



Digital Push

Mentoring programme for digital readiness and creativity fostering

Digital Push promotes digital skills of cultural and creative sector professionals, and of vulnerable people in order to foster their creative skills and use them as a means for promoting themselves, their craft and ultimately improve their working conditions, bonds and environments.



PROJECT

Digital Push: Upgrading the portfolio of low-skilled unemployed

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Context

The Mentoring programme for digital readiness and creativity fostering is a result of Digital Push – a Project, co-financed by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ Program, KA2 Cooperation for Adult Education, developed and delivered by seven European organizations from Sweden, Portugal, Turkey, and Italy.

Digital push aims to support and empower unemployed/inactive people with low digital literacy, tailored to workers from the cultural sector, to foster their creative skills and use them as a means for promoting themselves, and their craft and ultimately improve their working conditions, bonds, and environments.

Informed and inspired by the **Guide for digital inclusion in culture**, providing the methodology and tools to up and re-skill workers for creativity and digital skills, developed by the partnership, the **Mentoring programme for digital readiness and creativity fostering** combines the benefits of mentoring (i.e., closeness, informality, relationship, confidence, and self-efficacy) with tangible skills connected to digitalization (i.e. how to use digital tools, understand IT potential, how to channel IT tools to “boost” creative workers), alongside a focus on creativity development.

Based on theory and evidence-based Mentoring, this Program has a cross-over learning process, practical technology-related material and activities that empower the mentees with basic digital competencies to support them to access the labour market.

The Mentoring Program’s operationalization and delivery are composed of:

- 12 Group Sessions
- A Process Map for the Sessions – including templates for session plans and activities
- 15 Mentees per country
- 5 Mentors per country

Introduction

This document presents a structured plan for the implementation of the **Mentoring programme for digital readiness and creativity fostering**, aiming to:

- define the mentoring model to be developed under the mentoring programme.
- contextualize the meaning of a mentoring model.
- present the mentoring goals to be followed.
- clarify the different roles taking part in the mentoring processes.
- sum up the features and procedures of the mentoring model.
- outline the x phases into which the mentoring program is structured.
- present the Process Map for 12 Group Sessions.
- define the digital competencies/hard skills approached.
- detail how the mentoring processes should be conducted.

Mentoring Model

Mentoring Process

Mentoring can be defined as a supportive relationship between mentor(s) and mentee(s). The mentees, characterized by having less experience, can benefit from the expertise and know-how of the mentors, who present vaster experience and knowledge in a given context, and have the ability and will to support the mentees (Tolan et al., 2008).

The mentoring process is marked by the absence of unequal roles (Finnegan et al, 2010) and is co-constructed by the mentor and the mentee together, where both parties can learn from each other. Moreover, the knowledge, social capital, and psycho-social support transmitted and fostered through mentoring is perceived as relevant for the work and professional development of the mentees (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007).

Mentoring sessions should be regular and limited to a predefined time frame. The Mentoring programme for digital readiness and creativity fostering is carried out for 12 group sessions of 1 hour and 30 minutes each.

Group Mentoring

One of the characteristics of the Mentoring programme for digital readiness and creativity fostering is that it does not happen in a dyadic relationship, as is usually the norm for mentoring. Instead, the sessions will be implemented in groups of two or three mentees. Group mentoring is defined by collaborative and concurrent interactions in a mentoring relationship of more than two people and takes different forms – peer group mentoring, one-to-many mentoring, many-to-one mentoring, and many-to-many mentoring (Huzing, 2012). The Digital Push mentoring program resembles a one-to-many mentoring approach, where one mentor has various mentees. Group mentoring can enhance the benefits and results of mentoring if organized and used correctly accordingly to the characteristics of the mentees and the goals of the program (Stoeger et al., 2017). Moreover, group mentoring can develop and improve collaborative work, foster an understanding of self, develop a personal and professional identity (Driscoll et al., 2009), and it can promote networking while presenting a cost-effective solution. Such considerations are tailored to the target group of the mentoring program – people and workers with low digital from the cultural sector aiming to promote their craft and improve their working conditions.

Furthermore, group mentoring also provides an opportunity for peer learning, encouraging teaching/learning through collaboration (the faster learners will support those with some difficulties). This cross-over learning process also promotes the change of experiences and networking between the mentees.

A technology-in-class approach to training the mentees in using digital learning materials and software to provide creative tools, information, assessments, and other content, fostering the interaction of trainers/educators and learners, will also be employed. Such an approach is conducive with the goal-oriented programme tailored to the achievement of hard outcomes.

