MENTORING PROGRAM FOR HIGHLY SKILLED REFUGEES
– A HANDS-ON GUIDE
This hands-on guide helps you successfully implement a mentoring program in your company, for highly skilled refugees.

THE CONCEPT

Companies invite their employees to volunteer as mentors for refugees. Mentor and mentee meet 1-2 times a month for 6 months. This unique concept matches mentors and mentees who share the same professional background. The refugees receive field specific guidance and support in relation to their job search in Denmark.
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INTRODUCTION

THIS GUIDE IS BASED ON...

experiences from three mentoring programs for highly skilled refugees. One at Novo Nordisk which kicked off in January 2016, one at IBM Denmark in April 2016 and one at Roche in November 2016. The programs were facilitated in collaboration with Foreningen Nydansker who has nearly 20 years of experience with labor market integration of New Danes and the facilitation of mentoring programs.

Throughout the mentoring programs, Foreningen Nydansker has been collecting data quantitatively and qualitatively. The design of the program has continuously been developed and refined based on these experiences.

THE AIM OF THE PUBLICATION IS...

to give you a quick overview of what it requires to set up a mentoring program for highly skilled refugees and a step-by-step introduction to the preparations and execution of a program. We have turned our experiences into an easy-to-use hands-on guide of best practice for private companies, associations, organizations etc, who wish to implement a refugee mentoring program of their own.

This publication is the result of a collaboration between Foreningen Nydansker, the U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen and American Chamber of Commerce in Denmark which was initiated in the fall of 2015 and financed by the U.S. State Department.
"The mentoring program creates a feeling of pride amongst the employees, a sort of internal employer branding”

— mentor, IBM Denmark
WHY ENGAGE YOUR COMPANY IN A MENTORING PROGRAM FOR REFUGEES?

The number of refugees coming to Denmark have increased considerably over the past few years. Experiences show that the best way to successful integration is through the labor market.

Mentoring programs for highly skilled refugees, initiated through corporate volunteering, has proved to be successful in integrating refugees into the Danish labor market.

Mentoring programs for refugees benefit both refugees, employees and the society as a whole. With this program, companies have a chance to launch a Corporate Social Responsibility initiative which not only makes a huge difference to the individual refugee, but also develops the skills and knowledge of the company’s employees.
WHAT DO REFUGEES GAIN?

- Field specific knowledge and guidance towards getting a job within their professional field
- Integration into the Danish labor market – a majority of the refugees find either regular employment or experience a stronger attachment to the Danish labor market
- Gain professional confidence – refugees report feeling more focused, energetic and confident and states that participating in the mentoring program has developed them personally
- Plans for the future – refugees develop a short term as well as a long term plan with specific steps to take in order to access a job within their field
- Expansion of their professional network
- Clarification of qualifications
- Feeling welcome – to meet a Danish professional who wants to volunteer their time is invaluable

WHAT DOES THE COMPANY GAIN?

- Professional development for participating employees – both personally and professionally
- Engagement in social responsibility – be part of the newest initiative within Corporate Social Responsibility that makes a significant difference for refugees
- Employer branding – by taking action on social responsibility, the company creates a sense of pride among their employees
- Diversity focus – the participating mentor employees are given the chance to see the Danish labor market from a refugee’s perspective, inspiring them to broaden their horizon when hiring in the future
- Diversity creates innovation – diversity encourages innovative problem solving

WHAT DOES SOCIETY GAIN?

- Financial gains – utilizing the many resources that refugees bring to their professional field
- Securing future workforce – avoiding a lack of manpower in the future by focusing on exploring, developing and utilizing the skills that refugees bring from their countries of origin
- Integration – introducing Danes and refugees to each other creates understanding, integration and cohesion in society
“Danish companies have an enormous potential of integrating refugees into the labor market. Join forces with us and contribute with the skills of your company”

Sanne Urbak, CSR Manager, IBM Denmark
Foreningen Nydansker has developed a general design for mentoring programs that is applicable for companies of all sizes. The design can be tailored to the individual needs of your company.

