

CAREER MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR SPOUSES OF INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONALS

HOW TO GET STARTED



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“

MENTEE

I feel like I've stepped out of the darkness and can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I have much more clarity regarding my situation”

INTRODUCTION

Preface

Denmark competes globally for international talent who create growth and new jobs, develop new knowledge and technology, and pave the way to new markets. Studies show that highly qualified international employees create a value of DKK 1.5 million annually and nearly two extra jobs.¹

A large number of international professionals come here with a partner or spouse who is also highly educated and wishes to continue their career in Denmark. In order to support their job search, and thus the recruitment and retention of international talent, Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge has developed a Career Mentoring Programme, which is designed to help volunteer Danish mentors assist international spouses with networking, job seeking and cultural understanding.

The model for the City of Knowledge Career Mentoring Programme was developed based on the fact that many international professionals leave prematurely or underperform when their accompanying spouse does not have a job or network in Denmark. For example, 32% of highly educated professionals with family leave Denmark again if their spouse does not have a job. The figure is only 19% if the spouse has a job.² As a result the accompanying spouse's job and career are extremely important aspects of their retention in Denmark.

The mentoring programme and this guide were developed with support from the Danish Industry Foundation in 2015-2017 and based on experience from the Hellerup Language Centre in Lyngby and other project partners. The project is founded by the City of Knowledge Network for Internationalisation in Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge.

A step-by-step guide

This guide has been developed to share knowledge and inspire other cities, local authorities, organisations, institutions, business clubs, companies and volunteers in Denmark who are considering introducing a mentoring programme for the accompanying spouses of international specialists. Step by step, the guide explains how to develop a successful mentoring programme. Appendices, proposals for programme, invitations and forms are freely available for download from vidensby.dk/mentor.

Benefits of a career mentoring programme

Most job-seeking international spouses have a high-level education, in addition to international work experience, making them attractive in the Danish labour market. For the most part, finding work is nevertheless difficult. Many jobs are filled via networks, just as the process of searching for a job in Denmark often differs from that in the home country. Great importance is attached, for example, to personal skills that complement one's professional qualifications, and understanding the often invisible hierarchies and expectations in the Danish workplace can be tricky. A mentor can render this much more visible.

The mentoring programme in Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge benefits both mentors and mentees. A total of 30 job-seeking mentees and 30 mentors have participated during two programmes held in 2016-2017.

¹ "Velkommen, Bienvenue, Witamy", Confederation of Danish Industry Summit 2014

² "Are highly educated immigrants good business for Denmark?", DEA 2016



“

MENTEE

Now I know which direction to go,
and I'm ready to make things work
– I won't give up”

As figure 1 shows mentees (the spouses) primarily became more active in their job search during the programme, achieved improved understanding of Danish work culture and gained greater awareness of how education and employment work. Six months after the end of the programme 71% had found a job, a corporate trainee position or were self-employed.

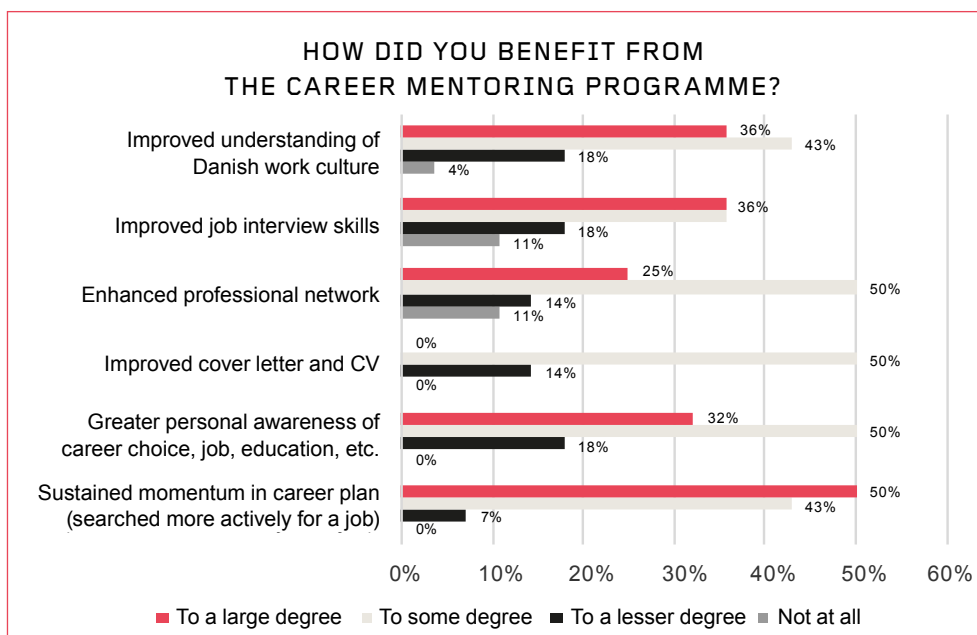


Figure 1. Benefits for mentees (accompanying partners/spouses) after six months

Danish mentors had the great satisfaction of making a positive difference for another person. In addition to strengthening their intercultural skills and network, they also achieved personal development; see figure 2.

