IMPACT HUB

STARTUP MENTORSHIP PRACTICES IN **THE AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ECOSYSTEM**

2022

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CONTENT

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1. Introduction

The agricultural and food industry is an important economic sector in many African countries. In many of these countries, it has the potential to drive economic development and contribute to food security and income generation.

Startups in the agricultural and food industry space are widely seen as the long-lasting route to sustainable development on the continent. Despite the myriad of support programs available to the startups, there's still gaps in terms of mentorship and expert coaching services to propel the startups to their maximum impact potential.

This report serves to present the state of the mentorship and expert coaching landscape in the agricultural and food industry sector for startups. In particular, it highlights: different actors involved in mentoring and their motivations and experience, how they are recruited and selected, and matched with each other (mentor - mentee), how mentorship programs are designed and the role of support providers, remuneration structures in this space, different regulatory frameworks, and how the community of mentors and experts for startups can be built and managed to strengthen the ecosystem of support to startups.
Insights from this report were gleaned from literature review and individual interviews with entrepreneur support and mentorship organisations, startups, investors, mentors and experts.

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2. Definitions

The startup ecosystem has its fair share of jargon with terms like 'mentor', 'expert', 'adviser', and 'coach' being widely used. Although these terms are used interchangeably, the context in which these words appear affect their meaning. 'Mentorship' is defined by its context whilst 'mentor' is defined by the function one performs. These important distinctions must be considered when designing the mentorship programmes.

Mentors & experts [m&e]

Mentors

A mentor supports a mentee on a 360-degree basis by helping them to recognise, explore, reflect upon and address external interferences like knowledge and skills gaps, and internal interferences like fears, insecurities and limiting beliefs. This results in the mentee developing confidence, stronger leadership and the knowledge to deal with and approach adversity and challenges in their business.[4] A mentor tends to encourage the entrepreneur to cultivate a solution-focused mindset within themselves, as opposed to giving them solutions. 'Mentoring' should be used as an umbrella term for various types of support like coaching, consulting and advising[4].

Experts

Experts, on the other hand, are usually professionals and consultants who leverage their specific domain expertise in response to a specific strategic need/objective of a startup. They generally engage with entrepreneurs for a short period of time[4], and are often actively involved in assisting with the implementation of the recommended strategy.

Within the agri-tech space, there are expert mentors with years of experience who work within the sector and teach young entrepreneurs. These seasoned professionals, especially in Africa, do not view mentorship as a trade in the same way as general mentors within entrepreneurship support organisations, but instead as part of the journey to support startups. Mentorship for the subject area experts is more of a natural process that either happens within the organisation they work in or as a result of the networks and interactions they have with their peers, partners and suppliers.

Startups & investors [s&i]

Startups

A startup is a young company with an innovative idea that uses innovative technology to create a new product or service. Startups have a competitive edge, are efficient, create an entry barrier for competitors and compete with larger well-established companies.

When it comes to the challenges the agricultural sector faces, agritech startups have the potential to address the issues and expedite innovation. Various trends facilitate technology adoption in the farm sector: upsurge in internet usage, increase in smartphone penetration, emergence of startups and various government initiatives in rural areas.

Investors

Every startup, regardless of the nature and size of its operation, requires funding to realise its innovative ideas. Funding a business can be quite complicated but it is essential for the idea to become a fruitful product or service. There are various phases of funding. For example, early stage investors invest in startup ideas and work with the startups to build an investable minimum viable product (MVP). Various types of investors can invest in startups such as angel investors, accelerators, crowdfunding platforms, micro venture capital firms and venture capital firms.

Entrepreneurship support organisations and mentorship organisations [e&m]

Entrepreneurship support organisations (esos)

Entrepreneurship support organisations play an important role in encouraging innovation, laying down entrepreneurial infrastructures and building entrepreneurial ecosystems. ESOs assist entrepreneurs in starting and growing viable businesses by providing training, coaching and mentorship. With the help of various programmes and activities, they influence policies, engage stakeholders, and support entrepreneurs, innovators, startups and SMEs. ESOs are social enterprises in essence that usually rely on partnerships, sponsorships, CSI and grants to finance their programmes.

Mentorship organisations

Mentorship organisations provide mentorship support to youth, young adults, professionals and entrepreneurs through mentorship and mentorship programmes. This enables them to drive personal growth, build skills, and gain knowledge. Mentorship organisations focused on supporting entrepreneurs are usually registered as not-for-profit. They rely on grants and ESOs to finance their programmes.

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3. Mentors

Mentoring relationships

Evidence from the literature suggests that mentors perform a number of functions within a mentoring relationship. The different mentor functions studied in the context of the novice entrepreneur can be grouped into the following four categories:[6]

• Psychological functions:
When the mentor gives feedback to his mentee, reassures, motivates and acts as a confidant. These functions appear to be the most important for the mentee to see the benefits of the relationship.

• Entrepreneurial career functions:
When a mentor gives the mentee information about the business world, introduces the mentee to someone in his network, confronts the mentee's ideas in order to test their maturity and guides the mentee toward appropriate solutions.

• Role model functions:
When the mentor shares his entrepreneurial experiences with the mentee in order to give him inspiring examples.

• Expert consultant functions:
When mentors with specific domain expertise help entrepreneurs with strategic issues in their business like marketing, customer acquisition, HR, financial, legal matters.

Key insights on mentoring relationships

GENERAL[2]
On the African continent, there appears to be a large focus on the entrepreneurial career and expert consultant functions. Very little emphasis is placed on psychological functions.

According to informant groups

Mentors and experts
When the context is lacking in the case of an international mentor who has no connection to the locale of the mentee, the need for local mentorship can become prevalent. The politics and socio-economics of a region heavily influence how a business operates. A local mentor will be in a better position to share similar insights and experience practices.

Startups and investors
Most startups received mentorship as part of an accelerator programme run by innovations hubs. The mentorship element is embedded in the programme.
Accelerators and angel investors are the only early stage investors who are keen on investing in startup mentorship.
The other investors depend on the accelerator's programmes to offer mentorship and in return they pay a success fee upon successful investment of the graduate startup.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
Although mentorship plays a key role in business sustainability and scaling, the ESOs and mentorship organisations that were interviewed have found that most entrepreneurs are not willing to commit to a mentorship programme unless it is tied to the completion of an incubation/acceleration programme or to some other form of incentive. The lack of awareness in regards to the importance and impact of mentorship among entrepreneurs is the most prevalent reason to not commit.

