



MENTOR

GEORGIA

2022-24
STRATEGIC PLAN

**FOCUS ON
CONNECTION**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

SECTION 1
MISSION, VISION, VALUES

4

SECTION 2
WHY MENTOR GEORGIA?

4

SECTION 3
HOW WE GOT HERE

5

SECTION 4
HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

6

SECTION 5
AN INTENTIONAL, INCLUSIVE, PROCESS

7

SECTION 6
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

13

SECTION 7
MENTOR GEORGIA GLOSSARY



Connecting programs to best practices | Practitioners to each other | Youth to supportive relationships

PRIORITIES

- 1.**

Build the support structure behind MENTOR Georgia
- 2.**

Build community within and around the MENTOR Georgia network
- 3.**

Grow awareness & external affairs for MENTOR Georgia statewide
- 4.**

Build tracking and technical assistance framework



MISSION

Our mission is to strengthen the quality and increase the quantity of mentoring relationships for Georgia’s young people and to close the mentoring gap.

VISION

Every young person in Georgia has supportive mentoring relationships they need to grow and develop into thriving, productive and engaged adults.

VALUES

- We believe in the power of community**
We make connections, build relationships and align work with partners in service.
- We embrace our shared humanity**
We act through compassion, equity, and inclusivity in everything we do.
- We strive to always be better**
We are lifelong learners who follow data and proven strategies to increase the quality of our work.
- We are strategic**
We operate with care, efficiency, transparency and integrity.



WHY MENTOR GEORGIA?

Young people who have a mentor are more likely to succeed in education, daily life, and career. It's a simple truth backed by decades of research: by investing in a young person, a single caring adult can help them grow a sense of identity, reserves of self-confidence, and the support network that successful adults rely on to navigate life.





Research also tells us that one out of every three young people will grow up without a mentor – **that's the mentoring gap**. We have everything we need to fix this problem; but it takes aligning systems, promoting best practices, and supporting leadership development among the community-based programs that match mentors and mentees. **MENTOR Georgia was established to close this gap in Georgia.**

HOW WE GOT HERE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF MENTOR GEORGIA

MENTOR Georgia is a statewide **Affiliate** of **MENTOR National** working to bring research-backed tools, quality training, and customized professional development resources to Georgia. Housed at the **J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development** at the University of Georgia, MENTOR Georgia seeks to elevate the work of local mentoring programs, advocate for the field, and invest in local leadership. Together, with peers and partners, we are working to expand and deepen the opportunities for Georgia youth to connect with caring, committed adults.

MENTOR Georgia began incubating at the Fanning Institute following a 2016 landscape scan and study undertaken in partnership with the Georgia Student Finance Authority and MENTOR National. That study sought to map and expand understanding of structured mentoring and youth development programs in Georgia, to document and analyze key trends, and to identify unmet needs. A total of 186 youth development **providers** and **organizations** participated, with some agencies operating multiple programs, thus providing insight into 220 mentoring programs.

Among the key findings:

-  More than half of programs surveyed reported operating with a **budget of less than \$25,000**
-  Meanwhile, more than 87 percent of programs reported either **stable or increased numbers of youth served** within the prior year
-  The **ten largest programs were serving almost 70 percent of all youth**, with the median program serving just 50 young people
-  Nearly 70 percent of programs surveyed expressed that they were unaware of the most recently updated research-to-practice standards for youth mentoring, with **57 percent reporting that they were not using any nationally-aligned standards** to ensure effectiveness of programming and produce positive outcomes for youth.

Since that foundational landscape and analysis report, MENTOR Georgia has grown a community of practitioners and supporters, officially recognized by MENTOR National as an “operationalizing” Affiliate. David Meyers, a public service faculty member and co-author of the 2016 landscape scan, led MENTOR Georgia as a portion of his role at the Fanning Institute. In June of 2021, Leslie Hale was hired as the first full-time executive director to grow the **MENTOR Georgia Network**, develop programs, oversee training, and set strategic direction for the affiliate.



There is no such thing as other people's children.





Bill Russell, MENTOR Co-Founder

HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

Soon after her hire, Executive Director Leslie Hale embarked on a virtual listening tour with mentoring and youth service programs around Georgia, conducting interviews and one-on-one conversations with 36 program directors. The discussions covered a range of topics, but two main questions were posed: (1) What successes are programs in Georgia celebrating that can be highlighted, scaled, and learned from? (2) What challenges are programs facing that the network collectively – or MENTOR Georgia specifically – can help them address?

Additionally, MENTOR Georgia launched a **mentor program** provider inventory in September 2021, conducting outreach to more than 530 contacts (previously identified programs, active members of the MENTOR network, listserv members, and newsletter recipients). The inventory is an effort to update the 2016 map of where programs and services exist, to better understand who is being served, and begin forming an updated understanding of the needs of mentor programs in the wake of historic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time this strategic plan was formed, that web-based inventory had 50 submissions, with responses informing MENTOR Georgia's strategic goals and plans.

