

# Community, Theory, and Guidance: Benefits and Lessons Learned in Evaluation Peer Mentoring

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**Abstract:** *The majority of evaluation practitioners begin their career in allied fields and stumble into evaluation. As such, university offerings and evaluation professional development sessions have become increasingly popular. As the field continues to professionalize and new mentoring programs emerge, empirical work examining teaching and training in evaluation has gained traction. However, little is known about the role that opportunities such as mentoring play in evaluation training. The purpose of this article is to explore the expected and unexpected benefits of our experiences as participants in an evaluation mentoring program, lessons learned, and logistical and structural promoters of success in peer mentoring.*

**Keywords:** *graduate students, mentoring, new evaluators, teaching evaluation, training evaluation*

**Resumé :** *La majorité des évaluateurs débutent leur carrière dans des domaines connexes et découvrent l'évaluation en cours de route. Les formations universitaires et les séances de perfectionnement en évaluation sont ainsi de plus en plus populaires. La recherche portant sur l'enseignement et la formation en évaluation suit aussi cette tendance, marquée par la professionnalisation du domaine et la création de nouveaux programmes de mentorat. Cependant, on en sait encore peu sur le rôle que joue le perfectionnement professionnel axé sur le mentorat, dans la formation en évaluation. L'objectif de cet article est d'explorer les avantages attendus et inattendus de nos expériences comme participants dans un programme de mentorat en évaluation, de décrire les leçons apprises ainsi que les éléments logistiques et structurels contribuant à la réussite du mentorat par les pairs.*

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The beauty and challenge of our field's exponential growth lie within the notion that essentially anyone can find themselves in the role of evaluator as evaluative responsibilities continue to emerge and multiply across disciplines. Concerns have been raised about the quality of evaluation work in relation to training and experience in this environment; however, there has yet to be a global consensus on what it means to be a competent evaluator (King & Podems, 2014). While the Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice have been approved (Canadian Evaluation Society [CES], 2010) and the American Evaluation Association (AEA) is currently developing a standard list of evaluator competencies (American Evaluation Association Graduate Student and Novice Evaluator Topical Interest Group [AEA GSNE TIG], 2017), there are no standard requirements of competency attainment through training or practice (Imas, 2010; Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005). Evaluation is becoming a distinct area of study, with over 48 university-based training programs in evaluation currently offered (LaVelle & Donaldson, 2010). The majority of evaluation practitioners, however, begin their professional journeys in fields with methods parallel to those in evaluation, such as psychology, public health, sociology, and education (Stevahn et al., 2005) and subsequently “stumble” into evaluation careers (Christie, 2003). As a result, a considerable number of evaluation practitioners do not hold an advanced degree in evaluation and are motivated to seek formal training through other avenues (Christie, Quiñones, & Fierro, 2014), such as professional development sessions offered by universities, evaluation societies, and private entities (AEA GSNE TIG, 2017; CES, 2017).

This shift is reflected in the increase in empirical work examining teaching and training in evaluation. Recent studies of training and teaching in evaluation have focused on the number and content of evaluation training programs (Davies & MacKay, 2014; LaVelle & Donaldson, 2010); novice evaluators' field-work experiences (Chouinard et al., 2017; Hurley, Renger, & Brunk, 2005); and evaluator course enrollment and professional practice (Christie et al., 2014). While knowledge about these formal training programs continues to grow, little is known about the role that less formal opportunities, such as mentoring, play in evaluation training.

As evaluators with diverse ethnicities and nationalities, levels of evaluation experience, epistemological leanings, educational training, and career aspirations, we took advantage of the unique opportunity to reflect upon our experiences as participants in the inaugural AEA Graduate Student and New Evaluator Topical Interest Group (GSNE TIG) Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) and share our reflections and lessons learned with the field as a way to build on the limited exploration of evaluation mentoring potential and best practice. We believe this content is especially timely, as CES recently acquired the responsibility for Evaluation Mentoring Canada and the creation of the CES Mentoring Initiative (CES, 2015). The purpose of this article is to explore and share the expected and

unexpected benefits of our peer-mentoring experiences and the lessons learned in order to contribute to the developing literature on evaluation mentorship. Based on reflections of our experience in a successful mentor group, we present four thematic areas of findings: (a) membership in a community of practice, (b) socialization into the field, (c) guidance on current work, and (d) addressing gaps in knowledge as outcomes of participation in the PMP. Finally, we present a brief discussion of lessons learned and logistical and structural promoters of success for peer mentoring.