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Various mentor profiles

Within the various mentoring relationships, various types of experts can offer their support. Gil Avnimelech et al reveals four different types of experts that work as mentors with accelerators. These are:[10]

Process experts:
Typically experienced entrepreneurs who have founded several startups (and have had CEO roles) in the past and have in-depth knowledge of the entrepreneurship process.

Skill experts (functional experts):
Industry experts from various startup-related fields, such as finance, marketing, product development, UX (user experience) or pitching.

Domain experts:
Industry experts from the specific domains in which the startups operate, such as the cyber, automotive, banking, advertising, music or travel industries.
Investment experts: Investors or other professionals with experience in fundraising and investor selection processes.

Mentorship within ESO programmes

In the majority of mentoring programmes implemented by ESOs, the mentors are volunteers from the business world. When it comes to mentors with functional expertise, they might have never started their own business but they are professionals with deep knowledge of their industry or role, such as bankers, management consultants, lawyers and other senior executives from large firms.[8]

For ESOs, this has obvious advantages, such as lower support costs but it also has major drawbacks. It is more difficult to manage a volunteer who wants to help than to impose a procedure on a recruited employee.

ESOs need to be mindful of what they expect from the mentors since their business or corporate careers occupy their time.

Key informant insights on mentor profiles According to informant groups

Impact hubs

Hub managers are mentors. They are responsible for the first contact with startups, offer support and help apply for programmes. These managers are often process, skill, or domain experts in their own right. They are experienced entrepreneurs, and have had training in various skills in tech, data, and business development. Since the programmes often are multisectoral, hubs outsource mentoring intervention when sector specific, or when it requires functional expertise.

Mentors and experts

Most of the mentors interviewed are process, domain and skill experts. They are recruited by ESOs to fulfil programme objectives and assist startups to scale their businesses. While some do it voluntary, most are paid by the hosting organisation and within the ESO context, the sessions are fairly structured. We only interviewed one investment expert and this may speak to the need to deliberately include investment mentorship in the programme GIZ designs.

Startups and investors

An expert or experienced mentor can provide startups with guidance from a practical point of view. Startups might disengage from mentorship when it proves not to be of value to the business.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations

Since most mentors do not rely on mentorship as a main source of income, it can pose a problem for ESOs in regards to availability and commitment. Mentors can be CEOs, founders, entrepreneurs, professionals, academia, and investors looking to share their knowledge and expertise.

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Connecting mentors and experts with startups

There are six prevalent ways in which startups can get connected with mentors and experts. The following list includes additional information on the relevant approaches according to each informant group.

1. Through informal network relationships with experienced entrepreneurs, professionals, and business leaders.

[S&I] A few startups successfully connected with mentors through platforms such as LinkedIn. Due to their very specific questions, they felt only expert mentors who have had similar experiences could support them.

2. Through participation in an Entrepreneurship Support Programme (incubator or accelerator), or other open innovation initiatives (e.g. Investment Readiness Programmes, startup competitions, etc)

[S&I] Many agritech startups meet their mentors through programmes they applied for.

[S&I] Investors generally meet the startups through pitch events conducted by ESOs.

In some occasions, entrepreneurs request to be mentored in specific subjects, ESOs and mentorship organisations reach out to their networks, communities, and partners to find subject experts willing to mentor.

3. By engaging an open mentorship organisation (i.e. Expert Impact, PUM, etc)

4. By seeking out and appointing a professional in the open market for a fee

[M&E] On rare occasions, mentors apply to become a mentor for a programme with the host organisation taking the lead in terms of the matching process.

5. As part of pre/post-investment support

[S&I] Many early stage investors bring mentors on board when investing in startups.

[S&I] Some angel investors networks offer ESOs success fees for successful matching. This eventually leads to an investment.

6. Within formal and informal peer-to-peer networks and relationships

[M&E] Most mentors are recruited through their networks and ESOs.

[E&M] The majority of the ESOs and mentorship organisations rely on their expert pool to identify suitable/potential mentors for their various programmes and entrepreneurial support activities.

[E&M] Some entrepreneurs request to be mentored by a specific person outside of that organisation's experts pool. ESOs and mentorship organisations facilitate, and sometimes oversee, the communication and interaction between both parties. [E&M] Programme alumni might indicate their interest in mentoring. [E&M] It is common practice for experts, coaches and mentors to reach out to ESOs and mentorship organisations to offer their services.

In less developed ecosystems, organic opportunities to meet potential mentors are limited. In addition, the opportunity to recruit good quality consultants is also limited due to limited budgets.[7]

The best opportunity for startups in africa

The best opportunity for startups to engage with mentors and experts in Africa is within Entrepreneurship Support Organisation programmes and initiatives. Typically, these would be incubators, accelerators and other innovation initiatives like pitch competitions and investment readiness programmes.

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4. Motivation to enter Mentorship programme

The mentorship experience for the majority of startups in Africa is influenced by different stakeholders who have different motivations.

DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATIONS OR CORPORATES
Program Sponsors / funders

STARTUPS

Recruit Match Connect

ESO
Program initiators, implementors and coordinators

Recruit Match Connect Measure

STARTUPS

INVESTORS?
Deal Flow partners

Motivation for mentors

The decision to become a mentor is often born out of the desire to make a real and lasting impact on the world.11 Some of the reasons highlighted for mentors to get involved cover:[8]

Altruism:
A desire to help others, the satisfaction to feel useful and contribute to the economic development of the territory; mentors who come forward to assist startups, including the hub management themselves recognise the socio-economic challenges of the continent and their countries. Most of the mentors interviewed became mentors because they want to see a real impact within the organisations they mentor.

Intellectual enrichment:
To exchange knowledge with younger entrepreneurs who are going through new experiences, to learn about new technologies, or new issues pertaining to the sector or a generation; some of the experts do it out of a desire to share the knowledge they have acquired over the years to ensure that the knowledge does not die with them.