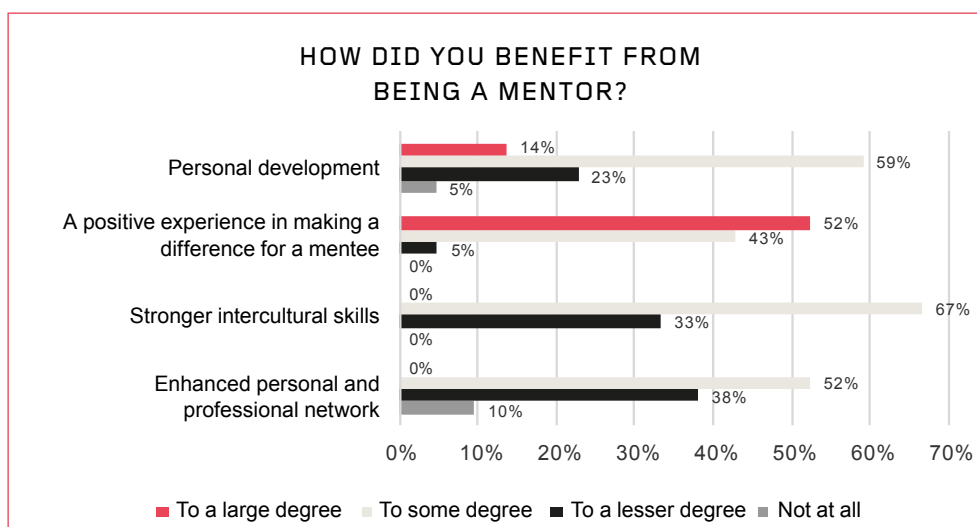


Figure 2. Benefits for mentors

“

MENTOR

I felt a mutual connection across cultures, age, education and so on. Having this experience meant a great deal”



THE GUIDE: 10 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER MENTORING PROGRAMME

The foundation of a good project involves determining who the project is for and what you would like to achieve. By following the 10 steps you can develop your own career mentoring programme for accompanying partners and spouses as part of the efforts to recruit and retain international talent.

STEP 1 – SUCCESS CRITERIA

What do you expect to achieve?

The success criteria represent the benchmarks to be used throughout the project period to ensure that you are on the right track and to make the goals visible to all stakeholders. At the same time the success criteria provide the foundation for an effective evaluation.

Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge employed the following success criteria:

- *At least 2/3 of the mentors felt they had enhanced their personal and professional network*
- *At least 2/3 of the mentors felt they had strengthened their intercultural skills*
- *At least 2/3 of the mentees felt they had enhanced their professional network*
- *At least 80% of the mentees had become more active in their job search*
- *At least 80% of the mentees had achieved a greater awareness of how education and employment work in Denmark*
- *At least 1/3 of the mentees were employed six months after the programme ended*
- *At least 80% of all of the mentors and mentees would recommend that others participate in a similar project*
- *At least 2/3 of the companies and educational institutions who worked with mentees experienced an improved ability to retain their international staff if the spouse was in the programme*

“

MENTOR

Even though it wasn't possible to directly get a job, I'm convinced that our collaboration tremendously changed my mentee's perspective both professionally and personally”

STEP 2 – PARTNERS AND PROJECT ORGANISATION

The success of a mentor project depends on excellent collaboration between several different parties. Step 2 involves a dialogue with the stakeholders who can contribute to the project and benefit from it. This may be in relation to coordination, recruitment of participants, communication, funding, facilities and catering.

Who are potentially good partners for us?

Identify possible partners in the project, for example, local authorities, companies, organisations, educational institutions, network organisations, business clubs and voluntary associations.

