



THE GIVEN INSTITUTE
**CATHOLIC YOUNG WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**
PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION

The GIVEN Institute's signature Catholic Young Women's Leadership Program provides emerging leaders (aged 21-35) with guidance, support, and accompaniment as they navigate the questions, opportunities, and challenges that face contemporary Catholic women.

The Leadership Program has three primary elements designed to help women understand their personal vocation and activate their personal gifts: 1) formation, including GIVEN's flagship Leadership Forum, 2) a year of dedicated mentoring, and 3) development and support to launch an Action Plan. At the conclusion of the year, alumnae are invited to join the GIVEN Network—a vibrant, international community offering ongoing support, connection, and collaboration.

The mentoring experience, known as the “Art of Accompaniment,” begins after the Leadership Forum. Through intentional relationships with established Catholic women leaders—lay, consecrated, and religious—participants are supported in discovering and fully living their gifts in service to the Church and the world. GIVEN mentors emphasize the uniquely feminine genius of integrating faith, relationships, professional aspirations, and vocational responsibilities.

Through this experience, mentors and mentees can expect:

- Spiritual and professional formation as Catholic women leaders
- Greater awareness and activation of their unique gifts
- Deep personal transformation
- Increased engagement in the life of the Church

This guide offers practical insights and guidance for building a fruitful mentoring relationship. We encourage you to read it carefully and become familiar with the expectations of the program. The GIVEN staff remains available throughout the year to support you every step of the way.

Through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe, let us pray that our hearts remain receptive to the Holy Spirit in all areas of our lives. Thank you for your FIAT in being a part of the Catholic Young Women's Leadership Program. We are confident that you will be blessed and enriched by your GIVEN experience.



FORUM JOURNEY

GIVEN FORUM JOURNEY

The Forum, a cornerstone of the GIVEN Leadership Program, is a five-day journey (June 24–28, 2026) that moves from the deep experience of being loved as a gift, to recognizing one's unique gifts, to responding outwardly in service.

- Rooted in the truth that action flows from being
- Rooted in the theology of the gift: first received, then given
- Formation is NOT just the talks, but the whole experience of prayer, formation, and community.

FORMATION

KEYNOTES ON THE 3 PILLARS

- Thematic backbone
- Laying the foundation

TRAINING

- Practical tools/application
- Panels that give witness to the living of the pillars

PRAYER

LITURGICAL PRAYER

- Mass daily
- Confession
- Optional Divine Office

PERSONAL PRAYER

- Adoration
- Group Prayer
- Guided Meditations

COMMUNITY

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Small Group Fellowship
- Shared Living & Meals
- Spiritual & Vocational Guidance
- Joyful Social Events
- Meaningful Speaker Connections
- Mission-Aligned Vendors

“To be able to discover the actual will of the Lord in our lives always involves the following: a receptive listening to the Word of God and the Church, fervent and constant prayer, recourse to a wise and loving spiritual guide, and a faithful discernment of the gifts and talents given by God.”

St. John Paul II, Christifidelis Laici

ART OF ACCOMPANIMENT MENTORING EXPERIENCE

Mentors play a vital role in accompanying young women participants in the months following the GIVEN Leadership Forum. Through meaningful conversations, mentors help young women deepen what they received at the Forum and offer invaluable guidance as they develop and implement their Action Plans.

The Art of Accompaniment mentoring experience is intentionally designed to foster a fruitful, mission-driven relationship that supports young women in discerning their personal vocation and activating their gifts.

WHAT MENTORING IS AND IS NOT

Mentoring is...

A relationship - Relationship is the heart of the program. Through self-gift, we find personal fulfillment.

Integrated - Mentoring considers the spiritual, personal, and professional needs of each woman.

A living Spiritual Motherhood - Each woman is called to exercise her spiritual motherhood through her own unique gifts and experiences.

Mentoring is not...

A substitute for formal development - Mentoring cannot replace formal training but should augment professional development activities.

Counseling or therapy - While personal issues may be discussed, mentors are not substitutes for mental health professionals.

A dependent relationship - Mentors give support for the Action Plan but are not expected to do the work or make decisions for the mentee.

MATCHING MENTORS AND MENTEES

Young women may propose up to three preferred mentors following the Forum, and mentors may also suggest up to three participants they connected with. Participants will be listed in the GIVEN 2026 Leadership Program Directory, distributed at the Forum.

Each pairing is thoughtfully and prayerfully discerned, taking into account the backgrounds, experiences, and gifts of both mentors and mentees.

