



# Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Mentoring Programs

A Comprehensive Guide  
for HR and L&D

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## Introduction

# DEI is More Than Policies and Cultural Awareness

Let's start with something HR and most employees already know: for the most part, **workplaces are not level playing fields**. It's not intentional or malicious, but influenced by structure, societal factors, and unconscious bias.

Despite many companies standing firm on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, underrepresented talent still face the uphill climb: fewer development opportunities, smaller networks, and more barriers to advancement.

When you think of DEI efforts, you might think of unconscious bias training, cultural awareness and sensitivity, or updating policies to be more inclusive—all of which are incredibly important, but they're rarely enough to drive meaningful, measurable change in your employees' everyday workplace experience.

Enter mentorship: an incredibly powerful yet underutilized tool for equity that connects real humans, builds real relationships, and creates real mobility. When companies intentionally design mentorship programs with DEI in mind, the results speak for themselves: higher talent attraction and retention, stronger leadership pipelines, more confident and creative employees, and a company culture where people actually feel like they belong.

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**In this ebook, we'll break down what DEI mentorship initiatives look like, why they're worth investing in, and how you can build your own—complete with examples, frameworks, measurement strategies, and common pitfalls to avoid.**



# What is a DEI Mentorship Program?

A DEI mentorship program is a structured initiative that aims to connect underrepresented employees (women, racialized talent, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, newcomers, and more), build community, increase visibility, and improve advocacy within an organization.

## Common Mentorship Models for DEI

### Traditional one-on-one mentoring

The classic format. This is great for deep development, personalized support, and strategic career planning.



### Group mentorship

Small groups of peers mentor each other, guided by a facilitator or mentor.



### Sponsorship

A sponsor supports one or more mentees. Where mentorship helps development, sponsorship helps with visibility and advancement.



### Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

Employees with one or more traits, identities, or interests in common come together for networking, advocacy, and shared experiences.



# How Mentorship Promotes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In short, a DEI mentorship initiative helps break down systemic barriers in your company through human connection, understanding, and advocacy. But let's explore that a little further.

Underrepresented employees face disproportionate barriers like:

- Limited access to networking opportunities
- Lower visibility and exposure to leadership
- Biased perception of potential
- Lower psychological safety
- Underrepresentation in leadership



Many organizations try to solve these issues with training sessions and compliance checklists. While these are great steps and they may help raise awareness, they rarely change the fabric of everyday experience.

71% of HR professionals cited mentorship and 36% cited ERGs as the core of their DEI strategies<sup>1</sup>



Mentorship sits at the intersection of development, opportunity, and belonging, which is why it so effectively breaks down those barriers.

<sup>1</sup> HRCI. "Diversity Initiatives in 2025." HRCI <https://www.hrci.org/diversity-initiatives-in-2025>

## DEI Isn't Just Performative Policy—It Works

DEI creates real, positive impact on your employees, team dynamics, and measurable business outcomes. With mentorship and ERGs as the vehicle for DEI, let's look at how they benefit your employees, your teams, and your organization as a whole.

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### Benefits to underrepresented employees

- ✓ Increased self-confidence and self-efficacy
- ✓ Greater clarity around career pathways and advancement
- ✓ Access to new and broader networks
- ✓ Support navigating workplace dynamics and bias
- ✓ Personalized skill development and feedback
- ✓ Increased sense of belonging and inclusion
- ✓ Better visibility with senior leaders
- ✓ Stronger advocacy and sponsorship opportunities
- ✓ Improved communication, leadership, and self-advocacy skills
- ✓ Reduced feelings of isolation

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### Benefits to teams

- ✓ Stronger collaboration and communication across roles and functions
- ✓ Increased psychological safety within teams
- ✓ Higher engagement and motivation
- ✓ Better knowledge-sharing and cross-team learning
- ✓ More inclusive leadership behaviors from mentors
- ✓ Reduced interpersonal friction through better understanding of diverse experiences
- ✓ Higher levels of creativity and innovation
- ✓ Strengthened cultural intelligence and empathy
- ✓ Improved team cohesion and trust
- ✓ More equitable distribution of opportunities



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## Benefits to underrepresented employees

- ✓ Increased retention—especially among underrepresented groups
- ✓ Stronger and more diverse leadership pipeline
- ✓ Improved employee brand and talent attraction—especially since 61% of Gen Z won't even apply to companies that don't support DEI<sup>4</sup>
- ✓ Higher engagement and overall employee satisfaction
- ✓ Better financial performance—companies that have a diverse executive team are 39% more likely to financially outperform those without<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Stronger, more connected company culture

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77% of executives link DEI with improved financial performance and 81% say DEI programs lead to stronger customer loyalty<sup>3</sup>



### Case Study

#### Building a More Diverse and Inclusive Organization Through Mentorship

Company	Industry	Company Size
King	Video Game Development	2K+ Employees

The ability to innovate is what sets video game companies apart from the competition.