## TRAINING AND TEACHING IN EVALUATION LITERATURE

Scholars have examined and made suggestions for improving practical training experiences in evaluation, such as having novices reflect on their practice, attending to socio-political and contextual issues, and addressing potential problems between student evaluators and agencies (Chouinard et al., 2017; Darabi, 2002; Hargreaves, Attkisson, Horowitz, & Sorensen, 1978; Hurley et al., 2005; Levin-Rozalis & Rosenstein, 2003). Additionally, evaluation teacher reflections have led to suggestions about evaluation course pedagogy, values, and content (Morris, 1994; Oliver, Casiraghi, Henderson, Brooks, & Mulsow, 2008; Thomas & Madison, 2010). The most recent literature on evaluation training has focused on categorization and classification of evaluation course offerings, courses taken by evaluators, and training needs of evaluators (Christie et al., 2014; Davies & MacKay, 2014; Galport & Azzam, 2016; LaVelle & Donaldson, 2010). There has also been a surge in the literature about evaluator competencies (Dewey, Montrosse, Schröter, Sulins, & Mattox, 2008; Dillman, 2012; King & Podems, 2014).

### *Training opportunities*

Opportunities for training in evaluation include university degree programs, certificate programs, and professional development workshops. Contrary to previous findings (Engle, Altschuld, & Kim, 2006), LaVelle and Donaldson (2010) provided evidence to suggest that there was an increase in the number of evaluation training programs within university settings in the twenty-first century (confirmed by LaVelle, 2014). Of the 61 university-based training programs offered in the United States at the time of study and 20 other programs in Canada, Australia, and Europe, the majority are housed within education, educational psychology, political science, or psychology departments (LaVelle, 2014). While most university-based degree programs offer only two to three specific evaluation courses, novice evaluators have sought a broad range of general methodological courses to complement coursework (Davies & MacKay, 2014; LaVelle & Donaldson, 2010). These evaluator-course enrollment patterns commonly drive novice and potential evaluators into four distinct types of tracks: quantitative, evaluation/qualitative, general research/quantitative, and general research (Christie et al., 2014).

Certificate programs, including the specialization areas of program evaluation, quantitative evaluation methods, evaluation and organizational development,

school-based evaluation, assessment and evaluation, and educational policy and administration, are also available to evaluators (Altschuld, 1999; Jones & Worthen, 1999; Smith, 1999; Worthen, 1999) and are on the rise (LaVelle, 2014). Recent estimates of these endeavors indicate that as many as 36 such certificate programs are in operation in the United States, a dramatic increase from the six programs identified in 2006 (LaVelle, 2014).

Evaluators also seek to gain experience and supplemental education through professional development workshops. Hosts of these workshops include the American Evaluation Association, the Canadian Evaluation Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The Evaluators' Institute, the Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment, and a number of university departments and affiliates (Dillman, 2012). Further, many global voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs) also offer professional development workshops and seminars for evaluators (Catsambas, Segone, de Silva, & Saunders, 2013). Despite these advances in offerings and modes of evaluator training, the task of pulling this myriad of fields and experiences together beyond the formal classroom is limited, and novice and emerging evaluators are tasked with pursuing supplemental education and building experience on their own.

### ***Professional mentoring***

Researchers have examined and defined many different forms of mentoring across professions and disciplines. Some of these include traditional versus peer, online versus in-person, and formal versus informal. Studies examining the mentoring of students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs have found both mentors and mentees to have increased satisfaction, fulfillment, productivity, work-related benefits, respect, emotional support, interpersonal skills, critical reflection, and leadership capacity (Ashwin, 2002; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Egege & Kutieleh, 2015; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh, & Wilss, 2008; Rittschof & Griffin, 2001). Investigations of experiences and outcomes as a result of professional mentoring relationships have gained traction as well. Professional fields such as occupational therapy (Nolinske, 1995), engineering (Green & Bauer, 1995), nursing (Blowers, Ramsey, Merriman, & Grooms, 2003), school counseling (Desmond, 2009), academia (Carmel & Paul, 2015) and elementary and high-school teaching (Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014) have examined the effects of mentoring within these various contexts, showing positive results for mentors and mentees alike.

