

# AES Group Mentoring Pilot

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## Program guide

### Table of contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction                                   | 2  |
| Overview of the pilot                          | 3  |
| Key dates                                      | 3  |
| What is group mentoring?                       | 4  |
| Who is eligible to participate?                | 5  |
| How will participants be selected and matched? | 6  |
| What is expected of participants?              | 7  |
| How will the pilot run?                        | 8  |
| Will the pilot be evaluated?                   | 10 |
| What else do I need to know?                   | 10 |
| How to apply                                   | 11 |

## **Introduction**

The AES Pathways Committee is excited to announce the launch of the AES Group Mentoring Pilot!

The development of the pilot is a response to the high level of demand for mentorship from members recorded in the membership survey for the 2019–22 strategic planning process. The pilot seeks to meet the needs of practicing evaluators seeking mentorship to support them in their professional development journeys. An innovative online group mentoring model has been developed to pilot.

As a pilot, there are several aspects of the model that require testing to establish what works well for AES members. Participation in the pilot provides a unique opportunity for innovative AES members who are seeking to develop their professional practice through mentorship to also contribute to the design of the AES mentoring program. It will require both commitment to the mentoring relationship and evaluation activities. Interested participants should also be prepared for a few bumps along the way as we work out what works and what is needed for a successful group mentoring experience!

The aim of these guidelines is to provide an overview of the pilot for interested participants. These guidelines will be refreshed following the conclusion of the pilot.

*Thank you for your interest in the AES Group Mentoring Pilot. We hope it is a rewarding experience for all participants and supports the development of a sustainable and successful mentorship program that meets the needs of AES membership.*

## Overview of the pilot

The AES Group Mentoring Pilot is an online mentoring program, in which seasoned evaluators guide less experienced mentees through their professional journey.

As a group mentorship model, the pilot also involves a mentee peer support function, where mentees with diverse experiences can learn from other mentees in pursuit of a common learning goal and develop their support network in the evaluation field.

For the pilot, four AES Fellows have volunteered to act as mentors to a small group of mentees. Each mentor will meet with a group of up to five mentees once a month over the course of six months.

The structure of each group's mentorship program will be flexible, depending on the mentor's specialisation focus, and needs and goals of the mentees involved. It will be up to the mentor and mentees in each group to negotiate a mutually agreeable format and common goal.

The mentoring pilot is intended to support further understanding of the needs and expectations of mentees, as well as potential models that would work for the AES membership. As such, the pilot will be evaluated to support the development of future iterations of the mentoring program. Participants of the pilot will be expected to participate in the evaluation.

## Key dates

| Stage   | Date*  |
|---|--|
| Mentee expressions of interest open to mentees          | Monday 9 November 2020                                       |
| Mentee expressions of interest close                    | Sunday 22 November 2020                                      |
| All applicants notified of outcome of selection process | By Friday 18 December 2020                                   |
| Orientation session for mentees and mentors             | January 2021 (date TBC)                                      |
| Mentoring pilot commences - TOR meeting                 | January 2021<br>(dates to be set by each mentor)             |
| First formal mentoring session                          | January 2021<br>(dates to be agreed by each mentoring group) |
| Mentoring pilot ends                                    | June 2021  |

\* Dates to be confirmed

## What is group mentoring?

Group mentoring involves a mentor working a group of mentees with similar interests in pursuit of their professional development goals.

Mentoring is intended support mentee's professional development, growth and competencies as evaluation practitioners. Unlike a traditional one-to-one mentoring program, group mentoring also benefits participants through having access to diverse experiences and perspectives supporting the development of a richer understanding of the practice of evaluation. Not only are mentees able to build relationships with their mentors, they are also able to build relationships with their peers and it is intended that this peer support network will provide a sustainable benefit to mentees beyond the program.

