

Acknowledgments



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Preface



The findings, conclusions and recommendations of this report point to two distinct areas of challenge within the general field of mentoring and the mentoring agencies that make up the field. These two distinct areas of need are: A) the general status/condition of mentoring as a young “emerging discipline”, and B) the current condition, pressures and capacities of the mentoring agencies that make up the field.

A) *The General Status/Condition Of The Field Of Mentoring As A Young “Emerging Discipline”:*

Our research has revealed that the field of mentoring is generally lacking systematic approach, a “science” if you will, regarding:

- 1) *“Definition of Terms”* (a lexicon/dictionary) that provides agreed upon meanings for mentoring vernacular such as “mentoring”, “at-risk”, “cultural diversity”, “best practices”, etc. These terms and others represent the field’s vernacular, however, in absence of a lexicon/dictionary these terms are often used generically or open ended. This causes general ambiguity in the field of practice with respect to the unavailability of exact meanings of terms for describing and/or referencing one’s program to the public, to funders through funding proposals, brochures, when requesting technical assistance and/or mentor training, etc.
- 2) *The ability to differentiate between “Assistance Mentoring” and “Transformative Mentoring” program models (i.e. one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, combination group and one-on-one mentoring, etc.)* Practitioners in the field do not have access to a rational system to explain if/why youth need mere “assistance mentoring” in fulfilling vacant needs (i.e. companionship, advice for college entrance, role modeling, tutoring, leadership development, etc.) and/or; “transformative mentoring” for addressing more complex attitudinal and behavioral problems/issues. Assistance vs. Transformative mentoring models should be distinctively different in both concept and design (i.e. mission/goals & objectives, design/program structure, youth assessment, mentor recruitment and assessment (characteristics), mentoring matching criterion, evaluation, etc.)
- 3) *“Researched Information” that embraces a variety of situational, cultural and life-experience perspectives.* The field could benefit from the development of additional concept papers; program development tools, and field studies in order to expand the representation of diverse perspectives and quality information.

- 4) *The development of more than one set of “best practices”* that considers different “levels of experience” (LOE), “levels of capacity” (LOC) and essentially “levels of readiness” (LOR) of mentoring agencies in the field. Best practices modules should also address differences in mentoring program typology.

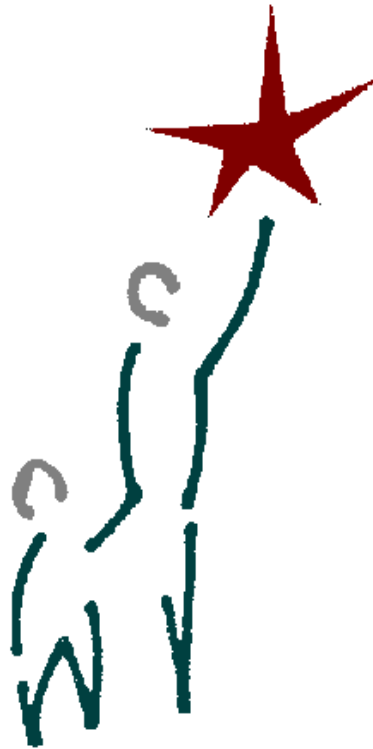
B) *The Current Conditions, Pressures And Capacities Of The Mentoring Agencies That Make Up The Field:*

Working against the above stated shortcomings/issues of the overall mentoring field, individual mentoring agencies are challenged in several and distinctly different ways that are not being addressed by the leadership of the field . The following are some of the key challenges:

- 1) The “*level of experience*” (LOE) of mentoring programs in the field is a crucial area of focus. Our research revealed that 66% of mentoring practitioners have 0-3 years of mentoring experience. Essentially, 66% of Bay Area agencies and particularly “Mentoring Program Coordinators” (MPC — lead staff person) have only between 0-3 years of experience in the mentoring field in any capacity. For 57% of MPC’s, the role of MPC is their first professional management experience.
- 2) *The “level of capacity” (LOC) for the majority of Bay Area mentoring programs fall significantly short of resources needed to sufficiently meet their mandated goals and objectives with respect to both the needs of the youth population served and number of youth served annually.* According to our research, 65% of Bay Area mentoring programs operate on annual budgets of \$100,000 or less. 57% of Bay Area mentoring programs function with 1-3 staff. 85% of Bay Area mentoring programs serve 50-100 youth annually. And, again, 57% of mentoring program coordinators are inexperienced in program leadership roles.
- 3) *On top of these “level of readiness” (LOR) and systemic constraints, there are no systemic guide posts available to mentoring agencies to assist them in selecting one type of mentoring model (i.e. one-on-one, group, peer, combination group and one-on-one) as opposed to another.* This is further compounded by the fact that there is also no general consensus on what constitutes likely predictors of success based on the preferred mentoring model/approach used and the respective service delivery system.