Above we learned how DEI actively contributes to creativity and innovation—something King<sup>4</sup>, a division of Activision Blizzard and creators of the wildly popular Candy Crush, was well aware of. Through surveys and conversations, they found that non-male Kingsters “didn't feel they had equal ability to express opinions, didn't have access to an equal share of career opportunities, and felt they lacked confidence.”

King sought to create a scalable mentorship program with the goal of leveling the playing field for women and non-binary employees at the company. Thus, the Kicking Glass program was born.

#### King's Mentorship Goals

- Improve access to career development opportunities
- Improve advocacy and support
- Build confidence and empower women and non-binary employees

<sup>2</sup> “Diversity Matters Even More: The Case for Holistic Impact.” McKinsey & Company, December 5, 2023.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-matters-even-more-the-case-for-holistic-impact>

<sup>3</sup> Pollack, Abigail, David Glasgow, Thijs van Bommel, Camille Joseph, and Kenji Yoshino. “Risks of Retreat: The Enduring Inclusion Imperative.” Catalyst & Meltzer Center for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, June 11, 2025. <https://www.catalyst.org/about/newsroom/2025/dei-scaleback-risks-study>

<sup>4</sup> “Activision King Case Study.” Together. <https://www.togetherplatform.com/resources/activision-king-case-study>

## Together's Mentorship Solutions

### ✓ Easy registration with meaning

King sent out Together's customizable registration questionnaires to 200+ employees that collected role information, experience level, skill interests, and goals they want to achieve.

### ✓ A smart matching algorithm:

Together's matching algorithm helped King match mentors and mentees based on registration information and empowered mentees to choose their own mentors.

### ✓ Customizable session agendas:

The Together platform provided session agendas to help focus mentor-mentee conversations.

### ✓ Peer mentorship

This program also paired participants for peer training for topics like cultivating a growth mindset, being resilient leaders, and unlocking personal influential power.

## The Outcomes

**3.9** /4

Mentor Feedback Score

**3.9** /4

Mentee Feedback Score



Average Feedback

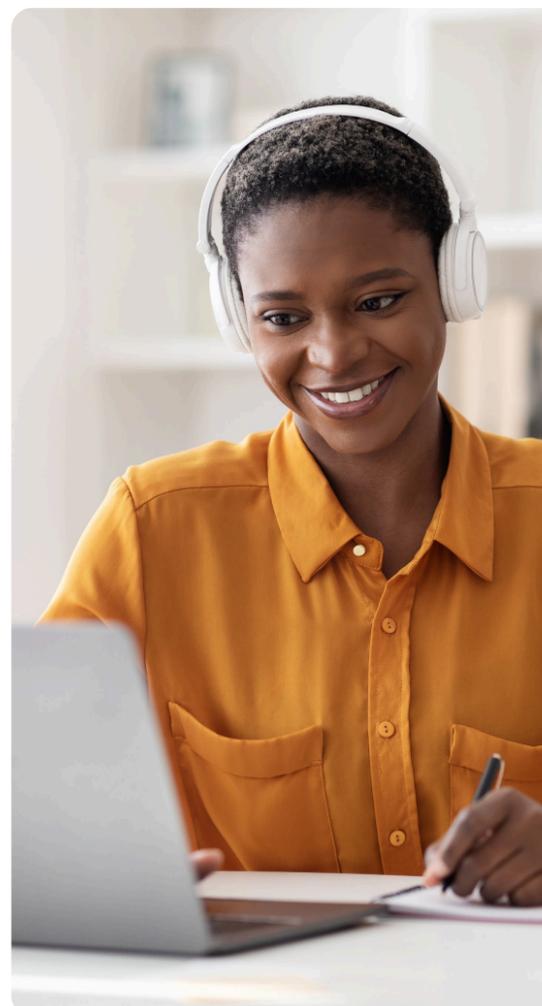
**250+** successful pairings, with **95.1%** of mentees and **94.6%** of mentors agreeing their pairing is a good fit



Improved hiring of female and non-binary employees



Demand for more mentorship across the organization



# Building Your DEI Mentorship Program

You don't need to completely reinvent your learning and development strategy. Think about how you can layer mentorship into what you already do.

