



MANDELA  
WASHINGTON  
FELLOWSHIP  
FOR YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS

# Peer Mentorship Toolkit





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## ANNEX I

### Peer Mentoring Agreement and Action Plan



## 1. INTRODUCTION & PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Thank you for your participation in the Mandela Washington Fellowship peer mentorship program. The Mandela Washington Fellowship, part of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), was established by President Obama to support young African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Africa. The goal of this peer mentorship is for you to reflect on your vision and achieve your goals with the guidance and advice of a skilled and experienced peer while also supporting your peer mentor in his/her vision and goals.

### About the Mandela Washington Fellowship Program

The Mandela Washington Fellowship empowers young people through academic coursework, leadership training, and networking. Mandela Washington Fellows are sub-Saharan Africa's most promising young leaders ages 25 to 35. The Fellows have established records of accomplishment in promoting innovation and positive change in their institutions, communities, and countries. Each year, the Fellowship brings a new cohort of these leaders to the United States for six weeks of leadership training in four tracks: Business & Entrepreneurship, Civic Leadership, Public Management, and Energy.

### About the Peer Mentorship Program

After Mandela Washington Fellows return home, they are eligible to apply for a peer mentorship along with other USAID-funded professional development opportunities implemented by IREX, such as professional practicums and networking opportunities. Peer mentorships are designed for the peer mentors to support each other with individualized leadership development, which will provide opportunities for guidance and growth to help them expand their networks and achieve their goals.



Peer mentorships last for an initial period of six months, and Fellows are matched with either virtual peer mentors or in-person peer mentors.

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## Program Guidelines

Developing a successful peer mentoring relationship requires commitment, open communication, and a dynamic and flexible attitude. When starting a peer mentorship, it is important that you and your peer mentor understand your roles and expectations so that you can both achieve your professional development needs, and so that both parties can benefit and grow from the relationship.

To that end, IREX asks you and your peer mentor to complete and sign a [Peer Mentoring Agreement](#) prior to the start of the peer mentorship. Included in this agreement is a [confidentiality clause](#) that you and your peer mentor must also sign and abide by to ensure that you are comfortable being open and honest with each other.

While you and your peer mentor will decide when you will meet, how often, and via what medium (virtually or in person), IREX asks that both parties commit to meeting a minimum of once a month over the course of six months, and more often if your schedules allow. You and your peer mentor can determine at the end of the six months if you would like to continue the relationship. It is important for both parties to fulfill their commitments to meet or to give advance notice if they will need to reschedule a meeting.

After the first month of the peer mentorship, an IREX staff member will contact both you and your peer mentor to discuss successes, concerns, or challenges and ensure that the remainder of the peer mentorship is a success. You should feel free to contact IREX at any time with questions or concerns, and you can find [IREX's Contact Information](#) at the end of this toolkit.

## 2. GETTING STARTED & TOOLS TO GUIDE THE PEER MENTORSHIP

### How do I get started?

An IREX staff member will introduce you to your peer mentor via email. Once the introduction is made, the peer mentors should schedule their first meeting. The Mandela Fellow should also send his/her Leadership Development Plan (see next page) to the peer mentor so s/he can review it prior to your first meeting. You should also each complete the [Peer Mentoring Agreement](#) and if possible, finalize and sign it prior to your first meeting so that you both have clear expectations about the peer mentorship.

Before meeting with your peer mentor for the first time, think about what you would like to achieve through the peer mentoring relationship and what goals you would like to establish for both yourself and your peer mentor. These goals could include developing your leadership skills, gaining access to new networks, exchanging best practices and lessons learned, or learning more about the peer mentor's country, to name a few. By thinking about your goals prior to meeting, you will be ready to discuss and complete the Peer Mentoring Agreement and assist your peer mentor with articulating their own goals.

During your first meeting, you should review the Mandela Fellow's Leadership Development Plan and the peer mentor's stated goals and use these to complete the peer mentorship [Action Plan](#). You should also discuss how you and your peer mentor will communicate moving forward (frequency, communication tools, etc.). Finally, you should set guidelines for discussions that may touch upon sensitive subjects such as gender, race, and ethnicity (see [Section 4](#) for more information).

