

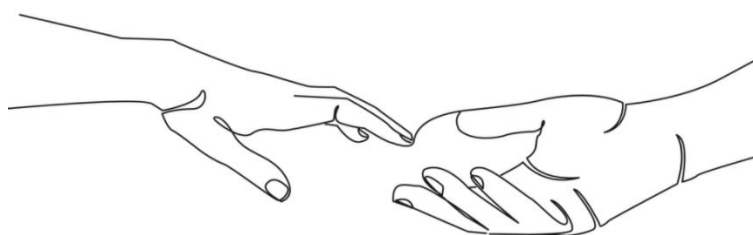
Formative assessment and summative evaluation of a mentoring program for immigrants with education from their home countries

Client:

Catalysts

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Foreword

This study was commissioned by Catalysts, a social entrepreneurship offering mentoring programs primarily to youth with multicultural backgrounds. The project was completed by a researcher in the Social Sciences department at NORCE Norwegian Research Center. This concluding report summarizes findings from the project period, which ran from October 2019 until September 2020. Catalysts initiated contact with the researcher as part of a collaboration with Knutepunktet, an educational counseling service offered at the University of Oslo. Catalysts' objective was to develop a pilot mentoring program for immigrants, primarily refugees, with education obtained in their home countries, who wanted additional education, to complete a previously started degree program, or to build upon an existing degree. The research portion of the project had two objectives. First, Catalysts wanted to gain insight into stakeholder needs for a mentoring program and to obtain recommendations on how it could be designed and implemented. This included a formative assessment of how existing elements of Catalysts programs could be adapted to this new target group. Second, Catalysts requested a post-implementation evaluation of how the developed pilot program was received by the stakeholders, particularly the refugee participants and recommendations for improvement.

Thank you to the Catalysts team and CEO Lisa Cooper, for initiating this research project. Special thanks to program coordinators Karina Storeng Ikhsani and Jacob Svendsen for their openness, feedback on this report, and an overall interesting and inspiring collaboration. Many thanks also to Martine Mevatne at NORCE and the Center for Digital Health Research at Oslo University Hospital for thoughtful and thorough comments. Most of all, thank you to the participants in the project, who generously shared their experiences and reflections. Hopefully this report can provide Catalysts and Knutepunktet useful input for additional development of programs for these target groups.

Bergen, September 2020

Rebecca Lynn Radlick

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Summary

For many immigrants, education represents an important step towards employment in Norway, yet they may face a variety of challenges in admission to higher education. Thus, programs which support this endeavor are worth exploring. Catalysts, a social entrepreneurship with experience in providing mentoring programs to multicultural youth, initiated contact with researchers as part of a partnership with Knutepunktet, an educational counseling service connected to the University of Oslo. Catalysts sought to develop an evidence-informed mentoring program for a slightly different target group: adult immigrants (primarily refugees) with education obtained in their home countries, who wanted additional education, to complete previously started education, or to build on an existing degree. These individuals in this new demographic are diverse in terms of their previous experiences and personal characteristics, including educational field, although all have *some* level of education from their home countries.

Because this target group was new for Catalysts, it was unclear what specific goals and needs these individuals had, and how these might be met in the context of a mentoring program. Furthermore, because this was the first time Catalysts would deliver this program, they also wanted an evaluation of how the developed pilot program was received by stakeholders, post-implementation. The objective was thus twofold. First, to conduct a formative assessment of stakeholder (primarily refugee) needs for mentoring, how a mentoring program could be designed, and how Catalysts current programs could be adapted to this new and slightly older target group. From this assessment and resultant recommendations, Catalysts developed a mentoring program to be pilot tested among a small group of refugees. Second, Catalysts requested a summative evaluation of how the developed pilot program was experienced by the participants, and recommendations for improvement.

Data for the study was collected via focus groups, interviews, written documents, and questionnaires. Respondents included target group members/pilot program participants, program coordinators, and a Knutepunktet admissions consultant. Participants for the first portion of the study were recruited from a local Adult Education (*Voksenopplæring*) class in Oslo. In total, 17 people participated in focus groups in the formative (first) part of the project. From this pool of 17 respondents, 5 individuals with refugee backgrounds were selected for participation in the pilot mentoring program (second part of the project).

In the formative assessment, the refugee respondents expressed a wide range of domains where a mentor might assist them. The foundation of many of these was a need for enhanced social capital in the form of information, instrumental and emotional support, and a broader network with

strengthened ties to and understanding of cultural codes in Norway. Many of the elements in Catalysts' standard programs for multicultural youth were viewed positively by the respondents. Particularly Catalysts' roadmap and network map were viewed as potentially useful tools in planning attainment of specific goals, especially if the need for social capital support is considered. Strength cards could be useful as an icebreaker, allowing the mentor-mentee dyads to get to know each other better, within the context of a specific activity. Plenary social activities were also of interest to the focus group participants, particularly those that might allow them to mingle with other mentors or mentees, as well as those focused on specific careers. A main point of disagreement encompassed the specific characteristics a mentor should have, indicating that this might be decided best based on individual mentee needs and wishes.

Based on this formative assessment and resultant recommendations for program adaptations, Catalysts developed a mentoring program to be pilot tested among a small group of individuals with refugee backgrounds. At the time of this report, 3 of the 5 people selected from the initial 17 respondents from the first part of the study had completed the program. Due to COVID-19, there were some challenges, which required minor adjustments to the planned program, including fewer meetings with Knutepunktet and the use of digital tools as a replacement for in-person dyad meetings.

Overall, the refugees who completed the program were highly satisfied with program contents and overall implementation. They expressed hope that the program would be offered to people with similar backgrounds to themselves in the future. Program coordinators also described the program as a "success". They felt that a key manner in which the program could be improved in the future was via additional mentor training, including training in unconscious biases.

While most of the program components were viewed as useful by participants, they found the group meetings to be the least essential. While this maybe have been due to a less-relevant theme, or due to low mentee participation, future iterations of the program should again assess participant needs for plenary meetings. Cooperation between the program and Knutepunktet also functioned well, with Knutepunktet being well suited for guiding mentees on formal aspects related to admission to the University of Oslo. In considering organizations for future cooperation, these partners could explore collaboration with additional parties, such as Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), or local introduction programs for new immigrants.

Catalysts also wanted an assessment of program results. All the mentees reported strengthened social capital, with their mentor as an important new contact whose resources and knowledge

they had gained access to via the pilot program. Pre-post descriptive indicators support this assessment. Although these do not support claims of causality, they suggest positive development from program start for the program participants in domains such as attachment to Norway, knowledge of application processes for higher education, having someone to ask for assistance in applying to education, for general support in life domains, advice, and motivation, and help with Norwegian language. Although the mentor appeared to represent an important new person in the mentees' networks, the mentees did not meet anyone else in their mentors' networks. While this may have been due to COVID-19, future iterations of the mentoring program could further endeavor to further strengthen mentee social capital within the context of the program, by encouraging participation in local activities together with the mentor, as well as mentors introducing the mentees to relevant contacts in their networks. Strengthened social capital could be encouraged after program conclusion by providing support for recruitment of natural mentors.

Prior to offering this program again in the future, Catalysts should further develop a logic model specific to the program, clearly specifying program inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. This can help focus efforts on what the program will endeavor to achieve by providing a visualization of the "challenge" to be resolved, and how services and activities can contribute to desired changes. As part of this, Catalysts should continue to assess program outputs and outcomes in future iterations of the program. Additional studies with larger numbers of participants, and which focus more comprehensively on mentor experiences, would be helpful in providing more robust and generalizable conclusions.

All in all, this report provides insight into refugee-centered design and implementation of mentoring programs, a topic which has little previous research in Norway. While the study has some methodological limitations, primarily due to the small number of participants, the findings suggest that this mentoring program provided beneficial support to refugees with education from their home countries.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Even after the apex of the refugee crisis of 2015, Norway remains a destination country for thousands of asylum seekers, many of whom are eventually granted refugee status. Education is critical for future employment, but half of refugees in Norway have only compulsory education (Olsen, 2019). However, those who have completed upper secondary or higher education in Norway have employment rates similar to the whole population (with the same level of education) (*ibid*; Dokka, 2020). This underscores the importance of obtaining education in Norway, particularly for refugees, yet refugees often experience barriers in admission to higher education. Some of these barriers relate to language, informational barriers, lack of professional or emotional support, approval of credentials, large caregiver responsibilities, and financing, with many refugees encountering institutions which are much different from those found in their homelands (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Bajwa, et al., 2017; Grüttner, et al., 2018). Considering this, measures to facilitate refugee admission to Norwegian higher education institutions are worth exploring. Mentoring programs might be helpful in this regard, as a supplement to public sector services (Preston, et al., 2019).

Mentoring relationships, particularly those supporting social capital, have been shown to assist in transitions to college, especially for minority students (Schwartz, Kanchewa, Rhodes, Cutler, & Cunningham, 2016; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Furthermore, mentoring can facilitate necessary language acquisition (Paulsen, et al., 2012), and future labor market integration for refugees (Bjørnset & Kindt, 2019). Newcomers therefore represent important target groups who could potentially benefit from mentoring (Preston, et al., 2019).