### ***Peer mentoring***

Peer mentoring, a relationship defined by the pairing of a mentor and mentee of relatively equal experience, is thought to be an untapped solution for challenges in many professional domains (Dennison, 2010). For many professional fields, there are simply too few senior members who are able or willing to act as mentors or meet the specific needs of new practitioners in quickly changing fields (Holbeche, 1996). Additionally, as both mentees and mentors within a peer mentorship are

on relatively equal footing, there is the opportunity for empowerment in addition to learning (Holbeche, 1996). Benefits for mentors within a peer mentorship have included the opportunity to review knowledge and stay current with skills, increased networking, an increase in respect from colleagues, and the opportunity to participate in an overall rewarding experience. The benefits for mentees within a peer mentorship have included reduced feelings of intimidation, greater comfort within the field, and a connection and shared perspectives with a peer mentor who has had a similar experience (Dennison, 2010). Benefits of peer mentoring for both mentors and mentees have included increased morale, collaborations, productivity, enhanced learning, and positive changes in health behaviors and sustainable lifestyle patterns (Brancato, 2003; Petosa & Smith, 2014; Santucci et al., 2008). While these studies indirectly measure or explore conceptual ideas for mentoring in a broad context, little is known about the role that mentoring (especially peer mentoring) can play in evaluation.

### ***Mentoring in evaluation***

Dillman (2012) surveyed members of the AEA GSNE TIG and asked them to order and rank the value of their educational experiences as they contributed to skill development. Specifically, they were asked if they had been mentored by an advisor, mentored by faculty or staff, mentored by a more advanced student, mentored by other professional, or had served as a mentor to someone else. Results indicated that working with a mentor was the fourth most influential education experience, preceded only by coursework, fieldwork, and conferences, respectively. Working as a mentor was also reported as generating a positive outcome and was ranked as the 10th most influential experience in skill development. While mentorship was ranked as important, only 53% of survey respondents indicated participating in some form of traditional mentorship. Respondents who did have mentors ranked it second among educational experiences according to perceived contribution to the development of the majority of competencies. Other cases of mentorship in evaluation describe both traditional and peer mentors as supportive and able to model expectations, provide feedback, treat students as professionals, and share opportunities (Gredler & Johnson, 2001; Levin-Rozalis & Rosenstein, 2003). Many prominent evaluators have reflected on the opportunities they have had with renowned scholars, a form of traditional mentorship, as demonstrating similar gains (Chelimsky, 2013; Chen, 2007; Schwandt, 2008).

Whereas the above studies focus on various configurations of the mentor relationship, we aim to provide an in-depth example of experiences and outcomes resulting from the peer-mentoring relationship specifically. As we have varying levels of evaluation experience (no experience to upwards of seven years), theoretical and epistemological leanings (traditional postpositivist to critical constructivist), educational training (self-taught in evaluation to doctorates who completed evaluation programs), evaluation career aspirations, and physical locations (including the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean), we believe this exploratory analysis will contribute to the sparse knowledge about mentorship

in evaluation. The role of peer mentorships in evaluation training and field socialization and the development of new evaluators in the technical, situational, and management practice competency domains is a pertinent issue as the field continues to expand, professionalize, and grapple with training opportunities for those entering the field.

## **METHODS**

### ***Study design***

A reflective case-study research design was selected to assess similarities, differences, and patterns across multiple cases (Campbell, 2010; Stake, 2006). We employed a constructivist action research approach, thus framing the construction of reality through meanings created both socially and experientially by members of the mentoring group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Reflecting on our experiences through a series of prompts, we independently developed our understanding of the phenomenon and assigned meaning across multiple sources of evidence. This approach allowed us to use our own experiences and reflections to assemble an in-depth personal view that ultimately provided insight to help us understand better the broader issue of peer mentoring within evaluation (Patton, 2015). Our ultimate goal for this research was to present study findings in a reflective narrative format useful when describing lessons learned for the improvement of practice and highlighting areas of future study and exploration (Becker & Renger, 2017).