The field in general and more specifically its practitioners are in need of ideological/philosophical clarity and, relevant, practical tools for achieving solid identifiable youth development goals and objectives. This clarity and the resulting tools are not currently available.

Executive Summary



Over the course of six months, The Mentoring Center (TMC) engaged in a review and reexamination of its existing mentoring Technical Assistance and Training Service Delivery System or SDS. The review was prompted by TMC's desire to improve and enhance its service delivery in response to the rapidly changing needs of mentoring practitioners. A process was designed with Consultant assistance consisting of three strategies of qualitative and quantitative data gathering, and analysis.

First, a diverse cross section of TMC service users was convened into a Focus Group (FG1) to examine and review the accomplishments and problems of the existing system (Training, Technical Assistance, Consultations, Materials and Conferences).

Secondly, a comprehensive Survey was designed and administered to TMC's Annual Conference-Forum to gather baseline data on the characteristics, operations, and orientation of mentoring organizations in the nine County San Francisco Bay Area.

Thirdly, the data collected from FG1 and the Survey was integrated into a proposed re-conceptualized and reconfigured SDS and tested by a second Focus Group (FG2). Collectively, these three processes generated six specific recommendations to redesign the SDS:

- 1) The SDS should be redesigned to correspond to the three levels of mentoring experience (start-ups, with 0 to 3 years of experience, emerging groups with 3 to 5 years, and a mature group with 5 or more years of experience;
- 2) TMC should add a research component to its system to expand knowledge production;
- 3) TMC should organize and host a series of workshops on current issues and problems in addition to, or in lieu of its Annual Conference-Forum;
- 4) TMC should reorganize its "training" systems to focus on specific skills building and organizational development, and de-emphasize mentor orientation sessions. Modularization of the training curriculum and Training of Trainers (TOT's) are strongly recommended;
- 5) TMC should expand the field's understanding of and access to funders to better assist practitioners with their resource development strategies; and
- 6) TMC should assist the field in developing more sophisticated and culturally relevant approaches to evaluation.

The implementation of these changes implies the possible addition of new Organiza-

Executive Summary

tional Development Staff, the reconsideration of the Annual Conference-Forum, the production of new training materials, and the addition of Research Consultants. In addition, the recommendations imply the transformation of TMC from a generic mentoring support system to a more purposeful, cutting edge and full service mentoring intermediary.

Introduction and Background

Introduction and Background



Over the last several years, The Mentoring Center has engaged in the delivery of mentoring services to hundreds of local, state, and national programs in response to the explosive and rapid growth of the mentoring field. As is the case in many newly emerging disciplines, there is intense and fervent debate on “best practices”, as well as appropriate delivery systems, and evaluation methodologies. TMC has found itself engaged in efforts to resolve such seminal problems and simultaneously deliver the highest quality of services to the field. This has resulted in a service response approach in which TMC has responded to all requests without the ability to critically influence and/or control the outcomes from its service delivery. In addition, current practitioners have entered the mentoring field with differing experiences, perceptions and expectations. This results in unevenness in program assumptions, designs and outcomes. Finally, many of TMC’s service users request assistance with a problem or issue without regard for the proper sequencing of their organizational interventions, or their level of readiness for the requested service. When taken in the aggregate, these problems make it difficult for TMC to continue its existing mode of service delivery as it seeks to insure the highest quality of both the delivery and utilization of its services.

These problems and concerns prompted TMC to initiate a review of its Service Delivery System (SDS) in order to improve the overall quality of the system over the next decade. This report concerns itself with the reexamination of the SDS, and with recommendations to change it.

Methodological Approach

Methodological Approach



In order to re-conceptualize the SDS, it was decided that empirical information was necessary to properly understand how the existing system actually works. Staff experience and anecdotal impressions were the initial sources of data which informed the approach; however, more objective and refined data were also necessary to insure the accuracy of the findings. Thus, a three part strategy was developed as the methodological basis to reexamine the SDS:

- 1) An initial Focus Group (FG1) to assess the existing system;
- 2) A comprehensive survey of Annual Conference-Forum participants; and
- 3) A second Focus Group (FG2) to test the redesigned system based on the findings from FG1, and this Survey.