Catalysts is one organization offering formal mentoring programs to a variety of groups, primarily youth and young adults with immigrant or refugee backgrounds. Catalysts is a social entrepreneurship (Eimhjellen & Loga, 2016), with years of experience in running mentoring programs. In light of this background, Catalysts wanted to expand its target groups to fit a slightly different and older demographic: immigrants (primarily refugees) with education from their home countries.

The initial concept was for these new immigrants with education from their home countries to receive services from Knutepunktet (an educational counseling service offered at the University of Oslo), as well as a mentor. This would ideally facilitate their preparations for additional education,

complete previously started education, or build on an existing degree. A long-term objective is for participants to be able to use their skills in Norwegian society and the labor market. These individuals in the new demographic are diverse in terms of their previous experiences and personal characteristics, including educational field, although all have *some* level of education from their home countries.

Because this target group was new for Catalysts, it was unclear what specific goals and needs the potential mentees have (particularly in relation to additional education), and how these needs might be met in the context of a mentoring program. Thus, in Catalysts' desire to expand their reach to a new group, they solicited feedback from researchers. Their objectives were twofold. First, gaining insight into potential stakeholder (immigrants, primarily individuals with a refugee background) needs for a mentoring program, as well as soliciting proposed suggestions on how such a program could be designed, and how Catalysts existing programs could be adapted. This was essentially a formative assessment. The second objective was conducting a summative assessment of the implementation of the pilot program, with recommendations for improvements and upscaling. A feature of the project is its focus on stakeholder needs in program design. Such needs are often not thoroughly considered, despite the necessity of honoring participant voices, not only in program delivery, but also in initial program design (Rhodes, Liang, & Spencer, 2009). This report is structured as follows: It first presents a background of literature on mentoring and mentoring program design. This is followed by a brief description of the main actors involved in program delivery. Next, the objectives and research questions are presented, followed by a discussion of the study's method and design. The results of the formative assessment for program design and results of the summative evaluation are then detailed, followed by a concluding summary.

1.2. Mentoring in Norway and abroad

Mentoring is defined as a one-to-one relationship, with a "mentee" who can benefit from support from a more experienced "mentor" (Garringer, et al., 2015). Program coordinators are a third party in the formal mentoring relationship and are typically responsible for recruitment and training of program participants. They also are often responsible for matching of the mentor-mentee dyads, following-up of the pairs, as well as support in concluding the formal mentoring relationships. In its ideal form, mentoring should be mutually beneficial and enriching for both mentor and mentee. Mentoring has multiple forms. Formal mentoring programs, as Catalysts offers, can be differentiated from "natural" mentoring programs. The latter are typically informal,

not limited by time, and include individuals already in the person's network, like teachers or neighbors (Sanchez, et al., 2008).

Although Norway has a strong voluntary sector (Selle, 1993), and Norwegians have high levels of participation in volunteer work and volunteer organizations (Loga, et al., 2016), formal mentoring is still a relatively nascent phenomenon in Norway. Overall, little is known about formal mentoring or mentoring best practices in the Norwegian welfare state context, and no comprehensive effect studies have been conducted. Nevertheless, limited existing evidence gives some insight into formal mentoring programs in Norway. A study assessing immigrant youths' needs for mentoring and electronic mentoring found a strong desire for strengthened social capital (Radlick, et al., 2020a), particularly access to resources through network ties (Lin, 2001). Connection to other individuals, as well as the local community, and a desire for an adult with resources to offer support in helping them achieve their goals was emphasized (Radlick, et al., 2020a). Norwegian research looking at the effects of mentoring indicates that mentoring can contribute to integration of groups with traditionally weaker attachments to the labor market (Munthe-Kaas, et al., 2018; Bjørnset & Kindt, 2019; Spjelkavik, et al., 2020). Additionally, refugees specifically can benefit from mentoring programs in the form of language acquisition, community social capital, and learning about cultural norms (Paulsen, et al., 2012).

In contrast to Norway, there are long traditions for both mentoring programs and research on the topic in the United States. Several meta-analyses of mentoring studies conducted in the United States indicate that mentoring programs can improve participant outcomes across a variety of academic, social, and behavioral domains, although effect sizes are often small (DuBois, et al., 2011; Raposa, et al., 2019). American research also indicates that while mentoring programs focused on positive youth development and emotional needs are quite prevalent and can be beneficial, programs with an instrumental or goal-oriented orientation are more effective (Rhodes, 2020).

1.2.1. Design of mentoring programs and education-oriented mentoring

A review of the literature on mentoring program design and use of education-oriented mentoring for underrepresented groups was conducted in order to provide a background for the study. Resources provided by MENTOR, an American organization oriented towards researchers and practitioners (*How to Build A Successful Mentoring Program Using the Elements of Effective Practice*, 2005) offer evidence-based guidelines on how to design a program. Main aspects to consider include (*ibid*, p. 33):

- Characteristics of the target group for the program (including age, gender, and need)

- The type of mentoring that will be offered (for example traditional one-on-one mentoring, group mentoring, e-mentoring, community-based mentoring)
- The program's focus
- Where the pairs will meet
- Relevant partners for cooperation
- Characteristics of program coordinators and staff

Overall, the literature in scientific journals focused specifically on mentor program *design* is quite limited.¹ Main findings indicate no single best practice for design and execution (Fornari, et al., 2014). However, a range of issues may be considered when designing programs, including the program goals, mentor functions, mentor selection, training, matching, and evaluation (Poldre, 1994). Others highlight the importance of proper matching and training of mentors and mentees for their responsibilities by using role play and videos to illustrate effective practices (Forret, 1996; Parise & Forret, 2008; Fornari et al., 2014).

In general, successful mentoring projects are holistic but tailored, and employ user-centered approaches. It is critical to recruit committed mentors with appropriate backgrounds to the target group, and who will develop a good chemistry with their mentee (Stukas, et al., 2014). However, matching based on ethnicity does not correspond with obvious benefits for program outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). Mentoring programs often experience challenges in recruitment of appropriate volunteers (IMDi, 2017; Bjørnset & Kindt, 2019), and in premature dissolution of the mentoring relationship (Spencer, 2007; Bodin & Leifman, 2011; *ibid*). Therefore, it is important to provide proper training of participants, with information on boundary setting and managing expectations, to minimize such challenges (Spencer, 2007; DuBois & Karcher, 2014; Radlick, et al., 2020a). For example, using a contract to specify meeting frequency and mode of communication was also suggested as a solution within the context of program design (Spencer, 2007). Follow-up and support from program coordinators can also strengthen retention (Stukas, et al., 2014). Consideration of the mentors' background, in order to build a trusting relationship, and identify interests which both mentor and mentee have in common (DuBois, et al., 2011) is also essential. Planned activities or games can help get the relationship off to a light and good start (Forret, 1996). Mentoring programs can also benefit from partnerships and cooperation with other organizations. For intra-organizational cooperation to succeed there should be an explicated division of responsibility, sufficient resources, and common goals (Lipsky, 2010; Spjelkavik, et al., 2020).

¹ Based on a search via Web of Science and searches in "grey" literature such as research reports

While the literature on mentoring offers some insights into program design, it is also useful to look at elements used in specific programs, particularly those which are evidence-informed, focused on similar target groups, outcomes, or implemented in a similar context. Several other programs offer examples, which can inform potential adaptations to Catalysts core program. The Directorate of integration and diversity (IMDi) created a summary report on experiences and results of mentor and trainee programs, the objective of which was employment commensurate to qualifications, as well as increased organizational diversity (IMDi, 2017). A total of seven organizations took part in 2016. Notable program components included network-building and visits to the workplace. One program offered participants courses related to workplace culture, CV writing, and how to apply for jobs, and participated in internships with their mentor for 10 weeks, 5 days a week.

An evidence-based American mentoring program focused on access to higher education is the Connected Scholars Program (CSP) (Schwartz et al., 2016). It targets first generation college-bound high school seniors by focusing on youth-initiated mentoring via group workshops. The program has 8 workshops with 3 main components: 1) information and discussion on the importance of social capital and mentoring relationships, 2) exercises to help students identify current and potential mentors and sources of social capital in their lives, and 3) training and practice to build connections and develop relationships. Ultimately, CSP increased student value of social capital and mentoring relationships, supported their skills and self-efficacy in cultivating such connections, and gave them knowledge to interact with potential future mentors (*ibid*).

The Australian program LEAP targets high school students with refugee backgrounds to help them transition to higher education by matching them with student mentors (Singh & Tregale, 2015). Main objectives were to help mentees develop confidence, resilience and agency, raise their aspirations towards further study, develop social and cultural capital to navigate the tertiary education system, develop understanding of and make decisions about potential educational pathways (*ibid*).

With this background on mentoring and mentoring programs, the report next discusses the two partner organizations involved in the pilot mentoring program.