### ***Context***

The AEA GSNE TIG Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) was established in 2014 to address a need for member support and guidance observed across TIG membership (AEA GSNE TIG, 2017). The program was developed to support novice evaluators as they enter the evaluation field. Goals included serving as a point of initial contact for new GSNE members, providing a supportive space for members to ask questions during their first year, and facilitating the transition of GSNE members into other TIGs and the broader AEA community (AEA GSNE TIG, 2017). Mentor qualifications included a minimum of two years in the field of evaluation and a willingness to support and engage with potential mentees. Mentors and mentees were then matched based on mentor areas of expertise, needs, and interests shared through program interest surveys distributed to the TIG membership. Unlike other more structured AEA mentoring programs (such as the Graduate Education Diversity Internship [GEDI]), the GSNE PMP allowed for flexibility on the part of the participants, allowing them to structure the program to their own needs.

### ***Data collection and analysis***

The reflections discussed here represent the experiences of one successful intact mentor–mentee group consisting of one mentor and five mentees. Participant

experience in the field of evaluation and level of participation in the AEA organization varied amongst members. At the time of the study, the mentor was a doctoral candidate in educational psychology and brought seven years of evaluation experience to the program. Mentees selected for the group had recently completed or were working toward completion of advanced degrees in education or evaluation. Unlike the mentor, mentees were novice evaluators with little experience in formal evaluation practice.

At the completion of the first year of the mentoring relationship, the mentor and mentees reflected on their experiences in the program to highlight gains, identify future areas for development, and improve future mentor/mentee experiences in the GSNE PMP. Reflections consisted of responses to three overall prompts: (a) what encouraged the mentee/mentor to seek participation in this program, b) what benefits or successes did the mentor/mentee attribute to the peer mentoring program, and c) what suggestions would the mentor/mentee offer to future mentors and mentees to promote success in the program. A thematic analysis of participant reflections (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) was conducted by the first and second authors and then presented to fellow mentees for member checking and clarification (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Resulting themes presented a variety of motivations for enrollment in the program, expected and unexpected benefits, and reflections on promoters of success within the peer-mentoring experience. Results indicated that the experience of peer mentoring in this program enhanced development of competencies for the novice evaluators included in this study.

## **LESSONS LEARNED: EXPECTED AND UNEXPECTED BENEFITS**

Analysis of participant reflections illustrated shared experiences within the mentors' and mentees' diverse experiences, backgrounds, and motivations for joining the program—namely, the presence of expected and unexpected benefits of program participation and promoters of program success. Participants expressed a variety of motivations for seeking a peer mentorship opportunity and the expected benefits that influenced their enrollment. Upon completion of the first year of mentorship, however, the group also identified a number of unexpected benefits of participation in the program as the specific mentor–mentee cohort developed (Table 1). Most prominent among motivators and expected benefits were membership in a community of practice, socialization into the field, guidance on current work, and addressing gaps in knowledge.

### ***Membership in a community of practice***

The most significant motivator for program participation was the desire for membership in a community of practice and the opportunity to meet fellow novice evaluators at similar points in their careers. Parallel to the finding that peer mentees expressed an important connection and shared perspective with their mentors (Dennison, 2010), participants in this study noted that while they would

**Table 1.** Expected and unexpected benefits for peer-mentor program participation

Principal benefit	Selected participant reflections
Membership in a community of practice	"I am now a part of and contribute to a network of people talking about and doing evaluation. It's a feeling that you've arrived." "I've been able to meet people at the same place in life that I will possibly continue to work with throughout my career. We're struggling in the same places and bond over that."
Socialization into the field	"I've determined a fulfilling niche to call home in the field. I belong." "I feel more empowered in the field and have a greater drive for participation in all levels of the organization. I highly doubt I would be where I am in my TIG if I hadn't developed the confidence and connections from my fellow mentees."
Guidance on current work	"I was able to get valuable advice from someone else outside of my direct reports and supervisors on evaluations in an environment where I can ask the questions I don't feel comfortable asking my coworkers" "I received helpful, specific feedback on a publication that I eventually submitted and encouragement to persevere through a tough review process"
Addressing gaps in knowledge	"Access to new resources, theories, ideas, perspectives. I've been exposed to things I didn't know existed or have been exposed to old ideas in a way that I had not considered." "It helped me realize greater gaps in my knowledge—but with the ability to build and fill them."

ordinarily be working or studying within the field individually, the program provided a cohort of fellow students of evaluation with whom they could discuss topics of interest and ongoing work. Mentees were able to "meet people at the same place in life that [they] will continue to work with throughout [their] career" as well as developing an ongoing and growing network within the broader field and its professional organizations.