PLANNING FOR THE MENTORING YEAR

The *Art of Accompaniment mentoring experience is mentee-driven, which means that young women assume responsibility for the mentoring process.* Once a young woman is matched with her mentor, it is her responsibility to begin developing the relationship with her mentor. She initiates, schedules, and plans for the mentoring sessions and determines her desired outcomes.

PRAYER AND DISCERNMENT

As you both begin your mentoring journey, we invite you to dedicate time to prayer for each other. This is the source of the greatest gifts in the experience and the best way to express your gratitude. *Seek docility from the Holy Spirit to ensure that your desires align with God's will.*

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

MEETING FREQUENCY

Mentoring meetings should take place at least once a month for a minimum of 30 minutes, though additional time or frequency is left to the discretion of the mentor and mentee. A sample meeting agenda is provided in Appendix A to support your preparation and ensure fruitful conversations.

BUILDING A STRONG RELATIONSHIP

To help mentors and participants better understand their **strengths** and **motivations**, GIVEN partners with the *Inscape Center for Personal Vocation* to provide formation that supports each woman in discovering her **unique** and **unrepeatable** vocation. The mentoring relationship is enriched as participants share their “fulfillment stories,” offering mentors valuable insight to guide and deepen their accompaniment.

Additionally, all participants receive access to the *Clifton Strengths Assessment*. Both mentors and mentees are formed in how to use this tool to identify connections between **fulfillment stories and natural aptitudes**. This integrated understanding helps participants develop and carry out their Action Plans with greater clarity and confidence. With the support of their mentors, each participant discerns her strengths and learns to activate them concretely through her Action Plan.

Mentors accompany participants in identifying patterns of motivation and uncovering strengths revealed through their fulfillment stories. They support participants in intentionally applying these strengths to the development and execution of their Action Plans, while also offering encouragement and the wisdom of their experience. Mentor–mentee pairs who engage this approach often find that the resulting self-knowledge and personal insight are deeply transformative.

A deeper awareness of one’s unique gifts equips both mentor and mentee to more fully embrace God’s call in every area of life. Mentors offer the witness of her faith, the wealth of her knowledge and experience, prayerful support, and her desire to help with and advocate for young women’s Action Plan. Our prayer is that this relationship will lead you both to share more fully together life in Christ, providing fertile soil in which both of you will grow and flourish.

WHAT IS A FULFILLMENT STORY?

Fulfillment stories describe things you have enjoyed doing, believe you did well, and found deeply satisfying. These stories can be from any point in time or aspect of your life - school, sports, work, church, volunteer activities, family life, and leisure activity.

REPORTING & TROUBLESHOOTING

Participants are required to submit periodic updates, including Mid and End-of-Year reports, to share the progress of their Action Plan. Mentors are likewise required to provide updates to GIVEN, confirming consistent engagement and regular meetings with their mentees.

Participants and mentors are encouraged to seek support when needed. If you are experiencing challenges during the mentoring experience please contact GIVEN’s Mentoring Program Director.

THE ROLES OF MENTEE

THE MENTEE

The mentee is entrusted with taking the primary initiative in the mentorship and is expected to:

- Initiate contact and coordinate the scheduling of meetings
- Prepare thoughtfully for each session with questions, reflections, and updates
- Take ownership of her personal, professional, and spiritual development
- Follow through on commitments and Action Plan milestones
- Communicate clearly regarding needs, challenges, and progress
- Remain receptive to feedback, guidance, and formation
- Demonstrate respect and gratitude for her mentor's time and investment

GUIDANCE FOR THE MENTEE

The mentor serves as a guide and resource, not as one who resolves difficulties or makes decisions on the mentee's behalf. The mentee is encouraged to approach each meeting with intentionality, having prayerfully considered the areas she wishes to discuss.

A spirit of initiative, flexibility, and gratitude will contribute greatly to the strength of the mentoring relationship.

MENTORSHIP CHECKLIST

BEFORE BEGINNING THE MENTORSHIP

- Review this handbook and all program materials
- Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance in the mentoring relationship
- Initiate contact and schedule the first meeting
- Identify and communicate availability for future meetings
- Establish a system for note-taking and tracking progress

DURING THE MENTORSHIP

- Establish expectations, goals, and a regular meeting cadence
- Follow up after the first meeting with a note of gratitude and confirmation of the next session
- Prepare for each meeting with intention and clarity
- Communicate promptly regarding scheduling changes or delays
- Follow up after each session with agreed-upon action steps
- Maintain notes to support progress and reporting
- Demonstrate respect for time and commitments

THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM

- Work collaboratively toward the development and launch of the Action Plan
- Complete and submit all required reports by established deadlines
- Communicate proactively regarding any challenges or delays
- Encourage perseverance and faithful discernment
- Continue fostering a relationship rooted in trust, respect, and shared mission