1.3. Catalysts and Knutepunktet

Catalysts is one of the first organizations to offer formal mentoring programs in Norway, with program presence in four counties. The organization runs a variety of strength-based programs, with a basis in Appreciative Inquiry (Orem, et al., 2007; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011). The

majority of Catalysts' mentoring programs use recruited volunteers, but several are in cooperation with corporate entities. The primary target group for these programs is newly arrived immigrants, ages 15-25; nearly 300 pairs have been matched since Catalysts' start in 2015. According to their website (www.catalysts.no), Catalysts endeavors to increase participant self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), increase high school completion rates among refugee and minority-background youth, contribute to integration and social inclusion of immigrants, contribute to a more diverse and inclusive work environment, and to increase diversity and cross-cultural understanding among mentors. The volunteer program trajectory after recruitment of mentor and mentee participants is:

- 1) Introductory meetings for mentees and mentors, separately
- 2) Program Launch
- 3) 1st dyad meeting
- 4) Appreciative inquiry (group meeting)
- 5) 2nd dyad meeting
- 6) Group Meeting
- 7) 3rd dyad meeting
- 8) Meeting with the theme "Diversity" (group meeting)
- 9) 4th-6th dyad meetings
- 10) End of program party

Catalysts wanted to expand their reach to new target groups and solicited feedback from researchers as to how to do this. Their new pilot program aimed at a slightly older target group (over the age of 20), with a different background: newly arrived immigrants (primarily refugees) in Norway with education acquired in their home countries. The initial plan was for individuals with a refugee background and education from their homeland to receive admission consulting services, as well as a mentor, to facilitate their preparations for additional education, complete previously started education, or build on an existing degree. The main long-term objective is for refugees to be able to use their skills in Norwegian society and the labor market.

This pilot program was intended to be a collaboration with *Knutepunktet*. Knutepunktet is an educational counseling service connected to the University of Oslo (UiO). Admissions consultants at the organization provide information in a variety of areas including information about registration to courses, UiO's course offerings and different study programs, prerequisites for enrollment and required credits, procedures for application and admission, and general information about UiO. They have experience working with international and exchange students from other countries. Knutepunktet's role in this pilot program was intended to provide information and guidance about the possibilities at UiO, as the volunteer mentors have no previous knowledge of the formal requirements for university admission. The intention was to

have three individual meetings between each mentee and a single Knutepunktet admissions consultant.

1.4. Objectives and research questions

The objectives of this program assessment and evaluation were twofold: 1) to gain insight into potential stakeholder (immigrants, primarily individuals with a refugee background) needs for a mentoring program and propose suggestions on how Catalysts' core program could be adapted or expanded to fit their needs. 2) Catalysts also had an interest in assessing how stakeholders (particularly the mentees) experienced the program, and how it might be improved in future iterations.

In assessing program design, the main questions to be answered included:

1. What do the refugee target groups need and want in a mentoring relationship? What can a mentor help with, and how?
2. What elements or activities should be part of the program? To what extent can pre-existing program elements be used with this new target group?
3. What personal characteristics should mentors have?
4. What preparations or training should participants receive prior to program start?

In assessing implementation of the program, Catalysts wanted insight into the following questions:

1. How did the program participants (primarily the mentees) experience the program?
2. To what extent were various elements of the program useful for the participants?
3. To what extent were the needs expressed during the program design phase met?
4. What outcomes did the participants have?
5. How can the program be improved and expanded?

2. Method and design

2.1. Introduction

This section describes the procedure employed for data collection and analysis for both the formative assessment and the summative evaluation. Collection of empirical data occurred at two different timepoints and used multiple sources. The first part of the project, which developed recommendations for program design (discussed under 2.2) based on the formative assessment of stakeholder needs, occurred from October 2019 until January 2020, with data collection occurring in November 2019. These recommendations were presented to Catalysts in order for them to develop plans for their pilot mentor program. The summative evaluation of the mentoring program developed and implemented by Catalysts (discussed under 2.3) occurred from May 2020 until September 2020, with data collection at various points during this period.

Because Catalysts' focus was primarily on the needs and experiences of the mentees, informants from this category comprise the main source for data for both parts of the study. Participants for the first portion of the study were recruited in cooperation with a local Adult Education (*Voksenopplæring*) class in Oslo, prior to commencement of the research portion. All participants had at least B1 level Norwegian skills. Selection of participants for the pilot program was done from the pool of respondents from the first portion of the study, in collaboration between Catalysts and the author of this report. A main objective in selection was to get a diverse group in terms of gender, country of origin, and educational background, in order to gain understanding of the needs and experiences of a wide range of people (Creswell, 2014; Stukas, et al., 2014). All data were collected in line with NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data) guidelines, with Catalysts as the party responsible for data collection and archiving. Every participant received and signed an informed consent form, which detailed the intended procedure for data collection, use of data, and security. Consent and participation were viewed as on-going, and it was emphasized that access to Knutepunktet services or pairing with a mentor was not contingent upon participation in the research (Hugman, et al., 2011).

2.2. Method and data: Formative assessment

In the formative assessment for pilot program design, two primary approaches to data collection were used-- an individual immigrant questionnaire and focus groups.

1) Questionnaire

Prior to the focus groups, 22 newly arrived immigrants filled out a questionnaire. Questions inquired about country of origin, sex, reason for immigration, level of education, field of education, and study goals. In all, 91% (N=20) of these individuals had a refugee background, while 9% were family of Norwegian citizens or permanent residence permit holders. The most frequent countries of origin were Syria, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. In response to the query on what they wanted to study, almost half were interested in nursing or other health-care related fields. Others were interested in studying IT, translation, mathematics, film, or engineering. Over two-thirds (N=15) had some university or had completed it, and two have master's degrees from their home country. Of those who disclosed their gender (N=15), 10 were male, and 5 were female.

2) Focus group interviews

Focus groups are useful to understand shared experiences and perspectives, allowing nuance, as well as stimulating dialogue and reflection between the participants (Creswell, 2014). A total of 4 focus groups were conducted with between 3 and 6 participants in each group, with most of the participants who filled out the questionnaire (as described previously under 1.) participating. In total, 17 individuals engaged in the focus group discussions, guided by Catalysts program coordinators. An interview guide, developed by the author of this report, was used to structure the focus group discussions. Main themes were identified both using a review of the scientific literature on program design and in consultation with program coordinators for relevance and feasibility. Additional edits were made based on this feedback. The focus groups lasted approximately one hour and were recorded. The sessions began with a brief presentation of Catalysts and what a mentor is. Questions for dialogue focused on participant needs in a potential mentoring relationship, the specific elements of Catalysts program, mentor characteristics, and training prior to program start. Recordings from the focus groups were later transcribed and anonymized by the two focus group leaders. The data material was subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis, where researchers familiarize themselves with the data, generate codes, assessing and reporting findings (Braun & Clarke, 2007). This was done in NVivo (QSR International Pvt Ltd), a program for text analysis.

2.3. Method and data: Pilot program summative study

Multiple data sources informed the summative analysis of Catalysts' pilot program. Informants included program coordinators, the Knutepunktet admissions consultant, and the mentees who

participated in the pilot program. These mentees were selected from the group of 17 respondents who participated in the focus group interviews from the formative assessment (described in section 2.2). While a total of 5 mentees started the pilot program, the experiences of only 3 of these are included in the analysis. One of the five mentees who was not included got a late start with the mentor. This individual had not progressed particularly far in the program, in part, due to COVID-19 and was not available at the time of data collection. The other mentee dropped out before the relationship with the mentor had been established due to mutual lack of time and lack of interest on the part of mentor and mentee. While it would be interesting to gain deeper insight into the reasoning behind early termination and delayed progression, this follow-up was not possible. The findings of this study must thus be viewed in light of these limitations.

Data sources for this post-implementation analysis of the pilot program included:

- 1) A written summary by the two program coordinators, describing their experiences and challenges in the pilot program. This also included a copy of written evaluations from mentors and mentees, and results from a mentee web-survey for all (N=2) who had completed the program before July. The survey was administered at program start and at completion by program coordinators. Survey questions were developed in coordination with the research project. The measures focused on plans for education in light of social capital, and variations of some of these questions are used in many of Catalysts' other programs (Radlick, et al., 2020b).
- 2) A semi-structured, 75-minute long interview between the two program coordinators and the author of this report. Topics addressed included general implementation of the program and various components, impressions of mentor and mentee experiences, challenges, and reflections on their role in the program, including relationships with the participants and Knutepunktet.
- 3) Interviews with all three mentees (two females and one male). This included a group interview in Norwegian with two of the mentees and a one-on-one interview with one of the mentees (who was unable to attend the group interview). Both group and individual interviews were conducted in tandem with the author of this report and one of the program coordinators, using video chat. Inclusion of the program coordinator was done to facilitate discussion on the specific program components and did not appear to hinder critical feedback from the mentees. Themes for the interviews were identified in cooperation with program coordinators and based on literature on evaluating mentoring programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2014).
- 4) A telephone interview with one of the admissions consultants at Knutepunktet, which lasted approximately 60 minutes. This consultant was the contact person for all the mentees in the pilot

program. Themes discussed included the collaboration with Catalysts, challenges experienced, and suggestions for improvement and program expansion.