While successes currently identified by programs vary – from numbers of youth served to growing funding to robust collaborations with school districts and fellow mentor programs – a number of challenges were commonly identified. Top needs fall into several areas:

-  **Resource development** – identifying funding sources, grant writing tools, and advocacy to the funding community about the critical importance of mentoring in youth development.
-  **Volunteer mentor recruitment** – Most programs have wait lists. Often, the larger the program, the longer the wait list. Meanwhile, well-established programs historically recruit a volunteer force that is overwhelmingly white, while serving a highly diverse population of youth. Much attention and focus is needed around recruitment generally, and around recruitment of diverse mentors specifically.
-  **Training and professional development** – Training for programs around best practices, in particular implementing those practices intentionally and effectively.
-  **Nonprofit organizational development** – Organizations recognize that strategic planning, board development, and solid policies and procedures are foundational to effectively meeting their mission, yet they often lack the capacity or the tools to devote attention to



Developing relationships with caring and supportive adults through mentoring is a key tool through which we can help these young people achieve their dreams. The promise of a generation depends on our efforts to reconnect these young people to education and career opportunities.

- Melody Barnes, Chair,
Aspen forum for Community Solutions

AN INTENTIONAL, INCLUSIVE PROCESS

In the fall of 2021, the 10-person MENTOR Georgia **Advisory Board** convened with an initial goal to refine the mission, vision, and values of the organization, reflected in the opening pages of this plan. Next, the board members collaborated on a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) to align the priorities and focus of MENTOR Georgia in the coming years. The most significant and frequently identified items within that analysis were:

-  **Strengths:** Strong organizational leadership, stemming from a well-connected, inclusive, and collaborative board and a strong executive director hire; Robust institutional partners in MENTOR National and at UGA; An existing, well-established, and engaged mentor program network.
-  **Weaknesses:** Lack of clarity and identity around what MENTOR Georgia offers and/or lack of awareness around the state of MENTOR Georgia and mentor programs in general; Lack of diversity and representation (racially, ethnically, and geographically) among current advisory board members; Small staff and relative youth of the organization.
-  **Opportunities:** The power to create interconnection between and among Georgia's mentor programs and invest in capacity; Community interest in and acceptance of the importance of mentoring; A strong network of **systems-level organizations** as peers and partners; Diverse funding opportunities.
-  **Threats:** Resource scarcity and perceived funding competition; Competing priorities at the state and systems level; Lack of awareness statewide of MENTOR Georgia and MENTOR National.



With the above analysis guiding the advisory board in crafting a path forward, the board met for a full-day, in-person strategic planning session in October 2021. Four strategic priority areas were identified, with specific goals and time-bound metrics beneath each one.

Following the collaborative session to form these priorities, and the translation of notes from that meeting into specific goals, MENTOR Georgia shared the priorities and goals with the 18-person MENTOR Georgia **Provider Council**. In December 2021, members of the Provider Council met to discuss the priorities and provide feedback. The assembled members endorsed the priorities and goals, added language that indicated possible missing groups from Priority 3 (Goal b) and began the discussion about implementation of the plan, including the formation of committees.

These priorities will align and inform the work over the coming years at MENTOR Georgia, with regular opportunities to pause and take stock of progress, shifting needs, learnings, and resources.



With a mentor, youth are 78 percent more likely to volunteer regularly in their communities.

- The Mentoring Effect™



2022-24 MENTOR GEORGIA STRATEGIC PLAN:

A vision to grow connection for programs,
practitioners, and youth

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Build the support structure behind MENTOR Georgia



Goals:

- a. Staffing: **Build staff capacity and skills** to advance the work of MENTOR Georgia. This includes UGA, graduate student workers, interns, VISTA, etc.
- b. Funding: **Increase revenue from diversified and sustainable sources** through strong philanthropic partnerships and fee-for-service programming. Includes corporate, institutional, public, and individual funding sources.
- c. Governance: **Develop strong processes, structure, and representation** on MENTOR Georgia Advisory Board, Provider Council, and committees.
- d. Milestones: **Compete MENTOR Affiliate Development Dashboard** and execute on all Core Functional Areas of MENTOR Affiliate development.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Build community within & around the MENTOR Georgia network



Goals:

- a. Expand Reach: Identify existing mentoring programs and bring them into the MENTOR Georgia network; Catalyze new growth among underserved populations and geographic areas by leveraging existing programs; Identify geographic and/or demographic gaps in service **and partner organizations** or **champions** to meet previously unmet needs.
- b. Facilitate Opportunities for Learning, Collaboration and Networking: By hosting an annual statewide summit, regional or population of focus summits, webinars, professional learning communities, problem of practice consultancies.
- c. Identify Connectors and Weavers: This team of mentoring champions – to include superintendents, youth-serving organizations, coalitions at the statewide level, and local/regional conveners – will integrate the work into their events and strategic initiatives.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Grow awareness & external affairs for MENTOR Georgia statewide



Goals:

- a. Communications Plan: Develop and implement a strategic communications plan including online presence, brand assets, publications (storytelling), and building/segmenting audience.
- b. Recruit and Refer Mentors: Build a strategy for marketing and recruitment of mentors that engages programs, **mentor community** champions, policy-makers, business groups, faith-based organizations, and civic groups while leveraging the tools available from MENTOR National (including the Mentoring Connector).
- c. Education and Outreach: Development of an education and outreach strategy includes partnership engagement and developing an advocacy and policy plan with partners following a policy landscape analysis.
- d. Elevation of the Mentoring movement: All of the above plans and strategies will incorporate education around best practices, spotlighting quality programming, and elevating pacesetters in Georgia.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Build tracking & technical assistance framework



Goals:

- a. Localize TA System: Become the lead agency for technical assistance administration via the National Mentoring Resource Center.
- b. Needs Assessment: Survey mentoring landscape and mentoring programs to identify needs (as identified in **Priority 2, Goal b**).
- c. Partner with Broader Youth Development Organizations: Identify potential duplication of services; define partnerships; and leverage educational, training, and collaboration opportunities.
- d. Develop and Implement Trainings on Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Advisory Board – References here are to the MENTOR Georgia Advisory Board, a 10- to 15-member board dedicated to advancing MENTOR Georgia. At the time of this plan’s formation, this board is heavily represented by founding members who work directly in the youth development and/ or human development fields. As noted in this plan, MENTOR Georgia has goals to grow and diversify geographic and industry representation so the Advisory Board can exercise the needed governance and advocacy functions across the state and across sectors.

Affiliate – MENTOR scales impact by developing and supporting affiliates on a national level. Affiliates are non-partisan, public-private organizations that galvanize local or statewide mentoring movements. They provide leadership and infrastructure necessary to support the expansion of quality mentoring relationships. They also serve as clearinghouses for training, resources, public awareness, and advocacy.

Champion – An advocate for MENTOR Georgia within an industry, a geographic location, or a community. Champions advance the need for investment of human and monetary resources in mentoring; they espouse the benefits of mentoring to youth and our state at large; they discuss the work of MENTOR Georgia within their spheres of influence and encourage people and organizations to become part of the MENTOR Georgia network.

J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development

A unit of Public Service and Outreach at the University of Georgia, the Fanning Institute is dedicated to strengthening communities, organizations, and individuals through leadership development, training, and education.

Mentor Community – Referred to typically as “the community,” this is in reference to the broader landscape of mentoring programs and organizations in Georgia, regardless of their connection to MENTOR Georgia in the past, present, or future.

MENTOR Georgia – An Affiliate of MENTOR National, housed at the University of Georgia’s J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development. MENTOR Georgia launched following a 2016 landscape scan of mentoring in Georgia and hired its first full-time employee in 2021.

MENTOR Georgia network – Commonly called “the network,” this refers to organizations formally connected to MENTOR Georgia through receipt of MENTOR listserv or newsletter communications, attendance at virtual or in-person gatherings and trainings, or self-identification as being part of MENTOR Georgia.

MENTOR National – MENTOR was founded 30 years ago to expand opportunity for young people by creating a youth mentoring field and movement. Based in Boston, Mass., MENTOR is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States, with Affiliates located in 23 states and Canada.

Mentor program – A specific, defined program offering mentoring to youth through any number of service models (group, one-to-one, or blended) and settings (school-based, community-based, site-based, or in a workplace.) Some providers and organizations have multiple programs under a single organizational umbrella.

Pacesetter – Programs and providers who exemplify best practices or innovative service delivery, acting as examples to their peers and colleagues, contributing to the shared learning of the mentoring community. A pacesetter does not have to be a paragon of perfect program execution, but rather an organization that can be an example of how to do one practice (or more) well. A program or organization can be a pacesetter in one area of focus and a beginning learner in another.

Partner organization – Organizations formally recognized as partners to MENTOR Georgia, to be defined within the goals of this plan.

Provider / Organization – The entity that runs or offers a mentor program. Some organizations offer a single mentor program, and therefore may use the term program and provider interchangeably. Other organizations and providers may offer multiple programs – sometimes mentoring and non-mentoring youth development programs.

Provider Council – In this document, this term refers to the MENTOR Georgia Provider Council, a body of 20 to 24 program founders, directors, and staff. They provide a direct advisory link between MENTOR Georgia strategic priorities and the resources and needs of the mentoring community in Georgia. The Provider Council has opted to take part in the operationalizing this plan by forming committees to oversee how the plan is carried out.

Systems-level organizations / coalitions – Agencies or coalitions of agencies, typically at the state or regional level, aligning multiple organizations around a single cause or need, e.g.: youth mental health, high school graduation, workforce development, etc.

Weaver – Those who perform a connecting function: between MENTOR Georgia and providers, champions, advocates, and more; between strategic priorities and the resources necessary to carry them out; between systems-level work and MENTOR Georgia in order to weave the work of mentoring into youth development and human development systems across the state.




MENTOR

GEORGIA

 MENTORGeorgia

 MENTORGeorgia

 mentorga

 706.542.1108

 MENTORGeorgia@fanning.uga.edu