Focus Group 1 was the initial research activity in the SDS assessment. TMC consistently receives affirmative comments on the delivery of its orientation sessions (“mentor trainings”); however, a broader and deeper understanding of what works or does not work and why had not been undertaken.

A selected sample of TMC service users (clients) representing a broad demographic cross section of mentoring organizations from the Greater Bay Area was invited to a 4 hour Focus Group on TMC’s current SDS. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences with TMC’s system and their resulting impressions and perceptions based on the utilization experience. They were also asked to focus on seven specific empirical questions which would assist TMC in understanding the outcomes and impacts of its service delivery. The data from this initial Focus Group would constitute the basis for subsequent data collection and methodological design.

The second research activity consisted of the design and administration of a survey of TMC’s Annual Conference-Forum participants. The Conference-Forum has become one of the most important gathering points and interactive experiences of the Bay Area’s mentoring community. It typically attracts approximately 125 provider organizations from all 9 counties in the region, and reflects the racial, ethnic, cultural, gender and linguistic diversity of the mentoring community.

In planning for the SDS reexamination, TMC staff and Consultants had previously concluded that there was no formal database on Bay Area mentoring service providers. There was also a paucity of information on the characteristics of mentoring organizations, and their rationale for service delivery to their client end users. This assumption was tested and confirmed with the FG1 participants; thus, leading to the conclusion that a survey was a highly appropriate research activity. As a result of such conversation and analysis, the survey was designed to collect data in four basic areas:

- An organizational/demographic profile;
- Mentoring approach;
- Service delivery; and
- Mentoring's future.

The survey instrument was developed and pre-tested over a 2/12 month period to resolve any technical and structural difficulties. It was then administered by mail to Forum pre-registrants and to Forum registrants at the Annual Forum.

The final research activity consisted of a second Focus Group (FG2), which was comprised of a sample of TMC service users based on their level of mentoring experience. The survey revealed that there were at least three levels of field experience:

- Start-ups (less than 3 years)
- Emerging (3 to 5 years)
- Mature (5 or more years)

Thus, the FG2 sample was selected based on experience levels, and sent a series of seven questions/propositions on proposed areas of change in the TMC Service Delivery System. The Focus Group was facilitated by the SDS Consultant during a 4-hour afternoon meeting.

Based on the combination of these three qualitative and quantitative research strategies, TMC felt comfortable that its approach to the SDS reexamination would result in reliable and useful data from which meaningful conclusions could be deduced.

Findings From Focus Groups

Findings From Focus Groups



As indicated by the data, participants uniformly agreed that TMC delivers a high quality of services to the field consistent with its claims in the five core areas of service (training, technical, assistance, consultations, materials and conferences). The services have been very helpful to field users, especially the mentor orientation sessions (trainings) and telephone consultations. While there has not been consistency among service users in conducting program evaluations, it is perceived that TMC's services have assisted them in achieving program objectives. It is also perceived that the "best practices" system is an important element in service delivery; however, it is difficult to situate one's program if its service request does not correspond to one of the sequenced categories in the system. For instance, if a program requests mentor recruitment training and has not resolved program objectives, the program and TMC must reconsider the initial request and determine an appropriate response. This reconsideration may often lead to ambiguity about the role of "best practices" in service delivery, as well as to uncertainty about how to best utilize TMC's menu of services. Neither TMC, nor the requesting service user, regard this as an ideal experience for either party. TMC would prefer sequencing the delivery of its services, based on intake and diagnostic assessments; however, field programs are often driven by other program logic and funding requirements which is inconsistent with the rationalized utilization of the best practices system. Service users also report that there is a minimum of follow-up to the initial TMC trainings (orientations) which results in inconsistent application of the training curriculum. Thus, neither TMC nor the service user can be assured of the long range results or impacts of the training services. In addition, service users are in need of assistance in determining exactly how to proceed if they do not fit within a given best practice sequence. Focus Group participants were concerned about available options to a service user when there is a best practice inconsistency identified by TMC.