The interviews described in 2) to 4) were conducted in Norwegian. They were not recorded, but notes were taken and (as close as possible) word-for-word responses were written. All quotations in this report are translated from Norwegian to English.

3. Results and recommendations for pilot program design

This section presents the empirical results and recommendations for adaptations and design of a pilot mentor program for immigrants with education from their home countries. It first discusses general target group needs for mentoring, many of which can be viewed through the lens of social capital. Next, it assesses respondents' perceptions of various program components, some of which are in use in Catalysts' "standard" mentor programs with other target groups. The chapter concludes by discussing desired mentor characteristics and training.

3.1. Target group needs for mentoring

3.1.1. Results

An assessment of target group needs was important for creating or adapting a program oriented towards the new target group with education from their home countries.

The focus group respondents expressed needs for both emotional and instrumental support. These included: assistance with decision making in various life arenas, diet and exercise advice, information on residence permits, information on a specific career and how to decide on that, how to select education, practicing Norwegian, how to apply for university and what steps were necessary prior to that (NOKUT), help in broadening their network and knowledge of institutions, as well as emotional support and motivation. Respondents also emphasized a need for understanding of cultural and social codes specific to Norway, something that they felt a mentor could support. Overall, there was a strong need for accurate information. Many of the individuals and institutions the respondents had previously been in contact with provided advice from only one perspective (i.e. work oriented, language oriented), without informing the respondents of all the possibilities and concomitant trade-offs. The following quotations illustrate these broad needs for a mentor:

Maybe we can get help from a mentor to get to know other institutions which we need help from. For example, education, the university. Maybe I have some questions on how education is structured, how it is to work as a teacher...It can be a bridge between myself and the institution. I can ask for help with that...(Focus group 4, Respondent 3)

[Emotional support] is also important (Focus group 4, Respondent 2)

Yes [emotional support] is important, especially for immigrants because we have come to Norway, there was war, or political problems sometimes, and we often feel confused. Sometimes energetic, sometimes it's okay. If things are [feeling] down, then we definitely need help from someone. It can be help from an advisor, psychologist, or another person, but we also need help and support, emotional support (Focus group 4, Respondent 3).

Some wanted general support in deciding on an educational path and then applying to school, as one respondent stated:

Yes, that we can ask the mentor about what prerequisites there are for meeting my goals, what I should study, when I should begin...Where I should send my papers from my home country (Focus group 1, respondent 1).

Others wanted information on specific career paths as illustrated here:

But I want to be [career] in the future, so I need more information from a person with a lot of experience from that, I need support and knowledge, I need them to share what they have, what they work with, and what is difficult as well as benefits of being [career]. So, I want to gain access to their knowledge (Focus group 1, respondent 4).

Many of the focus group participants emphasized the need for reliable and accurate information, as well as a single contact to support them, someone who is just “theirs” (as opposed to someone who has a caseload of multiple people), as discussed below:

For example, I have a caseworker, and she has many people that she has to help, so she doesn't have time to meet with me and talk, right? If a person has a mentor, perhaps they can meet every other week, maybe every month. So, for example, maybe for an hour. They can solve problems, right? But I hope we will get more help from a mentor than from a caseworker (Focus group 3, respondent 3).

3.1.2. Recommendations

The respondents expressed a broad range of “needs” within the context of a mentoring program; these do not necessarily need to be in conflict. For example, emotional support or life guidance can be important in supporting a path towards education. Furthermore, education and work are tightly connected. It was clear the informants saw the potential for mentors to offer support in these areas. Specifically:

- The pilot program should take into account the need for strengthening participant social capital, as many of the needs expressed by participants can be viewed in light of such a need. This has also been emphasized in other formative research with similar target groups (Radlick, et al., 2020a). In this respect, the mentor represents a contact via which

resources, both in the form of information, institutional understanding, and broadened network might be accessed. Focus on dimensions like networks can be done with specific program elements (as described later).

- The pilot program should *not* be oriented exclusively towards general emotional or motivational support. Although these aspects would ideally be present, there should be a clear and explicit goal which participants work towards (Rhodes, 2020), and towards specific target groups. For example, the program could be oriented primarily towards those who will pursue higher education. A main focus could thus be on this type of guidance within the context of an emotionally supportive relationship. If Catalysts focuses on education-related goals, these can be specific or more general. Both approaches have benefits as well as challenges, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Program goals: Benefits and challenges

Educational goals	Benefits	Challenges
Specific goals: “I want to go to university for nursing/to become a nurse”	-May be easier to tailor a program to specific needs -Can more easily map out a path towards the goal	-Plans can change -Unexpected roadblocks (e.g. NOKUT, language) which can limit a specific “path” -May need to recruit mentors with specific career/ educational backgrounds -Wide range of possible goals requiring very diverse program offering
General goals: “I want to go to university, but I don’t know what I want to study”	-Can more easily deal with unanticipated challenges or changes in plans -Possibly better for those with a longer “path” to attending school	-Program may need to be broader to accommodate needs -May take longer to determine the specific goal (depending on what steps need to be taken)

3.2. Program activities and components

Focus group participants articulated a variety of needs for support from a mentor and within the context of a mentoring program. It was also important to get feedback on specific elements offered in Catalysts existing programs, how these might be adapted, and on what additional components might be relevant. Specifically, Catalysts wanted feedback on the Strengths cards (*styrkekort*), Roadmap (*veikart*), and Network map (*nettverkskart*), as well as potential plenary

social activities. These are discussed separately, and suggestions for supplementary components are made.

3.2.1. Strengths cards

One activity in Catalysts' existing programs is the use of Strengths cards. These cards are an expansion on psychological dimensions related to personal strengths, with specific activities grounded in positive psychology (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The cards were developed by Catalysts specifically for use with their main target groups of multicultural youth. Each card has the name of a strength (for example, "Creativity") on one side, and a description or definition of the strength on the other side in Norwegian, as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Example of Strengths cards Leadership and Fairness

Strengths were not extensively discussed in all four focus groups. However, the focus group participants who were asked responded positively to the strength cards, as illustrated in the following quotations:

I think these are fun! (Focus group 2, participant 1)

The words are very good. Very nice! (Focus group 2, participant 3)

Recommendations for the use of strength cards:

- This would be a good early program activity, perhaps a good icebreaker for mentor and mentee to get to know each other, building trust and rapport in doing a very concrete task (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). This could be done as part of a first group meeting instead of appreciative inquiry, or perhaps at the program launch. Another possibility is to combine

using the strength cards with discussion of personal achievements (*Achievement Story*), using the story as an example related to the traits in the cards.

3.2.2. Roadmap

The roadmap is another key element used in Catalysts' current volunteer programs. It depicts a tree with main goal, and sub-goals, with strengths as the "roots" (see Figure 2). The roadmap is meant to be discussed and developed with the mentor.

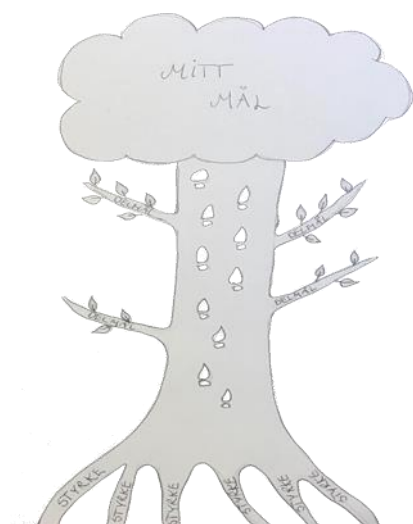


Figure 2. Roadmap

The tree format was acceptable to most of the respondents. For several, the point of the roadmap was unclear (focus group 4, respondent 2). It was also suggested that there could be more room for smaller goals, or more structure. Overall, the concept of specifying goals and smaller steps to achievement seemed useful to many. However, some had also experienced roadblocks and uncertainty in the past, and emphasized that it might be problematic if the main goal depended on sub-goals that were difficult to predict success of or that they had difficulty achieving, like approval from NOKUT (Focus group 3, respondent 4), or a certain level of Norwegian. As one informant stated:

But maybe some goals are unclear, for me for example. For example, I want to go enroll at the university. After my Norwegian course. But I don't know if I can pass the B2 level exam in Norwegian or not. And I also need English. So, I have to go to High School, after Norwegian course, just for English, and maybe for Norwegian. And after that I will go to the university. Yes, that is my goal, but after that my goal is to have a job. I have learned, for example [skill] many years ago. I can [do these tasks] but I don't have a certificate of apprenticeship that's accepted in Norway. This means that everything is a huge challenge for me (Focus group 3, respondent 5).

Mentors may be helpful in interpreting the information on formal admission provided by Knutepunktet, or giving advice:

We have advisors at NAV, he has information about [one type of information], but in regard to education, we need to cooperate with the university (Focus group 4, Respondent 3).

Planning and goal setting can also be challenging when one does not know all the possibilities available, and possible “paths” that don’t fit or should be avoided. Many of the respondents had experiences where they had received the “wrong” information, as the following quotation illustrates:

For example, I, in my home country, I could plan in my home country because I understood all the possibilities. But in Norway, I don’t know all the paths...For example, getting information from someone who doesn’t [know] me, or [know] us. Or they give the wrong information. Because we don’t know the possibilities. So, it becomes difficult to plan well for the future (Focus group 3, respondent 5).

