



GUIDELINES AND RESOURCES FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

Choral Canada Mentoring Pilot Project Overview

As an extension of the National Youth Choir of Canada (NYCC) professional artist training program, Choral Canada has created a Mentorship Pilot Project. The purpose of this program is to match NYCC participants with more seasoned professionals involved in choral music and group singing including conductors, singers, composers, administrators, and educators from across the Choral Canada network.

Broadly, the goal of this program is to facilitate conversations between up-and-coming singers and professionals within the choral arts and group singing sector, with the overall aim of encouraging more young people to consider and pursue employment in the choral arts sector in a professional capacity.

Mentorship relationships are ongoing and one-on-one. Matching will take place once NYCC choristers have auditioned and been selected for the next iteration of the NYCC. Mentees and mentors wishing to participate in the program will both complete a profile survey, which will be used to match goals and interests between the participants. It's important to note that while Choral Canada will facilitate the initial connection and provide resources to assist with discussions, the ultimate success of the mentorship is the responsibility of the mentee and the mentor. Mentees will be expected to take the lead in connecting with the mentor, and goal-setting and continued interactions will be coordinated between the participants.

What is the mentor's role?

- **Motivate** - encourage young singers in their choral music journey, help them to identify realistic goals and next steps to achieve those aims
- **Explore** - career opportunities, what life as a professional in the choral arts might look like
- **Expand** – the mentee's professional network within Canada's choral arts sector
- **Support** – act as a resource to assist with vocal technique, rehearsal, and audition strategies, how to make professional contacts etc.

Program Guidelines

- 12 months commitment, during the performance cycle year of NYCC (January-December)
- Minimum equivalent of 4 meetings x 1.5 hr each (virtual or in person)
- Mentees are responsible for initial contact and discuss with the mentor to set goals and communication parameters
- Mentors should be active participants in the Canadian choral arts sector, preferably holding a paid, professional position in some area of choral arts – as a singer, conductor, administrator, music educator etc.

What to do if the relationship is not working?

- If you find, from either a mentor or a mentee perspective, that the relationship with your matched partner is not working, we encourage you to discuss together.
- If that does not resolve the situation and your expectations still aren't matching, please contact Choral Canada.

MENTEE Guidelines

As a Mentee, how can I benefit from this relationship?

Choral Canada hopes that mentees and mentors will both benefit from the relationship, however as an NYCC chorister, some areas of benefit may include:

- Guidance, support, and encouragement in your journey
- Explore career opportunities around the many aspects of the choral music, singing and arts sectors
- Expand your professional network within Canada's choral and group singing arts sector
- Further your understanding of what it means to be a professional choral artist, singer, or other role of interest in the arts sector
- A professional resource to assist with vocal technique, rehearsal, and audition strategies etc.

Initial Contact with Your Mentor

You are expected to initiate contact with your mentor once the match is made, and to do so within a week of getting your match details.

- We encourage you to reach out initially by **email**, with a brief introduction.
- If your mentor **does not respond** to your messages or you have any other problems, please contact Choral Canada directly.

What Should I Expect from the First Conversation?

It is important to have an in-person conversation early in the relationship – either over the phone or virtually (Zoom, Google Meet etc.). Meeting this way will start building that connection and set up a good foundation for your relationship. In that initial conversation, we recommend that you ensure the following:

- Tell your mentor that you are excited about connecting with them! Sharing your enthusiasm will help reassure them that you are committed to making the relationship succeed.
- Start the conversation with your mentor by asking questions about their background and experiences and share your interests and background. You have a passion for singing and the choral arts in common and that is a great place to start!
- Most importantly, take some time at the beginning of the relationship to talk about expectations and goals for this mentoring experience. This conversation should be started in your first meeting, but if not, make sure you set a time to specifically talk about your goals. Some goal-setting tools and guidelines are found in **Appendix A** of this document.

The on-going mentorship relationship

What you talk about, how and when you meet, and what you get out of the mentorship is open for you and your mentor to determine. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

- Both of you will have busy schedules, so prioritize the relationship. If your mentor contacts you, respond promptly.
- Keep an open mind, ask good questions, and remember that the mentor is a resource, but they are not a job-finding service or your voice teacher
- Be professional and respectful in your interactions
- Be receptive to suggestions and feedback
- Share your goals and struggles, ask for advice or experiences they may have had that could be relevant.

As an example, if you know you'd like to look for professional singing work, don't ask "Do you know of any paid singing gigs?" Instead, ask something like "How would you recommend that I start looking for a job singing with a professional choir?" or "This is the next step that I'd like to take in my music education. Do you have any advice for finding a relevant program or teacher?"

