



**MENTOR**  
NEBRASKA

**2023 - 2025**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**





## **03** **OVERVIEW**

## **04** **ABOUT US**

- 04** WHO WE ARE
- 05** OUR COMMITMENT TO RACIAL EQUITY
- 06** OUR VALUE ADD

## **07** **STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

- 07** TIMELINE
- 08** COLLECTING INPUT
- 09** WHAT WE LEARNED
- 10** OUR IDEAL ROLE

## **11** **THREE YEAR PLAN**

- 11** PRIORITIES & GOALS
- 12** GOALS & INDICATORS

## **13** **NEXT STEPS**

## **14** **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**



# OVERVIEW

In the fall of 2021, MENTOR Nebraska partnered with Equivolve Consulting to facilitate a strategic planning process designed to set a vision for the organization's future work. The engagement offered MENTOR Nebraska the opportunity to:



**Reflect** on its recent growth, accomplishments, and lessons learned over recent years



**Assess** what has worked well in the past and uncover where the organization needs to grow



**Gain a deeper understanding** of what partners and stakeholders value and need from MENTOR Nebraska



**Examine** how MENTOR Nebraska can more fully activate its statewide charge



**Set a clear and shared vision** for MENTOR Nebraska's work over the next three years

**The planning process was designed to be inclusive and engage the range of stakeholders that interact with and are impacted by MENTOR Nebraska,** including sectors that work closely with mentoring programs, such as education and juvenile justice, as well as a range of mentoring program providers, young adults engaged in mentoring, funders, board members, and staff. MENTOR Nebraska has approached the planning process with considerable thought, intention, and input so that our path forward is both responsive and proactive.

**A plan is only effective if it is utilized, implemented, and revisited** – so MENTOR Nebraska's intention is to treat this plan as a living, breathing road map meant to be updated and revised as needed. MENTOR Nebraska cannot do this work alone and it is our hope that our community and partners will re-commit with us as we move on the path set forward by this process.



Equivolve is a Black-owned social sector strategy firm focused on equity and driven by a belief in the abundant potential that exists around the world. It sees equity as the means by which we achieve a just society where the gap between human potential and resources and opportunities no longer exists and where people have what they need to be their best selves. Its work is in service of closing this gap. Equivolve uses innovative research, evaluation, and strategy approaches to help leaders and organizations drive equitable results.

# WHO WE ARE

For more than 20 years, MENTOR Nebraska has led the mentoring movement to ensure youth and mentors have access to high-quality experiences. Founded in 1999 as Midlands Mentoring Partnership, it has experienced tremendous growth and in 2019 made the decision to become a statewide organization – MENTOR Nebraska. To support this transition, it designed and implemented a strategic plan between 2020-2022 that refocused the organization's core functional areas to have a statewide approach and align with MENTOR National.

In 2021, the organization recognized its successful accomplishment of the goals and key activities outlined in the previous plan. Between the successful implementation of operational changes, the addition of board members representing areas outside of Omaha, a more explicit and growing commitment to racial equity, and the experience of responding to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, MENTOR Nebraska was ready to set the vision for its next phase.

This new strategic plan reflects the voices, opportunities, and changes that will lead to a stronger, more united statewide mentoring sector that centers the voices of young people in the work we do. We are grateful for the contributions of all our partners to make this plan happen.

**MELISSA MAYO**  
Executive Director

## MISSION

To fuel the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships, strengthen collaboration, and advocate for mentoring.

## VISION

For every young person to have the supportive relationships they need to grow and develop into thriving, productive, and engaged adults.

## TIER I PARTNER MEMBERS

100 Black Men of Omaha

ACE Mentor Program

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Nebraska

Big Brothers Big Sisters Lincoln

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands

Big Pals Little Pals of Greater Columbus

The Bike Union

Charles Drew Health Center

Community Connections

Girls Inc. of Omaha

International Council for Refugees and Immigrants, Inc.

Kids Can Community Center

MentoringWorks

Ollie Webb Center, Inc.

Partnership 4 Kids

Release Inc.