## Defining mentoring

The AES online, group mentoring pilot takes a broad approach to defining mentoring. It allows each group to bring to the fore, in different ways, the following aspects:

- A structured relationship between an expert evaluator who provides guidance and support to less experienced AES members in which the mentee is responsible for their learning. Through serving as a role model, sharing their insights, listening objectively, acting as a sounding board and making suggestions, mentors facilitate the learning and application of critical problem-solving skills in decision-making by mentees. They may ask open questions to challenge ways of thinking and actions taken by mentees to handle or manage difficult situations or to make progress towards their professional development goals. This relationship has a holistic focus on professional development and is based on respect, mutual trust, encouragement, constructive comments and commitment to learning. It is goal-oriented and driven by the mentee.
- Small groups of up to five mentee and one mentor in which AES members staff share their mentoring experience, develop their capacity together and learn from one another. This element resembles formal peer support mechanisms and communities of practice that are intended to provide mutual social support. Here, the mentor facilitates the sharing of mentee experiences as a way to work through challenging situations.
- Knowledge and skill-based development in specific areas that are directly relevant to workplace responsibilities. For example, knowledge about the theoretical foundations of evaluation which are distinct from other forms of inquiry; value perspectives embedded within an evaluand; research methods for data collection and analysis; the tasks carried out during the course of an evaluation; or explore specific issues related to a particular sector. This is similar to coaching in which the coach directs instruction, provides appropriate direction and makes suggestions to share expertise within an organisation.

## **Who is eligible to participate?**

All participants must be AES members.

### **Mentors**

Four AES Fellows have volunteered to act as mentors for the pilot, in addition to supporting the design of the program through their participation.

In future iterations of the program, it is expected that the mentoring initiative will provide experienced evaluators within AES membership the opportunity to volunteer as mentors.

Learnings through the pilot will help to identify eligibility requirements for potential mentors.

Information on eligibility requirements and details of how to express an interest in future iterations of the program will be made available to the AES membership following completion of the pilot and its evaluation.

### **Mentees**

The AES Group Mentoring Pilot is a new professional development opportunity targeted towards evaluators committed to their professional development inclusive of emerging evaluators, mid-term evaluators and emerging leaders in the field.

As each mentor will have a different focus area for their group, this may also include a target group for the mentorship. Further details on each mentor's biography and focus area can be found on the [AES website](#).

## **How will participants be selected and matched?**

In the online form, mentees can express an interest in participating in one or more of the mentoring groups. The professional biographies of mentors and a summary of their mentoring group's focus are available on the [AES website](#).

Mentees for each group will be jointly selected by the AES Pathways Committee Mentoring Pilot Working Group and the mentors.

As places on the pilot will be limited, if demand exceeds available places, selection of mentees will be based on the following criteria:

- Mentee's stated goals/expectations and alignment with their preferred mentorship focus
- The diversity of personal and professional backgrounds within each group (to support peer learning)
- The alignment of interests of each group to other potential mentees in the group (to support the group in working towards common goals).

As a pilot, these criteria may need to be revised. Should this occur, this will be made transparent to all applicants when they are notified about the outcome of their application. Any revisions to the selection criteria during the pilot will be incorporated into future iterations of the program.

Applicants who are not selected will be notified of the outcome and can still apply for future rounds.

## What is expected of participants?

### Program requirements

Both the mentor and mentees are expected to commit to the relationship and dedicate time to its success.

All participants are expected to:

- read program guidelines and policies
- attend any preparation sessions
- sign and submit a mentoring agreement
- agree on a mentoring schedule, session expectations, individual and group professional goals
- attend mentoring meetings, prepare appropriately and attend to any follow up actions
- be professional, respectful and observe confidentiality
- contact their designated Mentoring Support Coordinator if any questions or concerns arise
- participate in required evaluations and feedback.

| Mentors   | Mentees  |
|---|--|
| Responsibilities include the following:   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to mentees through sharing experience and providing practical advice</li> <li>• Assist mentees to set an achievable individual and/or group goal</li> <li>• Be inclusive, taking into account the experiences and needs of people of all levels of expertise and experience in evaluation as well as other professional skills and abilities, cultural protocols and preferred ways of working, genders and sexualities</li> <li>• Assist the mentee to plan for success</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance as required</li> <li>• Reflect on progress</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be prepared for meetings</li> <li>• Respect the mentor's experience</li> <li>• Respect fellow mentee experiences</li> <li>• Identify a personal goal</li> <li>• Contribute to identifying a group goal</li> <li>• Track and communicate progress towards identified goal(s)</li> <li>• Communicate and work through challenges</li> <li>• Be open to receiving and providing feedback</li> <li>• Reflect on progress towards identified goal</li> </ul> |

## **How will the pilot run?**

### **Orientation session**

An orientation session for both mentors and mentees will be held in January, prior to mentoring groups meeting individually.

