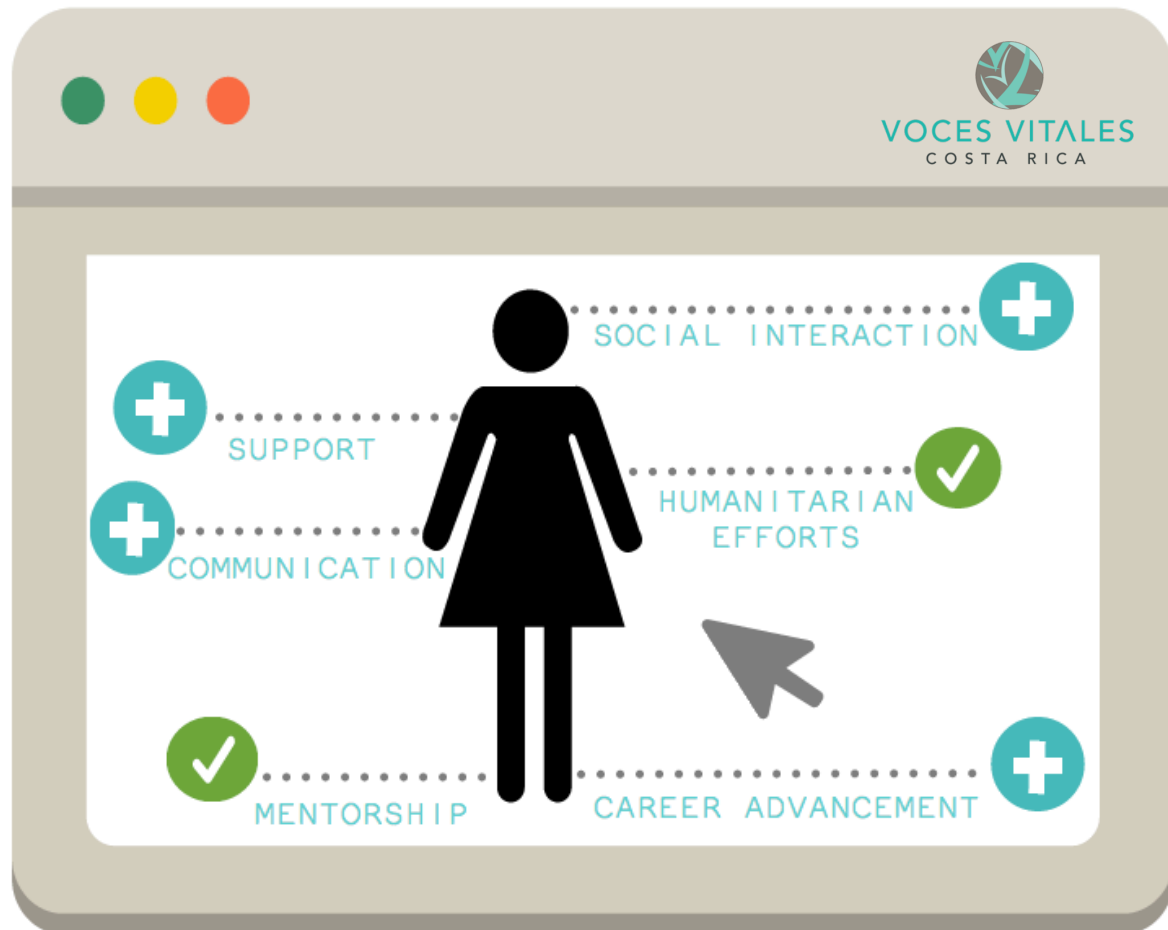# Enhancing the Mentor Network at Voces Vitales Costa Rica

Caroline Atteya

Tamika Isaac

Oscar Perez

Lauren Puishys

Enhancing the Mentor Network at
Voces Vitales Costa Rica

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report
Submitted to the Faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute
in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science
in cooperation with
Voces Vitales Costa Rica
submitted on May 6th 2015

Submitted By:

Caroline Atteya

Tamika Isaac

Oscar Perez

Lauren Puishys

IQP Sequence Number:

AM1 1504

Submitted To:

Sra. Gioconda Lizano

Sra. Eugenia Gamboa

Voces Vitales Costa Rica

Project Advisors:

Prof. Aarti S. Madan

Prof. Ryan Madan

Abstract

Gender inequality is a global issue often exacerbated in developing countries. The Vital Voices Global Partnership aims to "bring visibility to women" to end this inequality. The Costa Rican chapter focuses on mentorship to create this visibility; currently, however, they have trouble keeping the mentors engaged. Our goal was to increase the value of their mentor network by identifying ways to connect the mentors to one another. We first evaluated the preexisting mentor network based on best practices of similar international women's organizations. We then analyzed the VVCR network based on mentors' opinions gathered from an online questionnaire and focus group. We created eight recommendations for the enhancement of the VVCR network which are detailed in our Implementation Guide.

Acknowledgements

Authorship

Abstract and Executive Summary
Written by: Tamika Isaac, Lauren Puishys
Edited by: Caroline Atteya, Oscar Perez

Chapter 1: Introduction
Written by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys
Edited by: Tamika Isaac, Lauren Puishys

Chapter 2: Background
Written by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys
Edited by: Caroline Atteya, Oscar Perez

Chapter 3: Methodology
Written by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys
Edited by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis
Written by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys
Edited by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations
Written by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys
Edited by: Caroline Atteya, Tamika Isaac, Oscar Perez, Lauren Puishys

All four members reviewed each section and contributed to the Appendices and Implementation Guide.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Executive Summary

Enhancing the Mentor Network at Voces Vitales Costa Rica
06 May 2015

Caroline Atteya – cmatteya@wpi.edu
Tamika Isaac – ttisaac@wpi.edu
Oscar Perez – operez@wpi.edu
Lauren Puishys – lmpuishys@wpi.edu

The current unemployment rate for Costa Rican women is 10.2%, approximately two times higher than that of Costa Rican men. Despite Costa Rica's efforts to achieve gender parity in different areas of society, women remain underrepresented (WEF, 2014). In an effort to address this ongoing inequality, many organizations have emerged to improve the social and economic standing of women. One of these organizations is Voces Vitales Costa Rica (VVCR). VVCR is the Costa Rican branch of the Vital Voices global partnership and began as a non-affiliated organization three years prior to becoming affiliated with the Vital Voices global partnership. Although Voces Vitales has set the groundwork for a successful women's empowerment organization, it strives to increase interaction and therefore commitment by enhancing its mentor network. In order to help VVCR meet these goals, we assessed the current mentor network from the eyes of the mentors, outside sources, and the leaders of Voces Vitales. To guide our assessment, we created the following objectives:

Objective 1	*Understand the preexisting VVCR mentor network.* Gaining a background understanding of the VVCR network was vital to define the scope of our project.
Objective 2	*Evaluate the preexisting VVCR mentor network.* To provide recommendations to Voces Vitales, our team had to first evaluate how successful the current network was through both the eyes of the employees and the eyes of the mentors.
Objective 3 *+* *Objective 4*	*Analyze the best practices for both physical networking and virtual platforms in similar networks.* Both objective three and objective four were completed using the information gathered in the first two objectives, allowing us to compare the VVCR mentor network to the networks of other similar organizations.

Background:

'Networking' is set of goal-directed activities done by individuals attempting to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships (Gibson et al., 2014, Singh, 2006). For women's organizations, networks support greater organizational communication and enhanced reputation (Gibson et al., 2014). Whatever the impetus for joining networks, women find networking important for them to achieve their full potential and to gain access to different opportunities (Singh, 2006). Once women are provided with opportunities, they have the power to make advancements towards achieving their full potential (Singh, 2006). Through our research, we found that the main opportunities that women look for when joining a network are support, social interaction, career advancement, and access to information and resources (Vinnicombe, 2004; O'Neil, 2011).

A study by Pini (2004) reported that women found positive benefits in having support within a network. A high number of women's networks provide support groups because they create a sense of community and connect different people (O'Neil, 2011). Many women in the work force have trouble accessing one another for advice and support as they are in fields primarily dominated by men. To overcome this trouble, many networks arose to provide these social settings for women outside of the work environment (Catalyst, 1999). Women are often also excluded from certain career paths, therefore networking is important for these women to share career development strategies and learn from one another (Vinnicombe, 2004). Social capital, or the idea of an individual receiving something from a networking group, is often the reason why women desire access to resources and information. On top of this, it was noted by Finsveen and Oorschot (2008) that there is a positive correlation between successful networking and a member's access to resources and information.

Our assessment of the VVCR mentor network was primarily based on the four aforementioned criteria; support, social interactions, career advancement, and access to information and resources. Best practices that fell under each of these four criteria were analyzed. Both local and international similar networks were used to observe a large variety of best practices.

Methodology:

To satisfy our first objective of understanding the preexisting mentor network at VVCR, we used a series of different methods. We accomplished this objective through research (both independent and through correspondence with our sponsor) and

interviews (in the form of both an online questionnaire and small focus group). Our questionnaire generated 45 responses out of the 190 active VVCR mentors, equaling about 25% of the current mentors. Our focus group was only comprised of three women; however, they provided valuable feedback to our team. After accomplishing objective one, we used the same methods to complete our second objective.

Our third and fourth objectives involved analyzing the best practices of other women's networks in comparison to the practices of VVCR. Objective three focused on the physical aspects of a network, while objective four focused on the virtual aspects of a network. These two objectives were performed simultaneously in the form of one large comparative analysis. Within this comparative analysis we analyzed ten different networks, both local and international. Different criteria were used to pick the different networks we analyzed in order to assure their relevancy to VVCR. These different criteria included the size of the network, the cultural setting, the mission statement, the number of mentors, and the establishment year.

After the completion of our four objectives, we were able to analyze all of the data collected and create sound recommendations for the improvement of the VVCR mentor network.

Findings:

Table 1: Best Practices of Women's Networking

Upon performing our comparative analysis, we found that **VVCR employs 7 out of the 11 commonly used best practices of women's networks**. Table 1 identifies the practices that VVCR employs, as well as an analysis on the success of each practice. Although VVCR employs the majority of the practices, 4 out of the 7 practices employed have room for improvement when compared to the implementation of these practices by other networks. VVCR would benefit from the addition of the remaining 4 practices that they do not currently employ: circles, group get-togethers, virtual platforms, and a membership fee.

	VVCR
Support	
Club Meetings/Circles	
Social Interactions	
Guest Speakers	x x
Group Get Togethers	
Community Service Participation	x x
Career Advancement	
Workshops	x
Networking Events	x
Awards/Scholarships	x
Access to Information and Resources	
Social Media Pages	x
Virtual Platform	
Newsletters	x x
Membership Fee	

Key	
x x	Employ Well
x	Room for Improvement
	Do not Employ

Our team also assessed different implementation strategies that could be used to create a virtual platform for Voces Vitales Costa Rica. We used a series of different criteria to create Table 2 in order to assess which implementation plan would best fit VVCR's budget and needs.

Table 2: Best Practices for Implementing a Virtual Platform

	MakeANet	Yammer	Wild Apricot	Member Clicks
Spanish Language	x	x	x	
Can Integrate into Existing Page	x	x	x	
Online Communication	x	x	x	x
Virtual Library	x	x	x	x
Form Submission		x	x	x
Create Groups	x	x	x	
Member Profiles	x	x	x	x
Search Engine	x	x	x	x
Event Registration	x		x	x
Limited Registration Option			x with $50 a month	
Member Blogs	x		x	
Public vs. Private Option	x	x	x	x
Reminders for Events	x		x	x
Payment Options			x	x
Available Guest List for Events	x		x	x
Can Connect to Social Medias	x		x	Have their own social online community
Members can Input own Info	x	x	x	x
Cost Currently/ Month	$1.50/mentor	$3/mentor	$25	$210
Future Cost/month (at least 1800 mentors)	$1.50/mentor	$3/mentor	$100	$336
One Time Implementation Fee	-	-	-	$2,500

In addition to our two comparative analyses, we gathered many useful conclusions from the online questionnaire, as well as the focus group. These points included:

- Voces Vitales wants its mentors to create lasting connections with other mentors. We found that 70% of the mentors know less than 15 other mentors personally, despite training with 24 other women. Despite meeting and training with these women for a three part training, the mentors are not creating lasting bonds.
- The Voces Vitales' mentor network does not offer support activities. In our questionnaire, 87% of the mentors stated that they would like support circles implemented into the mentor network.
- Voces Vitales Costa Rica would like to create more communication within their network. Mentors are unaware of how many other mentors are in the network due to lack of communication. In addition, many mentors are unaware of the events happening within the network. Although 73% of the mentors have liked the Facebook page, it is not frequently updated, and the mentors expressed that they rarely check it.

- Mentors are willing to pay to support the VVCR network. In our questionnaire, many mentors were willing to 'donate' annually to VVCR to implement new programs. The values ranged from $10 to more than $100. Mentors in the focus group emphasized that they would rather this fee be called a membership fee as opposed to donation, as a membership fee alluded to more benefits.

Overall, we found that despite being founded so recently, VVCR has a highly developed network. However, there were many areas in which VVCR had room for improvement. After analyzing our data, we were able to create recommendations that would be able to fill in any of the gaps in the Voces Vitales mentor network.

Recommendations:

In order to enhance the VVCR mentor network, we provided the following set of recommendations, along with an Implementation Guide. These recommendations are based on both the information that our team gathered individually, as well as suggestions from our sponsor and mentors. This implementation guide will provide VVCR with implementation strategies for each of the recommendations provided. It was electronically delivered to the president of VVCR, Alexandra Kissling, as well as our primary contacts, Eugenia Gamboa and Gioconda Lizano. VVCR staff can use this guide to bring to life any of the recommendations we created. VVCR can also share this guide with other Vital Voices chapters, if necessary. The full implementation guide can be seen in Appendix F.

1. **Implement Lean in Circles for support.** As the members of the VVCR mentor network lack support activities, Voces Vitales could augment this area with Lean In Circles. Lean In Circles, created by communications operations expert Sheryl Sandberg, are widely used and very well-known across the globe. Lean In provides all of the proper materials necessary for starting, managing, and maintaining a circle. All of the resources that Lean In provides for circles are free (See Appendix F). The only requirement is that the organization must affiliate these circles with Lean In. We recommend that VVCR pilot 5 circles to first view their success and subsequently make any necessary changes. We also recommend that VVCR offer circles for six months and then close them and reopen new ones. This structure will allow members to participate in different circles, creating a larger support system.

2. **Incorporate a social component into the mentor-training program to bring together the mentors.** The mentor-training program at Voces Vitales is

highly effective in teaching mentors leadership and self-awareness. However, the mentors have not been able to create personal bonds with other mentors during these programs despite extended contact hours. We believe that adding a social component to the training would be beneficial to the mentors. The social events would be in three parts as to shadow the three-part training, and we suggest that they take place at the conclusion of each part of the training program, so they do not interfere with the training. The first would be a mentor lunch, followed by an event voted on by the mentors (e.g. cocktail/wine night, day trip, etc.), and would conclude with a mentor graduation.

3. **Hold monthly mentor get-togethers to build group bonds.** As the previous recommendation does not extend past the training process, we recommend another social component in order to build bonds between the certified mentors. These get-togethers would be monthly mentor events held at a volunteer mentor's house. The mentors would choose the themes monthly by means of an online survey. A small fee could be charged depending on the theme and potential overhead of the event.

4. **Offer more workshops with different topics for the mentors.** VVCR currently offers workshops during the training program but not throughout the year. Career-advancement and personal-growth workshops could be held to help the mentors advance personally and professionally. Sample themes for career advancement include marketing with social media and negotiation. Sample themes for personal growth include self-empowerment and personal branding. These workshops would help the mentors enhance their personal and professional lives.

5. **Hold professional networking events to build career advancement.** The mentors in the current VVCR network do not know one another well enough to refer to each when needed. We recommend implementing professional networking through the addition of speed networking. During speed networking sessions, mentors have 2-5 minutes to communicate with an individual mentor. When a bell rings, mentors would then rotate until every mentor has spoken to every other mentor at the event. This format would prevent mentors from talking to only the mentors they knew before the event. It also guarantees the creation of many connections within a short amount of time.

6. **Provide advertisement opportunities and discount opportunities to encourage the mentors.** VVCR mentors expressed that they would like to

see advertising opportunities for their businesses as well as discounts from others businesses. Mentors with businesses could offer discounts on products and services to other members, who could in return purchase their products. Eventually, the mentors, both with and without businesses, would become more connected to the network because of the benefits they receive.

7. **Implement a virtual platform for use by the mentors.** To organize each of the previous recommendations, we recommend that VVCR create a private virtual platform for the members. Members would be able to insert their own information into a personalized member profile. This would allow VVCR to quickly access mentor records, improving the record keeping process. A log-in feature would ensure safety of the mentors' information. Based on our research of other successful networks, we recommend that this platform also include a calendar of events, a blog, a communication forum, registration and payments for events, and a virtual library. We recommend that VVCR use the membership management software Wild Apricot as it meets all of the criteria listed in our comparative analysis.

8. **Implement a $25 annual Membership Fee to cover the costs of the network.** As the implementation of the previous recommendations will be costly, we recommend that VVCR charge a $25 annual membership fee per mentor. We also recommend that VVCR consider accepting donations, as many mentors were willing to pay more than the $25 recommended. As time progresses, and more programs are added to the network, we recommend that VVCR increase this price to accommodate the additional events.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The current unemployment rate for Costa Rican women is 10.2%, approximately

two times higher than that of Costa Rican men (WEF, 2014). Despite this, Costa Rica is

at the forefront of Latin American countries addressing the issue of women's rights

(COHA, 2013). Even with Costa Rica's efforts, the goal of reaching gender equality has

yet to be met. Throughout the 1800s, women assumed "traditional responsibilities,"

such as maintaining the home and taking care of the children (Wallerstein, 2009).

Starting in the early 1900s, living expenses increased, pushing women to take on jobs

to support their families. Women became nurses, teachers, and secretaries, all

considered low level jobs. The addition of women to the workforce was a catalyst for

change in many areas of society, especially politics. (Wallerstein, 2009)

Costa Rican women began to push for change, finally gaining their right to vote in

1948 (Wallerstein, 2009). Despite reaching this milestone, Costa Rican women were

still not satisfied. Shortly after, women started to push for more advancements in

politics, leading to the first female president of Costa Rica, Laura Chinchilla

(Wallerstein, 2009). Shortly after election, Chinchilla (2011), when referring to how she

approaches a challenge, said, "When you face unexpected events, you have to try to

overcome those problems, but at the same time, you have to continue working

according to the plan that you defined since the beginning. So that's what we have tried

to do – not to avoid the urgent responses but to continue the route that we had defined."

Chinchilla shows that despite the challenges women face with gaining equality, throughout history women have not succumbed to adversity, but have instead pushed for equality.

One such example of women's drive can be seen through the creation of the quota laws. Following Argentina's lead, Costa Rica became the second Latin American country to establish such laws (Viñas, 2014). The Costa Rican Quota Law of 1996 states that women must comprise at least forty percent of any political party. Additionally, the legislative assembly must have 50% of each gender on the ballots (Quota Project, 2014). Although these laws were established, they were not always followed (Viñas, 2014). A mandate was created in 2002, requiring that men and women alternate on candidate lists (COHA, 2013). In 1982, women represented 8% of each political party, however in 2010, this number rose to 40% (COHA, 2013). Each regulation had a significant impact on women's political representation in Costa Rica.

Despite the creation of these regulations, in 2014, only 19 of the 57 seats were filled by women. Women were in fact equally represented on the ballots, however, society still favored male candidates 66% of the time. A stigma still exists in society that prevents women from achieving gender equality. Gender inequality extends to different areas within Costa Rican society. According to the annual World Economic Forum

Global Gender Gap Index (2014), Costa Rican women face inequality in three major

areas: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Health and Survival, and Political

Empowerment. In 2014, Costa Rica ranked 48 out of 142 countries for gender

inequality, 1 being total equality and 142 being total inequality. However despite Costa

Rica's efforts to achieve gender parity in different areas of society, women remain

underrepresented (World Economic Forum, 2014). Costa Rica still faces a large gender

disparity because women's economic, political, and social needs are not being met

(Wallerstein, 2009).

In efforts to address this ongoing inequality, many organizations have arisen to

improve the social and economic standing of women. In 2011, a group of women

philanthropists created an organization named Unidas para Crecer to promote women's

leadership (Gamboa, 2015). Unidas para Crecer applied to become a chapter of the

Vital Voices Global Partnership in late 2011 (Gamboa, 2015). They officially became a

recognized chapter in 2014, adopting the name Voces Vitales Costa Rica (VVCR).

The Vital Voices Global Partnership exists in 146 countries, and has trained

14,000 mentors, impacting the lives of half a million mentees. The partnership's mission

is to "identify, invest in, and bring visibility to extraordinary women around the world."

Each chapter aims to change lives by helping women realize their potential through

training and mentorship programs. These programs focus on addressing the three main

pillars of the Vital Voices Global Partnership: Human Rights, Economic Empowerment, and Political Participation. (VVCR, 2015)

In the past year, Voces Vitales Costa Rica has only been able to focus on one of the three global pillars, Economic Empowerment. In February 2015, VVCR adopted a new strategic plan from INCAE business school. This plan focuses on the personal transformation of individual women through Economic Empowerment, setting forth the "multiplier effect of women" (VVCR, 2015). This means that investing in women not only affects each individual woman, but instead the effect is "multiplied" through her children, family, community, and even country (Aladesanmi, 2013). Through this plan, VVCR provides the opportunities for its members to achieve economic security through personal development, independence, and responsibility. However, VVCR is having trouble creating value for the mentors within its network. Voces Vitales would like to improve their current mentor network, to bring value to the mentors and increase their involvement. Establishing a comprehensive mentor network will create a sense of community between the mentors that will help them achieve their full potential.

A mentorship program currently exists; however, lack of networking leaves mentors disconnected from one another. This disconnection leaves many mentors unmotivated, some of whom drop out of the program completely. Since its establishment in 2014, 12% of the certified mentors have dropped out of the program

(Gamboa, 2015). VVCR realizes that it's not providing the mentors with sufficient opportunities for achieving their full potential. VVCR holds only a few networking events each year, relying mostly on their Facebook page as a means to keep mentors engaged. However, outside of organized networking events, mentors do not interact, physically or virtually. VVCR realizes it needs a way to manage the mentor network, both physically and virtually, so the whole mentor network is incorporated in one place. To manage their current network, VVCR uses Excel as a database to input mentor profiles and indicators. However, as Voces Vitales continues to grow, it will need a new database platform that can better maintain and analyze the network's information.

The goal of our project was to work with VVCR to assess the mentor network in order to enhance it. To better its mentor network, we had to first understand it. We did this mainly through correspondence with our sponsor. Once we gained an understanding of the network, we analyzed it through independent research and a comparative analysis. We then distributed online questionnaires and conducted a small focus group in order to measure the mentors' satisfaction with the current network, as well as their thoughts on how to improve it. From our research, we were able to create a set of recommendations for the improvement of the Voces Vitales mentor network. The following chapters detail our background research, methodology, and results necessary for formulating our recommendations.

We hope that Voces Vitales presents our final proposal to the Board of Directors in order to achieve appropriate funding to launch a prospective network. An improved network has the potential to create an added value to the mentors during their time with VVCR, ultimately leading to a better mentor to mentor dynamic. With this strengthened dynamic between the mentors, VVCR will be able to connect and transform women helping them achieve the "multiplier effect" together. These women can move on to be the pioneers of women's issues in Costa Rican society.

Chapter 2: Background on Networking in Women's Organizations

The following chapter presents background information on the topics crucial to understanding the issues within Voces Vitales Costa Rica. We start with a look at the broad definition of networking and its impact on women's organizations. Next, the chapter discusses why women join networks as well as the best practices of preexisting women's networks and how their practices compare to those of Voces Vitales.

2.1 What is Networking?

In order to provide recommendations for VVCR to better its mentor network, we needed to first understand the definition of networking and how it can positively impact women's organizations. In the broadest sense, networking is a set of goal-directed activities done by individuals attempting to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships (Gibson et al., 2014, Singh, 2006). In the context of this paper, we use the same definition when referring to networking. In reference to this definition, VVCR has already defined the goal of its mentor network but does not have sufficient activities for the network to function. Once these activities are implemented, both VVCR and the mentors can start benefiting from this network. Studies have found that networks within women's organizations have resulted in benefits for the participants and organizations alike (O'Neil, 2011). For each woman participant, networks facilitate the development of

personal and professional opportunities (Gibson et al., 2014). For women's

organizations, networks support greater organizational communication and enhanced

reputation (Gibson et al., 2014). Therefore, through a stronger mentor network, VVCR

can create female leaders that can both enhance their lives and the reputation of VVCR.

2.2 Why Women Join Networks

In order to create such a strong mentor network, we must first understand why

women join networks. There is no single reason why women join networks (O'Neil,

2011). Some women join networks because they recognize that they do not have

access to the same opportunities as their male counterparts (Singh, 2006). Other

women join networks to learn and share experiences with their colleagues (Vinnicombe

et al., 2004). Whatever the impetus is for joining networks, women find networking

important in order for them to achieve their full potential and to gain access to different

opportunities (Singh, 2006). Once women are provided with opportunities, they have the

power to make advancements towards achieving their full potential (Singh, 2006). The

opportunities that women look for are support, social interaction, career advancement,

and access to information and resources (Vinnicombe et al, 2004; O'Neil, 2011).

In the following sub-sections, we look more in depth into each of the reasons why

women join networks as well as several existing networks and their best practices. In

Chapter 4, Results and Analysis, we relate these best practices back to Voces Vitales

Costa Rica to evaluate whether VVCR uses similar techniques. The best practices were grouped into sections based on which aspect of women's networking they encompassed: support, social interaction, career advancement, or access to information and resources.

2.2.1 Support

Women's organizations use networking for a variety of reasons, including support (Singh, 2006). A study by Pini (2004) reported that women found positive benefits in having support within a network. As a result, many networks invest in support and provide it through support groups (O'Neil, 2011). Support groups are small-scale communities where women can share their personal interests and goals and interact with one another (O'Neil, 2011). Additionally, women find that they learn, grow, and become united when part of these close-knit communities (Pini, 2004). Overall, support groups help women meet new people, share thoughts and ideas, and create a sense of community (Pini, 2004). Voces Vitales does not provide support groups for their members. Outside of their organized events, the women do not associate with one another. Consequently, Voces Vitales' goal of connecting women is not being met to its fullest extent.

According to Deborah A. O'Neil (2011), many women's organizations provide support groups because they create a sense of community and connect different

people. Women within the support groups are able to interact and engage with one another, ultimately building relationships that not only affect their careers, but their personal lives as well (Singh, 2006). According to O'Neil (2011), women are more likely to form smaller groups because of the stronger support and relationships they foster. At Professional Women's Network of Paris, or PWN Paris, for example, the women are part of "think tanks" and clubs (PWN, 2015). These groups meet often and their goal is to connect women with similar aspirations and interests (PWN, 2015). Another women's organization, Savor the Success, has "savor circles" (Savor the Success, 2015). In these circles, the women have circle sisters and they check in with one another throughout the week (Savor the Success, 2015). In Girl Scouts, the members use friendship circles (Girl Scouts, 2015). The Girl Scouts share a handshake in the circles and these circles are used to signify sisterhood (Girl Scouts, 2015). Lean In Circles (2015) are also based on support. The small, tailored peer support groups serve as places where men and women alike can share their personal interests and goals (Lean In Circles, 2015). Despite what these groups are called, they all have one purpose, to provide interpersonal support to their members.

Voces Vitales does not currently provide their members with any type of support group. Aside from organized talks and breakfasts, they do not offer them any additional services. One of VVCR's objectives is to create a sense of community for their

members. PWN Paris, Girl Scouts and Lean In Circles all make the effort to invest in

their members. Therefore, if Voces Vitales offers some form of support, it would help

reach their goal of connecting their members.

2.2.2 Social Interaction

Many women join networks for the social experience (Knouse & Webb, 2015).

Some companies are designed in such a way as to exclude women as who are in fields

primarily dominated by men (Catalyst, 1999). This makes accessing one another for

advice and support difficult. In order to come together, women began to share strategies

and participate in joint problem solving in a social setting. Many networks provide these

social settings for women outside of the work environment (Catalyst, 1999). The women

of Voces Vitales come from a variety of backgrounds. Many of these women do not

have a chance for social interaction as they are stay at home moms. Others who are in

a career field may experience exclusion from their professional networks. These women

use Voces Vitales as a means for social interaction. However, Voces Vitales has not

supplied its mentors with events that are strictly social, leaving the mentors at a loss for

social interaction.

As stated, many organizations use social interaction in order to attract members.

Professors from the Centre for Developing Women Leaders at Cranfield University

interviewed both chairs and event organizers of different women networks in order to

identify the most memorable activities for social interaction. This list included events such as wine tastings, trips to art exhibitions, breast cancer awareness events, and cocktail making events. Each of these events gave women the opportunity to not only build their relationships with peers, but to network their thoughts and ideas as well (Vinnicombe et al., 2004).

Professional Women's Network of Paris has a series of social events for their members. One such event is a cocktail night where members, whether new, old, or prospective, can get together to mingle and have a fun night. They also have a series of group trips that members can attend (PWN, 2015). Girl Scouts offers many social opportunities. Different camping options are provided to the girls as well as field trips to zoos, aquariums, and museums (Girl Scouts, 2015). By referencing these best practices, Voces Vitales can provide social interactions in their mentor network to create stronger bonds among the mentors.

2.2.3 Career Advancement

Networking can also help women advance their career paths through peer learning. According to Catalyst, a US-based research organization, a study on women's corporate networks shows that organizational environments are often more challenging for women than men. This is because some established career paths often exclude women who do not have the benefit of female role models and, thus, are negatively

impacted by generational influence. Therefore, networking is important for women to share career development strategies and learn from one another. Voces Vitales has a wide variety of mentors ranging from executives to unemployed women. Creating peer learning opportunities within the VVCR mentor network can help women share their experiences and assist each other to start, continue, or advance their professions. (Vinnicombe et al., 2004)

To emphasize the importance of networking, a study claims that the quality of one's network has as great or greater influence on one's career success than their abilities, knowledge, and experience. This is because well-connected individuals are able to better solve problems and access opportunities that otherwise would be difficult to come by (Gibson, Hardy III, & Buckley, 2014). Thus, the increased visibility and power resulting from networking facilitates greater career success, which carries with it opportunities for advancement, power, and salary (Gibson et al., 2014). Since VVCR aims to be the premier women organization in Costa Rica, providing career advancement opportunities in their mentor network can help mentors advance their professional connections and skills. (Vinnicombe et al., 2004)

Part of Voces Vitales' mission is to help women transform their lives through economic security and career advancement. Therefore, we researched how different women's networks provide professional opportunities to their members. The

Professional Women Network of Paris and UBS Women Network organize networking

events throughout the year with different themes including "tackling conflict effectively"

and "performance measurement" (PWN Paris, 2015; Vinnicombe et al., 2004). PWN

Paris also organizes events like "Women on Board" and "Women and Money" to

discuss leadership and managing budgets respectively. Additionally, the Barclaycard

Women Network organizes a talk called "A day in the Life of a Director" (Vinnicombe et

al., 2004). This talk addresses career barriers, networking, communication,

understanding body language, assertiveness, applying for jobs, preparing for interviews,

and work-life balance (Vinnicombe et al., 2004).

