



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry



MENTORING

CONTENTS

Introduction to mentoring	2
Outcomes of the mentoring partnership	2
What is mentoring?	2
What mentoring is not	3
What makes an effective mentoree?	3
What makes an effective mentor?	4
The benefits of being a mentoree	4
The benefits of being a mentor	4
Steps in participating	5
Designing the partnership	6
Suggested partnership activities	6
Stages in the mentoring partnership	7
Mentoring from a distance and multiple mentors	8
Dealing with issues and expectations	8
Conclusion	9

APPENDICES

- 1 Mentoring Partnership Agreement
- 2 Mentoring Partnership Mid-term Evaluation Form

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INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING

These guidelines describe the aims and benefits of mentoring and the processes involved. Mentors and mentorees determine the content and structure of their mentoring partnership. They may take part in a mentoring partnership more than once.

OUTCOMES OF THE MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

FOR MENTOREES

Mentoring is meant to boost the participants' confidence, motivation and skills. Mentorees will develop new contacts, be exposed to ideas from inside and, possibly, outside their industry, and deepen their understanding of the way to achieve change and leadership. Their mentors' support will help them achieve set goals and broaden their career horizons.

FOR MENTORS

Mentors will benefit through the intellectual challenges mentoring will provide and the opportunity to strengthen their personal management and communication skills. Through the partnership, mentors can gain a greater appreciation of the capabilities of the individual. They will also achieve personal satisfaction from 'giving something back' to their profession by mentoring others.

WHAT IS MENTORING?

A mentoring partnership enables an individual to share professional and personal skills and experiences, and contributes to career growth and development. Through mentoring relationships, the mentor becomes the mentoree's source of advice, guidance and knowledge for professional and personal development.

Effective and positive mentoring relationships are dependant on six principles:

- Openness
- Supportiveness
- Willingness to learn and share knowledge
- Mutual trust and respect
- Constructive feedback
- Commitment to the outcomes



WHAT MENTORING IS NOT

Whatever form it takes, mentoring is not about power or one partner unduly influencing the other.

A mentoring partnership is definitely not about:

- One participant dominating or controlling the other
- One person depending or relying on the other
- One participant taking unfair advantage of the other
- Taking the other person for granted
- Putting someone down or denigrating them
- Assisting someone with the expectation of a return favour
- Harassing or making the other person uncomfortable

Nor is it a guarantee of advancement.

If one of these or similar issues come up, the parties need to resolve the problem either together or with outside help. If no solution can be found there is no point in continuing the mentoring relationship.

WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE MENTOREE?

Effective mentorees:

- Show ability and a desire to learn new skills
- Accept responsibility for their personal development
- Are proactive and dedicated to mentor/mentoree partnerships
- Are interested in sharing professional concerns
- Are open and prepared to accept criticism and feedback
- Can listen and communicate effectively
- Are committed to the integrity and confidentiality of their partnerships
- Set goals and targets



WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE MENTOR?

Mentors can play different roles in the partnerships:

- They can act as counsellors by sharing their personal experiences and helping their mentorees approach challenges with confidence
- They can teach mentorees and answer their questions about business or technical expertise
- They can help mentorees understand the culture of an organisation by helping to 'decode' the unwritten rules
- They can act as advisors on professional development and make suggestions to resolve problem situations
- They are accessible and committed
- They are open to new ideas

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A MENTOREE

There are numerous benefits in being a mentoree, including:

- Insight into professional organisations
- Improved confidence, motivation and skills
- Expansion of professional networks
- Greater career mobility and opportunities
- An improved support base to achieve goals
- Development of new/different perspectives
- Challenged to use talents and share expertise
- Greater understanding of ways to bring about change through leadership
- Accelerated learning and personal development opportunities

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A MENTOR

Mentors benefit through:

- Greater understanding of barriers at the lower levels of organisations
- Improved skills in listening, counselling, coaching and leadership
- Added perspectives and approaches
- Extended professional networks through emerging professionals



- Recruiting opportunities for colleagues and successors
- Deepened and invigorated professional understanding of their industry
- Identifying possible successors
- Joining a professional network of like-minded leaders and other mentors
- Improved understanding and appreciation of the capabilities of others
- Personal satisfaction from helping people with potential to realise their goals

STEPS IN PARTICIPATING

STEP 1 – FINDING A MENTOR/MENTOREE

Potential mentorees/mentors can meet anywhere. In most cases, individuals will find a mentor or mentoree at professional events.