**STEP 1: DESIGN YOUR OWN MENTORING PROGRAM**

- Secure funding for internal and/or external resources
  - Assign (part time) coordinator
- Adapt the design to your company’s wishes and needs: Size, target group, events etc.
  - Prepare timeline for the program
  - Define what success looks like (Formulate Key Performance Indicators – KPIs)
- Produce material (internal communication, profile forms and tools)
  - Prepare baseline questionnaire for mentees/mentors
  - Consider teaming up with an external partner (for training, coordinating, knowledge etc.)

**Approx: 1 month**
STEP 2: RECRUITMENT AND KICK-OFF
• Recruit mentors and mentees
• Screen and match mentors and mentees
• Mentor and mentee introductions
  • Kick-off event
• Send out baseline questionnaire for mentees/mentors

Approx: 2 month

STEP 3: THE MENTORSHIP
• Follow up with mentors and mentees
• Ongoing communication with municipal job centers
  • Internal communication of progression
• Workshop(s) – e.g. workshops on LinkedIn, job interview training etc.
  • Consider press and media

6 month

STEP 4: COMPLETION AND EVALUATION
• Final questionnaire for mentees/mentors
  • Evaluation of KPIs
  • Press/communication of results
• Wrap up event for all mentors and mentees

Approx: 1 month
“The mentoring program has been a professional inspiration into my career journey. During my participation in the program, my skills have been structured and developed”

– mentee, Novo Nordisk
CASE:
THE NOVO NORDISK MENTOR PROGRAMME

• **Size:** 49 mentors from Novo Nordisk were matched with 49 refugees with an academic background

• **Duration:** Six months mentorship

• **Content of program:** Training, kick-off event, three workshops held during the mentorship, follow-ups with all mentors and mentees four times during the mentorship, quantitative evaluation

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AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY:

**Novo Nordisk:**

• Securing funding

• Internal and external communication

• Recruitment of mentors

• Hosting training of mentors and mentees

• Planning, hosting and conducting kick-off event

• Planning, hosting and conducting workshops

• Quantitative evaluation of mentors’ experience (baseline and final survey)

**Foreningen Nydansker:**

• Recruitment of mentees

• Ongoing communication with municipal job centers

• Screening and interviewing of mentors and mentees

• Matching of mentors and mentees

• Planning and conducting training of mentors and mentees

• Planning and conducting kick-off event

• Assisting in planning and conducting workshops

• Follow-ups with mentors and mentees four times during the mentorships

• Ongoing feedback to Novo Nordisk on the status of the mentorships

• Identifying appropriate cases for press highlights

• Quantitative evaluation
“When I brought my mentee to my place of work, my colleagues were very engaged and interested. They all came by and greeted him. In that way, I wasn’t the only one affected by the program, but my closest colleagues were too. And they really liked that”

— mentor, Novo Nordisk
WHAT TO CONSIDER?

We have highlighted our key recommendations for structuring a mentoring program.

Engage top management
- Make sure to create awareness about the program in the company as a whole by engaging top management
- Securing top management support from the beginning, benefits a number of factors such as communication about the program, securing funding and making mentors and mentees feel they are part of a worthwhile initiative

Choose a manageable size
- We recommend a maximum of 25 mentee and mentor couples. A larger group requires more resources in order to secure a sense of cohesion for both mentors and mentees
- Think about what resources you have and what size makes sense in your context
- Consider making the mentor group large enough to also function as a mentor-to-mentor network and support system

Leave enough time to prepare
- Expect the introduction period (step 1+2) to last approximately 10-12 weeks. Be mindful that finding suitable mentees can take a long time depending on how specific you want their profiles to be. It can easily take several months to secure 20 participants if you start from scratch
- Agree on important dates as soon as possible to make sure the mentor employees can attend and that meeting rooms are available

Design the right target group
- Make sure that mentees speak and understand Danish or English
- Recruit mentees who prefer the same language for training sessions and workshops
- Recruit mentees relative to educational level and/or professional experience
- Choose mentees that match the professional profiles of your employees
• Think about certain characteristics that might speak to your company’s core values (E.g. women in business, attracting young people to your field, helping the less fortunate)

**Make geography manageable**
• Make sure the mentees are recruited from nearby municipalities in order for the mentee to be able to meet at the mentor’s place of work. Remember that most mentees do not have a car and travels by public transportation
• Find out who can sponsor the refugee’s transportation. The municipality should be able to.
• If several locations are in play, research which municipalities have received the most refugees
• If you have multiple sites across Denmark consider the logistics of the program prior to publishing the initiative internally

