BCMC Mentorship Program Q&A – Winter 2023-24

This document answers questions from participants of the Online Q&A Session on October 4, 2023

1. **In the last program, how many mentees applied vs how many were accepted?**
    - For the Winter 2022-23 Season of the Mentorship Program, BCMC received 102 mentee applications. 60 mentees were paired with 16 mentors. The availability of mentors by mountain sport and their preference for the group size impacts how many mentees we can select in a season.
2. **Will we be able to have a trip on a glacier?**
    - Depends on the skill level of the group and the comfort level of the mentor
3. **What are the typical skills and experiences of the mentors?**
    - Mentors come with diverse experience and skill sets. Most mentors have at least a couple of years of experience in a given mountain sport, and some mentors have more than ten years of experience.
4. **What prior experience do mentors have with teaching backcountry ski skills?**
    - Mentors don't necessarily have experience teaching backcountry ski skills. They are just individuals with more experience in mountain sports volunteering to help BCMC members new to the sport. Mentors are not certified guides.
5. **What is the mentor-mentee ratio?**
    - Typically, we have 2-3 mentees paired with a mentor. Some mentors might prefer a smaller or bigger group.
6. **How much time would mentors spend with mentees? What is the time commitments for mentors?**
    - Depending on the sport and the trip type, the time spent with mentees as a group might vary. We ask mentors to organize at least four trips through the season. These might be half-day trips day trips, and some overnight trips. Some mentors might also conduct pre-trip planning sessions online.
7. **Could mentorship pairs match up to form a larger group for a trip?**
    - Once the mentorship groups are formed, it is up to the mentors to coordinate with other mentors and organize larger group trips. Although it is not common, as the skill/experience level of the groups might not match. Also, finding a time that works for a bigger group is a challenge.
8. **Are Associate members allowed to join the program? I recently just moved to the Lower Mainland from AB so this is my first year as a member of BCMC (I was part of ACC Rocky Mountain Section in Calgary).**

- As far as you are a member of BCMC and have waiver status as current, you can apply for the mentorship program.

9. **Would it be feasible to be a mentee in one discipline (backcountry skiing) and a mentor in another discipline (downhill skiing)?**

    - Yes, we have had a few individuals who have done this over the last two years. However, one needs to take into account the time commitment for the season as a mentor as well as a mentee. Organizing and participating in trips with two groups might also result in scheduling conflicts. So, please make sure that you have the bandwidth to be a mentor as well as a mentee in a given season.

10. **I don't have the AST 1, however I do have experience backcountry skiing and did a course hosted by the NKBV (Dutch Mountaineering Club; https://nkbv.nl/). Will this be seen as enough experience to join the course?**

    - Please share the details of your backcountry experience and the skills you learned in this course hosted by NKBV in your application. If this course is similar to AST-1 then you don't have to take AST-1. But if some of the basic concepts are not covered, then we would recommend that you take AST-1.

11. **I'm going to be out of the country in November, which means I'll not be able to attend the Mentee - Mentor meeting at Anza Club. Am I still eligible for this program?**

    - Yes, you can apply and if you are selected, you will have to coordinate with your mentor and find a time to meet with your mentor and the rest of the group. Please note that this is an exception and not the norm and we expect all program participants to attend the meetup at the ANZA club.

12. **Can I apply for a sport even if I have absolute no experience in it?**

    - Yes, you can apply if you have the gear and are committed to the program. We have had individuals new to Canada who have never seen snow apply for snowshoeing. For Backcountry Skiing, we expect individuals to have skiing experience and completed AST-1 (or are planning to at the beginning of the season).

13. **Other than completing at minimum an AST1, are there any requirements for skill level? I.e. beginner - expert?**

    - No, we welcome mentees at different skill levels to apply for the program.

14. **How are mentees matched with mentors?**

    - Mentors review the mentee applications and select their group based on commitment to the program, goals, skills, experience and fitness level. These groups meet face-to-face at the ANZA Club and will potentially do an outdoor trip together to see if they are a good fit. Mentorship groups will be finalized by November 30, 2023.

15. **Will weekday trips be offered?**

    - Depends on the availability and preference of the mentees and mentors in the group

16. How many backcountry skiing trips are there in a season? Is there a minimum and/or maximum number of trips to attend?

- For the Winter 2022-23 season, we had about 63 backcountry skiing trips as part of the Mentorship Program. At the minimum, we ask everyone to participate in four trips per season. There is no maximum.

17. How much does the mentorship program cost?

- The Mentorship Program is free for all BCMC members. BCMC membership costs $40/year (2023)

18. What do you look for in a successful applicant?

- A successful applicant (mentor and mentee) meets the expectations listed on the Mentorship page and has provided a detailed response to all the questions in the application

19. What sort of training do mentors and mentees receive?

- There is no formal training that mentors and mentees receive. We do have Zoom sessions (if needed) and webinars on different topics based on the interest of the participants in the Mentorship Program.

20. What if you just moved and are not an active member yet, are you still able to join?

- By Active Member we mean Active Membership and not in terms of activity with the club.

