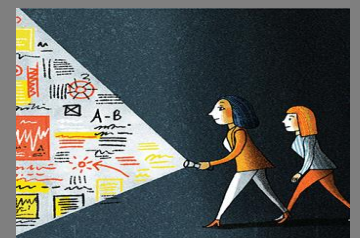


E-Mentoring Platforms: Leveraging Technology to Deliver Mentoring Solutions for Youth

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E- MENTORING PLATFORMS: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER MENTORING SOLUTIONS FOR YOUTH

This Note is part of the Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) Knowledge series that focusses on the nuts and bolts of designing youth employment programs. This Brief describes the operational structure of e-mentoring platforms.

Mentoring has always been a key component in designing and delivering youth employment solutions. Youth employment literature has highlighted the importance of supplementing formal training programs with a more personal mentoring approach in which an experienced mentor guides a young mentee towards developing critical industry/professional skills. Soft skills like communications, networking, and confidence lend themselves to more customized delivery models based on mentoring.

Traditionally mentoring has been done in a one on one, in person interaction, but over time, institutions have started using more hybrid/blended mentoring models, where a part of the mentoring program is conducted virtually/online. More recently, this trend towards hybrid models was further accelerated, especially during COVID, with the growth of more online mentoring platforms.

This Knowledge Brief focuses on platforms¹ that have leveraged novel digital technologies to deliver location agnostic mentoring solutions to youth. We explore 6 key operational areas where innovations have helped make e-mentoring processes more effective and efficient- 1) Recruitment of mentors and mentees using online marketing strategies, leveraging online networks and professional communities like LinkedIn. 2) Screening potential mentors and mentees through algorithms that match key pre-set criteria. 3) Using blockchain technology and artificial intelligence to make the best possible mentor-mentee matches. 4) Conducting mentoring by bringing together mentors and mentees on virtual meetup platforms like Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet. 5) Providing ongoing support, supervision, and monitoring through a library of online resources, ensuring a member of the senior team is available for answering questions virtually, and setting parameters and milestones that need to be met through the process. 6) Ensuring an appropriate closure of the mentor-mentee relationship by addressing challenges faced during the program and providing recognition to outstanding mentoring achievements.

The Brief also addresses how e-mentoring platforms can adapt their operations to provide mentoring in areas with low bandwidth or no connectivity. This will enable platforms to be more inclusive in their approach and include a more diverse mentee population.

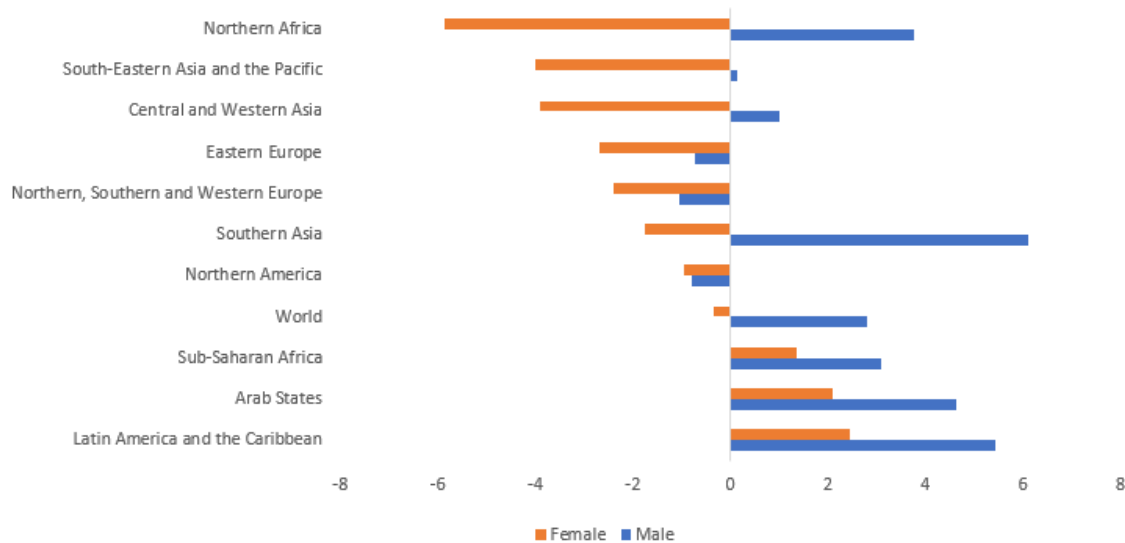
1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, rapid changes in the labor market have brought new challenges for youth in accessing productive jobs. Finding productive jobs that offer secure earnings has increasingly become difficult as industries further move into specialized niches and require very specific skill sets. The COVID-19 pandemic has created major disruptions in the labor market and has compounded already existing challenges. Young people, who often lack experience, skills, and social networks, find it particularly difficult to break into the job market and gain productive employment. Furthermore, youth may be unaware of what kinds of jobs and careers are in demand, in what sector, or at what location potential jobs are available. Information asymmetry combined with limited or no access to resources like networks, assets, and credit, often exacerbates the challenges faced by youth in seeking employment.

¹ Please see Annex- I for list of 9 platforms highlighted in this Brief.

Substantial number of young people are not in employment, education, or training (NEET). Globally, about 23% of young people are currently NEETs, which means they are neither gaining experience in the labor market, nor receiving an income from work, nor enhancing their education and skills.² Moreover, Figure 1 shows that over the past decade, more women are NEETs than men. This signals that their full potential is not being realized. All these forms of labor underutilization in the early stages of a young person’s career can lead to several scarring effects, including lower employment and earnings prospects decades later.³

Figure 1: Share of Youth Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)
(percentage points, 2010-2020)



Source: ILOSTAT

Note: Youth includes individuals between 15-24 years of age.

Even when they do find employment, youth often struggle to adapt to the workplace and meet the expectations of their new employers. Several studies show that employers face constraints in finding workers with the right skills.⁴ This skills gap can be technical, relating to specific job tasks, generic competences such as foundational skills like literacy, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literacy in more advanced countries, advanced cognitive skills like problem solving, and socio-emotional skills or traits that are important in the workplace such as the ability to stay on task, to work and network with others, to work towards long term goals, or to manage time appropriately. There is considerable evidence that socio-emotional skills are critical to long term labor market success,⁵and youth often lack these crucial skills to succeed at the workplace.