To get a better sense of the best practices for career support, we looked more

into the feedback from women involved in various networks. The study by Cranfield

Centre (2004) conducted surveys with 160 members from different women networks to

identify the best practices for implementing career opportunities. Interviewed women

mentioned events which provided professional advice. Event topics included "how to

advance their careers", "negotiation", "taking the stage", "personal branding", "work-life

balance", "job interview preparation" and etc. (Vinnicombe et al., 2004).

Different women's networks also provide career opportunities on the individual

level. Women's Success Network (2015) provides discounted advertising opportunities

for its members who provide products or services. Women can also provide member

referrals about another member's product or service that they have previously used (Women's Success Network, 2015). Celebrating career successes of each individual woman is another tactic used by multiple women's networks. Successful Women Always Network (2015) provides member spotlights to display members' accomplishments on their website. Also, PWN Paris (2015) provides an award called "Prix de l'Entrepreneure Responsable". This award is given to a woman entrepreneur who creates an outstanding business model with social, societal, or environmental objectives (PWN Paris, 2015). Voces Vitales offers career advancement opportunities to its mentors through trainings. After the trainings end, mentors are not offered more career opportunities on a regular basis. Providing career opportunities for the whole network and each individual mentor can create a better sense of belonging within VVCR's mentor network.

2.2.4 Access to Information and Resources

A study by Finsveen and van Oorschot in the Netherlands (2008), states that when joining a network, women often have access to information and resources as a primary motivation. This concept can be attributed to social capital, or the idea of an individual receiving something from a networking group. Social capital is about people's access to information and resources in their network. Finsveen and van Oorschot also noted that there was a positive correlation between successful networking and a

member's access to resources and information. These resources can be as broad as spreading information and as narrow as a friend to talk to when in need. (Finsveen & Oorschot, 2008)

In order to provide members of a network with appropriate information and resources an interactive database is vital. The information that needs to be stored includes the mentor's background information as well as their status within the network. In order to manage this information, one possibility is the implementation of a database driven website. A good website is one that will sufficiently meet all the requirements, and one that will typically do so in a way that will bring large scale user satisfaction. (Mahmood, 2000)

Research shows that there are three major criteria that need to be considered in order to guarantee user satisfaction (Mahmood, 2000). These criteria are the perceived benefits of the website, the organizational support for the website, and the user's competence in managing the website (Mahmood, 2000). In the case of Voces Vitales, there is a sense of need for a database driven website and so organizational support and perceived benefits do exist. In regards to user's competence, Voces Vitales needs a carefully designed website.

Websites can also be used to organize the mentors' information and provide resources. A number of different women's networks already use a website in order to

manage their user information and supply members with appropriate resources. Among

them are Girl Scouts (2015), PWN Global (2015), SWAN (2015), and Savor the

Success (2015). Specifically Girl Scouts' (2015) and SWAN (2015) have websites that

allow the networks to manage their members' information. Both networks use

directories in which each member has a profile. Each member is allowed to make

submissions like comments, articles, and videos that may be posted on the website.

Alternatively, PWN Global (2015) and Savor the Success (2015) both have websites

that serve as highly innovative, interactive online networking platforms. The websites

allow the members to interact with each other via a virtual form of information

management (PWN Global, 2015; Savor the Success, 2015). Voces Vitales could

benefit from using a database driven website to manage their members' information.

These kinds of websites have been successful for many women's networks, and it

handles and manages information better than Excel.

Chapter Summary

Through our research, we found that women join networks for four main reasons:

support, social interaction, career advancement, and access to information and

resources. Many successful women networks employ a series of best practices in order

to address each of these four reasons. Voces Vitales wants to successfully employ

some of these practices in addition to the practices that they already employ, in order to

connect the mentors and increase the value of the network for the mentors. Using these

defined best practices, we will detail in the next chapter how we use our research along

with other methods to define the practices that best fit Voces Vitales' needs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The goal of our project was to enhance the current mentor network at Voces Vitales Costa Rica (VVCR) in terms of mentor-mentor relationships. In order to achieve this goal, we formulated the following research objectives:

Objective 1: Understand the preexisting VVCR mentor network

Objective 2: Evaluate the preexisting VVCR mentor network

Objective 3: Analyze the best practices for physical networking in similar networks

Objective 4: Analyze the best practices for virtual platforms in similar networks

In order to address our first objective, we established a relationship and weekly communication with the leaders of VVCR. Through our communication with VVCR, along with background research on their current website, we were able to identify the goals and the preexisting networking events of the VVCR mentor network. Using this information, we were able to pursue our second objective of evaluating the preexisting VVCR mentor network. To complete our second objective, we researched the structure of similar women's networks in order to identify measures for evaluating the preexisting VVCR network. We also surveyed the current mentors at VVCR to get their opinions on VVCR's networking events such as the TEDx events, the Bimester Talks and the Euro American Women's Forum. Using these measures and opinions, we were able to identify the current organizational deficiencies. This led us to our third and fourth

objectives wherein we analyzed the best practices offered by other women's networks.

Using the findings from our four objectives, we were able to propose a set of

recommendations for VVCR's network.

The following chapter presents the methodology used to complete our research

objectives. We also included the limitations and the ethical concerns associated with

each method and how we addressed them.

Objective 1: Understand the Context of the Preexisting VVCR Mentor Network

In order to comprehend the preexisting mentor network at VVCR, we had to

obtain background information. The areas of our research included the histories of

women's rights in Costa Rica, gender inequality in Costa Rican society, and Voces

Vitales Costa Rica. Our investigation of women in Costa Rican society helped us to

understand the value of VVCR's goals and how they fit into the societal context for

women. Identifying the context for these goals helped us to determine whether VVCR's

preexisting network events were connecting their mentor's and helping them achieve

the "multiplier effect" together.

Our first step in obtaining background information was to learn about VVCR. The

leaders of VVCR helped us to gather material on the organization's mission, goals,

values, and needs. We obtained and examined the provided information, which included

presentations, spreadsheets, program descriptions, and member information. From our

examination, we gained knowledge of VVCR's guiding values and how VVCR operated.

Our team used informal conversations as our primary mode of gathering any material

from the leaders of VVCR, who were also our sponsors. One limitation of this method is

that it is purely internal, and we used promotional documents meant to perpetuate a

certain view of the organization.

To overcome this bias that existed in the provided information, we conducted

additional research on Voces Vitales Costa Rica. We examined how VVCR fit into the

Vital Voices Global Partnership, which lead us to many conclusions, including why

VVCR was established, the need for VVCR, and VVCR's future plans. In doing so, we

learned about gender inequality and the history of women in Costa Rican society. For

example, women face unequal opportunities in Costa Rican society and that is the

motive for women's organizations like VVCR. Our aforementioned independent

examination provided us with well-rounded information about VVCR. However, due to

cultural differences, we may not have fully understood the cultural contexts related to

women in Costa Rica.

To aid our research of understanding the cultural context, we surveyed the VVCR

mentors to fill in any gaps that appeared. Surveying is a common method used to

gather background information. We decided to use electronic surveys because as

Dorine Andrews states electronic surveys are inexpensive compared to paper and

phone surveys (2003). Our questionnaire focused on the mentor's involvement in the

preexisting network, the mentor's satisfaction with the preexisting network, and the

mentor's opinions on how to improve the network. We structured our questionnaire in

this manner so we did not overlook any aspect of the network, but instead get a

comprehensive look at the network. We made an online questionnaire because we were

able to see the responses immediately and it was easily accessible because all the

mentors had access to a computer. Andrews et al (2003) goes so far as to claim that

surveys completed online are more efficient for the researcher as responses can be

captured automatically. For this reason, our team decided to conduct electronic surveys

in the form of a questionnaire (See Appendix A). The questionnaire was also a

combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions so that for questions that

needed further explanation the mentors were able to elaborate. The aim of the

questionnaire was to reach out to the maximum amount of mentors within our time

constraints. One limitation to this method is that our questionnaire was not mandatory

and, as such, our team did not receive responses from all of the mentors at VVCR.

However we did receive a significant number of responses, our team received a total of

45 mentor responses out of 190 mentors involved with VVCR which is approximately

25% of the mentor population. The results of our questionnaire did not provide our team

with all the information we needed, so we decided to conduct a focus group to fill in the gaps.

Another common method used for data collection is a focus group. Focus groups are group discussions on particular topics formed and led by an investigator (Berg and Lune, 2012). Unlike interviews, or questionnaires, focus groups have the advantage of creating group interactions. Within a focus group, a moderator, or facilitator, guides the course of the meeting. The chief purpose of a facilitator is to direct the discussion and help those involved from going off topic (Berg and Lune, 2012). Due to the structure of focus groups, factors such as time and size of the group must be taken into consideration when formulating the questions and discussion period. For the purpose of our research, we conducted a two-hour focus group with 20 questions for three of the VVCR mentors because of time constraints. We planned to conduct the group with five mentors, but two did not show up to the group due to other commitments. As our team was unable to interview the two mentors our data was hindered because our team ended up with a smaller variety of feedback that a larger group would have provided. The focus group was facilitated by two of our team members while the other two members scribed. Our team used a focus group, as opposed to interviews or another questionnaire, to help address any questions we had after the questionnaire and to interact with the mentors on a personal level (See Appendix A). All of the questions

were open ended so the mentors could individually communicate how they felt without being limited or influenced by a provided answer, like on our questionnaire. While the focus group questions addressed the same topics as our questionnaire, the questions were open-ended and extended these topics in order to fill in any gaps in our data.

For our focus group, the sample included three mentors, two of whom had yet to complete a mentor process and one of whom who has completed one mentor process thus far. We read a confidentiality statement at the beginning of the focus group to provide security for the mentors (See Appendix C). To make the mentors feel more comfortable giving truthful answers, we provided a letter ID to each mentor. This provided anonymity and kept the mentors' names confidential to eliminate any consequences for a specific individual. We also asked permission from each mentor if notes could be taken during the focus group. Linguistic limitations were another obstacle we had to face. To overcome this obstacle, we consulted our sponsor and one of our on-site advisors, Dr. Aarti Madan, an Assistant Professor of Spanish and International Studies, at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, to make sure our questionnaire and focus group questions were not offensive and were linguistically appropriate. Overall, our team's understanding of the preexisting mentor network was essential and aided us in our assessment.

Objective 2: Evaluate the Preexisting VVCR Mentor Network

Using our understanding of VVCR's network, we were able to address our second objective of evaluating the preexisting network of VVCR. This objective was essential for identifying the status of the network and the different areas for improvement. To evaluate the network, we first researched the development of women's networks and the different measures used to evaluate the performance of a women's network. Next, we included in both the questionnaire and the focus group some questions addressing the mentors' opinions about VVCR and its preexisting network's events. By analyzing the mentors' responses, we were able to evaluate VVCR's network using both general evaluation measures and specific opinions about VVCR. In the section below, we detail the different measures used for evaluating a women's network performance. Additionally, we discuss the role of the questionnaire and focus group in evaluating VVCR's preexisting network.

We researched developing women's networks to find out categories by which to evaluate the preexisting mentor network of VVCR. One significant study (Vinnicombe et al., 2004) includes the different ways to measure a women's network's performance. It identifies measures associated with membership, events, impact on members, and a network's other activities. We used these measures to formulate our questionnaire in order to obtain information from the mentors addressing each measure. To evaluate membership of a women's network, information on membership numbers and meeting

targets for membership are needed. The study argues that to evaluate events of a women's network, one should measure the number of events, attendance at events, feedback from events, interest in repeat events, and interest in new events. To evaluate the network's impact on the members, the impact on their achievement should be taken into account. There are also other measures associated with other activities in the network: the number of mentoring relationships established, the number of website hits, and features on the network in general publications, to name a few.

The above research study provided us with a guideline for evaluating VVCR's preexisting network. Through correspondence with our sponsor, we obtained statistical information regarding the network's membership and the number of events offered in the network. To address the rest of the measures, we integrated some questions in the aforementioned questionnaire seeking the mentors' feedback. We specifically asked for the mentors' opinions regarding interest in repeat/new events, network's impact on mentors' achievements, and number of mentoring relationships (See Appendix A). When asking for the mentors' feedback on the preexisting network, we wanted to create a comfortable environment for the mentors where they could freely express their opinions and criticisms. In order to assure honesty within an organization, people need to be encouraged to share information (M.Reina & D.Reina, 2015). However, due to time constraints, we were not able to develop personal relationships with the mentors in

order to encourage them to share their opinions. Thus, we chose to send an online

questionnaire to all of the mentors as opposed to conducting interviews. The

questionnaire guaranteed anonymity to accommodate for the sensitivity of some of the

evaluative questions about the network's quality. On the other hand, we were not able

to analyze the different sets of responses together, and the mentors could not be

determined by their answers. Thus, promising anonymity also acted as a limitation for

evaluating the network. To compensate for this limitation, we held a focus group with

three of the mentors. Unlike the questionnaire, the focus group questions allowed us to

analyze the different responses for each mentor and formulate conclusions accordingly.

For example, we discovered the possibility of a correlation between a mentor's job and

her opinion on the offerings of the preexisting network.

Overall, using the researched evaluation measures along with the mentors'

opinions, we were able to identify the areas for improvement regarding both physical

and virtual networking. Using these identifications, we moved forward to our third and

fourth objectives wherein we researched the practices of different women's networks

addressing these areas.

Choosing the Networks for the Comparative Analysis

In this section, we detail why our team chose each of the specific networks that

we analyzed within our comparative analysis. We chose these networks based on many

different conditions, all relating back to their relevance to Voces Vitales Costa Rica. This

section will conclude with a summary figure of why each network was chosen (Figure

1).

Each model network was chosen based on specific conditions. These conditions

included the number of members, establishment year, size/demographic, cultural

setting, and mission statements. We analyzed each network based on support, social

interaction, career advancement, and access to information and resources. We chose

these four criteria as research identifies them as reasons why women join networks

(O'Neil, 2011).

As previously mentioned, we took certain conditions into account when choosing

the networks we analyzed. The first condition was the year established and the number

of members in the network. We analyzed networks established in a variety of year

ranges to assure that the methods used were not out of date. We chose networks with

varying numbers of members to assure that we considered different network sizes.

Networks with small member numbers correlated with the population size of Costa Rica,

but may not have been as successful as those with higher member numbers. As well as

the member number, we observed the demographics. We chose international networks

as well as national and metropolitan. This assured that the small population of Costa

Rica was taken into account when creating recommendations. We looked into relevancy

of the networks as well. This ensured that their missions coincided with VVCR's mission

in some way. We checked to see if the networks were active by looking at their web

pages and determining how up-to-date they were. We also chose other Latin American

networks such as Voces Vitales Argentina and the Rotary Club of Costa Rica to account

for any cultural differences that may have occurred in our research. Our team took into

account these conditions when assessing the best practices from different networks to

assure the practices chosen for VVCR would be relevant.

After reviewing the conditions, here is the final list of networks we analyzed in

depth: Professional Women's Network (PWN) of Paris, Rotary Club Costa Rica, Lean In

Circles, Voces Vitales Argentina, PWN Global, Successful Women Always Network

(SWAN), Women's Success Network, Alcoholics Anonymous, Girl Scouts, and Savor

the Success. Figure 1 details the specific conditions that each of these networks meets.

Figure 1: Summary of Networks Chosen with Justifications for Each

Objective 3: Analyze Best Practices for Physical Networking in Similar Networks

After identifying the gaps in the current mentor network in Objective 2, we were able to move on to analyze the best practices of both local and international networks. We used the analysis to create recommendations for VVCR on physical networking strategies.

We used both inductive and deductive reasoning in our research on women's networking. Deductive reasoning is "top-down" research, which starts with a general theory and works down to specific observations (Trochim, 2006). On the other hand, inductive reasoning is a "bottom-up" approach that focuses on creating theories from general observations (Trochim, 2006). Our team used deductive reasoning when

choosing the criteria as to why women join networks in order to give us an

understanding of what applies to all women's networks. We found four criteria through

our research: support, social interactions, career advancement, and access to

information and resources (O'Neil, 2011). Inductive reasoning was used when analyzing

best practices. For example, if many organizations used a similar practice to attract

members, then this method was assumed successful by inductive reasoning. We chose

inductive reasoning when analyzing best practices in order to ensure the applicability of

the four criteria.

We faced many limitations when performing the comparative analysis of the

physical networking techniques used by existing organizations. One of these limitations

was the small demographic of Voces Vitales Costa Rica. Costa Rica has a population of

approximately 4.9 million. To put this into comparison, the population of The

Commonwealth of Massachusetts is approximately 7 million. Best practices for

networks with thousands of members may not work for VVCR as they do not have a

large population to pull from. Another limitation is the differences in goals between

VVCR and the other networks researched. VVCR has a very specific and unique goal,

which is to "identify, invest in, and bring visibility to extraordinary women" through

coaching and self-discovery (VVCR, 2015). Of the three Vital Voices pillars, VVCR only

implements Economic Empowerment. Not many other networks have solely economic empowerment on their agenda.

As many of the analyzed networks were not from Latin American countries, our team faced a cultural limitation. Best practices in some countries may not be relevant in Costa Rica. The survey questions provided examples of best practices for the mentors in order to assure each practice was relevant to VVCR (Appendix A). Our analysis was not limited to the best practices of physical networking, but it also encompassed the best practices for virtual platforms.

Objective 4: Analyze Best Practices for Virtual Platforms in Similar Networks

This section will detail our methods for analyzing the best practices for virtual platforms of the different organizations mentioned above. It mainly consists of the reasoning strategies we used and the different limitations our team faced. Through our research, we discovered that virtual platforms for women's networks are usually used for two main reasons: information management and virtual networking. Information management was one of the areas where VVCR had expressed a need for improvement, and virtual women's networks allow direct network access to a large number of individuals. Participating in a virtual network is also easier than face-to-face or even telephone interactions. Therefore, computer access increases the network's

size and homophily, the tendency of individuals to associate and bond with similar

others (Knouse & Webb, 2015). Since almost all of Voces Vitales' mentors have internet

access, we researched how different women's networks implement virtual networking.

In order to investigate information management, we looked into the

organizational systems used by different women's networks to keep track of their

members through their websites. In particular, we looked at the different designs used

to implement the system such as directories, profiles, etc. Also, we examined the

accessibility of the members' information. Networks can make the information only

accessible to the leaders, accessible to members as well, or accessible to the

public. Additionally, we looked into the searching capabilities of each information

management system. Part of this included the complexity of the search query, the

criteria used for searching, and who can search for members.

In order to investigate virtual networking we looked into the ways in which

women's networks' websites helped satisfy their members' needs. We researched how

these websites kept their members informed about the networks. Moreover, we

investigated the opportunities that were offered via the websites to address each of the

four criteria as to why women join networks. One of the limitations of this research was

our inability to look at the private features that were only offered to members. We

attempted to contact the networks in order to be granted temporary access to these

pages; however, we didn't receive responses. As we were not allowed access to these private pages, we examined websites with public pages, helping us to partially overcome the abovementioned limitation.

Once we conducted the research on these websites, we performed a comparative analysis on each of these virtual platforms with the current virtual tools VVCR has to offer. While conducting this comparative analysis we compared two different things: the ways in which the virtual platforms provided information and resources, and the networking opportunities that were offered via the website. In order to complete the comparative analysis, we looked into each of the features offered by the websites of similar women networks, and the resources that these features offer for the networks. We performed another comparative analysis on the implementation strategies for virtual platforms. Using features from the websites of other women's networks, we came up with a set of criteria for choosing softwares that would be used to create the virtual platform. Additionally, we took into consideration the mentors' opinions on what to be included in the virtual platform. The different softwares were compared to find out which one best fit VVCR's needs.

Chapter Summary

Our team's goal was to examine the preexisting VVCR mentor network and provide them with ideas for improvement. To accomplish our goal, we created a set of

four objectives: to understand the preexisting mentor network at VVCR, to evaluate the

preexisting mentor network at VVCR, to analyze best practices of physical networking in

similar networks, and to analyze best practices of virtual networking in similar networks.

Our research approach used both inductive and deductive reasoning in order to

understand the information found. We used correspondence with sponsors, interviews,

independent research, and comparative analyses to evaluate and assess how the

preexisting mentor network was working. We chose these methods because when

paired together they compensated for each other's limitations. Based on our methods,

we discovered key findings and created recommendations and deliverables to present

to VVCR for the improvement of their mentor network. Figure 2 below shows a

summary of our methodological approach.

Figure 2: Methodology Summary Flow Chart

Objective 1: Understand VVCR Mentor Network
- Correspondence With Sponsors
- Independent Research
- Interviews

Objective 2: Evaluate VVCR Mentor Network
- Correspondence With Sponsors
- Independent Research
- Interviews

Objective 3: Analyze Best Practices (Physical)

Objective 4: Analyze Best Practices (Virtual)

- Independent Research
- Comparative Analysis
- Interviews

Findings/ Recommendations

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

Introduction

Our evaluation of Voces Vitales Costa Rica's current mentor network revealed a number of findings structured around mentor satisfaction with the current network, a comparative analysis of VVCR's mentor network with other similar networks, and mentor's willingness to expand the network. We grouped our results into three major sections based on the practices detailed in Chapter 2:

- Practice that VVCR successfully employs

- Practices that VVCR currently employs that have room for improvement

- Practices that VVCR does not currently employ

Our team's results do not only express areas in which Voces Vitales thrives, but the areas in which they could improve as well. These findings will lead us to our recommendations for future practices and allow us to create an implementation guide for use by Voces Vitales in the future.

These results were gathered through a series of methods, including correspondence with our sponsors, independent research, a comparative analysis, an online questionnaire (Appendix D), and a small focus group (Appendix E) consisting of three mentors. The online survey generated a sample of 45 mentors from the total population of 190 mentors. This number was approximately 25% of the population of mentors involved in Voces Vitales Costa Rica. Within the entire VVCR population, 44%

of the mentors are considered uninvolved, meaning that they have not yet completed a

mentorship process, or have not completed one within the past year. In our survey, 36%

of the mentors had not completed a mentorship process (Appendix D). From this, we

were able to determine that the questionnaire demographic was a good representative

sample of the entire VVCR population. In order to assure confidentiality for the mentors,

the survey was kept anonymous. Each set of responses could not be linked to any other

questions' responses, and the mentors could not be determined by their answers.

Because we were unable to link the mentors to their responses, we could not calculate

the percentage of mentors who had completed a mentorship but were still considered

uninvolved. This means that the percentage of uninvolved mentors in the mentor

sample could possibly be higher, making our sample even more representative of the

population. This would supply us with accurate results from the questionnaire.

In addition to consulting the Voces Vitales mentors, our team compared the

practices of Voces Vitales Costa Rica to ten other local and international networks.

These ten networks were chosen based on a series of criteria as mentioned in the

methodology. Table 3 lists each practice analyzed as well as which networks currently

use this practice. An 'x' is used to denote which networks employ this practice. This

comparative analysis chart was then used to see areas in which VVCR's network could

improve.

Table 3: Best Practice Comparative Analysis Summary Chart

	Voces Vitales Costa Rica	Professional Women's Network Paris	Rotary Club Costa Rica	Voces Vitales Argentina	Professional Women's Network Global	Sucessful Women's Network Always	Women's Success Network	Alcoholics Anonymous	Girl Scouts of the United States	Savor the Success	Lean In Circes	Totals	Greater than or equal to 50% of the organizations use this practice
Support													
1. Club Meetings/Circles		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	8	★
2. Mentorship	x			x	x				x			3	
3. Online Support Groups										x	x	1	
4. Think Tanks		x										1	
Social Interactions													
5. Guest Speakers	x	x		x	x				x		x	5	★
6. Group Get Togethers		x			x	x			x	x	x	6	★
7. Community Service Participation	x	x	x	x					x		x	5	★
8. Retreats		x		x					x	x		4	
Career Advancement													
9. Workshops	x	x		x	x	x	x		x	x	x	8	★
10. Networking Events	x	x		x	x	x	x			x	x	7	★
11. Awards/Scholarships	x	x	x	x			x		x			5	★
12. Leadership Opportunities					x				x			2	
Access to Information and Resources													
13. Social Media Pages	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10	★
14. Virtual Platform		x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9	★
15. Newsletters	x	x			x		x	x	x	x		6	★
16. Online Communication						x				x	x	3	
17. Membership Fee		x			x	x	x		x	x		6	★

39

Note that to the right of the chart there is a column labeled 'total'. This column indicates the total number of networks that employ this specific practice. The furthest column to the right indicates with a star each of the practices that are employed by at least 50% of the networks analyzed. The starred rows include club meeting/circles, guest speakers, group get togethers, community service participation, workshops, networking events, awards/scholarships, social media pages such as Facebook and twitter, virtual platforms with different aspects, newsletters, and membership fees. As more than 50% of the networks use these practices, our team considered them successful best practices.

In the following sections, we highlighted the different networks as well as the different strategies they employed within their network. VVCR was compared to these networks in respects to their employment of each practice. Table 4 states which best practices VVCR employs successfully, which have room for improvement, and those that they do not employ. Voces Vitales participates in a mentorship program, which falls under the category of support, however, it is not listed below. That is because it is not a widely used practice. Mentorship will still be discussed in the following section to give a better understanding of the current VVCR mentor network.

Table 4: Voces Vitales' Employment of the Top 11 Best Practices

	VVCR
Support	
Club Meetings/Circles	
Social Interactions	
Guest Speakers	x x
Group Get Togethers	
Community Service Participation	x x
Career Advancement	
Workshops	x
Networking Events	x
Awards/Scholarships	x
Access to Information and Resources	
Social Media Pages	x
Virtual Platform	
Newsletters	x x
Membership Fee	

Key	
x x	Employ Well
x	Room for Improvement
	Do not Employ

Note: Membership is a separate category, as it is not grouped under one of the four reasons why women join networks

4.1 Practices that VVCR successfully employs

We researched similar women networks in order to identify the local and international practices of women's networks. Through correspondence with our sponsor, we concluded that VVCR successfully employs, mentorship, guest speaker events, newsletters, and community service events, within its mentor network. The following section outlines VVCR's employment of each of these practices.

4.1.1 Voces Vitales has a strong mentorship program

One of the practices we found for support activities in networks is the implementation of a mentorship program. Although this practice is not employed by 50% or more of the networks, Voces Vitales implements it strongly, making it necessary to

define. Vital Voices Global Partnership (2015) is based on three pillars: Economic

Empowerment, Political Participation, and Human Rights. Vital Voices chapters around

the world address these three pillars through a series of mentorship programs as well

as other activities. The current Voces Vitales network emphasizes the first pillar of

Economic Empowerment as mentioned in the Introduction. Its primary means of

addressing this pillar is through their mentorship program. Women undergo a three part

training in order to become certified mentors. This training is valued at $750, which is

paid by VVCR. The mentors are then required to complete two mentorships within a

year of their training. If this is not accomplished, VVCR has the right to charge the

mentors for the training process.

Within the mentorship program, there are a series of projects funded through

grants from larger companies such as Coca Cola, United Way, and FUNDES (VVCR,

2015). VVCR typically offers about four processes a year for the mentors to participate

in. These processes, coupled with the rigorous training program, have been proven to

increase women's leadership, self-confidence, motivation, and vision (VVCR, 2015). All

three women in our focus group felt that they have greatly benefited from these

trainings, and they have learned not to judge others based on externalities. All of the

responses to the focus groups can be seen in Appendix E.

4.1.2 Voces Vitales successfully offers guest speakers for their mentors

Another commonly used best practice, which falls under the social interaction category, is guest speakers for mentors. In a study by Joseph Zorek (2011), it was found that guest speakers positively impacted the personal development of attendees. Voces Vitales currently offers Bimester Talks in which they have guest speakers come to talk about topics such as networking, leadership, and advancement for women. Ninety-three percent (93%) of the mentors surveyed felt that the Bimester talks should continue in the coming years (Appendix D). VVCR also holds a TEDxWomen event annually called TEDxLlorenteWomen. This event is based directly off of the TEDWomen talk held by TED every year (TED, 2015). The event must be held within one day of the national TEDWomen event and include a simulcast of the TEDWomen speakers in order to be called a TEDxWomen event (TED, 2015). A TEDxWomen event also has local speakers depending on the location and the group holding the event (TED, 2015). Voces Vitales holds this event in order to get the members together to learn and discuss topics on women's issues and advancement. This event is also offered to women who are not a part of the network, increasing the diversity of the event and therefore expanding the opportunities it provides. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the women said that the TEDxWomen talks should continue (Appendix D). None of the focus group women have attended this event, however, they all expressed that they think TED talks in general are very useful and should be continued (Appendix E). Voces Vitales also

participates in the Euro-American Women's Forum each year. This forum is a large

conference with guest speakers and focuses on women's issues from the previous year.

A few of the VVCR women are chosen to attend this event, however, not all of the

mentors can attend. Our questionnaire found that 78% of the mentors would like to

continue attending the Euro-American Forum (Appendix D).

Our questionnaire determined that these previously mentioned two events had

either medium or high attendance. None of the mentors surveyed felt that the events

had low attendance, however, 36% of the mentors were unsure of this number

(Appendix D). The 36% who were unsure may have not attended the events or did not

observe the other mentors at the events. As the percentage of mentors who were

unsure was so high, a conclusion could not be made from this piece of data. However,

as there was a high desire for the continuation of the events, we concluded that VVCR

successfully holds guest speaker events.

4.1.3 Voces Vitales offers community service opportunities

Voces Vitales offers community service in the form of their mentorship program.

Each mentorship program focuses on giving the mentee the tools she needs to better

her life, which requires time and commitment from the mentors without pay. Beyond this

mentorship program, Voces Vitales does not provide the mentors with other community

service opportunities. When analyzing best practices of similar networks, we found that

five of the ten networks held community service events. The members of PWN Paris

(2015) attend different community service walks together such as breast cancer walks

and autism awareness walks. Similarly, Rotary Club of Costa Rica (2015) holds various

community service events every month in order to raise money and awareness, and to

create a sense of community within its network. For example, every year its members

go to Talamanca to bring shoes and school supplies to children in need. In other areas

of Costa Rica, the Rotary Club distributes toys to children in shelters. The clubs

members read to members of retirement homes and play games with them as well.

(Rotary Club Costa Rica, 2015)

As previously mentioned, 93% of the mentors claimed that they joined Voces

Vitales in order to give back to society (Appendix D). The mentors are solely offered this

opportunity through mentorship, which 69% of the mentors agree is enough to give to

back to society (Appendix D). Our team concluded that although VVCR only offers

mentorship as a means of community service, it is enough as it is so successful.

4.1.4 Voces Vitales successfully distributes bi-monthly newsletters for their mentors

Voces Vitales offers a newsletter every two months for their mentors. These

newsletters are sent electronically to the members via email. They also include

upcoming events as well as topics on women's issues and facts about Voces Vitales

Costa Rica. Currently, 22% of the mentors are happy with this frequency, 16% would

not mind receiving them less often, and 58% would like to see them more often

(Appendix D). We observed that the mentors' expectations map on to what other

networks employ. As a result of our comparative analysis, our team found that six out of

the ten networks studied provided their members with newsletters. PWN Paris (2015)

and Women's Success Network (2015) have a monthly newsletter in which the mentors

can choose to subscribe or not. Both networks also provide a directory of the latest and

past newsletters for the mentors to access on their website (PWN Paris, 2015;

Women's Success Network 2015). In the focus group, the women expressed that

although they do not always read the newsletters, they were aware that Voces Vitales

provided them, and knew where to look if they had questions (See Appendix E).

Although 58% of the mentors expressed that receiving a monthly newsletter would be

most beneficial in terms of timing, this statistic alone is not enough to require change.

This is because the mentors in our focus group mentioned that they don't read

newsletters anyways. Thus, expanding investment in newsletters will not provide

benefits to outweigh the costs.