Example from Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge: Stakeholders

A close partner in the City of Knowledge Career Mentoring Programme was Hellerup Language Centre in Lyngby, which played a key role in the development of the project and recruitment of mentors and mentees. In addition, the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) was the largest single partner due to its large number of international researchers, which also made it an important partner.

Other stakeholders who supported the mentoring programme included both large and small companies, educational institutions and the local authorities. The companies comprised major businesses such as Microsoft, Haldor Topsøe and COWI, who recruit internationally, as well as companies from various industries, and of different sizes, that wanted to support the international agenda even though they do not employ international specialists.

If possible, bringing in or hiring a professional career coach can be a big asset to the project.

TIP: ASK QUESTIONS

Who would like to participate?

Who would like to take co-responsibility for the project?

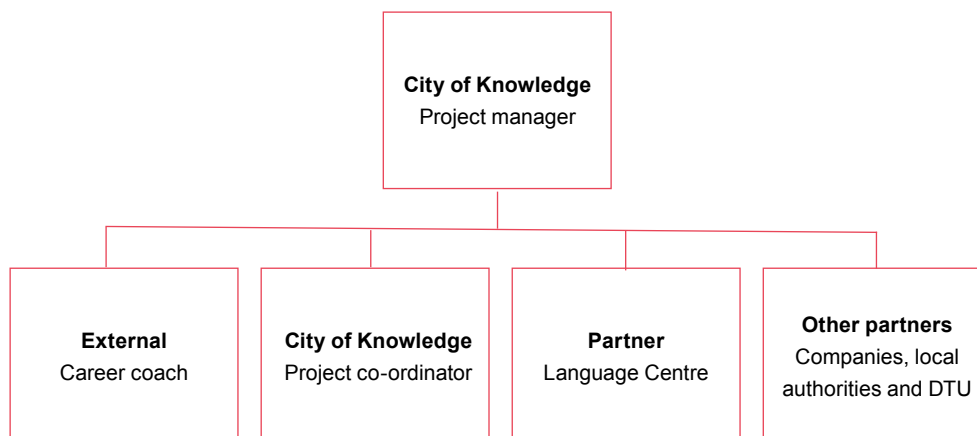
Who can contribute funding?

How can we ensure support and commitment?

TIP:

When there are multiple partners, confusion can arise as to who should do what. Establish a clear allocation of roles and responsibilities.

Example from Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge: Project organisation



Project manager:

had overall responsibility for the project, budget, resources and dissemination of the results.

Project co-ordinator:

assisted with, for example, administrative tasks, communication of results and preparation of informational and evaluation materials.

External consultant/career coach:

conducted career workshops for mentees, an introduction for mentors, kick-off meetings and midway sessions and was responsible for the matching and ongoing contact with mentors and mentees.

Language centre:

was responsible for initial contact with the mentees as accompanying spouses/partners often quickly attend language courses after arriving in Denmark. The language centre also held informational meetings and managed contact with the mentors and mentees.

Other partners:

served as a reference group. The Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge Network for Internationalisation in Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge had this role.



TIP:

Consider whether to meet regularly on a specific day or whether it might be better to meet on different weekdays. Perhaps there are some days that prevent certain groups from participating. On Thursdays, for example, banks and local authorities often have longer opening hours.

TIP:

Remember to incorporate some social activities into the programme, such as light refreshments or time for unstructured networking, as this is an important aspect of building trust and networking across mentors and mentees.

Encourage participants to meet for one-on-one sessions between joint meetings.