² ILOSTAT Data on Share of Youth in NEET status as a percentage of youth population, 2020

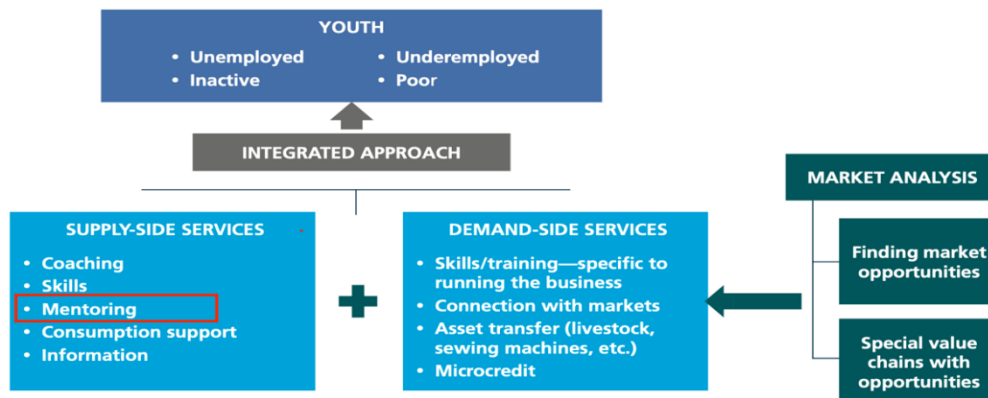
³ Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs, International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2020

⁴ Namita Datta, Angela Elzir Assy, Johanne Buba, Sara Johansson, de Silva, Samantha Watson, et al. 2018. “Integrated Youth Employment Programs. A Stocktake of Evidence on What Works in Youth Employment programs”. World Bank, Washington, DC. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO.

⁵ Guerra, Modercki and Cunningham, 2014

Mentoring serves as an important tool to facilitate equitable access to the labor market, especially for underrepresented and vulnerable communities, and could be an effective way to reconcile the information asymmetry that exists between young job seekers and employers. Mentoring can be a critical component of successfully supporting youth career engagement and workforce development in several important ways- improving youth’s employability by building the necessary skills and work experiences that allow youth to succeed in a job and advance in a career path; facilitating continued academic engagement and achievement; and supporting youth in the development of noncognitive skills necessary for successful employment.⁶ Mentoring can also play a role in creating a community for young women, immigrants, refugees, and youth with disabilities and from at-risk communities where they may seek support from fellow participants, in addition to support from mentors. This not only gives them access to resources and a network, but also helps in build mental resilience while navigating the choppy waters of an ever-changing job market⁷. Good mentoring targets and enhances the development of crucial socio- emotional skills along with on-the-job skills needed by youth to successfully land and succeed at a job. For example, Figure 3 shows that women are more likely to stay longer at an organization if provided with ample mentorship opportunities. Mentors also increase the likelihood of young people developing external and internal assets — structures, relationships, values, skills, and beliefs that promote healthy development and lead to future successes.⁸ In a way, mentoring programs can be a solution with a two-pronged approach- targeting skills/knowledge gap on one hand and aiming to bridge attitude gaps on the other.

Figure 2: An Integrated Approach to Youth Self-Employment



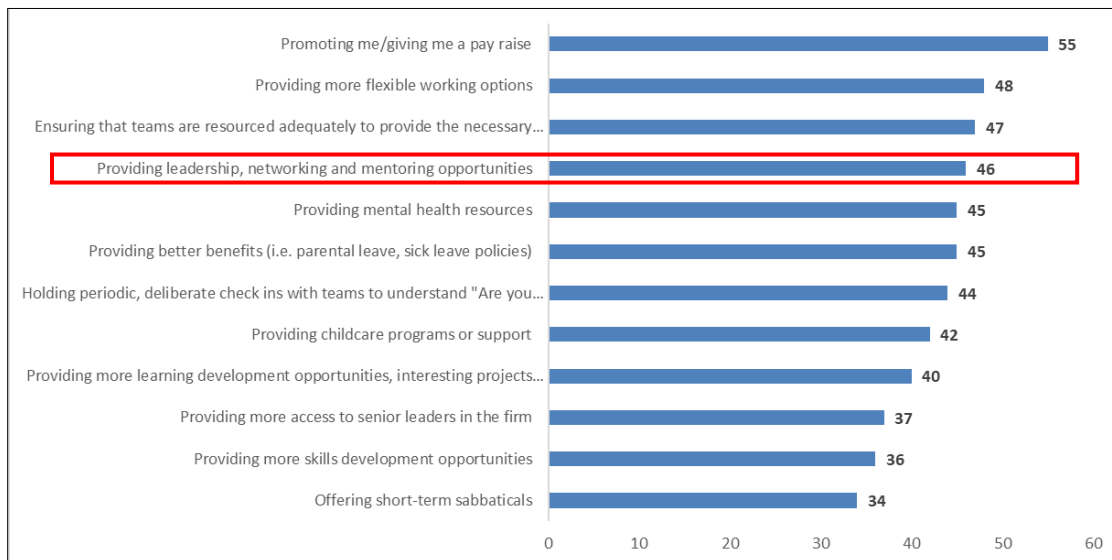
Source: Datta, N., Elzir Assy, A., Buba, J., Johansson de Silva, S., & Watson, S. (2018). Integration: A New Approach to Youth Employment Programs. World Bank, Washington, DC. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO.

⁶ Garringer, M., Kaufman, M., Stelter, R., Shane, J., & Kupersmidt, J. (2019). E-mentoring Supplement to the Elements of effective practice for mentoring. Boston, MA: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

⁷ Garringer, M., Kaufman, M., Stelter, R., Shane, J., & Kupersmidt, J. (2019). E-mentoring Supplement to the Elements of effective practice for mentoring. Boston, MA: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

⁸ <https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Career.pdf>

Figure 3: Women cite mentoring opportunities as a critical aspect of workplace support.



