



High Impact Mentorship for Athletic Administrators

Presenters

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Michigan High School Athletic Association

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Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union



JOHN E.
"JACK" ROBERTS
BUILDING

AD CONNECTION PROGRAM

Mark Uyl
Executive Director

AD CONNECTION PROGRAM



THE ISSUE

- The MHSAA has 755 member high schools. Each school is required to have an athletic director.
- **We were seeing an AVERAGE TURNOVER OF 133 new AD's each year over a 5-year period.**
- Turnover and retention was a HUGE problem for us in this profession in Michigan.
- High levels of frustration for all involved....we were churning out new AD's every single year.

Completed year 101 in 25-26. I am not a big fan of mission statements, strategic plans or "word-salading" problems without appropriate action.

- Look at your BUDGET.....SPENDING = PRIORITIES!
- We have four fundamental principles that drive what we do...
 1. Scholarship.....our kids are students FIRST, and athletes second.
 2. Scope....our programs are important, but not crazy. Proper perspective
 3. Sportsmanship...daily focus.
 4. Safety
- Who do we serve first and foremost?
- NFHS Example.....



“

**GET BUSY
LIVING OR GET
BUSY DYING.**

ANDY DUNFEE

THE PLAN

- Hired 7 master AD's, who had recently retired. Hired them as independent contractors at \$15,000 per year with a caseload of 15-20 new AD's. Total annual budget item of \$125,000.
- Gave them a sounding board, and connected them with our professional organization, the MIAAA.
- Wanted to improve retention rates!
- Also needed to EDUCATE SUPERINTENDANTS AND PRINCIPALS about the challenges that AD's face.
- Overall supportive....and now are trying to replicate the same program.

MIAAA: ADS PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

Professional Development Opportunities

- **Summer Leadership Academy** (*2nd year ADs*)
 - **Leadership Training Courses LTC** (*ongoing*)
 - **Certified Athletic Administrators (CAA)**
 - **Mid Winter Conference** **(March)** → **Grand Traverse Resort**
 - **Camp Mid** **(June)** → **Mt. Pleasant**
- + *Newsletter* + *Insurance* + *Networking* + *Voice*
- + **Karen Leinaar, Exec. Director**



AD CONNECTION TEAM

- *KAREN LEINAAR* *MIAAA*
- *WAYNE WELTON* *Chelsea*
- *BRIAN GORDON* *Royal Oak*
- *TIM JOHNSTON* *East GR*
- *CHRIS ERVIN* *St. Johns*
- *SEAN JACQUES* *Calumet*
- *MEG SENG* *AA Greenhills*
- *SCOTT ROBERTSON* *Grand Haven*
- *BRAD BUSH* *MHSAA*



OVERVIEW

- ALL NEW ATHLETIC DIRECTORS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND A DAY LONG FACE TO FACE INSERVICE AT THE MHSAA OFFICES IN AUGUST / SEPTEMBER
 - *THIS IS THE ONLY FACE TO FACE MEETING WE REQUIRE!*
 - *We do offer some Mentor/Mentee meetings as well!*
- EACH AD IS ASSIGNED A MENTOR THAT INCLUDES SCHOOL SITE MEETINGS; CHECK INs; COACHING; COHORT MEETINGS.
- THE AD IS CONNECTED TO THE MIAAA WHICH WILL FOLLOW UP WITH MENTOR SERVICES IN YEAR 2 AND 3 WHILE RETAINING THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR MENTOR.



INITIAL IMPRESSIONS



BEST PRACTICES

PROGRESS SO FAR...