4.2 Practices that VVCR currently employs with room for improvement

Our team also concluded that VVCR employs practices with room for

improvement. These practices are workshops, financial growth opportunities, and

networking opportunities. In the following sections, we highlight the different networks

that successfully employ these practices and how VVCR compares to these networks in

respects to its employment within the mentor network.

4.2.1 Voces Vitales offers a small variety of workshops for mentors

Forty nine percent (49%) of the surveyed mentors said that one of the reasons

they joined VVCR was for the workshops (Appendix D). As mentioned before, VVCR

participates in the annual Euro-American Forum on women's issues. As well as guest

speakers, this event offers a series of workshops for the women. Other than this forum,

VVCR provides a series of mandatory training workshops which are required for the

women to become mentors. These workshops include trainings on both soft and hard

skills. Soft skill workshops focus on topics such as leadership and communication, while

hard skills workshops focus on topics such as business and finance (VVCR, 2015).

VVCR interprets instilling leadership as helping women advance their career paths. But

despite this interpretation, VVCR does not provide mentors with workshop options after

the completion of this training, leaving 91% of the mentors hoping to see more

workshops held in the future (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Mentor's Opinions on having more workshops
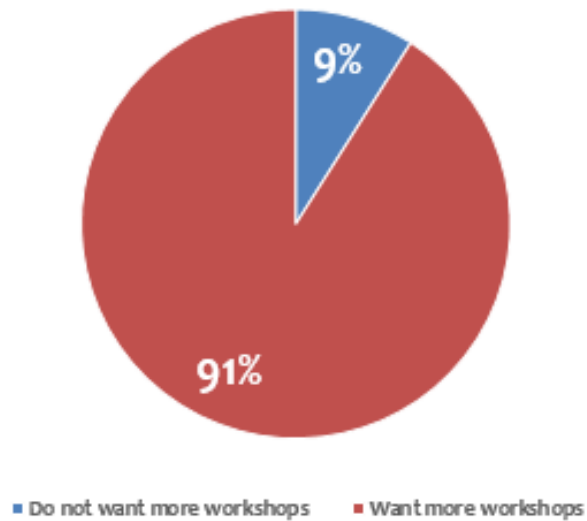
Our team found that a huge majority of the networks we analyzed—eight out of

the ten—held workshops for their members. Savor the Success (2015) holds workshops

in the form of a live teleconference. These workshops are held twice a month for half an

hour. A new career-related topic is discussed every workshop with an expert managing

the teleconference and answering some live questions. Apart from teleconferences,

workshops could also be held in person. Voces Vitales Argentina (2015) holds in person

monthly workshops related to the advancement of their members' businesses. These

workshops are held in the form of breakfasts for two hours in a hotel, charging $150 per

attendee. The workshops are run by experts in various fields, addressing issues related

to leadership skills and managing a small-to-medium enterprise. Overall, the workshops

held in the women's networks that we analyzed focus on the professional skills of

employed women and women who own businesses. With regards to VVCR, only 4% of

the mentors said that Voces Vitales helped them grow their business, emphasizing the

need for more workshops (Appendix D).

4.2.2 Voces Vitales offers minimal financial growth opportunities for its mentors

Voces Vitales currently offers a program called VVGrow Fellowship. VVGrow

Fellowship is a one year business mentoring program designed to improve women's

leadership and business skills. The VVGrow Fellowship is completely free for any

member or any unaffiliated woman, however, the woman must apply through a Vital

Voices chapter and be selected. The applicant must own a business that has been in

operation for three years, employs at least three staff, and generates at least $40,000

annually. With regards to these criteria, this fellowship can be considered highly

selective and therefore not every mentor at VVCR can qualify for it. Although

participating in VVGrow eventually leads to financial growth, this fellowship is not

tailored for the majority of VVCR's mentors.

Looking into other options for VVCR, we analyzed eight women's networks that

provide different financial growth opportunities for its members. These opportunities are

implemented in the form of awards and scholarships that contribute to a woman's

career or education, eventually leading to financial growth. For example, Girl Scouts of

America (2015) offers a series of scholarships and awards for its members. These

scholarships are for different programs and camps that the girls can attend as well as

college scholarships for the oldest members. The awards consist of different patches

that the girls can achieve as well as advancement through the rankings. Another

example is PWN Paris (2015) which provides "Prix de l'Entrepreneure Responsable"

award for women entrepreneurs who have created an outstanding business model.

There are no other criteria for the applicants for this award. The winner of the award is

offered a year of personalized advice provided by the expert members of the network as

well as access to PWN's international resources. This gives a chance for the winner to

expand her activity and pursue her commitment to responsible business.

Other women's networks provide financial growth in the form of advertising

opportunities. For example, Women's Success Network offers a free display table at

their monthly meetings for members to showcase their products or services. Voces

Vitales Argentina holds business fairs where the members who own businesses can

display their products and meet potential customers. Although Voces Vitales offers the

VV Grow Fellowship, it does not offer any scholarships for educational advancement or

career advancement for women who do not own a business. As for the women who own

businesses, VVCR does not provide them with any advertising opportunities. This lack

of financial growth opportunities could be one of the reasons why 4% of the surveyed

mentors felt that VVCR helped them grow their businesses (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: Mentors Opinions on how VVCR helped them with their business
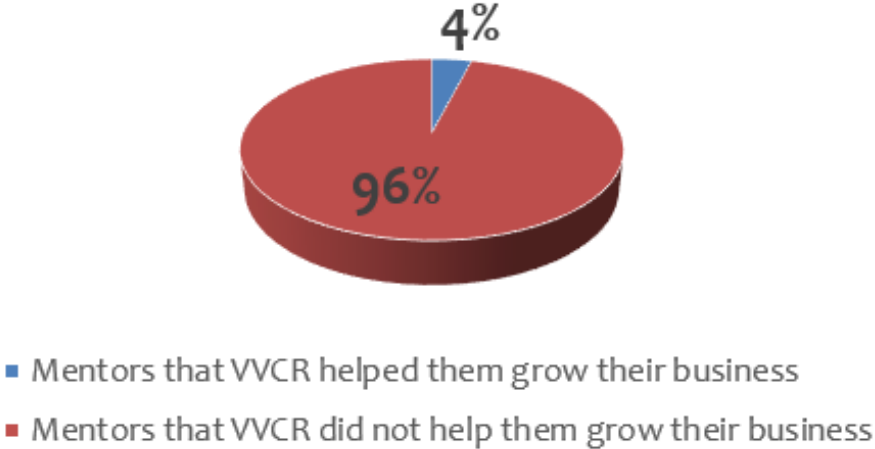
4.2.3 Voces Vitales indirectly provides networking opportunities for its mentors

Voces Vitales holds the following three guest speaker events: Bimester talks,

Euro-American Forum, and TEDxWomen. Although listening to the speakers during

these events, women have time before and after to mingle with the other women at the

event. However, there are no strictly networking events offered at Voces Vitales Costa

Rica. As a consequence, only 42% of the surveyed mentors said that they were given

the opportunity to network with other women by joining VVCR (See Figure 5). This

leaves more than half of the mentors in need for more networking opportunities.

Expanding on the need for networking, the mentors who participated in the focus group

mentioned that they did not know other mentors well enough and so did not feel

comfortable asking them for help when needed (See Appendix E).

Figure 5: Mentors Opinions on Networking within VVCR
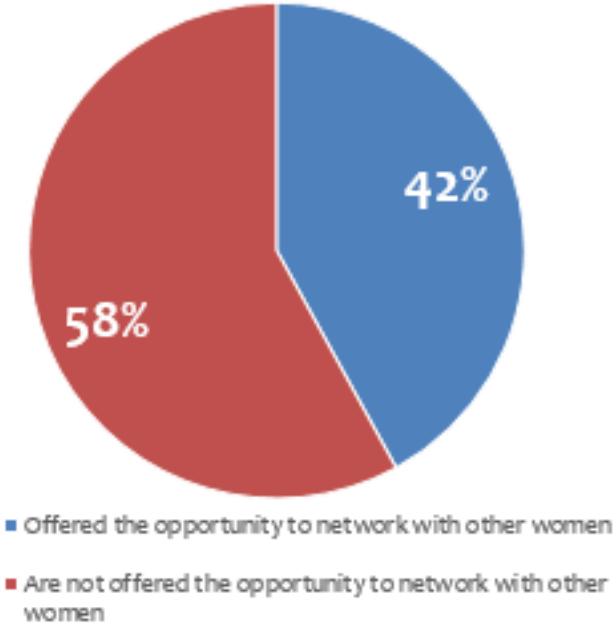
To address this need, we looked into the networking events offered by seven of

the women's networks we analyzed. For example, Successful Women Always Network

(2015) holds breakfast meetings as well as events called "speed networking". These

events are held in hotel for two and a half hours, charging $44 per attendee. This

charge entails a beverage, appetizers and raffle prizes. The objective of these "speed

networking" events is to meet and connect with as many, varied speed networkers as

possible, which helps improve the quality and quantity of the women's connections.

Likewise, Voces Vitales Argentina (2015) has a networking event in which they invite

CEOs of various companies to come converse with the members. As for VVCR,

providing more networking opportunities for the mentors can help them create

connections on the professional level that they could refer to whenever needed.

4.3 Practices that VVCR does not currently employ

The VVCR mentors are directly impacted by what goes on in the network. Their

opinions and support were important for our team to consider when evaluating the

preexisting mentor network at VVCR. The following section presents more of our

findings from the network wide questionnaire and our mentor focus group addressing

the mentor's thoughts on an improved mentor network and the mentor's satisfaction

with the network. Based on mentor's questionnaire responses, common trends

appeared, such as a desire for new events tailored to the mentor's interests and better

communication within the network. We included some of the mentor's responses to

support our findings. The trends we found are described in the section below.

4.3.1 Voces Vitales mentors want interpersonal support

Support groups are an internationally recognized and commonly used best

practice in women's networks (O'Neil, 2011). Successful networks, including all the

networks in our comparative analysis, use support groups as one way of building

relationships. From our research, we found that networks usually call their support

groups "club meetings" or "circles." Some of the networks we reviewed through our comparative analysis have club meetings in which members meet to participate in an activity, while others have circles in which members with mutual goals or at similar chapters in life come to share experiences that are tailored to their specific interests. We realized that support groups have similarities between them, yet despite these similarities, different networks exercise different practices within the support group framework. Our team decided to focus on *circles* because they encompass what VVCR wants its mentors to have for support. For example, Lean In Circles (2015), which were created by Sheryl Sandberg, are small peer support groups that meet regularly to learn and share together. Circles may have different themes, such as an engineer's circle or a political science circle, but the purpose of each circle is the same. They are for the members to share similar interests and have the ability to become united (Lean In Circles, 2015). Another example is Savor the Success (2015), who have virtual circles where communication solely takes place on-line. Within their circles, the women are assigned "circle sisters" who are responsible for communicating with each other on a weekly basis (Savor the Success, 2015).

The preexisting network at VVCR does not have small groups based on the mentor's interests, so our team asked the VVCR mentors if they would like to see circles adopted into the network. The mentors' responses on the questionnaire

revealed to our team their desire for support circles when an overwhelming 87% of the

mentors communicated that they would be interested in circles with different themes

(See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Mentors Responses to Support Circles

Interest in support circles (87%)
No interest in support circles (13%)
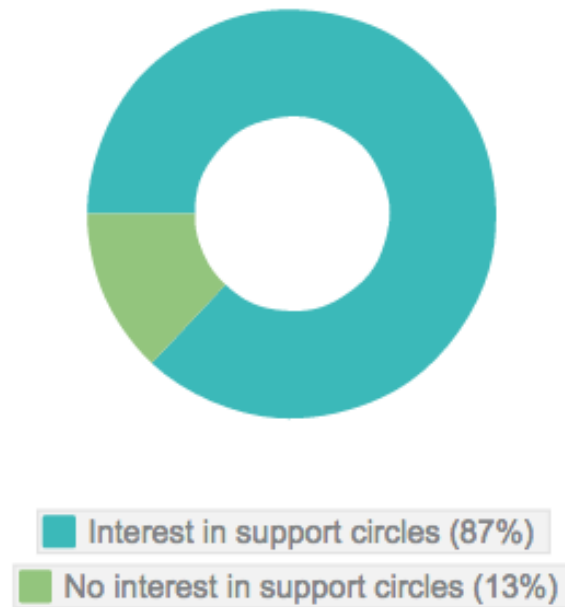
Some of the suggested themes included circles dedicated to movies, art,

literature, working mothers, businesswomen, cooking, and much more. All of the

responses to our questionnaire and focus group regarding circles can be found in

Appendices D and E.

4.3.2 Voces Vitales mentors want more social interaction

Another best practice our team found that many networks utilize was group get

togethers. Our comparative analysis showed that networks use multiple methods to

provide an interactive environment for their members. Circles, above, are a group based

support activity that focus on building supportive relationships, while group get togethers

differ because networks use them to provide less structured social interaction. Group

get togethers are social events that allow additional socializing outside of work, home,

and support circles because they are directed at fun and entertainment.

We observed that all of the networks we studied provided their members the

opportunity to attend more than three social events per year. One example of a network

that successfully offers group get togethers is the Professional Women's Network

(PWN) of Paris. PWN Paris (2015) holds weekly cocktail nights at different venues,

such as galleries, for new, current, and prospective members to socialize in a relaxed

and casual environment. They also hold other social events, such as dinners and wine

tastings, throughout the year to provide social opportunities to their members (PWN

Paris, 2015). We also noticed that our findings from our comparative analysis were

consistent with our research into social psychology. As previously mentioned in Chapter

2, a study by the nonprofit organization Catalyst (1999) affirms that women want social

events because they provide interaction outside of their work and personal lives.

Within the preexisting VVCR network, the mentors have three event options to

attend throughout the year that provide social interaction (Bimester talks, a

TEDxWomen talk, and the Euro-American Women's Forum, as mentioned above).

However, these three events are not exclusively dedicated to social interaction, but serve as career advancement workshops as well. On the questionnaire, we wanted to address social events, so we provided the mentors with a variety of examples to select from (See Figure 7). The examples included cocktail nights, lunches and dinners, day trips, etc. (See Appendix A).

Figure 7: Mentor Questionnaire Answers for Social Events
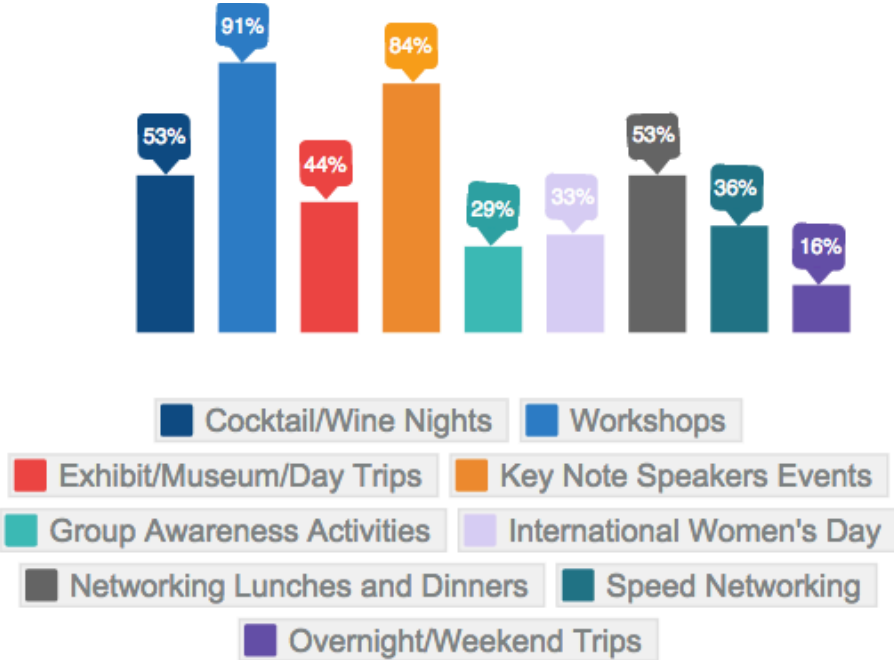
We expected to see the mentors express a strong interest in the addition of some social events, but we were surprised when the mentors showed an interest in all of the social events provided on the questionnaire. For example, 53% of the mentors expressed an interest in attending cocktail nights, while 44% expressed an interest in exhibits, museums, and day trips. Additionally, 33% of the mentors indicated on the

questionnaire that one of the reasons that they joined VVCR was to have social

interactions with other women. One of the mentors in the focus group even stated, "I

want more of an opportunity to have social events that are separate from professional

events." Another mentor offered some suggestions on how to achieve this saying "Open

houses, where the mentors can host dinners at their homes, would be nice." Overall,

from the questionnaire and focus group, our team found that VVCR mentors displayed

positive feedback towards having more social events and were eager for more ways to

socialize.

4.3.3 Voces Vitales mentors want a virtual platform, despite the forms of social media already provided

One of the reasons women join networks is for access to information and

resources. As mentioned in our background chapter, a study by Finsveen and van

Oorschot (2008) suggests that there is a positive correlation between successful

networking and a member's access to information and resources. Dr. Mo Mahmood

(2000) confirms this finding when he affirms that virtual platforms are beneficial to have

in a network. He goes on to explain that network support, user competence in managing

the website, and perceived usefulness of a virtual platform need to be present

(Mahmood, 2000). This means that networks benefit from virtual platforms when users

think it is a need and members are capable of using it (Mahmood, 2000).

VVCR told us that their network would be unable to do all that they want it to do

without having a virtual platform to incorporate the other aspects of their network. From

our questionnaire, we discovered that the mentors also see a need for a virtual platform.

Although 89% of the surveyed mentors have Facebook profiles, only 73% of the

mentors have actually liked the VVCR Facebook page (Appendix D). This means that

27% of the mentors do not receive updated information about the network because

VVCR's Facebook page does not currently attract their attention. Additionally, the

mentors who participated in our focus group mentioned that although they liked VVCR's

Facebook page, they do not frequently check it or read the information on it. A mentor

even went so far as to state that "I have not heard of the events and the few that I have

heard about have conflicted with my work schedule." This emphasizes the need for a

virtual platform so that the mentors gain access to the information and resources

needed. A virtual platform could also serve as a tool for virtual networking. Thirty-five

percent (35%) of the mentors said that they did not have time to go to events because

of their work (Appendix D). Therefore, virtual networking could be a good alternative for

these mentors. Overall, a virtual platform could be used to access information and

resources and as a tool for virtual networking.

When we performed our comparative analysis, we saw that all ten networks have

social media pages, and eight of them have virtual platforms as well. Lean In (2015)

successfully employs virtual platforms providing all circles with two free platforms to

choose from, Circle Hub and Mightybell. Each is built structured around circles, so that

members can participate in group emails, search for other groups, and have access to

guides and other resources (Lean In Circles, 2015). Figure 8 provides the explanation

for virtual platforms that Lean In provides circles.

Figure 8: Lean In Virtual Platforms

We provide two platforms with access to everything you need for your Circle: our Circle Hub and Mightybell.
Given that you're looking at this Kit, you've likely already been introduced to one of these platforms! Your Circle's
manager should determine which tool works best for your Circle and then invite you to join if they haven't already
done so. They may choose to use just one tool or they may decide to use both. Either way, we want to ensure
that you are familiar with both tools before you get started since we will reference them repeatedly in this Kit.

Circle Hub

Think of the Circle Hub as a one-stop destination for all things Circles. Here you'll find downloadable Circle
Kits, our most popular education videos, and links to daily inspiration and articles. You'll also be able to read
first-person testimonials from Circles around the globe, interviews with moderators, tips for your Circle, as well
as monthly advice from our team of experts.

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you decide to use the Circle Hub, you should register at **leanin.org/circles** and then invite other
members using the invitation link on the right of your My Circle page in the Circle Hub. Once you have
registered, be sure to bookmark **leanin.org/my-circle** and remind your members to do the same!

Mightybell

Mightybell is an optional technology platform for Circles with features and functionality that make it easy to
stay organized and connected. Using Mightybell, you can access materials like Circle Kits and expert lectures.
You can also chat with your other Circle members and schedule upcoming meetings. Mightybell also powers
what we call "Circle Matching", which enables you to search for new members to join your Circle. For more
information on Mightybell, visit **https://mightybell.com/communities/lean-in**.

On the questionnaire, we asked the mentors the types of features they would

want to see in a virtual platform based on the best practices that other networks

employed. We provided a series of features for the mentors to select from, and they

were asked to select as many of the features as they would like to be included in the

virtual platform (See Figure 9). Defining each feature of the virtual platform helped the

mentors understand, so they could answer accurately, which allowed us to comprehend

exactly what the mentors wanted. Some of the features we included were member

profiles, calendar of events, member spotlights, and a virtual library.

Figure 9: Mentors Responses for the Virtual Platform
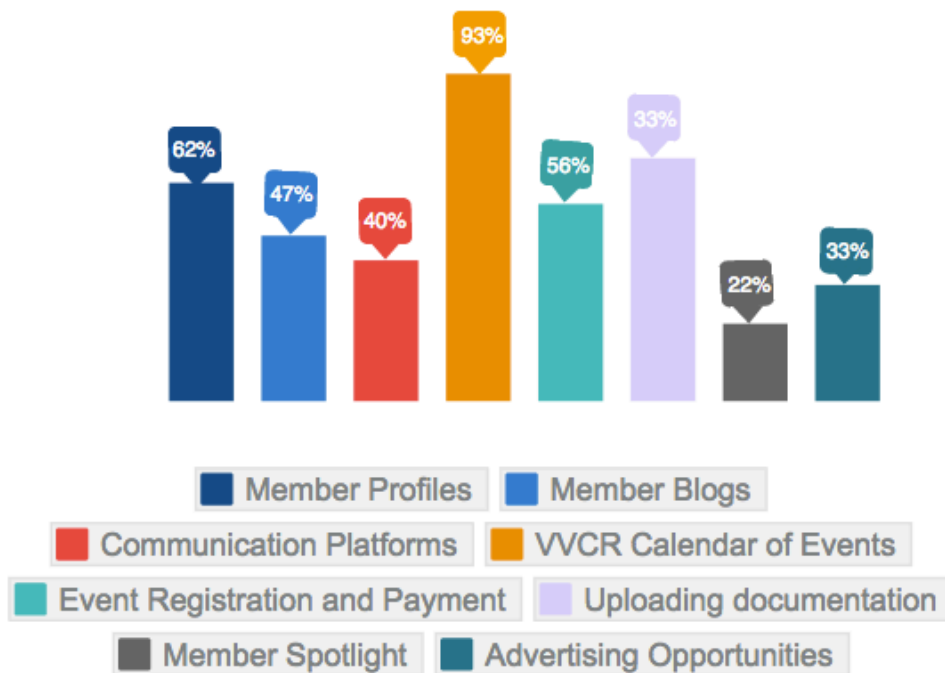
We observed that 69% of the mentors are interested in having a virtual library for

uploading documentation for trainings and to access past information (Appendix D).

With a library, the mentors will no longer have to send and receive documents by email

or look at other web sources to find information. Instead, a library will integrate

everything in one place rather than the mentors having to use email and other sources. By having everything in one place, mentors can go to the platform for one feature, and while there, be exposed to the other features that the platform offers. One example of a network that uses a virtual library is Savor the Success (2015). Savor the Success (2015) provides their members with a video and audio library. Their members are able to watch videos and listen to webcasts and books. We also looked at the types of social medias used by VVCR's mentors to understand the type of virtual platform that would best fit their needs. We asked the mentors about LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Seventy three percent (73%) of the mentors confirmed that they have a LinkedIn profile, while 44% of the mentors stated they use Twitter (Appendix D). We also discovered that 17 out of the 40 mentors who responded to the questionnaire have Facebook and check it every day (Appendix D). We found it interesting that 45% of the mentors responded that they would want to be able to blog on their own personal VVCR profiles, even though 59% said they didn't have Twitter, which is just a small-scale blog (Appendix D). The mentors were more interested in blogging with other VVCR mentors, rather than with a broader audience, like on Twitter. Based on all of our feedback, we found that the mentors and VVCR both see that there is a need for communication and acknowledge that a virtual platform could satisfy their need.

For the implementation of a virtual platform, we researched different membership

management softwares. These softwares offer organizations with the functionality they

need to provide the desired services to their members. Based on a set of criteria, we

performed a comparative analysis, as seen in Table 5 below, for four different softwares

to decide which software best fits VVCR's needs. On the online questionnaire, the

mentors have expressed interest in some features to be included in the virtual platform.

Based on these interests, we decided that the virtual platform can include member

profiles, a blog, an online communication platform, a calendar of events, and a virtual

library. All of the aforementioned features aim to either facilitate virtual networking within

VVCR or provide online access to information and resources that facilitates the events

at VVCR. Apart from the mentors' interests, another possible feature is having the

platform create groups to manage the support circles as well. Moreover, we think that

form submission is an important feature to be included in the virtual platform. Currently,

the mentors send their forms through email to VVCR's leaders and the leaders have to

input all the information by hand into Excel. Thus, the form submission feature can

make the record keeping at VVCR easier and more time efficient. The mentors can also

input their own information on their member profiles. VVCR's leaders expressed the

need to improve their membership management database. By having the members

input their own information, VVCR's leaders are guaranteed updated mentor information

and time efficiency. To further improve the membership management, we think that a

search engine can be helpful for VVCR's leaders in order to analyze the mentors'

information using different metrics. The search engine can also be used by the mentors

to research each other, facilitating virtual networking. To provide security for the

mentors' personal information, we suggest using a software that can create private

pages for the mentors' profiles, a practice adopted by similar women's networks. We

also compared the cost for using each software in order to make sure that the virtual

platform is affordable to VVCR. As shown in Table 5, Wild Apricot can offer all of the

features that VVCR needs in a virtual platform. Based on this analysis, we offered

recommendations to VVCR regarding the software to use for implementing the virtual

platform.

Table 5: Virtual Platform Comparative Analysis

	MakeANet	Yammer	Wild Apricot	Member Clicks
Spanish Language	x	x	x	
Can Integrate into Existing Page	x	x	x	
Online Communication	x	x	x	x
Virtual Library	x	x	x	x
Form Submission		x	x	x
Create Groups	x	x	x	
Member Profiles	x	x	x	x
Search Engine	x	x	x	x
Event Registration	x		x	x
Limited Registration Option			x with $50 a month	
Member Blogs	x		x	
Public vs. Private Option	x	x	x	x
Reminders for Events	x		x	x
Payment Options			x	x
Available Guest List for Events	x		x	x
Can Connect to Social Medias	x		x	Have their own social online community
Members can Input own Info	x	x	x	x
Cost Currently/ Month	$1.50/mentor	$3/mentor	$25	$210
Future Cost/month (at least 1800 mentors)	$1.50/mentor	$3/mentor	$100	$336
One Time Implementation Fee	-	-	-	$2,500

4.3.4 Voces Vitales does not currently charge a membership fee

Networks that provide a variety of programs and benefits, know that services aren't free; they have membership fees in order to cover the costs of the services they provide. Our comparative analysis showed that seven out of the ten networks we researched had membership fees. Also, each of the seven networks made their members pay a fee annually. For PWN Paris (2015) each member pays 115 euros at the beginning of the year to cover the cost of events and activities. Similarly, the Rotary

Club of Costa Rica (2015) collects dues that go towards the club's local expenses as well as Rotary International operations worldwide.

Instead of a membership fee like the other networks, our team thought VVCR could refer to this fee as a donation to increase each mentor's willingness to pay. To support our idea, we interviewed a women's network in Worcester, Massachusetts named Women's Initiative (WI, 2015). We spoke with the network's program manager Anne Wettengel. Ms. Wettengel informed us that WI (2015) has a membership fee in the form of a yearly donation. She told us that the amount that people donate varies from year to year and further explained that the donation is mandatory with WI setting the minimum amount for donation at one hundred dollars (WI, 2015). However, when we asked the mentors in the focus group, they expressed that the term "membership fee" made them feel like they were receiving benefits from the network.

VVCR realizes the need for the addition of extra activities to their network, but in order to do that they need funding. Our team included a donation question within the questionnaire because the VVCR leaders wanted to see if their mentors would be willing to contribute to the network to fund such expanded activities. The exact amount of money that the mentors are willing to donate varied. Sixteen percent (16%) of the mentors are unwilling to donate at all which might be attributed to the mentors who feel that the current network does not offer enough events (Appendix D). Another 26%

expressed they are willing to donate ten to twenty dollars annually, which means that

42% of the mentors are unwilling to contribute more than twenty dollars annually

(Appendix D). What was most surprising to our team was that 16% of the mentors were

willing to donate more than one hundred dollars annually (Appendix D). Based on all

the feedback, our team realized that although 58% of the mentors are willing to pay

more than twenty dollars annually, VVCR needs more mentors willing to pay twenty

dollars annually in order for VVCR to fund and provide more services.

Chapter Summary

In order to understand not only what Voces Vitales has in their network, but what

they are lacking as well, our team relied on correspondence with our sponsor, the local

and international best practices of other networks, the responses from our network wide

questionnaire, and the responses from the mentor focus group. We first focused on the

preexisting mentor network that VVCR had in place. We found that although VVCR

used many of the local and international best practices, they were not necessarily

effectively implemented. We distributed a questionnaire and conducted a focus group in

order to gather more information on the preexisting network and the mentor's thoughts

on how to improve the network. Based on the responses from the questionnaire, we

discovered that many of the mentors were dissatisfied with what the preexisting mentor

network provided. Our team studied and analyzed both the responses from the

questionnaire and the focus group to fill in any gaps in the data. We also used our

comparative analysis to view both what VVCR lacked in relation to other established

organizations and what they could implement to enhance their network. Our

comparative analysis showed that VVCR successfully offered mentorship, guest

speakers, newsletters and, community service events within their network. We also

found that VVCR offered workshops, financial growth opportunities and, networking

events — however these specific best practices were in need of improvement within its

network. Lastly, we discovered that VVCR does not offer club/circle meetings, group get

togethers, a virtual platform, and a membership fee. Based on all of our findings, our

team formulated a set of recommendations for the improvement of the VVCR mentor

network.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Our findings from Chapter 4 illustrate that Voces Vitales Costa Rica is already a well-developed organization in relation to other international and local networks. Therefore, VVCR is already in the position to help mentors and other prospective women achieve their full potential. The following recommendations will help to improve the mentor network within VVCR. With this improved mentor network, VVCR can give the mentors the opportunity to reach the "multiplier effect" together, changing both themselves and the community around them. These recommendations have the potential to add value to the overall mentor network at Voces Vitales Costa Rica.

5.1 Recommendations to Improve the VVCR Mentor Network

The following recommendations are structured according to the reasons why women join networks: support, social interaction, career advancement, and access to information and resources. We also have a recommendation regarding the implementation of a membership fee.

Implement "Lean In Circles" to provide support for the mentors

Many networks provide small support groups for their members because the members want to interact with people that share similar interests. As previously mentioned in our findings, 87% of the surveyed mentors are interested in having circles

for support. The VVCR mentors expressed they want to be provided the opportunity to be a part of small support groups because they feel they will build relationships, share, and grow together. *Therefore, our team recommends the implementation of Lean In Circles within the VVCR mentor network.* Within these circles, mentors will be able to have activities and talk with one another while building support. We chose Lean In Circles in particular because Lean In's methodology stands out from other circle models. They also provide new and existing circles with free materials to utilize. These materials include tips and guides on how to start, manage, and successfully maintain a circle (Appendices G, H, I). They also provide examples of how other circles work. Since circles will be the first time VVCR implements support groups, it will be helpful to have models of how other networks use them. Overall, VVCR will benefit from Lean In's methodology because the materials are presented in a clear and concise manner that is easy to follow.