## Peer Mentoring Agreement and Action Plan

The Peer Mentoring Agreement and Action Plan is a tool that you and your peer mentor should complete at the start of the peer mentorship to guide your time together and establish expectations. The tool guides you and your peer mentor to discuss and put in writing: your expectations and responsibilities during the peer mentorship, your goals, and a notional meeting schedule. Though these elements can change as your relationship evolves, the tool will provide you and your peer mentor with a framework for the peer mentorship experience.

The Action Plan will guide you and your peer mentor to reflect upon and write down the activities and goals you would like to complete.

## Supporting Leadership Development

As noted above, the Mandela Fellow will have completed a Leadership Development Plan (LDP) prior to beginning of the peer mentorship. The LDP is a tool that was developed for the Mandela Washington Fellowship experience, which Fellows use to plan and document their professional growth and development during their Fellowship year. It is also, however, a document that you can both use to guide your peer mentorship. Though the Mandela Fellow will have completed the LDP prior to starting the peer mentorship, it is a living document that can evolve throughout the next phase of their career as the Fellow's networks grow and they reach new professional milestones. The non-MWF peer mentor is encouraged to view the LDP template on IREX's website [here](#) and complete one themselves as it is a useful tool for reflecting on your leadership strengths, learning about servant leadership, setting goals, and strategizing for future networking (for more information, please see page 6).

Please review the mentorship timeline below for a summary of key milestones and steps during the peer mentoring program.

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## TIMELINE AND KEY MILESTONES DURING THE PEER MENTORSHIP

### Before Meeting 1

Mandela Fellow sends Leadership Development Plan to peer mentor; complete and sign Peer Mentoring Agreement with mentor

### Meeting 1

Review Leadership Development Plan with peer mentor to inform completion of the Action Plan and a discussion of the activities you will focus on during the peer mentorship

### After 1 month

IREX Regional Office will check in with peer mentors

### Meeting 2

Objective TBD according to Action Plan

### Meeting 3

Objective TBD according to Action Plan

### After 3 months

Review goals and assess progress of the peer mentorship; IREX regional office will check in with peer mentors at this time

### Meeting 4

Objective TBD according to Action Plan

### Meeting 5

Objective TBD according to Action Plan

### Meeting 6

Objective TBD according to Action Plan

### After 6 months

Peer mentors determine if they would like to continue the peer mentorship and complete Exit Surveys to provide feedback on the peer mentorship

### Use the LDP as a starting point for your discussions

The LDP guides Fellows to examine their leadership style and values, articulate their vision, and to plan their short and long-term professional goals. As noted above, non-MWF peer mentors are encouraged to complete an LDP of their own. Below are some suggestions for discussion topics based on the LDP:

- **Leadership Strengths:** The LDP includes goal-setting exercises and a reflection on personal strengths and assets. Help your peer mentor to identify their key strengths and discuss how to use these strengths to become a more effective leader. The book *Strengths Based Leadership* by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie (Gallup Press, 2009) provides strengths assessment tools and a roadmap for using these strengths to become a better leader.
- **Servant Leadership:** Discuss “Servant Leadership” (see page 12 of the LDP) and what characteristics you think are most important in a servant leader. (For more information about Servant Leadership, see “What is Servant Leadership? <https://greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>)
- **Setting goals:** Talk about your respective short and long-term goals and how they will help your peer mentor create change as a leader. Based on your own experience, are these goals and objectives realistic, measurable, and achievable? If not, how can the peer mentor modify them?
- **Networking and developing contacts:** Discuss tips and techniques for how your peer mentor can expand their network, and how to successfully develop and maintain strategic relationships to meet their goals.

### Use the LDP as a guide to chart your peer mentor’s progress during the peer mentorship

Mandela Fellows will revisit the LDP in June of 2017. You can both revisit the LDP several times throughout the course of the peer mentorship, to check in on your peer mentor’s goals, discuss if and how your peer mentor’s vision and priorities have changed over time, and to evaluate how he/she has grown professionally over time.

During your first meeting, please set aside some time to review the Mandela Fellow’s LDP along with the non-MWF peer mentor’s goals (through the LDP or otherwise) and discuss what goals may be achieved through the peer mentorship. This discussion will provide a good starting point for questions about whether the peer mentor has the relevant skills and contacts to achieve their vision. Reference your peer mentor’s goals on a regular basis so that he/she can reflect on progress made towards meeting their professional development goals.





