Public Service Commission

Home › Culture and inclusion › Diversity and inclusion › Cultural diversity › Sponsorship Guidance Toolkit ›
Sponsorship Toolkit - Chapter 4

Chapter 4: How to run and evaluate a sponsorship program

On this page

Guidance on key program areas

Common issues to support sponsor/sponsee relationships

Running an effective sponsorship program

How to evaluate a sponsorship program

This is the fourth chapter in the toolkit. This chapter and the accompanying video look at:

- how to run an effective sponsorship program
- how to evaluate a sponsorship program.

Mapping out the program timeline in advance, including estimated milestones and evaluation points, is key to success. These milestones and evaluation points also create markers for sending out communications to sponsors, sponsees and other key stakeholders.

Video embed:

Sponsorship Guidance Toolkit - Alumni Insights - Chapter 4

Guidance on key program areas

The following sections provide more detailed guidance and considerations for key program milestones and events.

Guidance on a program launch event ⌄

Hosting a program launch event serves to formally commence the program and build a sense of community across program participants.

In developing your program launch event, consider the following:

- Ensure you have the agency head or senior executive program champion speak to launch the program and explain its rationale
- Include a panel or speakers who are from CALD backgrounds to share from their personal perspective the importance of the program
- Ensure there is sufficient time for social-professional networking to create a connection between sponsees and sponsors
- Consider culturally appropriate food and other ways to make the event inclusive and accessible to other intersectional needs.

Guidance on the importance of capability building ⌄

Once you have selected your cohort and communicated this to sponsors and sponsees, begin the program with a capability session for sponsors and sponsees.

In developing your capability sessions consider:

- holding two separate sessions, one for sponsees and one for sponsors
- running these two sessions on the same day with a cross-over informal connection opportunity in between. This may be a lunch or afternoon tea.
- ensuring adequate time for each session, e.g. 2-3 hours in duration
- making attendance a compulsory part of participating on the program
- devoting most of the session to capability building for sponsors and sponsees, focussing on the differences between sponsorship and other programs. It is also important to cover practical elements of the program, including timing, expectations regarding participation and measures of success
- ensuring the session is hosted as a workshop to maximise participant engagement.

It is also important to use these sessions to establish a sense of community among the cohort. This can be supported through:

- connection via an online platform such as MS teams
- a program newsletter or providing regular program updates
- sharing program participant contact details with the whole cohort.

This also forms part of the monitoring component of the program.

Guidance on regular coaching sessions ⌄

The program should be supported with consistent coaching sessions. The OPSC's Elevate and Advocate program delivered at least 3 coaching sessions across a 6-month period. Running these sessions in a 'drop in' style allows flexibility and responsiveness to participant needs.

Coaching is important because:

- it ensures cultural safety is established and maintained
- it provides a regular opportunity to address situations and challenges in the sponsorship relationship, including changing capacities, drops in motivation, misalignment and miscommunications
- it helps participants to keep momentum and steers participants back on track if required
- it can be used to provide a safe space for either sponsees or sponsors, allowing for peer-to-peer learning and addressing similar issues.

Guidance on program conversations ⌄

Developing a conversation guide to support regular conversations between sponsors and sponsees supports the sponsorship relationship. Consider including a checklist, reading materials, and activities for sponsors and sponsees to complete. Topics to explore include:

- Establishing your sponsorship relationship
- Moving from career dreams to career goals
- Career goal setting and progression techniques
- Career progression and sustaining momentum
- Building your brand and identifying and leveraging your audience
- Sustaining impact

Common issues to support sponsor/sponsee relationships

There should be provision for ad hoc conversations between sponsors and sponsees as situations arise. This should be considered in program governance to ensure adequate, skilled resourcing is available.

To assist sponsors and sponsees understand when it is appropriate to seek guidance from a project lead or support person, provide FAQs at the start of the program. Areas to include in FAQs may include:

1. What if I feel my sponsor/sponsee is not a good match?
2. What if I don't feel culturally safe?

3. What if I am having difficulty with booking time with my sponsor/sponsee or our meetings are constantly moved? What if our conversations are turning into counselling sessions?

4. What if my sponsor does not have any relevant contacts for me and my career goals?

5. What if my sponsor takes unexpected leave for several months or their role changes?

6. What if my role changes during the program, can I stay in the program?

7. What if my manager is unwilling to support my participation in the program?

8. What if I want to drop out of the program?

When developing answers to these FAQs, consider the following guiding principes:

- participant wellbeing and safety must be prioritised
- embed culturally safe and culturally responsive practices, and understanding of CALD lived experiences
- answers should be tailored to your agency context, and draw on any internal resources to support wellbeing, e.g. EAPs
- participants may feel unable to raise some issues directly with their sponsee/sponsor given the power imbalance between an executive sponsor and CALD sponsee
- participants may have other intersectional facets of identity, e.g. disability, gender, LGBTIQA+, age and caring responsibilities.