Based on the responses from our questionnaire and focus groups, our team formulated a set of recommendations for the implementation of Lean In Circles. All of our recommendations are based on the best practices of other circles and the methods they use. Before VVCR fully implements circles*, they could pilot and introduce different circles into the mentor network to view their success and how they work.* On the questionnaire, the mentors informed our team of the different themes they would like to

see. Based on the amount of responses, our team found that the mentors are interested

in a variety of themes. We believe introducing five circles will give VVCR an adequate

amount of feedback, without being an insufficient or overwhelming amount. After the

piloted circles finish, VVCR can send out a survey to the mentors requesting their

opinions. The feedback from the mentors will give VVCR an idea of the parts of the

Lean In methodology that they would like to modify or change before implementation.

Lean In is very flexible—Lean In recognizes that many of the materials they outline and

provide have room for modification. They encourage everyone who adopts circles to

make them their own by introducing changes where they see fit. The implemented

support circles should address a variety of themes in order to appeal to the diverse

interests of the mentors. Some of the themes mentors suggested were: a movie circle, a

single mother's circle, a reading circle, and a wellness circle. More examples of the

specific themes the mentors expressed an interest in can be found within the

questionnaire results (Appendix D).

     We also recommend that VVCR set a minimum for the amount of people within a

circle in order for a circle to start. This amount will need to be defined before the circles

begin so that the number can be applied to all the circles. During our focus group, we

asked the mentors about the amount of other women they would want in their circle.

Based on the mentors' responses, we recommend that VVCR define five women as the

minimum amount of mentors to start a circle and fifteen women as the maximum

amount of mentors within a circle because these amounts cover the range that best

suits all of the mentors. Lean In describes eight to twelve members as a circle, but

when we asked the focus group their ideal range, they expressed that five to fifteen

women was a comfortable amount. They even went so far to state that this range would

still allow them to interact and support each other without it being an overwhelming

amount of women in one circle.

In addition to limiting the circle size, *we recommend that VVCR limit the period of*

time that mentors stay within one circle in order to include everyone. Both the

questionnaire and focus group revealed that women have similar interests in which

themes they would want for circles. For example, many mentors expressed that they

would want a wellness circle. In order to include all of the mentors, VVCR will need to

open circles up for a fixed period of time, such as six months, and then close the circles.

The mentors will be able to join different circles and no one will be excluded from

participating in a theme they like. For example, a circle will assemble every month for

one to two hours and finish after six months. After the completion of a circle, a new

circle will form with new members. Therefore, the circles will be temporary in regards to

the length of time they last for a group, but at the same time, the circles will also be

continuous in regards to the themes provided. Limiting the period of time also

encourages the mentors to interact with other women and prevents the mentors from interacting with one set group, thereby fostering greater support within the mentor network. Additional supplementary details on how VVCR should apply a time limit within the circles are outlined in the implementation guide (Appendix F).

In order to cover the cost of the activities offered in the circles, we propose that VVCR charge a circle fee for each circle. Preexisting circles in other networks charge different amounts, so VVCR will need to charge a fee that all the mentors feel comfortable paying. All the mentors in the focus group communicated that they felt comfortable paying $60 USD for a circle that lasted six months (which amounts to ten dollars for each monthly meeting). Depending on the activities within the circle, different circles should cost different amounts so every circle will not have the same fee. For example, a wellness circle that focuses on discussions related to one's physical health may not cost money compared to a cooking circle where mentors pay a fee to cover the costs of sharing recipes, baking together, or bringing in food they prepare. Nevertheless, an amount should be agreed upon and paid before the circle begins to assure that each circle is getting dedicated members. Lean In does not explicitly outline how a circle fee should be handled—instead Lean In allows each circle to handle the matter privately among their members. The VVCR leaders should decide whether they administer the fee or whether the fee should be handled within each circle.

Incorporate a social component into the mentor training program to bring together the mentors

Many of the mentors joined VVCR for the training program that it offers for mentors. Ninety-three percent (93%) of the surveyed mentors feel that their leadership and confidence has grown as a result of the training program. After speaking to the focus group, it was evident that although they gained these skills, they were longing for more social interaction within this training. Although they met many women during the training, they felt that they did not have enough time to bond with these women to form lasting relationships. *In order to help the mentors create lasting bonds during their training, a number of social components could be incorporated into the training process.* These social interactions would be events held after the completion of each of the three parts of the training program. These events would only include the mentors in each particular training program as well as the Voces Vitales employees. In its current structure, the first part of the program is two days long, ending before lunch on the second day. As the members are already together on this day, we propose that the first social event be a lunch for the members to attend directly after the training that day is over. The mentors could then vote from a list which event they would like to see after the conclusion of the second part of the program. Although this voting would take a little more preparation by the VVCR staff, it will allow the mentors to feel that they have a voice in the network even in the early stages. The list of events would include

cocktail/wine nights, day trips to museums or exhibitions, lunches/dinners, or other group trips (Refer to the Implementation Guide in Appendix F). For the third event we propose a graduation ceremony for the mentors. This ceremony would be a small party in order to congratulate the mentors for completing the training program, as well as an environment for them to bond with their fellow certification class. Other previously certified mentors could attend as well to see the new mentors or support their friends. By holding the social activities after each training section, as opposed to during the trainings, the activities will not divert the mentors' attention from the training.

Hold monthly mentor get togethers to build group bonds

Many of the networks we analyzed hold group get togethers to increase the social interaction within their network. These get togethers are a fun way for members to get to know one another. As stated in our findings, 70% of the surveyed mentors do not personally know more than 15 other mentors. The previous recommendation only creates social opportunities for mentors during the training process, and not after its conclusion. As discussed in the previous chapter, our research found that one way to meet more people is through social interactions (O'Neil, 2011). *Because of this, we recommend that VVCR facilitate monthly mentor get togethers.* These get togethers would be held monthly as a way to maximize mentor turnout. If held too often, there would be smaller turnouts than desired, leaving the mentors unconnected. These

events would be held after the conclusion of the traditional work day, as many of the

mentors expressed that they could not attend events due to their work schedule.

We suggest that these events have alternating themes each month; however, the

overall goal of these events would be to create open communication between the

mentors in order for them to become more familiar with one another. The reason for this

suggestion is the variety of event themes the mentors showed an interest in on the

questionnaire. These events included wine/cocktail nights, movie nights, and group

outings, all of which were provided by the mentors in the questionnaire and confirmed

by those in the focus group. The events could be held at the houses of the mentors,

alternating each month depending on which mentor offered to hold the event. If no

mentor offered to hold the event, then VVCR could book a venue. Subject to the event

theme chosen, *a small fee could be implemented in order to cover the costs of any*

supplies needed. Although this is a simple recommendation in comparison to the others,

our team believes that it will help the mentors grow closer to one another and maintain

these bonds as well. More details on these get togethers can be seen in the

implementation guide created for VVCR (Appendix F).

Offer more workshops with different topics

As mentioned in our results and analysis chapter, 91% of the surveyed mentors

expressed interest in having more workshops offered by the VVCR network. Also, the

majority of the networks that we analyzed offer workshops for their members. That is

why *we recommend that VVCR offer more workshops for their mentors. Some of these*

workshops can focus on career advancement since only 4% of the surveyed mentors

said that VVCR helped them grow their business. The mentors who participated in our

focus group suggested a few themes for career advancement workshops. These

themes included the following: project management, negotiation, marketing with social

media, and entrepreneurship. Additionally, *we suggest that VVCR offer workshops that*

are focused mainly on personal growth since this is one of the main goals of VVCR.

Mentors also suggested themes for workshops focused on personal growth. These

themes are related to health, self-empowerment, home economics, home sustainability,

and time management. To find more information on the implementation of workshops,

please refer to the implementation guide in Appendix F.

Hold professional networking events

According to the results from our online questionnaire, 58% of the mentors did

not think that VVCR has helped them network with other women. The mentors who

answered this question might have meant social networking or professional networking.

That's why we asked the mentors who participated in our focus group to elaborate more

on the networking need within VVCR. These mentors mentioned that they did not know

other mentors well enough and so did not feel comfortable asking them for help

whenever needed. Based on this information, *we recommend holding professional networking events within VVCR's mentor network*. We looked into different ways for implementing professional networking. Through our online questionnaire, 36% of the mentors expressed interest in speed networking. During speed networking sessions, the attendees are seated in pairs and each pair has between two to five minutes to introduce themselves and their profession (Excellence in Business, 2015). At the end of the two minutes, a bell rings and one of the parties moves to the next person on the right (Excellence in Business, 2015). The movement continues until all the attendees have had a chance to meet everyone in the room (Excellence in Business, 2015).

Although the majority of the mentors who completed the online questionnaire did not express an interest in speed networking, *we still suggest implementing speed networking in the networking events*. We think that, due to the language barrier, some of the mentors might have not chosen speed networking on the questionnaire because they are not familiar with the term "speed networking" or do not know exactly what it entails. Speed networking has many benefits that we think are very relevant to VVCR. Speed networking is a very structured form of networking and so it removes the pressure of taking initiative to network with other people (Excellence in Business, 2015). The structure of speed networking does not allow people to solely talk to attendees that they already know, granting the formation of new connections (Excellence in Business,

2015). Moreover, speed networking is a very efficient form of networking as it facilitates the formation of many connections in a short amount of time (Excellence in Business, 2015). These benefits are particularly important for VVCR, as they will help the mentors create connections on the professional level that they could refer to whenever needed. Although the structure of speed networking does not allow the creation of deep connections, these professional networking events are meant to be the seed for further contact if the mentors meet again in a more time-open social event.

Provide advertising opportunities and discounts for VVCR's mentors

From the results of our online questionnaire, we found out that only 4% of the mentors thought that VVCR helped them grow their business. Based on the best practices of other women's networks, *we recommend providing advertising opportunities and discounts for VVCR's mentors*. This recommendation addresses the economic empowerment pillar defined by the Vital Voices Global Partnership which is currently the main focus of VVCR. Our recommendation is supported by the mentors who participated in our focus group. *We suggest that VVCR offers advertising opportunities for the mentors who own businesses*. These opportunities could be in the form of a post on VVCR's website or Facebook page. One way to offer such opportunities during VVCR's events is to allow the mentors who own catering

businesses to cater the different events. Once a mentor actually advertises her product or service, as shown in Figure 10, *she could then be committed to offering discounts for the rest of the mentors. We suggest that the mentors who offer more discounts have longer advertising periods* since these mentors provide a bigger benefit for the rest of the mentors. We propose that VVCR's leaders be in charge of deciding the advertising periods for each mentor to make sure that everyone is given an equal opportunity to advertise their products and services. Eventually, VVCR will benefit because both the mentors who own businesses and the mentors who do not will get more connected to the network because of the benefits they are receiving. For more information on the implementation of advertising opportunities and discounts, please refer to Appendix F.

Figure 10: Provide advertising opportunities and discounts for VVCR's mentors
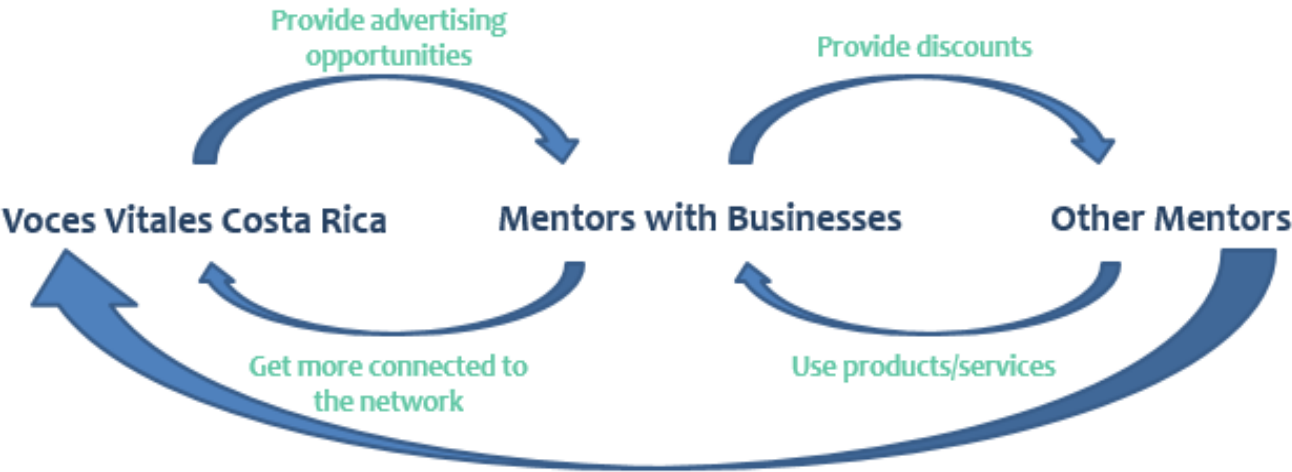
Implement a virtual platform for access to information and resources

The implementation of a virtual platform will be able to manage and maintain all of the aforementioned recommendations due to its use of a virtual database. Furthermore, the implementation of a virtual platform will allow VVCR to better provide mentors with access to information and resources. *We recommend that VVCR implement a calendar of events as a part of the virtual platform.* As stated in the results, the survey showed that 93% of the mentors expressed an interest in the online calendar of events. Furthermore, there was a large amount of networks that implemented a calendar of events on their virtual platform. This makes an online calendar a viable means of providing information to VVCR's mentors that is both desired and proven to be successful in other networks.

During the focus group, there was a distinct interest in *having the calendar be interactive*, meaning that the members can interact with the calendar in ways such as only including the events that they are interested in and looking at pictures that were taken at the events. We suggest *allowing the mentors to see information about private events*, so that they could be informed about what is happening within the VVCR network.

We also recommend that the virtual platform implement a blog in order to help distribute information and resources. The survey showed that 47% of the mentors expressed an interest in seeing a blog on the virtual platform. Also, many of the

networks that implemented a virtual platform had some sort of blog on their website.

Here the mentors will be able to post information about their organizations or

businesses, and general life and household tips. This not only keeps the mentors

connected, but also provides them with the ability to share information amongst

themselves.

We also recommend that the virtual platform have member profiles and chat

rooms available for the mentors. The questionnaire showed that 62% of the mentors

wanted member profiles, and 40% wanted chat rooms and virtual cafes. Here the

mentors will be able to interact with each other online. As previously stated, there are

two networks that implement these features in order to give their members the ability to

network with each other virtually. For Voces Vitales, this will give the mentors who travel

often an opportunity to network with their fellow mentors despite being a great distance

apart.

We also recommend that the virtual platform allow the members to register for

events, and include a virtual library. The questionnaire showed a desire for both of

these features to be placed on the virtual platform. The results showed that 56% of the

mentors wanted to be able to register for events, and 69% wanted the inclusion of a

virtual library. As mentioned before, eight out of the ten networks we looked into support

event registrations as well as a virtual library on their websites. These two features

provide mentors with an easy way to register for events and give them access to an additional source of information.

In order to implement a virtual platform with all of these features, we recommend that VVCR use the membership management software, Wild Apricot. We recommend Wild Apricot because it is able to implement all of the above recommendations at the lowest cost, as well as the criteria that we defined in Table 5. Wild Apricot would require minimal technical skills from the staff at VVCR, and therefore be simple to implement. Also, because of the ease of use Wild Apricot provides, the leaders of VVCR will be able to focus on the design of the website and will be more directly involved with the implementation process. The alternative to using this member management software would be to have VVCR's website administrators create all of these features from scratch. However, this would take much more time, and the implementation process would be more difficult.

Implementation a $25 annual membership fee for funding

The majority of the networks analyzed in Chapter 4 charge a membership fee. This membership fee would cover access to the virtual platform, venue and supply costs, raise money for the network, and provide benefits for the mentors. Typically, the higher the membership fee, the more events a network offers. VVCR needs to ensure that the price of the fee is a comfortable price for all of the mentors. We suggest that

VVCR implement an annual $25.00 membership fee, or approximately 12,500 colones.

In the online questionnaire, 58% of the mentors stated that they would pay more than

$20.00 annually. Accounting for the remaining 42% of the mentors, 16% expressed that

they would be unwilling to pay, and 26% said that they would pay $10-20. We believe

that this 42% can be reduced through VVCR offering more services within the network

and giving the mentors time to see the added value. Once the mentors recognize the

added value and express their satisfaction with the improved network, VVCR can

implement an initial membership fee of $25.00. The 42% of unwilling mentors might

come from the fact that the mentors provided us with their responses before VVCR

added anything to the network. However, the focus group mentors supported

implementing changes to the network when they stated that they believed all of the

mentors would be willing to contribute more money after the addition of events. Our

research supported this recommendation when all of the networks our team analyzed

charged an annual membership fee greater than $25 for the same services VVCR

wants to provide for their mentors.

Paying this membership fee would give the mentors a series of benefits. These

benefits would include discounts for the upcoming VVCR events and Lean In Circles, as

well as access to the previously mentioned virtual platform. We considered calling this

amount a "donation" in hopes of increasing the members' willingness to pay. However,

we discovered in the focus group that using the word "donation" leads the members to feel that they are not receiving anything in return. We asked the mentors how they felt about the term "membership fee" and they expressed that it made them feel that they would receive benefits and as a result they would be more inclined to contribute money. We suggest that VVCR call the annual fee a membership fee, but that VVCR also encourage donations from the mentors who are willing to pay more. VVCR will need a way to collect the money. For example, they could provide a link on its virtual platform where mentors can directly pay the fee online and/or find directions on how to pay the fee in person or by mail. A membership fee within the network will make sure that the mentors are dedicated to VVCR. Mentors will be more likely to participate and less likely to leave the network because they will essentially be paying for their commitment to the network. As a result of the mentors' investment, a membership fee will help VVCR gain in activity and retention. As time progresses, VVCR will ideally gain more mentors and increase the amount of opportunities they provide. As the network grows, we suggest that VVCR raise the cost of the membership fee to accommodate the growing network.

Chapter Summary

The ultimate goal of our project was to enhance the mentor network within VVCR in order to connect the mentors and provide them with more social and professional opportunities. Through our research, we have discovered that the VVCR mentor

network is already relatively developed when compared to many international and local networks. Voces Vitales already meets a majority of the best practices of these networks, but as with any other network, has room to continuously grow and improve. Through implementation of our recommendations, we believe that VVCR will be able to grow as a network and an organization, impacting women around the country. For more information on our recommendations, please refer to the implementation guide in Appendix F. This enhanced VVCR network will have the ability to help women grow together, leading to the chain reaction known as the multiplier effect of women. Costa Rican women have the power to change the country when pointed in the proper direction, and VVCR will be able to set their aim.

References:

Aladesanmi, L. (2013). The multiplier effect of investing in gender equality and
women empowerment. Retrieved 23 March, 2015,
from http://www.carmma.org/update/multiplier-effect-investing-gender-
equality-and-women-empowerment

Alcoholics Anonymous. (2015). Alcoholics Anonymous. Retrieved 16 March,
2015, from http://www.aa.org/

Andrews, D., Nonnecke, B., & Preece, J. (2003). Electronic survey
methodology: A case study in reaching hard-to-involve Internet
users. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction, 16*(2), 185-
210.

Berg, B., & Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social
Sciences* (08 ed.): Pearson Education, Inc.

Lean In Circles (2015). Retrieved January 26, 2015,
from http://leanincircles.org/

Catalyst (1999), Creating Women's Networks: A How-to Guide for Women
and Companies, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

COHA. (2013). Overcoming Entrenched Perceptions: Women and Leadership
in Costa Rica. Retrieved 19 March, 2015, from
http://www.coha.org/overcoming-entrenched-perceptions-women-and-
leadership-in-costa-rica/

Excellence in Business (2015). Speed Networking | Excellence in Business.
Retrieved 28 April, 2015,
from http://excellenceinbusiness.org/?s=speed+networking

Finsveen, E., & van Oorschot, W. (2008). Access to Resources in Networks: A
    Theoretical and Empirical Critique of Networks as a Proxy for Social
    Capital. *Acta Sociologica, 51*(4), 293-307.

Gamboa, E. (2015). [Voces Vitales Costa Rica].

Gibson, C., Hardy III, J. H., & Buckley, M. R. (2014). Understanding the role of
    networking in organizations. Retrieved 20 March, 2015,
    from http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/CDI-09-2013-
    0111

Girl Scouts. (2015). Girl Scouts of the United States of America. Retrieved 16
    March, 2015, from https://www.girlscouts.org/

Knouse, S., & Webb, S. (2015). Virtual networking for women and minorites.
    Retrieved 19 March, 2015, from
    http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/1362043011039754
    1

Mahmood, M. A., Burn, J. M., Gemoets, L. A., & Jacquez, C. (2000). Variables
    affecting information technology end-user satisfaction: a meta-analysis
    of the empirical literature. *International Journal of Human-Computer
    Studies, 52*(4), 751-771.

O'Neil, D. A., Hopkins, M. M., & Sullivan, S. E. (2011). Do women's networks
    help advance women's careers? *Career Development International,
    16*(7), 733-754. doi: 10.1108/13620431111187317

Pini, B., Brown, K. and Ryan, C. (2004), "Women-only networks as a strategy
    for change? A case study from local government", Women in
    Management Review, Vol. 19 No. 6, pp. 286-92.

Powerful Women Networking. (2015).

PWN Paris. (2015). Retrieved 2015, March, from http://www.pwnparis.net

Quota Project. (2014). Global Database of Quotas for Women: Costa Rica. Retrieved 19 March, 2015, from http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=CR

Reina, M., & Reina, D. (2015). The Truth about Trust and Betrayal - Associations Now Magazine - Resources - ASAE. Retrieved April 29, 2015, fromhttp://www.asaecenter.org/Resources/ANowDetail.cfm?ItemNumber=16982

Rotary Club of Costa Rica. 2015, from http://www.rotaractcr.org/rotary-internacional

Savor the Success - Business Network for women entrepreneurs. (2015).

Singh, V., Vinnicombe, S., & Kumra, S. (2006). Women in formal corporate networks: an organizational citizenship perspective. *Women in Management Review, 21*(6), 458-482. doi: 10.1108/09649420610683462

SWAN – Successful Women Always Network. (2015). from http://swannetwork.com/

TED. (2015). TEDWomen. from https://www.ted.com/

Trochim, W. (2006). Deduction & Induction. Retrieved 30 March, 2015, from http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/dedind.php

Vinnicombe, S., Singh, V., & Kumra, S. (2004). making good connections: best practice for women's corporate networks. Retrieved 19 March, 2015, from http://opportunitynow.bitc.org.uk/system/files/research/making_good_connections.pdf

Viñas, S. (2014). Latin Women Take the Helm. *World Policy Journal, 31*, 39-47.

Vital Voices Global Partnership. (2015). Retrieved January 24, 2015,
     from http://www.vitalvoices.org/

VVArgentina. (2015). Voces Vitales Argentina.
     from http://www.vocesvitales.org.ar/

VVCR. (2015). Retrieved 01/24, 2015, from http://vocesvitalescr.org/

Wallerstein, C. (2009). *CultureShock: Costa Rica (3rd Edition)*: Marshall
     Cavendish.

WI. (2015). Women's Initiative of Worcester: Anne Wettengel.

Women's Success Network (2015). Women's Success Network

World Economic Forum (2014). *The Global Gender Gap Report*: Geneva
     Switzerland.

Zorek, J., Katz, N., & Popovich, N. (2011). Guest Speakers in a Professional
     Development Series. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education,
     75*(2), 28.

Appendices:

Appendix A: Online Questionnaire for Mentors (English then Spanish)

English Version

1. How long have you been a Voces Vitales Costa Rica (VVCR) mentor?
   - o 1-6 months
   - o 7-11 months
   - o 1 – 2 years
   - o 2 + years
2. Choose the main reasons why you joined VVCR. (check all that apply)
   - To give back to society
   - To network with other women socially
   - To network with other women businesswise
   - Because of the trainings
   - Because of the events
   - Other: _____
3. How many mentoring processes have you completed in the VVCR programs/projects (Coca-Cola, Nutrivida/Florida Bebidas, MEIC, VVGrow, Mentoring Walk)?
   - o 0
   - o 1
   - o 2
   - o 3
   - o 4 or more
4. Please choose the areas where you feel VVCR has positively impacted your life. (check all that apply)
   - Personal growth in leadership and/or consciousness
   - Work-life balance
   - Opportunities to give back to society
   - Opportunities to grow my own business
   - Network with other women
   - Other: _____
5. How many VVCR events (Bimester Talks, TEDxWomen, Euro-American Forum of Women Leaders) have you attended in the past year?
   - o 0

- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4
- o 5+

6. In your opinion, what attendance do the VVCR events have? (TEDxWomen, Euro-American Forum of Women Leaders, Bimester Talks)
    - o High attendance
    - o Medium attendance
    - o Low attendance
    - o I do not know

7. Approximately how many women do you think are part of the mentor network at VVCR?
    - o 0-50
    - o 51-100
    - o 101-150
    - o 51-200
    - o 201-250
    - o 251-300
    - o 300+

8. How many other mentors do you personally know?
    - o 0
    - o 1-5
    - o 6-10
    - o 11-15
    - o +15

9. Please choose the reasons why you do not or rarely attend the VVCR events?
    - I consistently attend the events
    - Taking time off from work
    - Taking time off from family/home duties
    - Paying the entrance fees
    - Location of the event
    - Topics not interesting
    - Other

10. Check the events that you would like VVCR to continue offering: (check all that apply)
    - TEDx Women
    - Bimester talks

Euro-American Forum of Women Leaders

11. Would you be interested in joining a support circle? A circle consists of 5-10 women with similar interests who meet about twice a month to share experiences, opportunities and pointers on that area of interest, using a tested methodology . (Ex. Runners/marathonists circle, New Mothers circle, Young Business women circle, Cooking circle, etc.)
   - o Yes
       1. Do you have any circle themes in mind?
   - o No

12. Would you be interested in attending the following events? (check all that apply)
   Cocktail/Wine nights
   Workshops (Work/Life Balance, Personal Branding, etc.)
   Exhibit/Museum/Day Trips
   Key Note Speaker Events (CEO guest speakers, etc.)
   Group Awareness Activities (Breast Cancer Walks, etc.)
   International Women's Day Events
   Networking lunches and dinner
   Speed Networking (Event with 5 minute intervals of networking with each person)
   Overnight/Weekend Trips

14. Would you be interested in receiving a newsletter with VVCR updates?
   - o Once every three months
   - o Once every two months
   - o Once a month
   - o No

15. Have you "liked" our VocesVitalesCR Facebook page?
   - o Yes
   - o No

16. How often do you visit your personal Facebook page
   - o Every day
   - o 4-6 times a week
   - o 2-3 times a week
   - o Once a week
   - o 2-3 times in a month
   - o Once a month
   - o Rarely
   - o I do not have Facebook

17. Do you have a LinkedIn profile?

- o Yes
- o No

18. Do you have a Twitter profile?
- o Yes
- o No

19. If VVCR were to offer a virtual platform (ex. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) to connect mentors and offer them support and opportunities, which of the following features would you feel interested in using? (check all that apply)

  Member profiles (individual profile page including your information and picture)

  Member blogs (forum to share stories, ideas, recipes, etc.)

  Communication platforms (virtual *café*, messaging, chat rooms, posts, etc.)

  VVCR calendar of events

  Event registration and payment (for the different events VVCR holds)

  Uploading documentation for mentor and training programs (a "virtual" library as opposed to emailing)

  Member Spotlight (to highlight a mentor each month for her achievements or work)

  Advertising opportunities for members' businesses

  Other: _____

20. Provided all the events VVCR offers, and the addition of the previously mentioned events and a virtual platform, what donation amount would you be willing to offer VVCR on a yearly basis?
- o I am not willing to donate
- o $10-20
- o $21-40
- o $41-60
- o $61-80
- o $80-100
- o $100+

21. Do you have any suggestions for other programs, services, or events you would like VVCR to offer in the future?

Spanish Version

1. ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva como mentora de Voces Vitales Costa Rica (VVCR)?
   - o 1-6 meses
   - o 7-11 meses
   - o 1-2 años
   - o 2+ años

2. Elija las razones principales por la que se unió a VVCR. (Marque todas las que apliquen)
   - o Para devolver a la sociedad
   - o Para tener una red social con otras mujeres
   - o Para tener una red de negocios con otras mujeres
   - o Para participar en las capacitaciones
   - o Para participar en los eventos
   - o Otro:

3. ¿Cuántos procesos de mentoría ha completado en los programas/proyectos de VVCR (Coca-Cola, Nutrivida/Florida Bebidas, MEIC, VVGrow, Caminata de Mentoreo)?
   - o 0
   - o 1
   - o 2
   - o 3
   - o 4+

4. Elija las áreas donde se siente que VVCR ha impactado su vida de manera positiva. (Marque todas las que apliquen)
   - o Crecimiento personal en liderazgo o de conciencia
   - o Equilibrio trabajo/vida
   - o Oportunidades para devolver a la sociedad
   - o Oportunidades para desarrollar mi negocio
   - o Oportunidades para formar una red con otras mujeres
   - o Otros:

5. ¿Cuántos eventos de VVCR (Charlas Bimestrales, TEDxWomen, Foro Euro-Americano de Mujeres Líderes) ha asistido en el último año?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

6. En su opinión, ¿cómo es la asistencia de los eventos de VVCR?
    - Asistencia Alta
    - Asistencia Media
    - Asistencia Baja
    - No sé

7. ¿Cuántas mujeres cree usted que forman parte de la red de mentoras de VVCR?

    - 0-50
    - 51-100
    - 101-150
    - 151-200
    - 201-250
    - 251-300
    - 300+

8. ¿Cuántos otras mentores conoce usted personalmente?

    - 0
    - 1-5
    - 6-10
    - 11-15
    - 15+

9. Por favor, elija las razones por la qué usted no o raramente asiste a los eventos VVCR.
    - Asisto constantemente los eventos.
    - Poco tiempo disponible a causa de mi trabajo.

o Poco tiempo disponible a causa de mis deberes con la familia/hogar

o No quiero pagar las cuotas de entrada.

o Los eventos me quedan muy lejos.

o No me interesan los temas.

o Otros

10. Confirme los eventos que le gustaría que VVCR siga ofreciendo: (Marque todos las que apliquen)

o Charlas Bimestrales

o TEDxWomen

o Foro Euro-Americano de Mujeres Líderes

11. ¿Le interesaría formar parte de un círculo de apoyo? Consistiría en un círculo de 5 a 10 mujeres con intereses similares que se reúnen dos veces al mes para compartir experiencias, oportunidades y "tips" en esa área de interés, utilizando una metodología probada. (por ejemplo, círculo de corredores/maratonistas, círculo de madres primerizas, círculo de mujeres jóvenes con negocios , círculo de cocina, etc.)

o Sí, me interesa un círculo dedicado a (Escribe en la caja abajo)

*Escribe el tema que le interesa

o No, no me interesa esta idea.

