Task 10 Report: Mentoring Program Outlines

This document is meant to serve as an outline for hiring organizations or professional organizations to support the retention of a young and diverse workforce in water industry.

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Why mentoring is a key ingredient for retention

Sometimes creating networks and relationships needs a little prompting. Water organizations and the services they deliver depend on a trained a dedicated workforce that is connected and engaged in the work. Mentoring programs can serve a variety of organizational purposes, including; improving and training knowledge, skills and abilities, creating a sense of belonging for young and diverse staff, and fostering productive management/employee relationships, but most of all they can help form and enrich the connections in the people systems that make the infrastructure system work.

Outline on how to make a mentoring program

Your water organization can follow this outline to create a mentoring program

1. Tailor your mentoring program purpose
2. Define priority outcomes, performance measures, and program monitoring
3. Define program membership or affiliation and get input from mentee groups
4. Recruit mentors and set the tone with managers and leaders
5. Recruit mentees and implement program
6. Monitor, review outcomes, and celebrate successes

The general outline was created using the "common success factors" in section 1.4 of the Global Parity Alliance: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lighthouses Report (World Economic Forum 2023)

Example documents

Example 1: Mentoring Program Example
1. The goals of this example mentoring program are to assist participants in the program with:
    a. 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.

b. 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.

c. Leadership and management development: To encourage the development of competencies more easily gained through example, guided practice or experience than by education and training.

d. 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.

e. Staff retention: To retain qualified, self-directed, and motivated employees within the organization.

Example 2: Reverse Mentoring Example
1. The goals of this example reverse mentoring program are:
   a. To empower junior members of the credit union to share their ideas, thoughts, and knowledge.
   b. To enhance the uses of technology (i.e., staying current with social media trends, understanding the programs that mentors use in their daily operations, etc.)
   c. To understand different perceptions within the organization.
   d. To help with staff retention.

Example 3 and 4: Examples forms and application materials

Best practice documents

This section references and summarizes a variety of open-source best practice documents for use in program development:

Resource 1: Improving Workplace Culture through Evidence-Based Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Practices ([2021 Wharton School](#))
   Summary: This report found that Managerial Involvement, Workplace Policies, and Mentoring and Sponsorship are among the most influential practices from the workforce survey. The consolidated mentoring and sponsorship sections are presented and summarized below **and highlighted sections can be reviewed based on the goals of an organization** in creating their mentorship program:

Affective Commitment: Mentoring and sponsorship help employees **gain skills and build their networks**, which can help them **develop a positive connection to their workplace**. Yet, securing or maintaining effective relationships with mentors and sponsors may be difficult. Managers can help direct-reports access these experiences. Specifically, managers can:
- Check-in: Ask direct reports if they have a mentor and connect them to mentoring opportunities if they do not have one. This approach can ensure that no employee falls through the cracks and misses out on opportunities to enhance their career growth.
- Create or share a tips document: A tips document can provide strategies for making mentoring and sponsorship relationships more effective. Managers can create a document or share one created by the HR team. The document can be used to coach their direct reports in how to best leverage their mentoring relationships. However, managers should be aware that making

mentor-mentee relationships flourish among workers of differing demographic backgrounds may require special effort.

Belonging: Mentoring and sponsorship help employees **gain skills and build their networks**, which can help them **develop a positive connection to their workplace**. Yet, securing or maintaining effective relationships with mentors and sponsors may be difficult. Managers can help team members access these experiences. Specifically, managers can:

- Create a buddy system. Managers can develop a buddy system that pairs direct reports on their team and enables employees to get help from peers whose work is similarly occurring "on the ground." In the current environment, a temporary buddy system can address unique challenges created by the transition to a virtual work environment, giving employees the chance to check in with one another and share. The buddy system can also be a good way of connecting experienced team members with new hires or members of underrepresented groups.
- Ensure mentors and sponsors have access to resources. Mentors and sponsors often provide guidance to or advocate for employees who look, think, and work differently than they do. Managers can make sure that mentors and sponsors have access to helpful resources like unconscious bias training, inclusive language guidelines etc.

Inclusive Climate: Managers can help team members access and **cultivate more effective relationships** with mentors and sponsors who can help them reflect on their workplaces experiences including instances of inclusion and exclusion. Specifically, managers can:

- Be transparent about how sponsors are assigned: Managers can help employees to not only understand the importance of sponsorship to their inclusion, but can also facilitate access to one. In companies with formal sponsorship programs, managers can ensure that the process for accessing a sponsor is clear to all employees.
- Collect feedback on mentoring and sponsorship: Managers should not assume that employees' relationships with mentors or sponsors are generating feelings of inclusion. To understand whether these relationships are beneficial, managers can request anonymous feedback from direct reports about these relationships, including insights of the value of mentoring and sponsorship interactions and suggestions for how mentoring and sponsorship relationships can be improved. This feedback can be shared with leaders who are supporting mentoring and sponsorship initiatives (e.g., HR, DEI office, etc.)