## Define Your Program Goals

Step 1

What is the core goal of your program? What outcomes do you want to see?

- Are you trying to improve retention and engagement of underrepresented employees?
- Build a strong, diverse leadership pipeline?
- Support career mobility?

Get specific by using the SMART-ER goal setting framework.

### The SMART-ER Framework for Mentorship Goals

01

#### Specific

Target specific outcomes you want to achieve

01

#### Time-bound

Establish clear timelines

02

#### Measurable

Include quantifiable outcomes

02

#### Evaluated

Build in assessment checkpoints

03

#### Achievable

Set realistic expectations

03

#### Readjusted

Allow for program evolution

04

#### Relevant

Align with business objectives



## Identify Your Participants

### Step 2

Now it's time to define who would be the best fit for this program—both for mentees and mentors.

### Mentor Selection Criteria

Look for:



Relevant experience and expertise

Emotional intelligence and communication skills

Availability and general interest in development

Diverse perspectives that represent your organization's values

Cultural intelligence and sensitivity

Willingness to receive training on becoming an effective mentor

### Mentee Selection Process

Look for:



Individuals from underrepresented or equity-seeking groups

Genuine desire to learn and grow

Early-career employees needing visibility

Openness to sharing experiences

Commitment to program requirements

Diverse representation across functions, levels, and backgrounds

## Design Your Program Structure

### Step 3

Your company size, industry, employee demographics, culture, etc. all determine what mentorship model and program structure will work best for your DEI mentorship initiative.

#### One-on-one mentorship

- Career mapping and progression
- Leadership preparation
- Skill-building
- Confidence and self-advocacy

#### Sponsorship

- Increasing employee visibility
- DEI progress in leadership
- Addressing systemic bias

#### Group mentorship

- Internal networking and community
- Leadership preparation
- High potential programs

#### ERG-integrated

- Build community and identity-based support
- Improving cultural awareness
- Supporting retention

### How long should your program last?

At Together, we've found that 12–18 months provides enough time for meaningful relationship development and skill building. Shorter programs feel rushed; longer ones risk losing momentum.



## Create Your Matching Process

### Step 4

Matching mentors and mentees in a DEI mentorship program needs to involve more than just job titles. Here are some criteria to consider:



#### Skills and experience

Pair your mentees with someone who has the skills and experience that align with their aspirations.



#### Personality and identity

Consider pairing employees that have similar communication styles, identities, and backgrounds.



#### Goals and expectations

Understand what both parties are looking to get from the relationship and what defines successful mentorship.

Mentorship software can make this process a breeze by automating matching based on weighted criteria, tracking match outcomes to improve future matching, and removing any unconscious bias from the process.

## Provide Structure and Resources

### Step 5

Mentoring relationships need support from HR and L&D to be effective long term. Here are a few ways you can support and train your participants:

- 01 Provide learning resources on giving and receiving constructive feedback, emotional intelligence, owning growth, etc.
- 02 Make sure participants have things like goal-setting frameworks, meeting agenda templates, feedback tools, conversation prompts, etc.
- 03 Create a document that clearly outlines participant expectations such as meeting frequency, best practices for mentoring, etc.



## Launch and Support

### Step 6

You're ready to launch, but don't bite off more than you can chew. Start with a small pilot program with 20-30 participants. This will give you space to test what works and measure performance before scaling it across the organization.

#### Provide ongoing support through:

- ✓ Quarterly pulse surveys
- ✓ Resource updates
- ✓ Optional group sessions
- ✓ Troubleshooting support

As you go through the first run of your program, you'll get a firm handle on the logistics of administering a mentorship program, ensuring a smooth experience when you scale to a larger group or the rest of the company.



# Best Practices for Long Term Success

Going back to the importance of a foundational structure, here are a few best practices to implement in your DEI mentorship programs:

## Match with purpose

- ✓ Match pairs based on development goals, interests, and personalities as well as shared cultural, racial, or gender identities, not just job titles.