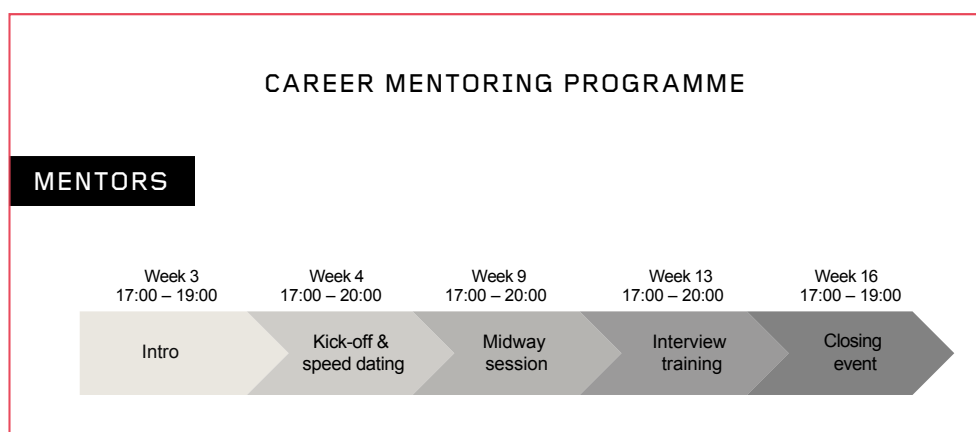
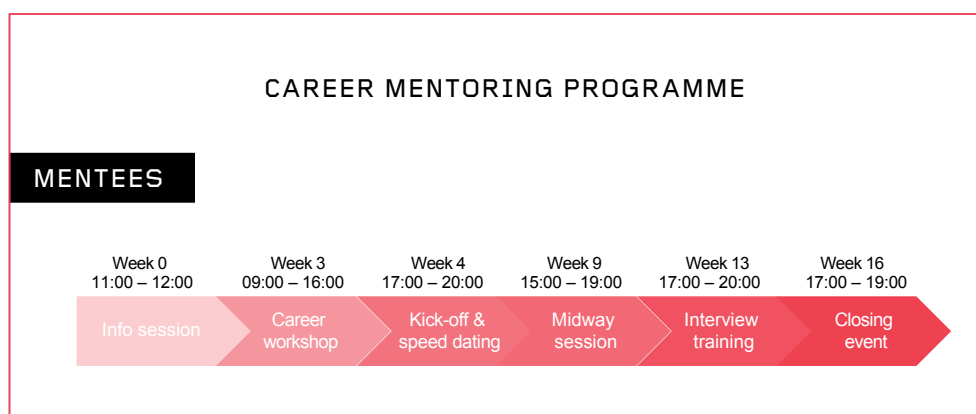
STEP 3 – PROGRAMME

When planning the programme it is important to take into account that Danish mentors who work often already have full work and leisure calendars, as well as the fact that the mentor project is competing against a host of other volunteer programmes. Accompanying spouses, in contrast, often have more free time. It is important to put together a programme that, in terms of time and content, is regarded as meaningful and that creates value for both the job-seeking mentees and mentors who work.

Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge decided to have a four-month programme with four joint meetings. When a programme lasts more than six months, finding mentors becomes difficult, while the yield from programmes that last less than four months is limited because it takes time to build trust between mentors and mentees. It turns out that people paired as mentors-mentees regularly continue their collaboration after the formal programme ends.

Design the programme based on your success criteria. Talk about what the participants should derive from the process and how best to organise the selected activities. Make a schedule for the programme that lists specific dates, times and the objective of each activity.

Example from Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge: Timeline





TIP:

Keep in mind that it may be a good idea to separate the participants so mentors and mentees can talk alone without their partner for part of the time. For example, mentees could meet up an hour or two before the mentors arrive and then the mentors could stay an hour or two extra.

TIP:

Involve mentors and partners by having them host one of the joint meetings, sponsor the catering or by having them do a brief presentation of their workplace. This approach allows mentors and mentees to gain insight into various places of work.

TIP:

Since not all mentors have experience with hiring employees, we recommend that two mentors conduct each job interview. In addition to simulating a real job interview situation in Denmark, it also allows the mentors to support one another during the interview.

Informational meeting for mentees

A one-hour voluntary info session about the mentor programme that describes the project and offers valuable insight into the participants' background and motivation for participating.

Course for mentors

A short 2-3 hour course for mentors that provides advice and guidance on their duties and also allows the mentors to get to know one another, making it easier to provide access to each other's networks.

Career workshop for mentees

One of the most important prerequisites for success is that the mentees are well equipped to search for a job in Denmark prior to meeting with their mentors. The workshop focuses on writing a motivated application and CV, job opportunities in Denmark, cultural issues, networks and personality as a complement to professionalism.

Kick-off event and speed dating for mentors and mentees

At the kick-off meeting, which lasts three hours, the mentors and mentees speed date and subsequently indicate whom they would like to be paired with. If each mentor and mentee provides three requests, experience shows that at least one of the participants in a match has requested the other person. Matching is conducted by the project co-ordinator/facilitator during a networking break on the actual day.

Midway session for mentors and mentees

The three-hour midway session involves taking stock and networking. Have, for example, the local job centre do a presentation on the labour market, trainee positions and wage subsidies, or do a presentation of the unwritten rules of the Danish labour market. If necessary, make any adjustments for the remainder of the programme.

Job interview training

A popular feature of the programme is the three-hour session on job interview training. Mentors take on the role of the recruiting manager and use actual job applications written by mentees. Two 45-minute rounds can be conducted.