Supportive Voice: Managers can mentor and sponsor their team members, but encouraging team members to seek out other mentors and sponsors can help team members to feel more aligned with their company's broader DEI policies and practices. This topic relates to **organization alignment of mentoring program,** options could include in-group mentor relationships,

Specifically, managers can:

- Create project teams that pair members of different backgrounds in peer mentoring relationships. Managers can pay attention to who is "in" and "out" of the group in their workplaces. When opportunities arise for team members to work together on shared projects, managers should be thoughtful about including members from both groups so they can be exposed to each others' experiences and mentor one another. Rotating employees through different project teams is also effective at increasing cognitive diversity
- Encourage team members to become DEI sponsors and reward them for their work. Managers can encourage individuals who are passionate about DEI on their teams to become DEI

sponsors. To ensure that they are being acknowledged for the work, managers can incorporate sponsorship activities into performance reviews.

Having mentors at work can help team members from all backgrounds **feel connected and engaged in their work**. Providing team members with recommendations on how to identify and build a relationship with a mentor can drive higher levels of work engagement in the workplace. A few recommendations for managers are:

- Encourage exploration. Managers can encourage team members to try new roles and tasks that enable them to bring new and unique perspectives to their teams. By experiencing new roles, team members can identify activities that they prefer, which can help their engagement at work.
- 'Show them the ropes'. Managers typically have greater awareness of unwritten rules and norms in their organizations relative to their reports. Managers can have informal chats with team members to help them see how they fit into the big picture of the organization and how to avoid breaking any norms. With guidance, team members can understand how they add value to the organization and feel more engaged in their work and contributions.

Managers help team members who are serving as mentors and sponsors **reduce their feelings of burnout**. Specifically, managers can:

- Celebrate mentors and sponsors. Managers should recognize the mentoring and sponsorship contributions that team members make. Examples include a sincere "thank you" or a gift of appreciation to those who are mentoring and sponsoring others. When it is clear that all employees are playing mentoring and sponsoring roles, reward the team as a whole — not just individual contributors.
- Encourage breaks in between mentoring and sponsorship meetings. Mentoring and sponsoring others can feel personally meaningful, but it can also take energy. Thus, after mentoring and sponsorship meetings, team members may need to take breaks before engaging in other types of work. Managers can encourage team members who are mentoring and sponsoring others to take time to do activities that help them to recover so that they can re-engage in work feeling more rejuvenated and energized. By encouraging recovery, managers can reduce burnout among team members.

Feeling like one has mentors and sponsors at work can **increase job satisfaction**. Having leaders both inside and outside the organization who can give candid career advice and look out for their career interests can help employees believe they have a long-term future in the organization and thus improve job satisfaction. Managers can:

- Facilitate mentoring relationships. Managers can help team members access channels for identifying potential mentors both within and outside the company. Internally, these channels can include employee resource groups or buddy programs. Externally, these channels can be personal networks or professional associations. Accessing mentors can help employees develop their own network and skills so they can grow in their roles and become more satisfied in their jobs.
- Help team members create career development plans. Managers can work with their own mentees to develop short-term and long-term career goals in the organization. The exercise of articulating their goals will help mentees track progress towards their goals. As mentees see progress and improvement towards their goals, they will become more satisfied in their role.

Mentors can help to **reduce turnover intent** in the workplace. Managers as mentors can help team members navigate the challenges of the workplace and empower their mentees to feel like they can succeed in the workplace. Specifically, managers can:

- Encourage feedback. Managers can encourage their mentees to seek feedback from different people in the organization. By receiving feedback from different people, employees can become more aware of gaps in their development and can be more likely to approach managers and mentors for feedback in the future. Managers can also encourage mentees to share the feedback they receive with them and with other mentors. With this information, managers and mentors will be better able to identify and provide their mentees with developmental opportunities, than can be important for reducing their turnover intent.
- Demonstrate commitment to mentees. Managers can advocate for their mentees by speaking up on their behalf and helping them to access opportunities. Managers can also invest in their mentees by suggesting ways to narrow gaps in skills and experience or providing feedback. This type of support can make it clear to mentees that they have the opportunity to be successful in the organization, which can reduce their turnover intent.

Resource 2: The Global Parity Alliance: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lighthouses Report (World Economic Forum 2023)

> Summary: This report found common success factors across a wide range of organizations diversity, equity and inclusion programs. The program outline and examples above use sections 1.4 Five common success factors across the DEI lighthouse initiative. Section 1.4 is summarized and, **highlighted sections can be reviewed to tailor your program**.
>
> Section 2 of the report also includes a variety of potentially helpful case studies and how the companies actions aligned with the common success factors. This section is not summarized but can be accessed in the link above.
>
> Section 3 "Actions employees at every level can take" also informs possible advice to mentors and mentees. Key sections below are summarized to inform the program document creation and advice to participants.