Source: Deloitte, October 2020

Note: 385 women respondents; countries represented include Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, India, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

There are various approaches to deliver mentoring solutions in communities- Traditional mentoring structures typically involved two key participants- the mentee (or protégé), who is often a young, less experienced individual seeking guidance in a trade, and the mentor, an industry expert or veteran who provides structured guidance to the mentee. Informal mentoring in an institution or organization entails a mentee choosing a mentor, based on the level of comfort and fit, which is often decided through regular in-person contact. Formal mentoring constitutes a more structured approach to the mentoring process and has well defined processes that facilitate the delivery of solutions from start to end. Often involving a set curriculum, formal mentoring can be effective in delivering time sensitive mentoring solutions and provide measurable results along with higher efficacy in the impact evaluation process.

Box 1: A Brief History of Mentoring

Although the first mention of the concept of mentoring dates back 3000 years in Homer’s *Odyssey*, it was the French author, Francois Fenelon, who is responsible for the popular view of the Greek mythological character Mentor. He developed the character in his 1699 novel, *Les Aventures de Telemaque*, referring to Mentor as a “guide and instructor”.

There is a long tradition of strong societies nurturing the next generation of workers and craftsmen - using structures such as apprenticeships, internships and formal guilds to reach out to youth and help them find fulfilling, meaningful vocations.⁹ Historical linkages to the Middle Ages explain that mentoring ‘became common practice in the time of the guilds and trade apprenticeships when young people, having acquired technical skills, often benefited from the patronage of more experienced and established professionals’.¹⁰

⁹ Kirk, J. J., & Olinger, J. (2003). From Traditional to Virtual Mentoring.

¹⁰ McKimm, J., Jolie, C. and Hatter, M. (2007) Mentoring: Theory and Practice. Preparedness to Practice Project, Mentoring Scheme.

An important caveat to note is that mentoring alone demonstrates mixed evidence with regards to solving supply side constraints.¹¹ Mentoring is only one component, albeit an important one, in a package of interventions deployed to address challenges pertinent to youth employment. While a mentoring component appears ubiquitously across youth employment solutions, it ideally works in conjunction with other solutions as opposed to isolated implementation. In some cases, mentoring is used as a post training supplement to provide continued guidance and support long after the training module is concluded. However, in this context, it is important to note that certain types of mentoring-like paid mentoring that are mostly tested on microenterprises and has a positive impact on business practices and revenues for self-employed workers- shows that the impact of mentoring tapers off once the mentoring program stops. This suggests that results from mentoring might be neither structural nor sustainable.¹²

2. E- MENTORING PLATFORMS

In a bid to achieve scale and reach, a more recent development is the proliferation of e-mentoring platforms. These platforms rely heavily on technology and provides a one stop shop by combining all the elements of a successful mentoring program in an accessible virtual space. Proprietary Multifeatured Platforms allows an integration of the various aspects of in person mentoring- mentor-mentee interactions are entirely online; matches are made using algorithms and artificial intelligence based on key criteria; Learning Management Systems (LMS) that include online messaging and video conferencing on the platform enable interaction; and program evaluation is facilitated through online surveys conducted after the duration of the mentoring program. Owing to their enhanced reach, mentoring platforms can target a very diverse audiences- high school students, college students, women entrepreneurs, and job seekers- often without geographical boundaries. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to virtual learning has further facilitated innovations toward e-mentoring platforms.

Delivering mentoring solutions through online platforms have unique benefits compared to traditional in-person mentoring. Virtual interaction facilitates inclusion of youth with disabilities or chronic illnesses, youth with social anxiety, and youth that cannot access mentor resources in their local communities. The virtual nature of e-mentoring platforms does not rely on visual cues or proximity for the relationship to succeed. In an e-mentoring environment, the issue of partiality is erased. Programs that allow anonymity eliminates inherent biases associated with gender, culture, and race and this allows for a more candid interaction between the mentor and mentee. Reduction in discrimination by race and gender shows the most correlation to delivering mentoring solutions in an online format.¹³ For example, it might encourage young women and persons of color to break into fields traditionally dominated by men, such as math and science.¹⁴ Finally, e-mentoring platforms are cost effective- they are cheaper to

¹¹ Datta, N., Elzer Assy, A., Buba, J., Johansson de Silva, S., & Watson, S. (2018). Integrated Youth Employment Programs: A stocktake of Evidence on What Works in Youth Employment Programs. World Bank, Washington, DC.

¹² Datta, N., Elzer Assy, A., Buba, J., Johansson de Silva, S., & Watson, S. (2018). Integrated Youth Employment Programs: A stocktake of Evidence on What Works in Youth Employment Programs. World Bank, Washington, DC.; Brooks, Donovan, and Johnson 2016; McKenzie and Puerto 2017; Valdivia 2013.

¹³ Scandura, T.A. and Pellegrini, E.K. (2007). Workplace mentoring: Theoretical approaches and methodological issues. The Blackwell handbook of mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach, pp.71-91.

¹⁴ Iqbal, Md. (2020). E-mentoring: an effective platform for distance learning. e-mentor. 84. 54-61. 10.15219/em84.1463.

operate, maintain and administer than traditional mentoring programs, largely owing to the use of technology for various operational functions.

Box 2: E-Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities

Online mentoring platforms can offer unique opportunities for youth with disabilities to engage in mentoring activities, which are otherwise not provided by traditional mentoring programs. By using the Internet, email and online discussion groups that are integrated into online platforms, youth with special needs are more willing to create written text, practice communication skills, and cultivate personal relationships, since barriers of time and distance are diminished.¹⁵ Moreover, most youth, but especially youth with disabilities, are comfortable using digital platforms as the primary way of communicating.¹⁶ Online platforms could provide youth with disabilities access to a wider pool of mentors. Online chat groups and message boards can expose youth with disabilities to several supportive online communities with diverse perspectives, which can be especially helpful in career exploration.¹⁷ A diverse mentor pool also helps provide access to more social capital and networking opportunities that can help with career transitions or academic pursuits.¹⁸

To make e-mentoring platforms more inclusive, platforms need to adopt innovative ways to incorporate the needs and limitations of youth with disabilities. These changes are needed not only through activities like customized supervision and support, but also in the very development of the user interface of the platform itself. Designing the interface is key in ensuring that it can be accessed across a broad spectrum of disabilities. For instance, some platforms are increasingly relying on Universal Design for Learning (UDL)¹⁹ guidelines to ensure platforms are accessible by all users. Common elements of accessible design include designing a simple menu bar, making text high-contrast with the background for low-vision or colorblind users and providing alternative text and transcripts for page elements such as images and any audio or video files.²⁰ A good example to look at is [Campus Career Connect \(C3\) platform](#) developed by Partners for Youth with Disabilities to mentor young adults with disabilities and help them connect to mentors in their desired career field. C3 was designed to be fully accessible and meet the standards set by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).²¹

¹⁵ Shpigelman, Carmit-Noa & Weiss, Patrice & Reiter, Shunit. (2009). E-Mentoring for All. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 25. 919-928. 10.1016/j.chb.2009.03.007.