12. ¿Le interesaría asistir a los eventos siguientes? (Marque todos las que apliquen)

o Noches de cóctel/vino

o Talleres (equilibrio trabajo/vida, "Branding" Personal, etc.)

o Museo/exposición/excursiones

o Eventos con ponentes de alto perfil

o Actividades de sensibilización (caminata contra cáncer de mama, etc.)

o Eventos del Día Internacional de la Mujer

o Cenas y almuerzos para formación de redes / "networking"

o "Speed Networking" (evento con intervalos de 5 minutos para conocer y conversar con cada una de las personas de la red invitadas)

o Viajes de fin de semana

13. ¿Le interesaría recibir un boletín con las actualizaciones de VVCR?

o Una vez cada tres meses

- o Una vez cada dos meses
- o Una vez al mes
- o No

14. ¿Le ha dado "Me Gusta" a nuestra página de Facebook VocesVitalesCR?
    - o Sí
    - o No

15. ¿Con qué frecuencia visita su propia página de Facebook?
    - o No tengo Facebook.
    - o Raramente
    - o Una vez al mes
    - o 2-3 veces cada mes
    - o Una vez en una semana
    - o 2-3 veces en una semana
    - o 4-6 veces en una semana
    - o Cada día

16. ¿Tiene un perfil en LinkedIn?
    - o Sí
    - o No

17. ¿Tiene un perfil en Twitter?
    - o Sí
    - o No

18. Si VVCR ofreciera una plataforma virtual (ex. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) para conectarse con las mentoras y ofrecerles apoyo y oportunidades, ¿cuál(es) de las siguientes funciones le interesaría(n) utilizar? (Marque todos las que correspondan)
    - o Perfiles de miembros (página con perfil individual que incluye su información y foto)
    - o Blogs de miembros (foro para compartir historias, ideas, recetas, etc.)
    - o Plataformas de comunicación (café virtual, mensajería, salas de chat, mensajes, etc...)
    - o Calendario de eventos de VVCR
    - o Registro de evento y pago (para los diferentes eventos que promueve VVCR)

- Biblioteca virtual donde se suben y bajan la documentación de mentores para las capacitaciones y programas de mentoría (en contraposición con envío de estos documentos a través de correo electrónico)
- "Mentor del mes" (para resaltar a una mentora cada mes por sus logros, su trabajo, su compromiso, etc.)
- Oportunidades de publicidad para las empresas de las mentoras certificadas
- Otros:

19. Tomando en cuenta todos los eventos que VVCR ofrece y la adición de los eventos mencionados y una plataforma virtual, ¿qué cantidad de donación estaría dispuesta a ofrecerle a VVCR anualmente?
    - No estoy dispuesta a donar.
    - $10-20 USD
    - $ 21-40 USD
    - $ 41-60 USD
    - $ 61-80 USD
    - $ 81-100 USD
    - $ 100+ USD

20. ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia para otros programas, servicios o eventos que le gustaría que ofreciera VVCR en el futuro?

Appendix B: Focus Group Confidentiality Statement

Thank you for coming today. We will be conducting a focus group with the three of you. We wanted to start off by saying please feel free to be as truthful and honest as possible. All of your names will be kept confidential and each of you will receive a letter as an identifier. Your answers will be used to provide recommendations to VVCR for the enhancement of their mentor network. Your answers cannot be linked to you in any way. Thank you.

Appendix C: Mentor Focus Group Questions (English)

1. How long have you been a Voces Vitales mentor?

2. How many one to one mentorships have you completed?

3. What benefits are you seeing from the mentorship program at Voces Vitales?

4. How often should retraining be?

5. Other than mentorship, how else would you like to give back to society?

6. What did you want to get out of the wellness group?

7. Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the TEDx Women events?

8. Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Bimester Talks?

9. Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Euro-American Women's Forum?

10. We know you have meet women already through your time at VVCR, but how many women do you personally know or have made a connection with so that you could reach out to them if you needed to?

11. On a scale of 1 to 10, could you please rate your satisfaction with what VVCR currently posts and provides on the Facebook page?

12. Have you given a like to other groups where go and see where they posted?

13. Would you like to get more involved with human rights through VVCR?

14. Would you rather spend more time on social events or professional networking?

15. What themes for workshops would be interesting to you?

16. If circles were implemented, how often would you like to have circle meeting?

17. If you were to manage these meetings, how often?

    NOTE: For example, 1 hr a week, 30 mins a week, 1 hr a month, 30 mins a month

18. If circles were implemented, how many women would you want to have in a circle?

19. How much time would you be willing to commit to Voces Vitales' events per month?

20. How much would you be willing to pay to be in the circle? Ex: 6 months, once a month for two hours

21. On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a calendar of events as part of the virtual platform? What would you like to see on this?

22. On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to attend networking lunches, what would the networking lunch include? Who would be invited to the networking lunch?

23. On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a virtual library as part of the virtual platform? What would you like the library to include?

24. Would you be willing to donate to VVCR annually? If so, what amount would you feel comfortable donating annually?

25. What would you want the money to go towards within VVCR?

Appendix D: Online Mentor Questionnaire Responses (Spanish)

Página 1. Una Mejor Red de Mentoras para usted. ¡Ayúdenos a mejorarla!

▼ 1. ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva como mentora de Voces Vitales Costa Rica (VVCR)?

		%	Total
1-6 Meses		18%	8
7-11 Meses		20%	9
1-2 Años		40%	**18**
2+ Años		22%	10

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 2. Elija las razones principales por la que se unió a VVCR. (Marque todas las que apliquen)

		%	Total
Para devolver a la sociedad		93%	**42**
Para tener una red social con otras mujeres		33%	15
Para tener una red de negocios con otras mujeres		18%	8
Para participar en las capacitaciones		49%	22
Para participar en los eventos		27%	12
Otro (Por favor especifique) Detalle		20%	9

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 3. ¿Cuántos procesos de mentoría ha completado en los programas/proyectos de VVCR (Coca-Cola, Nutrivida/Florida Bebidas, MEIC, VVGrow, Caminata de Mentoreo)?

		%	Total
0		36%	16
1		38%	**17**
2		11%	5
3		7%	3
4+		9%	4

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
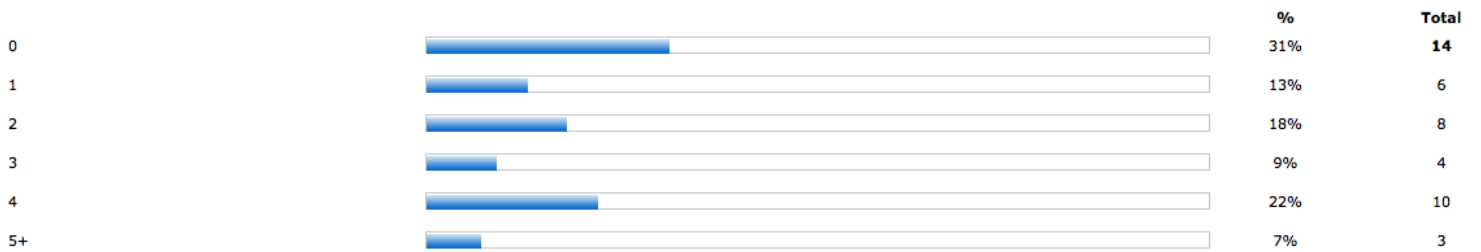Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 4. Elija las áreas donde se siente que VVCR ha impactado su vida de manera positiva. (Marque todas las que apliquen)

		%	Total
Crecimiento personal en liderazgo o de conciencia		93%	**42**
Equilibrio trabajo/vida		38%	17
Oportunidades para devolver a la sociedad		69%	31
Oportunidades para desarrollar mi negocio		4%	2
Oportunidades para formar una red con otras mujeres		42%	19
Otro (Por favor especifique) Detalle		9%	4

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
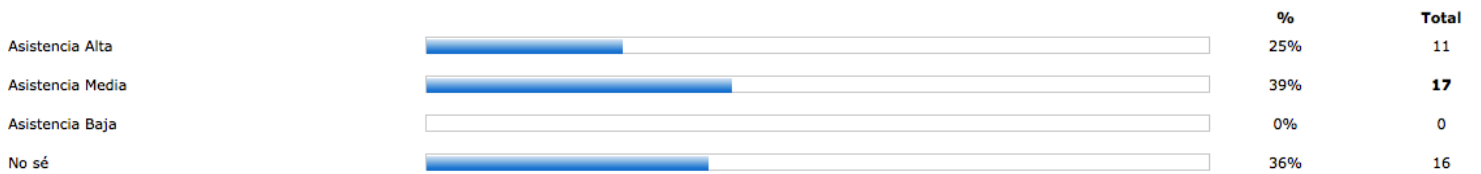Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 5. ¿Cuántos eventos de VVCR (Charlas Bimestrales, TEDxWomen, Foro Euro-Americano de Mujeres Líderes) ha asistido en el último año?

		%	Total
0		31%	**14**
1		13%	6
2		18%	8
3		9%	4
4		22%	10
5+		7%	3

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

Gráfico Excel   Gráficos interactivos

▼ 6. En su opinión, ¿cómo es la asistencia de los eventos de VVCR?

		%	Total
Asistencia Alta		25%	11
Asistencia Media		39%	**17**
Asistencia Baja		0%	0
No sé		36%	16

Preguntas sin contestar: 1
Respuestas recogidas: 44

Gráfico Excel   Gráficos interactivos

▼ 7. ¿Cuántas mujeres cree usted que forman parte de la red de mentoras de VVCR?

		%	Total
0-50		4%	2
51-100		20%	9
101-150		24%	**11**
151-200		22%	10
201-300		13%	6
251-300		0%	0
300+		16%	7
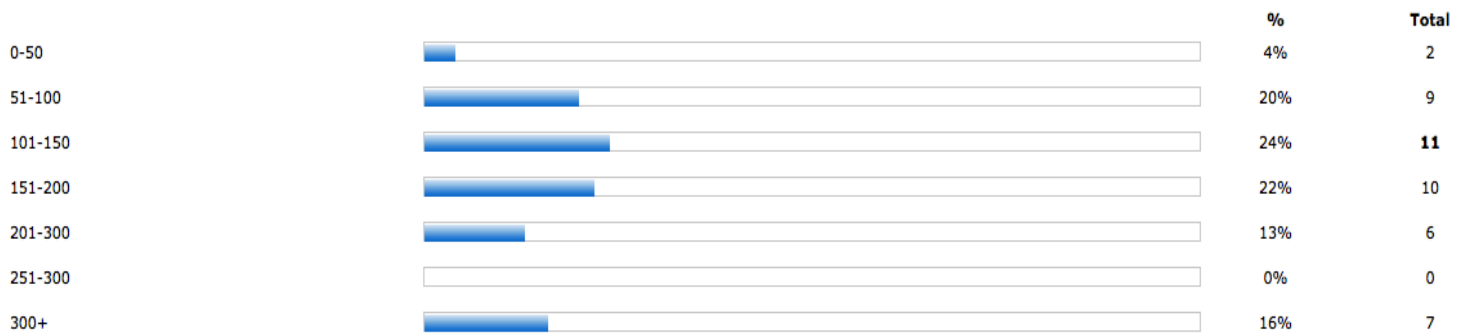
Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

Gráfico Excel   Gráficos interactivos

▼ 8. ¿Cuántas otras mentoras conoce usted personalmente?

		%	Total
0		0%	0
1-5		38%	**17**
6-10		16%	7
11-15		16%	7
16-20		24%	11
21-25		2%	1
25-30		2%	1
31-35		0%	0
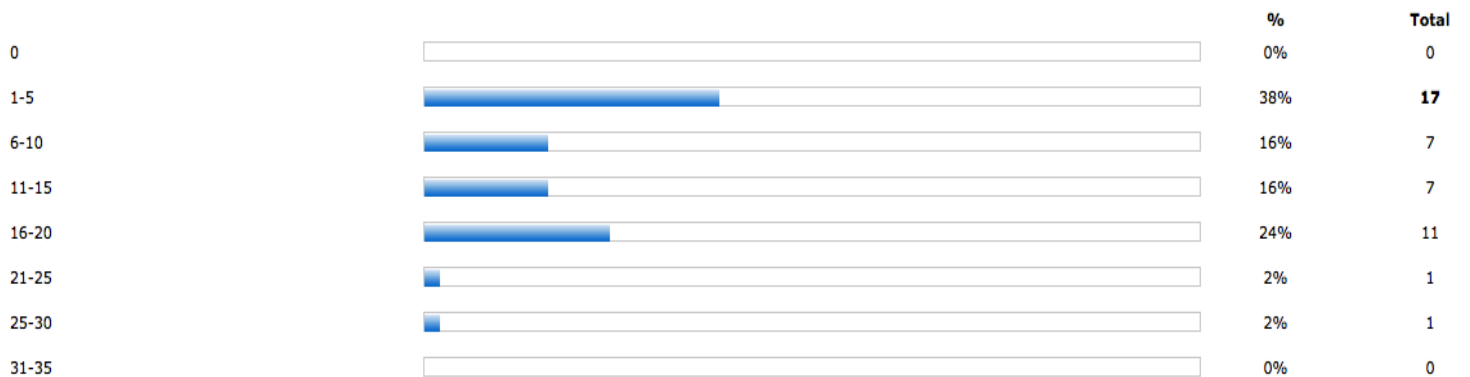
▼ 9. Por favor, elija las razones por la qué usted nunca o raramente asiste a los eventos VVCR. (Marque todos las que apliquen)

		%	Total
Asisto constantemente los eventos.		27%	12
Poco tiempo disponible a causa de mi trabajo.		36%	**16**
Poco tiempo disponible a causa de mis deberes con la familia/hogar		29%	13
No quiero pagar las cuotas de entrada.		11%	5
Los eventos me quedan muy lejos.		11%	5
No me interesan los temas.		11%	5
Otro (Por favor especifique) Detalle		20%	9

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 10. Confirme los eventos que le gustaría que VVCR siga ofreciendo: (Marque todos las que apliquen)

		%	Total
Charlas Bimestrales		93%	**42**
TEDxWomen		87%	39
Foro Euro-Americano de Mujeres Líderes		78%	35

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 11. ¿Le interesaría formar parte de un círculo de apoyo? Consistiría en un círculo de 5 a 10 mujeres con intereses similares que se reúnen dos veces al mes para compartir experiencias, oportunidades y "tips" en esa área de interés, utilizando una metodología probada. (por ejemplo, círculo de corredores/maratonistas, círculo de madres primerizas, círculo de mujeres jóvenes con negocios , círculo de cocina, etc.)

		%	Total
No, no me interesa esta idea		13%	6
Sí, me interesa un círculo dedicado a (Escribe en la caja abajo)		80%	36
Escribe el tema que le interesa Detalle		84%	**38**

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 12. ¿Le interesaría asistir a los eventos siguientes? (Marque todos las que apliquen)

		%	Total
Noches de cóctel/vino		53%	24
Talleres (equilibrio trabajo/vida, "Branding" Personal, etc.)		91%	**41**
Museo/exposición/excursiones		44%	20
Eventos con ponentes de alto perfil		84%	38
Actividades de sensibilización (caminata contra cáncer de mama, etc.)		29%	13
Eventos del Día Internacional de la Mujer		33%	15
Cenas y almuerzos para formación de redes / "networking"		53%	24
"Speed Networking" (evento con intervalos de 5 minutos para conocer y conversar con cada una de las personas de la red invitadas)		36%	16
Viajes de fin de semana		16%	7

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 13. ¿Le interesaría recibir un boletín con las actualizaciones de VVCR?

		%	Total
Una vez cada tres meses		16%	7
Una vez cada dos meses		22%	10
Una vez al mes		58%	**26**
No		4%	2

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

Gráfico Excel   Gráficos interactivos

▼ 14. ¿Le ha dado "Me Gusta" a nuestra página de Facebook VocesVitalesCR?

		%	Total
Sí		73%	**33**
No		27%	12

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

Gráfico Excel   Gráficos interactivos

▼ 15. ¿Con qué frecuencia visita su propia página de Facebook?

		%	Total
No tengo Facebook.		11%	5
Raramente		9%	4
Una vez al mes		4%	2
2-3 veces cada mes		0%	0
Una vez en una semana		16%	7
2-3 veces en una semana		9%	4
4-6 veces en una semana		13%	6
Cada día		38%	**17**

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

Gráfico Excel   Gráficos interactivos

▼ 16. ¿Tiene un perfil en LinkedIn?

		%	Total
Sí		73%	**33**
No		27%	12

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

Gráfico Excel   Gráficos interactivos

	%	Total
Sí	44%	20
No	56%	**25**

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 18. Si VVCR ofreciera un plataforma virtual (ex. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) para conectarse con las mentoras y ofrecerles apoyo y oportunidades, ¿cuál(es) de las siguientes funciones le interesaría utilizar? (Marque todos las que correspondan)

	%	Total
Perfiles de miembros (página con perfil individual que incluye su información y foto)	62%	28
Blogs de miembros (foro para compartir historias, ideas, recetas, etc.)	47%	21
Plataformas de comunicación (café virtual, mensajería, salas de chat, mensajes, etc..)	40%	18
Calendario de eventos de VVCR	93%	**42**
Registro de evento y pago (para los diferentes eventos que promueve VVCR)	56%	25
Biblioteca virtual donde se suben y bajan la documentación de mentores para las capacitaciones y programas de mentoría (en contraposición con envío de estos documentos a través de correo electrónico)	69%	31
"Mentor del mes" (para resaltar a una mentora cada mes por sus logros, su trabajo, su compromiso, etc.)	22%	10
Oportunidades de publicidad para las empresas de las mentoras certificadas	33%	15
Otro (Por favor especifique)	0%	0

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 19. Tomando en cuenta todos los eventos que VVCR ofrece y la adición de los eventos mencionados y una plataforma virtual, ¿Qué cantidad de donación estaría dispuesta a ofrecerle a VVCR anualmente?

	%	Total
No estoy dispuesta a donar.	16%	7
$10-20 USD	27%	**12**
$ 21-40 USD	16%	7
$ 41-60 USD	9%	4
$ 61-80 USD	4%	2
$ 81-100 USD	13%	6
$ 100+ USD	16%	7

Preguntas sin contestar: 0
Respuestas recogidas: 45

[Gráfico Excel] [Gráficos interactivos]

▼ 20. ¿Tiene alguna sugerencia para otros programas, servicios o eventos que le gustaría que ofreciera VVCR en el futuro?

	Total
[Pulsa para ver el detalle]	**16**

Preguntas sin contestar: 29
Respuestas recogidas: 16

Pregunta:

¿Tiene alguna sugerencia para otros programas, servicios o eventos que le gustaría que ofreciera VVCR en el futuro?

No hay ningún filtro aplicado a los resultados de esta encuesta

Alta ▲	Respuesta
08/04/2015 18:51:44	sería genial una página dónde se expongan los CV de las mentoras qu estén solicitando empleo y que los interesados puedan accesar a ella (con algún aporte) y otra posibilidad es crea una base de datos de mentoras y sus actividades para poder usar los servicios internos dándoles prioridad.
08/04/2015 22:50:25	expandir cada vez mas los procesos de mentoria en el pais. Lleguemos a mas lugares, mas comunicades y mas mujeres cada vez mas!
09/04/2015 0:34:58	Mas talleres con temas de desarrollo personal
09/04/2015 6:56:42	Como reclutan a miembros? Que son los criterios? Creo que hay muchas mas mujeres que pudieran integrarse!
09/04/2015 9:16:26	Con respect a la preg.19, estoy iniciando en la organizacion y me gustaria involucrarme mas y entender las necesidades antes comprometerme a una donacion anual.
09/04/2015 9:28:24	Asesoría legal para sus asociadas a costos accesibles y programas conjuntos con las instituciones públicas, no sólo la empresa privada, las cuales también son muy importantes de mantener.
09/04/2015 9:30:15	Realmente desde que es Voces Vitales no he tenido acercamiento con el grupo. Me han llegado invitaciones a un par de charlas con pago q no han sido de mi interés para mi. Luego me entere de la caminata pero ya era muy tarde pAra programar mi asistencia. Temas: Foros de mujeres Testimonios de mujeres exitosas Mesas de trabajo sobre temas sociales, familiares o empresariales
09/04/2015 9:37:45	No comprendo las preguntas 6 y 19. La 19 se refiere a cuanto estaria dispuesta a invertir en eventos organizados por VVCR o especificamente donar para mantener los eventos? no queda clara la pregunta. Pues podria invertir en eventos mucho mas de lo que podria donar.
09/04/2015 11:10:12	Ocupamos seguir compartiendo historias inspiradoras, eso seria algo que yo incluiria en el boletin, pero muy conciso no una historia muy larga. Gracias por todo lo que hacen :)
09/04/2015 11:29:26	Me gustaria que realizaran un seminario sobre como tratar empresas familiares. Tambien sobre estadisticas sobre medios de comunicacion Mas efectivas a nivel de mercadeo
09/04/2015 23:22:33	Oportunidades de intercambio con mentoras de otros países donde trabaja VV
09/04/2015 23:28:15	Me encanta lo que están haciendo!
10/04/2015 7:09:28	Que los horarios no sean en la mañana para las que trabajamos de 8-5
10/04/2015 16:37:46	Bolsa de trabajo para quienes necesitan y ofrecen servicios
13/04/2015 20:15:55	Sería útil que en la página de Facebook se compartieran también un calendario de actividades relevantes lideradas por aliados estratégicos. También conocer de historias de éxito de otras mentoras o proyectos de VV de Latinoamérica, puede ser generador de nuevas ideas
14/04/2015 9:59:43	Talleres para mujeres mayores de 55 años

Mentor ID Letter: A

1. **How long have you been a Voces Vitales mentor?**
    - Almost 1 year, training was last June
2. **How many 1:1 mentorships have you completed?**
    - 0
3. **What benefits are you seeing from the mentorship program at Voces Vitales?**
    - Principal thing to her was to learn and to listen to people and to wait and not to judge or to say her thoughts to quickly, help them go through their process by themselves. Little interventions
    - For society she feels it is to help and empower women to allow them to achieve their goals
    - Since she hasn't done a mentorship, the ideas are not so fresh in her head and a retrain or refresher meeting could be beneficial
        - This would really increase the confidence of the mentors
4. **Other than mentorship, how else would you like to give back to society?**
    - In her running group she gives back to society by helping these women, it is a different form of empowerment as they are reaching their goals. Helps with their self-esteem a lot. As a group they do some giving back to society. In March they hold a large program in Costa Rica (day of good deeds). Collected 700 books ad notebooks and pens to give to women who are in jail. Just a small gift that was very important for them. She is trying to develop a social program for the group currently. She is very cautious and she recycles. She tries to buy everything biodegradable although they are more expensive. Can afford this because she lives alone.
    - Is going to start a health and wellness Facebook page to be able to give the information she teaches her 60 women to all other women. Directed for women her are 40 or more because common articles usually address the younger people.
5. **Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the TEDx events? If you were to go, what do you want to get out of it?**
    - Has not attended the event

- They talk about everything. She has heard one about vulnerability. The important thing is that it has to be interesting because they are 50 minutes. Has to be condensed in the subject to keep the audience interested, but also give you a lot of information at the same time.
- You need to get so hooked into the subject that you follow up. Follow the speaker, buy their books.

6. **Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Bimester Talks?**
   - Question was skipped

7. **Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Euro American Women's Forum?**
   - Question was skipped

8. **We know you have meet women already through your time at VVCR, but how many women do you personally know or have made a connection with so that you could reach out to them if you needed to?**
   - Does not know many people in the company maybe 4 or 5. But they are all from her training group
   - Would like to see a graduation ceremony or maybe a mentor night a someone house

9. **On a scale of 1 to 10, could you please rate your satisfaction with what VVCR currently posts and provides on the Facebook page?**
   - Once a week you could post about one mentor. Tell her information to get more people to know more about each other.
   - Does not follow the Facebook page

10. **Would you like to get more involved with human rights through VVCR?**
    - Not really, it is a very difficult subject and you need to be very committed. She would have to think about it but it would be a no for now.
    - The subjects are very strong and difficult to address

11. **Would you rather spend more time on social events or professional networking?**
    - Defiantly social, but would enjoy some professional aspects

12. **What themes for workshops would be interesting to you?**
    - Health, taking care of yourself, eating well, aging well, not getting injured while running an doing exercise, wellness in general, marketing, how to properly use social media for marketing, believing in yourself as a women,

self-empowerment, self-confidence, economics, home economics, how to manage or save your money for the future

13. **If circles were implemented, how often would you like to have circle meeting?**
NOTE: For example, 1 hr a week, 30 mins a week, 1 hr a month, 30 mins a month
- Thinks circles are a good idea
- Once a month for a couple of hours
- Once a week would be too much for her
- Could be like the first Thursday each month

14. **If circles were implemented, how many women would you want to have in a circle?**
- 15 at the most
- Really depends on the topic
- If the subject is more intimate you might want less people

15. **How much time would you be willing to commit to Voces Vitales' events per month?**
- 2-6 hours a month, events have a beginning and then an end and then start over with new people, incorporate a small fee at the beginning to assure that people are actually committed.

16. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a calendar of events as part of the virtual platform? What would you like to see on this?**
- All of the courses offered, dates of other alliance events (right now you send information but not on a calendar)
- Choose which ones you want to go to
- Include social aspects as well as circles
- A trimester calendar
- A monthly update about what is coming up on the calendar
- Include private events so people know what VVCR is working on. It would be interesting to see. They feel slightly out of the group right now without the calendar.

17. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to attend networking lunches, what would the networking lunch include? Who would be invited to the networking lunch?**
- Like the Charlas talks

18. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a virtual library as part of the virtual platform? What would you like the library to include?**

- Calendar, chat rooms, some people are not very technological though so we need to consider how to reach out to these women. Could connect with other Voces Vitales chapters from other countries.

19. **Would you be willing to donate to VVCR annually? If so, what amount would you feel comfortable donating annually?**
    - For circles: ten dollars per session, but you pay $60 lump sum at the beginning, maybe pay in two sums. Beginning and the middle, could be a discount for those who pay the whole sum up front to encourage it.
    - For VVCR: of course I would donate if the organization was well organized. Maybe $25 a year. It depends on what they are getting out of it. Once you know what you are giving then you can put a price to it.

20. **What would you want the money to go towards within VVCR?**
    - Needs to be a benefit for having the title of a "member"
    - Discounts for products whether they be sold by the mentors or outside sources because that would benefit the company as well
    - If a mentor bakes then have her bake for a meeting and pass out her business card with the baked goods so they know that she made them
    - Just a social event like once or twice a year

Mentor ID Letter: B

1.   How long have you been a Voces Vitales mentor?
      • 2 years
2.   How many 1:1 mentorships have you completed?
      • 1
3.   What benefits are you seeing from the mentorship program at Voces Vitales?
      • The mentorship she did was a very nice experience. She needed a little push and she feels like she helped her get the little push she needed
      • Feels that she has grown a lot through the program and has learned not to judge. Very conscious about it now. Thinks twice before speaking. She is now able to see the other side of the story. Would really like to get a whole process and to be a mentee for 8 weeks herself, however, it depends on who your mentor is. Sometimes it is easier to open up to a person you do not know. It is not as easy to open up to a person you know. 4 mentee sessions was good but she would get cut off in the training. It was difficult to open up.
      • Maybe a retraining or practice session could be important
4.   Other than mentorship, how else would you like to give back to society?
      • She does not do much giving back currently. Her job does not relate to it. Recycles as well
5.   Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the TEDx events?
      • Has not attended the even
      • Likes the idea of getting together with women after the event and be able to talk about what each other learned or how the perceive the talk. People have different mind sets and you can get a lot more out of it when putting the people together.
6.   Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Bimester Talks?
      • Question was skipped
7.   Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Euro American Women's Forum?
      • Question was skipped
8.   We know you have meet women already through your time at VVCR, but how many women do you personally know or have

made a connection with so that you could reach out to them if you needed to?

9.   On a scale of 1 to 10, could you please rate your satisfaction with what VVCR currently posts and provides on the Facebook page?

- Has liked the page but she hasn't really seen any pages posted recently. If it shows on her newsfeed she sees the information but she has never gone out of her way to actually go to the page.

10.   Would you like to get more involved with human rights through VVCR?

- It depends on the subject

11.   Would you rather spend more time on social events or professional networking?

- She would really like the opportunity to have both

12.   What themes for workshops would be interesting to you?

- Marketing, how to sell things, how to wisely use technology especially when raising your children
- Would like a whole bunch of courses, but they are expensive
- Has children and cannot always afford the events, not easy to get the money or decide to spend the money on that, her children demand a lot of time

13.   If circles were implemented, how often would you like to have circle meeting?
NOTE: For example, 1 hr a week, 30 mins a week, 1 hr a month, 30 mins a month

- no response

14.   If circles were implemented, how many women would you want to have in a circle?

- Maybe 8 or 10 but no more

15.   How much time would you be willing to commit to Voces Vitales' events per month?

- 2-4 hours a month

16.   On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a calendar of events as part of the virtual platform? What would you like to see on this?

- Everything that they get emails about. It is difficult to know when something is because you have to scroll through your email to find it.
- Maybe even closed events (like this focus group)
- Small explanations of what each of the events are, even for the public events

- Email reminders a few days before the events would be very helpful
- A Facebook message or invite (reminder)

17. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to attend networking lunches, what would the networking lunch include? Who would be invited to the networking lunch?**
    - Today we will have a lunch and talk about this topics so people who are interested in that topic will show up
    - Someone to come and teach about wine or beer or anything really
    - Anniversary day, a party to celebrate when Voces Vitales was created. Get together just because they want to get together.

18. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a virtual library as part of the virtual platform? What would you like the library to include?**

19. **Would you be willing to donate to VVCR annually? If so, what amount would you feel comfortable donating annually?**
    - For circles: to be able to pay the 5,000 per session would be the best for her as she has children, but that defeats the purpose of commitment
    - For VVCR: call it a membership fee but mention that you would accept extra donations

20. **What would you want the money to go towards within VVCR?**
    - Combined professional and social events with a small fee. Have a glass of wine and be able to attend public speakers.
    - Advertisements: maybe tell the mentors that I have a service and they would want to come to it.

Mentor ID Letter: C

1.   How long have you been a Voces Vitales mentor?
   • Received training a little over a year ago
2.   How many 1:1 mentorships have you completed?
   • 0
3.   What benefits are you seeing from the mentorship program at Voces Vitales?
   • Seen benefits in personal growth. All of the teachings were consolidated. There were a lot of tools that helped her with skills she felt needed work. She feels more assertive.
   • Thinks training should be done yearly (voluntary). And every two years (mandatory)
   • Thinks that the program has made her judge much less. Also, to continue to not judge, she feels she needs a refresher on the trainings.
4.   Other than mentorship, how else would you like to give back to society?
   • Suggests teaching little kids how to bake. Or teach them other life skills.
   • Loves animals and wishes that she could teach people who don't know anything about animals. Also, kusera is a website she took courses on. Her courses involved nutrition. Really likes to learn and talk about what she has learned. So she would like to give back in some form of teaching. Has a Facebook group called wellness where she posts a lot of information for other members in the group. Wanted from the group to find other people interested in the same subjects. Also was hoping for some physical activities involving their interests. But the group is too small, and they are perhaps not as excited.
5.   Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the TEDx events?
   • Has seen some TEDx talks on the Internet.
   • Has not been to event.
   • If the events were offered would like to see applicability. Thinks that it is important that the talks be applicable so that they can use it in everyday life. Also, an activity where the members could try to focus on the applicability after the talk. This way, they can be motivated to apply what they learned.
   • Could be a "book club" but for TEDx. Needs a call to action where the women know what to do after the TEDx talk. There should be an objective.

6.   **Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Bimester Talks?**
   - Question was skipped

7.   **Could you briefly explain 3 things you like about the Euro American Women's Forum?**
   - Question was skipped

8.   **We know you have meet women already through your time at VVCR, but how many women do you personally know or have made a connection with so that you could reach out to them if you needed to?**
   - Agrees that there is not enough time in training to know people. An important aspect is personality. She says it would be good to have a Facebook page. Would like Wine nights. And other social events.
   - Only knows one person really well.

9.   **On a scale of 1 to 10, could you please rate your satisfaction with what VVCR currently posts and provides on the Facebook page?**
   - Has liked the page. Does not normally like Facebook pages. Liked it only because of close ties to management. But thinks they are boring. Could possibly have someone who manages the page well. Maybe this could be a way to give back.
   - Would not be hard to talk about mentors on the Facebook page.
   - Actually takes it back. Page is not boring, but it is not engaging and exciting.