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP

- Prioritize the relationship as the foundation for meaningful growth
- Remain attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit
- Approach the mentorship with humility, generosity, and openness
- Recognize that growth often unfolds gradually through reflection and experience
- Embrace the opportunity for mutual learning and accompaniment

THE ROLES OF MENTOR

THE MENTOR

The mentor is called to accompany the mentee through guidance, encouragement, and witness, and is expected to:

- Remain committed to her own spiritual growth through prayer and ongoing formation
- Offer wisdom, perspective, and encouragement rooted in her experience
- Be available for authentic relationship and appropriate spiritual accompaniment
- Practice attentive listening and thoughtful, intentional communication
- Provide both affirmation and constructive guidance when appropriate
- Serve as a source of accountability in the mentee's growth and Action Plan development
- Participate in GIVEN training and utilize the resources provided
- Maintain appropriate and healthy boundaries within the mentoring relationship

MENTORSHIP CHECKLIST

BEFORE BEGINNING THE MENTORSHIP

- Review this handbook and all program materials
- Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance in the mentoring relationship
- Review the mentee's Action Plan and background
- Identify and communicate availability for future meetings
- Establish a system for note-taking and tracking progress

THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM

- Work collaboratively in support of your mentee taking the necessary steps to develop and launch her Action Plan
- Communicate proactively if you see your mentee struggling in an area you can help address
- Encourage perseverance and faithful discernment
- Continue fostering a relationship rooted in trust, respect, and shared mission
- Provide monthly check-in notes and submit required progress reports

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP

- Prioritize the relationship as the foundation for meaningful growth
- Remain attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit
- Approach the mentorship with humility, generosity, and openness
- Recognize that growth often unfolds gradually through reflection and experience
- Embrace the opportunity for mutual learning and accompaniment

GUIDANCE FOR THE MENTOR

- *An essential aspect of mentoring is the willingness to allow the mentee to take initiative and grow in leadership. This requires a posture of accompaniment rather than direction.*
 - *Mentors are encouraged to:*
 - *Ask open-ended questions that invite reflection*
 - *Allow space for discernment, silence, and thoughtful response*
 - *Affirm progress and encourage growth, even in early stages*
 - *Resist the urge to immediately provide solutions, allowing the mentee to develop confidence and clarity*
- Mentorship is a relationship marked by mutual respect and openness to growth.*

ACTION PLANS

As part of the Leadership Program, young women commit to propose, develop, and execute an Action Plan. An Action Plan is a unique initiative that activates a young woman's God-given gifts for the Church and the world.

A GIVEN ACTION PLAN IS

1. ***A new initiative.*** Participants are asked to propose a NEW initiative. It can be an extension or growth of a project they are already doing, but it must have specific new elements, and offer something new for the participant and for the community it is intended to serve.
2. ***Beneficial to others.*** The Action Plan must be other-focused, serving members of the community.
3. ***Fully launched within the year of your Cohort.*** The Action Plan goals, details, timeline, development, and execution should be completed by April following the Forum. Full implementation of the Action Plan may occur after April, where necessary, with prior agreement with GIVEN staff.

Each Action Plan will be different because it gives expression to the unique desires the Lord has placed in each woman's heart. Young women should pray deeply and dare to dream with God, allowing the Holy Spirit to inspire and direct her in developing her Action Plan.

The scope of each Action Plan can and will be distinct. Young women are encouraged to ask their mentor to help them discern their particular desires, gifts, and capacities in developing, refining, and implementing their Action Plan. Mentors assist their mentees in setting a realistic timeline for the launch and execution of her Action Plan with completion by **April 2027**.

The mentor's role during the Action Plan development phase is to listen, ask thoughtful and clarifying questions, share the wisdom of her experience, answer questions, provide additional resources and support as she is able, and offer prayerful and practical encouragement.

ACTION PLAN STRATEGY SESSIONS

Throughout the mentoring year, participants have the opportunity to meet with Action Plan Strategists in addition to their mentor for skills-based support.

Action Plan Strategy sessions are one-time meetings designed to provide direction, actionable steps, and clarity. The Action Plan Strategist is distinct from the mentor role and is meant to complement their mentor.

THROUGH THE PROGRAM, I'VE CONNECTED WITH OTHER AMBITIOUS, FAITH-FILLED WOMEN, GAINED A LIFELONG MENTOR, AND GROWN IN CONFIDENCE IN MY GOD-GIVEN GIFTS."