1. **Root Causes:** It is important to start by identifying the company's DEI-related challenges and the associated root causes, to inform opportunity prioritization, goal setting and solution design.
   a. Understand the problem with a deep fact base: Start with a broad assessment of the organization to identify potential problem areas and any geographic- or segment-specific nuances.
   b. Identify the root causes: Assess potential problem areas through deeper data analysis and employee focus groups to identify what causes the issue and what changes are required. Root causes likely include a combination of internal barriers (such as organizational policies) and external barriers (such as cultural beliefs).
   c. Get input from the target population, initially and throughout: It is critical that DEI initiatives are shaped by the voices of the target population without burdening those individuals with the work. At the start of the process, solicit input through surveys, user interviews and focus groups. During the design and piloting processes, continue to seek input from the target population to test and refine the solution.
   d. Prioritize and sequence problem areas: Many areas for improvement may be identified, but not everything can be effectively addressed at once. Prioritize and sequence opportunity areas – for example, by considering impact versus feasibility and urgency

versus importance. Maximize potential impact by considering your organization's core competencies and unique positioning.

2. **Meaningful definition of success:** Setting clear, measurable goals and effectively communicating the rationale behind the DEI effort will guide the initiative and help galvanize support for change.
   a. Set clear and quantifiable aspirations (what and by when): After prioritizing an opportunity area, define success by setting measurable near- and long-term goals. To understand what is feasible, engage a cross-functional, diverse team well versed in the strengths and needs of the organization. This process should be informed by the fact base developed through root-cause analysis as described under the first success factor (i.e. nuanced understanding of root causes).
   b. Articulate a clear case for change that moves employees to action: The case for change sets out why the organization is focusing on the effort and connects the rationale to the company's values, mission, business outcomes and "what's in it for me" at each level of the organization. This helps employees understand what to expect and serves as a call to action.

3. **Accountable and invested business leaders:** Deep commitment from executive management sets initiatives up for success by signaling importance and facilitating adequate resourcing.
   a. Hold senior leaders accountable for outcomes, not just inputs or activities: Holding senior business leaders accountable by tying outcomes to performance incentives facilitates continued focus on the initiative's effectiveness, starting from the top of the organization.
   b. Model and lead desired change, starting with the CEO and senior leaders: Senior leadership can, for example, serve as the public face of the DEI initiative, lead the operation, advocate for the initiative's needs and/or adopt desired behaviors and ways of working. This signals importance to the rest of the organization and encourages other employees to follow suit. Leaders tend to hold the most social capital in an organization and can use that to advance DEI initiatives.
   c. Ensure resources for longevity in the budget, expertise and timeline: Like any other core business activity, DEI initiatives need to be resourced based on the capabilities required to effectively execute on the plan. This may require a cross-functional team (not limited to the HR function) and access to experts, possibly through external partnerships.

4. **Solution designed for context**: Driving effective, sustainable impact requires solutions that address the root causes of the problem and are integrated into day-to-day work.
   a. Develop solutions that address the root causes, with scalability in mind: To effectively address the most critical root causes, the initiative's solutions will likely need to be multifaceted. As an illustrative example, a coaching program alone will not solve a gender parity problem. The solution set will also need to address systemic bias in hiring, performance management and other policies that disadvantage the target population. Each solution should be designed with scalability in mind to ensure that potential impact will not be hindered by barriers such as cost or operational complexity.
   b. Equip and encourage employees to contribute: As part of the process of designing a solution, companies not only need to equip employees to make the desired change (e.g. through upskilling) but also to encourage them to do so by setting new expectations, measuring progress and holding them accountable through performance management.

5. **Rigorous tracking and course correction:** Measuring progress against initiative goals allows leaders to evaluate the solution's effectiveness and supports the most impactful use of company

resources. Insights from tracking may surface opportunities to adjust or course-correct the initiative to increase impact.

    a. Use data and feedback to course-correct as needed: With the right metrics and milestones in place, adjustments to the solution can be implemented sooner rather than later to ensure the solution is effectively addressing the root causes.

6. **Actions for all employees:**
   a. Be curious: Seek out perspectives different from your own to challenge your viewpoints.
   b. Own your learning process: Reflect on your own identity, perspectives, biases and privilege. Educate yourself on the experiences of others through podcasts, books, art and spaces created by members of diverse populations.
   c. Ask for feedback: Tell your teammates that you care about inclusion and ask for their feedback to help you improve.
   d. Listen actively: Ask open-ended questions to help you understand before making a judgement.
   e. Use inclusive language: Do not assume specifics about someone's identity, background or viewpoints.
   f. Check in regularly: Try to better understand others' feelings, challenges and priorities, and ask how best to support them.
   g. Address non-inclusive team dynamics: Proactively ask for certain team members' input, for example, if they are interrupted or are not invited to voice their opinions.

7. **Actions for managers and team leaders:**
   a. Role model and reward inclusive behaviors: You have the opportunity to set the tone and establish your team's dynamic (e.g. express gratitude and engage further when a team member challenges your thinking; encourage a learning mindset that allows mistakes to be made).
   b. Consider power dynamics and invite input: For example, invite missing perspectives to join the conversation; ask lower tenured team members to share their perspectives first; in meetings, ask for input from everyone; solicit ideas in advance of a meeting so that all can be considered equally.
   c. Lead with vulnerability and empathy: Get to know team members at a personal level, for instance, and ask them to share their needs in the working environment.
   d. Give credit to your team: Notice when a new idea is being introduced and give credit to the original contributor.
   e. – Create opportunities: Allow all team members to perform to their fullest potential (not just those who look like you).