Status:
Pride to continue to contribute and generativity - to pass on knowledge to the new generation of entrepreneurs; mentors see value in associating with global organisations that have great reputations; to enhance their own entrepreneurial and/or professional profile to attract the right global backing for their own projects; some become mentor to grow their network and to profit from the reputation that comes with being a mentor, especially when startups that have high-growth potential.

Personal development:
Through the practice of mentoring, the mentor can develop new skills that can be useful in his own business and managerial practice. These skills can be used for corporate career advancements.

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Motivation for startups

Startups aim to accrue a balance between mentoring, funding and networking opportunities. In developed startup ecosystems, founders often had the opportunity to find their mentor organically. This confirms the importance of mentorship to become a successful startup, both from the point of view of the founder and the mentor.

In addition, the GALI (The Global Accelerator Learning Initiative) report on accelerators in Africa interviewed multiple entrepreneurs who provided similar responses when asked to describe the most important connections made during their programmes; mentors and experts, followed by entrepreneurs and lastly, investors. This indicates that founders valued mentorship connections over investment connections.

Furthermore, access to investment capital can be a key driver to participate in mentorship programmes especially since it is understood to be the biggest challenge in the African startup ecosystem. In emerging markets with relatively little equity funding available, experienced entrepreneurs join accelerators since it is a clear route towards investment.

Key informant insights on the motivations according to informant groups

Mentors and experts

Formal mentorship is usually part of a programme for African startups. In some cases, startups have an informal mentor who helps them with their development and business. The programme support is usually funded by an organisation. Typically, startups do not pay for mentorship services. Mentors can find this problematic since this often leads to mentees not valuing the mentorship and therefore do not commit to the programme.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations

Startups requiring mentorship often approach ESOs for support. Most ESOs provide startups with two types of mentorship support:

• Formal mentorship:

Usually delivered as part of an entrepreneurial support programme in conjunction with other forms of support. By design, formal mentorship is more structured, has a shorter timespan governed by the programme duration, and ESOs have a higher level of engagement in the execution process than informal mentorship.

• Informal mentorship:

Provided for startups seeking mentorship support independently. Informal mentorship is less structured, has little ESO engagement, and has a longer duration than formal mentorship.
Startup mentorship is one aspect of the services provided by mentorship organisations. Normally, mentorship organisations will partner with ESOs to provide programme mentorship to entrepreneurs.

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Motivation for investors
Key informant insights

Impact Hubs

Investors often have a close relationship with hubs. They volunteer their time to mentor startups, and are usually engaged mentors who appreciate the importance of their role as a mentor in the success of their mentees since they will themselves often be seasoned entrepreneurs.

Networking with investors also forms part of the value that hubs offer to clients. Generally, startups would not have access to these networks. Investors that engage with hubs generally do not have the capacity to support startups themselves which is

why they occupy their role alongside hubs. This offers them the opportunity to benefit from the ecosystem, and to gain access to cutting edge innovation.

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5. Mentor selection, recruitment and matching

Selection and recruitment

The best mentors are generalists. They may have in-depth experience in a particular sector, but this does not necessarily have to directly match the business focus of their mentee. There is a great opportunity for cross-learning with diversity.[9]

Furthermore, general mentors should be recruited on fundamental virtues such as humility, reliability, trustworthiness, patience, etc. Both new and experienced mentors can and should upskill on mentoring microskills like active listening, effective questioning and feedback on a continuous basis, either through training and content, or mentor peer-to-peer learning[13]. These microskills are essential in leadership which is why upskilling forms part of the value that mentors derive from volunteering.

Key informant insights on selection and recruitment according to informant groups

Impact Hubs
Hub managers rely heavily on their own networks to establish and grow their database of mentors for programmes. This strategy is often effective, since hubs are not only well connected, but are known in the ecosystem for providing mentorship to startups which is why people who are keen to mentor, know to connect with them.

Sometimes hubs publish open calls for mentors. These calls often attract a high number of respondents. Yet there is a need for thorough vetting of mentor applicants to ensure that only skilled and experienced mentors are recruited.

Mentors and experts
The majority of the mentors were recruited through their network or by sending in their curriculum vitae to open calls for mentorship. A few started mentoring within their organisation as a by-product of their current work, or as part of the company's CSR efforts. This is largely true in the case of ESO mentorship where oftentimes the founder, CEO and/or programme managers fall into mentorship during programme implementation due to their acquired knowledge of various industries and practices.

Startups and investors
Startups are often connected to mentors during the ESOs programme by partaking in interviews or by filling in a needs assessments form. The identified needs function as a guide to programme managers when selecting mentors who will match the respective startups. In a few cases, startups have used LinkedIn profiles to identify their prospective mentors.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
ESOs and mentorship organisations have a process of identifying, recruiting and onboarding mentors. This could be through their networks and communities, via open calls for mentors, by recommendation and referrals or through volunteership. In some cases, ESOs receive requests from startups asking for mentorship by a specific person. ESOs usually encourage startup founders to become involved in mentoring.

Mentor matching

Finding the right match between the mentor and the mentee is an important challenge. It is crucial to the success of the process. Mentor matching can occur based on surface level characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, background, and language), or deep level characteristics (attitudes, values, motivations and beliefs).[10]

A balance between mentor-mentee similarity and diversity is encouraged. Too much diversity might disrupt communication, while too much similarity might hinder learning within the mentoring relationship.[4]

• In a study of 64 ESOs in the Israel ecosystem active between 2011 and 2018, Avnimelech et al observe a number of practices that they use to match mentees with general mentors, including:[10]

• Matching by programme managers based on startup context and mentor expertise and domain.

• A dual ranking system where entrepreneurs and mentors rank their preference for each other based on the startup executive summary and the mentor curriculum vitae, with some surface level matching.

• Through speed dating, where entrepreneurs and potential mentors meet for a quick introductory session; such a matching process is based on first impressions and mainly relies on surface-level characteristics.

• Less often, matching happens in networking events arranged for mentors and mentees.

Expert mentors, on the other hand, can be assigned by the programme, recommended by the general (main) mentor and/ or startups can be given a list of experts to choose from based on their domain expertise.