## Expectations and Roles of Peer Mentors and IREX

During the Mandela Washington Fellowship peer mentorship program, peer mentors are expected to commit to meeting at least once a month for six months, either virtually or in person. While peer mentors are expected to respect each other's time and boundaries, IREX also asks peer mentors to respond to each other's emails or calls in a timely manner. If you are unable to fulfill your obligations as a peer mentor, please let both your peer mentor and IREX know, so that IREX can identify another peer mentor for you if possible.

There are many different roles that you might find yourself playing as a peer mentor over the course of the peer mentoring relationship. Prior to meeting with your peer mentor for the first time, it might be helpful to think about what roles you are best suited for and how you could prepare yourself for other roles you do not feel as confident about. In general, characteristics of successful peer mentors often include:

- **Acceptance** of the peer mentor, regardless of their opinions or background
- **Empathy** and a willingness to listen
- **Openness** to new ideas
- **Enthusiasm** and a motivating energy
- **Patience** when things do not go as planned
- **Humor** in the face of inevitable bumps in the road
- **Trustworthiness** to keep the peer mentor's confidence
- **Inspiring confidence** in the peer mentor to take initiative

Developing a successful peer mentoring relationship is based on balancing a less formal tone that is open and encouraging with a more formal professional relationship. When you understand your peer mentor's professional goals, you can look for and offer your peer mentor opportunities to develop professionally. Please see some [sample activities](#) for inspiration, but also consult with your peer mentor to see what would be most helpful for him/her in order to achieve the goals in the Peer Mentoring Agreement. You can also use the peer mentor's current projects as the basis of your discussions. The Action Plan is another opportunity to brainstorm a schedule of activities early on in the relationship so that your meetings can be as productive as possible.



“My mentor helped me to redirect my vision, and made me realize exactly how I can use my leadership to change my community.”

*Ramadhan Ndiga, Mandela  
Washington Fellow from Kenya*

IREX expects peer mentors to take full advantage of opportunities provided during the peer mentorship, while maintaining professional boundaries and respecting each other’s time and busy schedule. Some peer mentors might be uncomfortable at the start of a peer mentorship because the relationship is new or they have perhaps never participated in a peer mentoring relationship in the past, so it is helpful to encourage your peer mentor to be open about their expectations during the peer mentorship.

Peer mentors should be clear and honest with each other about the best way to communicate on a regular basis, especially since internet is not reliable in some countries. Peer mentors should also allow flexibility depending on their schedules, and should be proactive about discussing their expectations and goals for the peer mentorship. IREX encourages you to be proactive and persistent in solving any challenges that might arise during the peer mentorship, but also encourages peer mentors to reach out to IREX if they have questions or concerns.

IREX also asks peer mentors to come prepared for each scheduled meeting with a discussion topic and their goals for the meeting. Unless there is an emergency, peer mentors should provide at least 24-hours notice if they are unable to meet at the scheduled time.

IREX is available throughout the peer mentorship to address any concerns or questions that you or your peer mentor might have, and will check in with you and your peer mentor periodically. Please do not hesitate to contact the relevant [IREX Regional Office](#) at any time with questions or concerns.

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## What do I do if the peer mentorship is not working?

IREX hopes that you and your peer mentor will have a productive and long-lasting relationship. If, however, you and your peer mentor are having difficulty making the peer mentorship work, **please contact IREX immediately**. IREX will work with both peer mentors to try and remedy the relationship. The following are some possible circumstances that, if they arise, we urge you to reach out to IREX as soon as possible:

- Prior to the completion of the six months, both peer mentors agree that the goals both parties had at the outset of the peer mentorship have already been met and there is no need to continue the peer mentorship.
- Either peer mentor is consistently unresponsive within the first 1-2 months of the peer mentorship and/or a peer mentor misses two or more scheduled meetings without sufficient justification.
- The peer mentors have irreconcilable differences due to [inappropriate behavior](#).
- Either peer mentor has a change in their professional/personal priorities or commitments that prevents the continuation of the peer mentorship, such as a physical relocation, family emergency, or new job with increased demands on the peer mentor's time.

In the event that one of the issues enumerated above are beyond repair, IREX may decide to end the peer mentorship early in consultation with the peer mentors as appropriate.

