunity for mentees to pause from 'doing', to reflect, consider new possibilities, and establish goals for action and professional development. Mentees may also benefit from hearing about their mentor's related experience, professional knowledge, or network. While not all our mentors have backgrounds in the voluntary sector, they all have considerable experience working in organisations.

ACOSVO Mentors are carefully matched with our members who sign up to work with a mentor. We use the information in applications to match a mentee with a mentor who has relevant skills, knowledge, and experience in relation to the issues they are seeking support with.

Having identified a good potential match, we send a few ACOSVO Mentor profiles to you as mentee. (On rare occasions, subject to mentor availability and service demand, we may send just one mentor profile). Mentees are given the opportunity to select their preference and we then introduce the two individuals via a connection email and encourage scheduling of an initial meeting.

If you as mentee decide to proceed with the mentoring relationship, we will ask you to read and agree to a **Mentoring Agreement** and then coordinate mentoring meetings with your mentor to suit yourselves – with both parties knowing they can contact ACOSVO staff about their mentoring at any time.

ACOSVO staff will recontact you three months after being matched and then approximately six months after the relationship is established, to gain an update on your progress toward the goals you bring to the mentoring relationship.

We suggest that mentoring relationships do not go on beyond a year, although support that happening in exceptional circumstances (by agreement with both parties). We do this to enable other members to also have the opportunity to work with a mentor, as there is always considerable demand for the service.

Recent mentee feedback has informed us that, in addition to the value placed on general support and time to think, they have gained skills and confidence through their mentoring relationship. These include:

- Leadership
- Strategic planning
- Organisational development
- Professional challenges
- Networking
- Self-reflection

We identified that the top five themes that our members bring to their mentoring sessions are:

- Governance
- Interpersonal relationships
- Staffing issues

- Operational decision making
- Workload prioritisation and time management

ACOSVO mentees identified a range of outcomes that they attribute to their mentoring:

- Cultivate new interests
- Forge new relationships & networks
- Change mental habits or attitude
- Resolve serious leadership style & management issues
- Willingness to stand back
- Increased capacity for self-reflection
- Secure new jobs
- Embark on a major career change

We also learned that mentors and mentees meet for an average of 90 minutes every 4 – 6 weeks over a 6-12 month period. We learned that 95% of the mentees who completed their mentoring believed their goals were achieved, and 100% rated it as having been an excellent experience.

Our Mentors

ACOSVO Mentors are recruited from within our membership and wider network which includes the public and private sector. Currently we have 40 volunteer mentors in our team.

ACOSVO Mentors are selected on the basis of their extensive mentoring and or coaching experience, either informal or more accredited experience. In addition, our mentors are offered basic mentoring skills training, regular peer-supervision and CPD opportunities. Our mentors have told us that they benefit from their volunteering in a range of ways, including:

- Having a chance to ‘give something back’ and help others
- Honing their communication and coaching/mentoring skills
- Learning from others
- Broadening their network
- Deepening their knowledge of the voluntary sector
- Having more variety and enriching their work and or home life
- Opportunities to see their mentee flourish
- Immense satisfaction

So, what do ACOSVO Mentors do?

Mentoring is a 1:1 relationship in which the mentor has a role of supporting and developing their mentee through being a trusted 'thinking partner'. They may well have useful experience and knowledge to share, but please know that ACOSVO Mentors are not offered as 'advisors', or 'trainers' – but as *critical friends*, companions. By that we mean a supportive person who is interested in you, and your success. Someone who listens deeply, will ask illuminating, maybe even difficult questions that enable you to explore issues more fully and decide on a course of action that feels aligned with your values and organisational role.

We know from our current mentors that they:

- Provide an external perspective on issues that matter to their mentee
- Listen, in confidence, to what is a concern for their mentee
- Facilitate decision making – sometimes exploring new options
- Are a sounding board for ideas
- Offer an opportunity to 'practice' a difficult conversation, or make a proposal/request
- Provide support and encouragement
- Keep you 'in the driving seat'
- Respect you, and the decisions you make
- Show positive regard, and compassion
- Offer friendly and objective support, and sensitive challenge
- Give honest and constructive feedback
- Share their own experience and knowledge, when it might be useful information to consider within your wider exploration of an issue

ACOSVO Mentors come from diverse professional backgrounds, and some are professional coaches. We trust all our volunteer mentors to understand the basics of maintaining good boundaries in professional relationships, the value of being a good listener, and have experience of supporting others to think through challenges. We seek to develop their skills and confidence through induction and training, as well as on-going CPD, to inspire them with new ideas and offer practical tools for use in their mentoring relationships. Like many services delivered by volunteers, our mentors have a lot of autonomy. Should you ever be unsure, or concerned in any way, about your mentoring-relationship be assured that ACOSVO staff are easily accessible and want to do what we can to support your experience to be an excellent one.

What next?

Is there anything else you would like to know, before deciding about working with an ACOSVO Mentor? If so, please contact us on services@acosvo.org.uk and we will be happy to discuss the service with you.

If you are ready to prioritise some supportive thinking time for yourself as part of your leadership development and in developing your professional confidence, then your next step is completing our **Mentee Sign Up Form** found on our website [here](#).

Soon after receipt of this, we will contact suitable ACOSVO Mentors and check their interest and capacity to support you in a mentoring relationship. We hope to offer you a potential mentor within 4 – 6 weeks. Sometimes we can match someone straight away, but sometimes it takes a little time for us to have someone available who we believe is a suitable match.

As described in an earlier section, there is no obligation to go ahead after the initial meeting, but our experience is that most people do. You would then expect to hear from us after three months and then six months, when we will ask you to return a brief monitoring form, enabling us to check on your progress toward the goals set for yourself when you first signed up. We will send a final evaluation form when your mentoring is completed.

Standards

We intend our Mentoring Service to be conducted to the highest possible standards and much of the responsibility for achieving this lies with you as a participant. The following link will take you to the International Standards for Mentoring Programmes in Employment: <https://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/resources/view/186/the-international-standards-for-mentoring-programmes-in-employment/>

Terms & Conditions

All mentors are covered by ACOSVO Public Liability Policy when travelling on ACOSVO business.

Our mentors generously offer their time voluntarily to support mentees as part of our Mentoring Service. With this in mind, we encourage mentees to provide financial assistance in covering mentor travel expenses on occasions when meetings are held some distance from a mentor's home.

To enable you to participate in the Mentoring Service, ACOSVO will need to hold your personal data. ACOSVO holds this data in accordance with our privacy policy on the basis of legitimate interest. Details of our policy and your rights are available through our website [here](#), our signature blocks or on request from office@acosvo.org.uk. ACOSVO will never sell your data, share it without your permission and we promise to keep your details safe and secure.

Related Links and Resources

Scottish Mentoring Network <https://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/>

Chartered Institute of Personnel Development

<https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/factsheets/?page=1&categories=56>

European Coaching and Mentoring Council/UK

<https://emccuk.org/Public/Public/Accreditation/Global Code of Ethics.aspx?hkey=5b5743c0-7aa6-424b-a805-b1d91bb3e5ed>