Ai implementation
The use of AI tools for mentor matching is not widespread in the startup ecosystem in Africa. One reason for this is that programmes are generally small (up to 25 startups in a cohort) which is why platforms that provide AI matching may not be efficient from a pricing perspective, and from a machine learning perspective. These platforms are generally used in other mentoring contexts such as universities and large corporate organisations.

The emerging use of AI in mentoring processes does necessitate the adherence to applicable laws and regulations (e.g. relating to data protection and non-discrimination) and requires a thorough understanding of ethical norms, guidelines, and unresolved issues (e.g. integrity of data, safety, and security of systems, and confidentiality, avoiding bias, insuring trust in and transparency of algorithms).[15]

In addition, platforms that offer AI matching acknowledge that there is still a need for human intervention, hence they also offer exclusively manual and hybrid matching functions.

Mowgli insights indicate that a high degree of AI matching is not best practice. The ESO is best positioned to facilitate the matching since a degree of tacit knowledge on the startup is

necessary for the mentor to do this function more accurately.[9]

Furthermore, mentees want the opportunity to choose a mentor after talking with several potential candidates. There is an indication that there is a higher level of startup mentee satisfaction when they have been involved in the selection of their mentor. In contrast, the most common matching procedure, in which the programme selects the mentor, was the least preferred.[5]

Key informant insights on mentor matching according to informant groups

Impact hubs
The first step of the process when onboarding cohorts is a needs assessment. This is often how hubs establish what resources will be necessary to support the clients and whether those resources are available (internally, or will need to be sourced externally). This is also how managers allocate mentees to mentors.
There is a high degree of preference for mentors who have sector alignment with the mentees, despite research indicating that this is not particularly necessary for successful mentoring relationships.

This may be an indication that the mentors perform multiple functions covering at least general mentorship as well as sector/functional expertise. Sometimes hubs host networking events where introductions can be made and interactions can be noted. Less often, mentors may indicate their preference.

Mentors and experts
A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the need for mentors to be involved in the matching process from the beginning. Often hosting organisations identify the needs of the entrepreneurs and then match them with mentors. These mentors have the expertise required from the list they have compiled but is purely based on the industry knowledge. This might not always be a good fit if the mentee requires specific marketing or other general business skills. A successful mentorship programme should heavily focus on the matching process.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
For ESOs, a needs assessment is the first step towards mentor-mentee matching. When it comes to matching, ESOs have full control over the process unless in cases where startups have specific mentor requests. The same applies to mentorship organisations.

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6. The role of the ESO

Cultivate success of mentoring programmes

Stéphanie Mitrano-Méda et al indicates that among the many actions ESOs could take, only three had a positive impact on the success of the mentoring programmes (measured in terms of satisfaction, learning, and goal achievement). These are:[8]

• Creation and facilitation of a professional, dynamic and friendly network of entrepreneurs.
This action brings together participants (mentors and mentees) who share the values of mutual assistance and personal development.

• Preparation of mentors and mentees for the mentoring relationship.
This action helps participants to understand the framework and to develop the relational skills necessary for the proper functioning and the effectiveness of the relationship.

• Coordination of the connection of the mentor-mentee pair:
The ESO coordinates the process of finding the right mentor-mentee pair for professional and interpersonal compatibility, in addition to supporting the pair in relation to their arrangement.

Mowgli found that mentorship programmes that are coordinated by ESOs have a greater impact. These mentoring relationships have specific goals, have guidelines on how often the pairs meet, give support, and collect impact to assess the performance of mentoring to address any challenges that may arise. They generally are pegged to certain objectives, such as project outcomes or donor/investor expectations.[9]

Programmes that do not provide coordination and follow-up support usually experience higher levels of drop-out rates, shorter duration of the mentoring relationships, and lower satisfaction for the mentors and mentees.[9]

Key informant insights on cultivating the success of mentoring programmes according to informant groups

Mentors and experts

The ESOs are the primary facilitators for programmes that include mentorship. In addition, many general mentors are ecosystem builders. The ESOs leverage their networks to connect each part of the ecosystem and host the entire process from the administration to implementation. After the mentorship phase is complete, they maintain the relationship with all parties.

MENTORSHIP IN ESOs

ESOs offer startups a suite of services at different stages of development that primarily exist out of a combination of a formal educational curriculum, training content and events, an array of volunteer mentors, a bundle of networks with business partners, seed investments or networking with investors, and an alumni community of peers and mentors.

There is a diversity of mentors and experts within ESOs and the programmes vary greatly depending on the stage of the business. For incubation and acceleration programmes, there is a broad spectrum, requiring diverse expertise and timelines depending on the programme design. This model differs from mentorship organisations that focus on a specific area, e.g. product development.

Key informant insights on mentorship in ESOS according to informant groups

Impact Hubs

For the first contact moment and the onboarding of startups, hubs rely on internal expertise. In some instances, hub managers seek out external mentors for specific functional expertise which may not be in place internally. This approach serves multiple purposes, including but not limited to managing slim budgets, since external experts generally levy a fee, and making opportunities available for internal staff to earn additional income from mentoring fees.

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Startups and investors
Mentorship, although often not sought by startups, has played a great role in scaling of startups that have participated in ESOs programmes. These mentorships have been key in perfecting products and services as well as scaling to new markets. In cases of the early investors, the mentorship is coupled with financial investment.

7. Training and programme design

Mentor training

Studies have shown that mentoring relationships have three times more chances to succeed if the mentors and mentees have been trained6. For startups, this training/induction can often be viewed as a strategy session to position mentorship as a critical intervention for successful entrepreneurship.

Mentor training has an impact on several levels:[6]
• It defines the relationship framework and rules of the game by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each individual.
• It enables the mentor to develop the necessary relational skills he/she/they may not have acquired during his/her/their career, such as communication, questioning, and listening skills, or how to build rapport and a trusting relationship

Based on their case-study research, Mitrano-Méda and Véran concluded that one of the three key success actions of an entrepreneurial mentoring programme coordination team was the "preparation of mentors and mentees."[8]

Topics to include in mentor training:[16]

• Clarity in the objective of the mentoring programme:
Business objectives should be decided early on and kept in mind throughout the whole programme.

