



ACCESS  
ADVOCACY &  
ACTIVE INCLUSION

Pathways to Increasing Diversity in the Arts and Culture Field

# AAA MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME BLUEPRINT FOR FOREIGN-BORN CREATIVES

*Specifically designed to address the needs  
and foster the active inclusion of artists who  
have moved to a country from abroad.*



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**Contributors:**

IMMART, International Migration Meets the Arts, <https://immart.dk/>

FACE, Fresh Arts Coalition Europe, <https://fresh-europe.org/>

G.A.P., Globe Art Point, <https://fresh-europe.org/>

**Logo design:**

Jelly Robot Creative - Julie Smith-Belton,

<https://www.juliesmithbelton.com/jellyrobot/>

**Authors:**

Sacramento Rosell-Martínez (IMMART) and Leticia Stallone (IMMART)

**Editor:**

Nicol Savinetti (IMMART)

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# AAA Mentorship Programme Blueprint for Foreign-Born Creatives

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# 1. Introduction

Access, Advocacy, and Active Inclusion – Pathways to Increasing Diversity in the Arts and Culture Field (AAA) aims at empowering the European arts and culture sector to better respond to the challenges that artists and cultural workers with migration backgrounds face in the societies they are living in.

## **Why do we need mentorship programmes?**

Mentoring should be an integral part of the active inclusion of professionals who are not from the country they are living and working in, particularly in the arts and culture sector, for several reasons. Firstly, there is a tendency for the field to rely on fine arts, performance studies and other forms of nationally sanctioned education systems as a path towards professionalisation. Secondly, the arts and cultural sector also represents a highly precarious labor market where temporary or zero contracts, and freelance work are commonplace. Thirdly, the sector and its governing institutions in many countries do not have open or shared knowledge structures that facilitate ease of access to opportunities. These factors (and certainly several others depending on which country one is in) make it particularly challenging for artists who are not born and/or educated in the country to thrive.

As such, this blueprint is designed to address the needs of artists who have moved to the destination country from abroad rather than all artists with migration backgrounds (which can include for instance country nationals with foreign parentage). We thus refer to our target group in this blueprint as foreign-born artists.

## Methodology

This Mentorship Programme Blueprint is the result of three-fold action-based research: the first step was the analysis and reflection upon data collected through Study Visits conducted in Finland, France and Denmark. The second stage involved targeted dialogue with industry experts whose specialisations include mentorship programmes for foreign nationals, universal design, and integration. In the third stage we designed an AAA Mentorship Programme Trial based on the knowledge gained from parts one and two. This allowed us to test our understandings and collect additional input for the blueprint from the participants (both mentors and mentees) in the AAA Mentorship Programme Trial.

The Study Visits which took place in 2023 and 2024 offered a comprehensive view of the mentoring landscape in the respective countries and allowed us to identify best practices across a variety of disciplines with a breadth of diverse approaches, experiences, and levels of success.

The AAA Mentorship Programme Trial was conducted in Denmark by IMMART and lasted several months. The first step was to identify mentee participants through an open call in the IMMART Network (a well-established informal network of Danish and non-Danish artists, cultural workers and practitioners, academics, curators and art collectors). We then conducted individual interviews as well as a focus group session to impart knowledge and understanding of the aims of the trial and the AAA project in its entirety as well as to concretely identify the mentees' needs and ensure readiness for the trial. Considering the needs of the selected mentees, we matched them with a mentor from the IMMART Network who has strong ties to the arts and culture sector, and who also presented a substantial capacity to be able to match the needs of the AAA Mentorship Programme Trial.

We conducted one-on-one interviews and, when required, individual capacity building with the mentors to ensure readiness for the program. The pairs

were encouraged to arrange a minimum of two sessions of a minimum of 90 minutes, to be executed at their own discretion regarding meeting place and intervals between sessions. Lastly, we conducted exit interviews with all participants which included a thorough evaluation of the sessions they had, as well as feedback and recommendations for the mentorship blueprint.