10.   **Would you like to get more involved with human rights through VVCR?**
    - No, prefers animal welfare.
    - Wants to know in what way they would be engaged. Ex. Fundraiser or walk. Says no.

11.   **Would you rather spend more time on social events or professional networking?**
    - Social Events. But, wants both. But, mostly social. Thinks she may be biased because she has fewer friends.

12.   **What themes for workshops would be interesting to you?**
    - Project management. Time management.
    - Also interested in health, and maintaining their health as they age
    - Would also like to know how to use social media/marketing
    - Negotiation
    - Stress Management

- Thinks if she had kids workshops on raising children would be good. Something that is not so connected to technology
- How to be Greener. Gardening, being sustainable in the home.
- Consider the fact that with a lot of workshops, there will be a lot of trouble selecting some and going to as many as they may want to. This could be because of work or kids.
- Economics

13. **If circles were implemented, how often would you like to have circle meeting?**
- Depends on the topic. For her, she would like to do it every week if she was super interested in it. However, she might only want to do it once a month if she was less interested. If once a month do it for a few hours. If once a week, only one hour a week.
- If she was a manager once a month. Would be tougher for a leader.
- Depends, because some circles might not need much coordination. If it is something like running. Also, it might be difficult for Voces Vitales to maintain control if the members coordinated the circles.
- Changes answer to once a month.
  NOTE: For example, 1 hr a week, 30 mins a week, 1 hr a month, 30 mins a month

14. **If circles were implemented, how many women would you want to have in a circle?**
- Going to say 15, so that 10 show up

15. **How much time would you be willing to commit to Voces Vitales' events per month?**
- A couple of hours a month. 2-4 hours a month.
- Might be a different answer for others. Her work schedule is very tight. Wonders if a person should only be able to coordinate one Circle. Maybe switch up topics every now and then. Thinks that there might be permanent groups and temporary groups. Probably depends on the topic and the interest for it.
- Worried about commitment. Some people will join excited but later on they might lose interest in time.

16. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a calendar of events as part of the virtual platform? What would you like to see on this?**
- All of the events. TEDx etc. Circle meetings. Even closed events should be there.

- Thinks that the calendar should be more interactive. Maybe click on events and see pictures. Have some privacy settings. An email would help as a reminder as well.

17. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to attend networking lunches, what would the networking lunch include? Who would be invited to the networking lunch?**
    - Short talks. Can be ones that are just social every now an then, but would mostly like a theme.
    - Circle coordinators could also get together and tell stories. Give feedback. This would be a working kind of meeting.

18. **On the survey most of the women expressed they would like to have a virtual library as part of the virtual platform? What would you like the library to include?**
    - Never reads Newsletters.
    - Unsure of Blog. Make people who write the articles scheduled.
    - Would be useful to have the Virtual Platform. Chat rooms for the Circles would be nice.
    - Thinks that there should also be someway to reach those who do not use Virtual Platform. Sending E-mails would be a good way.

19. **Would you be willing to donate to VVCR annually? If so, what amount would you feel comfortable donating annually?**
    - Agrees that paying for the Circles would help find the more dedicated members. Would pay 5,000 per month. Better than upfront because upfront it is a lot of money. Actually, should give options to pay in bigger amounts at less frequency.
    - Likes the word membership fee. Feels part of something. Would pay a membership fee, but could also be willing to pay more. 15 mil colones would be a good amount for the membership fee.

20. **What would you want the money to go towards within VVCR?**
    - Would be interested in receiving benefits and discounts from other businesses. Also, thinks it would be interesting to be able to advertise own business, and to have own business be giving the discount.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

For the addition of more services to the VVCR mentor network

Table of Contents

Introduction

This Implementation Guide is intended to assist VVCR with the implementation of additional services to the VVCR mentor network. VVCR is a young and thriving network and this guide is aimed at helping VVCR gain in numbers, activity, and retention. The prerequisite to using this Implementation Guide is for the reader/user to have an understanding of VVCR's current mentor network and the best practices of women's networks. You can learn or refresh your knowledge by:

- Reading the WPI research paper on VVCR's mentor network

Once you gain an understanding of what the VVCR mentor network offers, you will be ready to use this Implementation Guide. The Implementation Guide will first address/provide the framework for the process involved for successful implementation of these services. Then the guide will provide detailed directions and best practices of each of the different areas. With each area, you will be given a general overview so that you can plan accordingly and stay organized, a list of any required supplies, and a checklist to keep track of your progress. Also, the guide includes tips and guidelines for guaranteed success with each implementation.

We wish you the best with this Implementation Guide!

Getting Started

How To Use This Guide

This guide provides step-by-step directions on how to start and maintain these activities. Please pay attention to the tips, notes, and references that are provided throughout the document because they guide the user and call their attention to ideas that need to be taken into consideration, highlighted, or revisited.

Each section details a different service that can be added into the VVCR mentor network for enhancement and improvement. All of the services are in regards to the reasons why women join networks: support, social interaction, career advancement, and access to information and resources. We also address how to obtain funding. The different services are broken down into subsections that provide more detail and provide the user with more in depth knowledge. Pictures and models are also shown in order to facilitate the detailing of each service.

Part 1: Implement Lean In Circles

We recommend the implementation of Lean In Circles to the mentor network.

The following section outlines how to implement Lean In Circles. Be sure to follow the to do list and checklist at the beginning and end of the section. Remember to pay close attention to any tips or hints along the way. Happy implementing!

A few ideas to remember and think about:
+ Circles are aimed at providing support
+ Circles are **small** peer groups
+ Circles are based on creating a sense of community and fostering a collective identity

How To Set Up Circles
To do list:

- Go to Lean In, **leanin.org**, and download their free resources. These resources include: Circle Kickoff Kit, Circle Education Kit, and Circle Exploration Kit **(See Additional Resources, pg. 28).**
- Read through each kit in order to get an **understanding of the methodology**
- Determine the **themes** of the pilot circles
- Determine the period of time that each circle will run
- Determine how **circle fees** will be handled
- If you want more information, visit the **Circle FAQs** page on **leanin.org** for guidance and to view examples of other networks, businesses, and schools that employ circles

Lean In Methodology

Task: Please download and familiarize yourself with Lean In's Circle Kickoff Kit, Circle Education Kit, and Circle Exploration Kit.

All of the circles will follow the **Lean In methodology** developed by Sheryl Sandberg.

Remember that the methodology that Lean In outlines and provides has room for modification. They encourage making circles your own. If you want to add or remove things from the circle feel free to do so.

Lean In provides free resources on how to start, manage, and maintain circles.

Each VVCR circle will be a small group of mentors. The circles will contain two moderators, along with the remaining mentors in the circle. The moderator roles are divided between a **manager and facilitator**. These individuals are responsible for organizing, managing, and guiding what goes on in the circle. The moderators assume more responsibility than the rest of the mentors. Any mentors willing to assume these roles will need to be informed beforehand and agree to the responsibilities.

For more on the Lean In methodology, please refer to **leanin.org**.

By this time, you should have the three Lean In Kits. Lean In clearly outlines how to successfully employ their methodology and it is easy to follow. To start, be sure to use their methodology as a model of how to set up your circles. The rest of this chapter provides further guidance, apart from the Kits.

Setting Up the VVCR circles

Task: Choose 5 different themes for the pilot circles.

On the **encuestafacil** questionnaire, the mentors indicated the different circle themes they would like to see.

The themes included:

Art	Personal Growth and Development
Businesswomen	Professional Growth
Business Owners	Running
Cooking	Self Help
Entrepreneurs	Single Mothers
Executive Women	Spirituality and Religion
Finance	Stress Management
Film	Swimming
Furthering Education	Time Management
Humanitarian	Wellness
Leadership	Working Mothers
Literature	Women In Technology
Mindfulness	Young Entrepreneurs
Networking	Yoga and Meditation
Professional Women	

Using the list above as a reference, choose five different themes for the pilot circles.

> **NOTE**
>
> Keep in mind that the mentors chose many themes they would like to see. For the 5 pilot circles, pick a diverse group as to maximize the amount of women that will want to join the pilot circles.

Organizing your circles

Now it is time to set the conditions for your circles.

Task: Set a time limit for the circles.

Circles will run more than once a year in order to prevent exclusion. Each pilot circle will start the same month and run for **six months**. The circle meetings will be every month for 2 hours.

Task: Limit the amount of mentors in each circle.

Lean In describes circles as small peer support groups. They describe a circle as 8 to 10 women. Each circle at VVCR will contain 5 to 15 mentors.

Task: Determine the circle fee.

There can be activities and events within the circles. There may also be supplies needed. If a circle charges a fee, each circle will cost **$5 USD or 2,500 colones per meeting** to fund anything that goes on in the circle. This amount may vary depending on the circle so the amount is subject to change. The moderators of the circles should handle the circle fee. The manager and facilitator can determine who will assume responsibility within each circle. You should create and provide them with a document for tracking. This document will record the number of women in the circle, along with each mentor's payment history and a log of what the money goes towards.

Task: Choose a virtual communication platform for the circles

Mentors will need to be in contact outside of circle meetings for communication, such as updates and reminders. Please decide which virtual communication platform for each circle to use. All of the circles should be on the same communication platform so that different circles can communicate with one another.

You may use:
- Lean In's Circle Hub
- Lean In's Mightybell
- Facebook
- A virtual platform dedicated to VVCR
- Etc.

Congratulations, you're ready to start your circles.

Task: Notify the mentor network that you are introducing circles (i.e. email or Facebook).

Introduce the mentor network to circles. Briefly, explain the methodology, present the pilot circle themes, and provide a description of what the circles will entail. Lastly, invite the mentors to join the circles.

- Send out a **sign up sheet** for mentors to join the circles
- Joining circles should be on a **first come first serve basis**
- Allow the mentors a **week** to choose a pilot circle to join
- Provide a **contact person at VVCR** for mentors who are interested in becoming moderators to reach out to **(Note: This will also be on a first come first serve basis)**

Now that you have everything set up, let's make sure you covered everything.

Checklist

____ **Create 5 different circle themes**
____ **Set your circle conditions (i.e. circle fee, amount in each circle, etc.)**
____ **Notify the mentor network**
____ **Start the circle**

Well done, your circles are ready to go!
What's the next step?

Evaluating your circles

Once the pilot circles have ended, you will need to evaluate them. Create a questionnaire for the mentors that were involved in the circles to get some **feedback**. Analyze the data and **make any changes you see fit**.

You are officially ready to implement Lean In Circles to the VVCR mentor network!

Part 2: Incorporate a social aspect into mentor trainings

We recommend that VVCR incorporate a social aspect into their mentor training program.

A few ideas to remember and think about:
+ Mentors want **social interaction**
+ A social aspect will help the mentors **meet one another**

Training One

As the first part of the training ends around lunchtime, the first event should be a **group lunch** for the members to share their experiences from the previous training.

When: After the conclusion of the first part of the training

Who's Invited: Training mentors and VVCR employees

Expenses: Venue for the lunch and catering

Checklist
____ Send invitations
____ Book a venue
____ Book catering
____ Send reminders

Training Two

For the second part of the training, we recommend that you allow the training **mentors to vote on the event** they would like to participate in.

When: After the conclusion of the second part of the training

Who's Invited: Training mentors and VVCR employees

Expenses: Venue and food, if necessary

Other: A small fee could be charged for supplies depending on the event theme (i.e. event can be held at a public place or a mentor's home)

Checklist

____ Send out an **encuestafacil** survey
____ Choose an event theme
____ Send invitations
____ Book a venue, if necessary
____ Buy supplies, if necessary
____ Send reminders

Training Three

For the third part of the training, hold a small graduation ceremony for the mentors who have achieved their certifications. This will allow them to commemorate and remember their experience.

When: After the conclusion of the third part of the training

Who's Invited: Training mentors, VVCR employees, and any certified VVCR mentor(s)

Expenses: Venue and catering, if necessary

*Optional: Supplies for the graduation (i.e. cake and gifts for mentors)

Checklist

____ Send invitations
____ Book a venue, if necessary
____ Buy supplies, if necessary
____ Send reminders

All set! Let's make sure you have everything,

Review

[] Event One: Lunch after training
[] Event Two: Mentors vote for an event
[] Event Three: Graduation ceremony

You are now ready to incorporate a social aspect into mentor trainings!

Part 3: Hold monthly social get-togethers

We recommend that VVCR hold monthly mentor get-togethers.

A few ideas to remember and think about:
+ The average Voces Vitales mentor only knows about 15 other mentors out of the active 190 mentors
+ Mentors are eager to **create strong bonds** with each other

The figure below depicts the VVCR mentor network. The woman in the center is the average VVCR mentor, **surrounding her in blue**, are the mentors she already knows. The remaining mentors, **in red**, are the mentors that she has not yet met or created a personal connection with. **The figure on the right shows the transformation of the VVCR network after the addition of more social interaction.**

Before Social Aspect

After Social Aspect
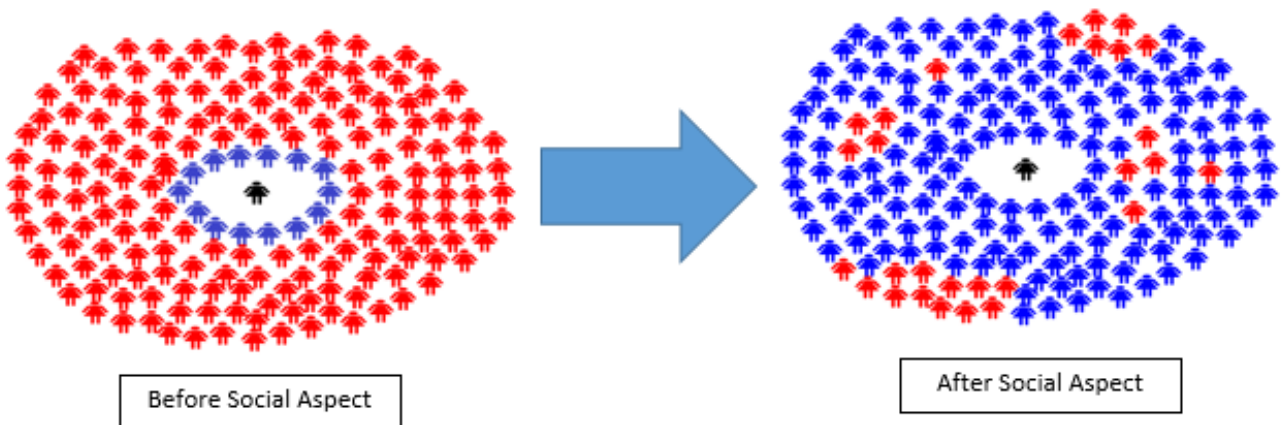
Social events should be held at a **volunteer** mentor's home and each event will have alternating themes.

Some themes may include:

Baking Night	Make Your Own Jewelry
Barbeque	Manicure Night
Cocktail Night	Movie Night
Cooking Night	Paris Night
Costume Party	Pizza Party
Dance Night	Potluck Dinner
*Decade Theme	Sewing/Knitting Night
Hawaiian Theme	*Stamping Up
Holiday Cookie Swap	*Upcycling Night
Holiday Parties	Wine Tasting Night
Make Your Own Ornaments	

* For decade themed parties, dress up like another era. For Stamping Up and Upcycling, visit **stampingingup.com** and **upcyclethat.com**, respectively.

How will get-togethers work?

Send out an **encuestafacil** survey for the mentors to choose the theme.

How often: Once a month

Who's Invited: VVCR mentors

When: Friday or Saturday evenings

Length: Approx. 2 hours

Expenses: Venue and supplies, if necessary

Other: A small fee could be charged for supplies. Events can also be held in a public space (i.e. a park) to reduce the cost

NOTE

You may want to use **money from the membership fees** to fund the events. This will alleviate the stress of mentors having to pay individually each time.

Checklist

_____ Send invitations
_____ Book a venue, if necessary
_____ Buy supplies, if necessary
_____ Send reminders

You are now prepared to hold monthly social get-togethers!

Part 4: Offer workshops with different topics

We recommend that VVCR offer workshops with different topics.

A few ideas to remember and think about:
+ Mentors want to develop more **professional and personal skills**

How will VVCR workshops work?

Workshops will cover topics focused on both **career advancement and personal growth.**

Potential topics include:

Career Advancement	Personal Growth
Dealing With Conflict	"Greener" Households
Entrepreneurship	Nutrition
Giving and Receiving Feedback	Health and Wellness
How To Deal With Top Executives	Home Economics
How To Get People To Follow You	Raising Children
How To Manage A Family Business	Self-Empowerment
Marketing With Social Media	Stress Management
Negotiation	Time Management
Work-life Balance	Using Technology Wisely
Personal Branding	
Project Management	

Speakers

Workshops will have speakers present to lead the workshop.

Speakers	How It Will Work
Contact faculty at INCAE business school	Invite guest speakers to run a workshop
VVCR mentors who are experts on various topics	Create a form for mentors to fill out the details—the resources they will need, duration of the workshop, and the number of attendees possible

> **NOTE**
>
> Provide the mentors with a contact at VVCR to reach out to when they want to host a workshop.

How to Set Up Workshops

Event Registration

Task: Create the event

Send out event details through email or Facebook. Once a virtual platform is created, mentors will be able to register through the calendar of events. Remind mentors that **registration is required** due to limited space and resources.

Event Payment

Task: Provide a payment method

Send out event details through email or Facebook. Once a virtual platform is created, mentors will be able to pay through the calendar of events.

Workshop Details

How often: Once a month

Location:
Option 1: Get a space through partnership with INCAE
Option 2: Rent a conference room at a hotel

When: Weekdays after work hours and weekends

Topics: Will alternate between career advancement and personal growth

Who's Invited: This is dependent upon the topic and space available

Cost: Included in the membership fee

Length: Approx. 2 hours

Expenses: Speaker and venue

Other: Resources will be determined by the speaker

You are now ready to offer workshops!

Part 5: Hold professional networking events

We recommend that VVCR hold professional networking events.

A few ideas to remember and think about:
+ Mentors want to be able to network **professionally** so they can form more business relationships

How to Set Up Professional Networking Events

Layout of the events

Mentors will have **5-minute speed network rounds**. At the sound of the bell, each mentor will rotate.

Event Registration
Task: Create the event

Send out event details through email or Facebook. **Remind the mentors to bring their business cards.** Once a virtual platform is created, mentors will be able to register through the calendar of events. Remind mentors that **registration is required** due to limited space and resources.

Event Payment
Task: Provide a payment method

Send out event details through email or Facebook. Once a virtual platform is created, mentors will be able to pay through the calendar of events.

Event Details

How often: Once a month	
Location: At volunteer mentors' homes	
When: Weekdays after work hours and weekends	
Topics: Speed networking, 5 minute networking rounds	
Who's Invited: VVCR mentors (limit to a max. of 20 mentors)	
Cost: Mentor who hosts the event will receive a discount of $5 or 2,500 colones off of the next years membership fee	
Length: Approx. 2 hours	
Other: Resources will be determined by the mentor who hosts the event	

NOTE

The mentors who host the events will facilitate the events. They will be responsible for providing refreshments, explaining how to speed network, and setting the room up in an accommodating fashion.

You are now prepared to hold professional networking events!

Part 6: Provide advertising opportunities and discounts

We recommend that VVCR provide advertising opportunities and discounts.

A few ideas to remember and think about:
+ Mentors will be able to **advertise and foster more connections** within the network.

How to provide advertising opportunities

Offer advertising opportunities **for the mentors who own businesses**. These mentors could then **provide discounts to other mentors** that are also considered potential customers. These other mentors will then use the products and services offered by fellow mentors. This will **benefit the VVCR mentor network** because the mentors who are offered advertising opportunities and discounts will **get more connected to the network** because of the benefits they are receiving. The figure below illustrates this domino effect that advertising opportunities will introduce to the network.

Provide advertising opportunities

Provide discounts

Voces Vitales Costa Rica   **Mentors with Businesses**   **Other Mentors**

Get more connected to the network

Use products/services

Get more connected to the network
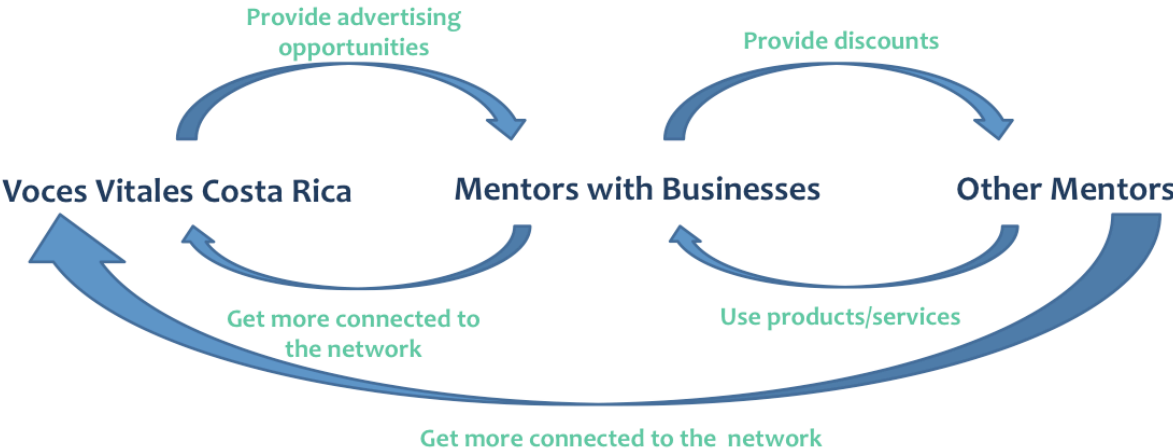
Advertising and Discount Details

Location: VVCR's Facebook page or a virtual platform dedicated to VVCR

Format: Flyer or advertisement panel

How to organize an advertisement service

To Do List

[] Create conditions for advertisement opportunities
[] Notify the network of advertisement opportunities

Set conditions

Task: Limit the amount of time advertisement is available

Based on the advertisement opportunity, decide how long the flyer will be displayed. (i.e. Mentors who offer larger discounts should be offered a longer advertising time)

Task: Make the flyer accessible to the network

When an advertisement opportunity is available, post the opportunity up on the VVCR Facebook page. When VVCR gets a virtual platform, post the flyer or advertisement panel for everyone.
NOTE: On a virtual platform, only allow one advertisement opportunity at a time.

Send out a notification

Let the mentors know about opportunities to advertise their businesses through email, Facebook, or a virtual platform dedicated to VVCR. Include details on how to provide advertisement opportunities and receive discounts.

How to advise the mentors

[] Provide mentors with businesses a contact at VVCR to send their advertisement panel or flyers

---

Mentors with businesses

This mentor is responsible for sending VVCR her flyer or advertisement panel with her advertisement opportunity.

NOTE: This mentor must provide a discount for her fellow VVCR mentors.

You are ready to provide advertisement opportunities and discounts!

Part 7: Implement a virtual platform

We recommend that VVCR implement a virtual platform.

 A few ideas to remember and think about:
+   A virtual platform will allow **mentors to have their own profiles in which they can interact** with the features you provide

Where to Start

In order to create a virtual platform for the mentor network, we suggest you use the membership management software **Wild Apricot**.

How to Implement Wild Apricot

Follow the directions below in order implement the **Wild Apricot Software:**

____ **Add a membership subdirectory to existing website. This needs to be done by the website administrator for the VVCR website (i.e. Contact Stefany).**

____ **Register with Wild Apricot (http://www.wildapricot.com/) and use the subdirectory created in step one as the custom domain for Wild Apricot.**

____ **Build the member management Web pages using Wild Apricot's built in tools. To do this, go to your Wild Apricot Page and use the add page feature. Click on a desired default page offered by Wild Apricot and insert the features that were desired by the mentors. Wild Apricot offers features for Member Profiles, a Calendar of Events, a Blog, Event Registrations, and Payments. These features can be added by clicking and dragging them to the desired section of the webpage.**

____ **For customized pages that are different from the default ones offered by Wild Apricot, contact Stefany to create a new webpage using normal html code. Then, select the features on Wild Apricot and copy**

the html code that the feature produces and insert it into the webpage that was created by Stefany.

____ You do not need to use Wild Apricot to implement a virtual library on the virtual platform. Contact Stefany to add photos and videos to the website like she normally does.

____ In order to implement communication platforms on the virtual platform a 3rd party software is required. Wild Apricot recommends the use of Disqus (http://disqus.com/).

____ Create a Disqus account and create a communication platform on it. Next, have Stefany copy and past the html code for the communication platform onto the website.

You now have a functioning virtual platform!

Part 8: Implement a $25 annual membership fee

We recommend that VVCR implement a $25 or 12,500 colones annual membership fee.

The membership fee will cover the cost of the virtual platform, events, get-togethers, and any other services within the mentor network.

You will need:

[] Create a way to collect the money

Before the virtual platform is created, you have to collect the fee **by email or in person at events**. Once a virtual platform is created, the mentors will be able to **log in and pay securely** within the platform.

Now, let's review everything,

Summary Table

Service	Aim
Implement Lean In Circles	Support
Incorporate a social aspect into mentor trainings	Social Interaction
Hold monthly social get-togethers	Social Interaction
Offer workshops with different topics	Career Advancement
Hold professional networking events	Career Advancement
Provide advertising opportunities and discounts	Career Advancement
Implement a virtual platform	Access to Information and Resources
Implement a $25 annual membership fee	Funding

Additional Resources

Circle Kickoff Kit

Circle Education Kit

Circle Exploration Kit

Each Lean In kit has a form that is dedicated to the moderators and the members. All the Lean In kits follow.

CIRCLE KICKOFF KIT

FOR MODERATORS

Introduction

Welcome to your first Circle! The Kickoff Meeting is about getting to know each other. It serves as an opportunity for members to start creating connections and building relationships. Given it's your first meeting, it's also a time to discuss how your Circle will work, identify shared goals and plan your next few meetings.

What's Inside

What to do with these docs

• Read **Setting the Stage** to ensure you understand the resources available for your Circle.

• Review **Moderator & Meeting Basics** to make sure you understand your role.

• Use the **Kickoff Checklist** as a tool to stay organized.

• Complete **Prepare for Kickoff** before your meeting (all members do this).

• Spend time reviewing the **Kickoff Guide** before the meeting. You should also bring copies of the member version of the same document to the meeting; you'll find it on page 5 of the PDF titled **Circle Kickoff Kit** for Members.

• If you're the Circle Manager, bring a printout of **Circle Fundamentals** and be prepared to fill it out during the meeting.

Setting The Stage

GOAL: Make sure you are aware of all the resources we offer for starting and managing your Circle

---

CIRCLE MANAGER

You should determine which of these tools will work best for your Circle. You may decide to use just one tool or to use both. You are responsible for registering your Circle for the tool(s) you choose and then inviting other members to join.

We provide two platforms with access to everything you need for your Circle: our Circle Hub and Mightybell. Given that you're looking at this Kit, you've likely already been introduced to one of these platforms! Your Circle's manager should determine which tool works best for your Circle and then invite you to join if they haven't already done so. They may choose to use just one tool or they may decide to use both. Either way, we want to ensure that you are familiar with both tools before you get started since we will reference them repeatedly in this Kit.

Circle Hub

Think of the Circle Hub as a one-stop destination for all things Circles. Here you'll find downloadable Circle Kits, our most popular education videos, and links to daily inspiration and articles. You'll also be able to read first-person testimonials from Circles around the globe, interviews with moderators, tips for your Circle, as well as monthly advice from our team of experts.

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you decide to use the Circle Hub, you should register at **leanin.org/circles** and then invite other members using the invitation link on the right of your My Circle page in the Circle Hub. Once you have registered, be sure to bookmark l**eanin.org/my-circle** and remind your members to do the same!

Mightybell

Mightybell is an optional technology platform for Circles with features and functionality that make it easy to stay organized and connected. Using Mightybell, you can access materials like Circle Kits and expert lectures. You can also chat with your other Circle members and schedule upcoming meetings. Mightybell also powers what we call "Circle Matching", which enables you to search for new members to join your Circle. For more information on Mightybell, visit **https://mightybell.com/communities/lean-in.**

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you decide to use Mightybell, you should visit **https://mightybell.com/communities/lean-in** and click "Create a Circle" in the top right. Once you have created your Mightybell Circle, invite other members to join. Be sure to bookmark your Mightybell Circle and remind your members to do the same!

LEAN IN

CIRCLE MANAGER

If you've already registered with the Circle Hub, you can upgrade your Circle to Mightybell. You'll still get access to the content on the Circle Hub, but now you'll also be able to use the added functionality that only Mightybell offers - like live chat and scheduling meetings. To upgrade, just visit your My Circle page in the Circle Hub and click on the "Upgrade to Mightybell" button on the right. Don't forget to invite your other Circle members to your new Mightybell Circle!

IMPORTANT NOTE

Think of the contents of this kit and the resources outlined above as a recipe that your Circle manager, facilitator, and fellow members should customize for your Circle. If there are ingredients you don't like, remove them. If you think something is missing, go ahead and add it. Every Circle is different will try new things. If you find an approach worth sharing, we'd love to hear about it at **circles@leanin.org.**

LEAN IN

Moderator & Meeting Basics

GOAL: Make sure you and your Circle are ready.

We recommend two members serve as co-moderators and divide up responsibilities as follows:
Note: The rest of this document outlines specific how-to's and tips assuming there is a Circle Manager and Circle Facilitator.

The **Circle Manager** focuses on the operations of the Circle and handles:
• Choosing which platform the Circle uses (the Circle Hub and/or Mightybell,
  see previous page for details), setting it up and inviting members to join
• Scheduling meetings
• Timekeeping during meetings
• Managing the Topic Lot and shaping the agenda of meetings

The **Circle Facilitator** focuses on guiding discussions and handles:
• Guiding in-meeting discussions
• Helping members prepare for Personal Explorations
• Making sure everyone respects the Communication Guidelines (outlined later in this document)

ACTION

Decide how you're dividing up the shared moderator role.

For an introduction to the Topic Lot and Personal Explorations, consult the **Circle Exploration Kit** for Moderators available in the Circle Hub at **leanin.org/my-circle.** Mightybell users can find this Exploration Kit in your Mightybell Circle in a post titled "Exploration Meeting".

ACTION

Quickly run through the following action items, and make sure you're all set:

_____   Invited 8 to 10 peers to participate in the group (at similar stages in their careers and lives)
           for a total of 10 to 12 members including you and your co-moderator.

_____   Arranged a meeting time and place and other details that make sense for your group.

Kickoff Checklist

We've created the following checklist to help you keep track of everything you'll need to do before and during your Kickoff Meeting.

Both the Manager and Facilitator will want to take time before the Kickoff to:

_____ Read through all the materials in this packet

_____ Watch the videos and/or read the FAQs in the Circle Hub at **leanin.org/my-circle**

Circle Manager

You are responsible for overseeing meeting preparation and logistics, so you're mostly focused on what happens between meetings.

BEFORE THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Set a date, time and location for your meeting

_____ Remind everyone to bring a copy of their completed **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet

_____ Print copies of the **Kickoff Guide** for Members (on page 5 of the **Circle Kickoff Kit** for Members)

_____ Print two copies of the **Kickoff Guide** for Moderators, one for you and one for your co-moderator

_____ Print a copy of the **Circle Fundamentals** worksheet to complete during the meeting

_____ Bring a computer or tablet to play a two-minute "Welcome to Lean In" video

_____ Make sure you have a device to keep track of time

You can access the "Welcome" video on at **leanin.org/welcomevideo**

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Serve as timekeeper and flag timing concerns with the Circle Facilitator

_____ Track the group's responses to activities on the **Circle Fundamentals** worksheet

Circle Facilitator

You are responsible for guiding discussions and making sure everyone in the Circle communicates openly and respectfully, so you're mostly focused on what happens in meetings.