Recommendations for the Roadmap:

- The roadmap should be completed one on one with the mentor; this allows the mentor to better get to know the mentee and their goals, potentially help in managing expectations
 - Preparation ahead of the meeting might make it more fruitful. For example, the concept could be introduced at the first plenary or dyad meeting, so the mentee could reflect at home and prepare for later discussion on the topic.
 - Development could be an on-going conversation, with editing, rather than a one-time event.
- Allow for potential multiple goals (first, second), and assessment of potential hindrances or roadblocks, particularly if one is dependent on something that might be difficult or take a long time to achieve. Alternatively create several roadmaps or tree branches related to, for example, education, short-term employment, and long-term employment.

3.2.3. Network

The topic of networks was also discussed with the focus group participants. In many of its standard programs, Catalysts uses network mapping, with the mentee at the center, to depict important people in their life. Many of the focus group participants mentioned network as being critical, particularly for refugees, again underscoring the need for social capital. When asked if a network map was something that could be used with a mentor, the respondents were positive:

Yes, it is really important because network is extremely important in Norway (Focus group 1, participant 2).

Yes, it is super important to know a lot of people and someone who can help you-I need a network (Focus group 1, participant 5).

Another respondent explained in more detail:

Because network is important! But instead of public employees...we need someone other than public employees, also who aren't friends or family. So, network is better for everyone, a person you know in the city who can give you information, who isn't a friend or a colleague (Focus group 2, participant 3).

Network: Recommendations

- The respondents viewed network as a useful component, and it is recommended to include it in the program, particularly in light of the previously articulated needs for social capital among respondents, as well as similar target groups (Schwartz, et al., 2018; Radlick, et al., 2020a). Discussion on network could be done as part of a group meeting, within a greater framework of social capital, focusing on resources. This could include a presentation on social capital (possibly academic-oriented, given the participants' level of previous education) and physical network and resource mapping ("when have you drawn on social capital in the past and how might you use it in the future?"). If done after the session on roadmap, the two can be connected.
- A session on network could also include reflections on who in their networks might support them in goal achievement (identification) or how to develop new relationships and potential connections (participant-initiated mentoring) like in CSP (Schwartz, et al., 2018)

3.2.4. Other program activities

Aside from the previously discussed activities, Catalysts "standard" programs also have group meetings in Appreciative inquiry (AI) and Diversity (*mangfold*). These elements were not explicitly discussed with focus group participants. According to program coordinators, a similar target group collaborating with Catalysts (*Styrket til arbeid*) found the AI meeting to be less relevant to their needs than previously anticipated. If these meetings are critical for the program in terms of providing necessary skills for the mentors or mentees, they could be retained. However, if the main findings of these could be summarized and included in the mentor or mentee "handbook", the meetings could be replaced with something more relevant and interesting.

Some of the other programs were discussed in Chapter 1 activities and seminars. The focus group respondents were overall positive to these elements, at least as a supplement to dyad meetings. Some were positive to group courses for CV and job applications (focus group 1, participants 2 & 4), while others were uncertain or felt it was something they already had proficiency in (focus group 1, participants 3, 5, & 6). The response was universally positive to inviting someone with a

specific career (nurse, IT) to come and present information on their work. Several of the respondents viewed group meetings as a way to get together, almost as a networking opportunity with other mentees but also mentors, again supporting social capital. The possibility to hear what others had done, see what they thought, and discuss how they had progressed in their plans was also mentioned as a benefit of group meetings (focus group 4, participant 2).

Recommendations for additional program activities:

- The social activities should have concrete goals that facilitate building a relationship with the mentor, individual mentee objectives, or program objectives. Some suggestions include:
 - Having a university student come and talk about their experiences over time: for example, applying to university, classes, talking about workload, internships, and similar. This could be someone in the same field as one of the mentees (for example IT, nursing). If done as a group meeting, should be something that could be applicable to all. This could also be done with a guest speaker established in their career.
 - Attending a lecture at the university with their mentor. Ideally, this would be in a similar field to one that they are already interested in, and hopefully something rather “introductory” (so that it is possible to follow along, without significant specialized information).
 - An additional (fourth) Knutepunktet meeting, as a group, rather than individually.
 - A group meeting for training in networking (Schwartz, et al., 2018).
 - A meeting on diversity could potential be tailored to give tools in dealing with racism or sexism (*ibid*).

3.3. Mentor characteristics

Catalysts was also interested in gaining insight into what type of mentors to recruit. Mentor characteristics matter, but not always in the way one might anticipate. Overall, careful matching of the pairs is important to avoid premature match dissolution. The focus group respondents had varied preferences for characteristics in a potential mentor. Several informants wanted someone with a lot of life experience to be able to give good information about school or career or to have a big network. Numerous respondents expressed a desire to have a mentor who worked in their field of interest, or, alternatively, that the mentor could learn a bit about the field prior to the first meeting (Focus group 2, participant 1 & 3). Preferences for age varied, with several emphasizing

that the mentor should neither be too young nor too old (30-50). Some mentioned that an older mentor might have more experience and a larger network (and that there would be potential for the mentee to help the mentor), while others suggested that a younger mentor might be more active and have up to date information. Those who were asked directly did not express a preference for a Norwegian mentor, so long as the mentor was able to give good, insightful information. Other preferences were for a psychologist, who was creative or good at finding solutions, who was positive, who had school experiences and interpersonal relationships, and someone who was not racist. A willingness for the mentor to learn about their situation and listen was also highlighted:

It is extremely important that the person who is a mentor has special skill. That is very important. He or she should [get to] know me first. After that, she or he can give advice, good advice for me....Yes, society and culture and mental health. Teachers give advice to their students, just from the educational perspective, language, not different [other perspectives] (Focus group 3, respondent 4).

3.3.1. Recommendations: Mentor characteristics

Preferences were very individual across respondents, and therefore it can be useful to ask individual program participants what their preferences are during the intake phase (with the clear understanding that it is not a guarantee that they will get what they ask for). Recruitment is a perennial challenge for mentoring organizations (Stukas, et al., 2014; Garringer, et al., 2015); targeted recruitment of individuals with a specific educational background or career might be quite challenging. Aside from efforts to satisfy mentee preferences, the most relevant criteria for recruitment are:

- Someone who can make a commitment, as premature match dissolution can be traumatic, especially for already vulnerable individuals (Spencer, 2007)
- Someone who is willing and able to provide support and motivation
- Someone who has education or works in the same general career as the mentee wants, or in a “helping” profession (Rhodes, 2020)

3.4. Mentor training prior to program start

Training and managing expectations, particularly for mentors, have been shown to be particularly important in avoiding premature match dissolution (Spencer, 2007; Stukas, et al., 2014). The majority of the focus group participants felt that there was no need for the mentor to receive background information on them in advance before meeting. However, one mentioned that the

mentor could have some background on career and education goals. Another mentioned the importance of being open and honest.

3.4.1. Recommendations: training

- Provide additional training to mentors on managing the relationship, potential challenges (similar to Catalysts' current training approach) (Radlick, et al., 2020a)
- Emphasize to mentors how important it is for mentees to receive correct information/answers
- Because many of the mentees expressed a strong need for *correct* information, it could be useful to put together an updated resource book for the mentors focused on education. This could have links to official sources on applying to higher education.

4. Evaluation of the pilot mentoring program

Based on many of the recommendations described in Chapter 3 resulting from the formative assessment, Catalysts designed and implemented a pilot program for a select group (N=5) of mentees, as described in Chapter 2. This chapter presents the results of an assessment of the implementation of the pilot program, with an emphasis on the mentees' experiences. Catalysts sought insight into the following questions:

1. How did the program participants experience the program?
2. To what extent were various elements of the program useful for the participants?
3. Were the needs expressed during the program design phase met?
4. What outcomes did the participants have?
5. How can the program be improved and expanded?

Overall, Catalysts' program coordinators, the Knutepunktet consultant, and the mentees expressed satisfaction with the program. The coordinators described it as a "success", despite some of the challenges that COVID-19 introduced. The mentees, overall, felt that their needs had been fulfilled and that the program components were relevant and useful to their goals. As one stated: *It was a very good plan and good program*. All the mentees expressed a desire for the program to be continued for future cohorts of individuals in a similar position.

The chapter first presents details of the developed pilot program, discussing its implementation (Moore, et al., 2015). It continues with an assessment of training, recruitment, and match closure, and thereafter an assessment of the cooperation with Knutepunktet. Next, the chapter presents an analysis of experiences with program contents, followed by a discussion of social capital and activities with the mentor. It concludes with an analysis of program results for the participants.

4.1. The pilot program: implementation

The program had five mentor-mentee pairs at its inception. One of these relationships was mutually dissolved due to the lack of interest from both parties and mentor's lack of time. A second pair had a delayed start and had not properly established their relationship at the conclusion of the program and the time of this evaluation due to COVID-19 delays. Two of the dyads completed the program within the planned period, and a third pair completed it one month later. These three pairs who completed the program comprise the focus of this report.