The following blueprint is the result of the AAA Mentorship Trial, and the knowledge gathered from the study visits and industry experts. It is adaptable and scalable and has been created for organisations in the arts and culture sector to design and implement their own mentorship programme founded on strategies that promote active inclusion of foreign-born artists and cultural workers.

## **Mentorship Programme Formats**

Your adapted mentorship programme may take different formats depending on the needs of the mentees, the goals of the programme and availability. This blueprint incorporates one-on-one mentorship, peer mentorship and tandem mentorship.

Examples of different formats:

- **Tandem Mentorship:** A mutual mentoring approach where two peers mentor each other, often bringing different skills or experiences to the table.
- **One-on-One Mentorship:** The traditional model—one mentor, one mentee. Personalised, focused, and flexible.
- **Group Mentorship:** One mentor works with several mentees at once, fostering shared learning and community building.
- **Reverse Mentorship:** A junior employee mentors someone more senior, often around tech, culture, or generational trends.

- **Peer Mentorship:** Colleagues who consider themselves to be at the same level support each other's development, sometimes in pairs or small groups.
- **Speed Mentoring:** Like speed dating for professional development—short, structured conversations with multiple mentors in a single session.
- **Rotational Mentorship:** Mentees rotate through several mentors, gaining exposure to different perspectives and areas of expertise.
- **Flash Mentorship:** A quick, one-time conversation with a mentor—great for specific questions or brief guidance.
- **Mentoring Circles:** Small groups of peers and mentors who meet regularly - ideal for shared learning and inclusiveness.
- **E-mentoring / Virtual Mentorship:** Done entirely online, perfect for remote teams or international connections.

## 2. Mentorship Programme Blueprint

### Mentorship Programme To-Dos

When formulating and documenting organizational goals and objectives, reflect upon the advice shared in the [AAA Guide to Active Inclusion](#) and the [AAA Diversity Training Module Blueprint](#).

#### Formulate Objectives

Organisations should be mindful of the aims and goals of their mentorship program. This can be a general introduction to the cultural ecosystem that defines their field of action, or it can be targeted to specific problems identified by its stakeholders. As a general principle, a mentorship programme should support the artistic, professional, and personal development of foreign-born creatives through mentorships that foster mutual learning, emotional resilience, career growth, and cultural exchange.

The programme proposed here is built on a foundation of trust, care, and long-term thinking. It encourages reciprocal relationships in which mentors and mentees learn from one another, creating pathways into a more inclusive and diverse creative sector.

#### Fix the duration

Each organisation may define the length and rhythm of their program. We recommend a minimum of 6 months, ideally extending to 12 months, to allow for meaningful reflection, relationship-building, and transformation over time.

## Define the target groups

- **Mentees:** Foreign-born artists, curators, designers, cultural workers (and potentially other creatives who seek guidance and connection within the local creative ecosystem)
- **Mentors:** Experienced professionals in the arts and culture field who bring creative leadership, cultural sensitivity, and a desire to accompany the growth of others.

## Define the programme goals

- **Ensure that the programme goals align with your organisational objectives:** programmes aligned with broader goals enhance their relevance and sustainability.
- **Foster artistic and professional growth:** Provide tailored, one-on-one mentorship that actively supports foreign-born artists and cultural workers in developing their unique voices, navigating local cultural sectors, and building sustainable careers that reflect diverse perspectives.
- **Support cultural exchange and mutual inspiration:** Facilitate bi-directional learning between mentors and mentees—centring foreign-born perspectives—to foster intercultural creativity, break cultural silos, and generate inclusive, innovative artistic practices.
- **Enhance integration and visibility of diverse creative voices:** Work with mentors to identify and advocate for mentees' work in exhibitions, publications, and networks, ensuring foreign-born artists' access platforms and audiences traditionally less open to non-native voices.