Mentoring Goals

Mentoring goals are essential for the success of a mentoring program, being defined and set from the beginning of the mentoring process, permitting for the deconstruction into smaller steps, fostering a better understanding and defining a clearer mentoring path, and allows for the pursuit of tangible targets improving mentee's motivation.

The objective of the Mentoring program for digital readiness and creativity fostering is to develop specific hard outcomes related to digitalization (i.e., netiquette; browsing, searching and filtering

data, information; using digital tools) while fostering the development of soft outcomes such as confidence, communication, and self-efficacy. Given this objective, a goal-oriented approach will be used. The goal-oriented approach, distinguished by the presence of a specified target present in the pilot design, is better tailored to achieve the hard outcomes, while an open-ended approach – incorporation of intermediate goals instead of one specific end goal – is suited for the soft outcomes expected (MEGAN, 2013).

The hard outcomes of the mentoring programme are informed by the Guide for Digital Inclusion developed by the partnership and the EU Digital Competence Framework¹.

In this sense the following goals are expected to be achieved throughout the sessions:

Topic	No. Session	Hard Outcomes
Information and data literacy	2	Identify the data and information sources viable and important to their work; Search and articulate data, information, and content in digital/online platforms; Manage, organise, and store structured data and information on digital and online platforms.
Digital content creation	3	Recognize and identify best practices/examples in digital content for their work; Understand the digital tools and platforms that can be used for content production.
	4	Develop and edit digital content in different mediums and formats;
	5	Develop and edit digital content in different mediums and formats; Understand copyright and licenses in digital domains.

¹ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/digcomp/digital-competence-framework_en

Communication and collaboration	6	Identify the digital tools and platforms for communication and interaction; Interact within the online environment, using digital tools/ technologies; Use suitable digital tools/technologies to share content and data;
	7	Understand and be aware of netiquette; Professionally collaborate with others within digital environments.
	8	Professionally collaborate with others within digital environments; Professionally co-produce with others within digital environments; Manage and dignify the digital identity;
Promotion and marketing	9	Identify the current digital marketing best practices in the cultural sector; Understand the essentials of online marketing with an emphasis on cultural and creative sector characteristics;
	10	Set up and maintain an online shop, considering the business and national context;
Problem solving	11	Be able to identify and assess technical problems; Boost creativity through Information Technology (IT); Recognize one's shortcomings and needs regarding digital competences; Be able to autonomously improve digital competences.

Consider, that conducted with a mentoring process, the outcomes and goals should be set up alongside the mentee. As such, the described hard outcomes can be adapted.

Mentoring Roles

The following personas
and roles are established in the Digital Push mentoring model:

Mentoring coordinator: Person responsible for the recruitment of mentors, matching process, and managing and supervising the mentoring process;

Mentor: Individual collaborating, as a volunteer or worker of the organization, experienced and knowledgeable in the field of digitalization and creativity willing to guide and provide support, direction, and feedback, and constructively influence the mentee.

Mentee: unemployed/inactive people and cultural sector workers with low digital literacy, that can benefit and are motivated to participate in a mentoring process to develop their digital competencies and improve their working conditions.

Each country's pilot will have 1 mentor coordinator and 5 mentors that will be responsible for 15 mentees – 3 per mentor.

Mentoring forms

To guarantee a clear organization and tracking of the mentoring process, the Mentoring programme for digital readiness and creativity fostering presents a set of forms. Mentoring coordinators will make use of those forms, for the duration of the mentoring programme, assuring a regular and timely completion of the sessions and activities, monitoring the quality and effectiveness of the mentoring process, and providing support for the mentors and mentees.

- Mentoring Agreement
- Session Registration Form
- Evaluation Report
- Assessment Tools

These complete forms can be found in the annex.

Mentoring Agreement

The mentoring agreement is an informal contract that aims at setting a commitment between mentees and mentors. Moreover, the document presents the procedures of the mentoring process, the expectations (i.e., the range of competencies regarded), and limitations (i.e., the appropriate moment for the contact between the mentor and mentee). Namely, the mentoring agreement covers the following:

- identifies the mentor's and mentees' names and contacts;

- defines the duration, frequency, format, and place of the sessions;
- sets main responsibilities and goals (it is for each pair to define together the goals during the introduction time);
- contains a statement of privacy;
- registers the starting date and the prospective ending date for the process;

To be valid and finalized the mentor and mentee will sign the document.