## 3. TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR PEER MENTOR

### Providing Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback are important aspects of the peer mentorship experience. While you should provide feedback during the peer mentorship, you should also encourage your peer mentor to provide you with feedback at critical junctures in the peer mentorship so that you can have the opportunity to learn and improve your peer mentorship skills as well. Below are some tips on providing feedback throughout your peer mentorship, adapted from the Institute for Clinical Research Education Mentoring Resources.<sup>1</sup>

#### Types of Feedback

- **Positive** – One role of a peer mentor is to be a motivator. When your peer mentor accomplishes something or improves one of their skills, you should congratulate them and give them feedback on what they did well.
- **Constructive** – Feedback should never be “negative.” Rather, if you see room for improvement in something your peer mentor is working on, you should give them feedback on what they could do better—not on what they did wrong. It can also be helpful to give constructive feedback along with some positive feedback so your peer mentor does not feel demoralized—but the positive feedback should not overshadow the constructive so that the peer mentor ignores the advice.

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<sup>1</sup> Institute for Clinical Research Education Mentoring Resources, University of Pittsburgh. *Giving and Receiving Feedback*. n.d. <http://www.icre.pitt.edu/mentoring/feedback.html> (accessed September 23, 2015).

## Frequency of Feedback

- Feedback should happen consistently as your peer mentor will be working on developing their skills and projects throughout the course of the mentorship. That does not mean that you have to give them a grade at every meeting, but rather that you should integrate positive and constructive feedback into your conversations, and help them articulate their progress in meaningful ways.
- In the mentorship Action Plan, you should designate specific meetings to have larger discussions about your mutual progress so far and to reflect back on the peer mentorship. Since one or both of you may be reluctant to give feedback outside of an official, scheduled time, creating that space for you both to do so is important. Note that there may be cultural or gender-based norms around hierarchical relationships that make this exercise difficult for one or both of you, but it is a leadership skill that improves with practice. Embrace it!

## Tips for **GIVING** Effective Feedback

- **Trust** – Having a trusting and open relationship with your peer mentor is necessary for giving and receiving feedback. When you feel comfortable with each other, it will be easier to have these discussions, particularly when giving constructive feedback.
  - **Specificity** – Be specific when giving both positive and constructive feedback. If your peer mentor wrote an excellent proposal for their project, point out the aspects of that proposal that are particularly well-executed so that the peer mentor knows what to repeat next time. Similarly, if your peer mentor's proposal is not very persuasive, discuss the aspects of it that need work and give your peer mentor advice on how to improve.
  - **Participation** – When giving advice, also make sure you ask the peer mentor how he or she thinks something could be improved so that they are an active participant in their learning.
  - **Goals** – Refer back to the goals in the Peer Mentoring Agreement when giving feedback so that the peer mentor can understand how the work he/she is doing contributes to their ultimate goals.
  - **Simplicity** – Do not overwhelm the peer mentor with a laundry list of improvements—keep it simple while still being specific. If there are many points you want to discuss, break up the feedback across multiple meetings.
  - **Listening** – If your peer mentor is neglecting their work or any assignments you have asked them to complete, lend a sympathetic ear and listen to their reasons. There may be deeper issues at play and the work may have to come second to whatever else is going on in their life.
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### Tips for **RECEIVING** Feedback

- **Listen** quietly and try not to interrupt so the peer mentor can finish their thought.
- **Paraphrase** back to the peer mentor what you heard so you can be sure that you understand.
- **Ask questions** if you need further clarification.
- **Thank your peer mentor** for the feedback—it is important that the peer mentor receives positive reinforcement when giving feedback so that they are comfortable doing it in the future.

### Active Listening

Even when not receiving feedback, active listening is important. By listening to your peer mentor and *showing* that you are listening, you will gain your peer mentor's trust, show that you respect what your peer mentor has to say, and—most importantly—learn about your peer mentor and deepen your relationship. Active listening, however, is more difficult than it sounds. Here are some tips for improving active listening skills:

- **Face the speaker** at a professional distance (approximately an arm's length). Even when sitting next to your peer mentor, change your position in your seat so that you are actually facing him or her.
- **Look at the speaker.** Even if you are facing the speaker, you may be distracted by activity in the place you are meeting or—more likely—by your phone or computer. Put the technology away if possible and focus your attention on your peer mentor.
- **Acknowledge** what the peer mentor is saying by nodding, saying “yes,” and so on so the peer mentor knows that you are engaged.
- **Paraphrase** what the peer mentor is saying. By repeating back to him/her what you have heard, you will ensure your own understanding and confirm to the peer mentor that you were listening.
- **Ask questions** about what the peer mentor is saying. This will help clarify the conversation for both of you and also demonstrate your interest.
- **Summarize** the conversation when it is over. This will help both of you understand the conclusion reached and make sure you are on the same page.