21. Is it possible to apply as a group, when you have the same goals and skills?

- If you are applying to the program with your partner or friends with similar goals and skills, then please mention it in your application. We cannot guarantee that you will be in the same group as it is a blind selection process (mentors don't have any personal information about the mentees).

22. Can you join if you have done another (European) avalanche course and/or plan to attend an AST this season?

- Yes, as far the European avalanche course covered all the AST-1 concepts. You can also apply if you plan to take AST-1 at the beginning of the season.

23. 4 month season is Dec-March or Jan-April ?

- Dec-March and depending on the conditions for the mountain sport, some groups continue to organize Mentorship Trips in April and May.

24. I can snowshoe and snowboard but wonder if I can apply as a beginner backcountry skier

- Depending on your snowboarding ability and AST-1 course completion, you can apply for Splitboarding.

25. **The form says, "Describe your skill level (recent trips, difficulty level, etc.) in the mountain sport selected above." - for the sport of backcountry skiing, is this question asking about our downhill ability?**

    - There is a separate question about downhill ability. This question is specific to backcountry skiing or snowshoeing experience.

26. **There was mention of a downhill skiing mentorship program - will that happen?**

    - It depends on how many mentors and mentees select “Other” and mention Downhill Skiing in their application. If we have at least one mentor and a couple of mentees who are a good fit, we will include it in the program.

27. **How do the groups typically manage risk assessments about trip planning? I want to push out of my comfort level, but I am concerned about peer pressures from mentors and mentees.**

    - The Mentorship Program aims to create a safe and trusting environment for all mentees to learn and practice skills in a given mountain sport. So, mentors are expected to communicate openly with mentees and ensure that everyone is comfortable. A mentee should feel comfortable voicing concerns or asking questions about any aspect of the trip. As a mentee, you should talk to your mentor (and even other mentees) about your comfort level and concerns. If you are not comfortable, please reach out to Shashi Shanbhag (shashiraj8@gmail.com)

28. **Will there be lots of trip options posted by the Mentors on weekends for those who work Mon-Fri?**

    - Most trips are organized over weekends as majority of mentors and mentees work Mon-Fri.

29. **Beyond the learning opportunities around trip planning and backcountry decision making do you typically see mentors planning trips that will include learning other skillsets. Example self arrest with ice axe, rope skills for rapelling into objectives if required etc...**

    - Mentors are not certified guides. As part of the Mentorship Program, mentors usually do a skill review rather than teach a new skill set to the mentees. Mentors will share tips and other resources with the mentees to help them progress in their mountain sport.

30. **How do I get paired with the mentees if I apply to be a backcountry ski mentor? Do I get to choose? Can I set ski ability, fitness and/or gear requirements?**

    - Mentors choose mentees by reviewing their applications. The application includes questions specific to ski ability level (Level 1-6) and other questions related to fitness/skill/experience level and gear.

31. **How would you describe the skills level of the "most experienced/ advanced" mentee?**

- Last year, we had a mentee who had six years of experience, had done a couple of multi-day traverses, AST -2, and other winter/backcountry courses. But this is not typical, and we usually get more beginner/intermediate level mentees.

32. Are there any Ice Climbing mentors?

- We didn’t have any Ice Climbing mentors last season, but would love to have a couple of mentors this season.

33. Is it okay if I'm travelling for a couple of weeks during the winter?

- Please mention your travel plans in your application. Some mentors might be able to work around your travel plans and schedule mentorship trips that work for everyone in the group.

34. How best to describe ability and match with the right mentor/program

- A group where the mentees' goals and skill/experience/fitness level are similar and align with the mentor's preferences is the best match. So, filling out the application in detail is critical to ensure the mentors have all the information when they choose the mentees. An in-person meeting at the ANZA club and a follow-up trip with the group might also help assess if it is the right fit.

BCMC Mentorship Program Q&A – Summer 2023

This document answers questions from participants of the Online Q&A Session on April 3, 2023.

1. What are the prerequisites for each mountain sport regarding courses and general skill level?
- A mentee specific to Mountaineering is expected to have completed a Basic Mountaineering Course that teaches skills like ice axe and crampon use, self-arrest, glacier travel, crevasse rescue, etc. For Alpine Climbing, it depends on the climbs a mentee wants to climb. A Basic Mountaineering Course will be required if an Alpine Climb involves glacier travel.
- No prerequisite for Rock Climbing and Hiking. People who are new to rock climbing or hiking are welcome to apply.
- Mentors will try to select and group mentees based on skill level, fitness, goals and preferences so that we have a group that is at similar level.

2. How many mentees does each mentor have?
- It varies by mentor, but typically we have 3-4 mentees per mentor. The group size might vary depending on factors like mountain sport, mentor preference, mentee skill level, etc.

3. How many mentors and mentees are there per program?
- The BCMC Mentorship Program has grown since the program was launched in Winter 2021-22 Season. Winter 2022-23 Season had 16 mentors and 60 mentees. We get about 100 mentee applications per season.

4. Is there a price attached to the mentorship program for mentees? If so, how much does it cost?
- The program is free for all BCMC Members.

