

What is the Tourism Business Mentorship Program?

The Tourism Business Mentorship Program provides approved mentees with an opportunity and financial support to learn important business skills from an experienced mentor. These skills will help mentees to:

- Maximize their potential;
- Improve their leadership skills; and
- Become successful and profitable tourism operators.

What is mentorship?

Mentorship is when an experienced person in a business (**mentor**) helps a person with less experience in that field of business (**mentee**). Together, they work to discuss, evaluate and solve identified business issues.

How do I know if mentorship can help me?

Because each business has specific needs, only you can answer this question.

A mentor can:

- Help develop your business skills.
- Bring a fresh perspective to your business issues.
- Provide advice and encouragement to you.
- Listen to new business ideas and answer your questions.
- Help clarify business related problems.
- Suggest alternative working methods.
- Develop solutions to help resolve important business issues.
- Help expand your professional networks and business relationships.

What is the difference between a mentor and a consultant?

Simply, a consultant is somebody you pay to do the work for you. A mentor is somebody who advises you on what work needs to be done and helps you learn how to do the work yourself.

How does the mentoring work?

Once a mentor and mentee are partnered together, it is up to them to agree on a mutually convenient place and time to work together.

This may involve:

- Mentees visiting the mentor's place of business.
- Mentors visiting the mentee's place of business.
- The use of technology (phone calls, email, Skype) so mentorship is not restricted by geography.

What qualifies someone to be a mentor?

There is no formal qualification to become a mentor. Mentors are business people who have a wide range of experience resulting from their years of business activity and are interested in helping emerging entrepreneurs.

Who are the mentors in the database?

The Tourism Business Mentorship Program has developed a database of experienced business people who are willing to use their knowledge and experience to help emerging tourism operators in the NWT.

Mentors in our database come from a wide variety of successful businesses. These might be people with experience owning and running a small business; working for and running organizations with strong links to small business; or possibly working for large organizations. Each will have some specialist knowledge, but overall, they will help you learn general business related skills and navigate through business related issues.

A key factor in selecting our mentors is that they demonstrate an appreciation for the operating contexts of small businesses. Our mentors are people who genuinely enjoy helping small businesses overcome hurdles to develop and prosper.

Who can apply to be a mentee of the Program?

To be eligible for the program, tourism operators need to meet the following criteria:

- Must be a resident of the Northwest Territories (NWT).
- Must have a valid Tourism Operator License or be a business, collective or organization that is engaged in the NWT tourism sector.
- Must be legally entitled to be a business in the NWT.
- Must have a business plan.

How do I apply for the mentorship Program?

Applying is easy. An application form can be picked up from any regional ITI office, or you can download it from the website: www.iti.gov.nt.ca/bmp.

Regional Tourism Officers are available to discuss project proposals, help complete your application and to accept your completed application form. Applications can be submitted anytime.

How do I get matched with a mentor?

There are a few different ways to be matched with a mentor.

- You can suggest the name of a person that you would like to be your mentor. ITI will see if they meet the guidelines to be a mentor.
- You can choose from an ITI approved list of mentors. ITI will determine if that mentor is a good match for you.
- If you need help choosing a mentor, ITI can suggest one that is best suited for you.

Will the mentor I choose be the one that I get?

Not necessarily. ITI will do its best to accommodate the choice of mentor selected by the mentee. However, it may be the case that the selected mentor from the database does not fit the needs of the mentee or the mentor proposed by a mentee does not meet the ITI mentor criteria. In this case, you will be matched with a mentor that is a better fit for you.

You will have the opportunity to confirm if the recommended mentor is acceptable before you sign the mentorship agreement. It must also be considered how many mentees a mentor can have at one time.

What if I can't find a mentor with an exact match for my business?

That could happen. It is nearly impossible to have a team of mentors that will have the exact experience required for every individual operator in the NWT. However, all mentors selected by ITI will have long and valuable experience in general business disciplines. Core business issues tend to be the same regardless of the industry.

If my original mentor can't provide all the assistance I need is another mentor able to assist?

Yes. Your original mentor will quickly determine if you need to see another mentor with different skills that match your particular issues. Your mentor might even be able to recommend a better-suited mentor. Subject to approval from ITI, a transfer to a different mentor can be arranged.

How is this mentorship financially supported?

Funding is provided to mentees (and mentors) to partake in this opportunity. The funding contract is valid for one year.

- Eligible costs for the mentee are funded to a maximum of \$10,000. The mentee must invest a maximum of \$500 as equity for the total eligible costs.
- The mentee will be reimbursed when approved receipts are submitted at the end of the mentorship program, together with reports from the mentor and mentee. Advance funding support for specific costs might be possible and will be assessed on an individual basis.
- The eligible costs do not include the mentor honorarium, which will be paid directly to the mentor by ITI. The amount of this honorarium will be identified by the GNWT Financial Administration Manual and may not exceed \$2,500 per duration of the contract.
- The Program may also consider funding a group of interested mentees to visit a mentor's place of business that agrees to provide such opportunity.
- All funding is subject to availability and approval.
- This may be renewed on a case-by-case basis.

How confidential are my sessions with a mentor?

Mentoring will touch on very confidential and sometimes personal issues. It is therefore essential that the working relationship between mentor and mentee be kept confidential.

As part of this program, a confidentiality agreement will be written and signed by both the mentee and the mentor.

What is my involvement and commitment to the mentoring process?

Each mentoring session should result in a set of action items that you (the mentee) and the mentor decide upon. As part of the process of building your business and addressing business related issues, it will be your responsibility to work on these action items. These action items will be reviewed and refined during the course of the mentoring process.

What is my time commitment as mentee?

Together with your mentor, you will determine the time commitment based on your specific needs. However it is important to engage in consistent communication with your mentor and work toward your identified business goals. The funding contract is valid for one year.

What topics are covered during my mentoring sessions?

This will depend on your specific business context. Some mentees will need immediate advice to remain in business, while others may need more strategic long-term support. When you start the mentoring process, these topics will be identified with your mentor and help guide your future sessions.

Do I need to do any preparation prior to the first mentoring session?

The more information you can give your mentor before or during your first session the better. This will speed up the time taken to understand your business and issues. Some of the subjects that the mentor will be interested to learn about would include your financial position, opportunities and ideas, any challenges that you face, and an overview of what service or product you provide to the tourism industry.

Do I need to have a business plan prior to the first mentoring session?

Yes. To apply for the Tourism Business Mentorship Program, you must have a business plan. However, it may be the case that you need to develop a more effective business plan. This might be one of the things your mentor helps you with. A copy of your business plan should ideally be sent to your mentor prior to the first meeting.

How long does it take from when I apply to seeing the mentor?

It takes about 60 business days to go through the process from application to when a formal mentorship contract is signed. After that, it is up to the mentor and mentee to decide on when to meet and start the mentoring process.

How many mentorship sessions should we have?

That is up to you and the mentor. It is recommended that at least four sessions take place and at least two of them are face-to-face sessions. Your contribution agreement is intended to cover most of the travel costs associated with these sessions.

The only exception to this is where there is a very specific problem that you want to discuss and that could be done in one session, or a start-up business idea that needs to be run past an experienced business person to determine its feasibility. In fact, effective monitoring is best achieved through a larger number of shorter conversations over the course of time.

Is my mentor allowed to do paid work for me in addition to the mentoring sessions?

No. A mentor is prohibited from gaining any commercial benefit from their mentoring work. However, after this mentorship contract is complete, they are free to pursue whatever relations they see fit.

Can this mentorship program help me if my business is outside of the NWT?

No. The Tourism Business Mentorship Program is only open to residents and business operators in the NWT.