• Promote the benefits for the mentor:
When mentors know what they are getting out of their mentorship, they are more engaged and invested in their role.

• Provide a role profile for the mentor and the mentee:
If they don't know their roles, both participants can be confused. Role profiles offer clarity and guidance throughout the relationship; remind them that the relationship is always mentee driven and mentor guided.

• Define phases of the relationship:
Defined phases and checkpoints for the mentorship let the mentor know what to expect and set the pace.

Provide tips and ideas for the mentoring relationship:
Give your mentors tools and direction for their mentorship.

Highlight challenges they may encounter and provide solutions:
There are always challenges in any kind of situation. Let the mentors know what they may face and give them solutions to use.

Discuss how to transition the relationship:
Once the learning has been completed or when one or both parties want to terminate the relationship. The mentor may decide to continue the relationship unofficially or take on a new mentee.

What is interesting to note is that mentor training is only marginally useful for new mentors, but is crucial for experienced mentors and can help neutralise the negative effect of accumulated experience. It would therefore appear that training allows mentors to question their intervention and help them maintain an awareness of the psychosocial aspects of mentoring. Without continuous training, the quality of their intervention could decrease in these areas.[6]

Furthermore, the 'knowledge transmission' type of training is not necessarily the only approach that should be considered to improve the mentorship experience. Indeed, a professional co-development approach to training could be appropriate for mentors. An example of this is when mentors are grouped into regional cells where they can discuss their practices, under the supervision of a chief mentor elected by their peers.[6]

Lastly, providing mentors with ongoing support, learning opportunities, and capacity building allows them to deliver greater value, have higher levels of motivation, and is part of the value that a mentoring programme brings to a volunteer mentor.[9]

Key informant insights on mentor training according to informant groups

Impact Hubs
Hubs have a preference for mentors who are experienced entrepreneurs with mentoring experience. They rely on those insights and experiences. Whereas the hubs offer training / teaching mentoring skills to mentor recruits for the necessary quality interactions. In some instances, hubs will conduct induction with the mentees, primarily to set programme expectations and explain programme structure.

Mentors and experts
Mentors noted that when both they and the mentees are extremely clear about the expectations and the work that will go into the sessions, the relationship works well. Establishing the methodology, means of communication, expectations and clear boundaries is therefore crucial not only between the mentee and mentor but also between the hosting organisation and the mentors.

Startups and investors
Early stage investors tend to undergo training on mentorship engagements especially when they are part of a network like ABAN (African Business Angels Network) . Startups are mostly run through a couple of hours programme to explain the mentorship process and tend to culminate in agreement signing that indicates the frequency and duration of the mentorships, and the dos and don'ts.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
ESOs and mentorship organisations found that having an induction session for mentees increases their commitment and engagement levels which, in turn, increases the benefits they gain from the mentorship programme. Mentors too are treated to an induction session, where they are introduced to the programme structure along with their duties and targets. Experience has shown that these sessions have a positive impact on the outcomes of mentorship programmes, induce smooth programme flow and delivery, and ensure that all stakeholders are on the same page.

Programme design

Length of mentorship relationship
Effective mentorship is successful over time, which must be taken into consideration in designing mentorship programmes. GAN (Global Accelerator Network) found that out of over 131

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respondents, on average each cohort typically lasts just under 4 months (19 weeks).[17]

Between 2020 and 2021, GALI identified and assessed over 300 accelerators globally, and found that the majority (77%) of accelerators identified have programmes that last between 3 - 6 months, with a much smaller proportion of them lasting less than 3 months or more than 6 months.[18]

Frequency of engagements

General/main mentors engage regularly (weekly or bi-monthly). For a period between 3 months and 12 months. Experts, on the other hand, will engage with entrepreneurs once or twice in the programme. Startups often engage with multiple expert mentors in the programme.[10]

Once the base parameters have been set, and matching has been made. The structure of the interactions are generally left to the mentor-mentee pair with little interference. There are often different checkpoints along the journey where hubs can get feedback from both mentor and mentee.

Personalised approach

From a mentee perspective, many mentees complain that the training they receive is not tailored to their needs, suggesting that a more personalised learning process may be appropriate.

Graduation

Graduation often takes the form of a Pitch Day, where the networks of the hubs, including potential commercial partners and investors are invited to hear pitches, and potentially reach out to startups.

Key informant insights on programme design according to informant groups

Mentors and experts

The mentors interviewed noted that the mentorship programmes they are part of are usually 4-6 months long, with one 1.5-3 hour session per week. These are usually virtual one-on-one sessions. Bootcamp style mentoring can work for larger cohorts of up to 5-7 individuals (a day) if the programme is well coordinated and the mentorship is surface level.

Startups and investors

Startups on average are comfortable with 3 months long programmes with meeting days frequency between twice and thrice per week either virtual or physical meetups. However, a distinction between ideation and scale up is important to cater to different startups stages. Most startups have undergone structured programmes with other ESOs tending to kick out the stratips that do not achieve the agreed progress during the programmes. The mentorship process has to most part left to be agreed upon between the startups and the mentor. However, some early stage investors do speculate the milestones that startups should reach when engaging with experts. The graduation process, a pitch or demo day gives startups the opportunity to showcase and market themselves and the products/ service, and search for investors.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations

Depending on multiple factors and mainly funding, programme duration could range from 2 months to 1 year with a combination of general and expert mentorship sessions. General mentorship usually takes the form of one-to-one sessions conducted either virtually or physically. ESOs require 2-4 general mentorship hours

per month for each startup. Expert mentorship sessions on the other hand rarely exceed two sessions per programme. They are delivered collectively or in group format rather than on a one-to-one basis. The size of programme cohorts also varies among ESOs. Most ESOs prefer to have between 12 and 27 mentees per programme to maximise efficiency in programme delivery and optimum use of resources. To mark the end of a programme, startups pitch their solutions to an audience of investors and potential partners. Mentorship organisations on the other hand, provide systemic and focused mentorship services and programmes range from at least two months to one year.