## Make expectations clear

- ✓ Both parties should know how often to meet, what success looks like, and how to access and use available resources.

## Keep communication flowing

- ✓ Regular check-ins and surveys help you identify issues with the program or individual matches early on.

## Balance structure with flexibility

- ✓ Provide guidance but let relationships evolve naturally.

## Recognize contributions

- ✓ Celebrate mentors and mentees who make a difference and achieve their goals.



# The Role of Technology

Now you've put together all the components, let's add technology into the mix.

## Do You Really Need Mentorship Technology?

In short, yes. But let's explore why.

### Consistency

Provides a cohesive, consistent experience for all participants and administrators.

### Accessibility

Combines mentorship and associated resources in one user-friendly place for quick, easy access.

### Measurability

See participation rates, goal progress reports, feedback, resource access rates, and more.

### Scalability & Sustainability

Automated workflows, analytics, integrations, etc. take the burden off your team—allowing for growth.



## What to Look for in a Mentorship Platform



### Relationship Management

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#### Smart matching

Uses skills, goals, experience, and preferences to pair people..

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#### Flexible program formats

Supports different mentorship models, cohort sizes/durations, etc.

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#### Conversation and meeting resources

Gives participants prompts, agenda templates, and other resources.

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#### Goal-setting tools

Helps participants define, update, and track goals.

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#### Progress tracking

Shows how relationships and skills are developing.

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#### Integrated communications

Streamlines scheduling, messaging, secure video calls, and reminders.



### Administrative Management

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#### Automated enrolment

Removes manual setup and onboarding for new participants.

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#### Scalable program configuration

Lets you run multiple programs or cohorts at once.

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#### Engagement dashboards

Shows real-time data on participation, meeting frequency, and session feedback.

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#### Outcome reporting

Tracks mobility, skill growth, and long-term impact.

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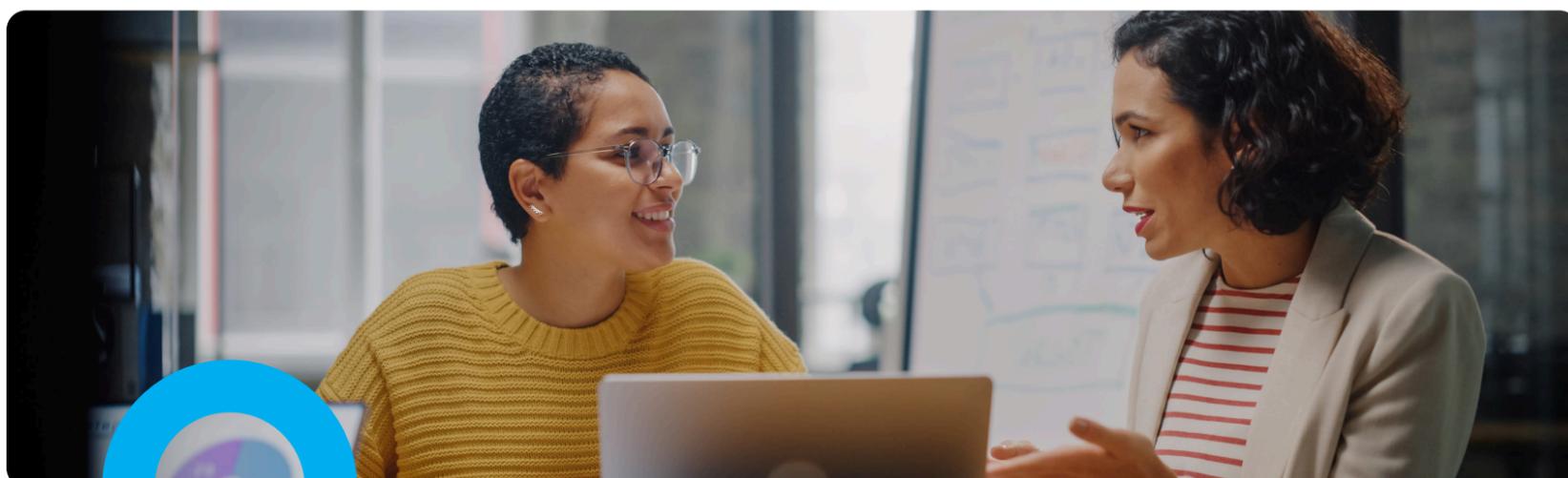
#### Automated workflows

Nudges, reminder emails, feedback requests, and more.