The TMC "Classification of Mentoring Relationship Types" (hereafter referred to as TMC Typology of Mentoring") has proven to be a valuable tool in describing the diversity of youth populations in need of mentoring. The profiling of youth as Soft, Medium, Hard, and Hard-Core is functionally useful as a classification system; however, refinements are needed to improve the actual utilization of this system. Some youth may fit into more than one category, or have characteristics of more than one typology. The Mentor characteristics preferred by each typology also requires further elaboration and testing to determine the desired relationship between mentee needs and mentor capacity. Focus Group participants agreed that there are important differences in the delivery of mentoring services based on the population being served, and that a combination of program approaches may be required to achieve optimum results. *"One size does not fit all youth."* Participants also expressed the need for a more precise definition of the term "at-risk." Within the typological matrix, there is an implicit definition of this term associated with the potential for an encounter with the legal system. The common usage of this term in today's vernacular however, may imply being at risk to experience multiple socially dysfunctional experiences. Further clarification of this term by the mentoring field was suggested.

A final area of intense exchange and discussion among participants was the area of mentor-mentee matching strategies. Participants reported a wide variety of matching strategies including both same (similar) and cross (different) matching by race, culture, gender, age, interests, language, and location. There does not appear to be a consistent pattern of reasoning or body of data which guides service user decision making in this area. Some make the decision based on their perception of the mentee's needs and parental preference, while others decide based on whether the mentoring activity is related to self-concept enhancement, or to academic tutoring. Even other's report that availability of a mentor, and who they are able to recruit are the determining factors in their choice. Although participants reflected significant variations in matching strategies, two tendencies were apparent:

- Same gender matches are widely used by most participants; and
- Matching which may involve self-concept enhancement and personality reexamination is poorly understood, and requires more extensive research and analysis.

Suggestions on modifying the SDS included:

- More emphasis on helping less experienced groups to clarify and figure out the mentoring process;
- Better usage of TMC materials;
- More assistance with funders;
- Identifying and recruiting more low-income, male minority mentors;
- More time working with Boards and staff;
- Assistance with evaluation approaches; and
- Workshops on special topics.

Other suggestions were offered, but with less intensity and frequency. Thus, it is assumed that the above ideas reflect the Focus Group's primary conclusions.

Findings From Survey Results

Findings From Survey Results



The survey was administered to all Forum pre-registrants and registrants. Responses were received from a total of 50 participants which represented a significant return rate for this population (80%). Not every question was answered by all respondents, however, this did not affect the stability or integrity of the findings. The following data represents the findings from the survey.

I. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

1. The Bay Area mentoring community is comprised of three relatively distinct populations based on how long services have been provided. Sixty-six percent (66%) have been providing services for 3 years or less (the start-ups) while 19% have been providing services for 3 to 5 years (the emerging groups) and 15% have been providing services for 5 or more years (the mature groups);
2. Most programs are projects of a larger organization (57.7%), with the remainder (42.3%) existing as Agencies or programs themselves.
3. The budget size varies within the population with 33% at less than \$25,000 per year; 20% between \$25,000 to \$75,000 per year; 12% between \$75,000 to \$100,000 per year; and 35% over \$100,000 per year.
4. The sources of funding varied from foundation grants (49%), to government grants (42%) to private donations (29%) and fundraising events (26%). Investment and other sources were 6% respectively.
5. The staffs were small with 57% having from 1 to 3 staff, 16% having from 4 to 5 staff, 20% having 6 to 9 staff and 7% having 10 or more staff. 62% of the staffs were full-time, and 38% were part-time. Similarly, 66% of the staffs were female, and 34% were male.
6. The staffs reflected significant racial/ethnic diversity, with 32% being Anglo-American, 29% being African-American, 23% being Hispanic/Latino-American, 1.3% Asian-American, and 1.4% Native-American. 3.6% were of other racial/ethnic groups.
7. The Board of Directors are 60% female and 40% male. 38.5% of the Board have 10 to 15 members, 32% have 6 or less, and 30% have 7 to 9 members. In racial/ethnic make-up, 41.3% of the Boards are Anglo-American, 19.3% are African-American, 16.5% are Hispanic/Latino-American, 17% are Asian-American, 1.3% are Native-American, and 4.1% are of other racial/ethnic groups.
8. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of mentoring service users (mentees) are female, and 43% are male. 55% of the programs serve mentees from 12 to 15 years of

Findings from Survey Results

age. 43% serve those from 16 to 19 years; 24% serve those from 5 to 11 years; and 7% serve those from 20 to 25 years of age. In terms of the racial/ethnic make-up of the service user population, 37% are African-American, 25% are Hispanic/Latino-American, 17% are Asian-American. 14% are Anglo-American, 1.6 are Native-American and 6.2% are of other racial/ethnic groups.