8. Technology platforms

During the mentoring process, most pro-grammes make little use of online tools and systems for managing the relationship between mentees and mentors. Among those that do use more advanced online systems, the primary use is to facilitate mentee/mentor management and communication.[5]

This is to be expected since ESO startups' access mentorship programmes are generally small, thus may not justify the cost and administration of a comprehensive multi-function technology platform.

The need to use a tech platform in mentoring programmes varies depending on the role occupied in the startup support process:

• Incubators/accelerators:
Need to streamline the suite of services offered (mentorship, training, networking, introductions) to support startups more efficiently.

• Programme sponsors:
Need to deploy resources more efficiently and effectively track project implementation in various entrepreneurship programmes. Mentors: Need to easily get their startups up and running, easily engage, monitor and evaluate startups in different locations and use allocated time more efficiently.

• Startups:
Need to be empowered to take charge of their development/ mentorship journey by being aware of what success looks like and having a clear path to achieving it.

Key informant insights on technology platforms according to informant groups

Impact Hubs

Hubs do not use technology platforms to manage programmes or mentoring relationships. They rely primarily on widely used tools for different functions such as email for communication, zoom/teams/meets for conferencing, and generally use surveys to get feedback and assess startup progress. Hubs do recognise the importance of platforms and desire to incorporate them into processes. The primary reason given is to offload the manual functions that can be done very easily and automated with a platform.

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Mentors and experts
The platform used by mentors and mentees typically depends on the programme and requisites. Platforms such as Airtable are helpful for ongoing interactions mentors use the available social media channels such as Zoom, Google Meet and WhatsApp. To track progress, Google Sheets is popular among mentors and programme managers.

Startups and investors
Startups have indicated using tech platforms during the application process and the mentor matching process, and for e-meetings with mentors or physical meetings. Some used the local social platforms search as Linkedin to search for expert mentors. Others subscribed to online learning platforms such as udemy platforms to learn needed skills.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
ESOs indicated the desire and preference of using specialised technology platforms for programme management generally and mentorship management specifically. However, for most ESOs, the high cost of building and maintaining such a platform coupled with the small size of programme cohorts led them to rely on available tools such as Zoom, Google Meets, Microsoft Teams, Google Docs, WhatsApp, and emails to manage mentors and mentees and facilitate mentorship schedules and sessions. Most of the mentorship institutes interviewed use a commercial technology platform such as Torch for programme management and monitoring and evaluation.

9. Remuneration structure

Programme funding
There are 2 prevalent mechanisms for funding mentorship for startups globally. These are:

• Large Corporates:
Usually fund open innovation initiatives aligned with their sector or innovation goals

• Global Development Organisations:
Backed by government funding from developed nations to achieve common global development goals

These funding streams are often proactive and voluntary, and less often aligned with local legislation. For example, in South Africa, corporates have a scorecard that reflects transformation within their businesses. The largest component of this scorecard speaks to Enterprise and Supplier Development, which they are required by law to spend 2% of their Net Income Before Tax towards. These are the funds that corporations use to fund mentorship for startups and small businesses through incubators and accelerators. Programme funding has the largest influence on the operations of programmes in ESOs. It influences how decisions are made since it is related to the amount of available resources. Programme funding affects how much and how often startups can be mentored, and whether mentors occupy a voluntary or are paid role.

Mentor remuneration
Financial rewards remain the most criticised subject in mentoring. Some researchers found rewards motivating for mentoring while others believe they are insignificant. Self-motivated mentors do not seek rewards out of mentoring, but some prefer rewards as the source of financial benefits. Prior investigations have also argued that mentoring is a philanthropic activity that requires passion. Thus, the preference for financial rewards has largely been suppressed and remained unexplored and undervalued in research.[20]
This same study concludes that without ignoring the importance of intangible motivations like altruism, a package of rewards that is both financial and non-financial in nature may positively affect the motivation levels of mentors for mentoring.[20]

In GAN's evaluation of 131 accelerators, the majority 87.6% of them don't provide monetary compensation for their mentors. However, accelerators still reward their mentors, and encourage their startups to do the same, through publicity (82%), hosting an event specifically for mentors (63%), allowing mentors to help choose startups (58%), and more.[17]

In Mowgli's experience, volunteer mentors are usually highly committed because they join mentoring programmes and relationships with no strings attached. Usually, their biggest drive is the opportunity to give back to others through their time, expertise, and network, as well as gaining skills they can utilise in their personal and professional lives.

These mentoring relationships also tend to be long lasting, because relationship building between the mentors and the mentees often goes beyond the business. On the other hand, paid mentors, otherwise known as consultants, tend to be very formal and concentrate on the business relationship. These usually tend to be short-term interactions, because once the specific goals are met, there is little that connects them. This is only to be expected in this case of paid interactions, as building a personal relationship is not a priority.[9]

Key informant insights on remuneration structure according to informant groups

Impact Hubs
Hub programmes are primarily funded through grant funding from global development organisations and Impact Investors. There are instances where grants are late or funders are not responsive, where hubs have funded programmes with their own earnings from other programmes in the hub. For startups to pay for access to mentoring is uncommon. Hub managers believe that mentors (including themselves when performing mentorship functions) should be remunerated for their time and effort. Most often, this fee is well below market value, however is appreciated as a gratuity. Not paying for mentoring services may limit the number of mentors that they can make available to their mentees, which may limit their performance.

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Where programmes are pro-bono (hub funded), mentors are asked to co-volunteer with hubs as there are no budgets that can be allocated towards mentorship.

Mentors and experts
In the case of Africa, mentors are typically paid via programme supporters/funding and not by the startups. Sometimes mentors are engaged in pro-bono or hybrid mentorship. In other cases, mentors are paid for a programme with the mentorship section included within an overall lump sum. Programmes have hourly payments and fixed-term payments depending on the organisation.

Startups and investors
Few startups have expressed willingness to pay for mentorship. In one case, a startup has been paying an ESO a monthly fee in order to have access to the ESO services including mentorship, networks and an office space.

Most startups access the mentorship via the ESOs programmes that are funded by grants and other sponsors. Early stage investors offer mentorship that is privately funded. An ABAN believes that grant funded investments are well utilised once the angel investor has committed their private investment since this investment serves as collateral for the grant to double or triple the initial investment.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
Funds allocated for mentorship are usually minimal in most programmes. Mentors are paid in stipend or honorariums by ESOs as a token of recognition and appreciation.