## Scheduling Meetings with your Peer Mentor

Working to schedule meetings, whether virtual or in-person, between two busy individuals can be challenging at times. During your initial meeting with your peer mentor, discuss the best and most reliable ways for both of you to communicate with each other. Be sure to discuss potential busy times over the course of the six-month peer mentorship as well as what days or times are best for each of you. In some cases, it might be best to schedule all six meetings up front, leaving room for flexibility should schedules change. As mentioned earlier in this toolkit, both you and your peer mentor should try to provide 24-hours' notice if you will need to reschedule a meeting.



## Negotiating Virtual Peer Mentorships

Virtual peer mentorships can take place via a variety of media: email, phone calls, video conferences, Skype, and texting apps like WhatsApp. Peer mentors working virtually will have to discuss which media they each have available to them and would work best for conducting their meetings. For example, you may want to Skype once a month but exchange emails once a week. A critical issue to discuss as well is the reliability of your Internet and/or how often you are each online. You may also wish to establish a protocol for times when you have set a meeting and one party's Internet is not working.



**78% of  
MENTORSHIPS  
are VIRTUAL**

- **Work to build trust with your peer mentor:** It is often more difficult to build trust and establish a relationship virtually without the benefit of face-to-face interaction. Make an effort to build trust with your peer mentor by sharing information about yourself and making small talk. Try to meet frequently with your peer mentor early in the relationship, and use videoconferencing whenever possible.
- **Awareness of Differences:** If your peer mentor is from another culture or gender, be aware of cross-cultural and gender-based differences that might influence your conversations or both parties' perceptions of the relationship. Please see the section on [Negotiating Differences](#) for tips.
- **Telephone Manner:** Executive Coach Nicola Shearer on her website LittleSpringtime.com notes that many people act differently on the phone or on Skype than they do in person<sup>2</sup>. This may be particularly true for peer mentors who did not grow up around technology and are therefore somewhat less comfortable with the medium. Both peer mentors should make an effort to act as naturally as possible even if it is not their first instinct. In addition, Shearer observes that natural pauses in conversation occur and, while in person these can clearly indicate someone collecting their thoughts, they can feel uncomfortable over the phone or Skype.
- **Written Communication:** Because it is harder to get in touch when peer mentors are not physically close, you should take advantage of email and texting to communicate thoughts and questions so that you do not forget them and so you can keep track of what you want to discuss at the next meeting. Similarly, email and texting can be good ways for you to motivate each other and provide positive feedback.
- **Active Listening:** Active listening is an important tool for peer mentoring. It is particularly critical for virtual peer mentorships. When you are already at the computer for the meeting, it can be tempting to quickly check your email or engage in other online activities. Remember, however, that typing on a keyboard can be heard on the other end of the call, so please give your peer mentor your undivided attention.<sup>2</sup>

A virtual peer mentorship can be just as rewarding as an in person one. It is up to the peer mentors, however, to establish protocols for managing the virtual relationship and ensuring that both parties feel comfortable using the media at their disposal.

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<sup>2</sup> (Shearer 2013)

## 4. NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCES AND OTHER SENSITIVITIES DURING THE PEER MENTORSHIP

When beginning a peer mentorship, it is important to be aware of the similarities and differences between you and your peer mentor. These similarities or differences could be in location, age, culture, gender, or other identities. By considering potential sensitivities as well as differences in culture and gender up front, many pitfalls and miscommunications can be avoided later on in the peer mentoring relationship.

### Confidentiality

When you sign the Peer Mentoring Agreement, you and your peer mentor are agreeing to keep each other's confidence. That means that you will not disclose conversations you have together with outside parties unless you mutually agree to do so. It is important that you reinforce this trust with your peer mentor by asking their permission when you, for example, wish to discuss the peer mentor's current initiative with a contact who might be of use. By asking permission, you will reassure your peer mentor that you only want to help them and that you have no intentions of appropriating their ideas or work for you or someone else's benefit. IREX advises that you discuss confidentiality with your peer mentor at the beginning of the relationship, so that you both feel that you can speak openly and honestly. In extreme circumstances, such as [sexual harassment](#), confidentiality does not apply.

