



INDIGENOUS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

MENTEE HANDBOOK

Government of
Northwest Territories

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

As Minister responsible for the Public Service, I am proud to announce the launch of the **Indigenous Mentorship Program**, a key action item of the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework.

This initiative represents a meaningful step forward in our commitment to building a public service that is inclusive, representative, and reflective of the people it serves. It is designed to support Indigenous employees in their professional growth by fostering culturally grounded, supportive relationships between mentors and mentees across the GNWT.



Mentorship is a powerful tool. It builds confidence, strengthens networks, and opens doors to new opportunities. For Indigenous employees, mentorship can also provide a safe space to navigate the public service, share lived experiences and receive guidance from those who understand the unique challenges and strengths that come with being an Indigenous person in the workplace.

The Indigenous Mentorship Program will pair Indigenous employees with experienced Indigenous mentors who are committed to supporting their career development. It will also provide training and resources to ensure that these relationships are meaningful, respectful, and rooted in cultural understanding. This initiative is not just about professional development - it is about reconciliation in action. It is about creating a workplace where Indigenous voices are heard, valued, and empowered to lead.

The Indigenous Mentorship Program builds on the foundation laid by other GNWT programs such as the Indigenous Career Gateway Program, the Indigenous Development and Training Program, and *Living Well Together: Indigenous Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training*. Together, these efforts form a comprehensive approach to addressing barriers and creating pathways for success within the public service.

As we implement this initiative, we are guided by the vision of a public service that is welcoming, culturally competent, and non-discriminatory, and the Indigenous Mentorship Program is just one way that we are getting to that vision.

Caroline Wawzonek, Minister of Finance

INTRODUCTION

The GNWT's Indigenous Mentorship Program (IMP) is, at its current stage, a pilot program where participants are paired with a mentor in the same field who can offer a broad understanding of skills for proficiency or advancement as well as insight into big picture considerations. As Indigenous employees of the GNWT, by participating in IMP you will get a chance to connect with someone who has knowledge in navigating some of the barriers that aren't seen by non-Indigenous employees, and can provide valuable insight, not only in specific and non-specific career advancement advice and skill development, but also in Indigenous ways of being, knowing, doing and believing.

Benefits of Mentorship:

- higher morale
- increased rates of staff retention
- earlier identification of skill sets and career aspirations, and
- establishing the necessary elements for succession planning

Participants will be provided a curated list of offerings on mentorship including self-assessment readiness tools, articles, best practices, and other online resources.

Mentorship represents an opportunity for learning, connection, networking, and skills development over the course of the program. Participants can expect to dedicate 2 hours per month over an approximate 9-month run time, with feedback sought at the 3-, 6-, and 9-month marks.

The primary drivers are the mentees who will be responsible for coordinating meeting requests, completing assigned reading and other tasks recommended by the mentor, participating in peer meetings between participants, completing a skills inventory, engaging with available resources and career pathing.

This handbook is meant as a reference guide to help get some ideas flowing and provide some tips for best practices, but every mentoring relationship is unique and provides endless opportunities for growth. Get creative and have fun!

GETTING STARTED AND BEST PRACTICES

WHY MENTORSHIP MATTERS

Mentorship is a powerful tool for professional growth. It offers:

- learning from experienced colleagues;
- exposure to new perspectives and approaches;
- development of new skills and expansion of your knowledge base; and
- a stronger sense of connection and support in the workplace.

For Indigenous employees, this program also creates a safe space to share barriers and experiences that may not feel comfortable in non-Indigenous settings.

Remember: Mentorship is about learning and growth - not a guaranteed fast track to promotions.

Success looks different for everyone.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR MENTORSHIP

Your effort determines the value you gain. Here's how to make the most of the experience:

- come prepared with clear career goals (refer to your Mentee Application Guide for ideas);
- be proactive in scheduling meetings and setting agendas;
- engage openly and honestly - trust takes time to build;
- respect boundaries and maintain professionalism;
- take ownership of your development by following through on agreed actions;
- use additional resources like the MS Teams Peer Support Network for learning and networking.