The pilot program had an introductory course in January, with group meetings for the mentors and mentees respectively. Subsequently, there was a 3-hour long startup meeting, which included training in Appreciative Inquiry (Orem, et al., 2007; San Martin & Calabrese, 2011). The “launch” party, where the mentor pairs met for the first time, was offered individually for each pair, due to challenges in schedules and recruitment. The pairs each signed a contract, which delineates the method of contact, date for first meeting, and rules to guide the relationship. The three pairs had five or six meetings in total; the pairs decided when these would occur. Contact between the mentors and mentees also required adaptation due to COVID-19; in-person meetings were replaced with contact via telephone, video, and e-mail. While the mentees felt that in-person meetings were preferable to using digital platforms for contact with their mentors, they felt that such a replacement functioned acceptably, given the circumstances. Program coordinators followed up on participants’ progress in an informal and unstructured manner via mail, WhatsApp, or by telephone. The program was intended to collaborate with *Knutepunktet*, the educational counseling service connected to the University of Oslo, which provides information and guidance on university admission to potential students. However, Knutepunktet closed their doors from March, also due to COVID-19. This resulted in the mentees receiving only 2 admissions consulting sessions rather than 3 as planned. Two group seminars were also planned, but only one of these was completed, due to COVID-19. The focus of the single completed seminar was on CV writing and job interview preparation. Other program elements included strengths cards, achievement story, road map, network map; these are discussed subsequently in the section on program contents.

4.2. Training, mentor recruitment, and match closure

Training of mentors has an impact on both mentor retention, as well as youth outcomes (Spencer, 2007; DuBois & Karcher, 2014). Program coordinators experienced some challenges in recruitment and training of the mentors. At the outset, the recruited mentors expressed a great deal of uncertainty and requested clearer guidelines on the extent of their responsibilities and expectations in the mentor role. Several desired a more informal and non-specific role with their mentee based on discussions, listening, and providing general life advice, rather than searching for information about specific rules for the mentees (for example, how many credits were necessary to gain admission to the university). Another mentor was concerned about setting boundaries between their private life and their relationship with the mentee, a common challenge among

mentors generally (DuBois & Karcher, 2014; Radlick, et al., 2020a). This individual expressed discomfort at inviting the mentee home to eat dinner together. However, these initial anxieties and concerns evolved throughout the program. After these mentors met their mentees and established a relationship, these concerns became less controlling; the mentors searched for formal information and happily invited their mentee home.

During the mentor training, the mentors expressed ambiguity about their role, and the program coordinators found it challenging to provide clear guidelines about what should occur within the context of the relationship. They felt uncomfortable in dictating what the mentors should and should not do with their mentee. The program coordinators also perceived some of the mentors as having unconscious biases related to immigrant cultures. The coordinators thus reflected around a need for additional training on such biases and how they influence mentors' actions, prior to the first meeting.

Another challenge related to dissolving the relationship at the end of the six-month program period. At the start of the program, the mentors expressed reticence in maintaining contact with their mentee after program conclusion. They also felt that the program coordinators should have the primary responsibility for communicating the program conclusion in a clear way to the mentees.

When asked about their experiences, the mentees stated that the program was as expected, and that they did not have a need for any additional or different training or information prior to meeting their mentors. They also expressed a high level of satisfaction regarding the mentors they were matched with. Their responses varied when queried about specific characteristics mentors should have. Some felt that young mentors were preferable, since they had a better understanding of the university system. Others appreciated having access to a mentor with experience in their desired career.

The mentees disagreed as to whether the program length and frequency of contact was sufficient. One stated that:

I need more time to achieve my goals. I need that, not just six times [meetings]....Why is the program so short? Six times is not enough. [It should] continue until the person starts university or work!

The mentee continued, saying that the program conclusion came as a surprise when the mentor said that the meeting would be the final one. This may have been due to language barriers, as

program leaders reported having communicated this information to the mentees on multiple occasions. However, this same mentee mentioned that it was still possible to maintain contact with the mentor if necessary.

The other two mentees felt that the number of meetings was sufficient, since there was a lot of preparation work for each meeting, such as writing drafts of CVs to discuss with the mentor. Furthermore, mentees had school and other activities to participate in, while the mentors worked full-time. To formally conclude the program, Catalysts arranged a final party for all mentors and mentees at their main office. Questions for reflection were sent out ahead of time, so that participants could prepare for discussions; the participants viewed this positively. At this party, everyone received a diploma. Two of the mentees mentioned the diploma during the interview with pride, and one even pulled it out to show the interviewers.

4.2.1. Recommendations

- Future iterations of the program should continue to endeavor to consider mentee needs when recruiting and matching them with mentors. Ideally mentors should have some previous education (Bjørnset & Kindt, 2019), preferably university or university college, given the program's focus on admission to higher education. This must also be balanced with the need to obtain an acceptable number of volunteers.
- The six-month program limit is appropriate in light of potential challenges in recruitment of skilled mentors. Where relevant, mentees may be given tasks to complete between meetings.
- Catalysts should explicitly consider whether they want to encourage and "re-use" mentors across multiple cohorts. This would offer a better return on investment with regards to training, allowing volunteers to develop their skills as mentors, and lightening the burden on program leaders to recruit new volunteers every cycle (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). However, it would also likely necessitate that the boundaries after match closure are communicated more clearly. Such an assessment of mentor "re-use" could be done at program conclusion by asking the mentors explicitly (as part of an assessment of mentor experiences more broadly with the program).
- Catalysts should develop routines for early termination (for example, a standardized set of questions that could be asked if a person wants to terminate participation), clearer criteria for participation, and more time for training, emphasizing that mentor (and possibly mentee) needs and concerns at the start will likely change. Additional training for mentors could include training in unconscious bias and potential effects on mentor

behavior. Mentors must also receive clear guidelines on how to close the relationship, for example, by addressing issues of loss, and viewing the closure of the relationship in a positive light, such as by highlighting what was accomplished (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014). Making the mentees aware of impending program conclusion may also lighten the burden of closure on the mentors. Catalysts might consider having a meeting with mentors and mentees together or separately prior to relationship dissolution in order to initiate the process.

- Managing expectations is important for both mentors and mentees (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). It might be useful to engage previous mentors and mentees in making a short video, discussing their experiences, both good and challenging, in navigating their roles, as well as how their expectations and boundaries might have shifted over time. This could be shown to new participants and might help with recruitment.

4.3. Cooperation with Knutepunktet

As described previously, Knutepunktet partnered with Catalysts to provide guidance services to the mentees. It was initially intended to have three individual advisory sessions between the mentees and Knutepunktet admissions consultant. However, the mentees received a more limited offering from Knutepunktet due to them closing their doors in March in the wake of COVID-19. While many organizations have transitioned to using digital tools to hold meetings, the consultant at Knutepunktet felt that this could be challenging based on the program's target group and potential language barriers.

The relationship between Catalysts and Knutepunktet was characterized by a clear although informal delineation of program objectives and roles, which catered to each organization's competence. The Knutepunktet consultant's role encompassed formal aspects of admission to the university, explanation of different study programs and prerequisites, and providing information on different education possibilities. Although mentors could look up this information online, they had no special expertise in the matter. It was not uncommon for advisees to ask about the state of the job market related to a specific study path, and the consultant was able to answer questions on the subject, as well as present information on a more pragmatic path where relevant. As the Knutepunktet consultant stated:

They've [the mentees] lived in Norway for a relatively short period of time. They don't have knowledge of the educational system, even if there is a lot of information available. They need to be able to ask someone, especially when the system is so different from their home countries.

However, the consultant also mentioned that it was not always possible to help if the advisee was interested in a program that was not offered at the University of Oslo (UiO). UiO offers a wide range of study programs but does not offer professional training in, for example, nursing or teaching. Both program coordinators, as well as the consultant, also explicitly mentioned the potential for this type of mentoring program to cooperate with the introduction program for newly arrived immigrants (*Introduksjonsprogram for nyankomne flyktninger*).

The program coordinators viewed the cooperation with Knutepunktet positively, as a way for the mentees to receive information on the university and various degree and course options. There was already an established relationship between the program coordinators and the contact person at Knutepunktet, so it was natural for the program coordinators to discuss the pilot-mentor program in the context of this relationship. Both parties opined that this pre-existing relationship made things run smoother. In a situation where a relationship had not already been established, both the program coordinator and admissions consultant felt it would have been useful to have meetings agreed upon in advance. The Knutepunktet consultant also felt that having all the routines for the cooperation written down could be beneficial.

The mentors did not have any contact with Knutepunktet, and the program coordinators did not view this as necessary. However, the consultant at Knutepunktet felt that it might be beneficial for the mentors to attend the first meeting with their mentee. When asked, the mentees mentioned that Knutepunktet had been helpful in assessing their grades. However, one of the mentees had forgotten about these guidance sessions. Overall, it appeared that the mentor was the most important resource for the mentees. Still Knutepunktet was able to provide precise information, and function as a gateway to the university.