### Negotiating Differences

While you may both belong to similar professions, you and your peer mentor's backgrounds may be very different. These differences should not be a point of friction but rather seen as an opportunity for both parties to learn from each other. The peer mentors must be careful not to engage in discrimination (even unintentionally) based on an individual's gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other factors<sup>3</sup>

### Race and Ethnicity

Peer mentors should be mindful of differences in and assumptions about race or ethnicity, and how these differences and assumptions might influence a relationship with their peer mentor. You should consider developing a strategy with your peer mentor early in the peer mentoring relationship on how to handle the issue, either to openly discuss race or to avoid such discussions. Peer mentors should be aware of their own biases and stereotypes and try to understand the experience of their peer mentor.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on discrimination: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/index.cfm>

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## Gender

Like cross-cultural peer mentorships, the diverse spectrum of gender identities, roles, and expectations require the peer mentors to be open and honest about their differences and assumptions. But cross-gender peer mentorships have additional considerations that should be acknowledged and discussed. Sonja Feist-Price in the *Journal of Rehabilitation* cites Kram (1985) in her presentation of five main complexities in cross-gender relationships, four of which are relevant and adapted below, along with suggestions solutions for navigating these complexities. Feist-Price’s article “[Cross-Gender Peer mentoring Relationships: Critical Issues](#)” provides more information about dealing with these complexities.

- **Collusion in Stereotypical Roles** – When men and women enter into new roles (such as peer mentors), they may be more likely to revert to traditional stereotypes to accommodate for the discomfort they feel. For example, a man may resist his female peer mentor’s advice and/or a woman may feel more timid about giving advice to her peer mentor.

*Suggested Solution: By simply acknowledging the tendency to slip into stereotypes out of discomfort, men and women are more likely to resist the urge to do so.*

- **Limitations in Role Modeling** – One of the key roles of a peer mentor is to be a role model. But a male peer mentor will face different opportunities and obstacles than his female peer mentor as will a female peer mentor with a male peer mentor. Women in particular face unique challenges that a male peer mentor may not fully understand, such as taking maternity leave, and gender non-conforming individuals are at the highest risk of gender-based discrimination and harassment.

*Suggested Solution: Peer mentors should ask each other to be open about what kind of gender-specific challenges they encounter professionally. Peer mentors should provide advice to the best of their ability, but then reach out to their own networks for assistance if they cannot help in any given situation*

- **Public Scrutiny** – For peer mentorships that take place in person, there may be a reluctance to interact socially in public spaces out of fear of gossip or judgment. Further, a man and woman socializing alone together may be looked down upon in certain cultures, which can make it more difficult for the peer mentors to forge a deep bond.<sup>4</sup>

*Suggested Solution: If the peer mentorship is in person, the peer mentors should have a conversation early on about how they will meet and where. You should be honest about any reservations you might have about appearing in public together and, if that is going to be a problem, arrange to meet at a private office or virtually instead.*

Being aware of and anticipating these potential complications will help make a cross-gender peer mentorship successful. It is important that the peer mentors recognize these issues and work together to get past them.

<sup>4</sup> (Feist-Price 1994)

## Sexual Harassment

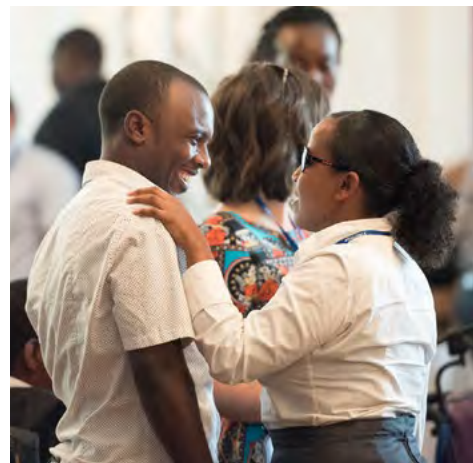
The Mandela Washington Fellowship program aims to ensure gender equality, and empowers all Fellows, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, with support to achieve their leadership and professional aspirations and capabilities. The belief that men, women, and gender non-conforming individuals should enjoy equal opportunity and equal protection under the law and in practice is foundational to the Fellowship as well as the peer mentorship program.

