

A Collective Exchange: Informing the Vision of the International Mentoring Association

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Since 1987, the International Mentoring Association (IMA) has been a source for best practice solutions and support of mentoring professionals and their programs. As a 501c3 organization, the IMA promotes individual and organizational development by using mentoring best practices in every setting. Anchored in a long-standing record of supporting best practices in mentoring through education, evidence dissemination, networking, and accreditation programs, the IMA now enters a (re)visioning phase and is actively seeking stakeholder input. Building capacity in mentorship professionals, which include diverse contexts like practitioners, scholars, and program managers, is critical and not a trivial task. The 2019 National Academies' Science of Effective Mentoring in STEMM identified both the IMA and University of New Mexico's Mentoring Institute as venues critical to advancing mentorship. Through innovatively blending these two notable mentorship organizations with an interactive panel, the IMA vision will be bolstered by the exchange of evidence-based ideas and experiences. The IMA seeks to further become a hub for all mentoring stakeholders through this (re)visioning phase. To be clear, the IMA exists to complement the work being done by people and organizations by offering shared resources and mechanisms to elevate mentoring together. With the goal to amplify the current breadth and depth of mentorship experience and expertise, this Mentoring Institute panel-participant exchange will certainly help drive the organization's mission, and mentoring field, forward. This interactive panel session will engage Mentoring Institute participants in co-constructing insights and strategies through which the International Mentoring Association (IMA) can provide leadership and support for essential mentorship domains as the world moves into a new era of increasing complexity. Domains discussed will include resources, setting standards, people, connection & community, awards & recognition, conferences & symposiums, collaborations, technology & innovation, data, and professional development. The panel will provide a venue for collaborative discussion and vision-casting.

Keywords: Kotter, vision, strategic plan, mentoring, change

Introduction

The International Mentoring Association's (IMA) mission is to create global communities for sharing best practices that lead to development of highly effective mentoring programs via a support base of diversity through a variety of venues (IMA WEBSITE). From 2014 to 2018, the IMA was associated with the University of New Mexico. Since then, the IMA established an association with the University of Florida Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI), which serves as the academic home of the IMA. A recent Memorandum of Understanding with the European Mentoring Coaching Council Global (EMCC) enables continued promotion of mentoring and coaching worldwide. The IMA Board of Directors have served on the National Academies Science of Effective Mentorship in STEMM committee contributed to mentorship research investigating professional development, wellbeing, mentoring

relationships; and supported other practitioners committed to effective mentorship program design, accreditation, and consultation. A cluster of IMA Board of Directors will anchor a scholarly panel at the 18th Mentoring Institute as an exchange designed for high interaction with a community of mentoring professionals to inform the IMA's (re)visioning process.

Influenced by the continued emphasis on mentoring across multiple geographical, workplace, and disciplinary contexts, the International Mentoring Association (IMA) embarked on a (re)visioning phase over the past year. The IMA aims to further become a global and dynamic resource hub capable of connecting, strengthening, and celebrating mentorship successes and programs. Such a 'spotlight' or 'megaphone' approach means the IMA is neither seeking ownership nor authoritative control. To be clear, this is an opportunity for scholarly exchange with the University of New Mexico's Mentoring

Institute's 18th annual conference attendees to collectively construct the renewed vision, mission, and scope of the IMA, regardless of the attendee's IMA affiliation status. By designing the interactive panel to actively embrace an exchange of diverse perspectives, the overall goal, just like mentoring relationships, is to foster co-agency, co-development, and co-investment within and across mentoring stakeholders. The fresh perspectives, expertise, and experiences that each Mentoring Institute participant brings will be a valuable contribution to the broader mentoring community.

The International Mentoring Association's (IMA) vision is to be the premier organization and a leading resource for mentoring excellence and best practices (IMA). Neighboring organizations to the IMA include the University of New Mexico's Mentoring Institute (IMA), the National Academies Science of Effective Mentorship in STEMM (2019) committee, and the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC). The recent partnership with the EMCC offers unprecedented pathways and opportunities for the IMA to deepen and expand their international presence (IMA).

Many organizations seeking to implement a strategic vision turn to the Kotter (1995) change model as an implementation framework. The change model has 8 steps:

1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Build a guiding coalition
3. Form a strategic vision
4. Enlist a volunteer army
5. Enable action by removing barriers
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Sustain acceleration
8. Institute change

Literature demonstrates the change model remains a viable mechanism for organizations (Kotter, 1995; Stanley et al., 2019; Kang et al., 2020; Patterson et al., 2021). The framework's 8-steps provide a digestible path to implement change across higher education (Farris et al., 2009; Nahata et al., 2010; Stanley et al., 2019; Patterson et al., 2021). Recent literature indicates the change model is not always implemented linearly as originally depicted and often perceived; instead, change tends to occur cyclically within organizations. In other words, organizational change is ongoing (Kang et al., 2020; Patterson et al., 2021).