Example FAQ response from the OPSC's Elevate & Advocate ⌄

What if I feel my sponsor/sponsee is not a good match?

Consider where this feeling is coming from, there can be many factors which influence this such as:

- how well you socially relate to each other
- if your fields of work are vastly different
- the relationship is moving at a faster/slower pace than you prepared for
- opportunities for meeting networks and contacts feel limited
- time for meetings is limited

These reasons can be clarified with clear communication and expectation setting. We encourage sponsors and sponsees to set aside time to clarify what their expectations are, and where these might not be being met. We note that this can only work if there is a sense of safety in the relationship, and that both the sponsor and sponsee recognise that issues are not personal but rather about the functionality of the relationship.

Remember that:

- Bonding socially is not the goal of sponsorship. All you need to have is a respectful, mutually beneficial relationship that progresses the sponsees career direction and mobility.

- You have been matched based on multiple factors. Some matches are based on fields of work, and others might be based on personal factors (such as the experience of being working parents).

- Even if a sponsor does not work in the same field as a sponsee, they can still leverage their existing networks and professional capital to make relevant connections for the sponsee.

- Pacing, momentum and frequency of meetings are important. Continually reflect on what is and what is not working for both of you. Sometimes you may feel that extra meetings will support progress, at other times you may need a break between meetings to work through the strategies you're creating together.

- At a minimum, sponsor/sponsee pairs should meet 6 times throughout the program, for at least 45 minutes at a time. Sponsors should ensure that they always 'show up' for their sponsee by replying to emails in a timely fashion and ensuring their EAs can prioritise meetings with sponsees.

Running an effective sponsorship program

Planning is key to an effective program. In planning your resourcing, consider:

- How will you provide support mechanisms for participants? This does not necessarily mean continuous dedicated resourcing for the whole program. However, resourcing must be responsive, specific and agile in order to respond to needs. For example, where a participant does not feel psychologically or culturally safe, any response must be rapid and culturally appropriate to mitigate the risk of harm.

- How will you manage the administration load for the program? This includes tasks such as sending program communications, keeping an up to date contact list, and organising program sessions.

- How will you respond to any unforeseen impacts on participant commitment? This may include participants having to take unexpected extended leave or participants leaving the sector.

How to evaluate a sponsorship program

A successful sponsorship program also requires monitoring and evaluation to ensure the program is achieving its outcomes. The evaluation should cover both qualitative experience and quantitative outcomes.

See the below for guidance on developing an effective evaluation strategy.

Plan for evaluation   ⌄

- Plan for evaluation prior to commencing the program, including when and how you will evaluate

- Consider evaluating consistently throughout the program, e.g. 3 surveys - a pre, mid and post program evaluation survey
- The pre-program survey could focus on expectations
- The mid-program survey could focus on areas of improvement for the program, so administrators can make any required changes to the program
- The post-program survey could provide an opportunity to reflect on program expectations, goal fulfilment, and overall program feedback

Communicate consistently ⌄

- Communicate consistently that the program is evaluated and seek a commitment from participants to evaluation
- Communicate this from pre-program and again at the program's commencement
- Ask whether participants are comfortable with this, including at the EOI stage, as being open to evaluation is critical to program participation
- Ensure both sponsors and sponsees are aware that engaging with evaluation is mandatory

Include a qualitative component ⌄

The evaluation needs a qualitative component. This might include:

- how people felt through the program about their time investment versus the outcomes achieved
- experiential factors, e.g. safety, open communication, ease of access, timing, logistics, support etc

Include an outcome component ⌄

The evaluation needs an outcome-based component. This includes:

- progress in career mobility and support of the sponsee
- role change, attainment or progression. Note that a new role or promotion is not always realistic to expect in the time period or within the scope of the program.

Include program elements ⌄

The evaluation should also cover program elements.

- This supports evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the program

- Questions might cover the EOI process, the matching process, the capability sessions, check ins and any other program aspects

Evaluate sponsors and sponsees ⌄

Sponsors and sponsees must both be evaluated

- Have separate forms for sponsors and sponsees
- Include common questions on all surveys to compare, contrast, and analyse experiences

Provide additional response channels ⌄

- Providing a mailbox or staff contact for participants to provide other insights outside the surveys
- This may also include more informal feedback and responses