

Mentoring Program

Program Purpose

A mentoring relationship is usually where a more experienced person assists another person to grow and learn. Mentors are selected based on experience, skills and a genuine desire to help others within the organization. Both partners in the mentoring relationship benefit. Learning must be a lifelong process and one of the most effective ways to learn is to assist in the development of others. The best teachers learn as much from their students as their students learn from them.

The goals of the mentoring program are to assist participants in the program with:

1. **Skills enhancement:** To enable skills to be passed on in the workplace by experienced, highly competent staff to others who need to acquire specific skills.
2. **Career development:** To help staff in the planning, development, and management of their careers and to help them become more resilient in times of change, more self-reliant in their careers and self-directed learners.
3. **Leadership and management development:** To encourage the development of competencies more easily gained through example, guided practice or experience than by education and training.
4. **Education support:** To bridge the gap between theory and practice. Formal education or training is complemented by the knowledge and hands-on experience of a competent mentor.
5. **Staff retention:** To retain qualified, self-directed, and motivated employees within the organization.

The benefits of the mentoring program to the __ (organization) __ will be realized through increased morale and motivation; greater productivity; discovery of talent; development of leadership potential; building a learning organization; and development of cross-organizational networks.

The benefits of the mentoring program to the program mentees are the development of potential; knowledge about the organization; self-directed learning; increase in career mobility; more opportunities; receive encouragement and support to achieve goals; development of new networks; development of different perspectives; assistance with ideas; an avenue to demonstrate strengths and potential; develop visibility within the organization; and be challenged to use talents and share expertise.

The benefits of the mentoring program to the program mentors are a greater understanding of the barriers experienced at all levels in the organization; enhancement of personal skills in coaching, counseling, listening, and modeling; development and practice of a more personal style of leadership; gain additional recognition and respect; learn new perspectives and approaches; contribute something to others within the organization; demonstrate expertise; and share knowledge.

Mentoring Program Overview

Mentoring is most successful when:

- Supervisors select the mentees;
- Mentors are successful employees who are supportive of the organization;
- Mentors initiate contact early and hold face-to-face meetings;
- Regular structured interaction takes place;
- Confidentiality is maintained;
- Mentor has no supervisory role with the mentee;
- Mentor and mentee can request reassignment without blame being assigned;
- Goals and expectations for the relationship are mutually set;
- The mentoring relationship occurs over a fixed timeframe, usually six months to one year; and
- Mentor and mentee clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

All successful mentoring relationships have a few key elements in common:

- Clear and honest communication;
- Realistic objectives; and
- A structured plan for success.

Communicating Clear Expectations

The _(Business Name)_____ strongly recommends that mentors and mentees clearly communicate expectations early in the relationship. Make this discussion a priority for the first or second meeting or phone call, so that each party understands the responsibilities they are agreeing to.

- Mentees should be prepared to tell their mentors what they would like to gain from the mentorship, and in what ways the mentor's help would be most greatly appreciated and beneficial.
- Mentors should be prepared to respond to the mentee, about what they can work towards or promise, as well as identify potentially unrealistic expectations.

Clearly communicating expectations from the beginning not only sets a standard for honest communication and mutual responsibility, but also decreases the possibility of misunderstandings.

Setting Realistic Goals and Objectives

The _(Business name)___ strongly recommends that at the onset of the mentoring relationship, the mentee and mentor identify goals and objectives to achieve during the mentorship. The organization also encourages each mentor-mentee pair to address

whether goals and objectives are realistic. Keep in mind that the scope of what each pair hopes to accomplish should be attainable within the year of the mentorship.

- Mentoring pairs should avoid unrealistic expectations, such as swift advancement, "quick fixes" on employment issues, or immediate integration of new professional skills and ideas.
- Mentors can use their knowledge of the market or of a particular industry to help manage the mentee's expectations of what can be accomplished during the year, and which objectives may take longer to reach.

Recommended Mentoring Program and Activities

The Business name recommends that mentors and mentees jointly develop an action plan that focuses on achieving goals and objectives during the yearlong engagement. The achievement of benchmarks should be monitored regularly and reassessed when necessary. The plan should allow for at least 12 "significant discussions" to take place during the year. Mentors and mentees should consider a variety of activities throughout the course of their mentoring relationships, to keep goals fresh, and activities vary. Varying mentoring activities will help build a strong foundation, as well as make the mentorship more dynamic and sustainable. Consider activities that range from career-focused to social, and which take place between only you and your mentor or mentee, or with other mentor-mentee pairs.

Phase 1: Career assessment and objectives – 3 months

The Mentoring Questionnaire should be completed by the mentee prior to the first meeting and discussed with the mentor to determine an action plan. Mentees should be honest and realistic about their needs and objectives, and mentors will need to recognize what they can deliver before committing to a particular outcome.