As in other professional environments, it is therefore inappropriate for the relationship between peer mentors to be of an intimate or sexual nature. You should be aware that attempting to establish an intimate relationship with your peer mentor is unacceptable. Likewise, if your peer mentor expresses a desire for or attempts to engage in an intimate relationship with you, you should feel empowered to ask them to stop immediately.

Sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated and includes nonverbal, verbal, and physical forms of sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or creating a hostile or offensive peer mentorship environment (for example, through inappropriate jokes, images, or references to a person's sex).<sup>5</sup> It can also occur over email, text message, and other digital communications. IREX expects peer mentors to adhere to professional standards of conduct and to provide each other with a peer mentorship experience free from discrimination and/or sexual harassment.

## Culture

Open and honest communication is the key to having a successful cross-cultural peer mentorship. The peer mentors may be from different ages, language groups, ethnicities, countries, regions, or even continents. But rather than ignore these differences, it is important for the peer mentors to discuss any assumptions or questions they might have about each other from the outset in order to prevent future misunderstandings. Culture moreover does not simply mean differences of language, race, or nationality—rather it is a difference in the way the peer mentors view the world. The peer mentors need to have a certain amount of self-awareness of these differences before entering into the relationship so that they can discuss them openly.



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<sup>5</sup> For more information on sexual harassment: [http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual\\_harassment.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/sexual_harassment.cfm)

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Karine Mangion of Regent's University London emphasizes the need for peer mentors from different cultures to be clear about how they best communicate. She says that, "Communication patterns may result in irritation, frustration and misunderstandings when they are overlooked or overgeneralized. Therefore, communication patterns should be recognized, analyzed and understood like a code with its own signification." (Mangion 2012) Her paper "[Cross Cultural Coaching and Mentoring in International Organizations](#)" provides more information on different kinds of communication patterns.

While this exploration of differences may not be initially comfortable, both peer mentors are encouraged to ask questions about each other's cultures, such as diverging norms regarding gender, personal space, hierarchy, punctuality, etiquette, and family. In addition to asking questions and sharing openly, it is equally as critical to be an active listener.

By acknowledging cultural differences, particularly those governing styles of communicating effectively, and being open to learning from each other, the peer mentors can get far more out of the peer mentorship than they would have if they attempted to pretend that these differences did not exist.

## 5. EFFECTIVE CLOSURE OF THE PEER MENTORSHIP

On the end date set out in the Peer Mentoring Agreement, you should meet with your peer mentor to discuss the peer mentorship and decide whether or not to continue even after the formal peer mentorship has ended. The closure date should be a celebration of your time together and an opportunity to discuss the peer mentorship in a positive, fun way.

At the closure of the peer mentorship, the relevant IREX Regional team will send you an **exit survey** in order to get your feedback about the program and for IREX and USAID to learn ways to improve the peer mentorship program in the following years.

## 6. IREX CONTACT INFORMATION

Your main point of contact throughout the peer mentorship will be the relevant IREX Regional Office. This should be **the Regional Office for the country that the Mandela Fellow is from**. Please find the contact information for these offices below as well as a chart outlining what region each country falls into. If you have any additional questions, please email [MWFAumni@irex.org](mailto:MWFAumni@irex.org).

### East Africa Regional Office

(Located in Nairobi, Kenya)

**Mercy Githanji**

East Africa Regional Manager

[mwfeastafrica@irex.org](mailto:mwfeastafrica@irex.org)

Ph: +254 (20) 3871700

IREX's local implementing partner in East Africa is VSO International.

### Southern Africa Office

(Located in Johannesburg, South Africa)

**Marcia Small**

Southern Africa Regional Manager

[mwfsouthernafrica@irex.org](mailto:mwfsouthernafrica@irex.org)

Ph: +27 11 318 1012

IREX's local implementing partner in Southern Africa is Southern Africa Trust.

### West Africa Regional Office

(Located in Accra, Ghana)

**Aissatou Diajate**

West Africa Regional Manager

[mwwestafrica@irex.org](mailto:mwwestafrica@irex.org)

Ph: +233 302 542 010

IREX's local implementing partner in West Africa is WACSI, the West Africa Civil Society Institute.