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#### Integrations

Works with tech you already have like HRIS, LMS, and communication tools.



## The Together Platform Advantage

Together has been the platform of choice for hundreds of companies for a reason.

### Comprehensive program management

Together manages multiple program types, relationship structures, content types, and complex organizational hierarchies in one platform.



### Enterprise-grade integrations

Seamless integration with HRIS systems like Workday, SuccessFactors, and BambooHR, plus communication platforms like Microsoft Teams and Google Workspace.



### Advanced analytics

Predictive relationship analytics, cohort analysis, custom reporting, and ROI measurement tools that would be impossible to track manually.



# Measuring Program Success

Measuring success is what helps you figure out what's working, what's not, and how the program is impacting the business—all while proving it's worth the investment.

## DEI Mentorship Measurement Framework

### Engagement Metrics

- Meeting frequency
- Mentor and mentee satisfaction
- Participation across demographic groups



### Cultural Impact Metrics

- Engagement survey results
- Psychological safety and belonging scores
- DEI advancement, especially in leadership pathways



### Skill Development Metrics

- Competency growth tied to role expectations
- Self, peer, and manager assessments
- Goal achievement rates
- Readiness indicators for leadership or specialized roles



### Business Impact Metrics

- Retention rates of participants vs non-participants
- Time-to-competency changes
- Program efficiency
- Leadership pipeline strength
- Training and recruitment cost reduction



### Career Outcome Metrics

- Internal moves or promotions
- Lateral mobility
- Stretch assignment completion
- Project leadership opportunities
- Confidence ratings



## Calculating Program ROI

Let's explore what ROI calculation looks like with an example.

$$\text{ROI} = (\text{Program Benefits} - \text{Program Costs}) / \text{Program Costs} \times 100$$

### Example ROI Calculation

Let's say you have 100 participants in your mentorship program:

#### Retention improvement

20% reduction in turnover saves \$500,000  
(assuming \$50,000 average replacement cost)

#### Productivity gains

15% improvement in performance equals \$750,000 in value

#### Total benefits

\$1,250,000

#### Program costs

\$200,000 (platform, staff time, materials)

**ROI:**  $(1,250,000 - 200,000) / 200,000 \times 100 = 525\% \text{ ROI}$

## Case Study

### Strengthening diversity and inclusion by connecting ERG members with relevant mentors

Company	Industry	Employees
Avison Young	Commercial Real Estate	5000+

As a commercial real estate firm, [Avison Young](#)<sup>5</sup> has always known it's their people that set them apart from their competitors. Since they are a global company that has over 100 offices around the world, DEI is something incredibly important to them. Their market is diverse and their workforce should reflect that.

That's why they launched several DEI initiatives, including a mentorship program supporting their ERGs—Black professionals, women, and LGBTQ+ groups—as well as their Emerging Leaders program. They had big plans and a jumping off point—a previously launched mentorship program within their Women's Network ERG that was manual and cumbersome.

#### Avison Young's Mentorship Goals

- Easier, more streamlined program management
- Nurture high potential talent
- Support underrepresented employee groups

<sup>5</sup>Avison Young Case Study." Together. <https://www.togetherplatform.com/resources/avison-young-case-study>



## Together's Mentorship Solutions

### ✓ Matching with meaning

Together's intelligent pairing algorithm made matching far more efficient, considering employees' experience, career goals, and preferences to make a meaningful match.

### ✓ Mentor and mentee training resources

Together's platform supported Avison Young's program with resources like discussion agendas and mentoring handbooks.

### ✓ Automated reminders

To keep pairs on track, Together automatically sends email reminders for registration, upcoming sessions, and feedback requests.

## The Outcomes

**3.97** /4

Average Mentor and mentee feedback score



**3.97** /4

Of mentors agreed the pairings were satisfactory or very satisfactory



Increased retention attributed to mentorship



Excellent participant feedback and increased demand for mentorship



# Common Challenges and How to Avoid Them

Even the best-designed DEI-focused mentorship programs aren't immune to challenges.

Here's a look at some of the most common obstacles and how to navigate them:

## Challenge 1: Tokenism

### The Problem



The language your program uses devalues underrepresented talent, alluding to “fixing” them.