Closing event

To round off the programme, invite participants to a reception to celebrate the results and to thank the mentors for their efforts. The evaluation can be done in smaller groups, where the mentors and mentees have the opportunity to share what they experienced during the programme.

“

MENTOR

As a mentor, I've learned to speak more English than I'm used to and it's gone far better than I expected”



STEP 4 – LANGUAGE CONSIDERATIONS

Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge chose to communicate in English with mentees and in Danish with mentors, especially during the recruitment phase, in order to reach as broad a target group as possible. All joint meetings and joint communication during the programme were conducted in English.

Language centres may prefer that all communication take place in Danish because they consider it part of learning Danish.

You may want to consider communicating with both mentors and mentees in English because international employees who have found their footing in Denmark can be a valuable resource as a mentor in the programme.

STEP 5 – BUDGET

Depending on the project's budget, the programme can be implemented in a variety of ways. We here outline three different models for a four-month mentoring programme. Keep in mind that the first time you do a programme will require the use of more resources than subsequent programmes because it takes time to develop and streamline the procedures.

Model 1, which is the less expensive, is based on volunteers and one administrative employee to do the coordinating. This model involves partners who contribute by providing consultancy and coaching, facilities and catering, volunteer assistance with the preparation of informational materials, advertising and networking. Mentees participate in at least one two-hour introductory career workshop.

Model 2 is based on having someone experienced with personnel matters to handle administration, coordination, communication and facilitation of the individual aspects of the programme. The advantage of this model is that a single person runs the project, which simplifies the management and requires less coordination. Similar to the first model, it is based on partners providing facilities and catering and assistance with the preparation of informational materials and advertising. The mentees participate in a one-day introductory career workshop.

Model 3, which is the most expensive, is based on hiring a professional external career coach to execute the programme. This results in a more professional execution, better streamlining of planning and fewer expenses for coordination and project management. Mentees participate in a two-day career workshop that includes a personality analysis and accompanying report.

TIP:

Volunteers can be recruited from one of the project's partners, for example, an internal HR service, a language centre, an educational institution, a business club or a volunteer association.



“

MENTEE

I've been reminded
of the fact that searching
for a job is more like
a marathon than a sprint.
I'm sure I'll get there,
but doing so is a long haul”

STEP 6 – WHO CAN BE A MENTOR OR MENTEE

Clear selection criteria for mentors and mentees can help ensure the success of the project. Our experience shows that it is easier to recruit international mentees than Danish mentors and that having a final balanced number is essential. The size of the project depends on how many international specialists live/work in your local area, and how many mentors you expect to be able to reach, but also partially on the budget for your project.

Example from Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge: Profile for mentees

A mentoring programme represents help to self-help for mentees, which means that the primary motivation must come from the mentees themselves, which requires surplus energy and focus.

To ensure success we established the following requirements for mentees, who:

- *Are prepared to take a job/strongly want to have a job, build a career and gain access to a professional network in Denmark*
- *Are proficient in English and possibly Danish as a working language*
- *Have lived in Denmark for at least six months*
- *Are a spouse or cohabiting partner of an international specialist who works or lives in Lyngby-Taarbæk*

Example from Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge: Profile for mentors

To ensure success we established the following requirements for mentors, who:

- *Have the time and desire to help and provide feedback for an international resident in Denmark*
- *Are part of, or have strong network ties to, the Danish labour market*
- *Are willing to provide access to their personal network*
- *Can come from a variety of job types, educational backgrounds and industries*
- *Can participate in the mentoring programme's joint meetings and one-on-one meetings with mentees*

TIP:

We recommend 15-20 mentor-mentee pairs per programme in order to achieve good team dynamics and networking opportunities. This amount is also manageable and will increase your chances of being able to borrow facilities from your partners.

TIP:

Use your partner organisations' channels and networks, including their corporate intranets. Bring flyers along to network meetings and business meetings, hang posters up in the library, businesses, educational institutions, the city hall and in the local authority's Citizen Service.



“

MENTEE

I've got more self-confidence now. Someone showed confidence in me and believed in me when I wasn't able to do it myself. That was a huge help”

TIP:

Start recruiting early to ensure that there are enough participants.

TIP:

Maintain a list of previous mentors in order to create a team of ambassadors to recruit new mentors for future programmes. Our experience shows that many people sign up again at a later point or encourage others to participate.



STEP 7 – RECRUITING MENTORS AND MENTEES

Now you are ready to recruit participants for the project. You may want to use your success criteria to talk about the benefits for mentors and mentees.