4.3.1. Recommendations: Knutepunktet

- Cooperation with Knutepunktet in future programs appears logical given many of the participants' focus on continuing their education. Admissions consultants at Knutepunktet have detailed knowledge of the criteria for admission to higher education and are therefore well-suited for guiding the mentees on the formal aspects of prerequisites, potential study programs at UiO, and application procedures and deadlines. Additionally,

Knutepunktet's office location (at the university) can be valuable for mentees, allowing them to be physically present at their (potential) future university. A tour of the campus could also be useful in this regard.

- Given the fact that UiO does not offer some professional studies and given that many of the respondents in the program design phase of the project were interested in these careers, having additional contacts between Knutepunktet other institutions like OsloMet, who offer these, would be useful. This would ideally be via Knutepunktet, who could first have a conversation with the mentee, and then refer them. This might require additional resources as there is no previously established connection between the admissions entities at the two institutions. Contact with other institutions could also be done with mentor support; perhaps after a first meeting together with the mentee and Knutepunktet consultant.
- Knutepunktet and Catalysts might also consider how their pilot mentoring program could be offered to individuals with previous higher education participating in or nearing completion in the municipal introduction programs. These individuals often do not receive (higher) education-oriented measures in their programs, and generally do not receive a program well-tailored to their needs, particularly in the smaller municipalities (Djuve, et al., 2017).

4.4. Program contents

4.4.1. Program launch, strength cards, and achievement story

The pairs had individual launches due to differing dates for program start. This approach worked well for all parties, but also required more resources from the program coordinators as compared to a group launch. One activity the pairs engaged in during program launch was the use of Strengths cards (also discussed in Chapter 3). Each card has the name of a strength, and the objective of the exercise was for pairs to identify their own strengths and discuss them together.

The mentees described the Strengths cards as being “nice to use”, although some words were new, and therefore difficult to understand. This focus on strengths was described by the program coordinators as an important activity both mentor and mentee, which shaped the mentors' view of, and approach to their mentees. This strength-based approach was also underscored in the Achievement Story activity, where mentees shared a story of an event or challenge that they were proud of. Although the program coordinators experienced that the pairs generally did not use the

Strengths cards much after the program launch, they viewed the cards as a useful tool to emphasize personal strengths from the personal achievement stories and underscore the strength-based approach to their programs. However, the Achievement story activity was not equally important to all the mentees, with one mentioning how important it was, while another did not recall the task.

At the launch, mentees and mentors were to sign a contract, which presented rules and guidelines for the relationship. While two of the mentees found this to be acceptable, one was displeased. This individual felt that the contract was “too serious”, particularly in its prohibition on loaning money or giving gifts, something that was perceived as unnecessary. The issue was resolved together with the mentor on an individual basis. The two other participants found the contract acceptable.

4.4.2. Plenary theme meetings

It was planned that multiple group meetings on a specific theme would be organized. As previously mentioned, only one of these two meetings transpired, and only two participants attended the single meeting. The meeting focused on writing a CV, letter of interest, and interviewing for a job, as requested by mentees. Those who attended felt that it was interesting, but some were not “ready” to apply for a job and were primarily focused on gaining admission to the university and continuing their education. The program coordinators opined that this group meeting was possibly the least “useful” of all the program components.

4.4.3. Roadmap and Network map

The objective of the Roadmap was to help mentees clearly articulate their future goals and the steps necessary to achieve them. This was done using two approaches. Participants could use a paper with a picture of a tree; the roots represented different tasks necessary to reach a goal (the leaves) or use an updated roadmap with flow diagram to indicate actions necessary to reach a goal. Two versions of the Roadmap are depicted in Figure 3.

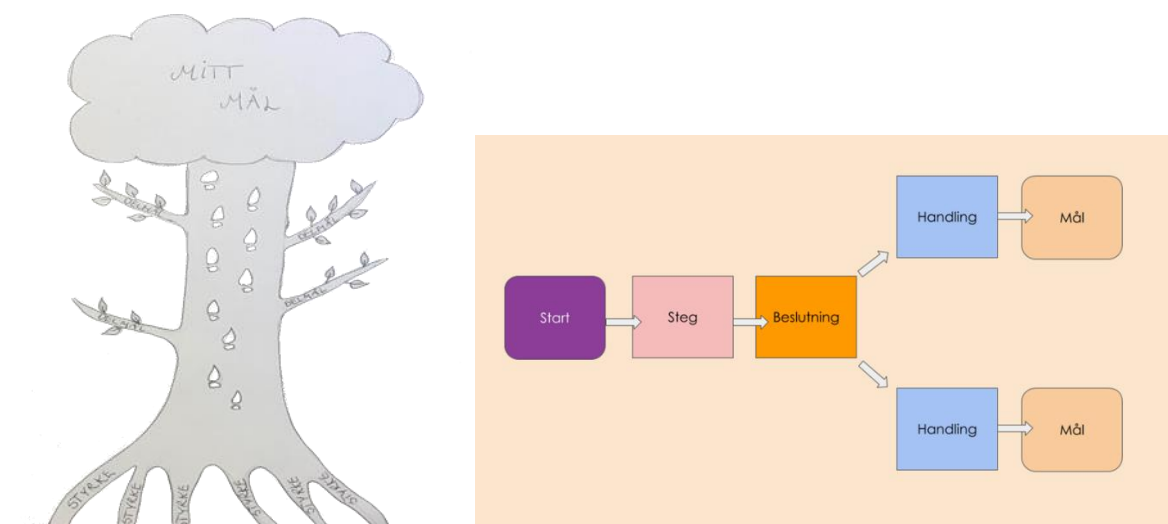


Figure 3. Two different versions of the Roadmap

A network map was used to illustrate people in the mentees' lives, depicting the mentee in the center. For many of the mentees, the roadmap was "very useful", perhaps more so than the network map. This may be due to the roadmap being more tangible, as one described:

To become a [career] I need to prepare some things...If I want to attend the university, I need to know Norwegian. What do I need to do for that...?"

A second mentee noted

...Short and long-term goals... [the roadmap] helped me to become more aware of the order of the different goals...previously I was confused because I had to do a lot of different things.

The network map appeared to underscore the general importance of a network in Norway for finding a job, rather than the explicit resources that the individuals in the network possessed. Nevertheless, one of the mentees mentioned that the network map had made them more aware of the different people from various social circles, and that their mentor also underscored the importance of getting to know a broad range of people. Another mentee described talking about networks as useful, but also suggested that maybe the network map and roadmap could be combined somehow. This was something that the program coordinator was also receptive to.

4.4.4. Recommendations for adjustments to program contents

- In future programs, the roadmap and network maps could be combined, either by having them completed on the same paper, or discussing them in tandem.
- Program coordinators should continue to be sensitive to mentee and mentor needs in the context of the contract.

- Of all the program components, the group meetings may have been the least useful. This may have been due to the selected theme, which did not end up being relevant for all mentees. This may also have been due to the individual characteristics of the mentors (highly educated), who could assist their mentee on an individual basis with many of the themes covered in this group meeting. These meetings might also have been more interesting had more of the mentees been able to participate. If the program is offered in the future, content for any group meetings could again be determined in collaboration with program participants, after assessing whether such meetings were necessary at all. Having people come and talk about their career or educational trajectory might also be more relevant for this target group. Such potential for networking between mentees and external contacts might thus be facilitated, in light of their articulated needs for strengthened social capital.

4.5. Social capital and activities with the mentor

During the formative assessment phase for designing the pilot program, many of the respondents' needs reflected an underlying desire for strengthening social capital: the resources embedded in networks of relationships (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Many explicitly mentioned a desire to expand their networks of contacts, to better understand social codes, and to improve their Norwegian skills, all dimensions of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Lin, 2001). The manner in which the mentor-mentee relationships were characterized varied. One of the mentees described the relationship as such:

I see her as my grandmother here in Norway.

A different mentee, who had a mentor around the same age, described the relationship as a "friendship" rather than a mentor-mentee relationship. These relationships, in line with the idea of reciprocity (Putnam, 2000), were not one-sided; one of the mentors had contact with the mentee's family, and the mentees overall felt that the mentors had gained insights into their different culture and customs during the course of the relationship. One of the mentees mentioned explicitly the sharing of food customs from their country of origin as something the mentor appreciated.

In the first part of the project (program design, as described in Chapter 3), the focus group respondents mentioned their need for assistance in finding accurate information from government institutions, particularly in relation to education and employment. The interviews at

program conclusion followed up on this theme. All of the mentees emphasized they had received a plethora of information about Norwegian education, society, laws, and mentioned how critical their mentors were in supporting them in finding out information on a variety of themes. While this frequently included formal rules and procedures for applying for school, for example, they also included psychosocial support. One of the mentees described the mentor as

A person with knowledge who can help with life and with education, who could explain...She is a person who has a lot of knowledge, even if it's something difficult, she knows the answer. She has helped me with Norwegian, [and to] see what I needed to apply for school, help with laws, assistance in residence permits, and these kinds of rules...I got a lot of advice and tips...if I encountered a problem, I could get in touch with her...

Another mentee explained:

After talking to [mentor], I found out that I have a lot of good qualities, and good knowledge that I can use to contribute to society...I have been [matched] with a person with resources, and in the same career path as me.