### The Fix



- Use the right language, focusing on growth and empowerment.
- Understand that the challenges groups face are systemic and not their fault.
- Be open to feedback, especially if you don't share the identity or experience the program is focused on.

## Challenge 2: Low Mentor or Mentee Engagement

### The Problem



Participants lose steam and start to disengage.

### The Fix



- Send out regular surveys to help identify issues.
- Establish clear escalation paths when participants need help.
- Store support documents in an easily accessible place.
- Provide confidentiality guidelines to build trust.



### Challenge 3: Scaling Beyond a Pilot

#### The Problem



What worked for 20-30 broke at 100+. Tracking, matching, and ongoing support are chaotic and hard to manage.

#### The Fix



- Adopt tech from the get-go to keep matching, scheduling, feedback collection, and reporting in one place.
- Start gathering benchmarking data immediately.
- Play with a mix of different mentorship models to meet demand while not overwhelming mentors.

### Challenge 4: Poor Matches or High Rate of Re-matching

#### The Problem



Matching based on superficial criteria like job title creates unfulfilling, mismatched pairs that lead to re-matching or disengagement.

#### The Fix



- Use in-depth intake surveys to match based on goals, interests, and preferences.
- Check in with participants individually to identify issues early.
- Encourage early alignment by having pairs discuss experience, interests, goals, etc.

### Challenge 5: Limited Mentor Availability

#### The Problem



The availability of mentors is outpaced by the number of mentees.

#### The Fix



- Add in group mentoring formats to expand reach.
- Train and motivate potential mentors by reminding them how qualified they are.
- Use peer mentorship to support development goals.

### Challenge 6: Difficulty Measuring Impact

#### The Problem



Success was not properly defined from the start, meaning success can't be proven.

#### The Fix



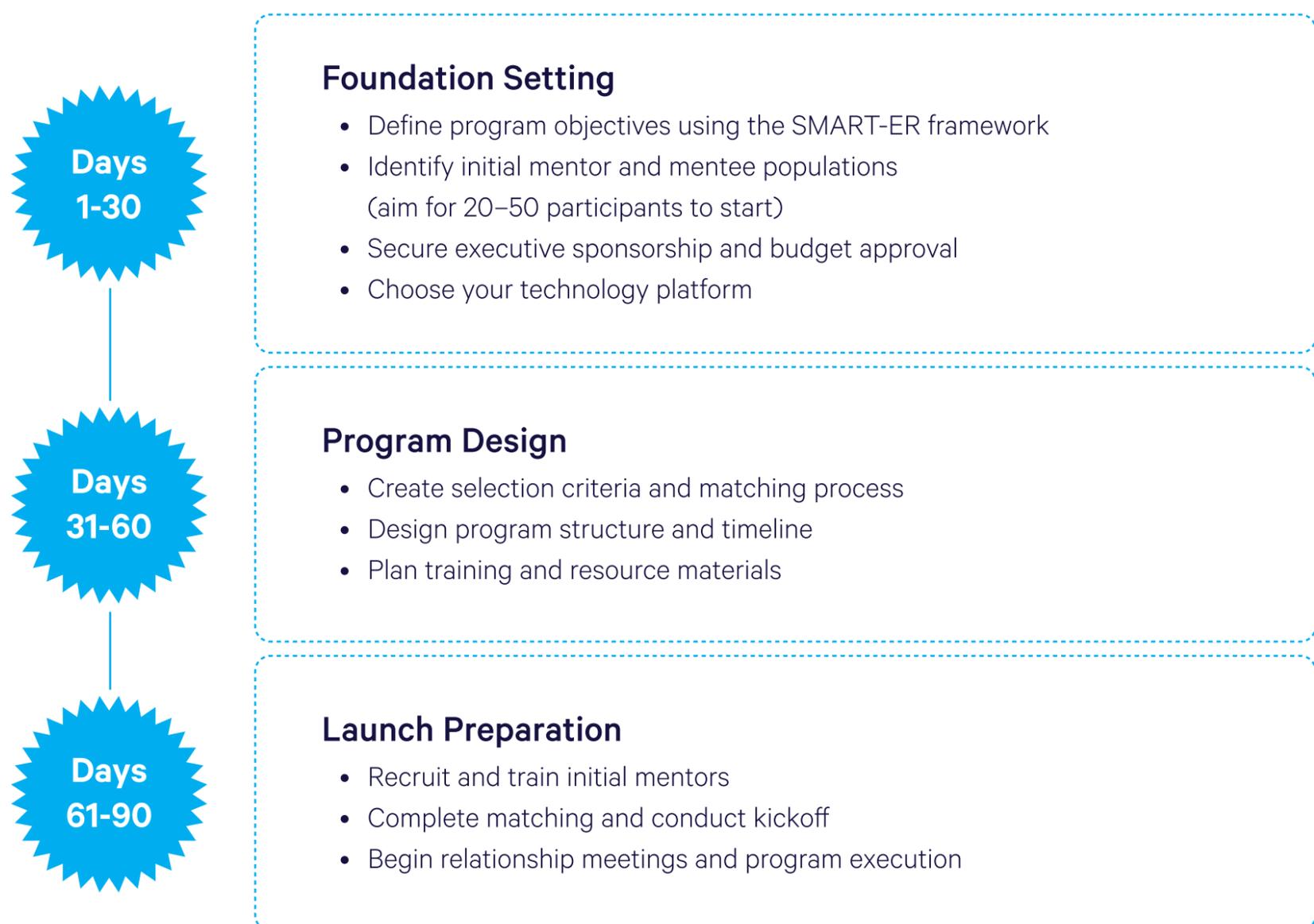
- Align your metrics with company priorities and be specific! SMART-ER goals are your friend here.
- Qualitative measurement is important too—tell human stories alongside the numbers.
- Automate reporting as much as possible using platform dashboards.