### ***Socialization into the field***

The goal of transitioning from novice student of evaluation to full participant in the field was an additional motivator for participation. Participants sought opportunities to engage with AEA and the broader profession to complement their academic preparation. Participants felt that upon completion of their academic studies, they were "let loose" into the field with little information regarding the practical aspects of evaluation. For these participants, the PMP provided socialization into the field. Program participation offered discussions of career paths in evaluation as well as a place to discuss options for further academic study

and identification of a “niche to call home in the field.” Participants utilized the program to identify various previously unknown opportunities in evaluation, resulting in feelings of empowerment and “a greater drive for participation in all levels of the organization.”

### ***Guidance on current work***

Mentees sought guidance and advice from the program and specifically sought out mentorship to have a safe and judgment-free place to discuss ideas and ask questions about evaluation design and methodology. Mentees described the “step down” relationship as a positive aspect of the experience, one that was not as intense as direct supervision but still involved accountability and seeking advice and expertise as needed from someone with more experience. Opportunities for context-specific guidance were prevalent throughout the reflections, including addressing specific client issues, best practices in approaching sensitive situations, and feedback on individual publications. As a result, mentees not only strengthened their professional skills and competence in evaluation practice but also, through the process, felt supported and encouraged in the field.

### ***Addressing gaps in knowledge***

All mentees voiced concern regarding gaps in knowledge and competency and saw membership in the PMP as a potential path toward filling this gap through discussions of specific topics and learning from other group members’ areas of evaluation focus. For most mentees, this benefit was realized through access to new resources, theories, ideas, and perspectives and greater discussion and exploration of specialized topics such as cultural relevance and competence in practice. For most, this exploration led to a realization of “greater gaps in [my] knowledge,” but empowerment “with the ability to build and fill them,” thereby promoting a sense of continued learning and growth within the field beyond the mentee experience integral to reflective and competent professional development.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: PROMOTERS OF SUCCESS IN THE PEER-MENTORING PROGRAM**

In addition to the benefits stemming from program engagement, promoters of program success also emerged from participant reflections (Table 2). Shared strategies for success include awareness of goals prior to participation, constant and varied communication, flexible structure, strong mentor–mentee matching, and the promotion of a professional network.

### ***Awareness of goals***

Upon reflection, group members stressed the importance of having clear goals guiding the mentee–mentor relationship. Responses suggested the role of reflection on participants’ professional skills and areas for improvement as crucial before working with a mentor. An inventory of potential mentee areas of perceived need

**Table 2.** Promoters of success in the PMP

Successful strategies	Selected participant reflections
Awareness of goals prior to participation	<p>“Know yourself and what you need professionally”</p> <p>“Be clear about what you want to get from and give to the mentoring relationship”</p>
Constant and varied communication	<p>“Stay active and involved in the relationship—both with your mentor and fellow mentees.”</p> <p>“Stay in touch through social media, build relationship formally and informally”</p>
Flexible structure	<p>“Be willing to work as a cohort rather than individuals”</p> <p>“Allow the relationship to evolve and grow—I can’t imagine this level of learning had I followed my original plan or shied away from new strategies”</p>
Importance of appropriate matching of mentor and mentee	<p>“Match with mentor who has similar values. Remember—evaluation is not value-free! Not only are you speaking the same language, but the learning is happening in both directions”</p> <p>“Do some homework on what area of evaluation interests you—and be sure to find a matching mentor. Be clear about what you’re looking for by knowing what you need.”</p>
Promotion of professional networks	<p>“Look for continued opportunities to collaborate and learn from one another; invite fellow mentees to opportunities”</p> <p>“Having someone within the group to bring you in and do things as basic as introductions was amazing. Plus, as a novice as well, they know what it’s like and aren’t so removed from the ‘imposter syndrome’ fight or flight that takes over so you actually socialize and connect.”</p>

assisted the mentor in identifying ways to help the mentee and assisted the mentee and mentor in making the most of the relationship. As was shown by [Huston and Weaver \(2008\)](#), the authors found that setting specific goals and objectives guided their time together and served as benchmarks to meet during the relationship.