23-24

139

24-25

128

25-26

106

26-27

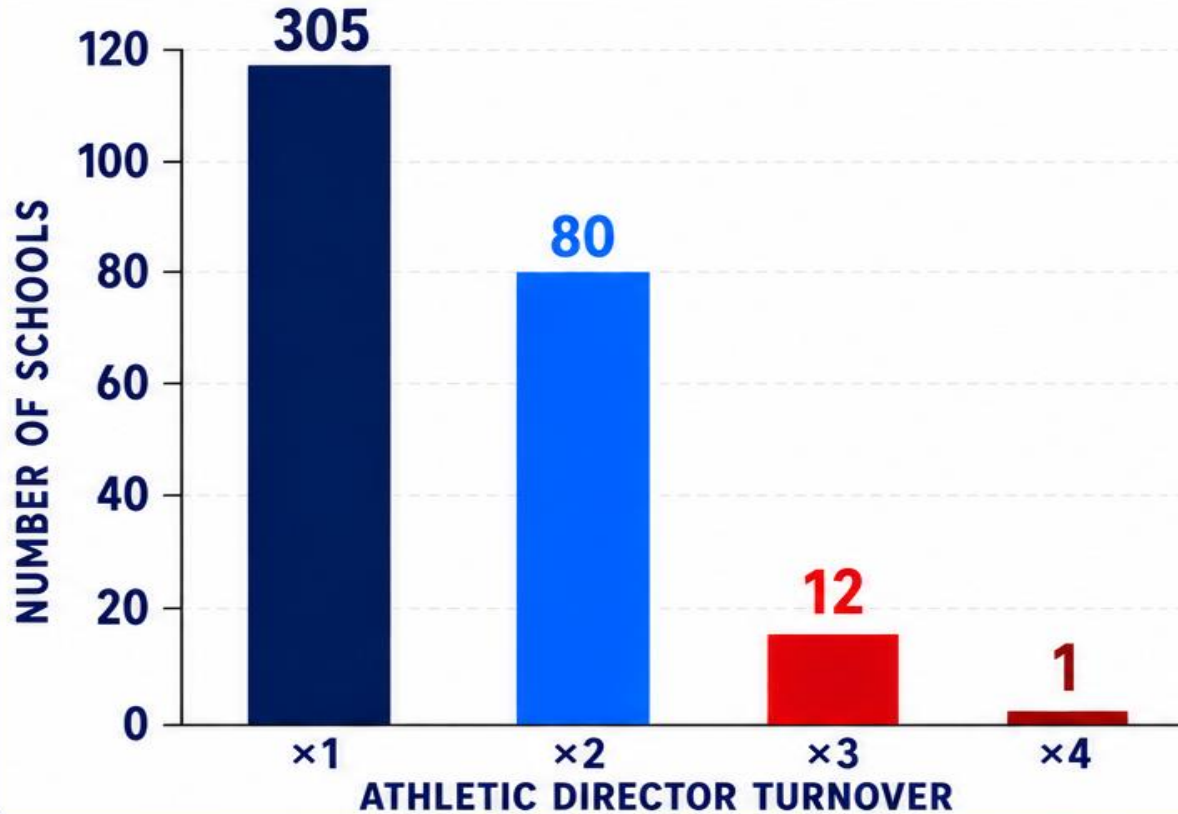
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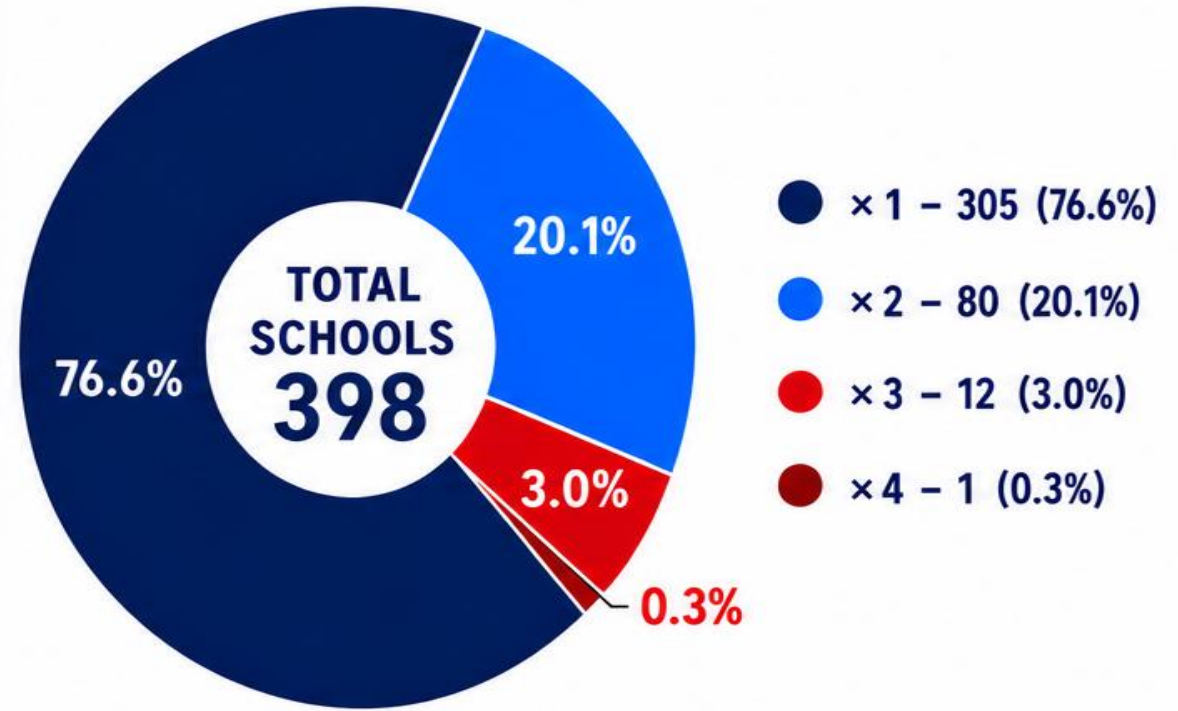
MHSAA AD CONNECTION PROGRAM