Mentors collaborating with mentorship institutes do not receive any payments, they work on a voluntary basis. However, some mentorship institutes cover transportation and other programme-related costs incurred by the mentors.

Mentorship in ESOs generally refers to a wide array of services including mentorship, coaching, consultancy and expert advice among others. Mentorship cost , which is mostly honorariums, is accounted for in ESOs programme budgets. From the interviews, it was found that in mentorship organisations most mentors work on a volunteer basis or receive an honorarium in recognition for their time and services.

10. Prevailing regulatory frameworks and/or industry associations

There are no universal global quality standards for mentorship or expert mentoring, and no universal regulatory framework that governs mentorship, particularly within the context of ESOs. There are however various industry associations of mentors/coaches and ESOs.

Mentors and ESOs tend to communicate their implementation of best practices, adhere to common quality standards, build networks for themselves and their cohorts, and associate with well-respected brands in the market.

For mentors, an example is the International Mentoring Association that provides accreditation for mentorship programmes based on internal experience as well as the European Mentoring and Coaching Council in Europe.

For ESOs, there is Afrilabs, which is active across Africa and SABTIA in Southern Africa. These associations are generally aimed at Mentor/ESO capacitation, sharing resources, data, and the best practice, as well as advocacy and policy influence on behalf of startup ecosystems.

There are also leading ESO brands that have regional and global reach that have built reputations for being well networked, and effective in supporting entrepreneurs, such as Impact Hub and Startupbootcamp. The ESO networks and brands will have their own internal mechanisms for ensuring quality and adherence to best practice.

Currently, there are emerging initiatives that drive policy intervention and standardisation in ESOs, and support startup initiatives, including Startup Acts in Nigeria and in South Africa, as well as a Standards Framework for Incubation in South Africa. The quality is reflected in a standard administered by the local bureau of standards (South African Bureau of Standards).

Key informant insights on regulatory frameworks and industry associations according to informant groups

Impact Hubs
Hub managers are not affiliated with any industry associations. Also, there are no specific legislative considerations, except in instances where data privacy legislation applies. That being said, hubs are subject to norms, expectations and/or agreements that govern the relationship between the local ecosystem builder and the Impact Hub network.

Mentors and experts
There is no standardised industry association or regulatory framework for mentors. There are courses for mentoring but a set system does not exist. The standards vary greatly and there is subjectivity involved. Industry expertise, technical capacity and business acumen usually determine a mentor's trajectory.

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A mentor's track record also goes a long way when it comes to recruitment and selection.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
Few African countries have entrepreneurship regulatory frameworks established. One example is Tunisia, the first country in Africa to adopt the Startup Act. Currently, ESOs from across Africa are lobbying for the adoption of the i4Policy manifesto. Some ESO associations have already been established. Afrilabs is the most notable association with member ESOs from all across Africa. In South Africa, entities registered as mentorship organisations receive support from the government.

11. Monitor and evaluation

The outputs of mentoring engagements will vary depending on the individual relationship and the set objectives. Despite the complexity of quantifying mentoring outcomes, there are particular common markers of success which can be monitored which include:[21]

General outcomes
• Mutual value for both parties
• Mentee becomes a mentor

Relationship-related outcomes
• Duration of the relationship, especially if it continues outside the programme
• Whether the mentor is on or joins the MSME's board or becomes an official advisor
• Whether the mentor/mentee continues to advise others
Business-related outcomes
• Growth: turnover, headcount, valuation, profitability, new business lines, pivots etc.
• Networks and clients: connections to new champions and/or partners
• Access to finance and capital
• Improved operational approaches: productivity, efficiency, leadership strengthening, etc.

Key informant insights on monitoring and evaluating according to informant groups

Impact Hubs
Hubs primarily use surveys to collect feedback from both mentors and mentees. There is no standard framework of data collection. The nature of the data collected and mechanism of collecting is largely informed by programme sponsor requirements.

Mentors and experts
Generally, mentors and experts monitor and evaluate their sessions and interactions based on the mentorship organisation. Most are keen to have a set reporting and programme structure based on the theme and needs of the programme managers. In cases where KPIs are required, mentors choose to monitor and evaluate based on the KPIs. In less structured cases, they use their own mechanisms to keep track of the mentee's progress.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
ESOs and mentorship organisations have various methods for monitoring and evaluation such as KPIs, feedback forms and surveys, and one-on-one feedback sessions with both mentors and mentees.

12. Alumni, community management and ecosystems

Alumni management
An alumni network is a critical component of sustainable mentoring programmes. Based on their experience since 1970 and working in over 150 countries, the DAI (Development Alternatives Incorporated) network has outlined four key reasons why alumni programmes are an essential investment. These include:[22]

• Generating compelling impact stories to grow your programmes' reach and brand
• Alumni programmes give fledgling businesses a better chance to grow
• Alumni strengthen entrepreneurship ecosystems
• Engaged alumni will help you build a pipeline of businesses for your programme

The engagement strategy for alumni is different to the one for active cohorts. ESOs must accept that not everyone will participate in everything, as can be expected with active cohorts. The objective is to provide different opportunities and incentives for people to engage organically.

Community management
A community on the other hand, which can be defined as a space where people with shared interests and goals can engage and share knowledge with one another, is an addition to entrepreneurship programmes. It will assist in supporting and growing startups.

Typically, communities are made up of active cohorts, alumni and mentors. Programme communities can offer good opportunities for ecosystems to engage as a whole. This results in broadening the community platform to cover industry, programme applicants, ESO and programme sponsor staff, researchers, investors, and other stakeholders with a vested interest in innovation in a specific sector. This approach is more appealing in vertical programmes, where the vertical is the point of common interest.

The exact goals and ideal outcomes for a community need to be established and considered when selecting a platform on which it will be managed. Essential features of a platform to manage ESO programme communities include:[23]

• An easy way to **search**, **find** and **connect** with the right people.
• The ability to **share** and **access** sensitive information where permission is sought and given.
• Integrated **event management** and **calendars**.
• **Profile** customisation and personalisation capabilities.
• **Mobility**, typically through a mobile app.