The purpose of the orientation session is to:

- provide an overview of the mentoring pilot model and structure
- provide any materials/documentation required to be completed prior to or during the mentorship
- introduce participants to their Mentoring Support Coordinator (MSC), and discuss the role of the MSC
- provide an overview of the evaluation and participants' role in the co-design of the program
- provide an opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet before program commencement.

### **Mentoring Support Coordinators**

Each mentoring group will be provided with a designated Mentoring Support Coordinator (MSC). For the pilot, MSCs will be members of the AES Pathways Committee's Mentoring Pilot Working Group to enhance AES learning on support needs for future iterations of the program.

The MSC's role is to:

- check in with individual participants during the course of the mentoring relationship to ensure the match is progressing smoothly
- be a point of contact for any questions or concerns that arise during the course of the mentoring relationship.

An MSC will be assigned to each group. Participants will be provided contact details for their MSC at program commencement.



## Suggested program framework / structure

Each mentoring group's approach will be different, depending on the objectives, experiences and needs of the participants. A suggested framework for the program is provided below:

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Stage 1</b> | Introductions, expectations and goal setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Getting to know each other</li><li>• Understanding mentee's needs and expectations about what they hope to gain through their participation</li><li>• Mentee goal setting</li><li>• Setting group expectations</li></ul> |
| <b>Stage 2</b> | Ongoing meetings to progress mentee goals   |
| <b>Stage 3</b> | Wrapping up <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflection on progress and areas for continued development</li><li>• Discuss ongoing contact</li></ul>  |

### Meeting 1

The first meeting is critical for establishing the foundations of a successful mentoring relationship.

Essential to a successful mentoring relationship are two important aspects, which should be addressed within this first meeting to help set the group up for success:

1. *Setting expectations and objectives*

These should be prepared in advance by all participants for a facilitated discussion and negotiation.

2. *Developing a relationship based on trust and respect*

In a group mentoring scenario, this requires both trust between mentors and mentees, and amongst mentees. During the first meeting, the group will focus on getting to know one another.

*Organising the first meeting:* The mentor will coordinate a mutually agreeable date for the first meeting of the mentoring group at the orientation session. Future meeting dates will be decided during the first meeting and set up by the mentor.

*Mentee preparation:* Complete all preparation activities prior to the session

#### *Discussion points*

- Getting to know each other
- Ground rules for working together
- Mentee expectations and goals
- Future meeting dates

## **Will the pilot be evaluated?**

All pilot participants will be expected to participate in evaluation activities throughout the course of and following completion of the mentorship. This may include records of self-assessments, surveys, interviews and focus groups.

The Pathways Committee Mentoring Pilot Working Group encourages any suggestions and feedback on the pilot at any stage from all participants.

## **What else do I need to know?**

### **Policies**

#### ***Ending the relationship early***

Where a mentor or mentee cannot or does not wish to continue participating in the mentorship, they should notify their Mentoring Support Coordinator of their decision at the earliest opportunity.

In situations where this is due to difficulties between members of the group, or between the mentee and mentor, the MSC should be notified. If this participant wishes to work through the issue, the MSC will support the facilitation of this. Otherwise, the Mentoring Agreement includes a 'no fault' clause, which enables the mentee or mentor to end the mentoring relationship without any blame attached.

#### ***Code of conduct***

All participants are expected to adhere to the responsibilities outlined in the section [What is expected of participants](#).

In particular, participants must:

- observe confidentiality at all times
- maintain professional behaviour
- fulfill agreed commitments
- contact the MSC with any concerns of difficulties.

## How to apply

Mentees must complete an online expression of interest form to be considered for the program **by Sunday 22 November 2020**. The form can be found on the [AES website](#) or click on the link below. On the form, mentees can indicate their preferences for the mentoring group they wish to participate in.

Applications will inform the evaluation of the pilot by supporting understanding about the needs and expectations of AES members wishing to be mentored.

[REGISTER YOUR INTEREST TO JOIN A GROUP AS A MENTEE](#)