

NPHI BEST PRACTICES SERIES: MENTORSHIP

CASE STUDY: IANPHI/HEYMANN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

THE PROBLEM

In 2008, IANPHI was approached by Dr. David Heymann, who offered a generous donation to support development of the next generation of leaders in low-resource NPHIs. IANPHI was tasked with creating a mechanism to achieve this goal.

THE SOLUTION

The IANPHI Mentorship Program (IMP) was launched in 2009, with a goal of providing current and future NPHI leaders with the tools, training, and support needed to develop their full potential. IMP facilitated mentoring partnerships between established public health experts and colleagues from low-resource NPHIs who showed substantial promise as public health leaders.

HOW IT HAPPENED

During the inaugural year (2009), IANPHI developed procedures and materials to create and support the program and selected the first mentorship program 'class.'

Why Mentorship?

A strong and viable mentorship program not only will strengthen the career potential of a cadre of public health professions in low-resource countries but also is key to developing confident and competent leaders who can address increasingly challenging public health issues that affect nations and the world.

Materials included:

- Standard operating procedures for program implementation, monitoring, and evaluation
- List of qualified potential mentors
- Criteria and process for selection and matching; application form for mentees
- Template for program plan
- Website
- Fact sheet, FAQs, 'Getting Started' kit

Additional implementation activities included:

- Soliciting and confirming potential mentors for Year 1
- Announcing the program and soliciting applicants
- Selecting and matching participants; finalizing program plans

NPHI BEST PRACTICES SERIES: MENTORSHIP

- Facilitating communication among program pairs

During the first year, the program funded three mentor-mentee pairs, and two more pairs were added in Year 2. In 2011, the program named a final pair, for a total of six.

IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Individually, the pairs reported accomplishments ranging from training in scientific publication and preparation of a research grant application, to development of procedures for creation of a new NPHI.

As the program evolved, it became clear that the most effective projects, and by extension the most productive mentorship pairs, were those that had the active support of the mentees' NPHI directors. In these cases, the directors used IMP to catalyze institutional change, recognizing mentorship as a fundamental element of scientific collaboration and workforce development.

SUCCESS FACTORS

IMP program evaluations suggested several critical 'ingredients' for success:

- NPHI director who is personally invested in the program and recognizes the importance of mentorship on workforce development
- Mentors with skills in areas the institute views as important to achieve its mandate and goals
- Projects that provide tangible benefits to the NPHI, in addition to benefitting the mentee; this encourages buy-in from the director and other staff
- If the mentor is from another institute, adequate time to understand the institutional context, and opportunities for on-site interaction
- Availability of one experienced mentor to serve as 'mentor to the mentors,' providing focused technical assistance and coaching to colleagues to overcome obstacles

"Clear objectives and close working relationships between the mentors and program staff have been the foundation of the relationship from the outset; enthusiasm and support of the mentees and their NPHIs have aided in sustaining it."

-IMP Mentor

NPHI BEST PRACTICES SERIES: MENTORSHIP

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The experience of three years of operation provided lessons to consider for future programs:

- Every senior scientist or public health leader is not necessarily a good mentor. Mentors need training and support.
- Simply matching mentor and mentee is not enough. Each needs to understand their responsibilities, have reasonable expectations, and have an awareness of the climate and culture of the mentee's home institute.
- Mentorship is a long-term adult developmental process that can be affected by organizational, occupational, positional, and interpersonal variables. It is not an 'all or nothing' enterprise.
- Mentees and mentors need to have a way to measure the success of their relationship. IMP surveys revealed the need for more in-depth analyses. Successful outcomes are often largely dependent on lucky pairings of well-suited mentors and mentees.
- The most significant obstacle is time.

The program design, which matched mentees with mentors from outside institutes and often in other parts of the world, created challenges for some at the individual level. For a few pairs, obstacles to in-person mentoring opportunities and real-time communication limited the ability to meet expectations and attain goals. As noted by one mentor, "[we] had far higher expectations when we started the program, but real life is different."

At the IMP level, a key challenge was the difficulty in evaluating success. Measures of performance were difficult to define, and there were few measurable outcomes by which to assess success.

THE WAY FORWARD

In recognition of the value of mentorship to the success of NPHI operations, IANPHI intends to continue to make mentorship and leadership development a cornerstone activity. Pending funding to continue IMP, IANPHI has launched a series of complementary activities aimed at empowering a new generation of high-potential public health professionals in low-resource countries to lead and invigorate their NPHIs. Lessons from IMP informed development of the 2014-2015 IANPHI Leadership Institute, piloted with colleagues from Sweden and hosted by the NPHIs of Mozambique and Tanzania. Feedback from the 35 graduates, designated **Heymann Fellows** in recognition of Dr. Heymann's

NPHI BEST PRACTICES SERIES: MENTORSHIP

contributions, attest to the success of the program. With a growing call for strong leadership in NPHIs, the leadership training was offered again at IANPHI's annual meeting in Rome in October 2017.

...In many ways, IMP exemplified and extended the values of IANPHI: cooperation, collaboration, and development of NPHIs in low-resource countries.

- IMP Mentor

HOW WE GOT THE STORY

This case study was based on reports, materials, and interviews documenting the IANPHI Mentorship Program, which was funded from 2009 to 2012 through a generous gift from Dr. David Heymann to IANPHI (derived from a Heinz Family Foundation award and provided through the Better World Fund). The program was managed and coordinated by IANPHI's US Office at Emory University.