- **Encourage emotional resilience and leadership among foreign-born creatives:** Offer culturally responsive mentorship that builds confidence and leadership skills tailored to the unique challenges foreign-born artists face—such as cultural adaptation, funding inequity, and institutional exclusion—so they can assume roles of influence.
- **Create a network of care and solidarity in the creative sector:** Design mentorship relationships that evolve into peer-led ecosystems, where foreign-born and local creatives connect, share resources, and co-create support structures, embedding DEI in the sector’s fabric.
- **Offer structured tools for reflection, feedback, and growth:** Co-develop culturally attuned toolkits (e.g., reflective prompts, cross-cultural communication check-ins) ensuring feedback is respectful, grounded in mutual understanding, and which enhances mentees’ artistry without erasing cultural identity.
- **Address the tension between creative visibility and personal vulnerability:** Guide mentees through the complex dynamics of sharing personal or culturally specific narratives, helping them set boundaries, frame their work safely, and navigate public exposure without compromising security or authenticity.
- **Help mentees develop additional peer support strategies beyond the mentorship:** Empower mentees with the skills and confidence to form or join peer cohorts—especially among foreign-born creatives—fostering longer-term, self-sustaining networks that continue the DEI mission.

## Define the programme structure

### OPENING SESSION

*AIM: to establish a common ground through inclusion and intentionality*

A facilitated group gathering that launches the mentorship programme by cultivating a welcoming, equitable space where all participants, especially foreign-born artists and cultural workers, feel seen, valued, and empowered. This session centres shared values, active listening, and intercultural awareness as the foundation for trust and collaboration throughout the mentorship journey. Organisations decide whether this session should be held with one group only or with both mentors and mentees. Separate group meetings may encourage a more in-depth sharing of experiences, strategies and a clarification of goals amongst peers, while mixed group meetings may facilitate future engagement for each pair.

#### **Here are some suggestions for facilitation of the session:**

##### **1. Inclusive welcome from organisers**

Acknowledge the diverse identities in the room, including immigrant and diasporic perspectives, and affirming the program's commitment to equity, inclusion, and cultural humility.

##### **2. Intentional icebreakers and introductions**

Activities designed to surface the richness of participants' backgrounds, creative practices, and lived experiences in a respectful, low-pressure environment.

##### **3. Overview of the mentorship journey**

A transparent, values-aligned walkthrough of the program's goals, structure, and expectations—highlighting how mentorship supports the leadership and visibility of foreign-born creatives.

#### **4. Intercultural communication and active listening workshop**

A short, interactive session that offers tools to navigate cross-cultural dialogue with respect, curiosity, and care—essential for building trust in diverse mentorship relationships.

#### **5. Guided goal setting for mentees and mentors**

A reflective, culturally responsive activity where each participant articulates their hopes and priorities—centring personal and professional growth in the context of shared accountability and inclusion.

### **ONE-ON-ONE MENTOR-MENTEE MEETINGS**

*Aim: to deepen connection and centre equity*

At the core of the program, these regular meetings are a space for trust-building, skill-sharing, and mutual growth between mentors and mentees. Meetings are shaped by the needs, contexts, and aspirations of each pair, with attention to cultural nuances, identity, and power dynamics. They may take place in person or online, and should foster safety, respect, and curiosity—particularly for foreign-born creatives navigating new systems.

#### **Meetings may include:**

##### **1. Portfolio reviews**

With a focus on valuing diverse aesthetics, storytelling traditions, and artistic languages.

##### **2. Support with proposals, pitches, and applications**

Tailored guidance to help mentees translate their work and voice across cultural and institutional contexts.

### **3. Artistic feedback and professional guidance**

Delivered through culturally aware and affirming practices that recognise the value of difference.

### **4. Career strategies and emotional sustainability**

Conversations around balancing creative ambitions with mental health, financial precarity, and systemic challenges, especially relevant for immigrant and underrepresented artists.

### **5. Dialogues on identity, visibility, and belonging**

Safe space to reflect on the complexities of public representation, authenticity, and navigating the arts sector as a foreign-born or marginalised creative.