Session registration form

The Session registration form serves to register data regarding the mentoring process and schedule the sessions. Therefore, the form presents the following components:

- Number of the session
- Date of the session
- The place where the session was carried out
- Duration of the session
- Format of the session
- Description of the activities and sessions
- Occurrences

The form is filled in at the end of each Session. Additionally, the Registration form for the first session also has a section for the mentors and mentees to schedule the entirety of the mentoring sessions – this procedure aims at facilitating the monitoring and operationalization of the mentoring.

Evaluation form

The Evaluation form composes an ensemble of metrics.

It will be completed at two points during the mentoring process: an interim evaluation, after the sixth session, and at the end of the 12th session for a final evaluation.

Moreover, the evaluation will be completed with assessment tools related to the hard and soft outcomes to be achieved by the mentee.

Progress Report

Self evaluation form:

- Mentoring coordinator self evaluation form
- Mentor self evaluation form
- Mentee self evaluation form

Mentoring structure

A mentoring programme is made up of various phases with specific purposes, from the launch of the programme and recruitment of mentors and mentees to the closure and evaluation, going through the intermediate phases. In total, the programme can be divided into 7 phases, based on the Mentoring4All program developed by Aproximar (figure 1). Below, a more in-depth look and description of each phase is presented.

Mentoring process map



Figure 1: Mentoring Process Map. Source: Based on Aproximar's Mentoring Programme M4ALL

1) Programme Launch

Select and prepare the coordinator of the mentoring programme. Each organization carrying out the mentoring programme for digital inclusion and creativity fostering selects one mentoring coordinator. It is advisable and expected that the person selected has previous experience and/or training in the role of the mentoring coordinator. In this regard, a self-evaluation questionnaire will



be completed by each coordinator to assess the knowledge and competencies at the beginning of the programme. This questionnaire will also be completed at the end of the programme in order to compare and understand the evolution of the coordinator throughout the process.

Recruitment of mentees. The mentoring programme for digital inclusion and creativity fostering stems from the necessity of unemployed/inactive people and cultural sector workers with low digital literacy to learn and improve their digital competencies. Therefore, the mentee's profile is clearly stated. Partners implementing the mentoring programme will recruit mentees with these characteristics, using their own network and through partnerships with organizations that can assist in the dissemination and identification of mentees. A registration form will be filled in by each potential participant. Furthermore, during the first session, a mentee's initial evaluation form will be completed, identifying the mentee's profile, needs, motivation, and goals.

Recruitment of mentors. To recruit mentors, organization promoting the mentoring programme, can select people inherent in the organization or find volunteers through their local network. Given the goals of the mentoring programme and the mentee's profile, the following requirements need to be met for the mentor's selection:

- Availability, motivations, and necessary competences to be a mentor;
- Experience and knowledge regarding digital skills, specifically in the mentoring programme, substantiated either through education and/or professional experience in the area;
- Additionally, if possible, the mentor should be a worker in the cultural sector.

Mentors will also complete a self-evaluation form before and after the mentoring process, to assess their profile, promote self-reflection, and compare and understand the evolution resulting from their participation in the programme.

Presentation of guidelines. A clear and brief explanation of the mentoring programme will also be prepared and given to the coordinator, mentors, and mentees, explaining the steps of the process and the role of each participant.

2) Mentors Preparation

Training. Mentors should preferentially go through mentoring training before starting the process. If such a solution, due to time or resource restrictions, isn't possible, at least one short session or workshop should be conducted addressing the following topics/content:



Main concepts of mentoring – definition, principles, mentoring process map, and mentoring model used; Mentoring competencies; Roles in the mentoring process – coordinator, mentor, and mentee; Mentor and mentee relationship; Communication between mentor and mentee; Mentoring strategy and tools;

Informal interview. An informal interview should be conducted before the training, to understand the mentors' profile and support their self-reflection.

Knowledge and competencies. The mentor needs to be knowledgeable and experienced in the digital and cultural area and content covered by Digital Push.

3) Matching

Selection and matching of mentors and mentees. Based on the characteristics and profile of the available mentors and mentees, and the needs of the last, the mentoring coordinator will proceed with the matching of 3 mentees with 1 mentor. Those pieces of information can be found through the registration form and the self-evaluation form completed before the first session.