**Collaborate with municipal job centers on recruiting mentees**
• Contact the local municipalities to get an approximate number of relevant refugees fitting the target group
• We recommend that you keep in touch with the municipal job centers to ensure a good collaboration throughout the program. They usually welcome feedback on the progression of the program
• Consider alternative recruiting channels such as NGO’s, social media or local volunteer groups. But remember to verify the participation of a potential mentee with the municipality

**Screen mentors and mentees before matching**
• We recommend using both profile forms and telephone interviews in the screening process
• Match mentors and mentees based on common professional backgrounds, personal characteristics and mentees’ career goals
• Make sure to get the mentor’s OK if you utilize alternative matching criteria

**Set realistic criteria for success**
• To avoid setting unrealistic expectations among the mentors and mentees consider outlining qualitative standards for success
• For inspiration on KPI’s, see examples of mentee’s focus areas and results on page 17
Prepare mentors and mentees for the program
- Give the mentors a helping hand by sharing mentoring tools and techniques at a training session
- The more thoroughly you balance expectations of both mentors and mentees beforehand, the greater the likelihood of a successful program
- Consider hiring a psychologist to prepare the mentors for the challenge ahead. It allows them to be mindful of the possible mental and physical repercussions of being a refugee

Follow up during the mentorship
- Make sure to continuously support the participants throughout the mentorship: We recommend that you call both mentor and mentee four times during the six months
- Keep engagement high by assisting in solving potential challenges along the way
- Get knowledge about the results and development of the mentees

Consider having workshops
- Workshops are a great way to gather the mentors and mentees, but consider whether everyone has the possibility to participate and whether it’s worth the efforts needed, to plan and execute. You may also consider ‘booking an expert’ (recruiting partner, LinkedIn wiz, etc.) who can provide valuable insight and new perspectives to all parties

Share the good stories
- Communicating about the results is a good way of branding the company and makes mentors and other employees proud of the program
- Gather results, positive stories and angles for press coverage through follow-ups with the mentors

For more information
please contact Trine Lundgaard Hoffmann, Senior Consultant at Foreningen Nydansker, tln@foreningen-nydansker.dk or +45 3338 6211.
RESULTS AND FOCUS AREAS

(Based on mentoring programs at Novo Nordisk and IBM – a total of 74 mentees)

69% of mentees found regular employment or strengthened their attachment to the Danish labor market through internships, admission at university, part time jobs or student jobs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regular job</th>
<th>Part time job/student job</th>
<th>Admission at university</th>
<th>Apprenticeship</th>
<th>Internship (skilled and unskilled)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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98% of the mentors from Novo Nordisk stated that the program was worth their time and effort.
MENTEE’S GOALS FOR THE MENTORSHIP

- Match their education with relevant employment in Denmark
- Create a successful application letter and professional CV
- Expand their professional network
- Gain new perspectives on their specific sphere of work
- Search for further education to update and add to their qualifications

89% OF THE MENTEES HIGHLIGHTED ONE OR SEVERAL OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL GAINS

- Feel more focused
- Feel that they have more energy
- Feel that the mentorship has developed them personally
- Feel more confident
- Feel more optimistic
INSPIRATION AND FURTHER ADVICE

After reading this practical guide, we hope you feel, not only prepared and informed, but also inspired to start a similar mentoring program for highly skilled refugees in your company. Should you find any questions unanswered, Foreningen Nydansker is at your disposal to answer these or discuss potential collaborations in the future.

Find more information about mentoring programs, diversity management and cultural communication on our website, www.foreningen-nydansker.dk

“We have experienced a fantastic engagement among our employees about the mentoring programme, and I am sure we are not the only company where employees want to make a difference and help refugees integrate into the Danish labour market”

— Anette Lund, Programme Manager, Novo Nordisk
A special thanks to the U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen and AmCham Denmark for the funding and being a constant sounding board throughout the past year. Also, a special thanks to Novo Nordisk, IBM and Roche for showing boldness and being first movers on this new CSR initiative and for making a huge difference to refugees coming to Denmark. Last, but not least, we would like to thank the mentors and mentees of the programs, for taking the time to give us feedback on their experiences of the programs, enabling Foreningen Nydansker to improve and develop the concept.