TeamMates of Lincoln

TeamMates of Millard

TeamMates of Omaha





# OUR COMMITMENT

MENTOR National developed a Racial Equity Plan in 2022 which includes a set of goals that reflect the ways the organization intends to operationalize racial equity within its work. These goals are critical to living into MENTOR Nebraska's values and will be implemented alongside the vision and goals set forth in this strategic plan and together, illustrate how MENTOR Nebraska is moving forward.

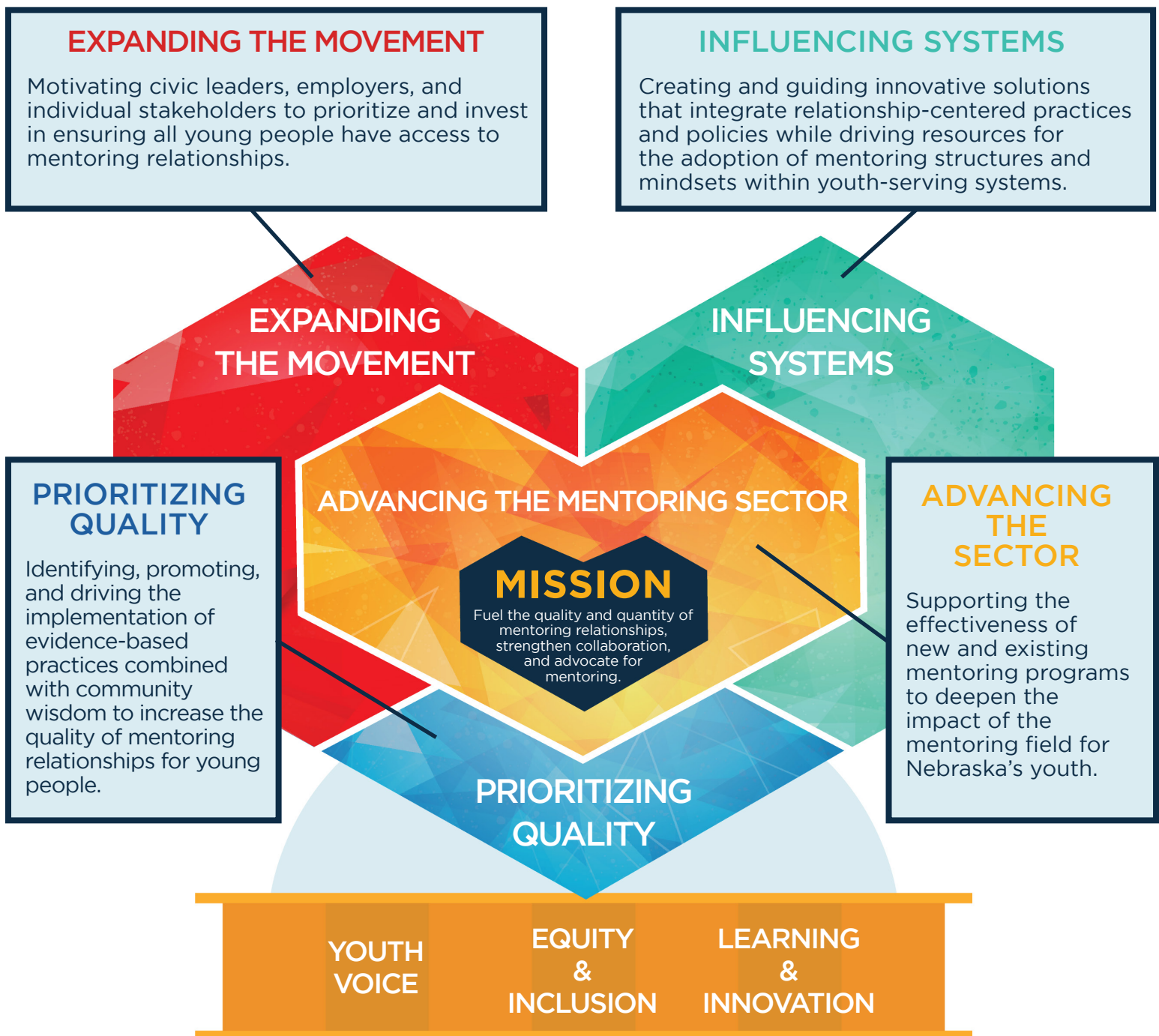
It is our goal to create a society where every young person has a web of supportive adults available to them as they form their identities, achieve their dreams, and reach their goals. By centering our values of diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and racial justice, we have hope that we can tackle injustices and ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for all of our children.