### ***Constant and varied communication***

Communication served as the cornerstone of the mentor–mentee relationship. Without regular, active communication, the relationship crumbles. Successful relationships within the group were defined by early agreement on what type of communication (face to face, email, phone, and text) was most productive and what frequency best suited their relationship, allowing both the mentor and mentee to define the relationship and the time commitment. Reflections suggest that as little as a half-hour phone call once a month, with clear goals and time for questions and discussion, was enough to cultivate a strong relationship between the mentee and mentor. Beyond formal mentoring meetings, mentees and

mentors enjoyed communicating via social media, which proved vital to building an authentic informal peer relationship in addition to a professional one.

### ***Flexible structure***

An overwhelming theme among participant reflections was the need to be open to an evolving structure of mentorship. For some members of the mentee group, group mentorship was more feasible or appropriate than individual mentorship. For others, the mentorship relationship became largely multidirectional, with freer boundaries about who was the mentor and who the mentee. While it was considered necessary for all members to clarify goals at the onset as described above, the ability to remain open to gaining things from the mentorship that were not explicit from the start were central to mentees' perceived success in the program. Unanimously, flexibility was seen as key to getting the most out of the experience.

### ***Importance of appropriate matching***

The field of evaluation is characterized by a plurality of working methods and approaches, furthering the importance of being matched with (or intentionally seeking) a mentor who has similar values. Both the mentor and mentees stressed the importance of reliable matching at the start of the mentoring relationship. For mentees, reflecting on needs and areas of interest before entering the mentorship was seen as vital to the appropriate matching they experienced and gave direction to the format of the mentorship. The mentor–mentee matching orchestrated through interest questionnaires was viewed as not only adequate but also necessary to the success experienced by the mentee group.

### ***Promotion of professional networks***

An additional benefit of the mentor–mentee relationship was the opportunity to network across a broader group. In this instance, where the mentor–mentee relationship stemmed from a larger organization, the mentor and mentees were able to network within this group and across one another's connections. These connections were successful not only in engaging mentor-group members with the organization at large but also in making connections with evaluation peers operating at similar places within their careers and educational attainment. These findings echo [Petosa and Smith's \(2014\)](#) assertion that mentoring programs can benefit schools and other organizations by assisting in the establishment of social and professional networks.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

[Egege and Kutieleh \(2015\)](#) argue that research on peer mentoring should elucidate what mentoring entails and be clear about best practices and benefits. Little is known about the role that less formal opportunities, such as mentoring, play in evaluation training. The experiences presented here are limited in their reflection

of only one mentor group's case within a greater field's push for competency, but they provide a foundation for exploring the potential benefits and best practices in peer mentoring as it applies to evaluation and further encourage the use of the practice across evaluation professional organizations. Unlike other forms of mentorship discussed above, the structure of peer mentoring provided a greater sense of belonging and cohort mentality among evaluators at similar (and often seemingly vulnerable) points in their career. The peer-to-peer nature allowed for the openness of conversation and willingness to analyze and share weaknesses in the pursuit of growing as competent evaluators. Aside from the social and personal benefits of the experience, the peer-mentoring experience was vital to the development of a number of evaluation competencies, including those identified by professional organizations (CES, 2010). Socialization into the field, guidance on current work, and addressing gaps all contributed to participant development in the technical, situational, and management-practice competency domains (CES, 2010). Further, the decision to participate in a peer-mentoring program underscores the importance of the domain of reflective practice, as evaluators are encouraged to be aware of their strengths, deficiencies, and needs for growth (CES, 2010). Specifically, reflection themes suggest that peer-mentorship formats have the potential to promote multiple competencies, including understanding the knowledge base (competency 2.1), examining contexts (3.2), sharing evaluation expertise (3.9), and identifying and mitigating problems (4.7) (CES, 2010). Finally, in addition to enhancing our professional competencies, we have developed an understanding of potential best practices for those attempting to implement a peer-mentoring relationship. These include ensuring awareness of mentee-mentor goals before participation, constant and varied communication, flexible structure, attention to mentor-mentee matching, and establishing and promoting a professional network. Although experiences were limited to those of a single group, we hope that the potential of peer mentoring experienced by this cohort will provide some insight into the uses and application of peer mentoring in the evaluation field as well as encourage further research into the benefits and outcomes of such relationships.

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