Request for Expressions of Interest

Improving Youth Employment Outcomes through Quality Mentoring and Pay-for-Performance Funding-for-Performance Funding

Mentor Canada invites Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from eligible organizations seeking to enhance their existing programs and services through the integration of high-quality mentoring practices. This initiative is delivered under *Mentoring as a Catalyst for Youth Employment*, a multi-year project led by Mentor Canada in partnership with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and the Students Commission of Canada (SCC) and funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC).

The project aims to address emerging systemic challenges in the youth employment sector through cross-sector partnerships and research-driven innovation. Participating organizations will pilot research-informed, practitioner-validated set of guiding principles and novel tools and resources designed to strengthen mentoring practices that support youth aged 18 to 30 on pathways to meaningful employment.

1. Background and Objectives

Mentor Canada is developing a **Quality Mentoring Framework (QMF)** to help organizations deliver equitable, effective, and high-quality mentoring opportunities tailored to youth employment outcomes. The QMF is based on research evidence and best practices as well as practitioner expertise and promising approaches.

The QMF includes:

- Guiding principles of quality mentoring for youth employment in a framework

- Practical tools such as *Cultural Humility Training for Mentors* and the *Toolkit to Enhance Social Capital through Mentoring*

Pilot partners will apply and test the principles of quality mentoring for youth employment and integrate these tools and resources into their existing programming and document how mentoring practices are adopted, implemented, and sustained in their specific service contexts. Working alongside SRDC, partners will also contribute data to support cost-benefit analyses and evaluate how quality mentoring contributes to improved youth employment outcomes.

2. Eligibility and Ideal Pilot Partners

EOIs are encouraged from a diverse range of organizations that contribute to youth employment pathways, including direct service providers as well as employers and other sectoral groups.

For **direct service providers** such as training providers, community organizations, and educational institutions, we are looking for partners that:

- Operate programs or services for youth aged 18–30 and will continue to do so until March 31, 2027

- Serve youth from equity deserving groups, including young women, Black, Indigenous and other racialized youth, newcomers, 2SLGBTQIA+, and youth with disabilities-deserving

- Seek to strengthen your programs, services, or organizational practices by embedding or integrating mentoring approaches, even if your current activities are not formally structured as mentoring, or by developing and pilot testing new mentoring components

- Have the capacity to influence youth employment outcomes, e.g., by supporting continued training and education, providing work-based learning opportunities, or connecting youth to job opportunities

- Can collaborate with SRDC on data collection required for evaluation and cost-benefit analyses-benefit analyses

Employers and industry associations may contribute in different but equally valuable ways, such as by:

- Embedding mentoring practices into workplace onboarding, supervision, or professional development

- Providing access to supervisors, managers, or staff who serve as mentors (formally or informally)

- Contributing insights on workforce needs and helping test mentoring practices that improve job readiness, retention, and belonging for young professionals

- Amplifying sector-level learning and integrating mentoring principles into existing workplace training programs

Employers will not be expected to create standalone youth mentoring programs. Instead, employers are encouraged to focus on integrating mentoring approaches within the natural context of the workplace. The project also welcomes interest from industry associations, who can amplify sector level learning and support participating employers.

We welcome all applications. Preference will be given to small and medium enterprises with a social purpose as well as non-profit organizations and charities.

3. Funding Model: Pay-for-Performance-for-Performance

This initiative uses a pay-for-performance funding model, with payments tied to collaboratively defined milestones. All pilot partners will receive:

Advance Payment

Issued upon contract execution and submission of a startup plan.

Milestone 1: "On the Platform" (Readiness)

Deliverables may include:

- 1-hour onboarding session with the Project Lead

- Mapping the mentoring journey for youth served

- Equity-centred mentor/mentee recruitment planning

- Commitments from mentors to complete training and use resources

Bonus Payment: Demonstrated innovation (e.g., youth co-design, trauma-informed approaches, enhanced wraparound supports).

Milestone 2: "In Transit" (Practice Integration)

Deliverables may include:

- Integration of selected QMF-aligned mentoring practices, e.g., nominating a designated staff member to serve as a mentoring champion; supporting mentors, supervisors, and leaders to complete cultural humility training as part of mentoring onboarding

- Participation in a half-day knowledge exchange workshop with other project partners to share progress and learning

Bonus Payment: Customized practices that address the intersectional needs of youth served.

Milestone 3: "Arrivals" (Outcomes & Learning)

Deliverables may include:

- Reflections on mentoring integration and its contribution to youth employment

- Plans to sustain use of the QMF beyond the pilot

Bonus Payment: Evidence of positive short- and medium-term outcomes (e.g., job placement, continued education, increased career clarity and enhanced self-confidence for youth).

4. Measurement and Evaluation

Successful pilot partners will collaborate with SRDC to develop and refine a **milestone-based measurement framework** that examines intermediate and longer-term outcomes of mentoring on youth employment pathways. Indicators may include:

- Career adaptability and future orientation

- Motivation, receptivity to learning, and commitment to training

- Employment readiness and job search behaviours

- Progress toward education, training, or employment milestones

Partners will support the collection of baseline and follow-up data and participate in sensemaking sessions to generate learning for the sector. SRDC will conduct all cost-benefit analyses.

5. Project Timeline

The pilot will begin in March 16, 2026, and conclude on March 15, 2027. Selected organizations are expected to be available throughout April 2027 to complete all wrap-up, reporting, and close-out activities.

6. Submission Guidelines

EOIs must not exceed 10 pages and must include:

1. Introduction to your organization and how your work supports youth employment

2. Description of activities relevant to this pilot, and proposed enhancements to these activities using mentoring

3. Description of youth population served (e.g., demographics, geography) and how mentoring can help mitigate systemic barriers to employment for them

4. Expected outputs and outcomes of the proposed pilot

5. Organizational capacity and staffing

6. Risk mitigation approach

7. Commitment to data collection activities with SRDC, and participation in a half-day knowledge exchange workshop with all partners

EOIs must be sent no later than **11:59 pm EDT on March 2, 2026,** via email to:

Blanche.Monabeka@mentorcanada.ca

7. Selection Process and Timeline

Proponents whose EOIs are shortlisted will be invited to participate in an interview with the project team during the week of **March 9, 2026**. Following these interviews, the project team will finalize its assessment and confirm pilot partners. Final selection decisions will be communicated during the week of **March 16, 2026**.

8. Language and Accessibility

The project team primarily operates in English, and the tools and resources organizations will be piloting are primarily in English. Support in French is available upon request to ensure that pilot partners can participate fully and equitably in all project activities, communications, and reporting requirements.