¹⁶ <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/mentoring-for-youth-with-disabilities/#implications-for-practice>

¹⁷ <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/mentoring-for-youth-with-disabilities/#implications-for-practice>

¹⁸ <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/mentoring-for-youth-with-disabilities/#implications-for-practice>

¹⁹ The Universal Design Guidelines (UDL) are a tool used in the implementation of Universal Design for Learning, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. The UDL Guidelines can be used by educators, curriculum developers, researchers, parents, and anyone else who wants to implement the UDL framework in a learning environment. These guidelines offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. Learn more about the guidelines on this link:

<https://www.cast.org/impact/universal-design-for-learning-udl>

²⁰ <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/mentoring-for-youth-with-disabilities/#implications-for-practice>

²¹ <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/mentoring-for-youth-with-disabilities/#implications-for-practice>

Our Brief studied 9 different e-mentoring platforms and found that there is an inherent difference in mentoring for jobs versus mentoring entrepreneurs/mentoring for startups. The former involves activities like help with developing a competitive resume, screening for jobs, interview prep, coaching for salary negotiation, and guidance in the event of job changes. Some mentoring platforms also help youth who are already in jobs and match them with mentees from the same industry- this primarily focuses on industry specific guidance around growth within the company/industry or guidance on switching jobs within an industry. On the other hand, mentoring young entrepreneurs is generally involves guidance on how to obtain seed funding or mid stage financing, managing a team, efficiently navigating teamwork dynamics, making effective investor pitches, and keeping employees motivated. It also involves a larger focus on networking and connecting young entrepreneurs to seasoned business owners in an industry.

Box 3: Women Entrepreneurs Mean Business

The [Cherie Blair Foundation for Women](#) has long supported women entrepreneurs in realizing their full potential. Their in-house online mentorship program, [Mentoring Women in Business](#), matches women entrepreneurs from low- and middle-income countries with professional mentors of any gender elsewhere in the world. Mentors and mentees virtually meet one-on-one for a year for two hours a month to work on personal and business goals- this is done using common virtual meetup platforms like Skype, Zoom and WebEx. Mentors and mentees have the flexibility to mutually decide on when to meet and the duration of each meeting, as long as it's two hours a month. The program has a dedicated support team to assist each mentor/mentee pair and keep in touch around the year. The support team schedules virtual check-in calls with mentors and mentees to support peripheral operational aspects including logistics of the relationship (i.e. connecting, finding times to meet), guidance on what their meetings would look like, outlining expectations at various points and helping pairs set ground rules. Individuals can connect at any time with a foundation team member through an instant messaging system available on the mentoring platform.²² The program also offers mentees and mentors additional support through our wider network of current participants and alumni, and a range of online resources.²³ Through their closed LinkedIn group, participants can network and connect with a vibrant online community of thousands of entrepreneurs and professionals.²⁴

However, e-mentoring platforms have some drawbacks. E-mentoring platforms are not a perfect substitute to in-person mentoring. With mentor-mentee relationship building at the core of an effective program, virtual interactions can pose a challenge in cultivating a successful relationship. Mentees may also lose out on the peer learning experience that in-person mentoring may provide. Moreover, participation in the digital realm requires access to technology and computer literacy. Public access is

²² <https://cherieblairfoundation.org/about-mentoring/>

²³ <https://cherieblairfoundation.org/about-mentoring/>

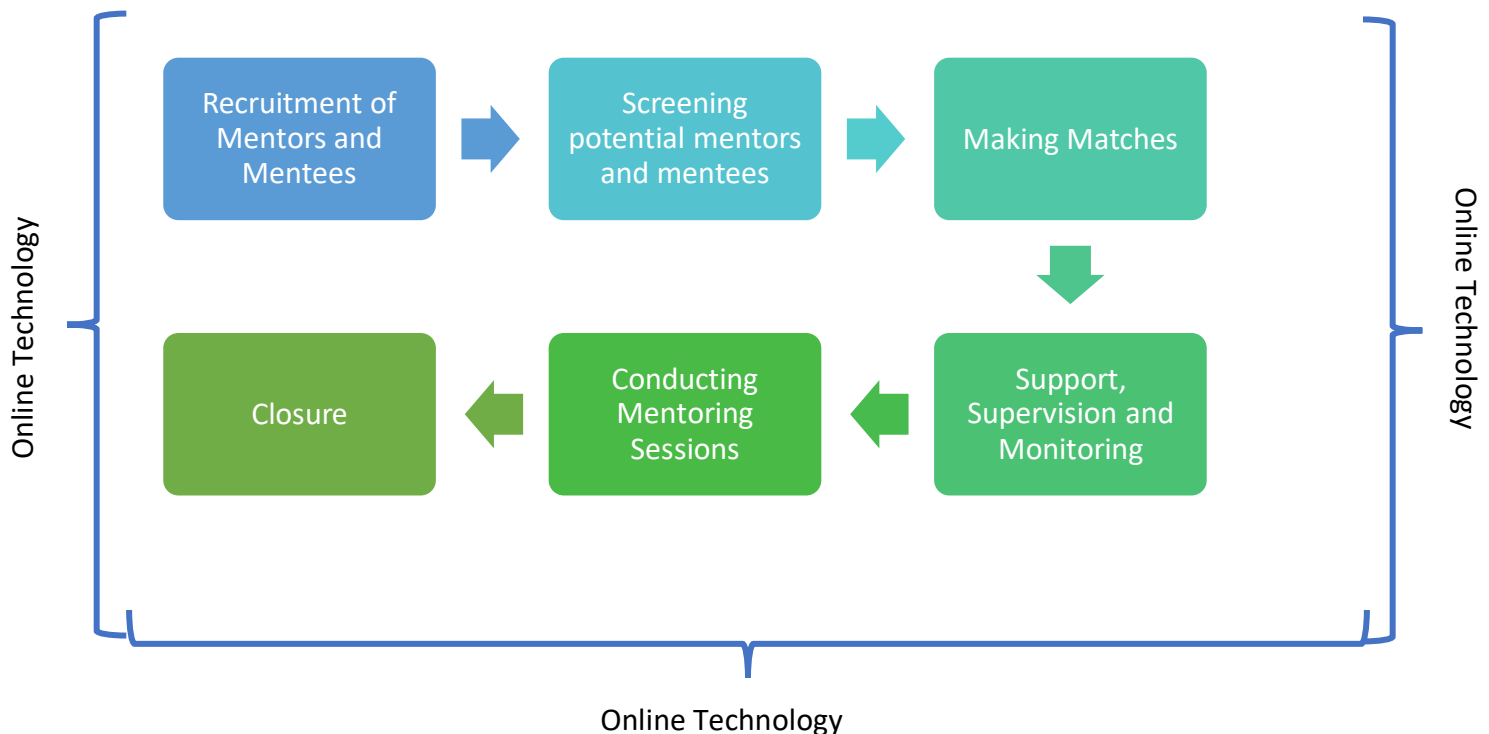
²⁴ <https://cherieblairfoundation.org/about-mentoring/>