MEETING YOUR MENTOR FOR THE FIRST TIME

BEFORE YOUR FIRST MEETING:

- map out clear career goals (refer to your Mentee Application Guide for inspiration);
- think about what you want your mentor to know about your background, work history, and ambitions;
- accept that early meetings may feel awkward - trust takes time to build.

DURING YOUR FIRST MEETING:

- agree on meeting frequency (once a month or every two weeks is recommended);
- take responsibility for scheduling meetings and reserving space if needed;
- discuss openness to calls or emails between meetings (understand that frequent chats may not be possible);

- review confidentiality expectations and refer to the GNWT Code of Conduct if needed;
- go through your application guide together and work on creating SMART career goals:

Before wrapping up, schedule the next meeting.

SETTING SMART GOALS



BEST PRACTICES

- prepare an agenda for each meeting;
- after each meeting, review what you need to do before the next one;
- respect personal boundaries - if your mentor repeatedly crosses lines despite being told, contact the Indigenous Career Pathways Officer immediately;
- keep routine meetings in professional settings and avoid situations involving alcohol or substances;
- be mindful of your mentor's time - additional outreach should be considerate;
- understand communication styles and feedback preferences - be open to discussing yours;
- don't expect your mentor to meet all your career development needs - maintain other support networks and check the MS Teams Peer Support Network for updates.

MENTORING ACTIVITIES

Mentorship is more than attending scheduled meetings - it's about creating meaningful interactions that help you grow and develop professionally. The activities and conversation starters in this section are designed to build trust, encourage open dialogue, and give structure to your mentorship experience.

These ideas will help you:

- establish a strong foundation for the relationship;
- explore your career goals and development opportunities;
- gain knowledge and resources; and
- maintain momentum between meetings.

Use these suggestions as a guide, adapting them to your needs and goals.

BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

- start with a casual meeting: share your background and career path, and invite your mentor to do the same;
- reflect on the pairing: if it feels mismatched, don't be discouraged - identify what's not working and discuss options with the program administrator if needed.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

- in your first substantive meeting, review the mentorship agreement together;
- clarify:
 - meeting frequency and duration;
 - outreach between meetings;
 - topics that are off-limits;
 - who will send calendar invites (usually you);
 - expectations for preparation and cancellation policies.

GOAL ALIGNMENT

- review your intake form or profile with your mentor;
- explain why you joined the program and what you hope to achieve;
- confirm your short-, medium-, and long-term career goals;
- if you haven't set goals yet, work with your mentor to create **SMART goals**;
- brainstorm steps to achieve these goals together.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- dedicate a meeting to career pathing: review job descriptions for roles you aspire to and discuss skill-building strategies;
- attend a networking event, tradeshow, or conference with your mentor:
 - explore career opportunities;
 - learn the importance of building a professional profile;
- make meaningful connections.

EXPANDING KNOWLEDGE

- ask your mentor for recommendations on books, podcasts, or resources - and schedule time to discuss insights;
- if you want to learn about something outside your mentor's expertise, ask if they can connect you with someone who can help.

SELF-AWARENESS AND FEEDBACK

- share any personality assessments you've completed and discuss results with your mentor;
- talk about how you prefer to receive feedback - direct or more nuanced;
- be open to feedback as a tool for growth.

ADVANCED FEEDBACK TOOLS

- if you've been with GNWT for a while, consider asking your mentor about a 360-degree feedback exercise;
- review results together and explore strategies for improvement.

TRACKING PROGRESS

Keeping track of discussions and action items ensures accountability and helps you see progress over time. Use the **Mentorship Conversation Log Template** to document:

- meeting dates, topics discussed, and key takeaways;
- agreed-upon goals and next steps;
- follow-up actions for you and your mentor;
- reflections on what's working well and what needs adjustment.

Review this log regularly with your mentor to stay on track.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW SUPPORT

- discuss any concerns from your performance reviews;
- ask your mentor for advice and examples from their own experience.