The (Business name) recommends the remainder of the initial quarter be spent building a relationship between the mentor and mentee in which both parties get to know each other beyond their professional experiences and career goals. The best mentoring relationships are built around trust, mutual respect, and open communication. Some ideas to consider include:

- Establish a top-10 list of realistic and achievable goals to be met over the course of the mentorship.
- Devise a complete yearlong action plan with strategies for meeting each benchmark.
- Discuss current events, news, politics, or other areas of mutual interest.
- Go over the tangibles of professional success, such as attire, grooming, organizing your desk/office, and managing your free time.
- Talk about mentors or role models each of you has had in the past and how they impacted your life or career.
- Describe the most challenging moment in your career and how you dealt with it or discuss "things I learned on my own that I wish someone had told me".

- Sign up for a class or workshop together at a local college or library.
- Set up “shadow days” to allow the mentee to observe the mentor at work.

Phase 2: Skill and leadership development – 3 to 9 months

The _(Business name)__ recommends that mentors offer assistance with various skills required of mentees. Examples may include: third party skill assessment, personality typing (e.g., Myers-Briggs), public speaking, and utilization of additional training necessary to meet established goals. Mentors may wish to engage the human resources (HR) department.

Some ideas to consider include:

- Follow through on established action plan.
- Invite the mentee to give presentations at the mentor’s meetings.
- Mentor and mentee can videotape each other public speaking, and then review and give feedback to one another.
- Identify training resources to allow mentee to gain additional skills. Follow up on a regular basis to discuss skills and practical application.
- Help mentee expand their professional network.

Mentor and Mentee Program Responsibilities

Responsibilities include:

- Complete questionnaire prior to being admitted to the program.
- Mentor shall initiate contact within the first two weeks of mentee being assigned.
- Mentee shall bring the completed questionnaire to the first mentor/mentee meeting.
- Mentor and mentee shall meet either virtually or in person, and together set goals for future meetings. The questionnaire may be used as a guide.
- Stay connected through emails, phone calls, or meeting held virtually or in person.
- Be flexible in setting meeting dates but keep appointments as scheduled.
- Mentor and mentee complete and return the final evaluations.
- Request reassignment if necessary.

Responsibilities of a Mentor

Mentors must be willing to accept the commitment of time and energy to provide support for the mentee during a six-to-12-month period. A clear understanding of the mentoring process will go a long way toward assuring success. You will need to maintain support and open communication.

You will also:

- Initiate contact with the mentee;
- Be a good listener;•Maintain confidentiality;
- Give constructive feedback;
- Promote mentee creativity and skill development;
- Meet at scheduled times;
- Share _Business name__ mission, vision, values, and culture;
- Help the mentee to develop goals, access resources and build a professional network;
- Maintain a positive attitude;
- Encourage independence, not dependence; and
- Remember there is most often more than one way to reach a goal. Support the mentee to the best of your ability but remember the program success or failure of the mentee is their responsibility.

Avoid these pitfalls:

- Don't give advice unless asked. Keep advice strictly to skill and leadership development;
- Don't take responsibility for our mentee's program or duties;
- Don't allow the mentee to be dependent on you;
- Don't complain about your own problems;
- Don't do your mentee's work for them; and
- Don't give advice on policies, procedures, or department operations. Discussions with your mentee should focus on achieving career goals.

Responsibilities of a Mentee

You will find that having a supportive mentoring relationship will benefit you as you continue your career with the (Business name). Your mentor is a support, but not your supervisor. Be receptive to what the mentor has to say and be clear in asking for assistance when you need it.

Mentee's responsibilities include:

- Assume personal responsibility for your professional growth;
- Listen and consider alternatives;
- Maintain confidentiality;
- Accept constructive feedback willingly;
- Be willing to take risks, be open to new ideas;
- Maintain a positive attitude;
- Demonstrate initiative;
- Respect your mentor's time;

- Notify your mentor of problems, concerns, or questions; and
- Remember, there is more than one way to reach a goal.

Avoid these pitfalls:

- Don't rely on your mentor as your only source of information;
- Don't expect your mentor to give you all the answers – think of your mentor as suggesting alternatives;
- Don't ask your mentor to do your work for you;
- Don't ask your mentor for advice related to department policies, procedures, and operations. Discussions with your mentor should focus on career goals; and
- Don't cancel meetings at the last minute.

Entering the Mentoring Program

The mentoring program will run on a calendar year and will last no more than 12 months. The __ (Business name) __ will make a limited number of spots in the program available each year. Candidates to the program should complete the Mentoring Questionnaire and obtain a recommendation from their immediate supervisor. The questionnaire and recommendation should be sent to HR.

Participants will be selected by HR from the candidate pool based on the information provided by the candidate. Participants will also be matched to a mentor best able to assist the participant/mentee with their stated goals and career objectives. HR will avoid any potential conflicts in assigning mentor/mentee pairs.

Participation in the mentoring program is voluntary. Participation in the program does not guarantee future advancement within the __ (Business name) __. Non-participation will not impair an employee's career or future advancement within the