becoming more available, for instance through libraries and cyber cafes, but owning and maintaining a computer can still be prohibitive for some. Online mentoring platforms may not be an option for youth residing in remote areas with low bandwidth and sketchy connectivity. Additionally, mentoring in certain “hands-on” occupations like plumbing, carpentry etc may be hard to conduct in a fully virtual format. Online mentoring platforms, in such situations, many need to adapt to a blended approach- some mentoring tasks are performed in person and a few can be performed online. To facilitate peer learning, online mentoring platforms create virtual groups to ensure peer-to-peer knowledge transfer. With most of mentoring activities occurring online, incidences of sexual harassment, bullying and other privacy concerns may exclude youth and mentors from participating in these programs. E-mentoring platforms need to be cognizant of these challenges and design their programs to enable a safe and egalitarian exchange of knowledge.

3. HOW PLATFORMS USE TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER MENTORING SOLUTIONS

Using the guidelines prescribed by the *Elements of Effective Mentoring*, this section aims to understand how some e-mentoring platforms have leveraged technology to deliver effective mentoring solutions. By using project examples, we also look at ways in which online mentoring platforms have made certain processes more efficient and effective.

Figure 3: Operational Structure for an Effective Mentoring Program



Source: Adapted from MENTOR-National Mentoring Partnership, how to build a successful mentoring program using the elements of effective practice, 2005

a. Recruiting Mentors, Mentees and Other Volunteers

Recruitment is a crucial first step in the operational process of an e-mentoring program. Making the general population aware of your program may require a little more in-person interaction. Traditional methods include a blended approach involving connecting with a community or an institution that fits the industry requirements of specific pre requirements of the mentoring platform. For example, the Cherie Blaire Foundation uses a blended approach to recruitment through a local network of partnerships with women centric institutions and women in business organizations. Recruitment sessions are held where applications forms are distributed to prospective mentors and mentees.

Recruitment processes for e-mentoring programs are predominantly done online. Online marketing strategies like internet advertisements and google ads are deployed to spread awareness about the program. Corporate e-mentoring programs recruit volunteers using an online intranet-based recruitment package for prospective mentors. Such a package often includes a brief overview of the program, a mentor job description, an application, and a statement of confidentiality. For example, [Mentorloop](#) is a cloud-based mentoring program management platform headquartered in Melbourne, Australia. They operate globally and help organizations design and run their one-on-one and group mentoring programs at any scale. The program offers a custom branded marketing portal and allows the user organization to send out a customizable application form that includes survey style questions. The data collected is collated in an online portal that process various criteria. This method is fast and efficient, and results in more signups and a better user experience. Platforms also use online communities to sources mentors and mentees- LinkedIn communities/groups are a popular resource leveraged in the recruitment process. Platforms also leverage their own mentorship alumni network to recruit volunteers and mentors. This is an effective method as an alumnus are more likely to show strong commitment and be more aligned to core values of the program. For example, [The Mentoring Women in Business](#) is run by The Cherie Blair Foundation and is headquartered in the UK. The platform specializes in mentoring young women entrepreneurs from middle and low-income countries, and they leverage their closed LinkedIn group to send out marketing mailers and help recruit alumni mentors for ongoing mentoring cohorts.

b. Screening Potential Mentors and Mentees

The selection process is a key element for a successful e-mentoring program. The screening of the potential mentors forms the base of the subsequent operations- matching, mentoring solutions, and success of the mentor/mentee relationship, all depends on the quality of the screening process. At its core, the screening process is required for 3 reasons- a) to screen for people who have the sensitivity, commitment, and sense of responsibility to uphold a successful mentor mentee relationship. b) to screen out people who have the potential to harm youth or the program in any way; c) to ensure that youth participants are eligible for and can benefit from the program. Traditional mentor/mentee screening is generally done through in person face to face interviews, followed by a background check and a pre-match training/orientation. This is general done by meeting in a physical location. However, most of these procedures are moved online when e-mentoring platforms are used.

Most E-mentoring platforms use algorithms to screen applicants to the program. The online application form includes questions that outline several criteria, and the screening algorithms shortlists candidates

based on the reply to those criteria. The use of algorithms has transformed the process in a keyway- as computer mediated languages are binary, the application forms are generally shorter and less descriptive. This also makes the screening process faster and is less of a barrier to applying for programs. [Chronus](#), for example, is a mentoring platform based in the US and serves organizations globally that want to design a mentoring program for their employees. They have an online screening application system that takes no more than 15 minutes to fill out. Chronus' platform systems are well integrated with various collaboration tools that also allow for faster program enrollment. Some platforms have an additional step to the screening process is conducting face to face virtual interviews using an online platform like Zoom, WebEx or GoogleMeets. For example, [Global Mentorship Initiative \(GMI\)](#), a global mentoring program headquartered in the US, focuses on mentoring university students who are about to enter the job market. The platform conducts virtual screening interviews with prospective mentors and the interviewer is generally a senior mentor or senior member of the team.