Self-selection enables individuals to choose people they believe will make effective mentoring partners. It also gives both parties ownership and a mutual commitment from the beginning.

STEP 2 – FORMALISING THE AGREEMENT

These guidelines contain a form (see Appendix 1), which the mentor and mentoree, may wish to use to outline what each will bring to the partnership. This ensures both parties are clear about what they can contribute to and seek from the partnership, and minimises misunderstandings. It also allows them to sign up formally for a specified time.

STEP 3 – STARTING A MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

The participants need to define upfront what they want to get out of the partnership, and develop the relationship and its activities around their objective, and their circumstances and resources.

The type of partnership and means of achieving objectives can vary. For some, a phone call once a week to discuss issues that have arisen will be sufficient. For others it might involve shared activities, taking part in networking events, working together on a particular project or obtaining work experience in the mentor's workplace.

STEP 4 – MID-TERM EVALUATION

Halfway through the mentor partnership, each participant should reflect on the progress of the mentoring relationship so far. The evaluation form at Appendix 2 may help with this process.

Participants need to think about whether they need to record any agreed changes.

STEP 5 – CONCLUDING EVALUATION AND THE END OF A FORMAL PARTNERSHIP

At the end of the partnership, the mentor and mentoree should discuss what they have achieved and gained from the partnership.



DESIGNING THE PARTNERSHIP

Having a successful mentoring relationship requires a serious commitment on both sides. The partnership should not take a back seat to other priorities and wither away from lack of interest or energy.

However, if the partnership doesn't work out, both parties must agree beforehand that either may end the arrangement at any time without fault. As the name suggests, the 'no-fault' conclusion to the mentor partnership is intended to allow a quick and clean exit. All that is required is that the participant wishing to exit the partnership contacts the other person.

Participants need to agree on the duration of the partnership. If the parties are unsure about how much time they will need, they should select a three-month option, which they can extend if necessary.

Mentorees often determine the initial scope and goals of the partnership. They may have a particular goal in mind, want someone as a sounding board for their ideas, or seek help with contacts or other networks to achieve their goal. At other times, the parties can work together on an agreed project with each contributing to the common goal.

At the beginning, mentorees should consider what they want to achieve and gain from the mentoring partnership. They should write down no more than three key objectives or outcomes that are 'must haves'. In addition, they can list secondary outcomes or goals.

The parties may find it difficult at the beginning to gauge how much time they need to devote to the partnership. However, they should agree on a minimum contact period (e.g. one hour a week or fortnight). If the parties cannot keep to their schedule, they need to agree on a new timetable that each can meet.

SUGGESTED PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The means of achieving the goals will vary for each partnership, and will depend often on resources and circumstances. It is important to remember that mentoring is a reciprocal arrangement and each party may have skills and knowledge to offer to the other.

Possible activities include:

- Weekly telephone chats about issues (a neutral sounding board)
- Networking events with the mentor introducing the mentoree to new contacts
- Work experience opportunities
- Submitting project work by e-mail for the mentor's appraisal
- Informal get togethers once a month to 'road test' ideas or assess work progress



- A study project supervised by the mentor (e.g. a new skill or knowledge the mentoree wants to learn)
- Attending a conference or workshop together
- Gaining experience in decision-making
- Gaining experience in conducting meetings (organising, presenting or chairing them)
- Applying for grants or courses
- Developing communication skills
- Learning organisational or project management skills
- Studying how committees and boards work
- Examining how policy is developed and implemented
- Working and interacting with the media
- Effective meeting techniques
- Dealing with workplace issues
- Planning the next career step
- Acting as a referee or supporting an application
- Broadening social or interpersonal skills
- Developing self-management or time-management skills
- Adding to learning techniques or skills
- Learning fundraising skills
- Learning skills in marketing or promoting an organisation or event
- Celebrating the partnership's achievements!

