

**YALSA Board of Directors Meeting
ALA Midwinter Meeting, Atlanta
January 20 - 24, 2017**

Topic: Re-Envisioning the Mentoring Program

Background: YALSA’s mentoring program has been in place since 2010, and has retained the same format throughout the six years. The adoption of the Organizational Plan presents an opportunity to review the program to ensure it aligns closely with YALSA’s new goals and priorities. Linda Braun, CE Consultant for YALSA, has presented the following proposal for the Board’s consideration.

Action Required: Discussion

Proposal

Re-envision YALSA’s mentoring program from a cohort format requiring a 12-month commitment, into a shorter-term commitment with a rolling admissions basis.

Rationale

- **Over the past few years the current virtual mentoring program has seen a decline in applicants.**

Year	Mentor applications	Protégé applications
2016 - 2017	5	9
2016 - 2015	8	15
2015 - 2014	13	20
2014 - 2013	11	22

The Virtual Mentoring Task Force and YALSA staff advertised the mentorship/protégé opportunity throughout the application time period with posts on the YALSAblog, inclusion in the weekly eNews, and personal contacts to specific people and groups - for example, Past Presidents and former Board members. These advertising efforts had little impact on the final application pool.

- **The extensive time commitment and the process for getting involved in the Virtual Mentoring Program is a barrier to participation.** Over the past six months I have talked with many members, including those already actively involved in the association and those new to teen librarianship or YALSA, about the mentoring program. I have intentionally had conversations with LIS students, committee members and chairs, and others who are a part of the general membership. These members have expressed interest in continuing mentoring/protégé opportunities, but are looking for a less cumbersome and more flexible and responsive format. And, particularly, a format that allows for short term involvement at a specific time of need or interest. The benefit of

this short-term format, to mentors and protégés, is highlighted in an article in the *Harvard Business Review* titled “Engage a Mentor with a Short Term Project.” The article notes:

- “...the number one benefit Millennials request upon being hired is to receive a mentor. Yet the experience of many mentors, especially those in limited supply such as senior executive women, is that the free-range scope of most mentoring engagements presents a time commitment and emotional investment... Imagine yourself as a potential mentor. Which one is easier to say yes to? The person who asks, “Will you be my mentor?” or someone who approaches you with, “I want to learn more about working directly with customers, and I’d like you to mentor me in that area for the next month with just two or three meetings. Are you available?” It is much easier to say yes to the second request. With careful planning, you can get a great mentor — or a series of mentors — by simply showing sensitivity to the mentor’s schedule. Limiting the engagement to a very specific development area ups the odds of getting the mentor you need even further.”
- **The current program format requires significant time and resources, for little return**—only one or two dozen members are impacted each year. By moving to a short-term format and leveraging new technologies, such as the Mentor Match module that will be included in the new version of ALA Connect, YALSA can reduce resource use but increase impact
- **Moving to a short-term and on-going format supports YALSA’s Organizational Plan** by
 - Leading the transformation of teen services by helping members gain the specific skills they need at the point of need.
 - Increasing opportunities for those already skilled in teen services to support their colleagues, learn through that support, and advance the profession.
 - Allowing for increased member participation through a more flexible format and a short-term focus.
 - In the 2016 YALSA Member Baseline Survey, 60 members indicated an interest in helping another member learn a new skill, which indicates a much larger interest in mentoring activities beyond the 5 individuals who applied to be a mentor through the existing program
 - Providing new ways for members to engage in the work of YALSA

Proposed Format

While the specific process for the setup and implementation of the new mentoring program will be developed if this proposal is approved by the YALSA Board, a potential framework might include:

- Those interested in providing short-term mentoring to YALSA members would apply to be included in a mentoring database (Mentor Match in ALA Connect). The application would require the potential mentor list areas of expertise (based on a selection of areas included on the application form) and provide evidence of that expertise. Evidence could

come from a range of sources including articles, blog posts, program descriptions, program evaluations, professional references, etc.

- Potential mentors will be contacted for a follow-up interview before being selected (or not) for the program.
- Mentors selected to the program will be required to take part in virtual training (pre-recorded webinars and discussion threads) that prepares them for work with protégés. YALSA’s existing mentor training can be adapted for this purpose.
- Mentors will be contacted annually to confirm whether they still want to be listed in the database.
- Members interested in being matched with a mentor will, at a time of need, submit a form listing their specific need and the timeframe within which they want to work with the mentor. Once the form is submitted, potential mentors will be contacted to connect with the protégé. Protégés can seek mentors at any time that they have a professional need for that kind of support.

A version of the above process is used by the National Afterschool Alliance as a part of their Expert Hub service which matches experts in particular areas with organizations requiring assistance or support. Before being listed in the Expert Hub a potential “expert” must submit an application and is required to provide references.

The process for working with mentors and protégés would be the responsibility of the YALSA CE Consultant (the CE Consultant is currently responsible for liaising with the Virtual Mentoring Task Force and with ongoing communications with mentors and protégés). During the design of the new mentoring program YALSA will leverage the opportunity to provide a short-term volunteering opportunity to members to help build out the program logistics.

Proposed Timeline

The exact timeline will be dependent on when ALA launches the new version of ALA Connect and its Mentor Match Module. A Jan. 3, 2017, report from ALA’s IT Dept. did not give a specific launch date, but anticipated having that available “after Midwinter.” YALSA’s current cohort of mentors and protégés is working through August 2017, so there is ample time to have a new program in place by Sept. 2017.

Measuring Impact

The new mentoring program will use a responsive and iterative approach to the evaluation. Throughout the first three years, those involved in the new program, mentors and protégés, will be asked to reflect on the experience and to make suggestions for changes and improvements. When possible these suggestions will be integrated into the program on an ongoing basis. At the end of the first and second years a formal evaluation will be submitted to the Board with an analysis of the program and any recommendations for substantial changes, if required. At the end of the third year of the program an evaluation will be initiated with recommendations to the Board made regarding keeping, changing, or dissolving the program.

Fiscal Implications

- No additional expenses are anticipated. The primary responsibility for this re-visioning and organizational plan alignment will fall under the existing responsibilities of the CE Consultant. The marketing and promotion of the new mentor/protégé program will also fall within already funded materials.
- By leveraging new technology and moving to a more flexible format, both member and staff time are likely to be saved

Proposed Board Action

The board accepts the proposal to move to a short-term, point of need mentoring effort, and directs the Executive Director to work with the CE Consultant to create an implementation plan and submit a progress report to the board for its June 2017 meeting.

Related Resources

- *Engage a Mentor with a Short Term Project*
<https://hbr.org/2014/02/engage-a-mentor-with-a-short-term-project>
- *Higher Logic's Mentor Match*, <https://www.higherlogic.com/products/online-communities/additional-features/mentor-match>
- *In for the Short Haul: 5 Tips for Micro Mentoring*
<https://www.geteverwise.com/mentoring/in-for-the-short-haul-5-tips-for-micro-mentoring/>
- *National AfterSchool Alliance Expert Hub*
<http://naaweb.org/professional-development/item/548-naa-expert-hub-connect-with-the-best>
- *YALSA Virtual Mentoring FAQ*
<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/profdev/mentoring>