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

- agree on meeting and check-in frequency early in the relationship;
- leave each meeting with a clear plan for the next one;
- remember: mentorship is not a "box to tick" - prepare thoughtfully for each meeting.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Feel free to use some of the below example questions to help get the conversation started.

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER:

- What inspired you to join the GNWT?
- Can you share a bit about your community or cultural background?
- What values are most important to you in your work and life?
- What are some of your proudest accomplishments so far?
- Are you reading or watching anything interesting right now?
- How and where do you find inspiration?

GOAL SETTING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- What are your short and long-term career goals?
- Are there any specific skills or experiences you'd like to gain?
- What challenges have you faced in your career journey so far?
- How can I support your growth?
- Think of the best boss you've had, what did they do to earn that title?
- What is one of your great accomplishments to date?
- What does success look like to you?

SKILL BUILDING & LEARNING

- What professional development opportunities or training have you found helpful?
- Are there any training programs or workshops you've attended that have had a particularly strong impact on you?
- What's your approach when learning something new? What's your preferred learning style?
- Tell me a story from your career that has left an impact on you.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

- Do you feel that you are able to freely express aspects of your Indigenous identity in your work?
- Have you experienced moments where your culture was especially valued or perhaps misunderstood in the workplace?
- What does reconciliation mean to you in a professional context?
- How could the GNWT better support you as an Indigenous person?

NAVIGATING THE WORKPLACE

- What's your experience been like working within the GNWT structure?
- How do you approach building relationships with colleagues or leadership?
- Are there internal networks or allies that have been helpful to you?

REFLECTION AND FEEDBACK

- What's something you've learned from our conversations so far?
- Is there anything we could do differently to make our mentorship more effective?
- What's one thing you're proud of since we started this mentorship?
- How can we celebrate your progress and milestones?

TRAINING

The GNWT has various training offerings that are beneficial for mentors and mentees to explore. Visit the learning page in HRIS/Peoplesoft to sign up for any or all of the following to set yourself up for success as a mentor/mentee:

- Leadership Development Program (Level 1)
- Coaching for Success
- Coaching Fundamentals

In addition to the above, it may be helpful to sign up for **Cabinet in a Consensus Style Government** to get a larger perspective to the work we do as a public service. We also always recommend attending **The Working Mind** which will help to maintain mental health and stamina during the duration of the mentoring cycle, as well as **Unconscious Bias and Equitable Workplace** to better understand how we often take shortcuts in our thinking and pass unfair judgement and how to combat this tendency.

ORIENTATION

To help get things off to a good start, we'll be inviting mentors and mentees to attend an orientation session which will go into each area of handbook and get conversations going about how we want the upcoming year to look, what goals and expectations we all have for the mentorship cycle and to answer any questions or go into any of the sections you'd like to explore a little more. This will be a full day training session hosted by the Indigenous Career Pathway Officer and the Indigenous HR Specialist.

INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM

It may be beneficial to look into the [Indigenous Development and Training Program](#) if discussing further training with your mentee (or to look into for yourself!). The Indigenous Development and Training Program (IDTP) supports the professional development of Indigenous persons who are employees within the Government of the Northwest Territories by providing funding to take the necessary skills training and/or work experience for career advancement.

Under this program, the Department of Finance provides up to \$10,000 each fiscal year to those who meet the eligibility requirements.

INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION ON SELECTION COMMITTEES

Looking to learn more and participate in the GNWT's hiring process? Consider volunteering to be an Indigenous Committee Member! The [Indigenous Representation on Selection Committees](#) initiative allows Indigenous applicants to request that an Indigenous Committee Member (ICM) sit as part of the selection committee. The ICM will be a full member of the selection committee and will participate in

steps such as screening, reviewing assessment materials, and in the assessment stage (including grading). Once added to the ICM list you'll be called upon periodically to participate in hiring processes when requested by an applicant.

MENTEE PEER SUPPORT NETWORKS

Another way we'll be sharing learning materials with you is through Peer Support Networks. These are MS Teams groups where you'll be connected with other mentees to share ideas and support one another as mentees, and where we at the administration side of things, will be sharing curated materials such as articles, podcasts, tips, ideas and activities for your consideration. Remember to check in with the MS Teams network occasionally to get some fresh perspectives and ideas, or maybe to share some successes you're seeing in your personal and professional development.

PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT AND THE COMPETENCY MODEL



Performance Development is a combination of employee development and performance management based on the GNWT's Competency Model. Performance Development in the context of the Indigenous Mentorship Program encourages communication between the mentor and employee by providing mentorship, insight into development and effective feedback throughout the mentorship cycle.

The GNWT's Competency Model is a great tool for performance development. The GNWT has seven core competencies and thirty-nine general competencies. These competencies form the GNWT Competency Model that is the basis of strategic human resource processes, such as attraction, selection, retention, performance management, development, and succession planning.

The cluster names, Leadership Excellence and Management Excellence, are in the outermost circle, followed by the names of the related competencies. In the next ring, are bullets that provide an illustration of what each of the competencies represent. The innermost circle depicts the Inclusive Leadership competency, central to the work of the GNWT public service, and its associated bullets.

The competencies define how employees can be successful in their roles. Though they are distinct, there is overlap between them. You can demonstrate similar values and behaviours - such as accountability, transparency, open-mindedness - as you strive to embody these competencies.

We encourage you to regularly look through the Competency Model throughout the mentorship cycle to help inform decision making and further contextualize mentorship and development.

Learn more about the GNWT Competency Model here: <https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/learning-development/performance-development/gnwt-competency-model-0>

For more information on Performance Development and Performance Documents, see here:
<https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/learning-development/performance-development/performance-development-resources>

MENTORS BEING THIRD-PARTY EVALUATORS IN PERFORMANCE DOCUMENTS

As you enter a mentoring relationship, you are entering into a circumstance where you are a direct part of furthering personal and professional development. By becoming a mentor, we recommend that you also take part in the Performance Development aspect of the GNWT's programming by becoming a Third-Party Evaluator. This means assessing and monitoring your developmental relationship with your mentee via their Performance Document. **For more information on how you can become a Third-Party Evaluator**, please contact the Learning & Development Coordinator by email at [Performance Development@gov.nt.ca](mailto:Performance_Development@gov.nt.ca).

CAREER PATHING: BUILDING PURPOSEFUL GROWTH

Career pathing is a proactive and collaborative process where employees and managers work together to define career goals and chart the development needed to reach them. Career pathing empowers employees to take ownership of their growth rather than waiting for advancement opportunities, while ensuring organizational readiness for the future.

Career pathing plays a key role in succession planning and talent development within the GNWT. The GNWT provides dedicated resources [Career Pathing for GNWT Employees](#) and [Career Pathing: Manager's How To](#) – to help staff and leaders engage in meaningful career conversations and planning.

Effective career pathing includes:

- **Defining career goals** aligned with personal interests and organizational needs;
- **Identifying skill gaps** and required competencies;
- **Creating a development plan** tailored to individual growth and long-term succession strategies.
- **Continuous manager support in their development plan;** set up quarterly meetings to engage on their development plans or if any support is required.

Examples of development activities supported by GNWT's approach include:

- **Stretch assignments** that expose employees to new functions or responsibilities;
- **Informal Job shadowing** with more senior staff to gain insight into higher-level roles;
- **Acting assignments (Transfer Assignments)** that allow employees to temporarily fill a more senior role; or one that helps development to gain experience
- **Formal training or certification** to build technical or leadership skills;
- **Mentorship and coaching** from experienced leaders;
- Participation in cross-departmental projects to broaden organizational knowledge;
- **Involvement in strategic initiatives** to build policy, planning, and decision-making capacity.

Managers play a critical role by initiating career discussions, aligning opportunities with employee aspirations, and using tools like the [Employee Development Plan \(EDP\)](#) to track progress. This approach not only enhances employee engagement and retention but also supports GNWT's commitment to a skilled, diverse, and future-ready public service.