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Welcome everyone and begin member introductions

_____ Encourage active participation

_____ Try to make sure the group starts and ends on time

Prepare for Kickoff Worksheet

GOAL: Identify your Circle goals and outline your Lean In Story. You'll share both of these during your Kickoff Meeting.

ESTIMATED TIME: 20 minutes

CIRCLE MANAGER

We encourage Circle members (including you and your co-moderator) to complete this worksheet and bring it to your first meeting. This way, you'll be ready to participate. You may want to send out a reminder to everyone beforehand to complete theirs.

Identifying Your Personal Goals

Our hope is that by participating in a Circle, you'll gain the encouragement and know-how to pursue your goals with gusto. This leads to the question: What exactly are your goals? Or put another way, what are you hoping to get out of your Circle?

ACTION

Take a few moments to think through your goals in advance of the Kickoff Meeting and write them down. Don't worry if you're not quite sure what your goals are. That's the point of joining a Lean In Circle! Just share a few ideas to get started.

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

A few common goals to jumpstart your own thinking:

+ Find a good work life/balance

+ Take more professional risks

+ Develop a good network of female supporters

LEAN IN

Sharing Your Lean In Story

Sharing personal stories is an important part of Lean In. Good stories can inspire, teach and connect us. To get to know each other, plan to share a short Lean In Story during your Kickoff Meeting.

A Lean In Story captures a moment in your career or life when you chose to "lean in" or "lean back." When you lean in, you push through a challenge and go down a path with an uncertain outcome—you believe in yourself and take a risk. When you lean back, you choose to stay in a known or comfortable situation—you play it safe. We all lean in and lean back at different times, and can learn from both types of stories.

Visit **leanin.org/stories** to read the stories of other Lean In community members; you can also add your own.

ACTION

Outline your Lean In Story using the prompts below as a guide.

• **Describe a moment you could choose to lean in or lean back. What was the situation?**

I'll never forget when _____

_____

• **Explain the decision you made—and why you made it.**

I decided to lean in (lean back) because _____

_____

• **Describe what action you took and how the situation played out.**

I (action) and here's what happened _____

_____

• **Explain how the experience impacted you personally and professionally. How did your life change?**

After leaning in (leaning back) _____

_____

Congratulations, you're ready for your Circle's Kickoff Meeting!

Just remember to bring this worksheet to help you participate in the conversation. Your moderator(s)/host(s) will take care of the rest.

CO-MODERATORS

Consult your **Kickoff Checklist** for everything you need to know to get ready for the meeting, such as bringing a device to play our "Welcome to Lean In" video on and printing out copies of the member version of the **Kickoff Guide**.

LEAN IN

Kickoff Guide

GOALS:
There are several goals for this first meeting:

1 Learn more about Lean In and how Circles work

2 Get to know each other better

3 Establish shared goals for your Circle

4 Agree on how you'll run your Circle

TIME ESTIMATE: 2 Hours

CO-MODERATORS

We've put together this document to make sure your first meeting goes off without a hitch. This guide is exactly the same as the member version, but includes callouts (like this one!) with information and tips to help you before and during the meeting. We recommend you read through this guide before the meeting to make sure you feel fully prepared and ready to roll.

The Kickoff Meeting sets the stage for your Circle's success and gives everyone a chance to get to know each other.

Suggested Meeting Agenda

Check In Host welcomes everyone and general greetings	**5 Minutes**
Part 1: Getting to Know Each Other & Lean In	
Member Introductions Everyone shares a little about themselves	**15 Minutes**
Introduction to Lean In Watch our "Welcome" video and share your Lean In Stories	**30 Minutes**
Circle Orientation Learn how Circles work and what you'll cover in monthly meetings	**10 Minutes**
Break	**5 Minutes**
Part 2: Setting up Your Circle	
Agree on Your Circle's Goals Share your personal goals and identify common goals for your Circle	**25 Minutes**
Agree on Circle Fundamentals Commit to our recommended Circle guidelines and Education schedule — or set your own	**20 Minutes**
Schedule Your Meetings Determine times, dates and locations for upcoming meetings	**10 Minutes**

LEAN IN

PART 1: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER & LEAN IN

Member Introduction
TIME RECOMMENDATION: 15 minutes (1 minute each for members; 2 minutes each for moderators)

CO-MODERATORS

Get things started by introducing yourselves and your role in the Circle first. Remember:

The **Circle Manager** handles:
• Scheduling meetings
• Timekeeping during meetings
• Managing the Topic Lot and shaping the agenda of meetings (not relevant for the Kickoff but important)

The **Circle Facilitator** handles:
• Guiding in-meeting discussions
• Helping members prepare for Personal Stories (not relevant for the Kickoff but also important)
• Making sure everyone respects the Communication Guidelines

A NOTE ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY: **The Circle discusses important confidentiality guidelines later in this meeting, outlined on page 14 of this document under Commit to Confidentiality.** You can choose to discuss this now or just generally say everyone should respect each other's confidentiality given they're sharing personal information.

This Kickoff Meeting serves as an opportunity for members to get to know each other and start building the trust and openness necessary for a Circle's success.

ACTION

Take a moment to introduce yourself to the group — for example, share what you do, where you live and three facts about yourself. (As a note: Your Circle Manager and Circle Facilitator — who serve as co-moderators of the group — should introduce themselves first and briefly explain their roles.)

Fact 1: _____

Fact 2: _____

Fact 3: _____

LEAN IN

Introduction to Lean In

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 30 minutes (2 minutes for the welcome video; 2 minutes each for members and moderators)

Lean In is creating a community to encourage and support women leaning in to their ambitions. If we talk openly about gender issues and work together to tackle them, we believe we can change the trajectory of women and create a better world for all of us. Lean In Circles play a critical role in achieving this vision.

ACTION

Watch a two-minute welcome video from Lean In **(leanin.org/welcomevideo).** Then go around the room and share your personal Lean In Stories from the **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet.

You should already have a Lean In Story ready to share, but if you didn't have a chance to complete the worksheet, follow these prompts:

CIRCLE-FACILITATOR

If a member didn't prepare her story and doesn't feel comfortable telling it on the spot, politely offer to skip to the next person and suggest she shares hers at the next meeting.

• **Describe a moment you could choose to "lean in" or "lean back." What was the situation?**

I'll never forget when _____

_____

• **Explain the decision you made — and why you made it.**

I decided to lean in (lean back) because _____

_____

• **Describe what action you took and how the situation played out.**

I (action) and here's what happened _____

_____

• **Explain how the experience impacted you personally and professionally. How did your life change?**

After leaning in (leaning back) _____

_____

When you finish sharing your story, take a moment and tell the group why you're leaning in with them:

I'm Leaning In because _____

Circle Orientation

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 10 minutes

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

We suggest you take the lead reading or summarizing the information covered in the meeting, including the basic ins and outs of Circles outlined below.

If you'd like more information, you can read through the Circle Kits available in the Circle Hub at **leanin. org/my-circle.** Mightybell users can find these kits in the collection titled "Meeting Types". You can also email **circles@leanin.org** if you're stumped on something.

ACTION

Talk through how Circles work as a group. Your moderator(s) will have more information to shape this discussion and can likely answer your questions.

A Lean In Circle is a group of 10 to 12 peers who meet monthly to explore professional topics and exchange personal experiences in an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust. Our goal is that every time a Circle meets, members are learning together or from each other—many times, both will be true. Monthly Circle meetings reflect these dual priorities, alternating between what we call Education and Exploration meetings.

Education Meetings are focused on learning new skills. Before each Education Meeting, members watch a short online video on a topic developed by Stanford University's Clayman Institute for Gender Research and a broad range of subject matter experts. Then during the Circle meeting, the group explores the topic more deeply and runs through how-to exercises together. Lean In provides the video and Discussion Guide, and you bring your personal insights and experiences.

Exploration Meetings are designed so members can share real-life opportunities and challenges with each other, and ultimately learn from each other's diverse experiences. Typically, two members present their situation; then the rest of the group shares their own insights and related experiences. Lean In provides everything you need to run an Exploration Meeting.

We encourage Circles to meet 10 times a year. If you follow our recommended agendas, each meeting will run about two hours, keep in mind that these are just our recommendations. We encourage you to do whatever works best for your Circle.

For answers to common questions, please visit the Circle Hub at **leanin.org/my-circle.** You can also email your questions to us at **circles@leanin.org.**

Break

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 5 minutes

PART 2: SETTING UP YOUR CIRCLE

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

The rest of the agenda is designed to talk through all the large and small decisions you'll need to make as a group. This will help get everyone on the same page right as your Circle is beginning.

CIRCLE MANAGER

For the rest of the meeting, you should capture the group's responses on the **Circle Fundamentals** worksheet on page 17 of this document. At the end of the meeting, we recommend you use the worksheet to confirm everyone in your Circle is on the same page.

Agree on Your Circle's Goals

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 25 minutes

ACTION

Go around the room and share your list of three personal goals (refer to the **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet you filled out before the meeting). Write down the common goals and interests you hear, and vote to choose the top three for your circle.

Votes   Goal

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Agree on Circle Fundamentals

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 20 minutes

STEP 1: COMMIT TO GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING YOUR CIRCLE

Circles will develop their own personalities over time, but research shows that all successful peer groups rely on a clear commitment to confidentiality, good group communication and consistent participation.

ACTION

As a group, review our suggested guidelines for confidentiality, commitment and communication.

1. Confidentiality

- The goal of a Lean In Circle is to create a safe environment to learn and grow together. Confidentiality and trust are critical to the success of Lean In Circles. It's important that anything shared by members isn't discussed outside the Circle. If it helps, think of the three Ns: Nothing, No one, Never. *However, feel free to share your own experiences and learnings with family and friends.*

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

Confidentiality is so fundamental because members aren't going to want to share real issues if they don't feel they can trust everyone in the Circle. We recommend you talk openly about its importance as a group and come up with a plan for dealing with a break in confidentiality now when it's not about a particular member or members.

WE COMMIT _____

2. Personal Commitment

- Groups are only as strong as their weakest link. The more you participate, the more you'll get out of your Circle. We encourage Circles to meet 10 times a year and members to remain active for a year—and we hope longer!

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

You may also want to encourage members to let your Circle Manager know if they're going to be late or miss a meeting, so the group doesn't lose any time waiting for them.

WE COMMIT _____

3. Good Group Communication

- Push yourself to share openly and to help others do the same. Everyone benefits from stretching outside comfort zones.

- Listen beyond the words to hear the feelings. It is important to listen in order to understand rather than listen to respond as we often do in our daily lives.

- Accept Circle members and topical discussions without judgment.

- Ask thought-provoking questions to help the member see their situation from a different angle. But avoid embedding advice in the form of a question (e.g., "Have you ever considered...?").

- Share experiences, not opinions or advice. Use "I" statements and speak only for yourself. Be specific and brief. Avoid "you should…"

- No cell phones, text messages or distractions during Circle meetings.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

There is a reason why offering advice is discouraged during Circle meetings. Imagine you advised someone facing a difficult situation at work to leave her job to search for something better. What if she spent the next six months looking unsuccessfully? Advice may be well intentioned, but it's usually not as helpful as our own experiences, and may break down trust over time.

WE COMMIT _____

STEP 2: ALIGN ON AN EDUCATION SCHEDULE

We recommend you discuss your education goals for the year. Keep in mind that you will alternate between Education Meetings and Exploration meetings going forward, so you will likely have about five Education Meetings this year.

ACTION

We recommend you begin with these three topics, but there's really no right or wrong way to get started. Explore all of the topics at **leanin.org/education** and pick the topics that are interesting to your Circle. Try writing down the ones you're most interested in below, but know that you can change your plan as you go!

Power & Influence
There's a body language of power. Find out how to use it to increase your influence.
Deborah H. Gruenfeld, Professor of Leadership & Organizational Behavior at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Co-director of the Executive Program for Women Leaders

Difficult Conversations
Learn how to achieve shared goals while remaining true to yourself, even when the stakes are high.
Fred Kofman, Professor of Leadership at Francisco Marroquín University in Guatemala, Director of the Conscious Business Center

Creating a Level Playing Field
Develop workplaces the tap everyone's talents and best work.
Shelley Correll, Director of the Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Professor of Sociology at Stanford University

Our first five education meetings will be:

Education Meeting #1: _____

Education Meeting #2: _____

Education Meeting #3: _____

Education Meeting #4: _____

Education Meeting #5: _____

WE AGREE _____

LEAN IN

Schedule Your Meetings

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 10 minutes

Circles run smoothly when they're well organized. Establishing the basic who, what, where and when for your Circle is an important step in this process.

ACTION

As a group, fill out the following information. Although things may end up changing, we suggest you plan out your next few meetings.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

Circle meetings are intended to alternate between Education and Exploration meetings, and our materials assume the second meeting is an Education Meeting.

	MEETING TYPE	DATE	TIME	HOST	EDUCATION TOPIC (WHEN APPLICABLE)
1	Kickoff				
2	Education				
3	Exploration				
4	Education				
5	Exploration				
6	Education				
7	Exploration				
8	Education				
9	Exploration				
10	Education				

LEAN IN

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> If you've had ample time to fill out the Circle Fundamentals worksheet, we recommend you read it out loud so your Circle has a final opportunity to make sure everyone is on the same page. You also might want to send a copy of the Circle Fundamentals worksheet and of the Circle Schedule out after the meeting so members can use it as a reference.

And you're done! Congratulations, you've accomplished a lot today.

Next month will be your first Education Meeting. Next month will be your first Education Meeting. In advance, make sure you watch the expert lecture your group has chosen. You can find the videos at **leanin.org/education** or in your Mightybell Circle.

We also recommend you read the **Circle Education Kit** for moderators available in the Circle Hub at **leanin.org/my-circle** for an overview of how Education Meetings work and what to expect. Mightybell users can find the Circle Education Kit in a post titled "Education Meeting".

> **CO-MODERATORS**
>
> Remember, your next meeting will be your Circle's first Education Meeting. To prepare, we recommend you take some time over the next few weeks to read the **Circle Education Kit** available in the Circle Hub at **leanin.org/my-circle** and in your Mightybell Circle. In both places, you'll also find a brief description of how Education Meetings work and what to expect.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> It might help to send out a reminder to watch the expert video for the education topic your Circle has chosen a few days before the meeting. You can find the videos at **leanin.org/education** and in your Mightybell space. If someone arrives and hasn't watched the expert video, they'll miss out on most of the evening— like arriving at book club without opening the book!

Our Circle Fundamentals

Circle Manager: Print a copy of this worksheet and bring it to the meeting so you can capture the decisions your Circle makes during Part 2 of the Kickoff. After you've filled in all the sections, read it back to the group to make sure everyone agrees. You're officially a Lean In Circle!

Our Circle Fundamentals

We agree to the following goals, guidelines and schedule for our Circle. We'll use this document as a guidepost for how we interact with each other and operate as a group.

Our Circle's Shared Goals are:

Shared Goal #1: _____

Shared Goal #2: _____

Shared Goal #3: _____

Everyone in our Circle is committed to:

_____ Confidentiality

_____ Personal Commitment

_____ Good Group Communication

Our first five Education Meetings will be:

Education Meeting #1: _____

Education Meeting #2: _____

Education Meeting #3: _____

Education Meeting #4: _____

Education Meeting #5: _____

Our Circle Schedule

	MEETING TYPE	DATE	TIME	HOST	EDUCATION TOPIC (WHEN APPLICABLE)
1	Kickoff				
2	Education				
3	Exploration				
4	Education				
5	Exploration				
6	Education				
7	Exploration				
8	Education				
9	Exploration				
10	Education				

CIRCLE
KICKOFF KIT

FOR MEMBERS

Introduction

Welcome to your first Circle! The Kickoff Meeting is about getting to know each other. It serves as an opportunity for members to start creating connections and building relationships. Given it's your first meeting, it's also a time to discuss how your Circle will work, identify shared goals and plan your next few meetings.

What's Inside

What to do with these docs

• Read **Setting the Stage** to ensure you understand the resources available for your Circle.

• Complete **Prepare for Kickoff** before your meeting.

• Review the **Kickoff Guide** for a sneak peek of your first meeting;
   your moderator(s) will handle bringing printouts for everyone.

Setting The Stage

GOAL: Make sure you are aware of all the resources we offer for your Circle

We provide two platforms with access to everything you need for your Circle: our Circle Hub and Mightybell. Given that you're looking at this Kit, you've likely already been introduced to one of these platforms! Your Circle's manager should determine which tool works best for your Circle and then invite you to join if they haven't already done so. They may choose to use just one tool or they may decide to use both. Either way, we want to ensure that you are familiar with both tools before you get started since we will reference them repeatedly in this Kit.

Circle Hub

Think of the Circle Hub as a one-stop destination for all things Circles. Here you'll find downloadable Circle Kits, our most popular education videos, and links to daily inspiration and articles. You'll also be able to read first-person testimonials from Circles around the globe, interviews with moderators, tips for your Circle, as well as monthly advice from our team of experts.

If your Circle is using the Circle Hub, your Circle manager will send you an invitation to join. If they haven't already done so, you should remind them now. Alternatively, you can register for the Circle Hub yourself at **leanin.org/circles.** (Note: If you register yourself it will be as if you are setting up a new Circle, but you'll have access to all the same materials). Once you have registered, be sure to bookmark **leanin.org/my-circle.**

Mightybell

Mightybell is an optional technology platform for Circles with features and functionality that make it easy to stay organized and connected. Using Mightybell, you can access materials like Circle Kits and expert lectures. You can also chat with your other Circle members. Mightybell also powers what we call "Circle Matching", which enables you to search for new members to join your Circle. For more information on Mightybell, visit **https://mightybell.com/communities/lean-in.**

If your Circle is using Mightybell, your Circle manager will send you an invitation to join. If they haven't already done so, you should remind them now.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Think of the contents of this kit and the resources outlined above as a recipe that your Circle manager, facilitator, and fellow members should customize for your Circle. If there are ingredients you don't like, remove them. If you think something is missing, go ahead and add it. Every Circle is different will try new things. If you find an approach worth sharing, we'd love to hear about it at **circles@leanin.org**.

Prepare for Kickoff Worksheet

GOAL: Identify your Circle goals and outline your Lean In Story. You'll share both of these during your Kickoff Meeting.

Identifying Your Personal Goals

Our hope is that by participating in a Circle, you'll gain the encouragement and know-how to pursue your goals with gusto. This leads to the question: What exactly are your goals? Or put another way, what are you hoping to get out of your Circle?

ACTION

Take a few moments to think through your goals in advance of the Kickoff Meeting and write them down. Don't worry if you're not quite sure what your goals are. That's the point of joining a Lean In Circle! Just share a few ideas to get started.

Goal 1: _____

Goal 2: _____

Goal 3: _____

A few common goals to jumpstart your own thinking:

+ Find a good work life/balance

+ Take more professional risks

+ Develop a good network of female supporters

Sharing Your Lean In Story

Sharing personal stories is an important part of Lean In. Good stories can inspire, teach and connect us. To get to know each other, plan to share a short Lean In Story during your Kickoff Meeting.

A Lean In Story captures a moment in your career or life when you chose to "lean in" or "lean back." When you lean in, you push through a challenge and go down a path with an uncertain outcome—you believe in yourself and take a risk. When you lean back, you choose to stay in a known or comfortable situation—you play it safe. We all lean in and lean back at different times, and can learn from both types of stories.

Visit **leanin.org/stories** to read the stories of other Lean In community members; you can also add your own.

Outline your Lean In Story using the prompts below as a guide.

- **Describe a moment you could choose to lean in or lean back. What was the situation?**

  I'll never forget when _____

  _____

- **Explain the decision you made — and why you made it.**

  I decided to lean in (lean back) because _____

  _____

- **Describe what action you took and how the situation played out.**

  I (action) and here's what happened _____

  _____

- **Explain how the experience impacted you personally and professionally. How did your life change?**

  After leaning in (leaning back) _____

  _____

Congratulations, you're ready for your Circle's Kickoff Meeting!

Just remember to bring this worksheet to help you participate in the conversation. Your moderator(s)/host(s) will take care of the rest.

Kickoff Guide

GOALS:
There are several goals for this first meeting:

1 Learn more about Lean In and how Circles work

2 Get to know each other better

3 Establish shared goals for your Circle

4 Agree on how you'll run your Circle

TIME ESTIMATE: 2 Hours

Meeting Agenda

Check In Host welcomes everyone and general greetings	5 Minutes
Part 1: Getting to Know Each Other & Lean In	
Member Introductions Everyone shares a little about themselves	15 Minutes
Introduction to Lean In Watch our "Welcome" video and share your Lean In Stories	30 Minutes
Circle Orientation Learn how Circles work and what you'll cover in monthly meetings	10 Minutes
Break	5 Minutes
Part 2: Setting up Your Circle	
Agree on Your Circle's Goals Share your personal goals and identify common goals for your Circle	25 Minutes
Agree on Circle Fundamentals Review and commit to recommended Circle guidelines and schedule of Education topics	20 Minutes
Schedule Your Meetings Determine times, dates and locations for upcoming meetings	10 Minutes

PART 1: GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER & LEAN IN

Member Introduction

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 15 minutes (1 minute each for members; 2 minutes each for moderators)

This Kickoff Meeting serves as an opportunity for members to get to know each other and start building the trust and openness necessary for a Circle's success.

ACTION

Take a moment to introduce yourself to the group — for example, share what you do, where you live and three facts about yourself. (As a note: Your Circle Manager and Circle Facilitator — who serve as co-moderators of the group — should introduce themselves first and briefly explain their roles.)

Fact 1: _____

Fact 2: _____

Fact 3: _____

Introduction to Lean In

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 30 minutes (2 minutes for the welcome video; 2 minutes each for members and moderators)

Lean In is creating a community to encourage and support women leaning in to their ambitions. If we talk openly about gender issues and work together to tackle them, we believe we can change the trajectory of women and create a better world for all of us. Lean In Circles play a critical role in achieving this vision.

ACTION

Watch a two-minute welcome video from Lean In **(leanin.org/welcomevideo).** Then go around the room and share your personal Lean In Stories from the **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet.

You should already have a Lean In Story ready to share, but if you didn't have a chance to complete the worksheet, follow these prompts:

• **Describe a moment you could choose to "lean in" or "lean back." What was the situation?**

I'll never forget when _____

_____

• **Explain the decision you made — and why you made it.**

I decided to lean in (lean back) because _____

_____

- **Describe what action you took and how the situation played out.**

  I [action] and here's what happened _____

  _____

- **Explain how the experience impacted you personally and professionally. How did your life change?**

  After leaning in (leaning back) _____

  _____

  When you finish sharing your story, take a moment and tell the group why you're leaning in with them:

  I'm Leaning In because _____

Circle Orientation

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 10 minutes

ACTION

Talk through how Circles work as a group. Your moderator(s) will have more information to shape this discussion and can likely answer your questions.

A Lean In Circle is a group of 10 to 12 peers who meet monthly to explore professional topics and exchange personal experiences in an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust. Our goal is that every time a Circle meets, members are learning together or from each other—many times, both will be true. Monthly Circle meetings reflect these dual priorities, alternating between what we call Education and Exploration meetings.

Education Meetings are focused on learning new skills. Before each Education Meeting, members watch a short online video on a topic developed by Stanford University's Clayman Institute for Gender Research and a broad range of subject matter experts. Then during the Circle meeting, the group explores the topic more deeply and runs through how-to exercises together. Lean In provides the video and Discussion Guide, and you bring your personal insights and experiences.

Exploration Meetings are designed so members can share real-life opportunities and challenges with each other, and ultimately learn from each other's diverse experiences. Typically, two members present their situation; then the rest of the group shares their own insights and related experiences. Lean In provides everything you need to run an Exploration Meeting.

We encourage Circles to meet 10 times a year. If you follow our recommended agendas, each meeting will run about two hours, keep in mind that these are just our recommendations. We encourage you to do whatever works best for your Circle.

For answers to common questions, please visit the Circle Hub at **leanin.org/my-circle.** You can also email your questions to us at **circles@leanin.org.**

Break

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 5 minutes

PART 2: SETTING UP YOUR CIRCLE

Agree on Your Circle's Goals

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 25 minutes

ACTION

Go around the room and share your list of three personal goals (refer to the **Prepare for Kickoff** worksheet you filled out before the meeting). Write down the common goals and interests you hear, and vote to choose the top three for your circle.

Votes   **Goal**

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

LEAN IN

Agree on Circle Fundamentals

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 20 minutes

STEP 1: COMMIT TO GUIDELINES FOR RUNNING YOUR CIRCLE

Circles will develop their own personalities over time, but research shows that all successful peer groups rely on the principles of confidentiality, personal commitment and good group communication.

ACTION

As a group review our suggested guidelines for confidentiality, commitment and communication.

1. Confidentiality

- The goal of a Lean In Circle is to create a safe environment to learn and grow together. Confidentiality and trust are critical to the success of Lean In Circles. It's important that anything shared by members isn't discussed outside the Circle. If it helps, think of the three Ns: Nothing, No one, Never. *However, feel free to share your own experiences and learnings with family and friends.*

WE COMMIT _____

2. Personal Commitment

- Groups are only as strong as their weakest link. The more you participate, the more you'll get out of your Circle. We encourage Circles to meet 10 times a year and members to remain active for a year—and we hope longer!

WE COMMIT _____

3. Good Group Communication

- Push yourself to share openly and to help others do the same. Everyone benefits from stretching outside comfort zones.

- Listen beyond the words to hear the feelings. It is important to listen in order to understand rather than listen to respond as we often do in our daily lives.

- Accept Circle members and topical discussions without judgment.

- Ask thought-provoking questions to help the member see their situation from a different angle. But avoid embedding advice in the form of a question (e.g., "Have you ever considered...?").

- Share experiences, not opinions or advice. Use "I" statements and speak only for yourself. Be specific and brief. Avoid "you should..."

- No cell phones, text messages or distractions during Circle meetings.

WE COMMIT _____

We recommend you discuss your education goals for the year. Keep in mind that you will alternate between Education Meetings and Exploration meetings going forward, so you will likely have about five Education Meetings this year.

ACTION

We recommend you begin with these three topics, but there's really no right or wrong way to get started. Explore all of the topics at **leanin.org/education** and pick the topics that are interesting to your Circle. Try writing down the ones you're most interested in below, but know that you can change your plan as you go!

Power & Influence
There's a body language of power. Find out how to use it to increase your influence.
Deborah H. Gruenfeld, Professor of Leadership & Organizational Behavior at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Co-director of the Executive Program for Women Leaders

Difficult Conversations
Learn how to achieve shared goals while remaining true to yourself, even when the stakes are high.
Fred Kofman, Professor of Leadership at Francisco Marroquín University in Guatemala, Director of the Conscious Business Center

Creating a Level Playing Field
Develop workplaces the tap everyone's talents and best work.
Shelley Correll, Director of the Clayman Institute for Gender Research, Professor of Sociology at Stanford University

Our first five education meetings will be:

Education Meeting #1: _____

Education Meeting #2: _____

Education Meeting #3: _____

Education Meeting #4: _____

Education Meeting #5: _____

WE AGREE _____

LEAN IN

Schedule Your Meetings

Circles run smoothly when they're well organized. Establishing the basic who, what, where and when for your Circle is an important step in this process.

As a group, fill out the following information. Although things may end up changing, we suggest you plan out your next few meetings.

	MEETING TYPE	DATE	TIME	HOST	EDUCATION TOPIC (WHEN APPLICABLE)
1	Kickoff				
2	Education				
3	Exploration				
4	Education				
5	Exploration				
6	Education				
7	Exploration				
8	Education				
9	Exploration				
10	Education				

LEAN IN

And you're done! Congratulations, you've accomplished a lot today.

Next month will be your first Education Meeting. In advance, make sure you watch the expert lecture your group has chosen. You can find the videos at **leanin.org/education** or in your Mightybell Circle.

We also recommend you read the **Circle Education Kit** for members available in the Circle Hub at **leanin.org/my-circle** for an overview of how Education Meetings work and what to expect. Mightybell users can find the Circle Education Kit in a post titled "Education Meeting".

CIRCLE EDUCATION KIT

FOR MODERATORS

Introduction

We recommend your Circle holds an Education Meeting every other month so you can explore a new topic together. Before each meeting, you'll watch a 20-minute online lecture from our recommended schedule or based on your group's interest. Then when you get together, you can focus your time on digging into the topic more deeply and practicing how to put your new skills into action.

What's Inside

What to do with these docs

• Use the **Education Checklist** as a tool to stay organized.

• Complete the **Update Exercises** in advance of getting together.

• Spend some time reviewing the **Education Guide** so you're familiar with it and/or to refresh your memory.

• If you're the Circle Manager, make sure you're ready to use **The Topic Lot**.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Every Circle is different and will try new things. If you find an approach worth sharing, we'd love to hear about it at **circles@leanin.org**.

Education Meeting Checklist

We've created the following checklist to help you keep track of everything you need to prepare for and run an Education Meeting.

Circle Manager

BEFORE THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Remind everyone to watch the 20-minute online lecture slated for the month

_____ Print copies of the corresponding Discussion Guide for every member

_____ Review the Education Guide and print two copies for reference during the meeting— one for you and one for your co-moderator *(A quick guide for running an Education Meeting on page 6)*

_____ Make sure you have a copy of the Circle's Topic Lot
(A worksheet to keep track of topics members may want to discuss later on page 11)

_____ Make sure you have a device to keep track of time

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Serve as timekeeper during activities

_____ Guide the group to start and end on time

_____ Welcome everyone and review the day's agenda

_____ Track any important or urgent topics discussed on the Topic Lot worksheet

_____ Ask for (or recommend) volunteers to present at next month's Exploration Meeting

Circle Facilitator

BEFORE THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Watch the 20-minute online lecture so you feel comfortable with the topic before discussing it with the group

_____ Read through the corresponding Discussion Guide to make sure you understand the main talking-points and activities

_____ Review the Education Guide quickly to make sure you feel fully prepped

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Lead the guided discussion and activities related to the lesson

_____ Encourage active participation

_____ Facilitate an impromptu discussion, time allowing. This could be an icebreaker activity, or for more experienced groups, a Personal Story

Update Exercises

At the beginning of each meeting, it's helpful to spend a few minutes updating your peers about the important things happening in your life. This keeps everyone in the group up-to-date and fosters the personal connections that drive a Circle's success.

If you're having trouble figuring out what to share, you can use one of the following exercises to help you put together your update.

Exercise 1

	BEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WORST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WHAT MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN THE MONTH AHEAD	WHAT MOST DREADING IN THE MONTH AHEAD
BUSINESS				
PERSONAL				

Exercise 2

The biggest opportunity I've had since our last meeting is _____

_____

The biggest challenge I've faced since our last meeting is _____

_____

In the next 30 days, the biggest decision I'll need to make/most significant situation I'm facing is _____

_____

Today I'm feeling _____

_____

I most want to talk about _____

_____

The thing that might prevent me from focusing on our meeting today is _____

_____

Education Guide

GOALS:

1 Update other members on what's happening in your life

2 Discuss the education topic as a group

3 Commit to "One Action" that puts the skills overviewed into practice

TIME ESTIMATE: 2 Hours

Suggested Meeting Agenda

Part 1: Staying Up-to-Date	
Check-In Review agenda, confidentiality reminder	Up to 5 Minutes
Member Updates Everyone takes turns sharing what's new in their lives	2 Minutes Each
Part 2: Learning Together	
Guided Discussion Using the Discussion Guide provided by Lean In and our education partner	60-90 Minutes
Part 3: Learning from Each Other	
Personal Discussions Use "icebreaker" activities to continue to get to know each other (More experienced groups can also use the time for a Personal Story)	0-20 Minutes, if time allows
Part 4: Wrapping Up	
Housekeeping Discuss what worked and what didn't; set agenda for upcoming Exploration Meeting; confirm next meeting time/date/location	Up to 10 Minutes

PART 1: STAYING UP-TO-DATE

Check In   `ALL MEETINGS`

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 5 minutes

Education Meetings begin with a Check In. This a great time to review the agenda and remind members that confidentiality and good communication are important. It's also an opportunity for members to surface any ideas for improving the Circle.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> Try to get things started on time so the group doesn't feel rushed later in the meeting.