## **MID-PROGRAMME CHECK-IN**

*Aim: to centre agency and adaptive support*

A midpoint reflection opportunity that honours the lived experiences of participants and ensures that the mentorship structure remains responsive and inclusive. This check-in, offered as a group session or an anonymous feedback survey, encourages transparent dialogue about how the mentorship is supporting (or could better support) foreign-born artists' integration, confidence, and creative agency.

### **Goals of the check-in include:**

- **Reassessing alignment of goals and expectations**
- **Surfacing any power imbalances or unmet needs**
- **Strengthening cross-cultural communication and support structures**

- **Celebrating early wins and affirming progress**

## FINAL FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION

*AIM: to honour journeys and sustain community*

A closing gathering that creates space to celebrate the work, reflects on growth, and affirms the relationships built. This session emphasises collective learning, visibility for foreign-born creatives, and intentional planning for continued inclusion and peer support beyond the formal mentorship period. The organisation should decide if both mentors and mentees are to participate as this "event" should be structured in line with the reasoning for the creation of the mentorship programme and the goals that have been set for it.

### **The session may include:**

- **Reflections from participants**  
This may include what it meant to be seen, heard, and supported as an immigrant or underrepresented creative.
- **Mentee presentations or storytelling**  
Opportunities to share work, process, or personal transformation and center authenticity and agency.
- **Shared evaluation and feedback**  
Framed to gather insights that can potentially make future mentorship more equitable and impactful.
- **Invitations for future connection and peer support**  
Encourage mentees and mentors to stay engaged in a growing, diverse network committed to care, equity, and collective empowerment.

## THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **Demonstrate active inclusion**  
Be mindful of visible and non-visible differences that may pose challenges for participants in the programme.
- **Mentorship not supervision**  
Each pair is encouraged to co-create a rhythm and relationship that works for them. Mentorship is not supervision - it is an evolving, responsive process rooted in trust and curiosity.
- **Flexible meeting formats**  
Pairs should be encouraged to find the format that suits both their needs, commitments and availability. A hybrid format with online and/or in-person, should be a possibility depending on needs. The organisation will need to decide their involvement in making these options technically feasible.
- **Multilingualism**  
Organisations should decide their involvement in supporting multilingual communication where necessary and in accordance with their capabilities.
- **Recognition and Acknowledgement**  
Recognise and reward participation for mentors and mentees through certifications and/or public acknowledgement of their contributions. Other forms of recognition may include access to events or professional development opportunities within the organisation or in partnership with like-minded institutions; increase visibility for participants through storytelling in organisational platforms such as

newsletters, interviews etc.; foster post-program collaborations or invitations, which may include having mentees becoming mentors.

- **Post-mentorship scenarios**

All involved, organisation as well as mentors and mentees, should be open to evolving formats—mentorship can transition into coaching or collaboration.

# Mentorship Programme Checklist

## Programme coordinators

- Match participants thoughtfully
- Provide training and orientation materials
- Facilitate group sessions
- Offer ongoing support and check-ins
- Create access to events, resources, or affinity groups
- Recognise and articulate the labour of mentorship (for instance, unpaid/paid work; choices regarding remuneration and time investment etc.)

## Mentors

- Offer guidance based on lived and professional experience
- Support mentees in navigating local systems and artistic opportunities
- Encourage artistic growth and experimentation
- Bring care and active listening to the relationship
- Recognise and articulate the labour of mentorship (for instance, unpaid/paid work; choices regarding remuneration and time investment etc.)

## Mentees

- Define and communicate artistic and professional goals
- Be open to feedback and experimentation
- Engage actively and reflectively in the process
- Seek additional peer support or networks when needed

## Monitoring and Evaluation

There are several strategies that can fulfil the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the program. The possibilities depend on the capabilities of each organisation and how the organisation has defined the goals of the program. Here are some suggestions modelled on the actions suggested in Annex I and II:

- **Construct a questionnaire to reflect upon the matching and expectations set.** This can be done by resending the original questionnaire or a slightly altered version of it.
- **Mid-programme check-in to realign goals and assess needs.** This can be done as an informal check-in, in any format, or through a more formal interview-based interaction. The format will depend on the overall design of the program.
- **Final reflection session with shared storytelling, feedback, and evaluation.** As with the initial session, this is a strategy that will help all participants to self-evaluate and propose a new course of action in their specific field. As before, it can be done by group or all together. The mid-programme check-in will give an idea of what is the best way given the people involved.
- **Additional surveys or interviews** to document qualitative impacts.
- **Follow-up** six months later to track longer-term developments.
- **Encourage continued informal exchange** beyond the formal program

## 3. Appendices

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## About the Erasmus+ Project, AAA

**AAA - Access, Advocacy, and Active Inclusion. Pathways to Increasing Diversity in the Arts and Culture Field** ([AAA](#)) is an Erasmus Plus project dedicated to empowering the European arts and culture communities to reshape their approach toward artists and cultural workers with migratory backgrounds by elevating inclusive practices, equality and non-discrimination in organisational transformation.

The term migration background is used to acknowledge artists and cultural workers who are subject to exclusion due to their cultural or linguistic heritage (e.g., parents from abroad, have spent many years outside of the country, are adopted from another country, or may be recognized as a person of colour) as well as those who have moved to the country for abroad.

AAA promotes cultural diversity across the field of arts and culture and strives to co-develop a creative sector that genuinely reflects Europe's cultural richness. The goals of the project are to research and advance the conditions necessary for *all* artists to engage in all aspects of the creative industries, including management and leadership, artistic/cultural production and content creation, as well as audience engagement.

As well as the present [guide to active inclusion](#), the project will yield two digital blueprints: one for a [transnational training module](#) and one for a [mentorship program](#), both specifically designed to address the situation of artists and cultural workers with migration backgrounds.

# Annex I: Sample Questionnaire

Below is a sample questionnaire to be used prior to the matching of participants. It aims to identify goals, dispositions, challenges and perceptions that might facilitate the pairing. The proposed sample is based on responses and reactions from the focus group conducted by IMMART with prospective mentees and the post-trial evaluation interviews with mentors.

Organisations should adapt this sample or find alternative strategies in order to provide a space for mentees to identify their needs, and for mentors to determine the appropriate response according to their circumstances.

## **Sample Questionnaire to Support Inclusive Mentorship Matching**

Please take a moment to thoughtfully answer these questions. Your responses will help us create meaningful, respectful mentorship pairings that honour your artistic vision, cultural identity, and individual experiences.

### **1. Artistic Background and Creative Goals**

- How would you describe your artistic practice and creative journey so far?
- What are your short and long-term creative goals, particularly related to expanding your presence in the arts and culture sector?

### **2. Cultural Experiences and Values**

- How do your cultural background and personal experiences shape your artistic work?
- Are there cultural values or traditions that you would like your mentor to be aware of or respect during your collaboration?

### **3. Challenges and Barriers**

- What specific challenges related to identity, inclusion, or access have you encountered in your artistic or professional path?
- Are there obstacles you would like support navigating, such as language barriers, cultural adaptation, systemic exclusion, or representation?

### **4. Communication Styles and Preferences**

- What communication approaches help you feel most comfortable, heard, and supported? (For example: direct feedback, storytelling, reflective dialogue, etc.)
- Are there cultural communication norms or sensitivities that your mentor should know to foster understanding and respect?

### **5. Expectations and Hopes for Mentorship**

- What do you hope to gain from this mentorship experience—both artistically and personally?
- How can your mentor best support your growth while honoring your identity and creative autonomy?

### **6. Availability and Practical Considerations**

- What days, times, and formats (in-person, online) work best for you to meet regularly?
- Are there any accessibility needs or other practical considerations that we should take into account?

### **7. Additional Information**

Feel free to give any additional information or thoughts that will help us create a supportive and inclusive mentorship experience tailored to your unique context.

## Annex II: Training and Orientation

Below is a description of the kind of training and capabilities that were identified as being necessary during the AAA Mentorship Programme Trial. The overview is based on the responses of both the mentor and mentee participants in the trial. In this annex, we also present a mock AI generated sample for a one-hour training and orientation session, which is based on the aspects identified in the initial section.