Certainly, since this is a National Youth Choir of Canada mentorship program, vocal technique, rehearsal strategies and future audition preparation might be things you discuss. The NYCC does offer professional vocal training outside of the mentorship program, so the mentorship is not meant as a teacher/student relationship, but if the mentor is comfortable assisting or answering questions about repertoire or technique this is something you could explore together.

Some Conversation Started topics are included in **Appendix B**.

How long does the mentorship relationship last?

At the end of your NYCC term (12 months after you auditioned and were selected for the program), you and your mentor will be formally released from the Choral Canada NYCC Mentorship Pilot Project program. This allows the mentors to work with another NYCC mentee if they wish. Of course, if you and your mentor have forged a connection and wish to continue, you may do so on an informal basis and outside the scope of Choral Canada.

You will both be asked to complete evaluation surveys partway through the mentorship term and at the end of the term to provide feedback as we look to improve this pilot project.

MENTOR Guidelines

As a mentor, how can I benefit from participating in Choral Canada's NYCC Mentorship Program?

- It is hoped that mentors will see the value in sharing their experiences with young choristers and support the end goal of encouraging more young people to view the choral arts sector as a viable part of their career path.
- Personal and professional development of mentorship skills - an excellent addition to your CV
- Participating in cultivating the growth and increased professionalism of the choral arts sector in Canada
- Networking and leadership opportunities within the program
- Opportunity to meet and work with enthusiastic young choral artists
- Support from Choral Canada during the required mentorship timeline
- Showcasing your own choir, singing group or affiliated program as part of the Choral Canada NYCC mentorship program at the national level through various promotional opportunities (i.e. Recognition in Anacrusis and on NYCC.ca website).
- Mentorship Program reception and networking opportunity with mentors and mentees at PODIUM 2022

Expectations of mentors

- Be open, enthusiastic, encouraging, and honest with your mentee
- Be available, within the parameters that you are comfortable with, to your mentee
- Assist with setting goals at the beginning of the relationship to ensure that conversations are useful and effective.

Compensation

- Mentors will receive a complimentary annual membership to Choral Canada (\$100 value) and access to all Choral Canada's membership benefits
- If the mentor and mentee wish to continue the relationship after the 1-year term, their agreement with Choral Canada will be deemed to be over and they will continue the mentorship relationship informally on their own with no financial compensation.

Appendix A

Areas of Interest and Goal Setting for Mentees

At your first meeting, it is recommended that you discuss the goals you have for this mentorship opportunity. This goal setting can help to keep your conversations on track and ensure that both mentee and mentor know what is expected.

Complete the following in advance of your first meeting and share with your mentor. Indicate your level of interest in the topics below (1 = low priority, 3 = medium priority, 5 = high priority). There are spaces at the bottom to add your own areas of interest that you might want mentorship for.

Areas of Interest	Low				High
Discussion of mentor's academic career path	1	2	3	4	5
Insight into mentor's professional musical career	1	2	3	4	5
Vocal training/feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Audition preparation strategies	1	2	3	4	5
Rehearsal strategies and preparation	1	2	3	4	5
Managing work/life balance in the arts	1	2	3	4	5
Marketing tools for professional career	1	2	3	4	5
Topic:	1	2	3	4	5
Topic:	1	2	3	4	5
Topic:	1	2	3	4	5

Discuss these topics with your mentor and see where they might be able to assist you in reaching a specific goal. Remember to use the "SMART" goal setting process to ensure that your goal is manageable in the time-frame allowed for this mentorship. An example of a SMART goal might be to help prepare for an audition that has a specific deadline and requirements, discuss post-secondary study options or to launch a simple professional website to showcase your talents.

S - Specific - make sure your goal is clearly defined and easily understood

M - Measurable - how will you know that you have reached your goal?

A - Achievable - is this goal something that can be accomplished within the bounds of this mentorship?

R - Relevant - is your goal relevant to the experience of your mentor and to your needs?

T - Time-bound - set a timeline for completion and stick to it.

APPENDIX B

Conversation Starters

Some options for things to talk about and get the conversation flowing!

- How did you get interested in choral music?
- What part of choral or group singing is the most exciting for you?
- What has been your favourite group singing experience?
- How have you made choral music/group singing a part of your life?
- What hobbies do you enjoy outside of choral/group singing?
- What are your favourite styles, periods, genres, composers?
- Who are your favourite conductors that you've worked with and why?
- What are some life lessons that you have learned through choral/group singing experiences?
- Are your experiences with choral/group singing applicable in other areas of your life?
- Are there areas of interest outside of music that you think bring value to your
- What has been your path to a professional career in choral music/group singing? What has been great about that experience, and are there things that you would have done differently knowing what you know now?