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#### East Africa

Burundi  
Central African Republic  
Congo  
Democratic Republic of the Congo  
Djibouti  
Eritrea  
Ethiopia  
Kenya  
Rwanda  
Somalia  
South Sudan  
Sudan  
Tanzania  
Uganda

#### Southern Africa

Angola  
Botswana  
Comoros  
Lesotho  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mauritius  
Mozambique  
Namibia  
Seychelles  
South Africa  
Swaziland  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

#### West Africa

Benin  
Burkina Faso  
Cameroon  
Cape Verde  
Chad  
Cote D'Ivoire  
Equatorial Guinea  
Gabon  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Guinea  
Guinea-Bissau  
Liberia  
Mali  
Mauritania  
Niger  
Nigeria  
Sao Tome and Principe  
Senegal  
Sierra Leone  
Togo

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## 7. SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

There are many resources to help you over the course of the peer mentorship, including the bibliography. For more links to free online resources and a bibliography of helpful reading, please refer to some [Helpful Resources and Suggested Activities for Mentoring](#) on IREX's website. Your own company or organization may also have further peer mentoring resources, particularly if they have their own mentoring program. Reaching out to your professional community may give you access to additional resources. Finally, if you have any questions about the peer mentorship or require further assistance, please email IREX at [MWFAumni@irex.org](mailto:MWFAumni@irex.org).

### Bibliography

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MANDELA  
WASHINGTON  
FELLOWSHIP  
FOR YOUNG AFRICAN LEADERS



Peer Mentoring Agreement and Action Plan

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**NON-MWF PEER MENTOR INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**MWF PEER MENTOR INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Fellowship Track: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*Both peer mentors should outline their expectations for the mentorship and outline any additional responsibilities they will be personally accountable for. Examples are provided below.*

The non-MWF peer mentor expects his/her MWF peer mentor to (e.g. introduce him/her to three new contacts, work with him/her on his/her public speaking skills, take him/her to a networking event):

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The non-MWF peer mentor additionally takes responsibility for (e.g. training his/her MWF peer mentor in job negotiation skills, improving his/her MWF peer mentor's elevator pitch):

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The MWF peer mentor expects his/her peer mentor to:

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The MWF peer mentor additionally takes responsibility for:

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## GOALS

*Both peer mentors should commit to at least three goals to be accomplished by the end of the mentorship.*

The non-MWF peer mentor's goals include:

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The MWF peer mentor's goals include:

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## MEETING SCHEDULE

The peer mentors should agree to a frequency of meetings as well as a start date for the peer mentorship, and a date on which the peer mentors will evaluate whether to continue the relationship. While the meeting (which could be virtual or in-person) does not have to occur at the same time/day on each occurrence, it should happen with a certain frequency (e.g. bi-weekly, phone calls weekly and in person monthly). IREX asks that both commit to meeting for a minimum of six times over the course of the peer mentorship. Each meeting should last no less than one hour in order for it to be productive. It is highly encouraged that peer mentors meet more often if their schedules allow.

Peer mentors will meet: \_\_\_\_\_ Starting \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_



### ACTION PLAN

IREX has provided a guide on [Helpful Resources and Suggested Activities for Mentoring](#) on IREX's website, which provides a number of ideas for discussions, training, and activities the peer mentors can/should engage in during the peer mentorship. Using this handout along with your stated goals, please design an action plan for the peer mentorship using the attached [guide](#) (if you plan to meet more than six times, please copy the page and reuse as needed).

IREX will check in with both peer mentors after the second meeting to address any initial concerns and ensure that the rest of the peer mentorship is a success. In addition, at the closure of the peer mentorship, the peer mentors will be asked to complete an exit survey in order to get your feedback about the program and for IREX to learn ways to improve the peer mentorship program for future Fellows. IREX appreciates your participation in this exit survey.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

All information between the peer mentors shall be confidential and only shared with outside parties if both agree.

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Non-MWF Peer Mentor Signature	Date

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MWF Peer Mentor Signature	Date

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## ACTION PLAN

	Activity	Goal	Assignment for Next Meeting
<i>Meeting Example</i>	<i>Resume Workshop</i>	<i>Peer mentors develop sector-specific resumes that highlight their experience and expertise</i>	<i>Peer mentors will develop a 2-minute elevator pitch</i>
Meeting 1			
Meeting 2			
Meeting 3			
Meeting 4			
Meeting 5			
Meeting 6			