Member Updates   `ALL MEETINGS`

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 2 minutes each

Before diving into the Education portion of the meeting, we recommend you go around the group and share important updates from the last month, as well as upcoming opportunities and challenges you anticipate for the month ahead.

If you didn't prepare anything to say, just share what you're feeling in the moment,.

> **CIRCLE FACILITATOR**
>
> If a member isn't prepared when it's her turn, offer to come back to her at the end of Member Updates so she has time to collect her thoughts.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> Use the Topic Lot to keep track of the issues raised during Member Updates. Also keep an eye on the clock and make sure members don't take much more than 2 minutes. If anyone runs over, give them a gentle reminder to wrap things up so other members don't feel rushed when it's their turn.

PART 2: LEARNING TOGETHER

During this portion of the meeting, you'll be able to rely on the Discussion Guide provided by Lean In and our education partners. We also suggest the following tips to help things go as well as possible:

1. Keep things moving at a good pace. That way you can get through the whole Discussion Guide.

2. If the Discussion Guide has several options for exercises and questions, choose the ones you think make the most sense for your Circle.

3. Try to identify a few stories from your own life that highlight key points from the lecture.

4. As members share their own stories, look for opportunities to connect them back to key takeaways from the lecture.

Education Discussion

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 60 to 90 minutes

Before the meeting, we recommend you watch the video lecture for the month's topic on your own. This way, your Circle can spend your time discussing the topic and sharing related experiences when you're together.

During this main portion of the meeting, you can rely heavily on the Discussion Guide to shape the conversation. A typical Discussion Guide includes talking-points, how-to exercises and ends with a recommendation for "One Action" members can do to practice their newfound skills. This small homework assignment helps you start putting what you've learned into practice in your daily life—for example, you might be asked to vouch for a women's competence or practice body language over a group lunch.

To celebrate each other's successes and give everyone a little extra incentive, we recommend members report back on the outcome of their "One Action" during the next meeting. (More on this later when you prepare for your first Exploration Meeting...)

PART 3: LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

Personal Discussion

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 10 to 20 minutes (optional depending on timing)

After going through the Discussion Guide as a group, you may have a few minutes leftover. We recommend you use this time to get to know each other better. There are lots of great places to look for these kinds of icebreaker activities, you can get started here:
http://www.team-building-leadership.com/free_icebreakers.html
http://www.training-games.com/pdf/40FreeIceBreakers.pdf

Or trying going around the room and asking everyone to complete a phrase like:
"I love..."
"I worry that..."
"I want..."
"I look forward to..."
"I fear...".
You can do as many as you want, and easily add more of you own.

More experienced Circles may also decide to use this time to dig into a topic that's important to one or more members. If you haven't already done this as a group, you'll quickly become experts after a few Exploration Meetings.

For more information about Exploration Meetings, read the **Circle Exploration Kit** for members on **leanin.org/circles-materials** and in your Mightybell space.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

Once you get the hang of how an Exploration Meeting works, consider using the extra time to have a few members tell a Personal Story. (More on this when you prepare for your next meeting...)

PART 4: WRAPPING UP

Housekeeping **ALL MEETINGS**

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 10 minutes

We suggest you use the last 10 minutes of the meeting to reflect on what worked and what didn't. This is also when the Circle Manager will confirm the details for next month's Exploration Meeting and identify two members to share their Personal Stories. If you have a challenge, opportunity or upcoming decision you'd like to discuss, consider volunteering. Then in the Exploration Meeting, you'll spend about 5 minutes presenting your story, and other members will share their insights and related experiences to help inform your thinking.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> The Topic Lot is a good tool for keeping track of issues surfaced during meetings, although any running list will work. If two members don't volunteer to share Personal Stories, use the Topic Lot to flag issues that are important and meaningful to the group, and then brainstorm the best members to present together.

Next Steps

If you are presenting a Personal Story, you can use our **Share Your Story** worksheet to get prepared. You'll find it in the PDF titled **Circle Exploration Kit** for members on **leanin.org/circle-materials** and in your Mightybell space. In addition, you can always read through the full kit for a preview of the meeting.

> **CO-MODERATORS**
>
> We recommend you prepare for your next meeting by reviewing the **Circle Exploration Kit** for moderators available on **leanin.org/circles-materials** and in your Mightybell space.

> **CIRCLE FACILITATOR**
>
> In preparation for the Education Meeting, it's a nice idea to contact each presenter to see how her Personal Story is coming along and if she needs any help.

The Topic Lot
For Circle Managers

The Topic Lot is a running list of personal topics—opportunities, challenges, upcoming decisions and so on—shared during meetings. We recommend you use the Topic Lot to keep track of what's discussed so you can identify good topics for Exploration Meetings.

As a Circle Manager, one of your most important jobs is lining up two members to present at each Exploration Meeting. Members are encouraged to volunteer to present a topic that's important to them. However, you may also ask members to present on topics that are meaningful and interesting to the group.

A few tips on how to use the Topic Lot:

• Topics that are extremely important to a member or generally important to the group should take priority.

• Try to encourage members who haven't presented recently to tell a Personal Story.

MEMBER	ISSUE	FEELINGS	URGENCY (1-3)
Example: Ericka	Supervisor takes credit for her work	Frustrated	2

LEAN IN

CIRCLE EDUCATION KIT

FOR MEMBERS

Introduction

We recommend your Circle holds an Education Meeting every other month so you can explore a new topic together. Before each meeting, you'll watch a 20-minute online lecture from our recommended schedule or based on your group's interest. Then when you get together, you can focus your time on digging into the topic more deeply and practicing how to put your new skills into action.

What's Inside

What to do with these docs

• Complete the **Update Exercises** in advance of getting together.

• Reviewing the **Education Guide** for a sneak peek of what's ahead.

Don't worry about printing anything out, your moderator(s) will have copies of all the materials you need for the meeting.

Update Exercises

At the beginning of each meeting, it's helpful to spend a few minutes updating your peers about the important things happening in your life. This keeps everyone in the group up-to-date and fosters the personal connections that drive a Circle's success.

If you're having trouble figuring out what to share, you can use one of the following exercises to help you put together your update.

Exercise 1

	BEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WORST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WHAT MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN THE MONTH AHEAD	WHAT MOST DREADING IN THE MONTH AHEAD
BUSINESS				
PERSONAL				

Exercise 2

The biggest opportunity I've had since our last meeting is _____

_____

The biggest challenge I've faced since our last meeting is _____

_____

In the next 30 days, the biggest decision I'll need to make/most significant situation I'm facing is _____

_____

Today I'm feeling _____

_____

I most want to talk about _____

_____

The thing that might prevent me from focusing on our meeting today is _____

_____

Education Guide

GOALS:

1 Update other members on what's happening in your life

2 Discuss the education topic as a group

3 Commit to "One Action" that puts the skills overviewed into practice

TIME ESTIMATE: 2 Hours

Suggested Meeting Agenda

Part 1: Staying Up-to-Date	
Check-In Review agenda, confidentiality reminder	Up to 5 Minutes
Member Updates Everyone takes turns sharing what's new in their lives	2-3 Minutes Each
Part 2: Learning Together	
Guided Discussion Using the Discussion Guide provided by Lean In and our education partner	60-90 Minutes
Part 3: Learning from Each Other	
Personal Discussions Use "icebreaker" activities to continue to get to know each other (More experienced groups can also use the time for a Personal Story)	0-20 Minutes, if time allows
Part 4: Wrapping Up	
Housekeeping Discuss what worked and what didn't; set agenda for upcoming Exploration Meeting; confirm next meeting time/date/location	Up to 10 Minutes

PART 1: STAYING UP-TO-DATE

Check In **ALL MEETINGS**

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 5 minutes

Education Meetings begin with a Check In. This a great time to review the agenda and remind members that confidentiality and good communication are important. It's also an opportunity for members to surface any ideas for improving the Circle.

Member Updates **ALL MEETINGS**

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 2 to 3 minutes each

It helps to stay current with the lives of your Circle members, and leads to deeper relationships. Before diving into the Education portion of the meeting, we recommend you go around the group and share important updates from the last month, as well as upcoming opportunities and challenges you see for the month ahead.

If you didn't prepare anything to say, just share what you're feeling in the moment.

PART 2: LEARNING TOGETHER

Education Discussion

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 60 to 90 minutes

Before the meeting, we recommend you watch the video lecture for the month's topic on your own. This way, your Circle can spend your time discussing the topic and sharing related experiences when you're together.

During this main portion of the meeting, you can rely heavily on the Discussion Guide to shape the conversation. A typical Discussion Guide includes talking-points, how-to exercises and ends with a recommendation for "One Action" members can do to practice their newfound skills—for example, you might be asked to vouch for a women's competence or practice body language over a group lunch.

To celebrate each other's successes and give everyone a little extra incentive, we recommend members report back on the outcome of their "One Action" during the next meeting. (More on this later when you prepare for your first Exploration Meeting…)

PART 3: LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

Personal Discussion

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 10 to 20 minutes (optional depending on timing)

After going through the Discussion Guide as a group, you may have a few minutes leftover. We recommend you use this time to get to know each other better. There are lots of great places to look for these kinds of icebreaker activities, you can get started here:

http://www.team-building-leadership.com/free_icebreakers.html
http://www.training-games.com/pdf/40FreeIceBreakers.pdf

Or trying going around the room and asking everyone to complete a phrase like:
"I love…"
"I worry that…"
"I want…"
"I look forward to…"
"I fear…".
You can do as many as you want, and easily add more of you own.

More experienced Circles may also decide to use this time to dig into a topic that's important to one or more members. If you haven't already done this as a group, you'll quickly become experts after a few Exploration Meetings.

For more information about Exploration Meetings, read the **Circle Exploration Kit** for members on **leanin.org/circles-materials** and in your Mightybell space.

PART 4: WRAPPING UP

Housekeeping **ALL MEETINGS**

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 10 minutes

We suggest you use the last 10 minutes of the meeting to reflect on what worked and what didn't. This is also when the Circle Manager will confirm the details for next month's Exploration Meeting and identify two members to share their Personal Stories. If you have a challenge, opportunity or upcoming decision you'd like to discuss, consider volunteering. Then in the Exploration Meeting, you'll spend about 5 minutes presenting your story, and other members will share their insights and related experiences to help inform your thinking.

Next Steps

If you are presenting a Personal Story, you can use our **Share Your Story** worksheet to get prepared. You'll find it in the PDF titled **Circle Exploration Kit** for members on **leanin.org/circle-materials** and in your Mightybell space. In addition, you can always read through the full kit for a preview of the meeting.

MEMBER	ISSUE	FEELINGS	URGENCY (1-3)

CIRCLE EXPLORATION KIT

FOR MODERATORS

Introduction

Exploration Meetings are an opportunity for members to share experiences and learn from each other. In a typical Exploration Meeting, two members present a challenge, opportunity or upcoming decision with their Circle. We call these Personal Stories. After listening to the presenter, the rest of the group shares their own insights and related experiences. The idea is that everyone benefits from the group's best thinking.

What's Inside

What to do with these docs

• Use the **Education Checklist** as a tool to stay organized.

• Complete the **Update Exercises** in advance of getting together.

• Spend some time reviewing the **Exploration Guide** so you're familiar with it and/or to refresh your memory.

• If you are presenting a Personal Story, use our **Share Your Story** worksheet to get started.

• Refer to our **Listen, Ask, Share** worksheet during the meeting to help prepare your responses to Personal Stories.

• If you're the Circle Manager, make sure all set to use **The Topic Lot**.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Every Circle is different. Your Circle will likely try new things based on what's right for your members. If you find an approach worth sharing, we'd love to hear about it at **circles@leanin.org.**

LEAN IN

Exploration Meeting Checklist

We've created the following checklist to make sure you keep track of everything you need to prepare and run an Exploration Meeting.

Circle Manager

BEFORE THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Make sure you have two presenters lined up

_____ Review the Exploration Guide and print two copies for reference during the meeting—one for you and one for your co-moderator

_____ Make sure you have a copy of the Circle's Topic Lot

_____ Make sure you have a device to keep track of time

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Serve as timekeeper during activities

_____ Guide the group to start and end on time

_____ Welcome everyone and review the day's agenda

_____ Track any important or urgent topics discussed on the Topic Lot Worksheet

_____ Confirm the topic for next month's Education Meeting

Circle Facilitator

BEFORE THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Check in with the scheduled presenters to see if they need any help with their Personal Stories

_____ Review the Exploration Guide to make sure you feel fully prepped

AT THE MEETING, YOU'LL:

_____ Introduce the presenters and facilitate the discussion that follows their Personal Stories

_____ Ensure members respect the Circle's commitment to good communication

LEAN IN

Update Exercises

At the beginning of each meeting, it's helpful to spend a few minutes updating members about the important things happening in your life. This keeps everyone in the group up-to-date and fosters the personal connections that drive a Circle's success.

If you're having trouble figuring out what to share, you can use one of the following exercises to help you put together your update.

Exercise 1

	BEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WORST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WHAT MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN THE MONTH AHEAD	WHAT MOST DREADING IN THE MONTH AHEAD
BUSINESS				
PERSONAL				

Exercise 2

The biggest opportunity I've had since our last meeting is _____

_____

The biggest challenge I've faced since our last meeting is _____

_____

In the next 30 days, the biggest decision I'll need to make/most significant situation I'm facing is _____

_____

Today I'm feeling _____

_____

I most want to talk about _____

_____

The thing that might prevent me from focusing on our meeting today is _____

_____

Exploration Guide

GOALS:

1 Update other members on what's happening in your life

2 Exchange personal insights and experiences on important issues

TIME ESTIMATE: 2 Hours

Suggested Meeting Agenda

Part 1: Staying Connected	
Check-In Review agenda, confidentiality reminder	Up to 5 Minutes
Member Updates Everyone takes turns sharing what's new in their lives	2 Minutes Each
One Action Updates Everyone takes turns sharing the outcome of their "One Action" (This can be done as part of Member Updates)	2 Minutes Each
Part 2: Learning from Each Other	
Personal Story #1	30-45 Minutes
Facilitator sets up the discussion (confidentiality, boundaries, communication guidelines)	1 Minute
Presenter shares her Personal Story	5-7 Minutes
Circle members can ask questions to shape the presenter's thinking or guide their own stories	Up to 5 Minutes
Members share their own insights or experiences	2 Minutes Each
Presenter shares how she benefited from the discussion	1 Minute
Members take turns doing the same	Up to 5 Minutes
Personal Story #2	30-45 Minutes
Part 3: Wrapping Up	
Housekeeping Discuss what worked and what didn't; confirm next meeting's Education topic as well as time/date/location	Up to 10 Minutes

PART 1: STAYING CONNECTED

Check In `ALL MEETINGS`

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 5 minutes

Education Meetings begin with a Check In. This a great time to review the agenda and remind members that confidentiality and good communication are important. It's also an opportunity for members to surface any ideas for improving the Circle.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> Try to get things started on time so the group doesn't feel rushed later in the meeting.

Member Updates `ALL MEETINGS`

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 2 minutes each

Before diving into the Exploration portion of the meeting, we recommend you go around the group and share important updates from the last month, as well as upcoming opportunities and challenges you see for the month ahead.

If you didn't prepare anything to say, just share what you're feeling in the moment, and try to stick to more significant updates.

> **CIRCLE FACILITATOR**
>
> If a member isn't prepared when it's her turn, offer to come back to her at the end of Member Updates so she has time to collect her thoughts.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> Use the Topic Lot to keep track of the issues raised during Member Updates. Also keep an eye on the clock during both Member and One Action Updates to make sure members don't take much than 2 minutes. If anyone runs over, give them a gentle reminder to wrap things up so other members don't feel rushed when it's their turn.

One Action Updates

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 2 minutes each

During your last Education Meeting, you likely ended by discussing how to incorporate the recommended "One Action" into your upcoming month. If you put your new skills into action and completed it, now is a great time to share your results with the group. If you didn't, consider sharing what, if anything, got in your way.

> **CIRCLE FACILITATOR**
>
> It's a good idea to start things out by reminding everyone what the "One Action" for the month was. You may want to start by asking if anyone has an especially interesting experience they want to share, or just go around the room and have each member share.

PART 2: LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

This is the part where Exploration and Education Meetings are different. Lean In provides an online lecture and Discussion Guide for Education Meetings. Exploration Meetings are a time to focus on the experiences of individual Circle members by sharing what we call Personal Stories.

A note to members sharing a Personal Story: We recommend you take some time ahead of the meeting to organize your thoughts. We provide the **Sharing Your Story** worksheet on page 9 to get you started. In addition, you can always reach out to your Circle Facilitator for help with your story.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

It's nice to reach out to presenters before the meeting to see if they need any help focusing their presentation, or figuring out what they hope to achieve during the discussion.

CIRCLE FACILITATOR

It's a good idea to start the Personal Story segment of the meeting by reminding everyone about the importance of confidentiality. You may also want to tell everyone to hold their questions until the presenter is finished, and to emphasize the importance of good group communication when asking her questions and sharing their own stories. If anyone's questions or stories drift into making judgements or offering advice, gently remind them that Circles are about listening to and sharing experiences.

Personal Story #1
TIME RECOMMENDATION: 30-45 minutes

During this portion of the meeting, the first presenter spends 5 to 7 minutes sharing her Personal Story with the group. After she's finished, members are encouraged to ask questions to help her consider her situation from a different angle and/or gather more information so they can choose the right story to share in response. In either case, they should avoid offering advice or making judgements.

Following this brief Q&A, members go around the room and tell their own stories. The goal is that hearing how other members have responded to similar situations will help the presenter work through her issue, and provide different points-of-view that are valuable to everyone in the Circle.

A great way to end is for the presenter to spend a few minutes explaining how she benefited from the discussion. Then other members can quickly do the same—a simple approach is to go around the Circle and complete the phrases, "I'm feeling…" or "I learned…"

Personal Story #2
TIME RECOMMENDATION: 30-45 minutes

In a typical Exploration Meeting, you'll have time for a second Personal Story following the same format.

If there's remaining time, you can always try to sneak in a third Personal Story or spend extra time digging more deeply into an issue that was raised by the goup.

PART 3: WRAPPING UP

Housekeeping ALL MEETINGS

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 10 minutes

We suggest you use some of the last 10 minutes of the meeting to reflect on what worked and what didn't. This is also when the Circle Manager will remind everyone what topic is on the agenda for next month's Education Meeting.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> If your Circle isn't following Lean In's suggested topic schedule, it might help to preview a few videos online so you can offer suggestions to the group and choose on together.

Next Steps

We recommend you watch the online lecture a few days before the getting together so it's fresh in your mind; you can also read through the Discussion Guide but it's not necessary. In any case, don't forget to come prepared to give your regular Member Update.

You can find all our online lectures at **leanin.org/education**, and we automatically add the next lecture on our suggested schedule to your Mightybell space.

> **CIRCLE MANAGER**
>
> It may be helpful to send out a reminder to watch the online lecture a few days before the meeting. If someone arrives and hasn't watched it, they'll miss out on most of the evening—like arriving at book club without opening the book!

> **CIRCLE FACILITATOR**
>
> Try to set some time aside in the days before the meeting to review the lecture and Discussion Guide so you feel prepared to lead the group activities. You can always find all the materials related to our education topics at **leanin.org/education**.

Share Your Story

As a presenter, you'll share a 5 to 7 minute Personal Story with your Circle, and then field questions from other members before listening to their insights and stories.

To get started, we suggest you take some time to work through the following questions. In addition, you can reach out to your Circle Facilitator for help focusing your thoughts and putting together your story.

ACTION

- **Nature**
  What is the nature of your Personal Story? Is it related to work or home or something else?

  _____

  _____

- **Background**
  What is the background information? This is the who, what, when, where and why.

  _____

  _____

- **Purpose**
  Why did you choose this topic? What question do you want to answer?
  What is the challenge or opportunity you want to address?

  _____

  _____

- **Feelings**
  How do you feel about the situation you're presenting? Sad, mad, anxious, scared?

  _____

  _____

- **Options**
  What are your options? What are the pros and cons of each? Do you have a preference? Are there elements of the situation that are out of your control?

  _____

  _____

- **Outcomes**
  What are the outcomes of your different options? What will happen if nothing changes?

  _____

  _____

Listen, Ask, Share

Personal Stories allow individual members to share their opportunities, challenges and upcoming decisions. Then the whole group benefits from everyone's insights and experiences. We hope your Circle becomes a place where everyone can discuss important issues that they're experiencing at work and home.

Remember your Circle's commitment to good communication during Personal Stories. As a refresher, here are our suggested guidelines:

- **Listen** beyond the words to hear the feelings. It is important to listen in order to understand rather than listen to respond as we often do in our daily lives.
- **Accept** Circle members and topical discussions without judgment.
- **Ask** thought-provoking questions to help the presenter see her situation from a different angle. But avoid embedding advice in the form of a question (e.g., "Have you ever considered…?").
- **Share** experiences, not opinions or advice. Use "I" statements and speak only for yourself. Be specific and brief. Avoid "you should…"

We've developed the prompts below to help you formulate your questions, insights and stories as you listen to each member's Personal Story.

Personal Story #1

ACTION

- **Listen**
  What are key considerations of the presenter? How is she feeling about the situation?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Ask**
  Is there a question you'd like to ask to help better understand the presenter's situation? Something that might get her to consider things from a different angle?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Share**
  What experiences have you had that might be helpful to the presenter?

  _____

  _____

  _____

Personal Story #2

ACTION

- **Listen**
  What are key considerations of the presenter? How is she feeling about the situation?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Ask**
  Is there a question you'd like to ask to help better understand the presenter's situation?
  Something that might get her to consider things from a different angle?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Share**
  What experiences have you had that might be helpful to the presenter?

  _____

  _____

  _____

The Topic Lot
For Circle Managers

The Topic Lot is a running list of personal topics—opportunities, challenges, life changes, etc.—shared during meetings. We recommend you use the Topic Lot to keep track of what's discussed so you can identify good topics for Exploration Meetings.

As a Circle Manager, one of your most important jobs is lining up two members to present at each Exploration Meeting. Members are encouraged to volunteer to present on a challenge, opportunity or decision that's important to them. However, you may also ask members to present on topics that are meaningful and interesting to the group.

A few tips on how to use the Topic Lot:

• Topics that are extremely important to a member or generally important to the group should take priority.

• Try to encourage members who haven't presented recently to tell a Personal Story.

MEMBER	ISSUE	FEELINGS	URGENCY (1-3)
Example: Ericka	*Supervisor takes credit for her work*	*Angry*	*2*

MEMBER	ISSUE	FEELINGS	URGENCY (1-3)

CIRCLE EXPLORATION KIT

FOR MEMBERS

Introduction

Exploration Meetings are an opportunity for members to share experiences and learn from each other. In a typical Exploration Meeting, two members present a challenge, opportunity or upcoming decision with their Circle. We call these Personal Stories. After listening to the presenter, the rest of the group shares their own insights and related experiences. The idea is that everyone benefits from the group's best thinking.

What's inside

What to do with these docs

• Complete the **Update Exercises** in advance of getting together.

• Review the **Exploration Guide** for a sneak peek at what's ahead.

• If you are presenting a Personal Story, use our **Share Your Story** worksheet to get started.

• Refer to our **Listen, Ask, Share** worksheet during the meeting to help prepare your responses to Personal Stories.

Don't worry about printing out documents you're not using to prepare; your moderator(s) will have copies of everything you need for the meeting.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Every Circle is different and will try new things. If you find an approach worth sharing, we'd love to hear about it at **circles@leanin.org.**

Update Exercises

At the beginning of each meeting, it's helpful to spend a few minutes updating members about the important things happening in your life. This keeps everyone in the group up-to-date and fosters the personal connections that drive a Circle's success.

If you're having trouble figuring out what to share, you can use one of the following exercises to help you put together your update.

Exercise 1

	BEST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WORST THING THAT'S HAPPENED IN THE LAST MONTH	WHAT MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN THE MONTH AHEAD	WHAT MOST DREADING IN THE MONTH AHEAD
BUSINESS				
PERSONAL				

Exercise 2

The biggest opportunity I've had since our last meeting is _____

_____

The biggest challenge I've faced since our last meeting is _____

_____

In the next 30 days, the biggest decision I'll need to make/most significant situation I'm facing is _____

_____

Today I'm feeling _____

_____

I most want to talk about _____

_____

The thing that might prevent me from focusing on our meeting today is _____

_____

Exploration Guide

GOALS:

1 Update other members on what's happening in your life

2 Exchange personal insights and experiences on important issues

TIME ESTIMATE: 2 Hours

Suggested Meeting Agenda

Part 1: Staying Connected	
Check-In Review agenda, confidentiality reminder	Up to 5 Minutes
Member Updates Everyone takes turns sharing what's new in their lives	2 Minutes Each
One Action Updates Everyone takes turns sharing the outcome of their "One Action" (This can be done as part of Member Updates)	2 Minutes Each
Part 2: Learning from Each Other	
Personal Story #1	**30-45 Minutes**
Facilitator sets up the discussion (confidentiality, boundaries, communication guidelines)	1 Minute
Presenter shares her Personal Story	5-7 Minutes
Circle members can ask questions to shape the presenter's thinking or guide their own stories	Up to 5 Minutes
Members share their own insights or experiences	2 Minutes Each
Presenter shares how she benefited from the discussion	1 Minute
Members take turns doing the same	Up to 5 Minutes
Personal Story #2	**30-45 Minutes**
Part 3: Wrapping Up	
Housekeeping Discuss what worked and what didn't; confirm next meeting's Education topic as well as time/date/location	Up to 10 Minutes

PART 1: STAYING CONNECTED

Check In `ALL MEETINGS`

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 5 minutes

Exploration Meetings begin with a Check In. This a great time to review the agenda and remind members that confidentiality and good communication are important. It's also an opportunity for members to surface any ideas for improving the Circle.

Member Updates `ALL MEETINGS`

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 2 minutes each

Before diving into the Exploration portion of the meeting, we recommend you go around the group and share important updates from the last month, as well as upcoming opportunities and challenges you see for the month ahead.

If you didn't prepare anything to say, just share what you're feeling in the moment, and try to stick to more significant updates.

One Action Updates

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 2 minutes each

During your last Education Meeting, you likely ended by discussing how to incorporate the recommended "One Action" into your upcoming month. If you put your new skills into action and completed it, now is a great time to share your results with the group. If you didn't, consider sharing what, if anything, got in your way.

PART 2: LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

This is the part where Exploration and Education Meetings are different. Lean In provides an online lecture and Discussion Guide for Education Meetings. Exploration Meetings are a time to focus on the experiences of individual Circle members by sharing what we call Personal Stories.

A note to members sharing a Personal Story: We recommend you take some time ahead of the meeting to organize your thoughts. We provide the **Sharing Your Story** worksheet on page 9 to get you started. In addition, you can always reach out to your Circle Facilitator for help with your story.

Personal Story #1

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 30-45 minutes

During this portion of the meeting, the first presenter spends 5 to 7 minutes sharing her Personal Story with the group. After she's finished, members are encouraged to ask questions to help her consider her situation from a different angle and/or gather more information so they can choose the right story to share in response. In either case, they should avoid offering advice or making judgements.

Following this brief Q&A, members go around the room and tell their own stories. The goal is that hearing how other members have responded to similar situations will help the presenter work through her issue, and provide different points-of-view that are valuable to everyone in the Circle.

A great way to end is for the presenter to spend a few minutes explaining how she benefited from the discussion. Then other members can quickly do the same—a simple approach is to go around the Circle and complete the phrases, "I'm feeling..." or "I learned..."

Personal Story #2

TIME RECOMMENDATION: 30-45 minutes

In a typical Exploration Meeting, you'll have time for a second Personal Story following the same format.

If there's remaining time, you can always try to sneak in a third Personal Story or spend extra time digging more deeply into an issue that was raised by the goup.

PART 3: WRAPPING UP

Housekeeping ALL MEETINGS

TIME RECOMMENDATION: Up to 10 minutes

We suggest you use some of the last 10 minutes of the meeting to reflect on what worked and what didn't. This is also when the Circle Manager will remind everyone what topic is on the agenda for next month's Education Meeting.

Next Steps

We recommend you watch the online lecture a few days before the getting together so it's fresh in your mind; you can also read through the Discussion Guide but it's not necessary. In any case, don't forget to come prepared to give your regular Member Update.

You can find all our online lectures at **leanin.org/education**, and we automatically add the next lecture on our suggested schedule to your Mightybell space.

Share Your Story

As a presenter, you'll share a 5 to 7 minute Personal Story with your Circle, and then field questions from other members before listening to their insights and stories.

To get started, we suggest you take some time to work through the following questions. In addition, you can reach out to your Circle Facilitator for help focusing your thoughts and putting together your story.

ACTION

- **Nature**
  What is the nature of your Personal Story? Is it related to work or home or something else?

  _____

  _____

- **Background**
  What is the background information? This is the who, what, when, where and why.

  _____

  _____

- **Purpose**
  Why did you choose this topic? What question do you want to answer?
  What is the challenge or opportunity you want to address?

  _____

  _____

- **Feelings**
  How do you feel about the situation you're presenting? Sad, mad, anxious, scared?

  _____

  _____

- **Options**
  What are your options? What are the pros and cons of each? Do you have a preference? Are there elements of the situation that are out of your control?

  _____

  _____

- **Outcomes**
  What are the outcomes of your different options? What will happen if nothing changes?

  _____

  _____

LEAN IN

Listen, Ask, Share

Personal Stories allow individual members to share their opportunities, challenges and upcoming decisions. Then the whole group benefits from everyone's insights and experiences. We hope your Circle becomes a place where everyone can discuss important issues that they're experiencing at work and home.

Remember your Circle's commitment to good communication during Personal Stories. As a refresher, here are our suggested guidelines:

- **Listen** beyond the words to hear the feelings. It is important to listen in order to understand rather than listen to respond as we often do in our daily lives.
- **Accept** Circle members and topical discussions without judgment.
- **Ask** thought-provoking questions to help the presenter see her situation from a different angle. But avoid embedding advice in the form of a question (e.g., "Have you ever considered…?").
- **Share** experiences, not opinions or advice. Use "I" statements and speak only for yourself. Be specific and brief. Avoid "you should…"

We've developed the prompts below to help you formulate your questions, insights and stories as you listen to each member's Personal Story.

Personal Story #1

ACTION

- **Listen**
  What are key considerations of the presenter? How is she feeling about the situation?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Ask**
  Is there a question you'd like to ask to help better understand the presenter's situation?
  Something that might help her consider things from a different angle?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Share**
  What experiences have you had that might be helpful to the presenter?

  _____

  _____

  _____

Personal Story #2

ACTION

- **Listen**
  What are key considerations of the presenter? How is she feeling about the situation?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Ask**
  Is there a question you'd like to ask to help better understand the presenter's situation? Something that might help her consider things from a different angle?

  _____

  _____

  _____

- **Share**
  What experiences have you had that might be helpful to the presenter?

  _____

  _____

  _____