Screening of mentors is particularly important to ensure the safety of mentees- especially if the mentees are youth and/or from vulnerable communities. Increased incidences of Cyber bullying, sexual harassment, and other forms of harassment can be detrimental to the mentees and the success of the program. However, with e-mentoring platforms having a global reach, a key challenge faced in background checks is the lack of a standardized document and procedure. In such cases, a local police background check is used. For example, international mentors and mentees applying to Women in Business platform and GMI must upload a copy of their local police background verification check. This is cross checked against the official address provided on the application form on the portal.

Box 4: Background Checks to Prevent Online Harassment and Cyber Bullying

While only one element of a careful screening process, criminal background checks are critical to ensure a safe virtual mentoring ecosystem. This is especially important when mentor/mentee interactions are primarily on an online platform. Background check requirements and procedures may vary by geography, but certain procedures like character references, and local police verification are location agnostic. Background checks of a county or local jurisdiction can be obtained through the local police department. These checks include crimes committed within that jurisdiction.

Most online platforms conduct some level of background verification. They could be name based (with social security id), fingerprint based, state background checks or private vendor checks. To make the background check process easier, platforms have developed innovative ways to integrate these checks into the system. For example, online volunteer management platform, [Vomo](#), uses third party volunteer screening and background check services like Sterling Volunteers and Checkr to conduct background checks for their mentors. VOMO integrates its platform with both of these background check tools allowing mentors to keep track of their clearance statuses in the Admin Dashboard. Some platforms use a volunteer-initiated background check where the prospective mentee is sent a link to a third-party company that conducts the check. A part of the cost is sometimes subsidized by the platform. For example, GMI sends the prospective mentor a link to the background verification and subsidizes up to 10% of the cost of verification. SkysTheLimit, a mentoring platform for young entrepreneurs has an online form that can be filled out by the applicant and the platform initiates the check on their behalf, thereby further cutting down on the background check time.

After successfully screening volunteers, e-mentoring programs also conduct pre-mentorship orientation and training. By providing prospective mentors with a pre-match orientation, platforms allow them to make a more informed decision about whether to participate in the program. This can also act as an additional layer of screening while setting expectations for interested volunteers. E-mentoring platforms generally conduct orientations through virtual platforms like zoom or skype. Another method adopted by platforms is to send short 15–20-minute pre-recorded videos to the mentors via email. For example, [MicroMentor](#) is an online platform run by the Mercy Corps and headquartered in Oregon, USA. The platform is available to mentors and mentees around the world and enables entrepreneurs and mentors to connect on an online platform, has a 20-minute pre-match orientation video that contains key information about the program with respect to time commitment, mentee expectations, code of conduct etc. The videos are linked to the online mentoring software and intimates the program administrator when the mentor has viewed the clips. The platform dashboard can also house numerous other resources in the form of pdf reading materials and additional information videos.

c. Making Matches

Matching mentors to mentees underpins the success of a mentoring program as it determines the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. Matches can be made based on numerous criteria- from personal preferences to cultural background- and these criteria enhance relationships.

E-mentoring platforms have made numerous innovations in the matching process, and this is the step where cutting edge software is deployed to ensure the best match. On a relatively basic level, algorithms are used to create a shortlist of matches based on criteria mentioned in the application process. For example, [Xinspire](#) is a global mentoring management platform, headquartered in California, USA. It is designed for universities or organizations that want to design a mentoring program for their employees, and uses a semi-automated matching algorithm that creates a shortlist of one-to-one match assignments and presents them to the admin. The admins then facilitate the match. Matches can be mentee initiated or completely automatic as well. In mentee-initiated matches, the mentee can apply to be matched to a specific mentor after viewing their profile on the platform. An interesting example of this is also demonstrated by *Xinspire* through a “ranked matching” system. The mentees apply to mentors, and then mentors review and rank applications. Algorithms present matches to the admin, who further makes the match. Another mentee initiated matching technique is the “search & request”, where the mentees search the platform for a mentor and directly request a match. To differentiate themselves from other platforms, some platforms have deployed novel matching techniques. For example, [SkyIsTheLimit](#) is a mentoring platform based out of Oakland, USA and serves for young entrepreneurs from USA, Nigeria, and Caribbean. The platform uses blockchain technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to match mentors with mentees. The platform sets itself apart by allowing an array of matching rather than the binary matching which is typical of most other platforms. Another example of product differentiation is seen in Chronus, where a “MatchIQ” algorithm spots matches with four times more accuracy than its ancestral version. The algorithm increases the match rate with built-in features like personalized recommendations that encourage the matching process, making it more reliant and faster.

d. Bringing Mentors and Mentees Together for Mentoring Session

This step is the start of the mentoring journey, where mentor and mentee interactions happen in a virtual safe space. Mentoring meetings and activities form the basis for the development of trusting and caring relationships between mentors and mentees.²⁵ Successful mentoring programs foster a sense of ownership and belonging among volunteers and participants. E-mentoring platforms also lay emphasis on sponsoring virtual group activities- this helps foster a sense of community for both mentors and mentees, providing informal support for the mentors and a strong support system for mentees.²⁶ For example, [OneMillionMentors](#), a mentoring program run by UK led youth organization, Uprising, specializes in training youth in UK to become mentors. They regularly schedule virtual happy hours and team building virtual activities like online business case solving etc. Examples of virtual group activities include - a virtual skill building workshops for interview prep, virtual happy hours, online gaming tournaments, and virtual concerts.

The frequency of mentor-mentee interactions can have a significant influence on the quality of the mentoring relationship. This can vary by program and often depends on the target group and predesigned curriculum. Mentoring youth with disabilities may require more frequent interactions than mentoring for job applications. The duration of commitment to the overall program also varies by platform. For example, The *Women in Business* mentoring platform requires interactions take place at least for 2 hours a month, for a total of 12 months. Global Mentorship Initiative requires that mentors and mentees meet on a regular schedule for 14 sessions.