— ATHLETIC DIRECTOR TURNOVER (23-24 TO 26-27) —

TURNOVERS BY NUMBER



PERCENTAGE OF TURNOVER



TOTAL OUT OF
MHSAA SCHOOLS
398 OF 758
(52.5%)



x1 CHANGE
305
(76.6%)



x2 CHANGES
80
(20.1%)



x3 CHANGES
12
(3.0%)



x4 CHANGES
1
(0.3%)



FUTURE OF THE AD CONNECTION PROGRAM



We Don't Have an Athletic Director Problem

We have a **leadership development opportunity**

Raise Your Hand If...

- HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE MENTORS?
- ARE YOU A MENTOR TO OTHERS?
 - NATURAL OR BY DESIGN?
- CONNECTION TO ASSIGNED MENTORS SO THAT THERE IS VALUE IN SEEKING NATURAL MENTORSHIP AS WELL...

What We're Seeing

Symptoms

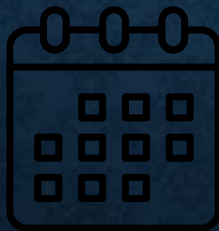
- Turnover
- Burnout
- Isolation
- Frustration

Root Causes

- Limited Onboarding
- Lack of Mentorship
- Lack of Support Systems
- Leadership
Development Gaps