Indigenous employees interested in developing a career path for their goals and aspirations should work with the Indigenous Career Pathways Advisor at diversityandinclusion@gov.nt.ca

For more tools and guidance, visit: [GNWT Succession Planning Toolkit](#)

INDIGENOUS AND WESTERN WORLDVIEWS

When designing a corporate mentorship program, the resources we've gathered to inform our structure have largely been from a non-Indigenous perspective, not because we want to diminish the Indigenous perspective, but because there aren't very many Indigenous corporate mentorship programs yet developed that we can pull from. We'll continue to inform our program structure through continuous research and feedback, but it also highlights a key aspect of creating the Indigenous Mentorship Program in the first place – where does Indigenous perspective fit in the corporate structure and how can we support a more inclusive workplace in this aspect? What does success look like to you and your mentee? This is an area we hope to gain some insight into through not only this program, but through continued employee engagement and through key deliverables of the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework and Action Plan. By participating in this initiative, you are actively helping to make the GNWT a safer and more inclusive space for Indigenous employees, and we thank you!

Many resources for personal and professional development have been created with the western worldview and inherently overlook Indigenous values and beliefs as a result. What are some of the ways that you've seen these worldviews clash in your experience with the GNWT?

One topic of discussion that may be helpful is considering how we navigate these spaces, and what challenges come with being an Indigenous person who is required to work within the assumptions and expectations of a western worldview.

It's also important to note that within each worldview there are multiple individual worldviews depending on where you're from. In the NWT, there's both a Dene worldview and an Inuit worldview which are distinct in many ways and similar in many ways.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment's work to produce the Dene Kədá and Inuuqatigiit curriculums for NWT schools has brought about the concept of a 'capable person' developed through elder consultation, which may be helpful to keep in mind throughout the mentorship cycle and when considering the clashing of worldviews:

"A capable person is ready, willing and able to learn and contribute to their communities. A capable person is motivated to act, can recognize relevant skills and information to draw upon, and knows how to do so appropriately. A capable person is one who demonstrates integrity in relationships that honour self, others, the land, and the spiritual world. A capable person finds the value in both Indigenous and Western worldviews and values a lifestyle that combines and appreciates both ways of being, knowing, doing and believing."

WELLNESS AND SAFETY

Engaging in meaningful discussions about career development and experiences as an Indigenous person in a corporate and Westernized landscape, you may explore topics that can be anywhere from uncomfortable to outright triggering. Please refer to the support resources listed below if needed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The mentoring relationship between the Mentor and Mentee is built on a foundation of trust and confidentiality. However, there are specific exceptions to this confidentiality, which should be clearly understood and agreed upon at the beginning of the partnership:

- **Mutual Agreement:** If both the Mentor and Mentee agree that an issue or concern should be discussed with someone else, they will decide together who that person will be. This may include, but is not limited to, the GNWT's Indigenous Career Pathways Advisor.
- **Risk or Legal Concerns:** If the Mentor (or Mentee) believes that something shared by the Mentee (or Mentor) indicates a risk of harm to the Mentee/Mentor, another person, or the Government of the Northwest Territories, or suggests that a crime has occurred or may occur, they are obligated to report the matter to the GNWT's Indigenous Career Pathways Advisor.

As a condition of your participation in the Indigenous Mentorship Program, you are required to download and sign a confidentiality agreement.

For further information on confidentiality please refer to the GNWT's Code of Conduct (https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/sites/myhr/files/codeofconduct_1.pdf).

PRE-MEETING AGREEMENT

When engaging in conversation you may find yourself sharing experiences of systemic racism, bias, harmful experiences and other topics that may cause some distress. In exploring these topics, if you wish to engage truthfully and constructively in these areas then, before each meeting, consider taking the time to come to an agreement regarding the following:

- **Stay engaged**
- **Speak your truth responsibly**
- **Listen to understand**
- **Be willing to do things differently and experience discomfort**
- **Expect and accept non-closure**
- **Confidentiality**

GNWT SUPPORT RESOURCES

The Government of the Northwest Territories offers confidential counseling and wellness resources designed to promote health and well-being for its employees and their immediate family members.

GreenShield+: GNWT's confidential 24/7 Employee Assistance program, website
<https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/employees/employee-health-and-well-being/greenshield>.