9. The overwhelming majority (75%) of mentees come from low-income/poor/poverty households. 21% are from moderate to middle income households, and 4% are from upper income households. 73% are from urban areas, 11% from suburban areas, 9% are from rural areas, and 7% are a mixture.
10. 33% of the programs serve 100 or more persons per year, 35% serve between 26 to 50, 19% serve between 51 to 100, and 13% serve less than 25.

The conclusion from this demographic profile is that the Bay Area mentoring community is very young and relatively inexperienced in the delivery of mentoring services. Thus, it experiences the normative growth pains associated with an emerging discipline. Problems such as definitional clarity, appropriateness of objectives, delivery strategies, and evaluation of outcomes which were evident at the Annual Forum are a reflection of the growth and maturation process of a young discipline.

An interesting finding is that the Boards, staffs, and service users are primarily female. The fact that 78% of the clients are people of color, overwhelmingly urban (73%), and economically marginal (75%) are also significant findings which has consequences for how TMC delivers its services in the future. Budgets and staffs are relatively small, with government and foundations as the primary funders. The Board sizes are within typical nonprofit ranges of 15 or less members per Board. In terms of the mentoring community's diversity profile, Anglo-Americans are the plurality of Boards (41%), and staffs (32%), although significant and substantial participation by people of color is evident in both Board and staff composition.

II. MENTORING APPROACH

1. Survey respondents concluded that there are many valid goals/objectives and purposes for mentoring. The three most important were:
 - a. Improving self-esteem/self-concept (the first choice of 95% of respondents);
 - b. Cultural enrichment (the second choice of 80%); and
 - c. Helping with career choices (the third choice for 70%).

Other goals such as social integration and behavior modification were of lesser importance.

2. Respondents indicated a variety of reasons for their involvement in mentoring ranging from new funds becoming available to improving support for “at-risk” youth.
3. In selecting mentors, respondents cited variables such as integrity, commitment, open mindedness, etc. There were no special or unusual requirements mentioned as desired characteristics. Some programs use peer to peer mentoring, while others do not, based on whether it is the only resource available. Some programs also use team or “group” mentoring, while others do not. There is no clear pattern which influences the choice.
4. Respondents indicated that both standardized and customized program approaches are utilized depending on the needs of the youth. It is not clear that any of these program approaches or mentoring approaches achieves better results than an alternative approach. The data is fragmentary and inconclusive regarding the impact of specific approaches to mentoring.
5. The area which generated the most diverse responses on mentoring approaches was the “mentor-mentee matching strategy.” Similar to the Focus Group 1 survey, respondents indicated that they utilize a variety of matching strategies with “same gender” matches being utilized more frequently than same racial and same cultural matching variables. The other matching variables were important; however, both same and different racial and cultural matching strategies were employed by respondents depending on very specific considerations. This confirms the findings of Focus Group 1. In some instances, the matching strategy has had a positive impact, while in other instances, no impact has been determined. No negative impacts were reported. Clearly, this is an area in need of further examination.

III. SERVICE DELIVERY

1. Two thirds of all respondents have utilized TMC services; however, fewer had utilized technical assistance (a staff service activity used by more experienced groups than the other service). Two-thirds of the programs have Mentoring Program Coordinators (MPC's), the majority of whom earn between \$25,000 to \$35,000 per year. MPC experience levels are equally distributed (33% each) between limited (0 – 2 years), somewhat experienced (3 – 5 years) and very experienced (6 or more years).
2. Respondents are engaged in all four types of mentoring: Soft, Medium, Hard, and Hard-Core, although Medium mentoring is practiced by more field programs (48%) than the other types of mentoring. Less than 25% of all programs have been evaluated or include evaluation as an inherent organizational activity; thus, there are limited statements which can be made about evaluative outcomes, or resulting modifications. Most programs (60%) use a most effective or best practices approach to mentoring, although it is not clear from the survey which practices are used most frequently and the results achieved. These findings require further disaggregation of the data by experience level to determine if there is significance to the findings.
3. Respondents suggested that TMC should offer more services in:
 - Information technologies/web sites, frequent newsletters, workshops, peer mentoring, team mentoring, cultural mentoring styles and identifying minority mentors.