STAGES IN THE MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

Like any relationship, the mentoring partnership will evolve. Most go through five phases:

Initiation This is the set-up period, and defines the partnership's expectations and goals, as well as its boundaries.

Development Trust and understanding will develop over time. To ensure this happens, mentorees must always take responsibility for their contributions and actions within the partnership. Both parties should provide each other with regular feedback.

Maturity At some stage, the roles of the partners may change as the mentoree gains confidence, knowledge and experience. The mentor may become less influential, marking the high point in the partnership.



Disengagement Whether it is at the agreed end point or before, one of the parties may feel the partnership has served its purpose. If this happens, they will either draw up another arrangement, which sets new goals, or dissolve the partnership.

Redefinition At this stage, the formal period will have ended, but both parties may want to continue some form of mentoring contact. Alternatively, as mentioned in the previous point, the parties may decide to redefine their partnership to meet a new circumstance or need.

MENTORING FROM A DISTANCE AND MULTIPLE MENTORS

Mentoring does not have to be face-to-face after the first meeting. Through e-mails and teleconferencing facilities, for example, participants can maintain regular contact in a way that can sustain an effective partnership. However, occasional face-to-face meetings are valuable and, where possible, should be included.

In some instances, it is possible for a mentoree to have several mentors. Each mentor could be a source of different expertise or advice.

Just as every relationship is unique, each partnership between mentor and mentoree will have its own dynamic and focus of activity. While not suitable in every circumstance, having multiple mentors can be of benefit.

It should be remembered that commitment is required by the mentoree in every mentoring partnership, with each receiving due investment and attention.

DEALING WITH ISSUES AND EXPECTATIONS

Like any relationship, issues can come up that need resolution if the partnership is to be rewarding, positive and move forward. Both parties must spell out for each other from the start the amount of time, effort and activity each can invest in the partnership and state exactly what each wants to get out of it.

Things can go wrong with a mentoring partnership because the participants:

- fail to take their roles seriously
- do not provide each other with feedback
- take credit for each other's work or do not acknowledge each other's input
- do not prioritise time for regular meetings, calls or e-mails
- mentors being too critical of mentorees, or pushing them too hard
- mentorees expecting too much from their mentors
- over-ambitious programs



- one party wanting to end the partnership before the other
- ignorance about the amount of effort or resources each participant will put into the partnership

The key message is that both parties must agree on what they want to achieve and what each will contribute and make certain they have a regular and effective communication system in place.

CONCLUSION

Apart from the immediate benefits, it is worth noting that relationships between mentors and mentorees often last long after their formal partnerships end. Many continue their relationship on an informal basis as colleagues and friends.

Many of today's mentorees are likely to become tomorrow's mentors.



APPENDIX 1 – MENTORING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

MENTOR

Title: Name:

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Address:

Phone:

Email:

Organisation:

Duration of partnership: months

Start date: / /

Finish date: / /

Brief description of goals and expectations
of the mentoring partnership

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Proposed frequency and type of
communication:

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signature:

date: / /

MENTOREE

Title: Name:

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Address:

Phone:

Email:

Organisation:

Duration of partnership: months

Start date: / /

Finish date: / /

Brief description of goals and expectations
of the mentoring partnership

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Proposed frequency and type of
communication:

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signature:

date: / /



APPENDIX 2 – MENTORING PARTNERSHIP MID-TERM EVALUATION FORM

1. Are you benefiting from the partnership?

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2. What challenges or obstacles are you encountering in the mentoring partnership?

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3. Do you require any additional support or information? If yes, please specify.

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4. How frequently are you in contact with your mentor partner? What is the main form of communication?

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5. How many hours per month on average are you investing in the mentoring partnership?

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6. Is the mentoring partnership imposing on or distracting you in any way from your usual work or duties?

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7. Describe the type of resources you are investing in the partnership (time, knowledge, travel and money)?

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8. Is distance affecting the effectiveness and success of the partnership?

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9. Are your priorities or expectations of the partnership changing during the program?
If yes, how?

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10. Describe some of the benefits and achievements you are gaining from the partnership.

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11. Rate your level of satisfaction and fulfilment from the partnership?

- Exceeded Expectations Met expectations Did not meet expectations

Comments

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12. Specify some things you have learned about the mentoring process.

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