Factors to be taken into account. The following factors should be considered for a successful match (Aproximar, 2017):

- compatible personalities and communication styles;
- similar preferences, interests or hobbies
- personal skills and experiences;
- area of activity, mentoring and professional experiences;
- needs and expectations of the mentees and level of autonomy;
- mentoring experience and motivations for the role of mentor;
- similar particularities about culture, life context, language, ethnicity, and religion;
- age (depending on the context, it will usually be advisable for the mentor to be older than the mentee);
- gender (a pairing between people of different genders should be done with care, and only if the mentee agrees)
- geographical coverage, schedule/availability or accessibility;
- specific objectives of the programme and individual and other individual factors considered relevant.



4) Introduction

First Introductory session. Steps 4 to 7 represent the mentoring process. The first part is the introduction of the mentoring process, through the welcoming and presentation of mentors and mentees in an introductory session. This session will happen with each mentor (1) and mentees (3) group or, if the organization considers it beneficial and possible, this introductory session can involve every participant, and has the following goals:

- Present the mentoring process and procedures;
- Answer any questions that may arrive;
- Reduce resistance and increase engagement of all parts involved;

Follow-up introduction. Until the third session, the mentoring agreement form between the mentor and mentees should be signed, specifying the expectations and limitations. Moreover, during the first sessions, a matching confirmation is carried out. In practice, if any mentor or mentee communicates the desire to change or re-evaluate the matching, the mentoring coordinator has the responsibility of changing it accordingly.

Session organization. The session registration form will be completed at the end of each session, starting in the introductory session until the final one.

5) Development of the Mentoring Process

The development of the mentoring process is composed of regular sessions between mentor and mentee.

Delivery. As described before, the mentoring programme for digital inclusion and creativity fostering will be implemented during 12 sessions of 1h00 each, for 6 months.

Frequency. The sessions can occur consonant with the mentor and mentee disponibility and the coordinator orientations. Nonetheless, a frequency of 1 session every week is recommended. Moreover, the scheduled – time and location – of each session should be decided in the first session with a follow-up after each individual session.

Activities. The Guide for Digital Inclusion, developed during IO1 will serve as inspiration to re-skill workers for creativity and digital skills, with each session having a specific digital competence to be worked on (hard outcomes).

6) Follow up and Support





Availability and registration. The mentoring coordinator should be available to assist the mentors and mentees for the entirety of the mentoring programme, in any occurrence and difficulties that may occur during the sessions, and by regular contact with each mentor and mentee individually. Regarding the monitorization of the sessions, the coordinator will also access and monitor the correct completion of the Sessions Registration form. The information must be kept confidential.

Monitorization. The coordinator, above the mentioned activities, will also prepare and develop an Interim Progress Report at the halfway point of the mentoring process (3 months) for mentees and mentors to complete. This Report has two main goals: to enable feedback and changes, if needed, during the mentoring process; to provide valuable data for the final Report on the Mentoring programme for digital inclusion and creativity fostering.

Presence in Sessions. The coordinator should participate in key sessions, namely the introductory and the final sessions.

Beyond the formal supervision. Mentors should feel comfortable addressing issues and supporting mentees beyond the formal means of support and feedback. Such approaches can be materialized in different ways, for example, a personal reflection diary, group reflection, and creative methods of feedback.

7) Closure and evaluation

After the 12 established sessions, the mentoring process comes to an end.

Considerations. In the end, during the final session, all actors involved in the mentoring process – coordinators, mentors, and mentees – should come together and have a moment and space for consideration and self-reflection. Moreover, the coordinator should be available for any additional **Final Report.** A Final Mentoring Report, encapsulating the results and data from the different forms and tools created will be developed at the end of the mentoring process, offering a general evaluation, new insights into the mentoring programme, and providing areas of improvement for the future.

Evaluation. For the evaluation of the Mentoring Programme the following components will be taken into consideration: forms completed during the mentoring process, assessment tools – soft and hard outcomes of the process – and further feedback in written or in audiovisual format.

Assessment Tools. To monitor and assure the quality of the mentoring developed regarding the themes: digital and creativity/arts, soft and hard outcomes of the process will be identified, its

learning outcomes, and connection with the EU digital competencies framework: the key outcomes to be measured and the best methods to do it, including quantitative and qualitative formats.

Mentoring strategies

Mentoring strategies, critical for a goal-oriented approach, enable the development of structured programmes while aiming at improving motivation, attendance, and the mentoring process's impact and results, and can be applied in three moments, following the mentoring relationship cycle: relationship building; intervention; and closure.