In the discussions with the mentees after their programs concluded, it was revealed that none had met other people in their mentor's network. This may be due to COVID-19, as many of the meetings occurred digitally, but also due to the lack of an organic reason to introduce the mentee to others in their network. However, despite not gaining access to additional individuals, the mentor represented an additional person with critical resources for the mentees. This is evidence of a bridging type of relationship, where individuals with dissimilar backgrounds connect, something that can often be challenging but critical for newcomers to a country (Putnam, 2000; Eriksson, et al., 2018). All of the mentees mentioned their intention to maintain contact with the mentors after program completion. The frequency of and extent to which the mentors desired contact after the program ended was unclear, although the program coordinators experienced all the mentors as willing to maintain contact.

4.5.1. Recommendations: Social capital

- While the mentors represented a new contact person with additional resources in the mentees' networks, mentee social capital could be further strengthened in multiple ways in future iterations of the program. For example, encouraging the pairs to attend (free) community events or relevant academic lectures, could increase mentee attachment to the local environment (Putnam, 2000) or the academic community.

- Program coordinators might also underscore that it is acceptable and encouraged for mentors to introduce the mentee to (relevant) contacts in their network, if they feel comfortable in doing so.
- Other evidence-based programs offer networking events (Schwartz, et al., 2018); Catalysts might consider such events in the future when they have larger program cohorts or run more programs. These events could also include previous program participants, and could be combined with career talks (as described in the previous section)
- Formal mentoring programs, by their nature, have an end date. It is unclear the extent to which mentees will maintain contact with their mentor, and what support they can expect from their mentor, long-term. Mentee training in identifying and engaging informal or “natural” mentors at the university or in the workplace could be one way to conclude the dyadic relationship. It would also “teach the mentees to fish” rather than just providing them fish, in other words, giving them the tools to further strengthen their personal resources where needed by recruiting their own mentors (Rhodes, 2020).

4.6. What happened with the mentees?

This chapter has focused primarily on stakeholder (especially mentees’) experiences with the implemented pilot mentoring program. However, Catalysts also aspires to develop measures for tracking program outputs and participant outcomes. Therefore, in cooperation with the research project, Catalysts developed survey questions for mentees in order to assess program outputs and short-term outcomes. These measures focused on education plans, particularly in light of social capital, and some are being used in Catalysts’ other programs (described further in Radlick, et al., 2020b). Catalysts administered these, along with a standard battery of questions measuring self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) at program start and conclusion, in order to assess participant changes through the program period. Most questions had response categories ranging from 1 to 5 (disagree strongly-agree strongly), corresponding to various statements. Only two of the mentees answered the questions; clearly, outcomes cannot be directly attributed to participation in the programs with this specific research design and small number of participants in this study. Nevertheless, a brief description of changes in the program participants’ responses, between program start and conclusion is provided.

Prior to the program start, both respondents had plans to apply to higher education institutions, but were uncertain as to how to do this (average response 2.5 of 5). They also did not know

anyone within their field of interest who they could ask for assistance (average score 2.5). At program conclusion scores on both these items had increased to an average of 5 (+2.5). Both of the respondents exhibited positive improvement from the first measurement point, at program start, to the second measurement point at program conclusion in relation to: having someone who could help them apply for education (2 to 4.5), having a person in their life to support them (2 to 4.5), having someone to assist them with homework (3 to 4.5) and with Norwegian language (3.5 to 4.5), someone to give advice (3 to 4.5), someone to motivate them (2.5 to 4), and attachment to Norway (from 6.5 to 7 of 10).

In addition to the survey questionnaire, during the qualitative interviews, the mentees were also asked about what their goals had been when they started the program, and to what extent these had been achieved during or after the program ended. One of the mentees had been admitted to a master's degree program, which had been a primary goal at program commencement. This same individual had also wanted to get a part-time job but had not yet been able to (possibly due to COVID-19 and the societal shutdown). A second mentee wanted to work in a specific field but discovered that additional courses were required. This mentee recognized that their language skills needed to be improved, and this was something that they were working on. This mentee will enroll in the necessary courses from January and had reportedly received very helpful advice from the mentor, who had also worked in the same field. The third mentee was also working on improving their Norwegian skills before applying to school.

4.6.1. Recommendations: Outputs and outcomes

- Tracking of program outputs and outcomes can provide useful indicators on the program, even if changes cannot be directly attributed to participation. However, the administration of surveys can be challenging, given the linguistic limitations of the target groups. Use of validated and tailored indicators, allocating enough time to collect information, and explaining the purpose of data collection to respondents, is therefore critical to obtaining valid and reliable results (Creswell, 2014).

To provide a logic model (depicted in Figure 4) for connecting the program activities to outcomes, Catalysts should articulate a clear theory of change for this specific program, which should be different from the other programs they offer to other target groups (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999; Garringer, et al., 2015). This can help focus efforts on what the intervention *actually* is, by providing a visualization of the “challenge” to be resolved, and how services and activities can contribute to desired changes. A logic model diagram

depicts the *inputs* or resources, and specific *activities* intended to facilitate change. This includes training of youth and volunteers, program activities, and follow-up from program coordinators. *Outputs* are the direct result of program activities, for example, the number who complete the program, frequency or duration of matches, and program fidelity, while *outcomes* are the ultimate objective or goal of the program (what happens to the program participants) (*ibid*). Outputs are easier to measure, and logically closer to the program activities; they are a useful way to see how and to what extent a program functioned as planned and are essential for looking at any outcomes (*ibid*). Ideally Catalysts would focus on short-term outcomes, for example, assessing participant' concrete plans or preparation for higher education, sending in an application to the university, and/or social capital measures as described previously. This may also invite reconsideration of measuring self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), which does not appear to be a logical outcome or goal connected to this specific program and target group.



Figure 4. *Logic model*

- This small number of participants, and unusual situation due to COVID-19, provides only limited results, applicable to this specific group of refugees with education from their home countries. There is therefore a need to conduct research with an even larger group, as well as to include experiences from those who do not complete the program on time, or those whose relationship is dissolved prematurely. Further research in the future will enable Catalysts to further develop their programs (Garringer, et al., 2015).

5. Conclusion

The overall objectives of this study were twofold. First, to conduct a formative assessment to gain insight into stakeholder (immigrants, primarily refugees, with education from their home countries) needs for mentoring, how a program could be designed and how Catalysts' current programs could be adapted to this new target group. From this assessment and resultant recommendations, Catalysts developed a mentoring program to be pilot tested among a small group. Second, Catalysts requested a summative evaluation of how the developed pilot program was experienced by the participants, with recommendations for improvement. Information was collected via focus groups, interviews, written documents, and survey questionnaires. Respondents included target group members, pilot program participants, program coordinators, and a Knutepunktet coordinator.

Ultimately, the focus group participants expressed a wide range of domains where a mentor might assist them. The foundation of many of these was a need for enhanced social capital. Many of the elements in Catalysts' "standard" program were viewed positively by the respondents, particularly the roadmap and network map. Strength cards could be useful as an icebreaker, allowing the mentor-mentee dyads to get to know each other better. Plenary social activities were also of interest to the focus group participants, particularly those that allowed them to mingle with other mentors or mentees, as well as those focused on specific careers.

Regarding the summative evaluation, the program coordinators, as well as participants, reported a high level of satisfaction with the implemented pilot program and overall, the participants felt that their needs had been met. All the mentees reported strengthened social capital, with their mentor as an important new contact whose resources and knowledge they had gained access to via the pilot program. Pre-post descriptive indicators support this assessment, although they do not support causal claims about program effects. Main suggestions for improvement for future iterations include additional training for mentors on unconscious bias and match closure, and assessment of participant needs for group meetings, as well as additional support for social capital. Future programs may encourage the mentors and mentees to explore the local environment together, and mentors could also be more explicitly encouraged to introduce mentees to other relevant parties in their network.

Catalysts should continue to solicit feedback and map mentors' and mentees' experiences with the program, collecting data on the same indicators across cohorts, in order to provide a larger

number of observations. A clearly articulated logic model for this specific program (“what do they hope to achieve for the mentees and mentors?”) would help elucidate the main objectives and theorized mechanisms.

While the main focus of this report was on the needs and experiences of the target group of refugees with education from their home countries, future studies could also more comprehensively include the perspectives of the mentors, as well as perspectives of those who fail to complete the program on-time or who terminate their participation. The number of participants in the study is extremely small, making it difficult to generalize conclusions beyond this group. Thus, it will be important to request feedback from future participants so that additional adjustments can be made, and to assess to what extent the program is relevant to stakeholder needs.

Overall, these results suggest that this mentoring program provided needed support for the mentee participants. The report also provided insight into user centered design and implementation of mentoring programs, a topic which has little previous research in Norway. Considering the findings and recommendations in this report, Catalysts can consider continuing and expanding the program to reach larger numbers of the target group of refugees with higher education obtained in their home countries. As one of the mentees emphasized:

As refugees, we have a lot of challenges and need some help. I hope that [Catalysts] continue with mentoring [programs] in the future. They can change the life of a vulnerable person!

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