IV. THE FUTURE OF MENTORING

1. Respondents indicated that the five most important issues facing mentoring in the future are:
 - Stable and realistic funding;
 - Recruitment and retention of appropriate and responsible mentors;
 - Community involvement;
 - School-based programs; and
 - Improvement of mentoring infrastructure.

Findings from Survey Results

It is also believed that mentoring programs must be developed from the middle school age level through the college level.

2. Respondents suggested that in the future, TMC should offer more support to the field when a program is in its early stages of development. They also believe that TMC should offer more training for Boards and staffs. In addition, respondents felt that assistance was needed with culturally specific mentoring, especially as it relates to the special problems of economically marginal youth of color who constitute the majority of youth receiving mentoring services.

Conclusions From The Qualitative Findings

Conclusions From The Qualitative Findings



The findings on mentoring approach, Service Delivery and the future of mentoring did not result in a clear, precise or systematic pattern of responses. The Consultant's interpretation of these overall findings is that the mentoring discipline has not yet developed consistent standards which are applied evenly and uniformly by field programs. Certainly, there are suggested standards in a number of critical problem areas. However, there is no consensus on what constitutes likely predictors of success based on a preferred mentoring approach and a specific service delivery style. Practitioners appear to be searching for ideological/philosophical clarity and the pragmatic consensus which flows from that clarity. As mentoring matures as a field of practice and as a discipline, the need for clarity and consensus will continue to intensify.

The initial information provided by this survey could be an important reference point for further analysis and program design which might enhance the clarity and help to build the consensus. The process of redesigning TMC's SDS should immeasurably benefit from the findings, despite their evolving and changing character. Hopefully, the entire field and practice of mentoring will also regard these findings as a useful contribution to the ongoing dialogue on the nature and character of mentoring.

Recommendations To TMC Based On Focus Group And Survey Results



Recommendation 1:

TMC should reorganize its SDS to reflect the experience levels of the Bay Area mentoring community. In the future, all service requests should be filtered through a new intake and diagnostic process which precisely situates both the level of experience (LOE) and the level of capacity (LOC) of the requesting organization. The existing mentoring typology matrix should be expanded and refined to include a start-up, emerging and mature organizational profile. The profile would be integrated into the “best practices” system for each type and category of mentoring program to determine exactly what menu of services and which practice is most appropriate for a given client. FG2 correctly pointed out that a best practices system is needed by all 4 types and categories of mentoring (Soft/Medium/Hard/Hard-Core). However, the application of the system should be particularized based on the readiness or capacity of the client organization to implement the system. In turn, TMC would be able to rationalize the usage of its service delivery hours based on assumptions about desired and more predictable results and thus, better quality outcomes. The data from the SDS reexamination process are unmistakably clear: there are differing service needs and requirements based on levels of experience, program type and capacity. TMC’s future materials development strategy should reflect this reality by designing packets based on these considerations. TMC must be sensitive to these findings in its future Service Delivery.

Recommendation 2:

TMC should add a research component to its present profile of services. The survey and FG2 are emphatically clear. There are many ambiguous and/or complex issues and problems which require higher levels of information and analysis than is presently available. One example of this ambiguity and complexity is the area of matching strategies and needed mentor characteristics. Service users are left to their own conclusions and whims about what works best in this area. The “studies” which have been conducted are fragmentary and inconclusive, which only accentuates the existing confusion. The same could be said about needed mentor characteristics when applied to the different youth profiles or 4 types of mentoring. Again, due to the youthfulness of the discipline, existing knowledge is insufficient to draw unambiguous conclusions on how best to design the delivery system to insure the proper fit. There are other issues which could be included as part of a research agenda which TMC would explore in the future. Issues such as site-based mentoring, group mentoring, peer mentoring, the link between program approaches and program results, and a cataloguing of the different definitions of mentoring and the consequences of each are suggested as research subject candidates. Service users are definitive: TMC should develop a research strategy including the agenda and issues in collaboration with the field.