Key informant insights on alumni and community management according to informant groups

Impact Hubs
Hubs have found that alumni make for engaged mentors since they have experienced the benefits first-hand with their own businesses. Having met through the hub network, there are

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instances where alumni trade among each other. There are also instances where alumni are called back in to provide consulting services in their area of expertise. There is no standard mechanism of community or alumni management. Hub managers organise their communities depending on its context. Usually, hubs would host networking events, however that has declined significantly in frequency since the global pandemic.

Mentors and experts
The mentors and experts who were interviewed are a part of various alumni networks. However, the management of the network and communities varies, with some engagement being limited to a simple WhatsApp group with few interactions, to some being a full database where people can stay in contact.
The mentors generally keep in touch with mentors in their cohort and some with mentees in an informal and less structured way post programme.

Startups and investors
Startups use the alumni network to market their services and products, to further fundraise and seek mentorships to mentor upcoming startups in a buddy system. Social communication groups and newsletters which communicate opportunities and invite alumni to ESOs events have proven to be fruitful.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
ESOs provide alumni with post-programme support for up to one year. ESOs also engage alumni in mentoring activities as well as community activities and encourage them to attend ESO events where they can network, introduce their startups and connect with potential investors, clients, and/or mentors. mentorship

organisations provide different types of post-programme support including follow up calls, training of trainers, access to their mentorship platforms and access to funds.

Ecosystems
Key informant insights on ecosystems
According to informant groups

Impact Hubs
Impact Hub is a great example of a collaboration of ecosystem builders with both global reach and local relevance, with over 100 communities in over 60 countries across 5 continents. They support ecosystem builders to start and build effective, sustainable hubs.

Ecosystem builders get content, coaching, and learn from the network. Besides, the network shares resources and its best practice to support entrepreneurs making an impact. A rigorous due diligence process is set into motion when onboarding new locations to ensure alignment with Impact Hub's values and principles.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
ESOs are ecosystem builders by nature. They strive to provide startups with well-rounded entrepreneurial support. Since mentorship is an essential aspect of entrepreneurial support, mentors constitute an integral part of ESO communities. Alumni are also encouraged to mentor other startups and share their experience and knowledge gained during their entrepreneurial journeys.

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13. Summary of challenges

• Most accelerators continue to have application deadlines rather than rolling admissions.

• On the African continent, there appears to be a large focus on the entrepreneurial career and expert consultant functions. Very little emphasis is placed on psychological functions.

• Most mentors do not rely on mentorship as a main source of income, it can pose a problem for ESOs in regards to availability and commitment.

• Typically, startups do not pay for mentorship services. Mentors can find this problematic since this often leads to mentees not valuing the mentorship and therefore do not commit to the programme.

• A balance between mentor-mentee similarity and diversity is encouraged. Too much diversity might disrupt communication, while too much similarity might hinder learning within the mentoring relationship.

• There is an indication that there is a higher level of startup mentee satisfaction when they have been involved in the selection of their mentor. In contrast, the most common matching procedure, in which the programme selects the mentor, was the least preferred.

• Programmes that do not provide coordination and follow-up support usually experience higher levels of drop-out rates, shorter duration of the mentoring relationships, and lower satisfaction for the mentors and mentees.

• Effective mentorship is successful over time, which must be taken into consideration in designing mentorship programmes.

• From a mentee perspective, many mentees complain that the training they receive is not tailored to their needs, suggesting that a more personalised learning process may be appropriate.

• Since ESO startups' access mentorship programmes are generally small, online tools and systems for managing the relationship between mentees and mentors may not justify the cost and administration of a comprehensive multi-function technology platform.

• There are no universal global quality standards for mentorship or expert mentoring, and no universal regulatory framework that governs mentorship, particularly within the context of ESOs.

Key informant insights on challenges and opportunities according to informant groups

Impact Hubs
When it comes to resources and sustainability among ecosystem builders, significant challenges become prevalent. The Impact Hub model has been great to mitigate some of these challenges, however its reach is limited.

Hubs are multisectoral, however on the African continent, the default focus is on agrifood businesses. GIZ is in a position to initiate ecosystem wide collaboration which can offer resources such as mentors and experts, access to sector insights, and access to research to bridge the innovation gap at a grassroot level.

Mentors and experts
According to the mentors and experts who were interviewed, the following conditions need to be taken into account when setting up mentorship programmes:

• It would be useful to design the programme highlighting the importance of mentorship beyond fundraising since startups generally do not want to pay and/or do not value mentorship enough.
• To create a successful programme, it is important to have a clear structure and expectations set out for both mentees and mentors.
• Local mentors and international mentors are necessary for a well rounded programme.
• The platform can work in isolation as a virtual space but there is also a need for a physical space for entrepreneurs to meet, connect and work.
• Investment experts need to be included in the mentorship process.
• The tech platform needs to be user friendly and should take the data costs of African start-ups into account.
• To make the relationship mutually beneficial, opportunities for mentors investing their time and or money in the startup should be explored.

Startups and investors
Startups are hungry for resources that will push their innovations to the next level. Clearly mentorship seems to be the key to unlock those opportunities in skills and knowledge for the startups. However, so far the only place that startups can access mentorship is through ESOs programmes which are run on application basis and can only cater to a few given the funding secured. On the other hand a growing number of investors are keen to identify startups and invest private money and mentorship. A one stop shop center where a match of needs and benefits can be announced and responded to will serve the matchmaking and move the needle in allowing innovative startups to grow and serve the community with their offering while creating profits for the high risk investors and hence a sustainably run ecosystem.

Entrepreneurship support and mentorship organisations
ESOs are challenged by limited resources. These limited resources have a negative influence on their outreach and impact. Consequently, ESO programmes can only benefit a limited number of startups. Furthermore, mentorship structure, monitoring and evaluation, finding the required expertise, lack of startup awareness about the importance and impact of mentorship as a conduit for success and scale, and in infrastructure issues, all prove to be a challenge.

ESOs stand to benefit greatly from a systemic, standardised, and structured approach towards mentorship management where the terms of engagement are clear to all stakeholders involved. A streamlined mentorship management process will be of great benefit to ESOs.

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