What New Athletic Directors Told Us

**“I don’t know
what I don’t
know”**



The Cost of Learning Alone



Michigan Inspired Iowa

01



02



03



04



05

Michigan AD
Connection
Program

Collaboration

Iowa Planning

Partnership
Development

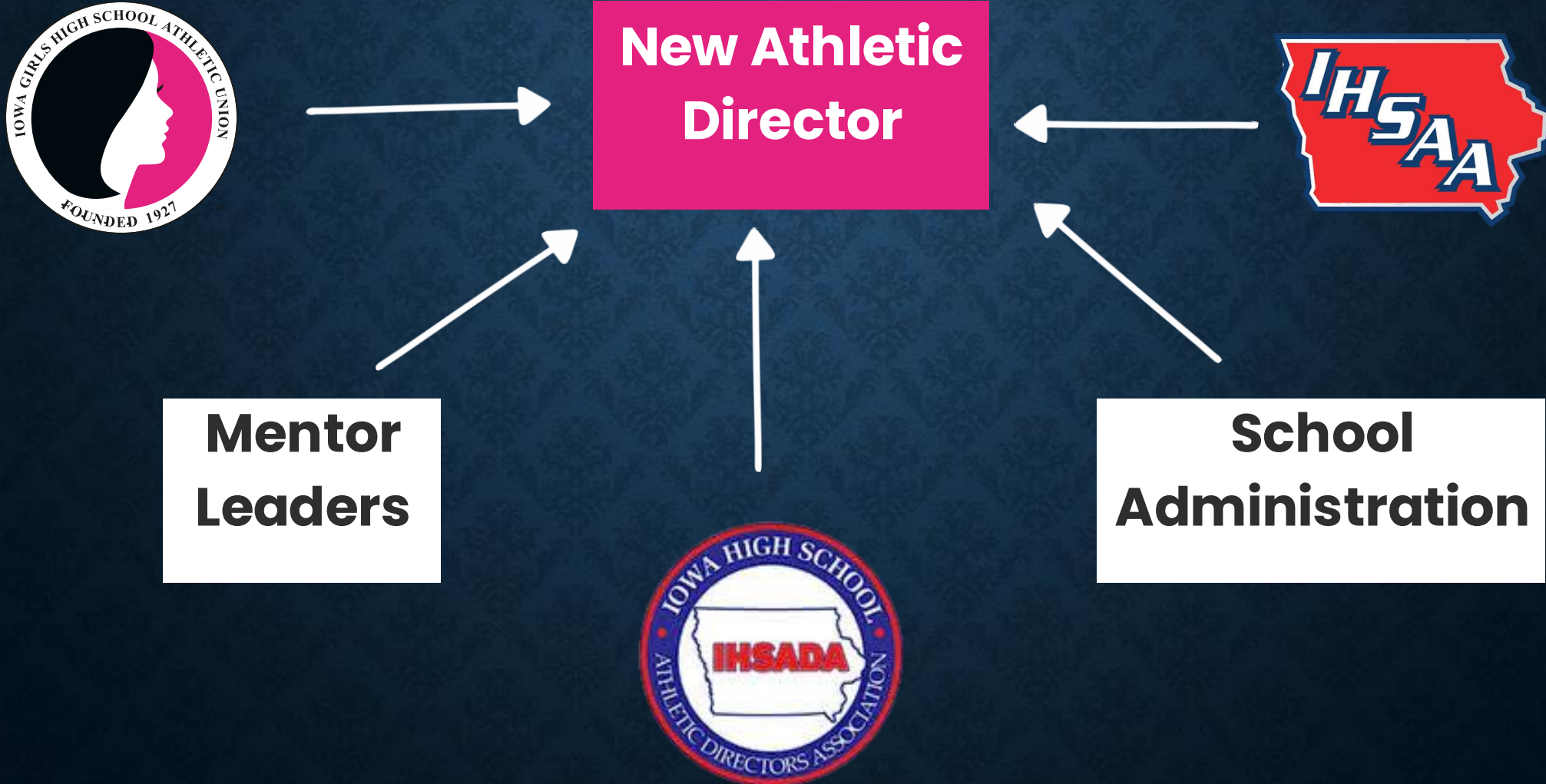
Program
Launch
(2024)