# Conclusion and Next Steps

DEI is creating a level playing field for everyone no matter how they identify and an intentional, DEI-focused mentorship program is the most human and practical way to make that an everyday experience.

From this ebook, you now have a better idea of how to move beyond sensitivity training and inclusive policies to drive greater DEI impact. There's a lot of information to process here, so here's a quick start plan to keep you on track for the first few months of your DEI mentorship program.

## The 90-day quick start plan



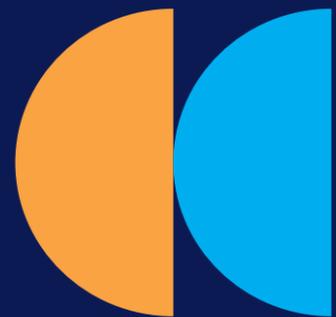
## Ready to drive better DEI outcomes? Together can help

Integrating a DEI mentorship program into your existing initiatives is one of the most powerful steps an organization can take. When employees—especially those from historically underrepresented groups—have access to meaningful guidance, advocacy, and stronger professional relationships, they gain the confidence and opportunities to thrive.

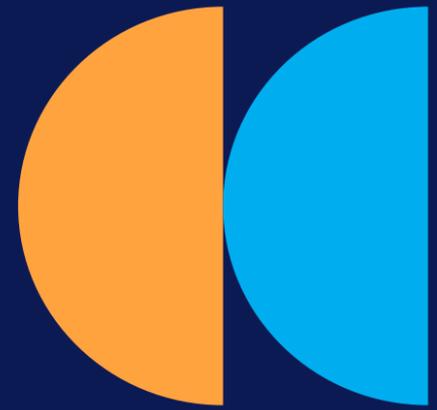
It's not just individuals that feel the benefits either. Your company will see a stronger, more understanding culture, higher retention, and the competitive advantages that come with diverse perspectives shaping decision-making.

If you're ready to build a DEI mentorship program that is equitable, scalable, and proven to drive real, measurable outcomes, Together can help. Book a demo with one of our experts at

[togetherplatform.com/book-a-demo](https://togetherplatform.com/book-a-demo)



# About Together



Together, from Absorb, makes it easy to unlock the power of mentorship and coaching in your organization. Our platform removes the manual burden of running mentorship and coaching programs by automating matching, guiding and supporting matches with session agendas, delivering actionable insights through built-in reporting, and more.

Our impact speaks for itself. G2—the leading software review site based on verified user feedback—has consistently ranked Together as the top mentoring platform for enterprise organizations.

## Together Administrators Report...

94%



Improved Employee Skills

95%



A More Connected Company

100%



Improved Inclusion and Support

79%



Improved Retention

## Some of our customers include



[Book Demo](#)