Recommendation 3:

TMC should organize and host a series of possibly quarterly “Workshops” and not restrict itself to its Annual Conference-Forum as the only vehicle for dialogue on critical problem areas. It is suggested that at least 4 such workshops be offered during the year based on the LOE of field programs. Participants felt that there are few opportunities to dialogue or engage in critical thinking about mentoring issues; thus, TMC would be filling a service gap widely felt by field practitioners. Among the suggested topic areas are:

- Gender issues in the delivery of mentoring services;
- Matching strategies based on types of mentoring programs;
- Cultural variations in service delivery;
- Family mentoring;
- Volunteer recruitment strategies;
- Information/Technology applications in delivering mentoring services; and
- The “actual” costs to deliver units of mentoring services.

Recommendation 4:

TMC should refocus its training efforts to focus more attention on the intensive and long-term training and the organizational development needs of its service users. Specific interventions should be developed for Boards of Directors, program staff, and Training of Trainers to deliver what TMC currently delivers to prospective mentors. Limited time and effort should be devoted to the mentor orientation/training sessions and more time devoted to the development of specific skills and capacities. TMC should modularize its orientation/trainings and materials to reduce the necessity for its staff to respond in person to every request. Some service users (especially the most experienced practitioners), might be willing to assist TMC in this endeavor.

Recommendation 5:

TMC should expand its services to include assistance with funding resources and direct assistance to funders. It is suggested that TMC organize periodic “Meet the Funders” sessions, where funders and field practitioners can gain a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints each operates with. Similarly, it is suggested that TMC develop a resource bank of funding sources by LOE, and assist the start-up and emerging groups with their funding strategy. It is also suggested that TMC assist the field in the identification of long-range sources of stable, less volatile funding opportunities, endowments, CRA funding, large private donations, celebrity events, etc. should be researched for their potential as sources of alternative funding for mentoring programs.

Recommendation 6:

TMC must assist the field in a more sophisticated approach to evaluation. Currently, evaluation is often perceived as an after thought, or is regarded as unnecessary until a funder requires it. Good process evaluations, results evaluations and outcome evaluations of local mentoring programs are not existent. It is believed that TMC is an ideal resource to develop an approach to evaluation in that it serves both as an intermediary providing services to the field, and it operates local mentoring programs as well.

Implications of the Recommendations for TMC



It is obvious to this Consultant that in order for The Mentoring Center to implement these recommendations, it must secure the resources to reorganize its existing staff, and consider adding either new staff, or long term Consultants to deliver the array of potential new or reorganized services. One way to accomplish this goal would be to create a new position for an “Organizational Development Specialist” and an additional “Training Specialist” whose primary responsibilities would be to service the needs of the start-up and emerging populations. All of the best practices issues, and mentoring typology issues for the young groups could be addressed by the Organizational Development and Training Specialists.

A second major implication of the recommendations might be the need to reorganize staff duties and time. An audit of senior staff time utilization should be conducted to determine how best to re-assign senior staff to implement the recommendations.

A third major implication is the possible reconsideration of the Annual Conference-Forum as the primary TMC field gathering. If the workshop concept is to be implemented, planning should be immediately initiated on how to implement it in relationship to the desirability of continuing the Annual Conference-Forum or folding it into the workshops.

A fourth major implication is the need to develop and/or reorganize TMC’s training materials, or the modularization of the materials. New materials may be necessary if the intent is to transmit specific measurable skills and capacities.

A fifth major implication is the possible need to develop or identify a research consultant or team to implement a research strategy. Existing staff and outside consultants could constitute the team whose primary mission would be the production of new knowledge desired by the field. It is suggested by this Consultant that TMC review this report, its findings, conclusions and recommendations, and develop a course of action to facilitate the transition to a “full service intermediary.”

Consultant Perspective on the Evolution of Mentoring as a Discipline and the State of the Practice



Throughout this SDS reexamination process, the Consultant has engaged in observation, data collection and analysis. Being a “outsider” to the mentoring discipline without an organizational stake has allowed for levels of objectivity and detachment which has sharpened the Consultant’s perceptions of the “culture of mentoring.” Despite its recent and explosive growth, there are additional questions to be answered, new problems to be identified and solved, and new challenges to be responded to during the next phase of mentoring practice. The Consultant wishes to identify three specific issues which may impact the practice as well as how TMC delivers services in the future.