ANDREA SPYKSTRA, GIVEN '24

All participants in the GIVEN Leadership Program are expected to:

- Commit to ongoing growth in faith through personal prayer and spiritual disciplines appropriate to their state in life
- Remain faithful to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church
- Cultivate a spirit of trust, respect, and authentic relationship
- Communicate in a manner that is timely, clear, and charitable
- Receive and offer feedback with openness and humility
- Honor all commitments made within the mentorship and to the program
- Take responsibility for contributing to a fruitful and professional mentoring relationship
- Seek support from GIVEN Staff when needed

PROGRAM COMPLETION

The Leadership Program and Art of Accompaniment Mentoring experience concludes in April of 2027. All Action Plans are expected to be launched and all formal mentor and mentee meetings to be completed by this time. An Action Plan is considered executed when the plan proposal has moved from an idea or a concept, to some form of actualization. The launch of an Action Plan can take many different forms.

Many mentors and participants continue their relationships beyond the program, united by faith, leadership, and shared personal connections. GIVEN celebrates these meaningful bonds, though the official mentor–mentee relationship concludes with the program in April 2027. Any continued relationship is completely up to the discretion of those involved.

BECOMING A GIVEN ALUMNA

A participant (Mentee) officially becomes a GIVEN Alumna after successful completion of the GIVEN Leadership Program which includes:

- ☐ Attendance at virtual meetings
- ☐ Monthly mentoring meetings
- ☐ Submission of Action Plan Progress Mid-Year Report
- ☐ Action Plan launched and executed as approved
- ☐ Submission of End of Year Survey

NETWORK BENEFITS FOR MENTORS AND ALUMNAE

- ☐ Full membership to the GIVEN Network!
- ☐ Access to private social media groups, including Facebook and LinkedIn.
- ☐ A monthly email newsletter featuring alumnae updates, job openings, exclusive invitations, opportunities, and ongoing formation.
- ☐ Free or discounted tickets to GIVEN events and other opportunities.
- ☐ Access to one-time mentoring conversations and connections within the GIVEN Network.
- ☐ Access to discounts to Network-related and alumnae-created companies.

CONCLUSION

The GIVEN Leadership Program and the Art of Accompaniment mentoring experience serve as powerful catalysts in forming the next generation of Catholic women leaders. Through intentional mentorship and the development of a personal Action Plan, participants and mentors alike are enriched and transformed. It is our prayer that the gifts and graces you receive through this journey continue to bear fruit throughout your life.

Thank you for your faithful “yes” — your FIAT — to God’s call.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE MENTORING AGENDA

This sample agenda is meant as an aid to help mentees and mentors structure meetings. Allow time for sharing your fulfillment stories and discussion of your gifts and strengths, while also making progress on your Action Plan.

OPEN WITH A PRAYER

CHECK-IN WITH EACH OTHER

- Share how you've been doing since your last meeting
- Discuss what's going well and how you're feeling
- Mention any significant life updates
- Share a moment of fulfillment or encouragement from the past month

SET THE FOCUS OF THE MEETING

- Identify what you would like to focus on today
- Share any specific questions, challenges, or opportunities you'd like to explore

REVIEW ACTION PLAN PROGRESS

- Provide updates on any steps taken since your last meeting
- Share key conversations or developments
- Discuss any tasks that were not completed and why
- Identify any ongoing or new challenges

EXPLORE CHALLENGES TOGETHER

- Are current goals and timelines realistic?
- What adjustments might be needed?
- How can similar challenges be avoided in the future?
- Is additional support needed?
- How can the mentor best offer support?

REFLECT ON GROWTH & PROGRESS

- Highlight what is going well
- Share what you are most proud of
- Identify key takeaways from the conversation

PLAN FOR THE MONTH AHEAD

- Set clear, specific, and achievable next steps
- Break larger goals into manageable tasks
- Identify any needed resources or support

MENTOR FEEDBACK & ENCOURAGEMENT

- Mentor offers insights, asks questions, and provides guidance or encouragement

CLOSE THE SESSION

- Confirm the date and time of the next meeting
- Note any upcoming deadlines
- End in prayer with gratitude for the time shared

APPENDIX B: MENTEE SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The questions below are intended to help participants prepare for and plan their mentorship meetings. The sample meeting agenda (Appendix A) can also be helpful. Participants are encouraged to spend a few minutes before each meeting reflecting on their goals, shaping the conversation's direction, and identifying what will be most beneficial for their growth.

PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

- **Determine meeting focus.** What would I like to gain from our conversation? If possible, share this with your mentor when you schedule the meeting and again at the start of the meeting.
- **Set the meeting agenda.** You drive the relationship. Consider what you want to discuss and share with your mentor in advance so that you can maximize your time together.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

- What manner of communication works best for both of us? Email? Phone? Video conferencing?
- How often will we meet? Will we communicate between meetings?
- Will we set up a regular monthly meeting time or decide month to month?
- What hopes and expectations, spoken and unspoken, do I have for this relationship?
- Does this meeting format and scheduling method work, or is there another, better approach for us?

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

During the first meeting you may want to focus on getting better acquainted. Here are some points you could discuss.

- Your mentor's current job and professional training.
- Why she decided to become a GIVEN mentor.
- How you see your role and responsibilities in the mentorship.
- What a successful mentoring relationship looks like from your point of view.
- What feedback you find helpful and how you measure success.
- What tends to motivate you and what tends to discourage you.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON BEFORE EACH MEETING

- What has been one fruit I have experienced since our last meeting?
- What tasks did I decide to complete before our next meeting? Did I complete them? If not, why not?
- Have I experienced any insight since we last met?
- How has that insight influenced my progress in developing my Action Plan?
- What challenges am I experiencing in developing and executing my Action Plan? Do I think that might interfere with my continuing with the program?

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON/ASK DURING MEETING WITH MENTOR -

- What hopes, dreams, and measurable goals will I bring to this session to discuss?
- What books and resources can my mentor recommend?
- Are there any people she can introduce me to directly related to launching my Action Plan or other area of mentorship we are discussing?

APPENDIX C: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHO INITIATES THE FIRST MEETING?

The mentee is responsible for initiating contact and scheduling the first meeting. If this does not happen within the expected timeframe, the mentor should notify GIVEN Staff so support can be provided.

WHAT IF WE MISS A MEETING OR LOSE COMMUNICATION?

If you have already established a connection and communication drops off, either the mentor or mentee is encouraged to follow up. Consistent communication is key to a fruitful relationship. If attempts to reconnect are unsuccessful, please notify GIVEN Staff before the next scheduled meeting.

WHAT IF WE DON'T SEEM LIKE A GOOD FIT?

We want this relationship to be fruitful for both mentor and mentee. If either person discerns that the pairing may not be the best fit, please reach out to GIVEN's Mentoring Program Director. While not ideal, reassignment may be possible.

CAN THERE BE MORE THAN ONE MENTOR?

Each mentee is paired with one primary mentor who accompanies her throughout the program. If specific expertise is needed for the Action Plan, additional support (such as an Action Plan strategist) may be available.

WHAT IF THE MENTEE IS HESITANT TO SHARE OR REFLECT (E.G., FULFILLMENT STORIES)?

There is no need to rush. Trust develops over time, and space should be given for openness to grow naturally. These reflections are simply tools to help uncover gifts, motivations, and areas of joy and meaning. As the relationship deepens, these insights can help connect personal experiences to the mentee's Action Plan.

CAN THE ACTION PLAN CHANGE?

Yes. Adjustments, refinements, or developments that remain within the original vision can be worked out together during the mentorship. However, a completely new Action Plan must be reviewed and approved by GIVEN. If significant changes arise, please contact GIVEN Staff.

WHEN SHOULD THE ACTION PLAN BE LAUNCHED?

Action Plans should be launched by **April 2027**. Launching means that the initial goals outlined in the proposal have been put into action. If a mentee is ready to launch her Action Plan before the end of the program year, she does not need to wait. We simply encourage mentors and mentees to continue their relationship through the remainder of the program, offering ongoing guidance as the plan begins to take shape in practice.

WHAT IF THE MENTEE IS STRUGGLING TO COMPLETE THE ACTION PLAN?

Open communication is essential. Mentees should share any challenges with their mentor, and together they can discern next steps. GIVEN Staff is also available to support.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE ACTION PLAN IS NOT COMPLETED?

GIVEN is committed to supporting each participant in bringing her Action Plan to life. However, completion of the Action Plan and fulfillment of program requirements are necessary for alumnae benefits, including membership in the GIVEN Network.

WHAT IF SOMETHING PERSONAL OR BEYOND THE MENTOR'S EXPERTISE IS SHARED?

Mentors should receive what is shared with care and compassion, while recognizing their role is not to provide professional counseling. Encourage seeking appropriate professional support when needed, and contact GIVEN Staff for guidance or additional support.



GIVEN

The GIVEN Institute is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to activating the gifts of young adult women for the Catholic Church and the world. We inspire and equip the next generation of female leaders to “receive the gift that they are; realize the gifts they’ve been given; and respond with the gift that only they can give.” Through leadership training, faith formation, and dedicated mentoring, GIVEN forms women for mission and for life. We are faithful to the Magisterium and entrusted to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the New Evangelization.

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