Create a 1-2-page flyer for mentors and one for mentees and be sure to create publicity and perhaps advertise via e-mail, social media, websites, newsletters, posters and local newspapers. See a sample flyer on vidensby.dk/mentor.

Consider inviting mentors and mentees to attend a voluntary informational meeting before signing up.

Recruiting mentors

Start recruiting mentors early via local companies, organisations and other relevant players. Personal contact and specific requests are much more effective than collective messages.

Our experience shows that mentors mainly sign up to share their professional skills, to help another person, to give their daily life an international twist and to develop their personal network with other professionals. They would like to make a positive difference and to support a local initiative. Many of them have an expansive professional network.

Some mentors have previously worked with HR, have been a supervisor or taught. Many of them have a completely different background in support, public administration, management, consulting and much more.

Draw up an application form for mentees as well as mentors that includes a short description of their educational background and experience, their motivation for participating and their expectations concerning the programme. Perhaps ask them to write in English so the information can be given directly to mentees. See a sample form on vidensby.dk/mentor.

Recruiting mentees

Recruiting mentees requires less hands-on management than mentors because mentees are often on the lookout for opportunities to establish themselves in Denmark, including assistance with job searches. Use various channels to create awareness of the mentoring programme by sending flyers to companies and the local language centre, ensure publicity in newsletters for expats and on social media and provide information at the local authority's Citizen Service and at the job centre.



“

MENTOR

Being a mentor has been a learning experience. I would like to be one of those people who gets my mentee a job, but we're also on a journey. We have to remember to enjoy what develops and changes. That's also a sign of success”

STEP 8 – MATCHING OF EXPECTATIONS

The participants' expectations do not always match the objectives of the project, despite a high level of communication. In order to ensure broad satisfaction among both mentors and mentees it is important to respond to the participants' expectations concerning the programme.

Example from Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge: Matching of expectations

Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge has found that both mentors and mentees have expectations concerning the collaboration, including the frequency of contact, type of communication, the role of the mentor and that the mentee finds a job during the mentoring process. If their expectations toward themselves and others are not articulated, then there is the risk that they will be disappointed. One mentor, for example, expressed dissatisfaction because the mentee did not do what the mentor expected. Likewise, a mentee expected much more frequent contact with the mentor than was possible. Unfulfilled expectations can have a demotivating effect. See a sample form on the matching of expectations on vidensby.dk/mentor.

STEP 9 – EVALUATION

Draw up evaluation forms for both mentors and mentees that are based on the success criteria. This can be used both at the beginning of the project, phrased as expectations, and upon completion of the project as a follow-up on expectations. Use the midway session to record experiences and adjust the content, if necessary. See a sample evaluation form at vidensby.dk/mentor.

STEP 10 – NOW IT IS YOUR TURN

Projects always change along the way, which means that even though we have given you ideas about how to conduct a mentoring programme, we recommend that you always be prepared to make adjustments along the way based on the participants' needs and expectations, the constellation of your partners and your budget.

We hope that this guide has inspired you to develop your own mentoring programme and we would like to wish you the best of luck with the process.

TIP:

Remember to tell the outside world about your results to ensure ongoing attention and support. Use, for example, the local newspaper, magazines, newsletters and social media.

TIP:

Remember to give the mentors a small thank you gift when the programme is over.

“

MENTOR

Sometimes being a mentor
was frustrating. I thought that
finding work in Denmark
was easier”

ABOUT LYNGBY-TAARBÆK CITY OF KNOWLEDGE

Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge is a private association and a unique alliance between private companies, research and educational institutions, public authorities, housing associations and citizens to ensure the city's continued growth and development. Our vision is to develop Lyngby-Taarbæk into one of Europe's leading university towns with the best conditions for research, study, business and entrepreneurship.

The Career Mentoring Programme is rooted in the City of Knowledge Network for Internationalisation, which gathers 20-25 participants in an ambitious collaboration with representatives from the private sector, education and research institutions and the Lyngby-Taarbæk Municipality. Read more at vidensby.dk/mentor.

APPENDICES AND LINKS

The following appendices are available for download at vidensby.dk/mentor:

- *Programme overview*
- *Flyer for recruiting mentors*
- *Flyer for recruiting mentees*
- *Application form for mentees*
- *Application form for mentors*
- *Matching expectations form*
- *Evaluation forms*



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Lyngby-Taarbæk City of Knowledge, 2017



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