Project

The IMA is a 501c3 organization with a longstanding record of supporting best practices in mentoring through education, evidence dissemination, networking, and accreditation programs. The IMA promotes individual and organization development by using mentoring best practices in every setting. The diverse and dynamic, worldwide organization unites individuals who are interested in the theory and practice of effective mentoring. Members bring unique experiences and fresh perspectives from their various fields of mentoring. Working together, the IMA shares a common commitment to increasing the impact

of mentoring best practices, the performance of mentoring participants, and the efficacy of the organizations with whom they partner.

Since 1987, the IMA has been the premier source for best practice solutions and support of mentoring professionals and their programs. The IMA offers several initiatives designed to connect members and non-members alike. For example, the consultant directory is a resource for mentoring program consultants to be discovered, thereby connecting to potential clients. Similarly, the speaker directory includes names, bios, and topics of potential mentorship speakers. Mentor Connect, the official magazine of IMA, is a peer-reviewed publication highlighting emergent mentoring trends, spotlighting programs or innovations, and book reviews. Submission is open to anyone. Another resource available to mentoring programs is the accreditation process. This is a holistic review for how a mentoring program aligns to IMA mentoring program standards and can provide recognition through gold and silver credentialing.

The current IMA vision is to be the premier organization and a leading resource for mentoring excellence and best practices. Like other organizations, the IMA finds itself with an opportunity to (re)vision, based on the global influences and advances in the mentoring field. As with any (re)visioning project, there is inherently an opportunity for introspection and self-evaluation. While this continual process has offered moments of celebration, it has also revealed potential growth areas for the IMA and the global field of mentoring.

Along the way, the IMA leadership identified a few assumptions. First, an association is a community, meaning there are opportunities for interaction, participation, and exchange. Second, are the assumptions that many effective associations are inclusive, collaborative, resourceful, visionary, advocates, and stewards. For the IMA, this means being the connective tissue of the mentoring field. It does not mean the IMA is the keeper of the field.

1. Similarly, the process has revealed six key principles the IMA leadership team believes to be guiding the organization and thus, this (re) visioning process.

We exist to complement the work being done by people and organizations, offering shared resources and a space to elevate the field together

2. Support and amplify what exists
3. Breadth and Depth of Expertise in Mentoring
4. It is not about being THE authority, it is about being a resource
5. Connect, strengthen, celebrate
6. Think "spotlight", "megaphone", and "bridge", not ownership or control.

One exercise undertaken by the IMA leadership was to envision the various domains associated with their global organization (see Figure 1). This reflection and ensuing exchange challenged what and how the organization identifies as a core domain. In other words, what must the IMA do versus what may the IMA do? Another emergent

pondering was how IMA defines their space. Within this conversation the IMA leadership noted the University of New Mexico's Mentoring Institute has clearly articulated this question.

Figure 1.
IMA (Re)Vision Domains

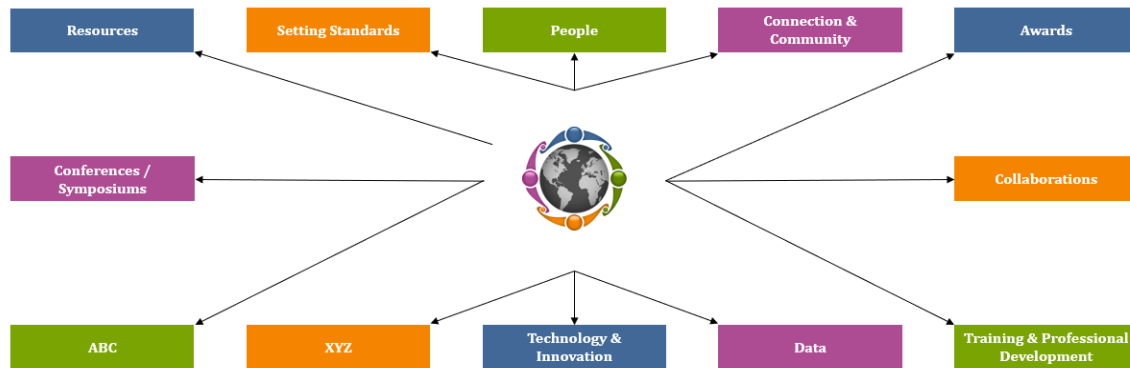


Table 1.
IMA Constituents and perceived want

Constituents	Perceived want
Researchers and Academics	Data sets Study participants Research dissemination
Companies and Organizations	Training and development Best practices "Business Case" data Program accreditation
Program Administrators	Certification Training and Development Community Program accreditation
Mentoring Platforms	Clients Accreditation Events/Platforms Communication
Consultants and Speakers	Clients Best Practices Research