5. Can you describe how the mentorship program typically runs for each program regarding the events and other information and knowledge passed from mentor to mentee?
- Primary events as part of this program are mentorship trips organized by a mentor for their group. Through these trips, a mentor will facilitate practicing and learning skills specific to a mountain sport. Some mentors will also conduct online trip planning sessions for an upcoming trip to go over trip details and answer any questions.
- Mentors might also collaborate to organize Online Webinars for all mentees on different topics like Creating a trip plan, Backcountry camping, etc.

6. Is it better to do the rock-climbing mentorship program before the Mountaineering and alpine program, as there are overlapping skill sets?
- It depends on the individual's skill level, difficulty level and nature of trips (e.g. alpine rock vs. mainly glacier travel) in the alpine. Going through a rock-climbing mentorship program would help, but is not required to sign up for the Mountaineering/Alpine Climbing mentorship program.

7. If someone is part of a mentorship program in one season, are they not allowed to participate in the next season to give someone else a chance?

- Mentees from previous programs are welcome to apply again. However, since we have a limited number of mentors, preference will be given to mentees applying for a mountain sport for the first time. But if past mentees apply for the mentorship program in a different mountain sport, they will be in the same pool as new mentees. So, for example, we might have a hiking mentee from a previous mentorship program apply for rock climbing this season, then the mentee will have an equal opportunity to be selected.

8. Are there standard events in each program, or is each time unique depending on each mentee and mentor?
- The meetup at the ANZA Club and the mentorship trip posted by each mentor are the standard events of the program.
- Online webinars are something that varies by season and depends on the interest level of mentors/mentees

9. Does the program match mentors/mentees based on location? I live in Victoria. I could travel to the mainland, but ferry/gas costs might make it tough to do this 5+ times. Not a hard no, just something I would need to consider.
- Mentors select their mentees based on different criteria, and location might be one factor. Unfortunately, we haven't had any mentors from Vancouver Island. So a mentee from Victoria will have to travel to the mainland and commit to the mentorship trips.

11. Is there an age preference for mentees?
- Currently, the mentorship program is open to all adult BCMC members

12. Can the mentorship program support someone who does shift work, possibly only available one week in every three?
- It depends on the Mentor and fellow mentees. One can request the mentor to schedule trips during the week the mentee is available, but weather or other scheduling conflicts might change the planned trip dates. Apply for the program, and if you are selected, discuss your availability with your mentor and fellow mentees.

13. What kinds of trips are mentors looking to lead?
- Depends on the mentor-mentee preferences and goals. We typically have mentors organizing beginner to intermediate-level trips in each mountain sport.

14. Can you join the program if you are out of town on May 2 for the meetup?
- We highly encourage all mentees and mentors to attend the meetup at the ANZA Club, as it is the first face-to-face meeting for the majority of the program participants. However, in some cases, an exception can be made provided the mentee has connected with the mentor before the meetup.

15. I'm interested in finding out what might be covered in the hiking mentorship program
- Depending on mentor/mentee preferences, skill level, and trip difficulty level, each group might cover different topics, e.g. gear, safety, overnight camping, etc.

16. I'm familiar with hiking in general as I have hiked since I was young in Australia. Still, I am new to Canada and the types of hikes here in mountain terrain and safety for this environment, including bear safety, camping with animals here etc. I was hoping this might be what would be covered in the mentorship for hiking
- You are welcome to apply and highlight what you plan to learn in your application. Mentors will select mentees based on skills, fitness, goals, preferences, etc. and cover topics that interest mentees during the mentorship program.

17. I'd like to know what, if any, courses mentors would like mentees to have before the program start and if it's acceptable to obtain courses throughout the mentorship program (i.e., glacier travel)
- BCMC partners with companies like Canada West Mountain School and Mountain Skills Academy to offer courses at a discounted rate to all its members. Look for Instructional Courses posted on the BCMC website that includes discounted pricing or a promo code for BCMC members. Mentees applying for Mountaineering and, in some cases, the Alpine Climbing program would need to complete a Basic Mountaineering Course.

18. How do mentorship trips work? Are all mentors and mentees invited on all trips in their respective sports, or is it a smaller group of mentors and mentees within the sport?
- Each Mentor organizes trips specifically for their mentees. In addition, some mentors might collaborate and organize trips together.

19. What are examples of developmental goals for hiking?
- Here are some examples of developmental goals for hiking:
    - I would like to learn about how to stay safe on hikes, overnight trips
    - I would like to do the Howe Sound Crest Trail in a day
    - I want to get more into Class 3-4 Scrambles on the North Shore Mountains
    - I would like to get comfortable planning and organizing an overnight backcountry camping trip with friends

20. How does the mentee selection work?
- It is a two-step selection process. The first step is a blind selection process, wherein a mentee's name and all identifying information are hidden. Mentors select mentees based on skill, fitness, goals and preferences.
- Step two is the face-to-face meeting at the meetup, where mentors and mentees get to know each other as a group and discuss plans for the summer. After the meetup, mentors and mentees confirm if they want to continue with their group. Sometimes, a mentee can request a switch to another group if it is a better fit and the mentor has room for another mentee.