First, mentoring is an ancient form of social and cultural replication, which is present and evident in all human groupings. However, the modern emphasis on social problem solving is often disconnected from cultural transmission and thus results in confusion and conceptual ambiguity. Modern day mentoring is lacking in a systematic approach to a “science” of definition and meaning (a phenomenology). The meaning systems are either undeveloped, or unevenly developed leading to the usage of the term “mentoring” to apply to virtually any supportive relationship between an adult and a young person. If this “generic” and open-ended usage is intentional, then practitioners should also develop a dictionary of specific meanings rather than continuing the generic usage of the term to apply to all supportive relationships. Alternatively, if the term seeks to describe specific patterns of cultural transmissions with attendant paradigm corrections, (especially generational ones), then, the term implies a profound shift in socio/cultural consciousness beyond supportive relationships. This shift in consciousness and thus, self-concept, then becomes the predicate for an enhancement of life opportunities and possibilities through the structured application of mentoring activities. There is an urgent need for phenomenological precision and clarity in order for the stakeholders to understand and/or agree on exactly what mentoring is and is not despite the appropriation of the term by anyone choosing to do so. For instance, “generic mentoring” may be “adaptive” in its intent, whereas “culturally specific mentoring” may be “transformative” in intent. Program content and delivery styles may be significantly affected by the implicit or explicit preference for one or the other of these two meanings. The need for clarity and precision is common to newly emerging fields of practice; thus, it could be argued that the lack of a definitionally precise conceptual apparatus is normative. However, this lack of precision may result in additional complications when one attempts to identify, comprehend or evaluate the personal and/or social impacts of mentoring programs. Emerging fields such as mentoring often make grand claims of “effectiveness” without a conceptual apparatus or theory of change to explain disparate results, or predicts likely outcomes of mentoring interventions. This intellectual difficulty will potentially attract severe criticism and challenges to the audacious public relations success claims of “generic” mentoring. The field of mentoring should initiate a more culturally specific phenomenology and theory building discourse to address the problem of conceptual confusion. During the early and formative years of a discipline, the lack of definitional precision and conceptual clarity may not hinder growth; however, as the discipline evolves and asserts its “truth” claims, it is challenged to develop a more sophisticated intellectual architecture.

Consultant Perspective on the Evolution of Mentoring as a Discipline

Secondly, the fact that the mentoring field in the Bay Area is predominated by relatively young start-up and emerging organizations (66% have three or less years of mentoring delivery experience), with small staffs and limited budgets is a matter of significant concern. There appears to be a correlation between the levels of experience (LOE) and the levels of capacity (LOC) which is in turn associated with limited resources and organizational technology. The LOE and the LOC of practitioner organizations will have a direct impact on both the quality and the pace of evolution of the mentoring field beyond its early growth phase. It may not be sufficient to merely fund programs to identify, recruit and deploy mentors. It may be even more critical to fund and support a “capacity building” system which assists the younger groups with the development of their organizational culture. If the level of organizational sophistication and capacity is improved, the ability of practitioner organizations to service the field’s demand for high quality mentoring programs should also improve. This Consultant regards the experience-capacity dynamic as a major limiting variable which will influence and shape the future of mentoring programs in the Bay Area. Thus, the recommendation to add an Organizational Development and Training capacity to TMC’s service menu may be extremely significant in addressing this problem. Young and emerging disciplines typically experience this dilemma as they evolve from growth to maturation and stabilization. Creative responses by funders, policy actors and service deliverers is urgently required.

Thirdly, and finally, this Consultant does not believe that TMC should continue to be a generic support system which responds to all requests. In a young discipline as well as a maturing one, there are multiple problems which constantly arise and are in need of short term and long term solutions. Unfortunately, however, no service provider has the human and organizational resources to simultaneously respond to all problems. Thus, priorities are determined based on perceptions of the need for services which then acts as the management system to rationalize the allocation of scarce resources. In addition, the achievement of strategically important objectives in the discipline may be preferred rather than the continued provision of general services. As TMC revises its SDS, the Consultant suggests a careful and critical review of the state of the practice to assist it in determining future priorities. This does not mean that TMC should be unaware of and insensitive to the myriad of multiple and constantly changing problems of practitioner organizations. It does, however, imply a level of responsibility and mutual understanding between the field and TMC regarding the expectations of a revised SDS.

These three reflective observations are offered as discussion points for staff, funders and service users as TMC proceeds with its SDS revisions. Mentoring practice is in a state of transition and will thus encounter unknown and unpredictable challenges in the future. Yet the challenge is also the opportunity: a moment for change and growth prompted by the dynamics of an evolving discipline searching for its soul. Hopefully, this report contributes to the dialogue.