Results

As the IMA journeys into this (re)visioning phase, members of the organization have begun to reflect on their various constituents and perceived wants from an organization like the IMA (see Table 1). Kotter's (1995) change model will frame the IMA visioning process. As this effort is in the early stages, it is unrealistic to report on all 8-steps. Therefore, the first four steps frame the visioning initiative:

Step 1. Create a Sense of Urgency

Literature abounds with the perceived and empirical value of mentoring in the workforce. However, the global workforce continues evolving due to external and internal factors. For example, the COVID-19 Pandemic disrupted work and influenced electronic mentoring (Chang et al, 2020). And more recently, the rise of generative artificial intelligence is impacting work responsibilities and relationships. These major shifts lead to the emergence of three evidence-based mentoring competencies developed by the Center for the Improvement of Mentoring Experiences in Research (CIMER), Enhancing Work-Life Integration, Cultivating Ethical Behavior, and Supporting Well-being. These three mentorship competencies are now described as having ample evidence for inclusion and competence for mentorship.

Step 2. Build a Guiding Coalition

IMA has a board of directors and members who invest in mentoring initiatives within and across the globe. The IMA leadership offers support and perspective for essential mentorship domains like best practices, emergent trends, and diverse contexts. The IMA board began the (re)visioning phase in early 2025 and aims to expand beyond IMA leadership and membership. Scholarly exchanges are planned at the Mentoring Institute in October 2025 and the IMA bi-annual conference in May 2026.

Step 3. Form a Strategic Vision

Although strategic vision does exist, there is opportunity to reaffirm or re-conceptualize the original IMA vision as described earlier in the paper. To achieve such a goal, the IMA will overlap with the University of New Mexico's Mentoring Institute to host an interactive panel session at the 18th annual conference. Panelists will be represented by the IMA board of directors and attendees will be Mentoring Institute Conference participants. This venue will provide a mechanism for collaborative discussion and vision-casting. The session's overall goal is to amplify the current breadth and depth of mentorship experience and expertise, this Mentoring Institute panel-participant exchange is anticipated to help drive the IMA organization and mentoring field forward. On the other side of this exchange, the hope is an attendee will value

the opportunity to inform the vision of a global mentoring organization.

Step 4. Enlist a Volunteer Army

In recognition that real change demands commitment from across layers of an organization, a volunteer army will begin forming beyond the established IMA leadership and members. For example, the Mentoring Institute session participants will be invited to not only the (re)visioning phase but will have opportunities to continue their mentoring stakeholder input and involvement. Through innovatively blending these two notable mentorship organizations with an interactive panel, the IMA vision will be bolstered by the exchange of evidence-based ideas and experiences. Attendee insights into various mentoring domains like mentoring programs, mentoring innovators, will be valuable perspectives to the IMA visioning process through semi-structured prompts and practitioner reflections.

Discussion

The first three steps of Kotter's (1995) process-based framework are often clumped as 'creating the climate for change'. Unfortunately, the second half of Kotter's 8-steps are yet to be determined. That could be a future paper and direction. Possible considerations for Step 5: Enable action by removing barriers could be available for IMA members and non-members to access the various speaker and consultant directories, as well as Mentor Connect. An example of short-term win might be the IMA 2026 Conference (and/or 19th annual Mentoring Institute conference) session where attendees continue their stakeholder input, or a vision report is shared. Critical moments for sustaining acceleration are during IMA Board of Director and leadership transitions over the next five years. And the final step to institute change may present opportunities to once again (re)vision as the world changes and mentoring advances.

A review of the IMA (re)visioning process thus far, explores the assumptions, guiding principles, domains, and constituents. The assumptions offer a collective self-reflection moment to ensure the holistic and welcoming themes associated with the IMA vision and mission remain in focus. The six guiding principles indicate the parameters with how the IMA will approach the scope of the vision. The domains demonstrate the current and forecasted areas of IMA engagement and involvement. The connection between guiding principles and domains has not yet been determined. Lastly, who the IMA constituents and their perceived wants from IMA is an exercise that showcased the wide representation and touchpoints, symbolic with a global mentoring organization. Continued reflection around other potential IMA constituents such as Not-for-Profit, Thought Leaders, and Sponsors is recommended.

Conclusions

Notably this is not simply a rare instance of overlap between the University of New Mexico's Mentoring Institute and the International Mentoring Association. In fact, there is quite a significant amount of historical evidence for collaboration. For example, the IMA moved operations to the University of New Mexico from 2014-2018. Within that time frame, Mentoring Institute Director Dr. Nora Dominquez was the IMA president and board member. Additional personnel overlap exists within and across memberships, conference attendees and speakers, as well as with the broader contributions to mentorship (Patterson, 2025).

The overall goal is not for the IMA to supplant effort or encroach on the distinct aspects of either, but to highlight their meaningful work and vision. An effective way to both carry momentum and ensure relevance is to form a co-created strategic vision for change by enlisting a volunteer army of mentoring-minded people and organizations.

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