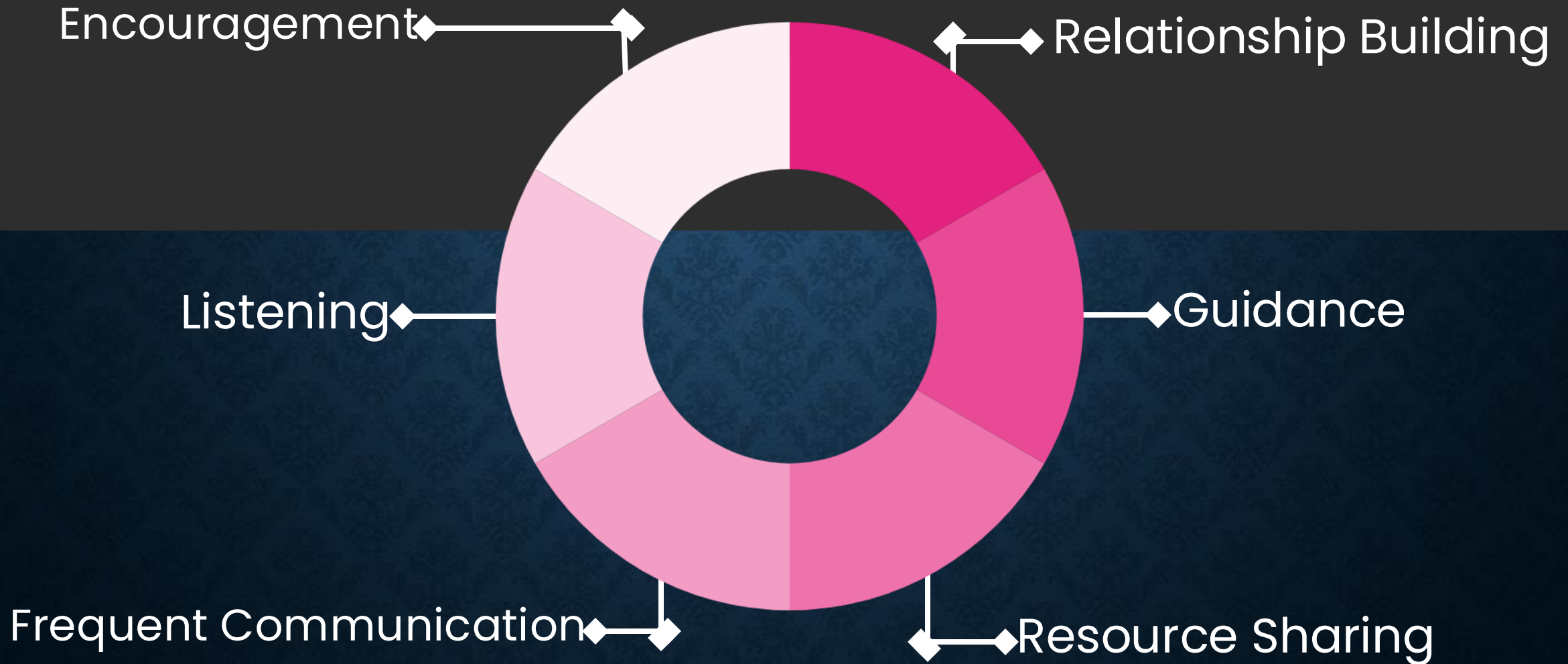
Why Iowa Chose to Invest

1. Support New Athletic Directors
2. Improve Confidence
3. Improve Retention
4. Strengthen Schools
5. Improve Student Experiences

The Iowa Partnership Model



What Makes The Program Work



Trusted Support

73%

of ADs felt their mentor
created a safe, supportive
relationship, built trust, and
was empathetic

Guidance & Perspective

93%

of ADs felt their mentor
gave helpful guidance on
core responsibilities and
essential duties

Stress Reduction

85%

of ADs feel they are more confident and competent in their role because of their mentor

What Mentors Learned:

“Building trust with the mentee is a necessity.”

- Trust
- Flexibility
- Relationships
- Individualized Support

Why State Associations Matter



- Credibility
- Consistency
- Connections
- Capacity
- Cost



The Blueprint



**THE GREATEST LEADERS ARE THE
ONES WHO POSESS THE ABILITY TO
GROW OTHER LEADERS...**



QUESTIONS?