

**Vermont Mentoring Partnership  
Task Force Recommendations  
November 18, 2011**

Thank you for your patience in this process and for entrusting us with taking this first step toward the development of a statewide mentoring organization.

The statewide mentoring organization task force met on October 26, 2011, to create a vision for the structure and development of a Vermont Statewide Mentoring Partnership (or similar name). The task force members are offering the following recommendations to the mentoring community of Vermont. There are still steps that will need to be taken to make this vision a reality, and we look forward to engaging the mentoring community to turn this into reality. Our meeting notes have been included as Attachment A.

We envision a statewide mentoring partnership that:

- seeks to strategically increase and improve the quality of mentoring opportunities available to the children of Vermont
- operates as a “table,” serving to convene, connect, and support mentoring service providers
- is lean, strategic, efficient, and maximizes support for programs
- is widely respected, trusted, and credible
- represents the VT mentoring community in the statewide conversations about education, social services, and economic justice; and successfully promotes the message that mentoring is a key part of the system of care for children.

To achieve this vision, we propose the following model.

### **Organizational Structure**

The task force recommends that the statewide organization exists as an independent 501c3 organization, but that a net new nonprofit not be formed in the process.

The task force is not making a specific recommendation about the process to develop the organization. Rather, we have conceived of three possibilities:

- A current mentoring partnership or umbrella could transform itself into what is envisioned here.
- The organization could replace one or more existing organizations.
- The envisioned organization could be a merger of two or more organizations.

### **Staffing**

The task force recommends that the organization has a lean staffing structure of key positions, including one full-time executive director.

A successful executive director will possess:

- significant work experience in a mission-driven organization
- proven experience as a fundraiser
- experience with inclusive models of leadership and facilitation
- strong skills and experience in building collaboration across diverse organizations and interests
- excellent interpersonal and communication skills

- creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit with a passion to serve the needs of children and volunteers
- an outlook that remains steadfastly optimistic in times of rapid change

Though not a requirement, relationships and contacts in Vermont would be an advantage for a prospective candidate. The successful candidate may or may not come out of the existing mentoring network.

*Note: In the interest of keeping this organization at an appropriate scale, it will be essential to compensate staff at comparable levels to staff at Vermont nonprofit programs of similar sizes.*

## **Leadership/Governance**

The task force recommends that the leadership and governance of the organization represent a diverse and talented group of individuals.

1. A **steering committee** (initially) that evolves into a board of directors
  - This might begin with eight people, half from the mentoring community and half stakeholders who are skilled, influential, and have time to give.
  - *Note on the future of this task force:* The existing task force had a specific charge to come up with a proposal, which we have now completed. Members have served in this ad hoc group for a year. A new group (the steering committee) should now be formed to carry forward the design and implementation of a statewide organization that can provide initial governance.
2. A **board of directors** (once the organization has been developed)
  - The board will have geographic representation with a clear and intentional composition that includes a minimum ratio of mentoring professionals, as well as members who represent stakeholders, constituents, and influential individuals.
3. The statewide organization will develop and support a **leadership council** of program coordinators that gathers/talks by region and provides input and is regularly tapped for advice by the Board:
  - This council will ensure statewide coverage. It will elect the mentoring professionals who will serve on the organization's board of directors. Four members of this council (one from each of four quadrants of the state) will be elected to serve on the board, with a role of representing all programs in the region.
  - The board of directors will develop mechanisms to ensure that the council can exercise real control over organizational goals.

## **Funding**

The task force recognizes that a funding model, based on the stated values, is a key first step to developing a long-term sustainability plan for a statewide organization. Specific funding details are not the work of this group, but recommendations include:

- The funding model needs to be diverse and come from a combination of state, private, and corporate donations, as well as modest support from member programs.
- Program buy-in is vital. The task force therefore recommends that a minimal portion of the partnership budget comes from program dues starting in year two. The task force further

recommends a tiered dues structure, which would allow for equity based on the size and scope of individual mentoring programs.

- A state partnership will seek funding in a collaborative and broadly beneficial manner, recognizing that mentoring programs across the state have existing relationships with funders upon which they depend.
- The funding model will include a deliberate and transparent system with which to ensure the distribution of funds and resources to direct service programs.

### **Anticipated Priorities for Year One:**

*Note: This work is to be undertaken once a board of directors and leadership council are established and seed funding for Y1 is confirmed.*

Y1 priorities include:

- Assume responsibility and complete updates for Statewide Mentoring Website
- organizing and conducting statewide networking and professional development opportunities, which may take the form of a statewide conference, regional meetings, webinars, etc.
- continuing development and conversations about a statewide database of mentoring programs and opportunities
- leading advocacy efforts for the continuation of Vermont Mentors funding
- developing and implementing a fundraising plan