Relationship building

The dynamics between mentor and mentee are shaped by a complex set of variables. To foster a positive and successful relationship trust and respect-based relationship should be developed. In this regard, fostering open and honest two-way communication can build such a relationship (Hudson, 2016). Regarding entrepreneurship, this may entail the mentor sharing weaknesses and obstacles faced in their own business to seek improvements which can be an effective strategy, nonetheless maintaining a professional ground is essential to keep the expected dynamics of the relationship between mentor and mentee, and assuring that the mentoring goals are reached (Hudson, 2016). As described in the previous sections, mentors should also be supportive which can contribute to the quality and success of the mentoring process (Hellsten et al., 2009). Actions including active listening, sharing of guiding information and resources (Hudson, 2016), and regular and constant contact can contribute to building a supportive relationship.

A fundamental factor in building a positive mentoring relationship is having clearly defined expectations and boundaries. The goals that can realistically be achieved, the purpose of mentoring, how the relationship will evolve, what the limits are (e.g. until what time can the mentee call, can there be mentoring sessions on rest days, the extent of support the mentor can give). Such issues are outlined and agreed upon on the mentoring agreement form.



Communication

Another fundamental point to developing and maintaining a mentor and mentee relationship is communication: effective interpersonal communication competencies, actively fostering trust, and respecting confidentiality is essential in this regard (Pfund et al., 2012). The vast majority of the communication between mentor and mentee is interpersonal communication – bilateral verbal and non-verbal information sharing between two or more persons – which, when done correctly, can create a positive working relationship by supporting the mentee to feel motivated, respected, and understood. Furthermore, as seen in the mentor role and profile providing assistance and feedback is central, such tasks are ever more effective and beneficial as the understanding of the mentee about the information, knowledge, and experience transmitted by the mentor. Such communication goes way beyond sharing information and advice, and requiring a multitude of competencies related to non-verbal communication, listening, and asking questions.

In practical terms, mentors should pay attention to (Pfund et al., 2012):

- **Eye contact** – culture dependent.
- **Posture** – welcoming and relaxed.
- **Facial expressions** – pleasant and positive.
- **Active listening** – be engaged in the conversation, focusing on the mentee's verbal and non-verbal clues and providing a response accordingly.
- **Reflective listening and paraphrasing** – check verbally on what the mentee said, making sure the mentor understood the message and is engaged in the conversation. If needed use different phrasing to be better understood.
- **Summarizing** – if the information is all over the place or not clear, summarizing the main points into a coherent statement can help both the mentee and mentor reflect and be better understood.
- **Open-ended questions** – ask questions that oblige a response other than yes or no, fostering meaningful answers and reflections.
- **Self-disclosure** – share suitable and appropriate personal experiences and attitudes to develop a closer, and more intimate and truthfull communication.
- **Confrontation/questioning** – through questions or affirmations without accusing or judging propel and support the mentee to reflect on difficult issues.

As for the attitudes that the mentor should mitigate in his/her communication, the following are identified (Pfund et al., 2012):

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- **Moralizing** – do not verbalize judgments about a mentee's behavior, including saying what should or shouldn't do.
- **Arguing** – while fostering the mentee's self-reflection and encouraging them to answer difficult questions is expected from the mentor, disagreeing and arguing actively isn't correct.
- **Preaching** – do not tell the mentee what to do or present yourself in a presumptuous manner.

Other communication missteps, such as talking too much, presenting stories and examples that don't fit the conversation, or showing no interest/attention to what the mentee is saying should be eliminated.

Intervention

Numerous forms and support documents have been presented in the Mentoring Programme, these enable cohesive and significant strategies to plan, organize, monitor, and support the mentoring process, both for the coordinator and the mentor. In this regard, the following tools can assist the mentor during the intervention phase:

- **Session registration form** to schedule and plan the mentoring sessions, defining the dates, length, goals, activities, and resources to be used.
- **Progress Report** to describe and assess the evaluation of the mentor-mentee relationship.
- **Action Plan** to support the identification and tracking of the mentoring goals. The action plan is presented in form of steps, enabling the mentor and mentee to deconstruct the desired goal into smaller and realistic steps, describing in each step the activities/actions needed to finalize it and ultimately reach the goal. Such a plan should be personalized and created together with the mentee, considering the pre-defined goals of the mentoring programme for digital inclusion and creativity fostering, and additional goals fitting the mentoring process and area.

Mentors can also introduce other strategies and activities, namely motivational interviews, leisure activities, or feedback to keep the mentees motivated and non-formal learning activities.



Closure

The mentoring process is limited in time with a clear timeline. In this regard, the mentor should prepare for the closure of the mentoring process and focus on how the mentee will proceed. Therefore the closure should be celebrated, highlighting the goals reached and the journey ahead.



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