### For Mentees

Mentees should present abilities in, or receive training in, the following orientations:

- **Storytelling, self-representation, and setting realistic goals**  
Developing authentic narratives that reflect cultural identity while aligning with achievable creative and professional milestones.
- **Navigating systems of visibility and representation**  
Building strategies to access platforms and audiences, especially within structures that may marginalise foreign-born artists.
- **Emotional sustainability and time management**  
Learning tools for maintaining well-being and balancing the demands of creative work with personal and cultural obligations.
- **Building or joining collective and peer support networks**  
Encouraging connection with inclusive communities that foster solidarity, shared resources, and ongoing empowerment beyond mentorship.

## For Mentors

Mentors should present abilities in, or receive training in, the following:

- **Intercultural listening and inclusive communication**  
Cultivating empathetic listening skills and culturally responsive dialogue to honor diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- **Navigating feedback across difference**  
Learning how to offer constructive, respectful feedback that acknowledges cultural contexts and avoids and/or openly recognises erasure or bias.
- **Giving Support**  
Supporting mentees through creative blockages, identity exploration, and administrative challenges
- **Acknowledging and responding to the environment**  
Providing sensitive guidance that respects the complexity of identity and the systemic barriers foreign-born creatives often face.
- **Consciously addressing power dynamics**  
Recognising and mitigating inherent power imbalances in mentorship relationships to create equitable, empowering partnerships.

## Sample Training and Orientation Session

Below is an AI generated sample for a one-hour training and orientation session based on the data collected from the AAA Mentorship Trial program

### 1-Hour Session Plan: Inclusive Mentorship Training and Orientation

**DURATION:** 60 minutes

**PARTICIPANTS:** Mentors and Mentees

**FORMAT:** In-person or online

**OBJECTIVE:** To introduce intercultural communication, power dynamics, and emotional sustainability to foster inclusive, supportive mentorship relationships that center foreign-born artists and cultural workers.

#### AGENDA

<b>Duration</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
5 mins	Welcome and Introductions	Set tone, shared values, brief participant intros.
10 mins	Icebreaker: Cultural Identity Snapshot	Quick reflection: What cultural experience shapes your work?
15 mins	Mini-Presentation and Discussion: Intercultural Listening and Power Dynamics	Define key concepts, practice one active listening exercise.
20 mins	Breakout Groups (Mentors and Mentees separately)	Mentors: Navigating feedback and power. Mentees: Storytelling and resilience.
10 mins	Closing and Next Steps	Share takeaways, resources, and encourage peer network building.

## **FACILITATOR GUIDE**

### *Welcome and Introductions (5 min)*

- Welcome participants, acknowledge cultural diversity.
- Share session goals and encourage openness and respect.
- Quick round: name, role, one word on what they hope to gain.

### *Icebreaker: Cultural Identity Snapshot (10 min)*

- Prompt: "Name one cultural experience or value that influences your creative work."
- Participants jot down or share briefly in pairs or the group.
- Reinforces value of diverse backgrounds.

### *Mini-Presentation and Discussion: Intercultural Listening and Power Dynamics (15 min)*

- Define intercultural listening and why it matters.
- Highlight power dynamics in mentorship and arts sectors, especially for foreign-born creatives.
- Practice: Pair up for 3-minute active listening exercise (share a challenge or goal, partner reflects back).
- Brief group reflection on what felt effective or challenging.

### *Breakout Groups (20 min)*

- Mentors: Discuss challenges in giving feedback across cultural differences and strategies to share power.
- Mentees: Explore storytelling as self-representation and ways to build resilience amid visibility challenges.
- Facilitators guide conversation with prepared questions; take notes to share key points.

### *Closing and Next Steps (10 min)*

- Groups briefly share highlights (1-2 points each).
- Facilitator offers resources and encourages ongoing connection via peer networks.
- Invite final reflections: one takeaway or action step.
- Thank participants and outline any upcoming sessions or supports.