# OUR VALUE ADD

MENTOR Nebraska exists to strengthen mentoring across the state. Mentoring is one of our greatest tools for improving the quality of life and wellbeing of our youth and our communities – and it is one of few strategies that can engage our whole community. A strong mentoring landscape is one where young people not only have access to mentoring but that the mentoring program and relationships meet quality standards that are safe and effective. It requires intentional recruitment, training, and matching of mentors and mentees, and consistently evaluating and refining efforts. Programs need to have both the capacity and ability to apply best practices to effectively deliver mentoring services that positively impact youth.

## BUILDING THE MOVEMENT & STRENGTHENING THE FIELD



# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Equivolve led MENTOR Nebraska through a process to set goals and identify key priorities in support of those goals. The planning process included extensive data collection and review, including:

- MENTOR 2020 Affiliate Assessment
- Statewide mentoring program survey
- Interviews with 19 stakeholders

## TIMELINE

### APRIL-JUNE 2021

Launched a statewide mapping project

### JULY-SEPT 2021

Led an in-depth analysis of the current state of mentoring in Nebraska

### OCT - NOV 2021

- Released [summary](#) of 2021 Mapping Project
- Conducted strategic planning interviews and focus groups
- Engaged board and staff in kick-off workshop to assess accomplishments, strengths, and areas of growth

### DEC 2021

- Compiled key findings and themes across data sources
- Convened board and staff for two-day strategic planning retreat

### JAN 2022

- Refined three-year goals, indicators, and activities
- Developed draft strategic plan

### FEB 2022

Released [2021 Mapping Project Report](#)

### APRIL 2022

Released [State of Mentoring Report](#)

### MAY 2022

Produced final version of Strategic Plan approved by board



The success of MENTOR Nebraska starts with relationships –listening, building trust, and responding to the needs of young people and the dedicated staff and volunteers of mentoring programs closest to the work. Through the strategic planning process, we learned how we can work together to ensure every young person has access to the caring relationships they need to thrive.

**MATTHEW ENENBACH**  
Board Chair







# COLLECTING INPUT



## PHASE 1

### MAPPING PROJECT

During the summer of 2021, MENTOR Nebraska surveyed 60 organizations across the state for the [2021 MENTOR Nebraska Mapping Project](#). This report provides a snapshot of mentoring in Nebraska's communities and reflects a key piece of this planning effort. Through a strengths-based questionnaire and analysis of community and school district data, the project estimates the size and scope of the mentoring sector – detailing geographic location and service coverage, programming design and objectives, target audiences, community conditions and areas for future growth.



## PHASE 2

### FOCUS GROUPS & INTERVIEWS

MENTOR Nebraska partnered with Equivolve to gather insight from stakeholders on strengths, emerging opportunities, and other information about the state's mentoring landscape. During the fall of 2021, Equivolve facilitated 4 focus groups and 6 interviews with funders, board members, partners in the education and juvenile justice sectors, member partners, nonmember organizations, and young adults.



## PHASE 3

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

The findings from the mapping project, focus groups, and interviews were utilized to develop a three year strategic plan.

Input from a wide range of stakeholders was critical to the strategic planning process. The themes and insights from multiple data sources guided the design of the priorities and internal action steps that MENTOR Nebraska has developed.

# WHAT WE LEARNED

Many important learnings emerged from the stakeholders engaged in the planning process which deepen MENTOR Nebraska's understanding of the mentoring landscape and were used to develop the organization's new goals. While there is much more information than we can share in this plan, below are some of the findings and insights.