Online Platform	Frequency of Interaction/Time Commitment
Women in Business	2 hr/month for total of 12 months
Global Mentorship Initiative	14 sessions on predetermined schedule
MicroMentor	12 hours over 3 months
One Million Mentors	1 hr/month over 12 months

Bringing mentors and mentees together can be challenging when it involves delivering mentoring solutions in low bandwidth/ poorly connected locations. With most activities performed online, access to decent ICT infrastructure is a pre cursor for a successful program. However, e-mentoring programs can adapt their operations to include youth from remote areas. A blended approach-part online, part in -person- can be deployed to increase accessibility to mentors. For example, *MicroMentor* uses an online platform to match young entrepreneurs and mentors. After the connection is made, they may take the relationship “offline” and continue mentoring in a way that works for them. This blended approach provides an option to either meet in person or use low bandwidth offline technologies like text messaging and email. The option to interact “offline” is also helpful in including youth with disabilities in the mentoring program, especially in cases where additional help might be needed. Studies show that

²⁵ Garringer, M., Kaufman, M., Stelter, R., Shane, J., & Kupersmidt, J. (2019). E-mentoring Supplement to the Elements of effective practice for mentoring. Boston, MA: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.,

²⁶ Garringer, M., Kaufman, M., Stelter, R., Shane, J., & Kupersmidt, J. (2019). E-mentoring Supplement to the Elements of effective practice for mentoring. Boston, MA: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.,

youth with disabilities prefer text messaging over video chat and they are more encouraged to engage with a mentor if done on a familiar device.²⁷

e. Provide Ongoing Support, Supervision and Monitoring of Mentoring Relationships

An important parameter for success is to ensure that mentoring relationships are sustained over the course of the program. This requires ongoing support, some level of supervision and monitoring. Programs generally have administrators that keep in regular contact with participants and track progress. They also act as sounding boards for any grievances experienced during the program-this is especially important in case acts of sexual abuse or cyber bullying need to be reported. A good example is the *Mentoring Women in Business* platform where program coordinators generally contact each mentor within the first two weeks of the match to see how things are going, then follow up every two weeks for the next few months. Contact is made by phone, by e-mail or by scheduling a quick video chat. The platform also has a support team that can be easily contacted to report an incident or technical issue. They also have virtual support groups for mentors and mentees to help provide a sense of community and a safe space to discuss any challenges.

E-mentoring platforms also offer training sessions on a wide array of topics, including diversity and cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, and communication skills. These training sessions are conducted either virtually or by sharing short training videos on the portal. Online mentoring resources like pdf reading documents and e-books are also made available on the dashboard. For example, *OneMillionMentors* uses an innovative model where they provide free of charge online training and support to mentors. In return, mentors volunteer for free one hour a month and up to twelve months. It is also important to ensure that the overall support ecosystem on the platform is conducive to all users, including persons with disabilities. *Xinspire*, for instance, has leverage technology to automate the support system- they have facilities that can set up automatic email nudges to mentors and mentees regarding important milestones to keep the relationship on track. They also have a system of automatic guidance prompts to help craft messages- this helps in initiating and sustaining an ongoing communication channel between mentors and mentees. Such technologies can be used broadly when engaging with youth with disabilities as well.

f. Match Closure and Recognition

As the program comes to an end, the mentor-mentee relationship could have changed overtime. A successful relationship would help the mentee reach a level of self-sufficiency and would leave the program with a more robust skill and knowledge base. However, it is possible that some mentor-mentee relationships may not have worked out. If the relationship ends prematurely or on a negative note, one or both may feel angry, rejected, depressed or guilty.²⁸ For young people with low self-esteem, the end of a mentoring relationship may reinforce attitudes of worthlessness and hopelessness. It may not be possible to have a formal closure process for both the mentor and the mentee because of circumstances

²⁷ <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/resource/mentoring-for-youth-with-disabilities/#implications-for-practice>

²⁸ Garringer, M., Kaufman, M., Stelter, R., Shane, J., & Kupersmidt, J. (2019). E-mentoring Supplement to the Elements of effective practice for mentoring. Boston, MA: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.,

surrounding their departure from the mentoring program.²⁹ In these instances, it's important to reach out to each participant to provide closure.

Evaluating overall impact of a mentoring relationship at the end of a program is a helpful way to quantify the effectiveness of a program. This also includes receiving feedback from both, mentors, and mentees. E-mentoring platforms generally use online surveys to receive program feedback. [ArtOfMentoring](#), a platform headquartered in Sydney, Australia, provides mentoring solutions to organizations globally to help build mentoring programs from ground up, offers periodic customized online survey questionnaires to both mentors and mentees to fill out. This includes questions on the progressive improvement/deterioration of the relationship and includes measurable metrics to keep tabs on the progress of the program. *Chronus*, for example, provides personalized dashboards to elevate important parameters and gain insights to improve and maximize mentoring impact. Online platforms also have robust M&E measures against which each pairing can be measured. For instance, GMI uses jobs placement rate of their mentees as a good indicator for evaluation of their job-related mentorship program.

Providing recognition to successful mentoring journeys is an important part of the closure process.

Recognizing outstanding mentor and mentee efforts, especially in reaching personal goals, can go a long way in keeping up sustained motivation for graduating mentees, while being a source of inspiration for existing mentors and mentees. For example, GMI provides a mentoring recognition certificate at the end of a program to recognize mentors for their contribution to the program. On the other hand, platforms also consider paramount the task of addressing problematic or failed mentor/mentee relationships. Platforms use their check-in mechanisms and periodic surveys to gauge the status of a relationship. In the event of a failed relationship, platforms deploy buffer strategies to re-match the mentor and mentees. For instance, *ArtofMentoring*, *Chronus* and *OneMillionMentors* keep a pool of backup mentors and mentees that can be rematched in the case of a negative experience. The rematching process is easier done on an online platform as part of the matching is automatized- tweaks are made to the algorithm and a rematch can be initiated.

E-mentoring offers a contemporary method of facilitating learning and mentoring in this digital age. Traditional models of learning, and teaching are being challenged in an age of rapid change and technological advancements. The COVID-19 pandemic reinstated the need to leverage existing technologies to ensure continued delivery of mentoring solutions. E-mentoring is the result of a move to adapt to a digitalizing world. However, mentoring platforms cannot be truly inclusive unless they further evolve to address the needs of youth from poorly connected and vulnerable communities. Hybrid and blended mentoring models have an expanded reach in communities with low bandwidth issues and help deliver mentoring solutions to youth in remote areas. While in-person interaction and traditional mentoring has certain key benefits that are vital to the mentorship process, e-mentoring has opened the door to new participants in this field and has enabled a more inclusive mentoring ecosystem.

