Benefits of mentoring

Mentoring is not just about asking an expert

Mentoring is well established in many professions as a successful mechanism for professionals to obtain guidance and support. Mentoring can be focused on a specific situation or more general support. It is often helpful to those who are new to a vocation, changing specialism or interest area of practice, stressful work situations, developing a career plan or embarking on a new venture.

Mentoring is often defined as a professional relationship during which a person who is experienced in the subject matter (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge in that area that will enhance the less-experienced person's professional and personal development. However, it is not all just one way transfer of support. In the mentor-mentee relationship conversations facilitate reflection and learning in relation to the mentee's needs. The mentor is also encouraged to reflect on their learnings and journey which often helps to further progress the mentors professional and personal development.

The mentoring process is typically divided into four stages:
getting together;
getting to know each other;
learning together; and
saying goodbye.

Getting together is the process of finding a suitable mentor. The Innovators Mentorship Programme will facilitate matching mentors and mentees through a two stage process of firstly shortlisting the innovation to the interest areas of the mentors, followed by short facilitated face to face meetings to seek and agree upon the best pairing of mentors and mentees. The facilitated meetings will enable exploration and agreement of How would each person defines mentoring?; “What do you want and expect from a mentor?”, and “What do you want and expect from being on IMP?”

Mentoring is likely to be ineffective if there is a fundamental mismatch in expectations e.g. if the mentee is seeking advice and guidance but the mentor intends to empower the mentee to find their own solutions through questioning and reflection.

Getting to know each other is the vital stage in developing the mentoring relationship where both parties take time to get to know each other to establish rapport and trust. This will help to overcome issues with disclosing information, understanding motivation, understanding incentives and helping to develop a healthy supportive and effective relationship.

Learning together is the stage where the mentor supports the mentee to overcome barriers and challenges in the development of the innovation. This
may be a combination of reflecting on a similar situation, or opening networks or directing to further reading. In this process it is common for the mentor to be able to reflect on their learnings to further develop their understanding also. Shared learning within the mentoring relationship brings many benefits for the mentor as well as the mentee.

The final stage is saying goodbye, and ending the mentor-mentee relationship. One of the hardest things for mentors to do is to let go and let their mentees continue without their support. Throughout IMP mentees will have mentors who may rotate, additionally after finishing the programme the mentees have a cohort of peers to continue to access for support.