MENTOR Nebraska needs to figure out how to better articulate their impact, and the importance of mentoring particularly for young people impacted by the criminal justice system... Including learning how to better understand the system and refining the narrative around the importance and impact of mentoring within those spaces.

## MENTORING PROGRAM






## STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

*Reported by Programs*

### TOP STRENGTHS

-  Partnerships with schools, nonprofits, mental health professionals, and others
-  Priority to serve young people who are justice-involved, first-generation college going, and LGBTQIA2S+
-  Desire to grow to provide different types of mentoring, reach other communities, and/or increase the number of matches
-  Staff representation & cultural competency

### TOP CHALLENGES

-  Fundraising to support operations
-  Recruiting mentors to meet demand of youth seeking a mentor
-  Family engagement in programming
-  Program evaluation to demonstrate effectiveness
-  Cultural representation in mentors

## MENTORING BY THE NUMBERS

Through the mapping project, **60 organizations** offered these insights about the mentoring sector:

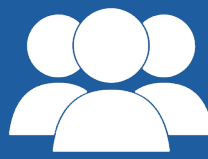
- Youth largely become involved in mentoring through **self-referral** or **caregiver referral**
- Most programs serve **high school** and/or **middle school aged youth**
- **One-on-one** and **group mentoring** are the most common forms of mentoring
- Nonmember organizations are more likely to offer **peer-to-peer** and **virtual mentoring**
- Most programs seek to enhance **social emotional skills**, support general **youth development**, and provide **caring adult relationships**



**139**  
Programs



**1,182**  
Sites



**22,000**  
Youth

**28%** White  
**24%** Black  
**11%** Hispanic/Latino  
**6%** 2+ Races  
**3%** Asian  
**3%** Other  
**1%** American Indian/Alaska Native  
**<1%** Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  
**24%** Unknown\*

*\*Info not shared by youth or data not collected by program*

# OUR IDEAL ROLE

## CONVENER

Support a larger mentoring network in the state



## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER

- Develop new trainings and resources
- Provide program evaluation support



## CHAMPION

- Normalize mentoring for everyone
- Communicate MENTOR's impact and value added to the mentoring field in Nebraska



## COLLABORATOR

Incorporate and engage more mentoring champions, community advocates, and youth



## IN THE WORDS OF PARTNERS...

Through the planning process, stakeholders offered their thoughts on the value MENTOR Nebraska brings to those it serves and spoke to the qualities the organization demonstrates:

They are the organization I would and will call for anything mentoring related.

MENTOR acts as a leader in the field to help agencies reach the required standards by providing training and support.

I feel connected more to the people now because they have intentionally reached out to make that connection.



# PRIORITIES & GOALS

## PRIORITY AREAS

The planning process revealed four areas most critical for MENTOR Nebraska to focus its next phase of growth on. Shared across the 75 external stakeholders that participated in the statewide survey and interviews, and informed by the experience and expertise of the staff and board, these themes became the top four priority areas for MENTOR Nebraska:



## THREE-YEAR GOALS

After taking stock of its core functions, organizational strengths, and areas of opportunity raised by partners and stakeholders, the board and staff developed goal statements to help chart its path forward. Aligned with the four areas revealed in the data, the board and staff developed the following goal statements that describe the organization's vision for where it intends to be in three years.

**By the end of 2024, the following statements will demonstrate success:**

MENTOR Nebraska is the responsive and equitable resource and clearinghouse for quality mentoring.

MENTOR Nebraska serves as a trusted advisor to mentoring programs statewide.

MENTOR Nebraska ensures youth representation, choice, and voice in mentoring.

MENTOR Nebraska promotes policies that increase funding for mentoring.