Specific Greenshield + resources include:

- [Critical Incident Support Services](#)
- [EAP Programs and Supports for People Leaders](#)
- [GreenShield EAP Step-By-Step](#)
- [Noojimo Health Step-By-Step](#)
- [Substance Use Management](#)
- [Children's Mental Health](#)
- [GreenShield Care Navigation Tool](#)
- [Digital CBT by GreenShield Health](#)
- [Pharmacy Services Factsheet](#)
- [GreenShield First Step Program](#)

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Below is a listing of emotional and mental health resources available to all NWT residents.

NWT Help Line: Call 811 for support 24 hours per day, 7 days a week

Talk Suicide Canada: Call 1-833-456-4566, text 45645, or visit the website at
<https://talksuicide.ca/>. Help is available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week

Hope for Wellness Help Line (for First Nations and Inuit): Call 1-855-242-3310 or visit
<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>. Live chat available in English or French and counselling in Cree, Ojibway and Inuktitut is available upon request. Available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program: Mental health and emotional support is available to former Residential School students and their families by calling 1-800-464-8106 or visiting <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581971225188/1581971250953>. Counsellors available for all NWT communities. The National Crisis Line is available 24/7 at 1-866-925-4419.

Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation: A Land-based healing camp is located off the trail behind the Multiplex in Yellowknife. More information is available at <https://arcticindigenouswellness.org/>.

Northwest Territories/Nunavut Council of Friendship Centres: Manages the Indian Residential School Program and Indian Day School Program. These programs support mental health and emotional support for Residential and Day school survivors, family members and intergenerationally effected peoples. For more information, call 867-873-4332 or visit their office at 5125-48th St, Yellowknife, NT.

Tree of Peace Friendship Centre: Provides alcohol and drug counseling, employment supports and recreation opportunities. Offices are located at 5011 51 St. Yellowknife, NT. Call 867-873-2864, email treepeace@theedge.ca or visit <https://www.ttopfc.com/yk-stree-services-guide> for a comprehensive list of services.

Mental Health and Community Wellness Supports: The GNWT and our NWT Health and Social Services System have a wide range of formal and informal supports available when and where you need it:

- Yellowknife (<https://www.nthssa.ca/en/yellowknife-mental-health-and-community-wellness-supports-0>)
- Sahtu (<https://www.nthssa.ca/en/sahtu-mental-health-and-community-wellness-supports-1>)
- Fort Smith (<https://www.nthssa.ca/en/fort-smith-mental-health-and-community-wellness-supports-0>)
- Dehcho (<https://www.nthssa.ca/en/dehcho-mental-health-and-community-wellness-supports-0>)
- Beaufort Delta (<https://www.nthssa.ca/en/beaufort-delta-mental-health-and-community-wellness-supports-1>)

A list of community counselors is also available online at: <https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/contact/community-counsellor>.

FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Throughout the mentorship cycle we will be collecting feedback from you in 3-month intervals to check in to see how you are doing and listen to your feedback. This is a very important part of the program as it gives us some insights as to what we can be doing better and what's working for people.

We'll be circulating a shortened version of mentee's original skills assessment, focusing on the goals they highlighted to track their self-reported progress, and will be providing a variety of options for checking in.

We will also be hosting an online sharing circle at the midpoint of the mentorship cycle to hear from you about how your mentorship journey is going, what you may be feeling through having these continued conversations and how your relationship is developing. We're very interested to hear about some of the interesting conversation topics and insights that you've begun integrating into your own worldview.

This initiative was designed in-house by our Diversity and Inclusion team as a pilot program preceding a larger release that will be open to all Indigenous employees. Though we have taken steps to incorporate Indigenous ways of being, knowing, doing and believing, we have had to pull from resources that are inherently colonial simply because there are very few similar programs to pull from. As such, we are always looking at ways of improving the program to be more safe, inclusive and respectful of the Indigenous perspective.

If you have a suggestion or idea you'd like to share with us, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Indigenous Career Pathways Officer through the diversityandinclusion@gov.nt.ca email.