²⁹ Garringer, M., Kaufman, M., Stelter, R., Shane, J., & Kupersmidt, J. (2019). E-mentoring Supplement to the Elements of effective practice for mentoring. Boston, MA: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership.,

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S4YE is a multi-stakeholder partnership housed in the Jobs Group in the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice at the World Bank Group. This knowledge brief does not necessarily reflect the views of the World Bank or each S4YE partner. For additional resources for youth employment, please visit <https://www.s4ye.org/s4yepublications>.

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ANNEX- I

Following is a summary of the stock take study conducted by S4YE on the 9 platforms described as examples in this brief.

Platform Name	Countries of operation	Target Audience	Model	Key Features	Number of Users	Revenue Model	Link
Sky is the limit	US; Nigeria and Caribbean	Mentees: Young entrepreneurs Mentors: Corporate volunteers from partner companies	1:1 remote mentoring, though each mentee can have multiple mentors	An online mentoring platform for young entrepreneurs that uses blockchain and AI to match mentees with mentors. The platform sets itself apart by allowing an array of matching rather than the binary matching which is typical of most other platforms. Key features are 1) Training: young adult-adapted entrepreneurship learning pathways by content area, industry, stage, etc. 2) Advising & Mentoring: recruit, screen, train, match, and support young entrepreneurs & volunteers in one-on-one, flexible engagements. 3) Funding: risk-tolerant startup grants for young entrepreneurs	Over 10K young entrepreneurs	No fee for mentees who sign up; revenues via donor/partner organizations (Accenture, eBay etc)	www.skysthelimit.org
Cherie Blaire Foundation - Mentoring Women	Global	Mentees: Women Entrepreneurs (from low income countries) Mentors: Corporate Mentors from partner organizations with at least 7 years of work experience	1:1 mentoring	1) Intake process through a network of local partnerships with women networks, women in business organizations e.t.c 2) Structured mentoring broken down into 4 distinct phases; mentor-mentee connect 2 hours/month 3) Use mentor and mentee application forms and an algorithm that produces a shortlist of matches; internal team manually processes these shortlists to find the most accurate match 4) Provide a suite of materials for women to access - like finance, marketing, HR, legal e.t.c 5) Robust M&E - baseline, periodic check ins and year end program evaluation after 12 months	8K mentees	No fee for mentees	cherieblairfoundation.org/programmes/mentoring/

Platform Name	Countries of operation	Target Audience	Model	Key Features	Number of Users	Revenue Model	Link
The Global Mentorship Initiative	US; South Africa	Mentees: University students Mentors: Volunteers from partner companies	1:1 remote mentoring	1) Prospective mentors are screened and interviewed to ensure the match will be a good fit. 2) Developed a structured curriculum for each mentoring session 3) Mentors receive training on the mentorship program curriculum 4) Mentors guide their students through the mentorship program via remote teleconference 5) The mentor and their		No fee for mentees; (partnership with universities)	https://globalmentorship.org/
MicroMentor (A program of Mercy Corps)	Global	Mentees: Entrepreneurs Mentors: Volunteers through corporate employee volunteering programs	1:1 mentoring (could be r	Micromentor is a hands-off platform that enables entrepreneurs and mentors to connect on an online platform- 1) Entrepreneurs and Mentors use the platform to find a mentoring match; after they make a connection they may take the relationship "offline" and continue mentoring in a way that works for them 2) Average 1:1 mentoring relationships last 12 hours over the course of 3 months - not prescriptive 3) Mentors and entrepreneurs choose how they would like to work together. The Mentoring Masterclass provides a framework employee volunteers can use to structure their relationships; and provides user support via email and phone.	56K mentees	Free for mentees; revenue through donor or partn	micromentor.org

Platform Name	Countries of operation	Target Audience	Model	Key Features	Number of Users	Revenue Model	Link
Mentorloop	Global	Organizations (mentorship solutions for organizations)	1:1 mentoring	MentorLoop is a cloud-based mentoring program management platform which is designed to help organizations run their one-on-one and group mentoring programs at any scale. The software offers custom-branded marketing portals, auto-matching of mentors and mentees, instant messaging, real-time analytics and reporting.	Depends on organization	Business management solution for various organizations	mentorloop.com
Xinspire	Global	Organizations (mentorship solutions for organizations)	1:1 or group matching	Xinspire a mentoring management platform designed for universities or organizations that want to design a mentoring program for their employees. It offers different kinds of matching models - 1) Semi-automated matching: Algorithms present one-to-one or group matching assignments to the admin. Admins facilitates matches 2) Ranked Matching: Mentees apply to mentors, and then mentors review and rank applications. Algorithms present matches to the admin, who facilitates the matches. 3) Search & Request: Mentees search for and request mentors. Participants facilitate their own matches 4) Also generates reports via in-platform surveys 5) Available in multiple languages	Depends on organization	Business management solution for various organizations	www.xinspire.com
Artofmentoring	Global	Organizations (mentorship solutions for organizations)	Depends on organization	They work with organisations to set up their mentoring programs - from the pre-design phase to the implementation, software selection and setup, ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Key features of the software are - 1) Automatic matching through the 'smart matching algorithm' 2) Provides mentors and mentees with video training & educational articles, tools & tips 3) Allows to schedule customisable email nudges 4) Keep track of program progress with our survey tool	Depends on organization	Business management solution for various organizations	Artofmentoring
Chronus	Global	Organizations (mentorship solutions for organizations); Note: the World Bank's internal mentoring program uses Chronus	Depends on organization	The Chronus platform is designed for organizations that want to design a mentoring program for their employees.	1500000 across various organizations	Business management solution for various organizations	chronus.com
One Million Mentors (project within Uprising, a UK youth leadership organization)	UK	Train youth to become mentors	1:1, in person	Online platform that provides training to mentors - 1) Provide free of charge online training and support to prospective mentors. In return, mentors volunteer for free one hour a month and up to twelve months. 2) Mentors typically meet with a young person face to face, for one hour per month and upto a year, to discuss the young person's ambitions and career opportunities. 3) Mentees are recruited through partnerships with schools, colleges and charities		Free for mentors; funded through donors and partners	https://www.onemillionmentors.org.uk/