# GOALS & INDICATORS



## PROGRAMMATIC

**GOAL:** MENTOR Nebraska is the responsive and equitable resource and clearinghouse for quality mentoring.

### INDICATORS

- **Increase member organizations and partners** that are BIPOC-led and LGBTQIA2S+ inclusive
- **Provide capacity building support for new and grassroots organizations** to be able to receive funding
- **Expand mentor recruitment strategies** to drive greater BIPOC mentor representation throughout Nebraska
- **Train programs to develop feedback loops** and other means to gather data and insight from mentees directly
- **Develop and provide program evaluation** supports and/or services
- **Revamp membership structure**, process and membership tier definitions using an equity lens



## STATEWIDE EXPANSION

**GOAL:** MENTOR Nebraska serves as a trusted advisor to mentoring programs statewide.

### INDICATORS

- **Increase the number of member organizations** from across the state
- **Increase the number of consultants** who live in communities outside of Omaha
- **Develop more opportunities** to build relationships and connect with programs across the state (such as an annual statewide tour)
- **Increase relationships with statewide stakeholders** identified through the mapping report data, particularly in the counties and school districts with the highest need
- **Convene a statewide mentoring network** by leveraging coalitions and creating new spaces for collaboration



## YOUTH VOICE

**GOAL:** MENTOR Nebraska ensures youth representation, choice, and voice in mentoring.

### INDICATORS

- **Create a diverse youth advisory board** to inform all areas of MENTOR Nebraska's work
- **Add at least one youth ex-officio seat** on the MENTOR Nebraska board
- **Create a Youth Initiated Mentoring community of practice** and/or satellite programs around the state
- **Support and expand young peoples' leadership and ownership** of Nebraska's mentoring sector



## POLICY & ADVOCACY

**GOAL:** MENTOR Nebraska promotes policies that increase funding for mentoring.

### INDICATORS

- **Create a system for connecting funding sources** to mentoring programs
- **Strengthen relationships with funders statewide** to be positioned as an expert that can help educate, inform and direct funding for quality mentoring
- In partnership with member organizations, **build relationships with policymakers at all levels of government** to develop and advance pro-mentoring policy and legislation
- Identify and implement key strategies to **engage in systems-level advocacy**

# NEXT STEPS

## JOIN US!

MENTOR Nebraska is tremendously excited to lead the growth of a quality mentoring ecosystem in Nebraska, but it cannot accomplish its goals without the many types of partners who impact mentoring across the state. There are opportunities for all types of partners to support, to be actively engaged, and to play a role in creating a strong ecosystem for mentoring.



## INDIVIDUALS

- [Become a mentor](#)
- Encourage others to mentor
- Ask your representatives, community leaders, and schools to prioritize mentoring

## PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY

- Fund MENTOR Nebraska and offer direct support to mentoring programs
- Use [statewide mentoring data](#) to inform your investments
- Encourage grantees to participate in best practices

## MENTORING PROGRAMS

- Participate in MENTOR Nebraska's [no-cost trainings](#)
- Utilize MENTOR Nebraska's [consulting services](#)
- Connect with other mentoring programs
- [Become a member organization](#)

## CORPORATE COMMUNITY

- Recruit mentors
- Offer PTO or flextime for staff to mentor
- Attract and retain talent by utilizing MENTOR Nebraska's custom training and consulting services
- Invest in young people through internships
- [Join the Corporate Honor Roll](#)

## POLICYMAKERS

- [Support mentoring policies](#) that increase resources and access to mentoring
- Look to MENTOR Nebraska as the "hub" for what is needed in the landscape

## JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Connect young people with mentors through Youth Initiated Mentoring
- Allocate resources and funding for innovative and responsive mentoring models for prevention and intervention

## EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Implement STRIVE Mentoring and Success Mentors
- [Become a relationship-centered school](#)
- Connect students with school and community-based mentoring programs



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## THANK YOU!

MENTOR Nebraska would like to extend its deepest gratitude to its many partners who supported and participated in this strategic planning process.

## BOARD

**Matthew Enenbach, Board President**  
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**Jeremy Christensen, Board Secretary**  
Baird Holm LLP

**Justin Frauendorfer, Board Treasurer**  
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**George Achola**  
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**Juan Padilla**  
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# MENTOR NEBRASKA

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**STAY CONNECTED**



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#MentoringAmplifies  
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